

# Socialist Organiser

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**SOUTH AFRICAN UNIONS UNITE**

# BLACK WORKERS' NEW POWER

The formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) at the weekend (November 30-December 1) marks an historic advance for the black working class. It is the largest independent, non-racial trade union federation in the history of South Africa. Indeed it is the largest and most powerful independent workers' movement outside of an advanced capitalist country.

The new federation will represent nearly 500,000 workers, larger than the main official white federation. It is of course still relatively small compared to the working class as a whole, representing perhaps 18% of non-rural black workers.

But it is a marvellous step forward. The destruction of the vile Apartheid system is now a great deal nearer. The working class movement of the entire world has grown by a head over the last week.

The new strength that this will bring to the black working class is reflected in a new political confidence. At the conference, the president of the new federation, Elijah Barayi, called for a political campaign against the 'pass laws' — the laws that enforce racial segregation.

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# The struggle

## 'Capitalism is the problem'

What sort of document is the Charter?

UDF: The Charter is a popular document, it keeps with democratic principles and represents the aspirations of the majority of the people. The Charter expresses both anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist sentiments as can be seen from the clause on nationalisation.

MAWU: The Charter is a popular document but the domination of the middle class can clearly be seen. The Charter makes important demands like 'freedom of speech' but these are limited as they do not address the primary conflict in society — the conflict between capital and labour.

The Charter talks for the 'people' but are there not different class interests among these 'people'?

The Charter is not anti-capitalist as the clause on nationalisation does not equate socialism. Production relations are not addressed.

Of what relevance are the demands of the Charter to the working class?

UDF: The Charter has relevance for the working class in every respect.

When the Charter was drawn up, the South African Congress of Trade Unions existed. We must understand that in South Africa, capitalism has taken on a racist form. Black people are oppressed as a nation and as a class. The clause in the Charter "The people shall govern" therefore shows that working

The 'Freedom Charter' is the most famous document of the liberation movement in South Africa. But what sort of document is it? Is it sufficiently democratic? Can it be a useful focus for working class struggle? These and other issues were discussed at a debate between an executive member of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and an organiser from the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU). The text is from 'Arise! Vukani', the bulletin of 'Action Youth'.

class interests are primary.

The Charter embodies working-class interests, not petit-bourgeois interests, because it is anti-imperialist.

MAWU: Some demands in the Charter are relevant to the working class but they are limited. Organisations like the UDF, which support the Charter, are dominated by the middle class, and cannot ensure the liberation of the working people.

What role has the working class in implementing the demands in the Charter?

UDF: In South Africa, the working class is in the majority. The central role of the working class must be fought for. Because of repression, the Charter had to be couched in a certain manner.

The Charter is representative of all the strata in South Africa.

MAWU: Bourgeois democratic rights are addressed in the Charter but not working class emancipation. Capitalism is the problem — the Charter does not address this. With the Charter, working-class dominance is not guaranteed.

Are class alliances in the Charter still viable?

UDF: Class alliances are important. The working class cannot hope to take the struggle up alone. We must broaden our base and include the black middle class. For example, the Western Cape Trades' Association must be included in the struggle. They are denied certain opportunities by apart-

heid.

MAWU: Alliances are vital but the working class must establish its hegemony.

Is a future society envisaged in the Charter compatible with capitalism?

UDF: Because of the nationalisation clause, the Charter is not compatible with capitalism. The Charter is not a socialist document, but neither is it a capitalist document. Society is in a state of transition and the Charter reflects this. It is adventurist to talk of a single stage to socialism and this is not in the interest of the working class.

MAWU: The Charter can be accommodated by capitalism. At best it is social democratic, but not socialist. Nationalisation clause does not equate socialism. In Britain, for example, key sectors of the economy are nationalised but one cannot say Britain is socialist.

After these questions a general discussion followed, the better part of which focused on Poland and Solidarity, the workers' movement there. The UDF spokesperson referred to Solidarity as "undermining elements that have to be dealt with". In answer to this we [Action Youth] refer readers to a speech delivered by FOSATU general secretary Joe Foster to the FOSATU Congress in April 1982. He said "Solidarity was not struggling to restore capitalism in Poland; its struggle was to establish more democratic worker control".



## Black workers' new power

From page 1.

"Cosatu gives Botha six months to get rid of passes", said Barayi. "I want to give P.W. Botha a last warning to get rid of the pass laws and to withdraw the troops from the townships before the country burns."

Until recently, the trade unions were wary of overtly political campaigns, anxious to build up their shop-floor strength. The Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), the major predecessor to the new Congress, had begun to take up campaigns against repression and the State of Emergency over the past year, and now Cosatu's defiant stand marks a further big step towards the clear politicisation of union struggles.

While participating in the



liberation movement, however, Cosatu will continue to focus on its specifically working class objectives.

The new federation includes the bulk of the independent unions formed since the mid-1970s — centrally Fosatu, the huge National Union of Mineworkers, and affiliates of the broad United Democratic Front, a movement politically associated with the exiled African National Congress. The less radical Council of Unions of South Africa (to which the NUM was formerly affiliated), and the Black Consciousness Azactu have not

participated.

Azactu in particular does not have Cosatu's commitment to 'non-racialism', that is, in effect, the involvement of some white people in the movement. They insist on the autonomy of blacks.

### Congress

The name of the new group, Congress, and the political history of Barayi, who was involved with the ANC in the past, suggest an attempt to compromise with the ANC tradition on the part of the majority of the movement. Nevertheless,

most trade unions have political criticisms of that tradition, and recognise the need for clear working class independence from it.

The struggles of black workers, and the movement they are building, is at the core of the liberation movement in South Africa. The liberation of the workers demands more than the end of apartheid: it demands the overthrow of capitalism.

The formation of Cosatu is an enormous step towards building the independent movement of the workers that can fight to secure that future.

## 'Not our idea'

THE FIRST problem we have with the Freedom Charter is its ambiguity — that is, it can be interpreted differently by different people.

For instance, the clause "The people shall govern" and the clause dealing with the nationalisation of banks, mines and the land has been taken to mean that the society envisaged by the Charter is anti-capitalist.

But as the comrade from MAWU pointed out, nationalisation or state control of sections of the economy does not equal socialism. Many countries have nationalised key aspects of their economies but the sufferings of the workers continue. Workers still don't have control over decisions.

The position of workers in Britain and Poland shows that even though the state in these countries controls much of the economy, the workers still lead miserable lives.

A respected leader who supports the Charter stated the following when writing about these clauses: "It is true that in demanding the nationalisation of the banks, the gold mines and the land, the Charter strikes a fatal blow at the financial and gold mining monopolies and farming interests."

"The breaking up and demo-

This is Action Youth's critique of the 'Freedom Charter', reprinted from 'Arise! Vukani'.

cratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country the Non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mines and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom, flourish as never before."

So what we see here is a denial that the Charter implies the overthrow of capitalism. In fact, it is positively interpreted as a programme of reforming capitalism.

### Racial

The second major problem with the Charter is that it accepts the government-imposed criteria of 'national groups' and 'races'.

The supporters of the Charter agree that there are four 'nations' or 'races' in South Africa — so-called 'Coloureds', 'Africans', 'Indians' and 'Whites'.

# for freedom



The struggle continues

## of democracy'

We believe this is dangerous for many reasons. Firstly, this kind of thinking plays into the hands of the government and collaborators like Hendrickse, Buthelezi and Rajbansi. These sellouts claim to represent different 'nations' and we are giving them an opportunity to do this.

It is true that many ordinary people see themselves as 'Indian', 'Zulu', etc. and it is easier to organise people in this manner because of geographical separation. But divisions have been forced onto our people for a reason: in order for the state to maintain easy control. It might be more difficult to organise across colour boundaries, but it is necessary.

We must fight divisions in the process of struggle and not wait for after the revolution. We have to build a single nation under the leadership of the working class.

Failure to realise this will result in a situation where opportunistic 'leaders' like Gatscha Buthelezi manipulate 'ethnic symbols' for their own reason. What happened in Inanda where so-called 'Zulu' workers were pitted against so-called 'Indian' workers for the benefit of Gatscha and Rajbansi teaches us the danger of the concepts 'national

groups' and 'races'.

It is difficult to see any difference between the 'national groups' envisaged in the Charter and the 'national groups' of today's apartheid structures. Certainly the development of "own languages, folk cultures and customs" (Charter clause) ties in neatly with what the National Party has implemented.

Thirdly, there is no attempt in the Charter to explain how working-class leadership of the struggle is compatible with the idea of several 'nations' each consisting of antagonistic classes. Among the so-called "Indian national group", for instance there are different classes.

### Majority

A minority in this group are businessmen, even big businessmen, but the vast majority are working people. The interests of these working people are more in line with the interests of so-called 'African' and 'Coloured' working people, and not with the businessmen in question. The Charter does not explain this.

Some people who support the Charter call themselves socialists but believe that we must first unite people against apartheid (the first stage), and then

fight for socialism (the second stage).

We in Action Youth oppose attempts to separate the struggle for democracy and the struggle for workers' power.

A great deal has been written and said concerning the 'democratic' way the Charter was adopted. Yet none other than Chief Albert Lutshuli, then president of the African National Congress (ANC), mentioned in his autobiography that the Charter was never circulated for amendments to affiliates of the Congress Alliance.

The man who chaired the meeting which adopted the document, Dr Wilson Conco, actually said that he saw the document for the first time at Kliptown (where the Charter was adopted).

The various congresses which made up the Congress Alliance had exactly the same vote. In other words, the minuscule white Congress of Democrats had the same vote as the ANC. This is not our idea of democracy!

Instead of the Freedom Charter, we stand by a socialist programme which reflects the class struggle and will act as a guide in our fight to end both class exploitation and national oppression.

## Support sarmcol strikers

One thousand workers at British Tyre and Rubber (BTR) Sarmcol, in Howick, South Africa, have been on strike since May for the recognition of their union, the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU).

All thousand were sacked at the beginning of May following a one-day legal strike for trade union recognition. As a result the workers now face starvation and indefinite unemployment.

BTR Sarmcol is the only major employer in the area, and has imposed an employment boycott on the sacked workers.

A stayaway and a consumer boycott has been organised in the Pietermaritzburg area

in solidarity. MAWU has pushed for negotiations, but the racist bosses refuse to budge.

BTR is a British multinational. It owns, among other companies, Pretty Polly, Cornhill Insurance and Dunlop.

British workers can and must take solidarity action with their brothers and sisters in South Africa. We need to push for a proper national campaign. In the meantime, trade unions, Labour Parties, college Labour Clubs and YSs can collect money and raise the issue.

MAWU can be contacted at 4, Central Court, 125 Gale Street, 4001 Durban, South Africa.

## Time to change the AAM

The Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) on December 1 drew together about 1000 anti-apartheid activists. Following on from the AAM's huge demonstration last month, it reflects the upsurge in interest in campaigning against apartheid, spurred on by the actions of the South African people themselves.

Unfortunately, the AGM demonstrated all the problems of the AAM as it presently exists. The platform, dominated by the Communist Party and fellow-travellers, kept the meeting under very tight control.

A security search at the door was extended to include the prohibition of political literature other than official Anti-Apartheid material.

And the conference was extremely heavily stewarded.

Much of the political debate was a non-debate. Most of the speeches, from the floor as well as the platform, consisted of general support for the liberation movement, with precious little reference to actual struggles or debates taking place within South Africa.

The new union federation, Cosatu, was welcomed; but there was no discussion on the trade union movement in South Africa. And a resolution from Guildford SWP, calling for limited, but useful forms of direct solidarity with the independent, non-racial unions, simply disappeared off the agenda.

Most of the discussion was tireless and abstract.

City of London AA, dominated by a small neo-Stalinist sect calling themselves the Revolutionary Communist Group, was suspended from membership of



Black workers march through downtown Johannesburg

national AA last year and the AGM reaffirmed their suspension.

Ostensibly, City of London have been suspended for organisational malpractice. But in fact, the Executive's motives are openly political: they object to the RCG's intention to change the nature of the AAM, and win it to a strategy that involves taking on the British state.

### Reinstate

City of London should be reinstated. Nevertheless, the RCG's belligerent attitude is sure to alienate new and unaligned members, was absurd, and they are to be condemned for allowing themselves to be involved in a nasty scuffle with the stewards towards the end of the afternoon

— though to be sure the heavy-handed stewarding was unnecessary and provocative.

But it is unfortunate that the AGM had to waste its time discussing these matters when there are so many real issues that need to be hammered out.

Socialists need to get more involved in the AAM. This conference could provide a springboard for organising labour-movement based solidarity work. We need to focus on building concrete forms of solidarity, and to make a particular effort to build support for the struggles of the South African workers.

The AAM itself will have to be changed in the process — from a bureaucratic, and therefore politically dead movement, into a vibrant, democratic solidarity campaign.

# EETPU helps Murdoch

By an EETPU member

Evidence is mounting about the nature of the EETPU's recent link-up with Rupert Murdoch at the press baron's new Evening Post plant in East London.

According to branch officers the EETPU has contacted some 500 unemployed members via its area office in Southampton as part of a labour recruitment drive aimed at getting the Post into the capital's streets early next year. Last July Eddie Shah finalised a closed shop deal with the EETPU for his new daily paper, also to be printed in East London from next March.

This latest operation began in August immediately after the EETPU obtained sole organising rights within Murdoch's new plant. Typically, the single-union deal favours Murdoch with a dispute-arbitration procedure linked to a strike-free agreement.

The workforce — few, if any, are home-side print workers — is comprised of boilermakers,

pipefitters and labourers. Many are recently paid off Esso refinery workers — who now claim to be earning upwards of £300 per week while they retrain for jobs as typesetters and printing press operatives, jobs traditionally in the domain of NGA and SOGAT labour. Plant commissioning and on-site installation work is also being carried out by electricians reported to be on wages of £400 a week.

How did Southampton EETPU come to be used as a co-ordinating centre for Hammond's 'New Unionism'? Trouble has been brewing for months; branch delegates to Trades Councils and Labour Party GMCs have been rejected for the most spurious reasons. Earlier this year the democratic right of branch members to vet membership applications was suppressed indefinitely by area office. The

decision has had a direct bearing on the present dispute — because no unemployed sections exist in the EETPU former members would have had to apply for re-admission via the local branch. In this case Southampton branch must have opposed such applications on pain of giving carte blanche to the leadership. As things stand the procedure is now firmly in the hands of local bureaucrats.

## Splashed out

On top of that some £50,000 from union funds has been splashed out on structural changes — brass fittings et al — to expand office space and allow EESA lodge organisers to operate from the same premises. From here an attempt to recruit senior engineers and technical management is in full swing as part of the EETPU's long term strategy of building a political base among white-collar engineering

workers.

But for the moment it serves only to camouflage more immediate plans. From this office — according to branch members — the EESA lodge secretary, Mick Scanlon, directs the operation in support of Rupert Murdoch's scab newspaper. A local coach operator (non-union) continues to be hired on a daily basis to ferry workers up and down the A27 to and from the plant. NGA Solent branch secretary Syd Johns has lodged a protest with EETPU and TGWU regions. He remains sceptical though: "It is too major for the local branch to deal with by itself because of the implications. This has to be taken up by the TUC", he said.

So far NGA and EETPU activists have failed to mount pickets either on the Wapping plant itself or the Southampton area office.

Joint pickets must be held now!

TUC must black this plant!

# Will WRP face up to the past?

By Bruce Robinson

The split with Gerry Healy has left the Banda/Slaughter section of the WRP shaken and bewildered. About 300 people at a meeting in London entitled "Revolutionary morality and the split in the WRP" heard them attempt to analyse what had happened and give some idea of where they see themselves going.

The main problem that the Banda brothers and Slaughter face is having to explain how they — as his chief lieutenants — tolerated Healy for so long and how they themselves for many years both took part in and covered up for many of Healy's practices which they now denounce.

