

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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FILTHY RICH AT OUR EXPENSE



are they
worth it?

NO!

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Criminal Injustice Act

Organise resistance

The Criminal Justice Bill has now become law. Despite a very wide campaign of opposition the law was passed and is already being used. Its first main targets are squatters, travellers, ravers and political protesters.

The effects of the Act will become clear in the years ahead. But the methods used against those who opposed the Bill provide ample warnings about what is to come. Already most demonstrations are heavily policed by riot squads and snatch squads are used to grab, beat and arrest protesters. Under the Act, trespass is made a criminal offence and this power will be widely used to charge and imprison people on marches, pickets, mass trespasses, squats and hunt sabotage activities. These parts of the Act and the ending of the right to silence will come into their own if and when widespread social and political unrest begins.

The movement in opposition to this increase in state powers has mobilised new forces, in particular amongst young people. In fact, the old forces – the trade unions – have been notable by their absence from protests. The Labour Party has said it will not repeal the Act. The protests have instead been organised by loose coalitions of people involved in squatting, hunt sabotage, roads protests and travelling. Their strength has been their creativity, resourcefulness and contempt for authority. On the night the Bill became an Act they climbed on to the roof of Parliament. Later, they held a public trial of Home Secretary Michael Howard in the garden of his palatial country residence.

We may be seeing the stirrings of a new oppositional movement. If it is to gain strength it will face challenges and difficulties. First it will and already is facing state repression. Such repression can only be met by rigorous and democratic organisation. If demonstrations, for example, are to henceforth face riot squads, then the movement must discuss how to deal with this, rather than leaving opposition to more or less spontaneous fightbacks. Marches will need to be defended and stewarded by organised forces who know how to do the job and are trained and prepared to do so. Self-defence squads are not a question for the future but for now.

Over the next period, people will go to prison and they will need to be defended and assisted in prison. All prisoners face harsh conditions but political prisoners are often singled out for special brutality. To defend them is an absolute duty and will require organisation.

Secondly the movement will face sabotage from those who are tied to the past, and in particular are wedded to the Labour Party. How will those who call for a vote for Labour in the coming election respond when protesters decide that Tony Blair's garden is as legitimate a scene of protest as Michael Howard's? Not happily, we predict. They will fight to pre-

vent more revolutionary trends emerging in this new movement. And once again, only organisation and democratic discussion can prevent them winning the day. Because they will be organised, they will prepare votes, they will dominate proceedings. Only democratic organisation will ensure everybody is given a voice and decisions are made openly. It is the school of the new movement.

Recently an old Courthouse in Brighton was squatted in protest at the Criminal Justice Bill. The squat is now ended but during its life its members invited the Women Against Pit Closures to speak to them. The women talked eloquently of the difficulties and state repression they had faced. They emphasised the need for people to rely on themselves and not on the Labour Movement. They pointed out that the next step was for all those who are fighting back to get together, to talk to each other, to link up. They are absolutely right. It is through hearing the experiences learned in diverse struggles, the tactics used, the enemies exposed, that we will move forward. By linking struggles together we do not only gain in numerical strength but in political strength. The anti-roads movement for example would be immensely strengthened by drawing in the people most reliant on public transport – the working class, particularly women and the elderly. The fight against state repression would be boosted by drawing together those fighting against the Criminal Justice Act and the immigrants and asylum seekers who have been facing imprisonment and murder at the hands of the immigration authorities.

In the British ruling class, we face a rich, highly organised and ruthless opponent. It is devastating working class areas, killing old people, criminalising the young, destroying the environment. At present people are fighting back in isolated pockets. The only effective response to the ruling class and its oppressive laws is solidarity and conscious political organisation to bring the pockets of resistance together.

COMMUNIST FORUMS

A series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!

LONDON

Sunday 11 December:
Their profit – our loss
Multinationals against humanity
Speaker: Trevor Rayne
2pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).
Entrance £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 14 December:
Their profit – our loss
Multinationals against humanity
7.30pm Friends Meeting House,
Mount Street, Manchester.

All welcome. A new series will start in January 1995. The first will be held 15 January (London) and 18 January (Manchester)

Tories disintegrate

MAXINE WILLIAMS

John Major's Conservative government is like a leaky boat in a storm. No amount of frantic bailing out can prevent new holes appearing. From the split on Europe to the almost daily allegations of corruption – this government is on the way out. The only pity is that it is destroying itself rather than being destroyed by concerted opposition. And that when it falls we are likely to be lumbered with a Labour government which has adopted most of the Conservative programme.

Particularly disastrous was the leak of Tory Chief John Major's report on their electoral prospects. It recognised that there was virtually no support for government changes in the NHS and hoped instead for 'zero media coverage of the NHS' over the next twelve months. It admitted the widespread perception that 'the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest' and the unpopularity of large executive pay rises and VAT on fuel. Most crucial however is the admission that living standards are 'falling in 1994 to 1995' and will fall again in 1995-96. If a Conservative government could provide rising living standards for the middle classes they would be re-elected.

But it cannot. The bonanza that enriched the middle classes in the 1980s is long gone. Not only are they faced with a decline in services on which they have come to rely, such as health and education, but also they face higher tax bills. Whilst those earning over £80,000 will save almost £17,000 on taxes compared to 8 years ago, those earning £30,000 to £40,000 will pay £700 more. The government can only secure a greater share of wealth for the already wealthy. And grateful though they

may be, there are not enough of them to return a Conservative government.

They have a lot to be grateful for. The government has created the low-wage economy on which profits thrive. It has deregulated finance in order to enrich the City at the cost, for example, of tens of thousands of people who have lost their occupational pensions to hard-selling pension companies. Most importantly, privatisation may have netted a few hundred shares to middle class households but it provided a gold mine for the Chief Executives, the bankers and the City. Privatisation was so important that the government consciously bribed the managers of state industries to go along with it. Their reward is clear. Whilst gas prices rose and VAT was introduced, the Chief Executive of British Gas Cedric Brown's salary rose to £475,000. Sir Iain Vallance earns £650,000 a year whilst making thousands of

Telecom workers redundant. David Morris of Northern Electric earned £300,000 plus £400,000 share option profits last year.

The arms manufacturers too received lavish subsidies in the form of export credits and every taxpayer helped to finance their bribery slush fund. A fund which benefited not only members of the Saudi Royal Family but Mrs Thatcher's son Mark Thatcher. Every day was Lottery jackpot day for them.

So close are the ties between business, Tory Party and government that they cannot be distinguished. The wives of Tory ministers sit on the Health Trusts; former ministers responsible for privatising industries leave to sit on their boards; businessmen play crucial roles in government spheres in which they have a financial interest – Jonathan Aitken had a long career connected with arms sales prior to becoming Minister for Defence Procurement. To

say nothing of his bills being picked up by overseas businessmen. Ministers Tim Smith and Neil Hamilton received payment and hospitality from Mohammed Fayed during his takeover fight for Harrods. Hardly surprising that backbench Tory MPs get in on the act cut-price for £1,000 a question.

In the end it will not be the sleaze that brings down the government but probably its disastrous split on Europe. It is not an argument which engages the British public greatly. Nor would it, for it can be summed up thus: which thieves kitchen shall we belong to, Europe or the USA? The pro-Europeans dress their argument up in modern and dynamic terms while the antis tend to go on patriotically about the inherent untrustworthiness of the Germans. The British working class can be sure of one thing: whichever side wins, their wages will fall, their jobs be insecure and eventually they will have to fight a stinking war for these people.

It is, of course, deeply satisfying to see these pompous swine caught with their pants down. But we must bear a few facts in mind. None of them will go to prison. None of them will lose their fortunes. None of them will be forced to live in the wastelands they have created or be on the receiving end of the weapons they have sold. In a society built on fraud and a blood, corruption is inevitable. If you rob a bank you will go to prison but if you own the bank you will be knighted for robbing your customers.

It is not enough to shout about how large their fortunes are, how big their houses. We have to organise to take them away – to destroy not only the rich but the capacity to be enriched at the expense of others. To do that requires not a change of government but a revolution.



John Major: Not waving but drowning in corruption

Kick the fraudsters out

Thugs steal £234m and walk free

The High Court has ruled that the £234m given by the British government for the Malaysian Pergau dam project was an illegal abuse of the aid system. This humiliation was brought about not by the Labour opposition but by the World Development Movement, which took the case to court.

The High Court found that the project, which was actually a sweetener for a huge arms contract, was economically unsound and of no benefit to the people of Malaysia.

Mrs Thatcher, arms saleswoman extraordinaire, negotiated the £1bn arms deal and explicitly linked the provision of aid to build the dam to the arms deal. Even the senior official at the government's Overseas Development Administration said that the project was a 'very bad buy and a burden on Malaysian consumers'.