Cliff Slaughter, the main speaker given the current 'disappearance' of Mike Banda, took a self-critical line that stopped short of the entire truth. "The Central Committee cannot separate itself from Healy by his expulsion; we must ask ourselves what our own responsibility was...". Appealing to ex-members of the WRP, he added "those who stayed in can be condemned for keeping their mouths shut..." and were not necessarily more honourable than those who had left.

## Add up

Yet Slaughter's account does not add up to an adequate explanation of the relationship between Healy and those members of the WRP leadership who have now split with him. According to Slaughter, "Healy's abuses have been going on for a long time. Up to the late '60s Healy was contained". Yet, "only one or two people knew about the abuse and they felt intimidated". Compare this with the statement in the News Line of 23 November 1985 that "Healy's abuses have long been common knowledge in revisionist circles". If the 'revisionists' knew, how could Slaughter and Banda not know?

The meeting provided more evidence of the truth of what Socialist Organiser said about the WRP in 1981 when we were taken to court by them. (Now that Slaughter is on the receiving end of Redgrave's writs we hear that "recourse to the courts is a fundamental class question".) The activism of endless paper sales and talk about 'Bonapartism' and 'revolutionary situation' merely served to keep the membership docilely working and "imposed a self-censorship of opponents". Healy's relationships with the Iraqi and Libyan regimes were "perpetuated because Healy thought there was something to be gained financially." Members of the Iraqi CP were fingered to the regime. Although Slaughter did not say that money had been received, he said that "The daily paper could not have been continued without a crippling deficit. Branches turned into debt-collecting agencies. The party turned into a sect."

Slaughter's speech shows the sorts of questions that members of the Banda/Slaughter WRP must be asking themselves in their dazed state following the split. While, by his own admission, Slaughter was "not in a position to give full answers", he declared the need to re-examine critically the entire history of the WRP/SLL, on our own and with others. In particular he called on ex-members of the WRP to rejoin, hinting particularly that the Thornett group

would be welcome. Slaughter also promised open meetings to discuss the 'historical questions' in front of the whole movement.

The meeting showed that Slaughter and Banda have opened Pandora's box by challenging Healy. Many members must be questioning all the sacred cows that form their education by the WRP. Many of the contributions from the floor were from organisations (Socialist Labour Group, British supporters of the American SWP, Alan Thornett) who date the degeneration of the SLL/WRP from just before their own break with Healy. Such explanations are wholly inadequate — whatever the political twists and turns the Healy internal regime has been a constant factor for well over 30 years.

After 1956 the SLL went to Trotskyism hundreds of Communist Party militants, who had begun questioning Stalinism in the wake of Khrushchev's half-exposure of Stalin and the invasion of Hungary. With conscious irony, Euro-CPer Monty Johnstone said, "We understand the shock members of the WRP must be feeling. We in the Communist Party felt exactly the same shock following the exposure of Stalin's crimes". Like Khrushchev, the comrades-in-arms of the 'dead' dictator, Banda and Slaughter can at best provide a collection of half-truths and unanswered questions. Like the ex-CPers of 1956, the WRPs must break with their entire tradition to find a road to Trotskyism. Socialist Organiser, which warned about and has been vindicated in its analysis of where Healy led the WRP, hopes to play a positive role in this process.

# ILEA goes SDP

On Saturday November 23 London Labour Party tried to adopt a Manifesto for the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) to be directly elected for the first time next May.

Constituency delegates were almost unanimous in their condemnation of the draft document viewing it as weak, unimaginative and unrelated to real issues.

## Cajole

But they sat powerless as Frances Morrell, the current ILEA leader, cajoled trade union delegates to vote down attempts to have the whole document referred back, and a recall conference arranged.

Despite a nauseating, condescending display from Morrell, constituency delegates held firm to their criticisms of a document that could have been written by the SDP.

As embarrassment increased for party officials at an obviously very unsatisfactory situation, the Chair, Arthur Latham, promised delegates that he would report the proceedings to the regional executive and all current regional policies would be reflected in Labour's manifesto.

# Scab

Kevin Dunn is a scab. Not only did he scab on the miners' strike, but according to some of the pickets at the pit where he worked, Walsanton, he also stuck his fingers up at them as sent in to work on the bus. Kevin Dunn is also a Labour Councillor on Stoke City Council.

Dunn was up for re-selection this year. When his name came forward to the Stoke North Constituency Labour Party for endorsement for the panel of candidates, Socialist Organiser supporters moved that he be dropped.

## Soft

Despite the opposition of the soft left in the meeting a majority voted against endorsing Dunn. Nevertheless, Stoke District Labour Party put him on the Panel of candidates, arguing that they had no choice under Labour Party rules because sitting councillors go on automatically. Socialist Organiser supporters and others argued that even if that was the rule we should not put a scab on the Panel.

But the soft left put forward that we accept him on the Panel "with reluctance" and call on the NEC to look into the Rule which forces DLPs to put sitting councillors on Panels irrespective of what they have done while in office. This cop out motion was accepted with seven votes against it. But the battle is not over. If Kevin Dunn is selected to stand in the elections next year his selection has to be endorsed by the District Party. The rules say that sitting councillors have to be put on the Panel, but there is no such rule which says that the District Party has to endorse their nomination.



Polish workers occupy Gdansk shipyard, 1980



"I couldn't survive without my crutches". From 'Voice of Solidarnosc'.

# Four years on

Four years ago, the movement of the Polish workers was violently suppressed by the Stalinist military elite. Despite heroic resistance, the Solidarnosc independent trade union was forced underground. Polish workers died in the attempt to save their union. Jaruzelski came to power.

The Polish working class has not forgotten the eighteen months in which it rocked the

bureaucratic dictatorship and forced them to allow a degree of working class freedom unheard of before in a Stalinist country. And beneath the surface, the Solidarnosc movement lives on — still circulating its literature, still organising discussions, still able to organise strikes.

Despite all the lies and defamations of the Polish workers from the mouths of Stalinists, East and West, and their fellow-

travellers, Solidarnosc still represents the future of socialism in Poland. It will rise again. Solidarnosc, and movements like it, will grind into the dust the tyrants who rule them.

We have to build for the day when the British workers can join them in forging a genuine, democratic and free socialist Europe.

# CPSA pay claim

By Mike Grayson

Branches of the largest Civil Service union, CPSA, are meeting over the next week to discuss the 1986 pay claim and a response to Treasury proposals on a long-term pay system for the Civil Service.

Alistair Graham and a majority of the union's right wing Executive Committee are pressing the membership to accept the Tory proposals. These are based on looking at pay movements (not pay levels) in similar jobs outside the Civil Service, and granting an increase in line with such movements. Not only does this system give no element of "catching-up" — and for years now, Civil Service pay has fallen consistently below the

rate of inflation — but the government would retain a power of veto, to override the agreement if it wished. Also, the unions would have no unilateral right to arbitration. Because of these "get-out" clauses for the Tories, the leaderships of even some management unions are calling for a rejection of the proposals. Some of CPSA's right wing are also against the deal, but Graham was able to swing a 14-11 majority at the special executive meeting called to discuss the proposals on 1 November.

Branches must vote to give these meaningless proposals the boot. Instead, we should demand a sizeable flat-rate increase (rather than a percent-

age rise, which automatically favours the higher-paid) in order to make up for the paltry deals we have had in recent years. Also, claims for increased annual leave and a 35 hour week, which are already CPSA policy, should be made part of the coming pay claim. Most importantly, the government must be given a clear indication that we are serious about winning such a claim. Alistair Graham thinks the union is too weak for a fight and that members have no stomach for one. He should be proved resoundingly wrong at the special one-day conference called for 21 January, where CPSA will make its final decision on the pay claim.

This issue of Socialist Organiser is bigger than usual, at 16 pages. But now the bad news: it's the last issue before Christmas. Over the next few weeks we'll be working flat-out on getting our new offices into shape to move in. Socialist Organiser no. 11 will be dated 2 January. Because this issue is more than 100 pages long, it will be more than 100 pages long.

WHAT WITH postal strikes, transport strikes and the threat of a close-down of all local authority workplaces, we only needed the telephones to go last week and the entire city of Liverpool would have been cut off from the outside world.

Maybe then Thatcher would have surrounded us with bulldozers and pushed us all across the Irish Sea. That way the Tories could maybe deal with two problems at once.

Since the Labour leaders have a bipartisan policy on Liverpool too, Kinnock would have been glad to lend a hand.

The budget crisis for this particular year is over. The city is not going bankrupt, thanks to a timely loan from Swiss bankers.

The price of the loan is more than just the loss of face for Derek Hatton. The city is plunged further into debt that it simply cannot pay. This bears a striking similarity to previous Liberal policy.

"As early as 1976, Labour was attacking the Liberals' plan to pay for repairs to council housing by capitalising them, that is, using its capital housing allowance to pay for them and borrowing the money long-term... Labour's argument was that this helped to keep down the rates short-term, but would increase the long-term debt of the city which future generations could not repay."

This quote, from the recently published book 'Liverpool On The Brink' by Michael Parkinson, is bitterly ironic in light of the events of the past fortnight.

Who is to blame? The Tory government has been immovable, prepared to see Liverpool go down the pan socially and economically. They have consistently refused to return any of the central government grant taken from the city in recent years but necessary to meet the real needs of the first deindustrialised city in Britain.

What it gives with one hand, in fancily-named grants, it takes away with a vengeance with the other.

### Undermine

The national Labour Party leaders have also made every effort to undermine the attempts of the Liverpool Labour council to maintain services and to develop a modest house-building programme without an increase in local taxation (rates) which the working class must pay.

The Kinnocks, Straws and Cunninghams have done the Tories' dirty work. They don't live in streets where almost everyone is on the dole. It is always OK to recommend suffering if you're not the one who has to suffer.

However, there is an old Yorkshire saying to the effect that 'them that's never done anything wrong, have never done anything right'.

How was it possible, given the Tories' evident culpability, for them to appear to be innocent by-standers in these events? Why was Kinnock able to get such support at Labour Party conference for what amounts to the launching of a purge of Liverpool Labour Party when two years ago he was very circumspect in criticising Liverpool? Why were national and local trade union leaders able to convince most Liverpool council workers not to support the council's stance, if, as the council leadership claimed, it would mean substantial job losses across the entire workforce?

These questions also give



# Liverpool: the truth

Bas Hardy reports from Liverpool

rise to a much more formidable one. In May 1984 the Liverpool Labour Party achieved its biggest ever electoral victory on the basis of its confrontationalist, anti-Tory ticket. It also had widespread support in the unions. At that time, even the NUT — the least class conscious section of the council's workforce — narrowly voted down a motion for a one-day strike in support of the council.

Why, now, do we have a totally destroyed local government joint shop stewards' committee? Why now is the Labour Party in danger of being crucified at the polls next May?

Some of the blame must be put down to the sectarian and bureaucratic behaviour of the Militant leadership on Merseyside. They cut away trade union support for the Council's stance. They allowed, through confusion or design, semi-gangsterist politics to develop in the Town Hall. They played into the hands of the Tories and the Labour Party Right/Kinnockites. They created a rod, not only for their own backs, but for everyone else who takes a left wing stance in the Labour Party.

Our Town Hall Marxists have behaved more like a cross between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Cosa Nostras.

The Hatton Factor is one sad symptom of this. Hatton has played the media in order to establish himself as a national political figure, courting publicity even to the extent that local people regard him as the sole representative of Liverpool Labour Party. It is no good accusing Kinnock of developing a personality cult, if you are doing exactly the same thing.

When the Leader of the Council, John Hamilton, talks of gangsterism, diversion of mail and telephone calls and surveillance, something is clearly wrong.

This sort of thing, along with the paraphernalia of flash clothes, flash cars, etc., seem, even to non-malicious observers, to have some substance to them.

The Hatton style has led many voters to believe that there is a grain of truth in the Tory press lies.

The present administration exhibits much of the wrongs of the Braddock era.

Jobs have been given to people either in the Tendency or willing to kowtow to it, across a wide range of council employment. Apart from the notorious example of Sam Bond, we have teachers promoted, union officials given sabbaticals, councillors included or excluded from the council on the patronage system.

### Patronage

The system of patronage is the major cause of disunity among the workforce. The GMBATU has benefited considerably in terms of pay and working conditions, a fact that in itself is not undesirable. These concessions have, however, been seen, and made to be seen, as being granted at the expense of other sections of the council workforce.

The other big blow to trade union solidarity was the dreadful and seemingly bizarre decision to issue redundancy notices to the 31,000-strong workforce.

This tactic was treated with hostility and suspicion by many honest trade unionists. Could it be that some of the councillors did not want to be barred from office? The redundancy notices were a legal device to stay within the law but such legal niceties only placed fear and uncertainty in the minds of the workforce.

The unions have generally been viewed as a subservient appendage of the council. Because the employer was the

socialist council, union disputes were an attack on socialism itself. Since most of the unions pursuing trade union grievances represented white collar workers, and such petty bourgeois workers were denounced, this gave an opportunity to the trade union leaders hostile to the council's fight to lead their members out of the campaign.

Many workers who broadly supported the council gradually became demoralised in 1985. They felt like a stage army, there to be wheeled out on demonstrations, but never party to decision making.

The contempt with which the council leaders held the workforce was clearly shown by the way in which the current crisis was solved. The council had agreed the bank balancing deal in August, yet it continued to tell the workforce for a further two months that there was no alternative to the bankruptcy option, apart from the Tory government climbing down.

Could such a loan have been negotiated without Tory Minister for the Environment Baker being aware of it? The Tories knew that the bankruptcy threat was nothing more than a charade, and a poor effort at brinkmanship.

The footsoldiers of Militant have yet to see it this way. They are used to accepting a line, handed down from the gurus at the top.

Until Militant took over the council it had no idea how to operate in real-life politics. Political activity consisted of passing tortuous resolutions on the need for socialism. The LPYS was controlled by them in a fashion to meticulously seal it from outside influences — cutting off any possibility of the LPYS developing into a mass youth organisation.

This spilled over into the way in which they dominated the city council. Decisions were taken by a small group at the top, Hatton, Mulhearn, etc., with the token non-Militant, Tony Byrne. The

line would then be absorbed by the apparatchiks who would then pass it on to the broad, politically uneducated masses.

This resulted in Militant supporters becoming isolated and exposed in Liverpool.

Such a situation does them no good in the long term although they may be able to recruit a few more supporters in the next few weeks.

Militant have succeeded in Liverpool in winning over large numbers of raw recruits around an anti-Tory political gut reaction. In so doing, they have failed to educate them on a number of important ideological issues, such as race.

### Socialist

These people are worth conserving for socialist politics, but they will be lost if Militant on Merseyside continues on its sectarian trajectory.

Militant supporters should think about the possible mistakes they have made if they are to win back support. There should be discussion around the following agenda:

- \*Removal of Hatton as the main spokesperson of the DLP. A definite need exists to de-personalise Liverpool Labour Party's stance.

- \*The removal of Samson Bond as race relations advisor.

- If the council is willing to make concessions to Swiss bankers, then surely some concessions to Liverpool's black community are in order?

- \*Reconstruction of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee. The council must take positive steps to try and reunite the local government workforce.

- \*Re-establishment of workers' democracy inside the DLP. This should be used as a forum for democratic discussion, and not as an arena for the pillorying of individuals who dare to disagree with the line.

- \*Candidates chosen by Labour Party wards who are critical of aspects of Liverpool Party policy should not be barred from the panel of candidates.

The Kinnock bureaucracy is more powerful than the Militant Tendency one. In attacking Militant the Kinnockites are inserting the thin end of the wedge.

They must be stopped from turning the Labour Party into an electoral machine — a kind of SDP Mark II. The non-Militant left must not allow the bureaucratic activities of Militant to stampede them into the camp of the witch-hunters.

After all, what has been going on in Liverpool is par for the course in councils up and down the country. Liverpool has been singled out because the Labour leadership happens to disagree with the policies being pursued there.

Socialists on Merseyside have to close ranks against attempts by the NEC to destroy a genuine, organised response to capitalist attacks on living standards and services for the working class. We must also be firm against attempts to hijack working class protests down various sectarian and bureaucratic highways and byways.

From Socialist Organiser:  
 'Starved, battered, defiant: magnificent miners'. An analysis of the miners' strike. 75p plus postage.  
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Geoff Bell, author of 'The Protestants of Ulster' and other books on Ireland and Hackney North CLP delegate to this year's Labour Party conference, replies to John O'Mahony on the debate at that conference

SOCIALIST Organiser of 17 October gave over three pages to attacking myself and three other movers and seconders of the resolutions on Ireland at the Labour Party conference.

In replying to this, the first admission I would make is that I am somewhat dubious about doing so. I find it rather difficult to take seriously John O'Mahony's 'review' of the Irish debate at conference.

It is reminiscent of those old stories about theatre reviews written by someone who spent the entire performance of the play in the theatre bar. Like John O'Mahony that reviewer may have read the script — and O'Mahony reproduced ours at great length — but there are more to plays than the script. And there is more to debates at Labour Party conference than what is actually said in speeches.

However, let me begin by questioning O'Mahony's methodology. In asking why, or rather asserting that, 'the Troops Out current still counts for little in our movement', he says that those who seek an explanation for this can begin by looking at the debate at conference and at the weak argument put over by those who made speeches there.

### Absurd

This is a very silly suggestion. The movers of the resolutions have five minutes each, the seconders and other speakers three minutes. To expect any individual to make a detailed, theoretically-sound, answering-all-possible-objections-that-might-be-raised type of speech in that time is absurd.

This is especially the case when the issue concerned is Northern Ireland; an issue continually distorted or neglected by the ruling class press and the labour bureaucracy. No, all we can do when speaking to resolutions on Ireland at the party conference is hope to make a couple of polemical points, correct one or two misapprehensions and supply the odd bit of information which perhaps, just perhaps may start the odd delegate thinking afresh about the Irish issue.

These may appear modest intentions but I do suggest that John O'Mahony is rather naive if he believes that it is speeches at Labour Party conferences which win or lose debates there. As I am sure he knows, the vast majority of votes are decided beforehand at caucus meetings of the unions.

What informs their discussion on Ireland I will discuss shortly, but to give over three pages of Socialist Organiser to discussing four or five speeches of a few minutes each is to elevate the importance of those, and the possible effect they could have, to a level they do not warrant.

But if John O'Mahony wishes to do that, at least let him get off his metaphorical theatre bar stool, buy a programme and see what the play was called. The basis of his attack on us was to insist 'the single slogan "Troops Out" needs to be replaced by a broader agitation which would make "Troops Out" one element in a coherent programme'. I agree, as I am sure do the other delegates O'Mahony attacked.

And that is why, totally contrary to the impression given by Socialist Organiser, the resolu-



Camera work

# 'Britain out' is principle No.1

tions we moved and seconded went way, way beyond 'Troops Out'.

O'Mahony wants 'a coherent programme'. So do we, which is why in the resolution I moved we called not just for withdrawal within the lifetime of the next Labour government, as Socialist Organiser reported, but also for the working out of 'a detailed policy for British withdrawal'.

Call it a 'coherent programme' or a 'detailed policy', it matters little: what does matter is they amount to the same thing.

Certainly we did not detail this policy or programme, although the second resolution mentioned some possible components of it — the ending of the PTA, plastic bullets and strip searching — but what we did do, in the wording of our resolutions, was to suggest that the working out of this policy/programme was of such importance that we needed a wide-ranging discussion within the labour movement to flesh it out.

That is what the resolutions called for, and for John O'Mahony to try and parade us as Troops Out simpletons is a sectarian distortion.

And, if I may, I will add a personal note here. John is kind enough to say in his article that

I have written some 'useful works' on Ireland. For that, thank you, but if he had read one of those works a little more closely — 'The British in Ireland' — he would know that in the conclusion I argue for and detail a coherent programme for British withdrawal.

The Labour Committee on Ireland also argue the importance of establishing a programme for withdrawal. All of which underlines the importance of not jumping to too many polemical conclusions on the basis of what is said in a couple of minutes of speechifying at Labour Party conferences.

### Opinion

As to the quality of those speeches which O'Mahony seeks to denigrate that is, of course, a matter of opinion. In the opinion of the Irish Post, for instance, 'the Irish case was put most eloquently at Bournemouth — the best ever presentation and all who spoke in favour of those resolutions must be warmly congratulated'.

Now the Irish Post may not possess the theoretical wisdom or Marxist analysis of Socialist Organiser, but there is one reason for taking its views a good deal more seriously than those of John O'Mahony: its

coverage of the Irish debate at conference concentrated on attacking the disgraceful, incoherent performance of Alex Kinson, the spokesperson for the NEC.

That, for me, was a much more important target — the target of the labour bureaucracy who both historically and presently must share the responsibility for British misrule in Ireland — than that of their left critics such as myself and the others who spoke in the debate in favour of ending that British misrule.

Mention of the labour bureaucracy raises a further point concerning the debate in the trade unions on Ireland and the relationship of this to discussions in the Labour Party. When O'Mahony asked 'Why is the Troops-out-of-Ireland current so feeble in the British labour movement?' he was not only mistaken in characterising us as simply 'Troops-out', he was also wrong in his assessment of our strength.

Within the last four or five years we have won the party to supporting, on paper, Irish unity; secured promises to repeal the PTA and stop the use of plastic bullets; and defeated the NEC on the ending of the

judicial courts and strip-searching. Support for our positions in the CLPs has also ensured that Ireland has been debated at conference for the last five years.

### Majority

I would also argue that we now have majority, if not overwhelming, support in the CLPs in support of British withdrawal. Where we lack support is in the trade unions and it is their block vote which has consistently ensured our withdrawal motions are lost.

Why have the unions adopted this attitude? Is it because, as John O'Mahony suggests, the trade union delegations at conference are worried about the prospect of a blood-bath if Britain leaves?

They may be worried about this, and certainly the question of the blood-bath needs serious discussion, but to suggest this is what informs the unions' opposition — or that of the NEC — to British withdrawal is to ascribe to these union bureaucrats — as many of them are — a degree of concern and compassion for the poor Irish Catholics of which, quite frankly, there is as much evidence as there is of snow in hell.

No, as any half-decent mater-

ialist analysis would recognise, the reason the union leaderships are hostile to British withdrawal is because of their membership in Northern Ireland, the vast majority of whom are loyalists and who would quite likely leave their unions if they believed their leaderships were voting pro-Republican resolutions at Labour Party conferences.

Add to that the fact the unions' local leaderships in Northern Ireland have, in some instances, been themselves accused of operating discrimination against Catholics by the Fair Employment Agency, and you begin to get a materialistic explanation for the unions' attitudes towards Northern Ireland, rather than some idealistic notion that it is all in people's heads and if we put the right argument over we will win the debate.

With that in mind, let me just conclude by making a couple of remarks as to how we can help to change this situation.

The work of building up support for British withdrawal from Ireland within the rank and file of the unions is an obvious priority, and one way in which, in future, the material interests of the bureaucracy could be negated. And we are all agreed that to win that support means going beyond Troops Out Now.

### Unconditional

Where the real dispute lies, I suspect, is just exactly where do we go? For myself, the guiding political principle is that socialists insist that British withdrawal from Ireland is unconditional.

To spell this out, neither the British government, the Labour Party conference nor even Socialist Organiser can place conditions on British withdrawal. The principle of self-determination means that they have no right to insist that the Irish construct their state in this or that way before Britain leaves.

That is why I object to John O'Mahony's practice — both in this article and others — of coupling British withdrawal with the advocacy of a federal Ireland in which there would be considerable autonomy for the Protestant North.

I have no intention of entering into this argument here because I do not accept the prime responsibility of British socialists at this stage in the Irish struggle is to sit around and commentate on debates at Labour Party conferences one day and construct constitutional arrangements by which Ireland will be governed the next.

Our job is to work for British withdrawal from Ireland. In the course of that work we can suggest ways and means of lessening the threat of a blood-bath — for instance the disbandment and disarming of the UDR — and we can include these measures in a wider and more detailed programme for British withdrawal.

That, however, is an entirely different process than the Irish priority Socialist Organiser has chosen to adopt in the last couple of years — arguing in Britain for a Federal Ireland.

It all conjures up an amusing vision: we win the debate in the Labour Party; a socialist government prepares to withdraw from Ireland; John O'Mahony parades up and down Whitehall with the banner 'Troops Must Stay Until Protestant Rights Are Secured'.

This, of course, is a caricature. The point I am making is that, for me, any theoretical discussion on the nature of loyalism which we in Britain have is best placed in the context of advocacy for unconditional British withdrawal. Once that context is agreed, then perhaps we can get away from both the type of 'reportage' Socialist Organiser used for the Irish debate at conference and the type of reply which was necessitated by that reportage.

John O'Mahony replies to Geoff Bell, and takes further some of the arguments developed in his analysis of the Labour Party conference debate on Ireland in Socialist Organiser no. 248.

Troops Out, he argues, must be used not as a self-sufficient slogan but as part of a coherent programme for Ireland.

DID I 'attack' Geoff Bell and the others whose speeches at Labour Party conference I summarised and commented upon in SO 248?

Certainly I criticised them pretty severely, and I suppose I was a bit unkind to Sarah Roelofs, whose writings on Ireland in Labour Briefing sum up for me much of what's wrong with much of the left.

But to disagree is not necessarily to 'attack'. I consider myself to be on the same side as those who spoke for Troops Out at Labour Party conference.

I presented full summaries of the speeches in order to avoid giving the impression of trigger-happy factional sniping and to give the reader the chance to form an independent judgment. I solicited Geoff Bell's present reply because I believe a serious debate *within the Left* on the question of Ireland is one of the most urgent tasks we have to tackle.

Unfortunately Geoff Bell declines to discuss most of what I wrote.

Having summarised and critically analysed the arguments used by advocates of Troops Out, I concluded that: "... The left lost the argument at this year's Labour Party conference. With the partial exception of Geoff Bell the left did not even seriously attempt to answer the arguments" (emphasis added). Was I right or wrong?

Geoff Bell is of course right that there is more to the Labour Party conference 'play' than the mere script, the speeches, alone embodies or can convey. The pressures and vested interests of the outside world overshadow the debates, giving their precise meaning and weight to the sentiments and ideas expressed there and sometimes predetermining the vote without regard to the speeches and arguments that emerge at conference.

Geoff is right that it is a weakness in my account of the debate that I didn't underline and bring out the significance of Kitson's reference (which I cited) to the TGWU's 200,000 Irish members.

But my subject was *the script*, i.e. the arguments. The absence of comment on the trade union bureaucracy's vested interest not to upset the status quo is a weakness in my article but not a decisive one *unless* you want to say that the arguments are irrelevant.

### Arguments

I itemised the three arguments on which the opponents of Troops Out base themselves.

"1. That British withdrawal would be followed immediately by sectarian civil war, and therefore:

"2. Troops Out leads not to a united Ireland but to bloody reparation and two Irish states; and

"3. That Northern Ireland is some sort of legitimate expression of the rights of the Protestant community, which can only be changed fundamentally with their consent".

My summary of all the points made by the speakers established the remarkable fact that only one left-winger even attempted to deal with any of these arguments — Geoff Bell took up the

# Workers' unity is the first principle



bloodbath argument.

The rest of the arguments were not touched at all by any of the left speakers. That was the most striking feature of the debate — they didn't try to argue. In terms of the arguments it was almost a non-debate because the left simply defaulted on the arguments.

If I'd seized on this or that hasty speech and said the equivalent of: "It is no accident, comrades, that comrade X in his speech about rate rises in Tower Hamlets neglected to deal with the class character of the Communist Parties of Cuba and Outer Mongolia" — then that would be very unreasonable. But what happened in the conference debates need an explanation stronger than Geoff Bell's charge that I'm engaging in factional sniping.

Because movers of the resolutions have only five minutes, says Geoff Bell, and seconds only three, "to expect any individual to make a detailed, theoretically sound, answering-all-possible-objections-that-might-be-raised-type of speech in that time is absurd".

Moreover, though "the question of the bloodbath needs serious discussion", "any half-decent materialist analysis would recognise (that) the reason the union leaderships are hostile to British withdrawal is because of their membership in Northern Ireland, the vast majority of whom are Loyalists and who would quite likely leave their unions if they believed their leaderships were voting pro-Republican resolutions at Labour Party conference. (This suggests) a materialistic explanation for the unions' attitude towards Northern Ireland rather than some idealistic notion that it is all in people's heads and if we put the right argument over we will win the debate".

So the arguments don't matter? Or anyway not very much?

But the arguments do matter — and if they don't, why write articles and books, why bother to make speeches at all?

The arguments had an importance outside the 'theatre' of the conference — they went out live on two TV channels.

Was five minutes not enough? That wouldn't explain the virtual absence of even attempts —

rushed and garbled as they might have to be in the circumstances — to take up the arguments. Nor does it explain the fact that in an article of about 1800 words — which can't be much less than the 'comment' part of my article — Geoff Bell still doesn't attempt to answer any of the points.

Perhaps our disagreement, then, is about what the arguments in the movement are? Well then, what are they?

In fact Geoff Bell's position seems to be not that the arguments don't matter, nor that they are different from what I stated, but that we don't have the right to discuss such issues. Neither the British labour movement, nor British Marxists (nor — in my own case — Irish Marxists who live in Britain) have any right to discuss the issues. Our political rights can go no further than the right to repeat, as often as we can muster the energy and conviction, the single relevant slogan, Troops Out Now, with no qualification.

### Response

I must have expressed myself badly, because Geoff Bell has not taken on board the main point I made, about the need for seeing Troops Out as one element in a coherent programme. His response is "that the resolution we moved and seconded went way, way beyond Troops Out... the resolution I moved... called not just for withdrawal within the lifetime of the next Labour government... but also for the working out of 'a detailed policy' for British withdrawal". Further:

"Certainly, we did not detail this policy or proposal, although the second resolution mentioned some possible components of it — the ending of the PTA, plastic bullets and strip-searching — but what we did do... was to suggest... that we needed a wide-ranging discussion within the labour movement to flesh (this programme) out.

By 'detailed policy', he understood a detailed policy for how to withdraw the troops, not a proposal for what is to replace the present structure which depends for its survival on British troops.

My entire argument was — and I said it explicitly — that

'Troops Out' alone is counter-productive. It begs questions — like the bloodbath issue — which it does not answer and which can only be answered by a programme for how Ireland should be restructured, with Troops Out as part of it. I said our programme should be "self-determination for Ireland as a whole and within that autonomy for the Protestant areas".

Even allowing 50% of the responsibility to the opacity of my writing, it is still remarkable that Geoff Bell does not seem able to take in the point, let alone reply to it.

In fact he explicitly refuses to discuss issues like 'federalism' in a profane publication like SO in a foreign country. Ours is not to reason why...

"We are all agreed that to win that support means going beyond Troops Out Now. Where the real dispute lies, I suspect, is just where do we go. For myself, the guiding political principle is that socialists insist that British withdrawal from Ireland is unconditional".

"To spell this out, neither the British government, the Labour Party conference, or even SO can place conditions on British withdrawal. The principle of self-determination means that they have no right to insist that the Irish construct their state in this or that way before Britain leaves..."

But with all due respect, this is metaphysics, not politics of any sort and certainly not working-class politics. You elevate Irish self-determination into an absolute principle against which everything else is measured and to which everything else is if necessary sacrificed.

Now I'm for a united federal Ireland (any other form of united Ireland is simply inconceivable). But I don't start out from the idea that a united Ireland, or even an independent Ireland, is the goal itself, an unquestionable axiom.

I arrive at support for a united Ireland as a result of asking other questions. How can the Irish working class be united? How can the paralysis of the Irish working class be lifted? What are the conditions in which the Irish working class is most likely to separate itself politically from the Green, Orange, and Green-White-and-Orange segments of the split and divided Irish bourgeoisie?