Thatcher got the deal, Major agreed it and Hurd finalised it. But no politicians will suffer

now that it has been ruled illegal. Whilst the payments (which include a large amount for bribing Malaysian ministers) will not now be made from the aid budget, they will still be made. The British taxpayer and the Malaysian people will foot the bill while British politicians and construction and arms firms laugh all the way to the bank.

There is nothing like a Dame

Westminster Council was the Conservatives' 'flagship' council, famous for selling its cemeteries off to property developers for 15p and then having to buy them back at vast public expense and for selling off huge parts of its housing stock. How galling, then, to see its activities in the 1980s being subjected to public scrutiny. The District Auditor's four-year investigation found that Dame Shirley Porter and her cronies wasted £21m of public money and that they should be surcharged accordingly. One of those

involved committed suicide, but Dame Shirley is made of sterner stuff – and a larger bank account. She has hired the best lawyers and accountants to try to prove the Auditor wrong.

But the public hearings about the scandal do not seem to be going well for her. Whilst her barrister (the allegedly left-wing Anthony Scrivener) claims there should be no surcharge because the Council got legal advice that they were acting lawfully, the evidence shows otherwise.

What they were actually doing was trying to secure a little middle class Tory sectarian state in Westminster by changing the population balance. This meant exporting the poor, immigrants and the working class to outer London boroughs, closing homeless hostels and simultaneously doing up and selling off the housing thus vacated to well-off people. Many a bijou bargain could be got in Westminster in those days.

The secret reports now being

scrutinised in public reveal the cynicism of the scam. One says the 'short-term objective must be to target the marginal wards, and as a matter of utmost urgency, redress the imbalance by encouraging a pattern of tenure which is more likely to translate into Conservative votes'.

A picture is also emerging from the hearings about the character of the people involved. Dame Shirley clearly modelled herself on Thatcher, and seems to have shared her capacity to spread fear in her wake. One of her fellow Tory councillors describes all opposition being 'hammered into the ground' and council employees threatened with dismissal if they did not operate the sell-off policy.

Dame Shirley's looting of public resources has caused hardship to thousands of Westminster residents. Even if she is surcharged, the Tesco heiress will not suffer. Presumably the reaction of the law would be different if we looted her Tesco stores.

What are the chances that Labour will win the next general election? They must be rated as very high. Crucially, its fervent pro-Europe stand reflects the dominant strategy of the British ruling class. This strategy was born out of the failure of Thatcherism, which sought to sustain Britain's role as an independent imperialist power in alliance with the US. However, Britain's continued relative decline throughout the 1980s made this an impossibility. By the end of the decade, the City's position as the dominant financial centre in Europe was under serious threat from Frankfurt.

Unless there was a rapid change in ruling class strategy, the City faced marginalisation in the developing European bloc, accelerating British imperialism's decline. Thatcher as prime minister was by 1990 a key obstacle to this re-orientation, so the poll tax debacle provided a heaven-sent opportunity to dump her. However her supporters within the Tory Party have continued to frustrate the new strategy with their opposition to Maastricht. The result is that Major cannot achieve what he was elected to deliver short of splitting the Tory party completely. In this context, the ruling class are looking more and more to Labour to implement its strategy on Europe.

Labour and New Realism

Yet it is not enough to gain the approval of the ruling class. It is also necessary to receive the support of those strata whose votes determine the outcome of general elections in Britain – the middle class and the more affluent strata of the working class. Labour could not have won the 1945, 1964/66 and 1974 elections without their electoral support. The policy of New Realism it implemented from 1984 was a response to the desertion of such support to the Tory party in 1979 and 1983. Although Kinnock played a vital role in establishing this policy and isolating any working class resistance to the Tory onslaught, it is Barrister Blair who most fittingly personifies this 'new' Labour Party.

Although the Labour Party was founded at the turn of the century as an alliance of sections of the middle class with the labour aristocracy, it was the latter who predominated through their control of the trade unions. This was expressed through their use of the block vote at Labour conferences. But with the triumph of 'one member, one vote' at the 1993 conference, there has been a decisive shift. The middle class – lawyers, journalists, lecturers, managers, professional politicians – are in the driving seat, and their programme shows how far removed their interests are from those of the working class. Key points in this programme are:

- Labour will re-nationalise none of the industries that have been privatised over the past 15 years, not even the coal industry;
- It will continue both the Trident nuclear submarine programme (minimum £15 billion) and the development of the European Fighter Aircraft (currently £13 billion). Given Labour's historic support for the military-industrial complex, it is not surprising that its 1994 conference was sponsored by GEC, currently bidding to take over VSEL which built the Trident submarine.
- It will maintain the Tories' education reforms, even down to promoting the performance league tables;
- It has accepted the purchaser-provider split which is the foundation of the market within the NHS;
- It will continue to implement the full panoply of immigration laws;
- It will retain the Tory anti-union laws; to do otherwise would be 'crazy' (Tony Blair at the Labour Party conference);

LABOUR PARTY: enemy of the working class

The Labour Party is a party with a middle class programme, a middle class membership and a middle class leader seeking to win middle class electoral support to pursue the interest of the ruling class. It is completely anti-working class in everything it says and does. In Britain today, says ROBERT CLOUGH, the task of socialists is to encourage every move that seeks to build opposition to this middle class admiration society and create a new movement to represent the interests of the mass of the working class.

- As the 'party of Law and Order' (Tony Blair again), it will do nothing either to diminish police powers or reform the prison service;
- It has made no commitment to repeal the Criminal Justice Act;
- It will not commit itself to restoring benefits to 17-18-year-olds, the loss of which in 1988 is a prime cause of homelessness amongst the young;
- It will not end the system whereby child benefit is effectively removed from mothers on benefit;
- It will not link the rise in pensions to rises in wages;
- It wants to promote the 'targeting' of benefits (ie to extend means testing);
- It will not commit itself to a national minimum wage, other than to say that it would be set after consulting with business at a level 'that avoids any adverse impact on jobs' – ie profits;
- It will consider students paying for part of their tuition fees, and extending the student loan system;
- It will not set any new top rate of tax; Blair himself is of the opinion 'that there are top-rate tax payers now who are hardly in the super-rich bracket, and I think we've got to be extremely sensitive to them'.

Labour and the working class

As its decline continues, British imperialism's survival will require the massive impoverishment of the working class. This process has started to happen under the Tories: the poorest 10% of the population are now 14% worse off than they were in 1979. Only the middle class will be able to afford decent conditions, and then in diminishing numbers and at the direct expense of the working class. This is already evident in the massive shift of wealth from the poor to the rich that has taken place over the last few years as a result of Tory taxation policies. Labour will continue this. It will only be able to satisfy the aspirations of the middle class by redoubling the attack on the working class.

Blair's triumph at the 1994 Labour conference has drawn forth a variety of responses on the left. There have been honest ones – John Pilger's in *The New Statesman*, calling for the

formation of a new party. And there have been dishonest ones which are founded on the claim that Labour was and still is a working class party with a socialist spirit enshrined in Clause 4. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* endorses the call for a new party, one which stands for the independent interests of the working class.

However, we must recognise that such a party could not somehow co-exist with Labour as a kind of *Red Pepper* ginger group promoting a



Neil Kinnock – now on the European Gravy Train – wasn't quite middle-class enough

socialist conscience. Quite the contrary: it would have to fight Labour if it were to stand a chance of survival. Labour in government has always been as vicious as the Tories in attacking the working class and any organisation standing for its interests. In opposition over the last 15 years, it played a crucial role in isolating the miners. It has attacked black people fighting police racism and fascism. Its leaders ferociously condemned those who fought the police on the 31 March 1990 poll tax demonstration, and the next day uttered the same sentiments about the Strangeways uprising. The experience of this new party would be no different.

The Has-Benns

Dishonest responses have come from those both in and outside of the Lab-

our Party. In April this year, Tony Benn wondered 'is the Labour Party dying?', a question which he says keeps cropping up all over the place. After a long list of symptoms of Labour's decline, he concedes that 'socialism has been explicitly repudiated', and that politics now resembles 'Victorian Britain, when neither the Tories or the Liberals represented the interests of working people'. But he cannot draw the logic of this, since to do so would lead to Pilger's conclusion. Instead, he talks about renewal, vigorous campaigns for this and that, making insistent demands, awakening visions, so that he can end up with the very safe but empty conclusion that 'if we get things moving at the grass roots, the leadership might even start demanding the same things itself.'

But Has-Benn's position is really shared by the rest of the left, who have now taken up the cudgels on behalf of Clause 4 on the grounds that it represents the socialist or working class essence of the Labour Party which Blair is now bent on 'betraying'. In truth, of course, Clause 4 is not about socialism. Its 1918 author, Sidney Webb, was a devout racist and imperialist who served as a representative of middle class opinion within the Labour Party. The clause was agreed by the most imperialist wing of the trade union leadership which dominated the Labour Party throughout the First War. Its vision was of a society run by enlightened technocrats (of middle class origin), a stratum which, in association with the trade union leadership, would prove far more capable of ordering affairs than either the bourgeoisie or the working class. Since that time, the only people who have attached any importance to it has been those on the left who want to retain an alliance with this party of privilege.

Real socialists don't vote Labour

As *Socialist Review*, the SWP magazine puts it, 'Clause 4 never represented the triumph of the left in the Labour Party or the conversion of the Labour Party to socialism. The people responsible for Clause 4 saw it as

a way of *stifling* not promoting socialism'. But why then does *Socialist Worker* instigate a campaign to retain this 'stifling' of socialism? Why does the same *Socialist Review* article say that 'we should resist with all our might' this attempt to get rid of 'the illusion of its socialist past'? Why does it then also say that even if this 'illusion' of socialism disappears, 'that won't mean that the Labour Party has become an openly capitalist party like the Tories and the Liberal Democrats'? Because what comes first with the SWP is its alliance with the left wing of the Labour Party.

There is one question we have to ask the likes of Benn, the SWP, the miscellaneous groups in and outside the Labour Party who are campaigning for Clause Four, who will urge us to vote Labour now, and vote Labour in the future when it has dumped Clause Four: what monstrous act would the Labour Party have to commit before you finally broke with it? Is there anything that it can do which even for you is so bestial, so criminal that even you would turn away to build something new and independent? We don't think so, because we can tell you it has already committed this atrocity at some point in its past, and you have chosen to let it go.

Building the future

Young people newly engaged in struggles have no difficulty with the idea that Labour is a party of privilege, a society for the protection of the middle class. They should be putting up anti-Labour candidates at elections, to represent students and unemployed youth. Single mothers, who will bear an even greater burden under Labour, should be standing as candidates to expose those who stand only to pursue their own careers. Pensioners should stand candidates to expose the unity between Labour and Tory on the issue of pensions. Trade unionists should stand to mobilise resistance against Labour's support for the anti-union laws. Actions like these will start to build the party Pilger calls for, not the forces of the past that try to resurrect the stinking corpse of the Labour Party.



Sleek from PR grooming and with the smugness of the middle-class, Mr and Mrs Blair are the latest Labour Party 'modernisers'

National Health Service cuts - the facts

HANNAH CALLER

The attack on the NHS may be bad news for patients and for the majority of its workers, but for some it is great news.

First and foremost, it is wonderful news for managers. A recent report shows that the number of NHS managers increased by 57% between 1992 and 1993 alone. The average top NHS manager (46-year-old white man, married, with two children) earns £50,000 to £59,000 pa. Forty-five NHS chief executives earn between £90,000 and £100,000. Nine earn more than £100,000. Compare this with the appalling pay and conditions of porters and domestics, many of whom have seen the removal of their pension schemes, their sick pay, their holiday pay and who are in full time employment for as little as £5,500 pa.

Not surprisingly, one third of trust board places are taken up by directors of private companies, the vast majority of whom have no medical expertise or experience of the Health Service. Sixty-six trusts are chaired by either a Conservative or someone connected with a company that has made a donation to the Conservative Party.

Meanwhile the numbers of useful people like nurses and Health Visitors continue to fall. The Department of Health estimates that there has been a 1% drop in the number of qualified nurses. In 1988, Regional Health Authorities recommended a 15% increase in Health Visitor posts. The latest figures show a reduction in 1992 of 4.5% with a massive 36% cut in student Health Visitors. The number of people requiring Health Visitors has grown by 11% since 1988.

The attacks are also good news for bureaucracy which, despite claims from Virginia Bottomley that it 'has no place in the NHS', is booming like there was no recession:

- NHS bureaucracy now costs

£5,708 every minute of every day.

- Administration costs in primary care have increased by 143% since 1990.
- The amount spent on NHS paperwork has doubled since 1987.
- The NHS Management Executive spent £50,000 to drop the word 'management' from its stationery.
- The NHS Supplies Authority spent £200,000 on a new logo and letterhead.
- Trust Hospitals spent £24.3m on cars in 1992-1993 (up a staggering 350% on the previous

percentage of GP practices which are fund-holders from the present 30% to 40% by April 1995 and 50% by the next election. Never mind that already at least £10m has been spent on fundholding practices to enable them simply to manage the fund.

Incidentally, one of the first GP fundholders and former Tory Councillor Dr Clive Froggatt, who was also a government adviser on the health service attacks, is currently facing 14 criminal charges of illegally obtaining, possessing and supplying heroin.



The London campaign to keep Bart's hospital open - no one listened

year). But not to worry: this will almost be covered by the latest 50p increase on prescription charges, expected to raise £22m.

The 'internal market' is also good news for the privileged patients of those GPs able to become fundholders. Such patients are 'fast tracked' to hospital to secure business from their fund-holding GPs. Their NHS contracts with hospitals allow them to refer patients for operations, when the funds of the District Health Authority have run out for non-fundholders. In the North Thames Regional Health Authority, fund-holding practices were allocated 10-40% more than non-fund-holding practices for inpatient care. So much for Virginia Bottomley's pledge that 'care is provided for everybody on the basis of clinical need.'

Bottomley aims to increase

Just as the government can find money to spend on managers, so it was recently able to stump up a full £30m, from taxpayers' money, towards a new private hospital in Glasgow for rich patients from overseas. This 260-bed hospital, the brainchild of two US doctors, was fitted with the most advanced technology. Next door was a 5-star hotel for patient's families. Unfortunately in the first eight weeks only 100 patients turned up and the hospital went bankrupt. Unable to make a profit, it now lies empty while NHS patients lie on trolleys in corridors for want of a bed.

The only people who can be relied upon to resist the attacks on the NHS are those who bear the brunt of them: the working class people who work in the NHS and who rely on it for their healthcare.

Standing up for our rights

NICKI JAMESON

Two young women have been awarded an out-of-court settlement of £21,000 in compensation for trauma and distress caused when they were strip-searched in a north London pub toilet in November 1992.

Helen Yaffe and Madlyn Ray-Jones, who were then aged 15, were spending the evening with friends at The Junction in Tufnell Park, when a group of 50 police officers 'burst in, knocking over chairs and tables, pushing people out of the way'. The landlord told customers this was a drugs raid and they should drink up and leave. Helen and Madlyn tried to, but their way was barred by police officers who insisted they go instead to the women's toilets and be strip-searched. The search was humiliating and distressing, and no drugs or other suspicious items were found. A

total of 88 young people were searched in the pub's toilets and conservatory; none were subsequently charged with any offence.

An agreed statement was read out to the City of London County Court. It included the fact that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner had expressed regret and had announced a review of procedures following the incident. Outside the court, solicitor Jane Deighton said she considered the judgement 'a tremendous achievement for these two young women, who by turning the trauma and humiliation of their own strip-search into a force for fighting for their own rights, have achieved a policy change in the Metropolitan Police'.

Helen Yaffe told FRFI: 'What we have achieved is very important. I know many people this sort of thing has happened to - it happens all the time - and I

wanted to make the point that you don't have to put up with police harassment. I kept trying to encourage other people, by saying you can do things to stop them.

'I would say to others who find themselves in that situation, "Get in touch with a good lawyer and don't give up, because you can have a voice, but it is up to you to make it heard. The police aren't going to stop and ask you how you feel. You have to make sure that you stand up for your own rights".'

'I think it is very important that we aren't just passive when things like this happen. Because I'd been part of political campaigns with the RCG and City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, I had seen that when people take on the state and they are right, they can win and they can have an impact.'

Asylum-seekers - Britain closes the door

BILL HUGHES

There are more than 25 million refugees in the world today. Europe, one of the richest regions in the world, cares for fewer than 6 per cent of them - and this figure is contracting further as the barriers of 'Fortress Europe' are strengthened. Racist procedures throughout the European Union have forced a drop in European asylum applications from 671,802 in 1992 to 543,648 in 1993.

Following the passing of the racist Asylum Act in 1993, the British government continues to undermine the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. These measures have met with virtually nil opposition from the Labour Party.

In October the government imposed visa restrictions on people from Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. In recent months, increasing numbers of citizens from these countries have sought safety in the UK. The

conflict between armed factions in Sierra Leone has displaced over a million people - one quarter of the population. Despite evidence of the killings and torture of civilians, in the first half of 1994, the British government decided that fewer than 10 Sierra Leoneans could remain here. Over 270 applications for asylum were refused.

The government recently announced plans to restrict access by asylum seekers to part-time study. New proposals would raise fees for asylum seekers to overseas students' rates. The cost of studying would be prohibitive for almost all asylum seekers, who would be denied the opportunity to learn English and gain qualifications.