I arrive at the belief that a united Ireland is necessary because I believe a federal united Ireland in which the democratic rights of both sections of the Irish people will be protected is the necessary way towards another goal, working-class unity, which I consider a higher goal and, if there were a choice to be made, a far more important goal.

I reject the politics of ABC economic agitation combined with abstract socialist propaganda characteristic of Militant and other groups because it simply has no way of relating to the political questions which dominate the life of the Six County working class and sections of the 26 County working class, and therefore has no grip on reality.

But if I thought the working class could be united by ignoring the unresolved and festering

national question, then I would consider it a socialist duty to ignore it.

Neither Irish independence, nor Irish self-determination, nor Irish unity, is an absolute principle if your standpoint is that of Marxist socialism. That is what distinguishes us from all nationalists, left and right: Irish independence and unity is not the end but a means to an end. We are for it or against it depending on other things.

### Programme

You make of 'self-determination' a self-sufficient programme and put Troops Out as its expression. It is not even something that can be discussed. Your position conflates the Marxist support for a democratic programme and for those fighting for it — a support that is always conditional in the sense of being a means to an end — with the nationalist view of slogans like Troops Out as an end in themselves.

You collapse the particular, and exceptionally complicated, Irish question into generalities about self-determination — the concrete into the abstract.

For a certainty the 26 Counties have self-determination and full political independence from Britain — they took a different line in World War 2 and the recent Falklands war, they argue with Britain as an equal within the EEC.

Southern Ireland hasn't got economic independence? No, it hasn't. But that is an entirely different question. The socialist programme against colonialism and imperialism is not the reactionary utopia of economic independence and autarky, which the Irish bourgeoisie

partly attempted between 1932 and 1958. Our solution to the economic questions is class struggle and socialism.

Self-determination is an organising principle for socialists, and an always binding and active principle. We are obliged to oppose its opposite, oppression and denial of national democracy. But how, if not by discussion, can we decide concretely whether we are for self-determination of particular groups, what self-determination means in particular circumstances, and what form of self-determination?

The British labour movement is faced with an Irish situation of many complexities. What about self-determination for the Protestants — what before Partition was called Home Rule within Home Rule? Certainly the idea that the Six Counties represent something like that is a powerful force in political life.

I don't believe that the Six Counties express the democratic rights of the Protestants; but it is impossible to deny that the Six Counties do express — if only in a negative way (as against a united Ireland), and in an unstable, murderous way, some degree of Protestant self-determination.

You cannot make 'self-determination', meaning concretely 'Troops Out and no talk about what comes after' an absolute principle, presented to British workers in a spirit of ultimatic sectarianism. Self-determination has to be assayed, concretised, discussed, and weighed; you have to make your case for your interpretation.

How should British (or Irish)

Turn to page 15



Paitley brought his Ulster Constitution Defence Committee out onto the streets to attack the Civil Rights marchers. Here they stop a march through Armagh with sticks, bill hooks, scythes, clubs and guns.

# Who is being

IN 1920-1 the two Irish states were designated equals in relation to each other.

There was talk of a Council of Ireland within which they would link up, but there was not even a deceitful hint from the treacherous Lloyd George or any of his associates that the South would be given any sort of domination or jurisdiction over the North.

The Anglo-Irish deal gives the South co-rulership, as Britain's partner.

The reason is that the rebellion of the oppressed Catholics has forced Britain to recognise that the Six Counties are not a viable democratic unit. But it is not surprising that the reaction of the Orange politicians and of a large number of ordinary Protestants at least is bitter chagrin and anger.

Last weekend 100,000 people demonstrated their hostility on the streets of Belfast. Unless they can smash the will of the British and Dublin governments to work the Anglo-Irish deal, the Protestants must choose either power-sharing with the Six County Catholics or letting the Dublin government continue to share the power in the Six Counties with Westminster.

De jure it remains British direct rule, but from now on de facto it will be London-Dublin rule.

The following speech made by the Rev Ian Paisley, the dominant figure in Protestant politics in the Six Counties, expresses their attitudes in the forceful biblical idiom which they favour and which rings so strangely in the ears of secular 1980s Britain.

Speaking on November 14th, Ian Paisley had this message for Margaret Thatcher:

Having failed to defeat the IRA you now have capitulated and are prepared to set in motion machinery which will achieve the IRA goal — a united Ireland. We now know that you have prepared the Ulster Unionists for sacrifice on the altar of political expediency.

They are to be the sacrificial lambs to appease the Dublin wolves. You can build your altar; you can use bent and corrupt law to ignite its fire; you can propose to stifle truth with a propaganda of lies paid for out of the taxpayer's pocket; you can bring into Northern Ireland those who illegally and constitutionally claim jurisdiction over this part of the Queen's dominions; you can wine and dine them on Ulster's soil and in the Queen's residence; you can offer bribes to the Iscariots who in their day of betrayal always surface with hands outstretched for the blood money — but you can never break the spirit of Ulster Unionists.

Like the three Hebrew children, we will not budge, we will not bend and we will not burn. This simple sum you will have to learn the hard way — 6 into 26 will never go.

Before it is too late, desist from refusing Ulster the right to vote on these proposals. If you deny democracy you and you alone will be responsible for an aftermath too horrible to contemplate.

In his dramatic Biblical prophet style, Paisley then addressed his remarks direct to 26 County Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald:

We Ulster Unionists know you of old. Your history and conduct reveal what you are.

When the nations of Europe in



## Paisley threatens resistance

World War 2 were battling to keep the torch of freedom burning you chose the base road of a benevolent neutrality to fascism and your prime minister officially lamented the death of the German dictator.

You claim in your constitution jurisdiction over our territory, our homes, our persons and our families. You allow your territory to be used as a launching pad for murder gangs and as a sanctuary for them when they return soaked in our people's blood.

You are a fellow traveller with the IRA and hope to ride on the back of their terrorism to your goal of a united Ireland.

We reject your claims and will never submit to your authority. We will never bow to Dublin rule. If you persist in pursuing your treacherous objectives then the total wrath of the Ulster population will fall upon your head. The responsibility is

yours.

You can choose now the path of democracy or the path of Dublin. Your attempt to interfere in our affairs through the proposed secretariat enrages every right-thinking Unionist in our province.

Don't think you will ever get away with that. Your policy, instead of bringing peace, is the sure recipe for war, and the responsibility for any repercussions will rest fairly and squarely upon you.

Those repercussions are of such a serious nature that the whole island could be engulfed in a situation too terrible to contemplate.

Ulster Unionists desire good neighbourliness on this island. It is now evident that you repudiate the idea of neighbourliness and have opted for deliberate interference.

That will be resisted to the very death.



First fruits: chiefs of police North and South meet for the first time in three years to discuss repression of the Republicans.

THE FIRST fruit of the Anglo-Irish deal has been a meeting of the Six and Twenty-Six County chief policemen to plan coordinated action against the Republicans north and south.

It is highly likely that attempts will soon be made to buy off the Protestant backlash by showing the angry Protestants that London and Dublin mean business on the 'law and order' front.

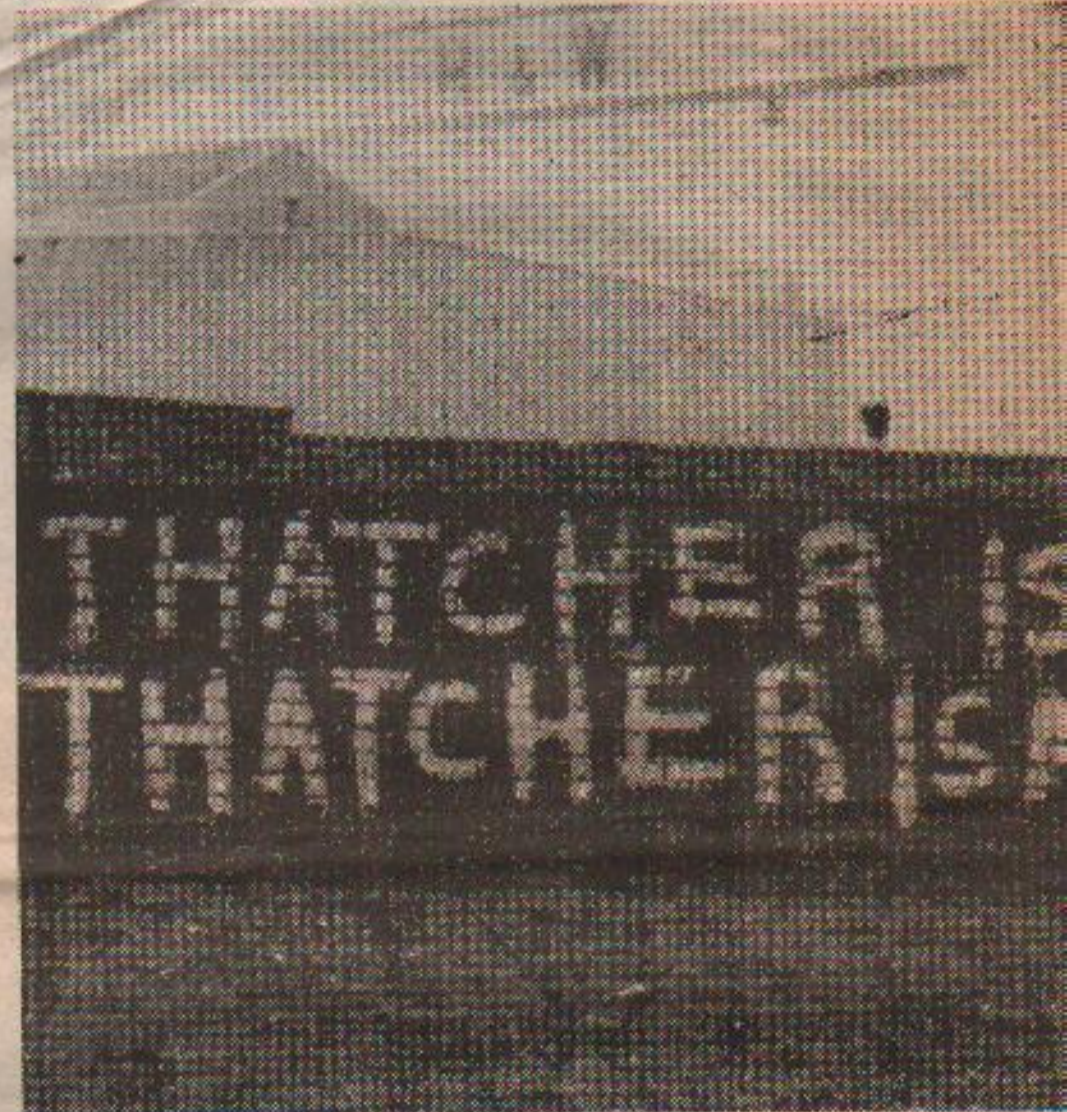
But the Protestants won't be easily placated. Perhaps 100,000 Protestants assembled in Belfast eight days after the deal was signed. The British equivalent would be a demonstration of either six million or 4½ million, depending on whether you count the whole Six County population or only the Protestants.

The 15 Unionist MPs say they will all resign from Parliament by 1 January and face what will in effect be a referendum in the

Six Counties on the Anglo-Irish deal. Even if they lose two or three seats, it is a certainty that a Protestant vote for the 15 Unionist MPs will be counted as a vote against the deal.

The Protestant leaders say that 80 per cent of the Six Counties will vote against the agreement to give Dublin Six Counties in partnership with the 26 County government, by formally recognising it for the first time.

In different ways both are nothing new in the 26 Counties. The new departure is Dublin's role in



A wall in Protestant East Belfast

## The Left Press: a fair

AT THE centre of the Anglo-Irish deal concluded in mid-November was the granting of a limited but real direct supervisory role over Northern Ireland to the Dublin government, coupled with coordination between London and Dublin to isolate and defeat the Republican movement.

Its most immediate impact will be intensified repression of the nationalist ghettos in the North. And the deal is merely tinkering with the central problem, i.e. the very existence of the artificially-constructed Six Counties unit.

So what should the left press do? Condemn the deal, but also accurately analyse its contents and its likely consequences.

Labour Weekly actually welcomed the deal. An article by Dublin-based Anne Dawson adopted a cautious tone. The deal was "a gamble" and no-one knew "how the dice will fall".

Rather like her own article, the deal "asks many more questions than it answers". But in the final analysis the deal "makes the most rational good sense", though this is no guarantee that it will work.

An accompanying article by

Stan Crooke reviews the left press

Stuart Bell, junior front-bench spokesperson on Northern Ireland, showed no such caution. He praised the deal as "providing a framework for a future Labour government to advance towards... a united Ireland". It was, he claimed, "a bridge... across which Labour can cross towards Irish unity".

Bell said nothing about the definite future repression of Catholics, nor the probable Loyalist backlash. Instead, he reduced the future role of the Labour Party to "chivvying the government towards implementation of the deal".

Socialist Worker, Militant, and the Bandit Newsline all condemned the deal. But did they assess it accurately?

Socialist Worker argued that the deal "hardly addresses the horrible poverty, the monstrous unemployment rates, and the general misery of those who live there. Neither the London nor Dublin governments have any answers to these problems".

In similar language, Militant explained that "for workers and the numerous unemployed in Ireland, North and South, in Catholic and Protestant areas,

the deal will offer nothing. No end to the poverty, no hope of employment except in the job creation scheme for top civil servants".

So "We have to insist that there is no solution for the mass of people, North and South, but a united socialist Ireland", wrote Socialist Worker, while Militant called for "a fight for the overthrow of capitalism in Ireland and Britain. On this basis a socialist united Ireland and a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland could be built".

Cure

All true of course, but it says nothing about the immediate political issue. To condemn the deal on such a basis is about as meaningful as condemning a proposal on abortion rights on the grounds that it will not cure unemployment and poverty.

As for Newsline, it declared that the deal is "not only an attack on Irish national rights but also strikes in the most insidious way at the heart of the socialist revolution in these islands".

That was all it had to say ab-



# The Anglo-Irish deal g sold out?

Two of them have already... 'marginal' seats, as is possible... there will be a massive... candidates, and it will be claim-... — as by and large it

the Union and British sover-... in fact been breached by... to-day joint control of the... Britain. The Republicans... of copper-fastening partition... able period ahead.  
But in reality there is... recognising partition. The... North.

The comments of the Protestant leaders on the meaning of the deal are therefore far more accurate and to the point than the analysis presented by the Republicans, whose comments are paralleled by the coverage in much of the British left press.

It is important for the left to oppose the deal; but it is also important to understand it and to register accurately what is new in the situation.

This the left has signally failed to do. It is quite possible that Northern Ireland will be convulsed by the Protestant backlash which is likely to develop and become desperate in the months ahead. The left should be prepared.

On these pages we reproduce and comment upon the reactions to the Anglo-Irish deal by Ian Paisley and An Phoblacht from their different points of view, and Stan Croke analyses the responses of the British left press.



## ure of analysis

the deal itself. But to make... for the lack of attention... empirical detail, there was a... nghtly discussion of hidden... cesses.

The article launched into an... analysis of the Protestant work-... class, in which it detected... "objective and deeply molec-... lar development", even if... otestant workers might try... many different avenues of... uggle" before "embarking on... e revolutionary road".

This was followed by an analy-... of Sinn Fein. "Sinn Fein does... only express an opposite... British imperialism in Ireland... within itself there are clearly... veloping opposites... This... flict of opposites has been... arp and growing sharper... at the "leap in consciousness... the Catholic masses "has... en held in deep freeze".

After all this philosophising... out the 'rise of history', oper-... ing unseen by common folk... at is the conclusion? Much... e same as Militant's or Soc-... ist Worker's. The answer is to... lid the Irish Socialist League... ter-organisation of the WRP... e Morning Star warns against... ophet for the deal, which con-... s a "phony legitimacy" on... rition."

"It will not further the cause

of peace in Northern Ireland", it said, going on to criticise attempts to tackle "the consequences of partition" rather than the causes, and calling on the British Labour Party to "work... toward a peaceful reunification of the country".

But by far the worst thing about the deal is that it provides "a real basis for the undermining of the Irish Republic's military neutrality", which is "already shaky as a result of increased encroachment by the EEC onto political and military questions".

"Irish neutrality is at risk" proclaimed the headline. The Morning Star's concentration above all on these power-bloc strategic issues suggests, predictably, that they are less concerned with resolving the national question in Ireland, than with the deal's implications for... the Soviet Union.

### Swamp

Somewhere in the swamp where the outer marches of the Trotskyist current overlaps with the fringes of British Stalinism lies the new Socialist Action. It struck a characteristically Irish-nationalist note.

The deal is "the biggest carve up since partition" and a "chal-

lenge to Irish nationalism" which "defies the Irish constitution" as it "involves recognition by the Dublin government of the partition of Ireland for the first time ever" (!)

Socialist Action further argued that a cosmetic measure — Dublin "being allowed a right to comment on the running of the Six Counties" — had been exchanged for the Southern Irish government "registering its acceptance of partition and the Unionist veto at the UN".

The answer? "To create an alliance with the Irish in Britain... It has to be got across that if we are to make advances on the left, then the alliance with the Irish people has to be foremost in people's minds".

In the columns of Socialist Action the term 'Irish' does not refer to flesh-and-blood people — of whom, rightly or wrongly, for better or worse, a large majority of the Southern and Northern Catholics support the deal, and most of the Northern Protestants oppose it as a move which threatens to bring a united Ireland. No, it refers to something quite different: a distilled essence of the 'revolutionary process' which Socialist Action sees as flowing inevitably out of the Northern Catholic struggle.

An Phoblacht/Republican News responded to the Anglo Irish deal with a front page editorial condemning it.

They are right to reject it. But it is necessary also accurately to record and analyse what the British imperialist government and its Dublin collaborators have done and are trying to do.

It seems to us that An Phoblacht's analysis and comments are way off beam. They seriously underestimate the dimensions and implications of the deal. They minimise the concessions London has made to constitutional Irish nationalism — in return for its support against the Republicans — and the result is to falsify the picture of reality.

The 26 County government has achieved an unofficial but real and substantial version of co-rulership with Britain in the Six Counties. The constitutional nationalists have not 'sold out' — they have made serious gains, perhaps the best that peaceful, constitutional nationalism could hope for in the prevailing circumstances which are shaped and dominated by the opposition of one million Protestants to any moves towards any form of Irish integration.

There is little doubt that the British government is satisfied, at the outcome of the London/Dublin talks. They have good reason to be satisfied because, in exchange for minimal concessions, none of which threatens their interests in occupying part of Ireland, they have secured the help of the Dublin government in opposing the demand for Irish re-unification.

Let the people of Ireland be quite clear about what has happened and what is going to happen in the coming months.

First, to stabilise the six counties and thereby secure its control in Ireland, the British government recognised that it could no longer rely solely on the unionist population. The 'Orange card' which had served its usefulness in the past in making 'the croppies lie down' was trumped by a generation of croppies who simply refused to lie down.

Britain's occupation needed to be refined for domestic stability and international consumption because, let's face it, Orange bigotry hasn't won many admirers in the world — with the exception of the racist regime in South Africa where similar supremacist attitudes prevail. In response to this and under constant military and political pressure from Irish republicans, Britain realised that it would have to smooth down some of the worst excesses of unionist supremacy if it was to develop a more effective counter-insurgency strategy. Cosmetic inter-

## Sinn Fein: Underestimating the implications



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**  
Full coverage of the London/Dublin deal including analyses of the terms of the pact and an expose of its origins



national reform and a powerless consultative role would be offered to Dublin and the SDLP in return for their active assistance in creating political stability in the six counties.

An outline of current British strategy was plotted out in a document prepared by right-wing Tories between 1983 and October 1984, a month before the London/Dublin talks got off to their stormy start at Chequers with Thatcher's rejection of the Forum report.

### Easy

Today, in comparing the objectives set out in that strategy with the current deal, it is easy to see why Britain is happy. The Dublin government and their SDLP allies have been only too happy to capitulate and to grab at any straw which might counteract the growing realisation amongst Northern nationalists that the Republican Movement offers the only effective answer to British injustice in Ireland.

'Unity must wait' the establishment parties argue as they prepare to give their full backing to a deal which strengthens partition. And now they hope to point to cosmetic reforms as justification for an intensified and relentless campaign of repression directed against the

Republican Movement. And make no mistake, that is what this deal is all about — defeating Irish republicanism.

Unionist hostility to the deal demonstrates their inability to accept any change in the status quo and the fact that they are so blinded by sectarianism that they cannot see that the present deal is essential if the union is to be strengthened. Such reaction, although it suits FitzGerald and Hume in selling the deal, should not confuse nationalists who are well used to loyalist hysteria at the most inconsequential change.

The Coalition government in the twenty-six counties has embarked on a campaign of selling the London/Dublin deal to its own membership and supporters, while the establishment media has embarked on a massive public relations exercise to brainwash the entire people of Ireland that this insulting deal is an advance on the road to justice.

Republicans must counter that propaganda. Failure to do so would allow the Dublin government and their British allies to isolate us and to create the climate in which massive repression can begin.

It is our relevance to the communities in which we live which will ensure the failure of this latest Brit-inspired strategy to defeat the Irish struggle.

# WORKERS' IRELAND

## No 1 on the Anglo-Irish deal

The first issue of a new publication dealing with Ireland is due out in the second week of December.  
40p plus postage from  
SO, 214 Sicker Court,  
London N1 2SY.

# Sinn Fein votes for women's choice

NEITHER the press nor the London and Dublin politicians have bothered to hide the fact that their immediate goal in Ireland is to smash Sinn Fein.

It is expected that a law will soon be passed requiring Sinn Fein councillors elected in the Six Counties to repudiate 'violence', that is publicly denounce the IRA. In this way the authorities hope either to drive Sinn Fein councillors out of the council chambers or else to cause a major division in Sinn Fein between those willing to toe the line and those who think it a point of principle not to.

Sinn Fein continues to be in political ferment, as the November Sinn Fein Ard Fheis demonstrated.

Whereas two years ago Sinn Fein did not take a position when the Catholic anti-abortionists were successfully campaigning to write the existing legal ban on abortion into the 26 County constitution, this Ard Fheis, by a very small majority, passed a

resolution committing Sinn Fein to support "a woman's right to choose".

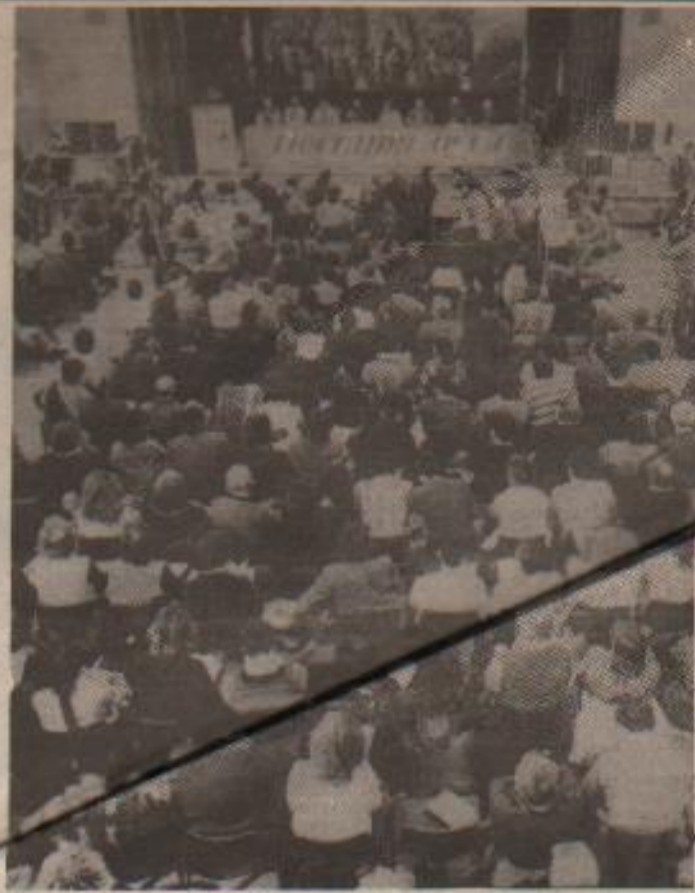
In the Irish context this resolution is a tremendous, and in some ways an astonishing, step forward.

Sinn Fein is the only sizeable Irish political party other than the so-called Workers' Party to favour abortion on demand.

What it will mean in practice is difficult to judge. Sinn Fein's leadership opposed it: will they now campaign for it?

Sinn Fein remains a politically diffuse populist party in our opinion, but developments like this are nevertheless very encouraging for socialists. That gives socialists in Britain an additional reason to defend Sinn Fein against the repression by the British state that will probably be the immediate fruit of the Anglo-Irish deal.

We reprint the speech of the mover of the 'right to choose' resolution, Daisy Mules, who argued for it in terms of the need for a secular democratic republic.



This year's Ard Fheis

# Women must decide

On behalf of the Padraig Pearse Cumann I am proposing the following motion as an addendum to our present policy on abortion:

"We recognise that women have a right to choose".

In deciding to present this motion to the Ard Fheis, the Padraig Pearse Cumann accepted that there was unlikely ever to be agreement within Sinn Fein about the rights or wrongs of abortion. But we also believe that no-one has the right to impose religious or moral values on another — we should respect and trust each other's personal morality.

I am not trying to persuade you to accept abortion — equally I am not trying to

## Daisy Mules's speech

persuade you to condemn abortion.

What I am asking you, on behalf of the Padraig Pearse Cumann, is to support women, trust women, and allow women to choose not to have an abortion or to have an abortion when faced with unplanned or unwanted pregnancies, when faced with a pregnancy which is the result of rape or incest, when faced with a pregnancy which will cause death or illness to herself or the potential human being.

I believe it is the right of a woman to choose.

I don't think any of us would have any difficulty in accepting that it is a basic right and civil liberty for a person to control her or his destiny. Women, and only women, have the right to make decisions about their own fertility, their own sexuality, and their own lives — in the same way as men have been doing for centuries.

Women cannot allow any person or institution to decide what happens to them. If women give in to the idea that doctors, the church, government and the state have the right to decide what happens to their bodies, then they have lost control over their own lives.

As revolutionary socialists,

pledged to ending the oppression of women by men, we must allow women the freedom to make the decisions about their own bodies. We must be committed to freeing women from the oppression of laws which are largely made by men.

Too often doctors, lawyers, politicians and priests, generally men, make decisions about a woman's body, her sexuality and her capacity to reproduce.

Much of this is fear — fear amongst men and some women — about woman's sexuality and her capacity to carry potential human life — fear of the unknown.

As a Catholic, a person may believe abortion to be morally unacceptable. As a Christian, a person may believe abortion to be morally unacceptable but permissible in certain circumstances. As a non-Christian, a person may consider abortion to be acceptable.

The Padraig Pearse Cumann believes that every person should be free to pursue their own moral and religious beliefs and values.

Sinn Fein is a secular organisation, an organisation which aims to embrace people from all religions, races, classes and sexes whose aim is to liberate Ireland from the colonialism and imperialism of Britain. So we must guard against policies which impose moral values and restrictions on people and which infringe on the civil liberties of any person.

We must not impose our own personal religious or non-religious doctrine on any other person, however offensive the alternatives may be to our individual ways of thinking.

I urge you, on behalf of the Padraig Pearse Cumann, to think clearly and unemotionally on this. Don't fall into the trap of imposing your own principles on others.

We support the right of any woman not to have an abortion if she so chooses; we support the right of any woman to have an abortion if she so chooses.

We urge you to recognise 'the right of a woman to choose'.

# Letter: Labour in Ireland?

I am very disturbed by the response of the Labour Party to the Anglo-Irish Accord. There appears to be no questioning the notion that this is anything other than a Good Thing.

Garret FitzGerald who signed on behalf of the Government of the Irish Republic has a record of using the Army to break strikes, has introduced the most swingeing anti-working class economic policies the State has seen since the early fifties when the mess the ruling class in Republic had gotten itself into was resolved by putting — at that Government's own estimate — nearly three-quarters of a million of their citizens on the boat to Britain.

FitzGerald's government has refused to legislate for divorce (under any circumstances), to ameliorate the position of persons who were conceived 'illegitimately', it has made abortion twice as illegal and unconstitutional as it was in the first place, and has refused to extend civil liberties, even the most basic, to its Gay citizens.

This Government — and its successor is likely to be worse, not better — is now to be given a say in the internal affairs of a part of the United Kingdom. According to Article 2(b) of this "Formal International Agreement" (surely a dictionary definition of the unspoken word

'Treaty', which in Ireland brings to mind the notorious 'Treaty' of 1921):

"The United Kingdom Government accept that the Irish Government will put forward views and proposals on matters relating to Northern Ireland within the field of activity of the Conference in so far as those matters are not the responsibility of a devolved administration in Northern Ireland..."

Apart from the fact that this seems to be at variance with the plan that we here were going to have 'rolling devolution' it is either cynical or silly. Devolution for Northern Ireland has been a dead issue for the past year or so. Again we have the situation where we in this most troubled part of the United Kingdom state have to prove ourselves better morally than everyone else in the whole of the British Isles, or our affairs will be in the hands of people who have carefully avoided putting themselves forward for election by anybody in Northern Ireland — because as they know and your readers may not know the terms "Catholic" and "nationalist" are not synonymous. If any of the Parties who rule or are about to rule the Republic put themselves up in Ulster to gather votes on any other than gut-nationalist they would be utterly humiliated.

The Labour Party has shamefully connived in a deal between a very reactionary Nationalist (Garret FitzGerald) and a somewhat reactionary Imperialist (Margaret Thatcher) — it will cause, at best, endless complications, and at worst possibly the deaths of many people. It may seem odd that the IRA has chosen to kill Catholic members of the security forces, but it has a certain macabre reason behind it. Despite the fact that the Nationalist establishment have got much more than they could ever have hoped for they have to pretend that they have won rather little, so the more genuinely Nationalist among the population in Northern Ireland far from deserting these semi-mythical "men of violence" will, almost inevitably, move towards Sinn Fein.

This gigantic can of worms would have been avoided if well had been left alone — and the Labour Party could have been instrumental in avoiding it if it had had the courage to organise and take members in this region, an option that is still open to the Party.

I feel that the Party has the moral duty to put its attitude to the test in electoral terms in Northern Ireland.

Yours fraternally,  
SEAN MCGOURAN  
Belfast

Socialist  
SSiN Students  
in NOLS

# NUS: the issues

THE NATIONAL Union of Students conference in early December takes place in an atmosphere of mounting attacks on education and the right of student unions to fight those attacks and defend themselves.

We need a fighting national union capable of pulling the many disparate campaigns and struggles of our movement into a coherent assault on the Tories. But we've seen the bitterest, worst coordinated national 'campaign' for many years.

This culminated in the total disaster of 'Work For The Future', NUS's "largest ever Further Education orientated campaign". Last weekend in Sheffield there were — being generous — 1000 people on the national march and rally.

## Promised

En route to that we saw the long-promised direct action against apartheid fade as NUS stewards organised against the sit-down outside South Africa house on a demonstration which stupidly cut across the Anti-Apartheid one two weeks later.

Though we now have an 'alternative' Green Paper, planning exercises for cuts have happened in Higher Education this term with no coordinated response, and it will probably be likewise with the resultant cuts.

We can target as many MPs, local dignitaries and celebrities as we like, but without national campaigns which tap the strength of rank and file resistance NUS is worth next to nothing.

That resistance certainly exists. Local activity against apartheid showed that.