As sporadic hunger strikes, and other protests by asylum seekers in detention have continued through the autumn, the publication of a new report has boosted the campaign against Britain's immigration prisons. *Prisoners without a voice*, pub-

lished by Amnesty International, shows that Britain routinely violates international human rights laws and standards. Of the sample of 50 asylum seekers interviewed in 1993, none was properly informed of the reason for detention, their rights or how to exercise them. The average time an asylum seeker was detained was 154 days - an increase since the introduction of the Asylum Act.

One year after the opening of the Campsfield immigration prison near Oxford, there is a further opportunity to show solidarity with asylum detainees. The Campaign to Close Campsfield is organising a march from Oxford to London starting on 30 November. The campaign needs support along the route with accommodation and publicity. It reaches central London on Sunday 4 December and will arrive in Whitehall at 1pm for a mass demo and rally. Be there! More information from: CTCC, c/o 111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford. Tel: 0865 724452/726804

Pensioners notes

RENE WALLER

So we pensioners have handed in a petition for an adequate pension to the Queen, complete with nearly one and a quarter million signatures. Well, what results?

Certainly it has helped to mobilise and draw thousands of people over 60 years of age into political activity, sometimes for the first time in their lives, and that in itself is a big plus, but there is no sign that there are any moves to grant our just demands. Nor did we get anything like adequate publicity in the media on 29 September, our big day.

One would have thought that, in a country said to be democratic, some attention would have been paid to the thousands of elderly people, some with obvious walking difficulties, who poured down Whitehall to Central Hall for a large rally, then through St James' Park to the Palace. Surely the degree of commitment shown was worthy of more media attention than the gossip concerning Princess Diana?

Still, the reaction of the Tories and their friends who control the media was predic-



Lewisham pensioners organising against VAT on fuel

table, but what of our supposed friends? Did our campaign feature prominently on the agenda of the Labour Party conference? Well, perhaps it would hardly have done to publicise pensioners' demands at all, when that party has dropped our demand for pensions to be linked to average earnings. It has even been suggested that the basic pension might be means-tested.

So how do we get the matters that really concern us pensioners raised, let alone dealt with effectively? Well, I think it's time we considered trying to get our own representatives on to councils and in Parliament - men and women responsible to us.

It's not impossible - we are

growing numerically and are becoming organised. Furthermore, in parts of Europe it's already been done. We need an independent voice desperately, for despite our real strength, we're still being ignored.

I also believe pensioners' representatives could be relied on to consider fairly the claims of other sections ignored by the present setup - our generation has known not only poverty but the wars to which imperialist rivalries are bound to lead.

So let's consider using our strengths and getting a few pensioners representatives elected for a start. Other sections whose claims are also being ignored may follow suit.

Dirty tricks to defeat striking miners

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Further evidence has come out about the methods used by the Tories to defeat the 1984 miners strike. Journalist Seumas Milne has detailed the MI5 operation, masterminded by the now head of MI5, Stella Rimington. It included the bugging of NUM offices; homes of prominent NUM members; the fish and chip shop where NUM officers regularly ate; surveillance of NUM headquarters from specially-leased buildings nearby.

Most deadly however, was probably the use of MI5 agents. One, Harry Newton, a prominent

CND/Workers Control Movement member for 30 years, was an MI5 agent throughout his career. He befriended Scargill. More damaging was Roger Windsor who became Chief Executive of the NUM and was heavily involved in the financial affairs of the Union. All evidence points to his being an MI5 plant who was sent on long-term placement into the NUM. His activities, including insisting on being filmed with Colonel Gaddafi during the strike, are classic intelligence operations. When he left the Union, having stolen some of its funds, he went on to make highly-publicised false allegations of financial impropriety against Arthur Scargill.

The Government was obsessed with beating the miners - the main serious opposition they faced from the working class. The new material includes the revelation that police and intelligence activities were stepped up when it appeared that the miners were close to winning the strike. Just how close they were has now become clear. Had they won, the whole political landscape would have altered. And it was not only the forces of the state that feared this. It was also the Labour Party. They probably did as much to undermine the struggle by the miners for their jobs and communities, as Mrs Rimington.

Poverty: Britain on the headline

'Although in the eighties the Conservatives seemed to promise a classless society of opportunity, the reality is now that the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest, who are getting poorer.'

John Maples,
Conservative Party
Deputy Chairman,
November 1994.

It is not often a Tory lets slip the truth. One child in three lives in poverty. Child mortality rates for the poorest are rising. Poverty diseases such as dysentery and tuberculosis are on the increase. For the first time, Oxfam is to extend its work here to combat growing deprivation. Welcome to Britain 1994. CAT WIENER reports.

Britain today houses a quarter of all the European Union's poor. A massive transfer of wealth from rich to poor over the last 15 years has created a gap between the incomes of richest and poorest unmatched since records began in 1886. Between 1979 and 1992 Britain's poor increased from 5 million to 13.9 million. Tax cuts to the rich were almost wholly financed by reductions in the value of pensions and other benefits; swollen salaries to directors have been matched by reductions in the real wages of the poorest. The net result is that the poorest tenth of the population are today 14 per cent worse off than they were in 1979, while the richest tenth are a massive 62 per cent better off. Overall, the share of income going to the poorest 10 per cent halved during the 1980s from 4 per cent to 2 per cent.

Benefit Personal Allowances (weekly)

Under 18 (usual rate)	£27.50
18-24	£36.15
25 or over	£45.70

Single parent	
Under 18 (usual rate)	£27.50
18 or over	£45.70

Couple	
Both under 18	£54.55
one/both over 18	£71.70

Dependent children	
Under 11	£15.65
11-15	£23.00
16-17	£27.50

Directors' pay (weekly)

British Gas	£9,134.62
Severn Trent Water	£3,757.69
British Telecom (Chairman)	£14,577.69
PowerGen	£6,738.33

Supermarket tycoon David Sainsbury last year received £31.9m in dividends on top of his £326,000 salary. Yet Sainsbury's £46 'budget basket' would cost a family on benefits half its weekly income – and still barely buy millionaire Chief Treasury Secretary Jonathan Aitken breakfast at the Ritz. The Chief Executive of British Gas' salary has just leapt 75 per cent to £475,000, while pensioners ride on buses to keep warm because they can no longer afford their heating bills.

A return to the poorhouse

"We grant you poor a right to exist, but only to exist. The right to multiply you have not, nor the right to exist as human beings" . . . thus is the expulsion of the proletariat from State and society declared, thus is it publicly proclaimed that proletarians are not human beings, and do not deserve to be treated as such.' Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England

In 1833, the ruling class, newly-empowered by the Reform Act, set about tackling the growing problem of working class unemployment and poverty. Investigating the old Poor Laws, which had, to their horror, been based on the premise that 'it was the duty of the parish to provide for the maintenance of the poor', they set about a programme of reform that was to culminate in the New Poor Laws. In a drive that would have endeared them to present day legislators such as Jonathan Aitken – who declared the poor 'too comfortable with benefits' – they found the old laws to be:

' . . . a check upon industry, a reward for improvident marriage, a stimulus to increased population . . . a national provision for discouraging the honest and industrious and protecting the lazy, vicious and improvident; calculated to destroy the bonds of family life, hinder systematically the accumulation of capital, scatter that which is already accumulated and ruin the taxpayer. Moreover, in the provision of aliment, it sets a premium upon illegitimate children.' (Report of the Poor Law Commissioners)

Workshy, feckless, immoral. This is the ideology in which capitalism always clothes its ruthless attacks on the working class. In 1833 it marked the prelude to wage cuts and the barbarity of the Workhouse. Today British capitalism is attempting to resolve its crisis through forcing the working class into the conditions of a Third World labour-force, a low-skill, low-wage economy with no employment protection, coupled with the withdrawal of any kind of safety-net for the poorest, as millions of pounds are slashed off social security spending.



Many women hold down two or three jobs just to make ends meet.

Sweatshop Britain

The growth in full-time unemployment has been matched by a rise in temporary, part-time, casualised labour, particularly among women who make up three-quarters of the low-paid. 5.47 million full-time workers (37 per cent) and 4.5 million part-time workers in Britain now subsist on 'poverty wages' – less than the decency threshold set by the Council of Europe. Within a year of the abolition of the Wages Councils, which governed rates of pay in areas such as retail, catering, hairdressing and textiles, wages in a third of these jobs have fallen. Even under the old rates, a shopworker on the highest scale earned a derisory £124 for a 39-hour week. 44.3 per cent of part-time women workers earn less than £4 an hour, many holding down two or three jobs in an attempt to make ends meet – a Herculean effort for those reliant on benefits: for every £1 extra earned, after deductions to benefit, they are a mere 32p better off. If they pay income tax and National Insurance, they will be 3p better off. A company director on £100,000 keeps 60p out of every extra pound earned.

Young people = slave labour

Three-quarters of jobs on offer nationally to young people pay less than £4 an hour, with a third paying below benefit levels. Examples in JobCentres include a sales assistant vacancy at £1.66 an hour, including Saturdays, and £96.80 per week for cleaners working six night shifts. 17-

18 year olds, unable to claim benefit, are forced into slave-labour, at as little as £2 an hour for a 40-hour week.

This situation will be exacerbated when the punitive Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) comes into force in April 1996. It extends the level of compulsion JobCentres can use against claimants, tightening 'availability/actively seeking work' regulations and forcing the unemployed to take 'any job they can reasonably be expected to do' for a *minimum* of 40 hours a week. Compulsory 'training' programmes will be expanded. JobCentres will be able to direct claimants to improve their 'employability' by, for example, altering their appearance – or lose four weeks' benefit. The message is clear – take on whatever degrading job you're offered, or lose your entitlement to benefit. At the same time the adult dependant allowance will be abolished, means-testing introduced and automatic entitlement reduced from 12 months to six. The application of IS benefit rates means those aged 18-24 face a 20 per cent cut in income. Claimants with partners who work full-time will lose entitlement to JSA at six months – again, women will be disproportionately affected.

The government expects to claw back £100m in the first year and £200m annually thereafter from some of the poorest people in Britain. 90,000 claimants are expected to lose benefit almost immediately JSA comes into force.

Meanwhile, those who cannot be coerced off the unemployment statistics into the drudgery and penury of low-paid work are to be increasingly penalised for the crime of being old, sick, disabled or having young children.

Hunger, sickness and death

Today, 11 million people live on or below current income support levels – £36.17 a week aged 18-24, rising to £45.70 at 25. The value of these benefits has already fallen from 26 per cent of full-time male earnings in 1979 to 19 per cent for a married couple, and from 16 to 12 per cent for a single person.

Those with children, in particular, are increasingly unable to survive on state benefits. IS child allowance for a child under 11 works out at £2.22 per day. The gap between income support rates and a low-cost budget is £23 per week for a lone parent with two children, £4 for a couple – a situation facing 1.57m families, with 2.97m children, at the end of 1993.

Disability and sickness are no protection from the government onslaught. From April, Invalidity Benefit (IVB) will be replaced by Incapacity Benefit, with much harsher eligibility conditions. Up to a quarter of a million people are set to lose benefits altogether; eligibility will depend on whether you can do any job to which you are 'reasonably suited' after being assessed by government-appointed doctors. At least 200,000 people currently on IVB are likely to fail the new test, with 60-70,000 fewer qualifying after that. Those who do qualify will not receive any payments for dependent partners for a year. The Child Poverty Action Group estimates claimants with families could lose up to £64 a week as a result. Meanwhile, government ministers manoeuvred this year to block a Bill that would have allowed disabled people greater access to employment as an unacceptable 'burden on industry'.

But perhaps no group has been as severely attacked as the elderly. While the richest pensioners saw their incomes grow by 40 per cent during the 1980s, this was matched by a rise of only 5 per cent for the poorest. The introduction of VAT on fuel bills – to be followed by higher gas bills for those not paying by direct debit, a direct discrimination

against the poorest – has left pensioners unable to afford adequate heating. A really cold winter will be a death sentence for many. The chronically ill are almost routinely ejected from hospital wards into private nursing homes (paid for by their relatives) or simply sent home to die. As budget-conscious GPs trawl their registers for unprofitable patients to strike off, the elderly are frequently the first victims. Local councils now charge for home helps and many old people live in conditions of freezing squalor without food or human contact. The much-heralded Social Commission for Justice document, a likely blueprint for a future Labour government, states: 'There is no question of the state being able to meet the chronic needs of the elderly' – and suggests the young start making provision now for their old age. This is an unofficial policy of murdering the old.

A denial of human rights

The human costs of resurgent poverty are all around us. 80 per cent of street beggars are in receipt of social security benefit but unable to survive on it. The infant mortality rate for the poorest sections of society is rising – in West Birmingham, it is 11.6 per 1,000 live births, compared to 4.6 in middle-class Barnet. Crime has risen 80 per cent, and violent crime 90 per cent in the last 10 years – with the poorest, as ever, bearing the brunt. The number of children being taken into care is up 30 per cent.



Yet these bare figures cannot begin to give adequate expression to the endless grind which poverty imposes. The terror of 70-year-olds who have never been in debt in their lives, facing Poll Tax arrears and menacing letters from bailiffs threatening to seize and auction their goods if they do not pay up. The elderly women who, because of the hopeless inefficiency of the Housing Benefit system, suddenly receive eviction notices from the home they have lived in for 30 years. The endless drudgery of form-filling, rude and inefficient authorities who pry into your life. Serious illness going untreated because families are too caught up in the labyrinth of working out which benefits they are entitled to and how to get them. Women getting up at 4am and working to nightfall as chambermaids and cleaners to scrape together £100 a week. For them, the 'right to exist as human beings' has indeed been denied.

This is capitalism writ large, in its most savage and brutal form. Work, if you can, for a pittance, or go hungry, homeless, sick, or die. In 1844, Engel's study of the dire poverty facing the working class in Britain led him to conclude that 'our present social conditions are good for nothing.' Today we must conclude the same.

This article will be discussed by North London FRFI on Monday 19 December 7.30pm at the Neighbourhood Advice Centre, Greenland Rd, London NW1 (Camden Tube) and by South London FRFI on Tuesday 10 January, 7.30pm at the Selkirk Arms, Selkirk Rd, SW17 (Tooting Broadway tube).

East Timor

Britain backs genocide

FRANCIS SQUIRE

The plight of the Maubere people of East Timor hit the headlines on 12 November when 29 activists occupied the US embassy in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, during a visit by President Clinton. The demonstrators demanded the release of Xanana Gusmao, leader of the East Timorese National Council of Maubere Resistance, who has been a prisoner of Suharto's regime since 1991. The demonstrators requested a meeting with Clinton, but the President made a few pious comments on human rights and refused to meet them.

Since Indonesia invaded East Timor (still considered a Portuguese Colony by the UN) in 1975, one third of the island's population has been annihilated. Torture, political detentions and mass killings remain an everyday occurrence.

As John Pilger has documented, a critical component of the genocide of the Timorese people is the British state. Britain is the largest supplier of arms to Suharto's killer regime. British-built Hawk aircraft, easily recognisable by their beak-like noses, are frequently used against the Maubere people. The Foreign Office claims that Hawks are for training purposes only, but British Aerospace, in its promotional material for Indonesia, claims that Hawks are 'designed from the outset with a significant ground attack capability' and Indonesia's weapons chief BJ Habibie has said that Hawks will be 'not only used to train pilots, but for ground attack.'

The sale of British Hawks to Indonesia was first approved by Labour's Foreign Secretary David Owen in 1978. He claimed that Indonesian attacks on East Timor were declining, when in fact the reverse was true. The snowball that Labour set in motion grew considerably during the Thatcher years. In August 1991, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd called on Europe

to cut aid to governments who 'violate human rights'. Three months later the Indonesian government massacred up to 400 peaceful demonstrators in Dili, East Timor's capital. Seven months later Britain pledged £81m in aid to Indonesia, followed by a deal for more Hawk aircraft. This murderous trade continues and recent reports indicate Britain is preparing a massive £2bn arms deal with Indonesia.

In 1995, Britain is planning a naval tour of South East Asia to promote further arms sales in the area. Labour has been a will-

ing sponsor of Britain's killing industry. In 1966, the then Labour government formed the Defence Sales Organisation at the Ministry of Defence. Dennis Healey defended it saying 'we must take what practical steps we can to ensure that this country does not fail to secure its rightful share of this valuable market.' He later sent SAS forces to help the Indonesian regime.



Demonstrators, including John Pilger, outside the Indonesian embassy, London

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As traditional British industries declined, the arms industry has boomed. Today one in ten British manufacturing workers are employed in the industry, with the MOD as its biggest customer, and Britain's share in the world's arms market is second only to the USA. Thatcher's

World 'from dictators who can actually cause damage to our civilised West.'

Meanwhile the Maubere people continue to resist Indonesian oppression. As we go to press, the US embassy occupation continues as do demonstrations and other protests. Xanana has written to Nelson Mandela, whose government also supplies arms to Indonesia, explaining how the South African struggle inspired the East Timor people and appealing to Mandela to halt arms exports to Indonesia. East Timor needs our support since Britain is, as one Maubere resistance fighter put it, 'the single worst obstructionist' of the industrial countries.

World 'from dictators who can actually cause damage to our civilised West.'

Ferry disaster Profit before safety

EGIL HJELMERVIK

During a stormy night on 28 September the roll-on roll-off ferry, *Estonia*, sank in the Baltic sea in less than 20 minutes. 912 people died in this, the biggest European sea disaster since the Second World War.