The outrage and anger of students, channelled through local student unions, saved NUS's South Africa campaign from being a flop, and it was this

term's only marginal success. The energy and experience from the anti-apartheid struggles, and from the miners' solidarity campaigns last year, has pulled student unions round and turned them out towards serious campaigns in other areas.

## Unions

This is shown by the motions prioritised for debate at conference. The education cuts debate will feature a call for a joint union strategy for non-implementation of these cuts, cross-sector and built with a clear orientation to college and public sector trade unions.

The debate on the welfare state is an obvious parallel to this: we need to knit together a non-implementation strategy against the cuts with the broader struggle to defend the welfare state.

On youth unemployment we are arguing that NUS should stop just saying how bad things are and do something. For us, getting on with the job of unionising YTS is central, as well as opposing the nonsense currently being offered by sections of the Labour Party, that pay restraint will create more jobs.

During the conference South Africa will be the major controversial issue. Socialist Students in NOLS are holding a fringe meeting and will be proposing that NUS asks COSAS, the banned student union, if it would like to exchange materials and perhaps send over a speaker.

This conference is an important one, both for the leadership, the Democratic Left (so-called), who are clinging on to a very tarnished reputation, and for those students who are looking for a national union which organises direct action.



British students should link up with those in South Africa

# LABOUR'S ECONOMICS

**What kind of economic policy does the Labour Party need? Is Labour's existing policy adequate? Can the work of the economist Keynes provide the framework for a socialist economic policy? Francis Cripps, Bob Sutcliffe and Martin Thomas discuss the issues.**

MT. A lot of people — for different reasons and from different viewpoints — think the Labour Party's economic policy is unconvincing. Do you agree?

FC. Sure, it's a very fundamental problem. We've been continuously disappointed in the last ten years or more. There's never been a political opportunity to allow the economic problems to be tackled.

It's very difficult to know all the reasons why there isn't a tide of support for a strong set of policies to deal with the economic crisis. I think one explanation might be that people are pessimistic or fatalistic about economic policy.

Economic policy is an abstraction which it's quite difficult even for economists to believe in, and for non-economists it may be just hot air talk.

BS. It seems to me that there is a parallel between the failure of Labour Party policy to be convincing, and on the other side a failure to blame the Tories for unemployment, to the extent that people did a few years ago. The climate of expectations about what governments can do has become very different; people don't expect governments to be able to solve economic problems.

FC. I wonder if they ever did.

MT. As far as I can remember, when the Labour Government was elected in 1964, a lot of people thought that a lot of things were going to change very radically. A large part of the reason why people don't believe the Labour Party's promises today is the experience of the last two Labour governments.

They say: if Labour is offering the same policies again, then no thanks.

FC. In the '60s people were very optimistic about the future of society, I was. We thought we had a political system which at least half-worked, and that social democracy gradually led towards socialism.

That's true. But talking about economic policy specifically, I doubt that people in '64 had very strong ideas about what Labour was going to achieve.

BS. But wasn't it part of the Keynesian ideology that with the right economic policies you could solve all the problems...

FC. I think economists believed it. I'm not sure how many other people ever believed it.

MT. Do you believe it?

FC. I don't now.

MT. Did you believe the Labour Party

manifesto at the General Election?

FC. It seemed to me very hypothetical, because the AES presupposes a political context which doesn't exist at the moment, and hasn't existed for the last ten years. We've steadily drifted further away from those political preconditions.

And that's only part of it. The changes in the international situation, which are very deep-rooted, limit national governments.

MT. So the average person who finds the Labour Party manifesto unconvincing is not so stupid after all...

FC. If you stand outside as an analyst, and watch the thing unfold, then you can say the political conditions aren't there, and it all looks inevitable. But if you are one of the 20 million electorate who can potentially get together with each other, then there ought to be no limit to what that electorate can achieve.

I mean, I don't think the vision is wrong. I think it's essential. The AES represents an aspiration for collective control over social and economic circumstances, and it's a thoroughly admirable aspiration.

MT. A lot of people would agree. They just don't trust the Labour Party leadership to do it.

FC. I think it goes deeper than the leadership.

MT. Yes. They don't have sufficient confidence in themselves to produce an alternative. The lack of confidence in other people is only decisive because they see economic policy as something that will be done by other people, somewhere else — nothing that they would have any control over. Collective control would not be control by them.

There wasn't anything in the Labour Party leaflets at the General Election to give any working class person any idea that Labour would fight for any sort of working-class control. Nothing to give them any confidence that collective control was something they could win themselves.

FC: But I'm not sure the Labour leadership could do it either, even supposing they had complete confidence.

Take the 1974-79 Labour government. Suppose it had been led by very determined people trying to carry out all aspects of the policy. Could they have pulled it off?

I don't know. I'm not sure. It might be that the electorate were right to be sceptical, and it might even be that up to a point the leadership were right to be sceptical.

There are certain things which to me



Carlos Augusto Guarita/Reflex

are not very forgivable about the 1974-9 Labour government. It's perfectly understandable for a Labour government to say: this year we are obliged by the situation to do so-and-so, although it is really the wrong thing to do.

But if this is something that is against the aspirations of the labour movement, they should come clean about it. But they try to justify themselves, and to do so they make anti-Labour propaganda. What was unforgivable about the 1974-9 Labour government was that they became converts to the profit motive.

It may have been necessary for them to make tax concessions to increase profits, or even to squeeze wages, but to say such policies were thoroughly laudable social objectives was to destroy the whole sense of being a movement in pursuit of something.

But even if they had been determined, they might not have been able to do what they wanted.

MT. Why not?

FC. International power — which is not just something outside Britain. It completely interpenetrates inside Britain. A large part of the technocracy and management are more integrated into the international system than they are British.

You can see that in every sphere. It's not just in business and industry. It's

here — in this department, in this faculty — among economists in British universities. What is the British economics profession, and has it got any particular national characteristics? To me the obvious thing about economics in Britain today is that it's American. But American economics is a shorthand for international economics. The same textbooks are read around the world. If you're a successful economist, you might as well go from a job in Britain to a job in the United States...

BS: I'm just about to go to a job in the United States!

FC ... Economics has been internationalised. There are some minority currents in economics which are more local and more national, but mainstream economics is totally international.

MT. Why is that a bad thing?

FC. The culture of international economics is broadly a culture in support of the present international system, extremely antagonistic to the Labour Party's objectives, and antagonistic to the whole idea of socialism in one country.

I did think that it would be possible to get a European Alternative Economic Strategy that would be widely support-

**Kinnock and Willis: Labour's new partnership for Britain; Partnership for whom?**

More on page 12

ed - a synthesis of the Keynesian and Marxist traditions, acceptable to a broad centre-left. But I'm now very dubious about the success of the project, because American economics is everywhere in Europe.

BS: I would have a basic difference with the aim of socialism in one country. It seems to me that socialism is essentially against national isolation. But all the recommendations of the Alternative Economic Strategy come down to a rather narrow sort of nationalism. And it seems to get narrower and narrower. The conclusion looks to me almost like a siege economy. In fact, you seem even to come to the idea that an international economy as such is a bad thing, and it would be better if we could isolate ourselves.

FC: Everybody would agree in principle that world socialism is a desirable objective. But at the same time it's very difficult.

We've concentrated a large part of our work in recent years on searching for people to work with on an international level. We've been trying to find out what are feasible and better configurations of growth and development, and trying to analyse what conditions would have to be met. It's just so difficult. And it gets steadily more difficult.

Presumably there are objective conditions which have to be met for different parts of the world to grow in harmony. It's quite difficult to know just what these are. We've got a rough understanding of growth and employment and deindustrialisation and so on at a national level, but at the level of the world economy I don't think anybody has got a reasonably accurate picture.

On top of that you've got the plurality of political power. Americans and Muslims and Chinese and Japanese and Comecon... you need an awful lot of parts of the world to be parties to a deal for it to be successful.

In 1945 the United States ran the world, and at least they could run it according to their vision, with some strategic objectives in mind. We're not in that kind of situation.

And therefore the utopia of world socialism - though I'm sure it's important to think about it and to discuss it - has precious little connection with the problems of British society today.

BS: But if people in Britain try solutions to British problems which are nationalistic, that will make the international utopia recede rather than grow closer. I'm thinking of protectionism, trade wars...

FC: I'm not sure. It may be that even as a long-run proposition a healthier recipe would be for less economic interdependence. If the capital markets were far more regional - if you had regional and local banking systems - if there was much less trade - it might

produce much better conditions for people to control the development of their societies.

It might mean fewer conflicts between different groups of people...

BS: But don't you think that historically protectionism has gone together with militarism and increased national conflicts?

FC: Not necessarily. It's a post-war rewrite of history to look at the '30s as the bad time. There's a legend that everything was all right in the '20s and then it broke up in the '30s. It's a complete travesty. The '20s were absolutely appalling, and in many ways things got better in the '30s.

The US was almost the only prosperous part of the world in the '20s. And the '20s were a period of the destruction of socialism. Socialism was being smashed even in the US in the '20s. Why not attribute the drift to war in the '30s to the destruction of socialism in the '20s, rather than just to protectionism in the '30s.

The Americans have always equated imperialism and protectionism and fascism. They attributed the war to the protectionism of the '30s, and they rewrote international ideology in favour of the global market system, which is a very American idea.

It was quite explicit. If you read about the negotiations during the war, the whole American aim was to replace the imperialist system with free access, so that the American banks would take over from the British banks, and American companies would take imperial markets away from British and continental companies.

The Americans clearly had a completely different vision of what the world should be like from the old-fashioned imperialists - but also completely different from the European socialists. We've all been brushed aside. One explanation of Mrs Thatcher is that she's much closer to the American Establishment, and she's rather out of her own Establishment.

MT: I would put it a different way. Rather than saying that free trade caused problems, or the colonial system caused problems, or protectionism, you should look at what lay behind all those. What lay behind the First World War, the '20s, the '30s, the Second World War, and the American-dominated system after the Second World War, was in every case the competitive drive of the leading capitalist states to dominate the world.

I don't think our job as socialists is to prefer one form or other of expression of that drive.

I think what Bob was saying was that if we as socialists try to focus the attention of the labour movement on national solutions, that has a reactionary effect on the possibility of progress towards a socialist world.

For example: the American-dominated system which broke down the old empires is just as much a capitalist system as the old imperial system. But if the attention of the British labour movement were focused on maintaining the British Empire in opposition to having free trade, that would be tremendously reactionary...

FC: You're confusing things. You're confusing political arrangements and economic arrangements.

I don't see how self-determination of peoples is to be equated with the global market system.

MT: But the alternative to the global market system was the imperial trading blocs, based on colonial empires or spheres of influence...

FC: You might have new alternatives. For example, the Labour government after the war had a vision of changing the Empire into a Socialist Commonwealth in which there would be autonomous states that would negotiate with each other on their international

economic relationships.

After all, socialism involves a search for self-management. You want self-management at a local level: but then isn't there a need for a certain amount of self-management at a national level? If you say that a country has got to fit into a global market, then that implies that regions have got to fit into it too, and so on down until factories are opened and closed according to the dictates of the global market, which is roughly where we are now.

## "A large part of the reason why people don't believe Labour Party promises today is the experience of the last two Labour governments".

I don't think you can have self-management at a local level without a measure of self-management at national level. That doesn't mean that you don't want market mechanisms at all, but there have to be elements of negotiation and planning.

We don't want a Gosplan at the United Nations.

MT: Why not?

FC: We don't want a very large element of centralised power. It's very difficult to make centralised power accountable.

MT: There seems to be an assumption in what you're saying that for example, to create socialism in one country in Britain is an easier proposition than to get a socialist Europe. It's not at all clear to me that that's true.

FC: I'm not making that assumption at all. I think the two are complementary.

A very important ingredient of any more rational social development is considerably more collective self-management at a national level. If the national economy is going to be as much a yo-yo of the international system as it is now, then there won't be much collective rationality.

But a national AES, to me, is absolutely complementary to trying to develop socialist alternatives in Western Europe. People in France and Italy and Spain and West Germany and everywhere else need similar things.

In the attempts I've made over the last few years to find groups of econo-

mists elsewhere to collaborate with, I found that if we said: 'We're against the Common Market because it takes away the possibility for national and regional planning to be effective' - a lot of people will agree. That's not against the idea of Europe-wide socialism, but we need much more autonomy at the national level.

MT: Can I go onto a different tack? I agree with a lot of what you have said about the effects of the market economy on a world scale. But how do you account for those in terms of the theory of your book [*Macroeconomics*, by Francis Cripps and Wynne Godley]?

In terms of the theory of your book I can't see why there should be any problems with the world economy at all. In that theory, the only problems for the national economy come essentially from international trade. And if you take the world economy as a whole, there is no external trade. So why isn't it self-righting?

FC: The book is about national economies, and it's only about one aspect of national economies, namely the monetary system.

It's very abstract. I believe that conventional economics is getting into more and more of a muddle. It's difficult to discuss anything in economics now because you don't know what assumptions you're making. But it seemed to us that there is one set of things, discussed in that book, which should be able to be agreed by a wide range of people. That could get some of the muddle out of the way, and we could get on to the other questions.

I've got my own extension of the book - in my head - which is the answer to your question.

The book tries to show that the monetary system can generate steady real growth provided that the fiscal system is set up appropriately. I think that probably is true in the world economy as a whole. But it requires a condition to be met, namely that the fiscal system - or rather, on a world scale, lots of fiscal systems - should be set up appropriately.

In fact in the world economy there is a strong deflationary bias, against governments who want to have expansionary policies and in favour of governments who have financially orthodox, deflationary policies. That is an endemic characteristic of rather liberal balance-of-payments systems and a global monetary system. I think it's almost bound to happen.

It's very difficult to see any answer to the problem.

MT: Why is there this bias towards deflation?

FC: Because the penalties for governments which push ahead of the others and overspend are very severe. They get into financial difficulties with the IMF, and they have terrible political consequences.

The world needs debt-creation at an international level on a pretty big scale. But because the debts are private debts of the particular countries, you don't think of the Brazilian debt as part of a set of arrangements which, thank god for it, has kept the world economy going. So they're all insanely trying to get the debt down. Which is a disaster. There isn't enough debt-creation.

MT: Discussions of the crises of the world economy from a Marxist point of view have all - in different ways - stressed the question of the rate of profit. But in your theoretical system the rate of profit seems to play no role at all.

FC: In this part of the 20th century governments have become very, very important in determining the dynamics of the economy, and I think they are more important, on the whole, than the rate of profit. Of course, profit feeds back onto government policy, and that



Laurie Sparham/Network

is important.

The main point about the world economy since World War 2, I think, is that in the '50s and the '60s the world shifted from a situation where the dollar was a very scarce currency and the United States had competitive dominance to the opposite situation. That resulted in very rapid growth. The Americans were strong enough to afford it, and they went from very large surplus to large deficit in 20 years.

There were a lot of things that caused the breakdown.

The liberalisation of capital flows meant more and more money washing around, and all the currency speculation made the fixed exchange rate system untenable.

BS. On the one hand, you reduce problems to the international dimension, which to my mind tends to lead towards national isolationism in your solutions.

On the other hand, you attribute domestic economic problems to errors in the state's economic management, and less to the rate of profit. That aspect leads to an attitude towards solving the crisis which is not based on class interests. It tends to suggest that the economic crisis will be solved by better government policy - that it isn't really anything basically to do with having a system which is still fundamentally capitalist, based on profits.

Certainly there are a lot of people in the labour movement who will take what you are saying to underestimate what is necessary for socialists to do in attacking the rights of private property and the rights of capital.

FC. I think that from the point of view of economic management, if the international monetary and trading problems could be solved, then the social-democratic recipe of state-managed capitalism is in economic terms fairly viable.

But I absolutely agree that viewed as an entire social and political process, it probably contains the seeds of its own destruction.

The re-entrenchment of capitalism in its managerial form in post-war Britain is what absolutely destroyed the vision of the Labour Party. Egalitarianism is thrown out of the window, and you move into an elitist, hierarchical vision of society.

But I think that the old analysis which emphasises profit and capital as economic mechanisms is too economic. It's looking at capitalism completely as an industrial system in which profits are made and then re-invested. In the 20th century the government is at the centre. The struggle is over the nature of the state. The failure of the Labour Party in post-war Britain was a failure to define a socialist state and begin to implement it. Instead, the state remained extremely paternalistic. It was managed capitalism.

That's what's wrong with Keynesianism as a political philosophy: it's the enlightened application of imperialist management to Britain.

BS. But either from the route I took or from the route you've taken, we arrive at the conclusion that we're not going to advance towards socialism without fundamentally confronting the class nature of society, and that means attacking the rights of private property.

What do you think about the AES in that regard? It seems to me that the AES doesn't represent any fundamental attack on private property, or any fundamental questioning of the form of the state. It seems to me on the whole to be going backwards - to be saying, let's go back to 1945.

FC. In my perception the AES is very different. The time when I was most interested in the AES as a political idea was when I worked with Tony Benn. At least half of it was about trying fundamentally to change the machinery of government. It was all about having Parliament exercise a different role, Whitehall run in a different way, and



Steve Benbow/Network

management decisions in companies made in a different way.

But that isn't true for everybody. You can take the economic part of the AES, in the narrow sense, by itself, and say it's a programme which could have been implemented by the post-war British imperialist state - and you'd be correct. The Treasury could be converted to do an AES all by itself without consulting anyone else. They could do import controls and increase public expenditure, and that could be called an AES.

But I don't think that that's what it's about. What was impelling the Left in the Labour Party at that time was the shop stewards' movement. A wide group of people who are at a certain managerial level in society felt themselves completely alienated from top management and Whitehall. They wanted to break in and say that the whole thing could be done quite differently.

Whitehall could have done an AES: they didn't precisely because they were unaccountable. If you're in a cosy club with top bureaucrats and top industrialists in the United States and Brussels and France and Japan and so on, why bother to do an AES in your home patch?

Whereas if the process of government was genuinely accountable to people in Britain, presumably the government would not be so casual about dropping a few tens of thousands of jobs here or lopping a few billion pounds there. And we wouldn't have negotiated with the IMF in the same way.

When the government ran out of money in 1976, the whole thing was handled by the Governor of the Bank of England. There was a Treasury man in the IMF mission who was egging them on to do us in. You'd think they were on the other side, most of the top people in Britain.

MT: Perhaps they are.

FC. Yes, indeed. Whereas if it had been an open, accountable Labour Britain, the IMF would have had to come and negotiate with all the shop stewards' committees, and they wouldn't have got off so lightly.

Why should we have conceded to the IMF at all? We didn't need their money. We could have closed the foreign exchange markets and put on import controls instead.

BS. Wasn't it actually more the case that the rulers of Britain decided that

the IMF was their best way of imposing discipline that they wanted to impose anyway - and making it appear as an external imposition?

FC. Exactly. That's precisely why the AES couldn't work without fundamental changes in the power structure. That is why accountability is a precondition for an AES.

BS. Do you see the AES as being associated with an identifiable section of the Labour Party?

FC. Yes. But I see it as something on its way out. It would have been an ideal policy for the '60s. The shop stewards were all ready to press for it, everything was catching fire, and internationally it wouldn't have been difficult to handle - we weren't in the Common Market, and other countries were feeling so prosperous that they wouldn't have minded much about Britain.

In the '70s, as a desperate last effort, it might almost have been viable. By now I feel that its time is largely passed. It's still a good idea, but the circumstances aren't there to do it. The groups in British society that need to have the confidence - and for good objective reasons: you can't expect shop stewards to be confident when they're in a weak bargaining position. And Britain is in an incredibly weak bargaining position internationally.

BS. I think that parts of the AES probably are going to survive, but in different hands.

The version you gave earlier of relative national economic self-sufficiency was economic nationalism with a socialist, human face, because you put your emphasis on accountability and democracy and control, and the need for small units in order for that to be a reality. Also, you put your emphasis somewhat on national self-sufficiency as against the dominant power of the world economy, which is the United States...

FC. No: as against an anarchic international system.

BS. Well, let me make two comments. First of all, in the United States you have a labour movement which is advocating something extremely similar to the more protectionist aspects of the AES. But secondly, there is a difference between how British protectionism might

be looked at by Americans and by, say, the workers of Hong Kong, or other countries whose imports are out-competing British production at the present time...

FC. I wish it were true, that it were mainly Hong Kong and Third World imports, as opposed to West European. Imports from the Third World are massive in a very few product areas in which they have made a practically clean sweep - but the business that they have taken away from British industry in total is much less than what West Europeans have taken away.

One of the advantages that we claim for protection is that it could be used for managing trade according to socialist principles, which might well include saying that we should give some priority in our import quota scheme to very poor countries.

BS. You make various comments about the protectionist aspect which relate it to some kind of socialist goal. But the point is that in fact protectionism is being taken up, both inside and outside the labour movement, in very reactionary ways. Reagan's steel quotas, for example.

FC. But is it entirely reactionary for American workers to want a bit of protection? I would prefer well-organised general schemes of protection with proper criteria and proper negotiation. But is it entirely reactionary?

BS. It's not at all reactionary for American workers to want their jobs protected. Import controls are the one route to do it that they're presented with. But there are other routes for which their leaders aren't prepared to fight.

FC. Their bosses might not even be able to deliver on the other routes. The world market is difficult for everybody.

BS. But my argument is that some of the other ways to fight for their jobs would involve the elimination of the bosses, or at least a severe reduction in their power.

FC. It's not clear that that would help them much without import controls. Worker-owned enterprises may go broke as easily as others.

MT. You say in your article in *New Socialist* that if everybody took a 15% cut in wages, all the unemployed could

### Unemployed youth in Port Talbot

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be employed.

Suppose that instead of taking 15% off everybody, the labour movement took all large industries out of the hands of the present owners and put them under workers' management, and essentially eliminated the wealthy classes. You could get your 15% of national income from that.

FC: What constitutes the wealthy classes? If it was mostly easily nationalisable wealth in Britain, if most of the profit flow was coming from British industries, that would be quite a good argument.

But all the evidence is that there is practically no profit being made in production in Britain. And it's not going to be so easy to nationalise all the highly profitable assets that the wealthy classes own around the world.

MT: I'm not at all sure it's politically possible to do such a thing in Britain in isolation from the rest of Europe. But suppose the labour movement were in a position to do it.

FC: Planning agreements are more radical than public ownership because you can have planning agreements with publicly-owned bodies.

Planning agreements are supposed to be about joint control by workers and government, negotiating with management.

MT: Look at Chrysler. The management at Chrysler weren't cleared out and replaced by representatives of the workers.

FC: No. And they haven't been in nationalised industries. I wish they had. But they don't get cleared out. Why? You have to come back to the machinery of government, the nature of the government process - it's not accountable.

I don't think anyone would disagree with the objective. It's how you get there. It's not necessarily easier to start by sweeping out all the top managers.

MT: If the Labour government in 1974



Photo: Chris Schwarz

Will Labour  
give him  
a future?

> If it was just Britain, we would be severely restricted by international pressures. But there are certain measures of planning you could carry out. And you could get hold of the income of the wealthy classes, which is a lot more than what appears at the end of the day as profit.

But the AES doesn't talk about any of that sort of thing at all.

Also, in terms of accountability and the political system, it doesn't talk about any radical transformation of the state machine - not even as much as electing top civil servants, let alone completely restructuring the whole apparatus.

FC: If you wish that there were better worked-out radical ideas being coherently argued for by the Labour Party on income distribution, wealth distribution, and reforms in the system of government, then I'm absolutely with you.

We worked with some other people to do a book a few years ago called *Manifesto*, and one of the things we suggested there was an upper income ceiling. It was very modest - we suggested a £28,000 ceiling about three years ago - but I realised that virtually everybody who has influence within the system - practically everybody who appears on television, for example - is above that limit. So where are we going to look for the spokespeople to advocate such a ceiling?

But I still think that it's very important to have some idea of the way that political action could one day translate itself into workable programmes. I think that's the point of the AES.

MT: But it's not at all clear to me that it's any more workable than the more radical policies I just mentioned. Why are planning agreements more workable than public ownership and workers' control?

had started off by sacking all the top managers at the Bank of England and replacing them by people who were elected and accountable...

FC: If they'd even had a minister responsible for the Bank of England...

But it seems to me you're assuming that the power on the other side is passive. It isn't. The Bank of England, the Treasury, the top management of industry, represent mobile and dynamic power which the labour movement is desperately trying to contend with. Saying that we should sweep them all out of the way is just saying that we wish the problem was solved.

The problem is precisely how to contend with this active, mobile and dynamic power. Taking it head on is like driving your car into a brick wall. The result would be a crash. You've got to somehow winkle them out.

BS: How you do it is to have a mass movement committed to it and strongly enthusiastic...

FC: But it's got to work for people on the way, or otherwise they won't be enthusiastic.

BS: The movement has got to have a programme which people can see as really changing their lives. But I'm not sure that anyone sees the AES as changing their lives...

FC: When I was at the Department of Industry with Tony Benn, there was a group of people who really fought for workers' control. They really believed it would change their lives. They made incredibly tough struggles to get small bits of workers' control. But I don't think you'd get many people to fight for that now. Because the experience was very disappointing. It's so difficult to make a success of workers' control in the present economic environment.

That's why you need visions like the AES. You can't just say workers' control and nationalisation. It's a whole question of social rationality.

MT: But that's an argument for saying that the vision you put forward must be a genuinely radical one. The AES is essentially about managing a system where the institutions we now have still remain, and managing it jointly through putting pressures on the people who have power at the moment.

FC: But the whole idea of the AES was that it had dimensions of fairly rapid and drastic changes in accountability both in government and in industry.

There was the hope at that stage, which I think has faded now, of a rather wide coalition of people who would think it was really worth fighting for.

In the end, you see, this idea of sweeping out all the managers is wrong. There's a difference between the social forms and the people. They're people too, and they embody a large part of our collective knowledge and skills. You want a philosophy of change in the structure which enough people think is worth fighting for.

In the end, some people are going to have to desert their own class perceptions - people have got to be prepared to give up one set of structures and fight for another one.

What would it really be like to change the machinery of government in a drastic way? How would you do it? I think as you opened government departments up and made them accountable, you'd have to have organised retraining of civil servants, and you'd have to have consultant psychiatrists to help some of them over it. You'd have to go a bit carefully.

You'd have to sack one or two of them, but you don't want a punitive attitude towards individuals.

It's about changing the structures.

MT: Following on from that, I want to ask a question about the theoretical ideas in your book [*Macroeconomics*].

The book very much follows the traditional method of academic economics - you construct a series of equations, and then you put in, from outside, a series of assumptions about how the economic agents behave.

It seems to me that such a method inevitably means that economic theory does not contain any critique of the social system. Every problem must be seen as coming from the behavioural parameters, because they are the only thing that comes in from outside to a system of tautologies.

FC: The book is very, very narrow. It's aimed at a particular narrow set of problems. And I agree with you, it's a problem with academic economics that it tends to be much too narrow.

BS: The book has got a big title, though...

FC: Maybe the title can be faulted. But it's true that what we do here is much too narrow.

We are constrained by the institutions. For example, this is called a Faculty of Economics and Politics. But we can't do what I think of as contemporary history.

Still, I would defend the book intellectually as being a useful enterprise in itself. It's important to clear up some of the muddle - even though what you've said is true.

It's also bloody difficult. I sometimes feel like giving up economics because it's so difficult.

BS: I agree.

FC: That's why I feel there is something to this idea of breaking down the world into smaller units...

MT: To make it easier for economists to understand?

FC: For humanity, not just for economists. We've made the planet so incredibly difficult to organise. When you have exploitation, by satellite at the opposite side of the globe, through such obscure institutions as the international monetary system, no wonder people can't cope.

At least in the Middle Ages the feudal system had the merit that exploitation was directly visible, because it was on a village basis. And now it's so impenetrable.

I went with Joan Robinson to Brazil about three or four years ago, and the students in Brazil were on about multinational capital and how it's a mechanism whereby people in Britain are exploiting people in Brazil. But most of the people in Britain can't tell they're exploiting workers in Brazil. To me it's better to say that it's a system which is exploiting most of the people - the workers in Britain are exploited by multinational capitalism, too.

MT: You say your book is about money. Marx wrote a lot about money, too. But he started off by analysing the conditions under which money comes into existence, and examining the whole concept of money - whereas from reading your book you could not imagine that anything other than a money economy was possible.

You find an equation, and one term in it is money. It's just an equation, nothing ideologically loaded about it...

I don't think you can take that as just a part of economics, and then have somebody else studying institutions. That's the traditional academic method. People say, "We're just economists." Of course, there may be all sorts of moral questions and institutional questions, but that's sociology...

FC: But in this department we've got economists studying institutions, and economists studying macro-theory and economists macro statistics, all working together...

MT: But isn't there an ideological bias in the very division?

FC: Of course there's an ideological bias. We live in a society where ideology is very, very strong. To me, really the problem of socialism is ideological bias.

For example, the unthinking bias in favour of profit, which is absolutely universal in the labour movement. Every shop steward thinks it's crucially important for his own factory to make a profit.

There are a set of biases in understanding the economy which make planning more or less impossible. The notion of a fair price is an incredible impediment to any notion of planning, because you can't alter the market if you can't alter the price.

These are very deep problems, and we ought to work at them. If we had a well-organised intellectual infrastructure in our society, that's what intellectuals should be paid to do - try to get us out of all these traps and biases.

But intellectual specialisation is pushed further and further all the time. Hardly anybody even does macroeconomics today. They do bits of macroeconomics. We're trying to pull certain things together again.

BS: Keynes wrote books about macroeconomics, and then at the end of each book he would write a chapter on social philosophy. That's something which modern economics has completely lost.

FC: Pre-war British economics was a much nicer, more integrated discussion than is permitted today. It was a local culture. It's partly the internationalisation of economics which has made things very difficult.

Keynes has been replaced pretty well completely in the academic world by this horrible American mathematicised economics, and we're trying to find a way of fighting back.

This interview  
was done in  
summer 1983

# Colombia warning

By Les Hearn

Notwithstanding my conclusions to last issue's article on the Colombian volcano, it now seems that there were a lot more warnings available of the coming catastrophe and the form it was likely to take. I am indebted to New Scientist for a most informative survey of these warnings\*\*.

The Nevado del Ruiz volcano had resumed some small activity a year ago with local earthquakes. In December 1984 these gained force and in January volcanic gases began escaping. By February 1985, the crater lake had been turned by these gases into a bath of concentrated sulphuric acid. In July, the glacier around the summit started melting and a yellow sulphurous cloud formed above the volcano.

On September 11 a small eruption threw ash into the air and triggered a mud flow down a valley in a slightly different direction from Armero. This mud flow travelled some 27 kilometres per hour, reaching depths of 20 metres. Some of the ash fell on Armero.

An international team of geologists rushed to Nevado del Ruiz after this eruption. They planted five seismometers round the volcano and these instruments began detecting frequent small earthquakes and also vibrations typical of magma (molten lava) moving about.

In early October, a UN volcanologist recommended to the Colombian government that "prudent" precautions should be taken to prepare for a bigger eruption and that monitoring should increase.

The Colombian government's response was described as "not very strong" as there was a lack of perception as to the real danger\*\*.

Meanwhile, activity continued. Changes in river and ground water levels, sometimes quite intense, occurred through-

out September. On October 5, ash fell on Manizales, to the west of Nevado del Ruiz. The geologists considered the shape of the volcano and its valleys and also the history of its last major eruption to try to calculate the potential outcome of a major eruption.

In 1595, massive mud flows had sped down the north-eastern flank of the volcano into three rivers, including the Lagunilla on which Armero was situated. A smaller eruption in 1845 had also featured a mud flow with some loss of life.