In 1987 another similar ferry, the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, capsized having left port with its bow doors open. Both these ships (and hundreds like them) have huge vehicle access doors back and front and vast car decks not divided by water tight compartments. The inherent instability of this design has been recognised for years, yet the ferry operators resist safety modification because it would interfere with their profits.

The people who died on the *Estonia* were either trapped in their cabins or died of exposure in the water. There were 70 14-year-old rafts but there was not time to lower them into the water given the speed of the capsizing. They floated upside down on the water without ladders to get people on board or systems to bale them out.

According to the operators, the *Estonia's* doors were checked before she left port and found to be in 'almost perfect condition'. The reality is that the doors could not withstand rough weather, and with 1,000 tons of water washing around, the ship was fatally destabilised.

With roll-on roll-off ferries continuing to be used, further disasters are likely.

DANISH POLICE OPEN FIRE

In 1992 the Danish people rejected the Maastricht treaty in a referendum. This created a crisis in the EC and the Danes were allowed various opt-outs from the treaty and a further referendum was held.

As a result of this new referendum, rioting on a scale not seen since the Second World War broke out in the Norrebro district of Copenhagen. Unemployed squatters, anarchists and left-wingers fought the police using bricks and petrol bombs and raising barricades. The police fired warning shots over their heads and then fired into the crowd seriously injuring several people.

Since then, the police have denied that the order to fire was given. But video recordings show senior police ordering 'fire at their legs'. It is unlikely that the police will suffer more than a reprimand.

Egil Hjelmervik

Palestine

Arafat colludes with Israel

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

Yasser Arafat, once a symbol of the Palestinian people's anti-Zionist struggle, is finishing up his career as a collaborationist Chief of Police for the Israeli occupation of the Gaza and the West Bank. When the Palestinian-Israeli 'peace process' was signed in 1993, Abdullah Hourani, an independent PLO Executive member stated that: 'This agreement transforms the Palestinian autonomy authority into a repression apparatus against our people in favour of Israel.'

The murder of 12 Palestinians and wounding of another 250 on 18 November by Yasser Arafat's National Authority Police was a terrible confirmation of this. In fact, this massacre was only the most brutal in a string of Arafat police operations against the Islamic fundamentalists of Hamas. Prompted by their Israeli masters, Arafat's police have set themselves the priority task of protecting Israeli security. The crackdown on Hamas is designed to halt further attacks, such as that which took place on 19 October when a suicide bomber killed 22 Israelis in Tel Aviv.

All the cynical, deceitful babble about 'democracy and prosperity' to follow the Israeli-PLO accord has been exposed as the sham it always was. Promises of international aid and investment were designed only to entice the PLO into ending the Palestinian people's struggle, which represented a threat to imperialist oil and financial

stakes in the region. Once this was achieved, and the 'peace' accords signed, all the promises were thrown into the dustbin.

So far only \$140m of the promised \$700m World Bank aid has been disbursed. Most of it has gone on financing the Palestinian Authority and its 9,000-strong police force. UN officials are urging donors to immediately provide a further \$120m until March 1995 - to pay for the police! For, as the *Financial Times* noted, 'a properly paid police force is essential'



Meanwhile, according to UN official Terje Larsen, living standards in the Gaza are 'falling like lead'. Over 50 per cent are unemployed and more than 30 per cent live below the poverty line of \$470 a year. The situation is daily aggravated by Israel shutting out tens of thousands of Gazans dependent on work in Israel.

As for the 'peace plan', it is in tatters. Extending 'autonomy' to the West Bank as a whole has been delayed, as have the elections. Israel has only paid out Shk20m of Shk180m it owes the Palestinian Authority from VAT payments it still collects. Promises to release political

prisoners have been reneged on while Israeli repression is intensifying with curfews, house arrests, assassinations, and collective punishments such as home demolitions. The brutal and depraved character of the occupation was shown during a curfew imposed on Sirri, just outside Hebron. Israeli soldiers went round using loudhailers to shout obscenities such as 'We will fuck your sisters!' 'We'll have a good time with your women; and the men, we'll kill.'

In the face of mounting poverty and the collaborationism of the Arafat authorities, opposition is gaining ground fast. Socialists, however take no comfort from the fact that Hamas is leading popular opposition. Hamas leaders are engaged in secret negotiations with both the Israeli government and Arafat. Its reactionary position on women is sufficient to condemn it as being totally anti-democratic. Long ago, a Hamas leader admitted 'We are the creation of Israel, they helped us'. Israel supported Islamic fundamentalism to undermine the PLO and its left wing in particular. Tal'at Lafi, left-wing Palestinian trade union leader, remembers how Israeli soldiers sealed off his neighbourhood and held his comrades at bay while fundamentalist forces beat him to pulp. Today Hamas is riding a tidal wave of support. But, as its own reactionary policies are revealed, the Palestinian exploited and oppressed will build their own political instrument with which to fight both Zionism and its local bourgeois collaborators.

Ireland

Get the troops out

SARAH BOND

Since the IRA ceasefire on 31 August, the Six Counties continue to be occupied by 32,000 British army personnel. 296 heavily armed Army or RUC installations remain. Repression for nationalists has if anything increased.

Incidents include:

17 September: the RUC fired plastic bullets into a Catholic crowd. One RUC officer was heard to shout, 'Let's have some fun'.

17 September: four terrified Catholic children, aged eight to eleven, were held at gunpoint against a wall by heavily armed RUC.

17/18 September: British soldiers slashed the tyres of 27 cars in the nationalist Turf Lodge area.

30 September: plastic bullets fired by British troops left a youth in intensive care with a fractured skull and massive bruising to the rear of his brain.

8 October: Seamus Hurl from Moortown was kicked and punched unconscious by British troops at a roadblock.

12 October: a nationalist family's home was ransacked in a four-and-a-half hour raid by RUC and paratroopers. Local residents quickly gathered in an impromptu demonstration.

30 October: RUC attacked a

peaceful demonstration against an Orange Order parade through an area which is 100 per cent Catholic.

2 November: nationalist Michael Conlon was held for two days by the RUC. He says he was 'interrogated, slapped and beaten on the body and arms, kicked on the legs' and offered bribes to become an informer. A few weeks earlier, a patrol had raided and wrecked Conlon's home.

5 November: a British army patrol attacked local people in Newry with rifle butts and batons. Five local men then found themselves arrested and charged by the RUC.

16 November: a young Catholic man had to be hospitalised following an attack by British soldiers as he walked along the road.

Repression has been stepped up in the South, too. On 22 October, the Gardai carried out dawn raids on more than 50 houses in what the *Irish Independent* described as a 'pre-emptive strike against republican groups opposed to the IRA ceasefire'. The raids were aimed at members of Republican Sinn Fein and, according to the Gardai, a new military organisation called the Irish National Republican Army.

Meanwhile, scandals have exposed the corrupt reality of

Dublin and Westminster. Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds had to resign after appointing Harry Whelehan as President of the High Court. Whelehan was being rewarded for defending Dublin's broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein in the European Court, and for preventing disclosure of Cabinet discussions to the tribunal investigating corrupt payments to Larry Goodman, beef baron and friend of ex-Fianna Fail leader Charlie Haughey. But for seven months Whelehan had ignored an extradition warrant for a paedophile priest, something which to the public smacked of the old collusion between Church and State. This alliance characterised the old agrarian society: Ireland is now a modern capitalist society, with a third of its population living in Dublin. Change is being forced on the political elite and Albert Reynolds represents the past.

Whichever party rules in Dublin (or Westminster), the current peace fraud seems set to remain in place. Whilst the IRA ceasefire continues, the British state is stepping up its repression of working class nationalist areas.

Talks with Sinn Fein are still promised before Christmas, but it is clear that while British troops remain on Irish soil, there can be no peace.

Why we are on hunger strike

Ronahi (16) and Medya (20) are Kurdish women who participated in the three-week picket of the Home Office called by Kurdish supporters of Kani Yilmaz. They spent 8 and 9 days respectively on hunger strike. FRFI spoke to them about the campaign.

'We didn't go on hunger strike just because our representative was arrested, but because in Kurdistan so many people are dying at the command of the Turkish state, killed simply because they are Kurds. So we went on hunger strike to draw attention to the fact that an attack on Kani Yilmaz is not just an attack on an individual but also on a nation - 30 million Kurds.

Hundreds of thousands of Kurds have had to flee Kurdistan, mainly driven out because of the torture inflicted by the Turkish state which means Kurds cannot be comfortable in their own land - even if they are not involved in politics at all, just for being Kurds.

We think the British state arrested Kani Yilmaz partly because of pressure from Germany and France, who have taken action against Kurds and banned the PKK and now expect Britain to react. But England also has a lot of profit in Kurdistan, and the Turkish state pushed them to do it.