The geologists predicted a two-thirds possibility that a similar mud flow, made up of melted snow and ice, loose volcanic soil and debris could sweep down the valleys again. And that is what happened at around midnight on 13 November.

Though the eruption was not particularly massive, it was enough to melt the glacier at the peak. Water rushed down gullies and canyons, collapsing the loose volcanic topsoil and reaching 100 kilometres an hour.

The torrents collected in the upper reaches of the River Lagunilla, building up pressure within its narrow banks so that when it emerged onto more open ground some 50 kilometres further on, it was travelling at 90 kilometres an hour straight for Armero.

A map showing the dangers was drafted by mid-October but was not circulated to Colombian ministers until 8 November. The impact of this report is shown by the fact that when a small eruption occurred on the day of the main eruption, government officials reassured the inhabitants of Armero.

The danger is not over yet, if unmelted ice on the north-western flank were affected by a new eruption, a similar mud flow could inundate the town of Manizales.

\*\*New Scientist, 21 November 1984. Christopher Joyce and Jeremy Leggett.

# Double standards!

I am not a supporter of Militant. We've had our differences. But I recognise they are members who have very deeply held convictions and have over the years campaigned tirelessly on behalf of the Labour Party.

To see them attacked as they have been by Kinnock is, I think, disgraceful.

I was selling raffle tickets for the Labour Party in the welfare. One man bought some, but was most vehement about saying he objected to being called a maggot.

He is not a Militant supporter, he is not even a member of the Labour Party, but he takes the reference that he is one of those whom Kinnock labels as a maggot.

What Neil Kinnock is saying is that Militant supporters are outside the constitution and outside the rules of the Labour Party. But as to those people in the Nottinghamshire coalfield who are members of the UDM, he has said that even though the Labour Party can't recognise the UDM as a union those people

should still be able to carry individual Labour Party cards.

One, it's not on because we won't allow it. Two, the constitution and the rules of the Labour Party clearly state that members shall belong to an appropriate bona fide trade union.

Now Kinnock is calling people in Liverpool maggots, but he is prepared to accept scabs and blacklegs. That is no way to lead the Labour Party towards victory.

Those who have turned out to be treacherous towards their own union are not to be trusted.

Kinnock can't use double standards. He can't have it both ways.

Labour Party members throughout the length and breadth of the country have got to realise that this is an attack on people who have sincerely-held views within the Labour Party. It is an attempt to drive the party to the right, and an attempt to drive a wedge between us.

I hope the resolutions condemning Kinnock's action are forthcoming, and I hope Kinnock will be held accountable to the party and to national conference.

The inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party is like asking a hanging judge to hold an appeal. The National Executive Committee prejudged the whole issue when they set it up.

## NCB is baulking us

The UDM have not got the support that they clearly wanted. The figure of 50,000 members was quoted by Coal Board officials, but they're going to struggle to get half that.

Members are still coming over to us. And once we have recognition in this area, I'm sure we're going to be able to recruit more and more members.

There's about 7000 NUM members in the Notts coalfield. In Bevercotes we've got 281, but there are still some more to pull in.

We've managed to get the first Bevercotes NUM pit bulletin out, and we're ready for producing the second. But it's with great difficulty.

We've been told that under no circumstances are we allowed to pin notices up, distribute literature, etc. etc.

The UDM isn't really doing anything at pit level, but it's the NCB that's baulking us.

The NCB's offer of money to Jack Jones if he would bring the Leicestershire miners into the UDM shows that gangsterism is being introduced into British trade union affairs. It's corruption, bribery, it's brow-beating, intimidation, it's everything that is disgraceful about the American way of carrying on.

It seems to me that Mac Gregor has exported those things directly into our unions.

I'm not surprised at the demand being raised for the publication of the detailed voting figures in South Derbyshire. There were one or two raised eyebrows in our own area.

Those figures should be produced and the members should have a look at them. To deny the members a look at those figures suggests to me that they have got something to hide.



Photo: Morning Star

# Workers' unity in Ireland

From page 7

workers work these things out? After all there is good reason to be perplexed, and reason to fear that Troops Out is the road to a bloodbath and the repartition of Ireland.

How? I say, by reason and argument. You say, by accepting the issue as posed now by the militant nationalists and in the demand 'Troops Out Now', with no nonsense or procrastination and no talk of a programme other than for how to withdraw.

This is metaphysics for another reason. For how is 'self-determination' and Troops Out going to be realised? By a sudden British pull-out with no political settlement? I'm not entirely sure that Conor Cruise O'Brien's 'malign' scenario is ruled out, but it is far from likely in the foreseeable future.

### Serious

Any serious talk of British withdrawal is necessarily talk of Britain negotiating its way out, arranging for a replacement for the state power which Britain now sustains. It will be a negotiated pull-out.

This is the Sinn Fein version of 'Troops Out', and the only one that does not raise the spectre of Troops Out meaning an inevitable bloody civil war, leading to repartition. Why should the left and the labour movement confine itself to the phrase-mongering role of saying 'Troops Out and no discussion',

thereby depriving itself of any possible role in shaping a political settlement? It makes no sense.

The 'Troops Out and no charter' line amounts to a self-denying ordinance for the left in trying to explain and argue its case. This may not matter too much if you confine yourself to a 'constituency' predisposed towards you by attitudes on Nicaragua, Cuba, etc — people who might indeed well be lost by having the issues and arguments teased out in a way that would make the Third World parallels difficult to sustain.

I worded carefully what I wrote about the "feebleness" of the Troops Out current. "Even after a notable accession of strength in the last three or four years, the Troops Out current still counts for little in our movement".

Geoff Bell replies by claiming victories on the juryless courts, strip-searching, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and Labour's commitment to a united Ireland.

### Counterposed

Even if you accept the claim that the Troops Out current won all those victories, the fact remains that all these positions — and especially a united Ireland — are counterposed by the leadership to Troops Out!

It is true that there is a lot of support for Troops Out in the constituency Labour Party left, and there is also a lot of passive support for Troops Out in the

British population (over 50%). Yet the Troops Out current still has very little clout outside the comprehensively left-wing sections of the CLPs. You admit that it counts for little in the unions.

More is involved than numbers. The Troops Out current is politically feeble. It is a current that cannot answer its opponents politically and at the conference did not seriously try.

### Scare

Also, I think that Geoff Bell is kidding himself if he thinks that the solid Troops Out support can be identified with the number of votes that Troops Out can get at constituency GCs. Will those who cannot answer the arguments of our opponents on the bloodbath question and on Troops Out not leading to a united Ireland stand up under pressure of a serious civil war scare? Passing a resolution reflecting conventional left wisdom at the ward or GC is one thing — sticking to it in face of the harsh realities that may unfold in Northern Ireland is something else, and so is being able to go out and argue and campaign in the trade unions for it.

For example, given the wide passive support for Troops Out in the population, why are the constituency Labour Party Troops Out forces unable to win the unions? The Troops Out current is a lot bigger than it was, and I don't neglect to

record that. But it remains feeble.

The argument that we have no right but to support those in struggle in Ireland is not only widespread but also a very old argument. I have difficulty taking it seriously because I encountered and opposed it as far back as August 1969, when it was used as an argument against British socialists calling for Troops Out!

When the British troops were put on the streets in August 1969, Catholics in Belfast and Derry welcomed them. Socialists and Republicans in Northern Ireland did not call for their withdrawal, and some explicitly welcomed them.

The biggest revolutionary socialist group in Britain dropped its previously prominent call for British withdrawal and polemicalised in Socialist Worker and elsewhere against those of us who refused to give de facto support to the deployment of British troops. And as one of their most 'clinging' arguments they used the fact that neither the Six Counties nor even the Republicans were calling for Troops Out.

That they were wrong, of course, you will agree. But logically, Geoff, you shouldn't agree. For if it is a principle now for us that we have no option but to go along with the Northern Ireland left and Republicans, then the same principle must have been in operation then, even though it led to diametrically opposite conclusions!

# Forgemasters

By Ray Ferris

Around 700 workers at the Atlas site of Sheffield Forgemasters have now been on indefinite strike for over seven weeks.

The catalyst for the dispute was the basic principle of trade union recognition. With the advent of a new McGregor-type manager the full time union convenor was locked out, and made redundant.

Agreements such as joint works health and safety were terminated without negotiation, and there was a refusal to recognise elected shop stewards.

However there have been problems. A few weeks into the strike, mass meetings were (temporarily as it turned out) abandoned and there was a serious problem of getting information to strikers.

Far, far worse however was the withdrawal of official ISTC support for the strike after five weeks and an instruction to return to work, having gained absolutely nothing. A mass meeting of strikers voted overwhelmingly to stay out regardless, and some ISTC members considered joining a union more interested in defending their living standards. Faced with such militant opposition, and

counting those membership forms, the ISTC backed down.

However, encouraged by official ISTC "militancy", management have threatened to sack all workers who were still out on strike on December 2. Another mass meeting was called on the 1st, and another overwhelming vote was cast. Strike action is to be spread to other sites if anyone is dismissed, with no return until they are reinstated.

It is vital to improve the organisational structure of the dispute. Action should be escalated and spread for a quick settlement. Money, food and information must be distributed effectively and mass meetings must not be used only as a defence against stepped-up attacks — by management or by trade union officials — on the strikers. There should be encouragement of rank and file initiatives and moves to get more women involved in supporting the dispute, in a similar vein to the miners' strike!

For more information, speakers, messages of support and donations, contact the dispute centre at AUEW House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield. Tel: 0742 79042. Cheques payable to Forgemasters Dispute Fund.

# Stop Socialist Organiser the witch hunt!

Militant runs Liverpool as though the Tendency were a criminal brotherhood and Liverpool 1920s Chicago. They use political violence and the threat of it together with political graft and personal corruption to keep their grip. This is the image of Militant in Liverpool presented in the press. Those who make these allegations against the leaders of the Liverpool Labour Party now have the authority of Labour Leader Neil Kinnock to back them up.

This image has, to be sure, been fed by events in Liverpool. Allegations are widespread that the Council's control of patronage — jobs, promotion, perks — has been used openly to reward Militant's supporters and to intimidate or punish its opponents. Council "Deputy" Leader Derek Hatton seems deliberately to go out of his way to court publicity which portrays him as a Flash Harry fly boy; he allows the widely circulated publication Private Eye to report with impunity detailed allegations that he is personally corrupt.

In face of charges such as those now being circulated against the leaders of Liverpool's District Labour Party and Council, socialists would normally argue that the correct thing to do would

## Editorial

be to set up an impartial labour movement inquiry which could establish what the facts are.

But Neil Kinnock's Labour Party NEC-endorsed inquiry into Liverpool Council will not be such an impartial inquiry and it will not clear the air in the Liverpool labour movement. It is an inquiry into the Liverpool District Labour Party and into Militant which runs it, which will be conducted by the most bitter enemies of everything Militant stands for. It is an inquiry initiated, set up and staffed by people who chose the very time when the Tories were battering down the resistance the Liverpool labour movement to mount a viciously divisive and destructive campaign of denunciation against the embattled Liverpool Council.

### Weight

Kinnock threw all the weight he could muster into the scales — on the side of the Tory government and against the Liverpool Labour Council. To the breathtaking ineptitude of the Militant council leaders was

added the open treachery of the national Labour leaders, though Militant's ineptitude was probably more decisive in undermining Liverpool's fight than was Kinnock's invective.

These days Neil Kinnock reserves most of his considerable stock of alliterative venom for the left of his own party. Kinnock acted throughout the crisis in Liverpool according to his belief that "The main enemy is at home" — in his own party. Instead of helping Liverpool fight the Tories he chose to give unashamed and undisguised help to the Tories against the council and the labour movement.

Kinnock had every right to disagree with the leadership of Liverpool Council: he had no right to scab on them.

The performance of the Labour leaders, and in the first place Kinnock, disqualify them as either impartial investigators or proper judges of the Liverpool Labour Council or of the District Labour Party. They are not the fair-minded and honest representatives of the labour movement, nor an honest and loyal labour movement leadership calling Militant to account for its stewardship in Liverpool. They are Militant's envenomed factional

opponents and people who have themselves — like the most embittered and blinkered 'sectarians' — subordinated the interests of the Liverpool labour movement and working class to their own shortsighted factional and political interests, not scrupling even to form an open political alliance against Liverpool with the Tory government.

### Limited

Just as Kinnock's intervention helped the Tories win the recent confrontation the inquiry is more than likely to help the Liberals sweep into the Town Hall in next year's elections.

One measure of what Kinnock and his supporters are about now is that they choose to investigate not Liverpool Council but the Liverpool District Party, which they have suspended. If Militant is guilty of misusing the council for political patronage and corrupt leverage in the local labour movement this is reprehensible, but they are only doing what the leaders of the Liverpool Labour Party — who were formerly not supporters of a Stalin-Trotskyist sect but members of a corrupt, self-seeking mafia — have immemorably done. And what other councils have done and do now.

Kinnock's new friend, Ken Livingstone, for example, did it with notable shamelessness.

The NEC have chosen to investigate the District Labour Party and not the Council because their investigation is designed for the specific and limited objective of carving up Militant.

And why did they choose to investigate it now? No-one even alleges that the DLP operates differently now from say two years ago. There is no new fact, no new cause for concern. No: it is just that now Kinnock thinks he has Militant on the run, and wants to put the boot in.

It is not an investigation but a witch-hunting tribunal. And if the left does not challenge and stop it the witch-hunt will inevitably spread.

If there is to be an investigation of Liverpool District Labour Party it should be an honest and impartial inquiry, not a factional witch-hunting "investigation" whose findings are a foregone conclusion and which can be no more than an empty ritual hurried through as preparation for the real business in hand: the burning of the heretics.

# Keep up the fundraising!

Thanks this week to the following, and apologies to those (there are some) whose donations have been missed from this list in the hubbub of moving — we'll have them all in the next issue.

Basingstoke readers £10,  
Birmingham: Jim Denham £30,  
other readers £7, Harry Lagan  
£1, J Wells £3, G Poxon £1.  
Durham: Tony Serjeant £40,  
Paul Hetherington £38, Gerry  
Steinberg £1.

Glasgow readers £32,  
Manchester drinks levy £8.35,  
Paul Gamble £11,  
Nottingham readers £5, Christine  
Priestley £10, anon £2,  
Stoke North: Phil Pender £5.50,  
J McReady £1, John Luckett  
£1.

London: E London readers £1.30,  
Linda Mouldsley £20, Steve Mac-  
Arthur £60, Peta Gilman £6.90,  
Lawrence Welch £30, Mike Gray-  
son £10, Tony Jain £11.50, John  
Hogan £4, Mick O'Sullivan £10,  
Bilington supporter £100, Rob  
Srinani £3, John Eyo £2, Bruce  
Robinson £150, Bilington readers  
£5.58, Tim Anderson £10, Vince  
Brown £10,  
US reader \$50 (£33); Lancs read-  
er (Mark Powell) £2.

Many local groups have good fund-raising ideas which should bring in sizeable sums over the next few weeks.

In Manchester, Dave Brennan is having a sponsored haircut, and two comrades are also planning a sponsored cycle ride from Manchester to London.

The group has instituted a system of comrades donating 10p every time they have a drink.

In London SO supporters

are holding a jumble sale this coming Saturday, 7th.

In Cardiff, Martin Barclay is doing a sponsored mountain walk, planning to climb six heights in the Brecon Beacons.

Glasgow SO have set up a "50 Club", where people put a regular amount in each month and a proportion is distributed as a prize.

All round the country, SO sellers now have collecting boxes to take with them wherever they sell the paper. First evidence is that the £1s and 10ps collected in this way could add up to a fair sum, if comrades work at it.

All these efforts, and a great deal more, are going to be needed. There's still a long way to go on the £15,000 target, and it's important that the tempo of fund-raising is kept up in the next few weeks.

Remember: the whole process of the move and installation of new equipment has to be completed in the next month, and our possibilities of credit are very limited.

Loans are useful as well as donations. Send money to SO at 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