We need the political support of the British people. The British people talk a lot about "democracy" - they have a lot of faith in parliamentary democracy. So we say to them, well, we are fighting for democracy for a people who are oppressed. We are fighting for a democratic, independent state of Kurdistan. Prove your belief in democracy by showing support for our struggle and putting pressure on the British state. ■



Towards Europol

'Britain's MI5 has built up particularly strong links to Germany's domestic intelligence agency, BFV,' *Financial Times* 22 November 1993. Both agencies now work with the Turkish secret service MIT and pass on information about asylum seekers and political opponents of the Turkish state to it. In her maiden public speech as head of MI5, Stella Rimington named only one other potential source of terrorism in Britain besides the IRA - the Kurds. MI5 now directs part of police Special Branch work.

Kani Yilmaz and the Kurds are being used to test a new Europol police and intelligence network that was incorporated into the Maastricht Treaty. Germany wants this Europol to be a European-wide force, like the USA's FBI. The British government prefers a decentralised intergovernmental arrangement which will preserve the key role of the European Liaison Unit of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch in combating 'terrorism'. No doubt the Home Office will present the case of Kani Yilmaz as demonstrating why the Liaison Unit must not be bypassed by the Hague or Brussels. Trevor Rayne

KURDS RESIST ATTACKS IN BRITAIN



The seizure and imprisonment of Kani Yilmaz, European Representative of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), by the British state, is a very serious attack upon the Kurdish community and the democratic rights of all people in this country. Since Kani Yilmaz's arrest on 26 October, the Kurdish community has responded with inspiring protest and resistance. Socialists and democrats in Britain must defend them against a sinister campaign of criminalisation, argues TREVOR RAYNE.

Kani Yilmaz was seized by Metropolitan Police on the way to a meeting of MPs and Lords at the Houses of Parliament. He was detained under the National Security provision of the 1971 Immigration Act. What threat Kani Yilmaz posed to Britain's security was never stated. This was the third recent visit he had made to this country. Home Secretary Michael Howard said that Kani Yilmaz's entry into the country was 'erroneous'; he had earlier directed he should be excluded because of 'his involvement in terrorist activity.' However, Kani Yilmaz was ushered through immigration control by officials who were expecting him, and to whom he showed letters of invitation to speak at the Commons.

He was taken to Rochester prison where 89 of the inmates went on hunger strike in solidarity with Kani Yilmaz and elected him their spokesperson. The Home Office transferred him to Belmarsh prison. While there, a civil rights worker from Liberty was removed by prison officers when he attempted to tape a conversation with Kani Yilmaz.

On 11 November Kani Yilmaz's status was reclassified under the European Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 1978, and the 1989 Immigration Act, following an application from the German government for his extradition. This removed the possibility of him appearing before a panel of three national security advisers who would decide his case. Kani Yilmaz was then transferred to Brixton prison.

On 17 November, Kani Yilmaz appeared at Bow Street Magistrates Court to hear the extradition order. The prosecutor said he had received

no papers relating to the case from Germany! Proceedings were adjourned until 28 November. Somehow better informed than the prosecutor, Radio 4's 1 o'clock news said that Kani Yilmaz was wanted for arson in Germany.

Kani Yilmaz has had refugee status and lived openly in Germany since 1991, when he left Turkey after being imprisoned for ten years and being severely tortured. The German police could have arrested Kani Yilmaz at any time they wanted to, had they any evidence against him. Kani Yilmaz has been in twelve European countries in the recent period, on public speaking engagements. None of them saw fit to arrest and imprison him.

Kurds respond

The Kurdish community's response was impressive. They started a non-stop protest and hunger strike outside the Home Office. Over 100 Kurds maintained the hunger strike, supported by hundreds more of their friends from 26 October to 17 November.

The Kurds had to resist periodic police harassment and intimidation. Banners were removed, megaphones forbidden, people followed or prevented from parking their cars, shelters pulled aside.

The RCG sent out a call to the left groups in Britain to rally on 4 November at the protest. Only the Colin Roach Centre from Hackney responded. RCG members and supporters regularly visited the protest.

Up to 2,000 Kurds and their supporters gathered outside Bow Street Magistrates Court on 17 November. Police in riot gear appeared. The

demonstrators were told that they had two minutes to take down a banner of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. The demonstrators refused. Police grabbed those holding the banner. When demonstrators attempted to protect their friends, the police laid into them with their new long truncheons. People were dragged across the road and beaten up in front of the Royal Opera House. Many people were bitten by police dogs. Two were hospitalised with head injuries; five were arrested. The police inspector said they would not be charged. They were, with assaulting the police. Since when has putting up a banner justified riot police, broken heads and police dogs?

The attack on Kani Yilmaz and the demonstrators is part of a targeting of the Kurdish and Turkish communities. British imperialism is too close an ally of the Turkish state and the Kurdish and Turkish people here are too political a section of the working class for the British state not to select them for special treatment.

A large open and democratic campaign must be built to support the Kurdish and Turkish people in Britain. It is necessary for British socialists to reach out and organise with the Kurds and Turks, but it is also necessary for the Kurdish and Turkish organisations to go out to the people in Britain and draw them to their struggle.

The British state is determined to prevent this. It wants to criminalise the PKK and its supporters, and isolate them from human rights activists and from socialists in Britain, just as it seeks to isolate and replace the PKK in Kurdistan with a reliable puppet that does not challenge the Middle Eastern status quo. ■

Defend Kurdish prisoners

In August Cafer Kovaycin, Hikmet Bozat and Zervet Ozen were convicted of petrol-bombing Turkish banks in London. Zervet Ozen, who is 19 years old, was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment; the other two men to 15 years each. All three are Kurdish and had sought political asylum in Britain. The judge who sentenced them recommended they be deported to Turkey at the end of their terms. This was tantamount to recommending their execution by the Turkish state, but the enemies of the Kurdish people were not prepared to wait that long.

On 10 October Cafer Kovaycin was attacked in Swaleside prison by two other prisoners who poured boiling oil over him. He sustained 23 per cent burns to his face, back and arms. He was taken to hospital by armed police and prison officers, who told the doctor he was a terrorist. The Kurdish community are certain this was a deliberate murder attempt, paid for by Turkish agents. TREVOR RAYNE and NICK JAMESON spoke to Cafer Kovaycin's brother, Nizamettin.

Nizamettin: I hold the prison authorities responsible. They allowed it to happen. We believe it was organised by the Turkish Consulate and that the prisoner who organised the incident was paid. The attack was planned for both my brother and for Hikmet Bozat. But on the day they didn't have enough time to get both of them.

After he was attacked my brother was taken to seven hospitals but none would accept him. Finally he was taken into a hospital where a doctor said that if the burns were just five degrees worse he wouldn't have lived.

How long was Cafer in hospital?

Two weeks. According to the doctor he should have remained in there for at least six weeks but, on the day Kani Yilmaz was arrested, Cafer was immediately taken back to prison. According to the authorities he is now in the medical part of the prison but it's just a bare dark room with no treatment.

How was he treated while he was in hospital?

He wasn't treated properly. He lost a lot of weight and a lot of blood. He was kept under constant guard, first by special armed police and then by two prison officers at a time. He was chained by his leg to the bed; they couldn't have chained his arms because of the severity of the injuries.

Then he was sent back to the same prison he was attacked in. The same prisoners are still there. I went to see the governor and asked him what he was going to do. He answered 'We know what did it and we are also charging the one who paid for it'. And he asked me, 'Do you think that the Turkish Consulate would give money to those prisoners?' I said, 'You know more about these things than me'.

On 23 November Cafer Kovaycin was returned to hospital. He has been denied legal aid. The RCG will support all initiatives in solidarity with Kurdish prisoners in British gaols and to publicise their situation. We believe that both the punitive sentence lengths and the ease with which the murder attempt against Cafer Kovaycin was carried out demonstrate the lengths to which the British government and its apparatus are prepared to go to please the Turkish state. FRFI readers are encouraged to write letters of solidarity to Cafer Kovaycin, HM Swaleside, Brabazon Road, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent ME2 4AX; Hikmet Bozat, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5T and Zervet Ozen, HMYOI Aylesbury, Bierton Road, Aylesbury, Bucks.

FRFI is asking prisoners to support the Kurdish prisoners in any way they can. If there are further attacks or these prisoners are suddenly moved, please contact us immediately.

Even those teachers working at the sharp end of these reforms have been unable to grasp what has been happening, beyond an apparent attack on their autonomy and a huge bureaucratic imposition on their workload. Their sense of fiasco and sheer bloody-mindedness on the part of Tory governments has been heightened by the frequent changes to the plans and the seemingly seasonal departure of education ministers.

Consequently, many teachers and their unions, with a feeling of relief that common sense had prevailed at last, welcomed the Dearing Report. This promises to make minor adjustments to the curriculum and testing arrangements and freeze further changes for the next five years.

In fact the Dearing review sets the seal on the Tory reforms: they now become the status quo. And as if to emphasise the victory of the Tory plans, Dearing suggests the reintroduction of bipartite education at the age of 14.

Some teachers had hoped that a future Labour government might reverse the reforms. The recent Labour education policy white paper, however, makes it quite clear they will leave the reforms largely intact. This should come as no surprise, for the reforms, as we shall see, originated in the Labour government of the late 1970s. Despite the clumsiness with which they have been handled, these reforms are not the rag-bag collection of half-baked ideas that they may appear. They constitute a major attempt to restructure state education to the needs of British capitalism in crisis; a capitalism with which Labour, as always, will collaborate.

The main purposes of these reforms are:

1. To direct the aims of education exclusively to the needs of the economy and to eradicate any countervailing views of education, for instance, a life-enhancing or critical pursuit.
2. To provide a system for the more efficient selection and training of the greater numbers of advanced technical, managerial and scientific workers required by modern business and industry.
3. To defuse and control the transition from school to 'work', particularly for working class youth; a period always fraught with volatility and rebellious threats to the establishment but especially so in a period of mass youth unemployment.
4. To infuse the education system with the ideology of capitalism; with individualism and competition; with the social relations of the market place.
5. To maintain the system of private education as an elite pathway for the children of the ruling class. None of the main reforms have been imposed on the private sector, but one of the earlier reforms provided assisted places at public schools for 'bright' youngsters from the state sector. This scheme creams off about 20 per cent of those children who would study two or more 'A' levels in state schools and, for example, transferred over £59m from state to public schools in 1989-90. Although Labour might end the assisted places scheme they have no intention of dismantling the private sector.

To understand how the reforms are to achieve these ends it is necessary to view the education system, not from the generally liberal, or even classical academic standpoint of most teachers, but from the perspective of British capitalism.

The perspective of capitalism

The chief values of state schools for capitalism are the following:

1. Training

Schools are expected to provide the minimal level of education required in most jobs, and to prepare some children for the advanced training required in technical, scientific and managerial posts. (For capitalists, other people are labour, the source of their profit. Training is the only component of education that adds to labour's value-creating capacity, so we should expect it to be an educational priority for capitalism.)

2. Discipline

Capitalism requires workers not only

Learning your Education for a divide

The past 10 years have seen a bewildering array of educational reforms. The changes in schools include: the assessment and testing of children from the age of four; the transfer of school management to headteachers; encouragement of schools to opt out of local authority control (grant-maintained schools); a free choice of introduction of specialist secondary schools and City Technology Colleges sponsored by industry and a major restructuring of the system. Education is in turmoil: JIM CRAVEN reports.

with the right training but also with the right attitudes. Capitalists require of their workers punctuality, subordination of spirit to routine, submission of will to authority, diligence, effort and concentration. It is no coincidence that schools mirror the forms and organisation of the capitalist workplace. They developed as such, largely in response to the same sort of social relations.

3. Stratification

Production under capitalism is divided into a variety and hierarchy of jobs. Capitalism requires some means of preparing people to fit into the different levels of this hierarchy.

The educational process plays an important part in shaping (usually limiting) the self-image and ambitions of children as future workers - particularly in helping to channel girls into domesticity, part-time work or 'traditional' women's jobs, and in damning black youth to the most menial jobs or to unemployment.

The main vehicle by which education assists in the stratification of the workforce, however, is the system of educational tests, qualifications and reports. These accredit a hierarchy of job expectations and provide a rule of thumb basis for employers to select their categories of worker.

4. Disarming the working class

Not only does capitalism need efficient and appropriate labour, it also needs to disarm working class discontent. How can capitalism deny a liberating education for the majority of children and prepare them for a life of wage-slavery without incurring the wrath of the working class?

Well, of course, there are many ways it does this, from media brainwashing to a police bashing, but education uses a more subtle approach for it invokes the collaboration of the working class.

The capitalist education system stresses the individual rather than the social nature of learning and sets individuals to compete for better grades, certificates and hence for better job prospects. At the same time it upholds the theory that initial differences in children are mainly due to 'natural talents'. The educational process is defined as fulfilling each child's 'potential' and great propaganda effort is expended in maintaining that the system provides 'equal opportunities'.

Thus the differential outcomes of the educational system can be explained in terms of effort and ability. Capitalism can lay the blame for a child's failure at her own feet. In this way inequality and privilege are justified and poverty is attributed to personal failure. The structural inequalities and oppressions of the class system are disguised.

Of course, many working class youngsters recognise the system for what it is and they drop out. Their disruptive reaction has always posed a threat to the stability of the system. However, enough people, particularly from the middle class and labour aristocracy, are willing

to compete for individual gain and social mobility for the system to remain viable.

5. Propaganda and ideology

Marx points out that the dominant ideas in any society will be those of the dominant class. Capitalists view it as natural that schools should perpetuate their world view in the interests of truth and freedom as they see it. Schools may do so through both the taught curriculum and the pattern of values and relationships stemming from the organisation and ethos of the school.

The extent to which this occurs as degree of coercion exercised by the capitalist state which in turn will depend on the political difficulties facing capitalism. Until recently, the British state has avoided too much interference in the school curriculum, preferring to rely on their ideological collaborators inside education. The fact that the state has now imposed a National Curriculum is perhaps indicative of the depth of the present crisis.

Of course, there are contradictions between different sections of the bourgeoisie, each pursuing its own interests under cover of its own particular brand of bourgeois ideology. Some values, however, are central to capitalism and these, amongst others, the whole bourgeoisie wish to see propagated. They include individualism as opposed to communality, competition, patriarchy, the right to profit at the expense of others, the naturalness of inequality, reformism not revolution, and the bourgeois view of history.

One of the reasons the educational reforms of the last 10 years seem so irrational to many middle class teachers and parents is that they appear so radically counterposed to the education system of the 1960s and 1970s in which they themselves went to school or began their careers. The educational settlement of that period came to be viewed by many of them as 'natural' or 'common sense' education. The ideological battle for the capitalist state, however, is always to establish reforms as 'common sense', and that battle is now being won over the present reforms, once more with the complicity of the Labour Party. In fact, the educational settlement of the 1960s was no less a restructuring of state education to meet the needs of capitalism at that time.

By the early 1960s the post-war boom was over. Economic growth was sluggish, rates of profit and capital accumulation were falling, and unemployment was rising. Part of the problem was low productivity, due to outmoded industry and lack of domestic investment. The solution proposed was ideologically encapsulated in the ideal of 'modernisation'.

Education had an important role to play in this. It had to produce more scientific and technical experts as well as raise the 'skill' level of all workers. Education was seen as an investment in 'human capital'; in the intellectual and cultural quality of labour power. Education spending



'A central tenet of the new thinking was to eradicate any egalitarian concept of education'

rose by 242.9 per cent in the 20 years up to 1972 and took twice as much of GNP in 1969 as it did in 1955.

The perceived need to train more technical experts and to encourage qualities such as adaptability and initiative, had some effect on opening up both the curriculum and the relationships between teachers and pupils. Although the so-called child-centred and discovery learning methods were more an adjustment of classroom control techniques to these new relationships, these changes in curriculum and relationships and roles gave the flavour of what became known as 'progressive' education.

It may well be true that 'progressive' education gave a little scope for progressive teachers to challenge capitalist social relations and to offer periods of critical assessment of the system. For the most part, however, the reforms merely adjusted training, stratification and discipline to the perceived needs of capitalism at that time. The working class were kept in their place. It was the bourgeoisie middle class and labour aristocracy and, in particular, white-collar workers in the state sector, such as teachers themselves, who benefited most from the system.

Scapegoat for failure

By the mid 1970s it was clear that the structural problems of British capitalism

could not be resolved by the policies of the 1960s. Education had been lauded as the key to modernisation in the 1960s, and so was to become a scapegoat for the failures of the 1970s.

Enter Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan, who in a speech at Ruskin College in October 1976 initiated the so-called Great Debate on education. The central theme was that schooling should be subordinated to the requirements of the economy. Any residual allusions to schooling for other purposes were finally abandoned. The main issues concerned control of the curriculum, assessment of standards, the training and autonomy of teachers and the links between schools, industry and working life.

Callaghan attempted to align the interests of the people with those of capitalism. At Ruskin, he said 'What a wise parent would wish for their children, so the state must wish for all children.'

In the context, parents' interests were to be represented through the rational organisation, by the state, of the school to work transition and the matching of the appropriate skills and aptitudes to the needs of the labour market. Schooling and its social purposes were therefore to be politically subordinated to the perceived needs of a capitalist economy in the throes of crisis. A restructuring was required because of the failure of schools to fulfil the older social democratic equa-

place ed society

the imposition of a National Curriculum with
ers and governors (local management); the
schools for parents (open enrolment); the
major expansion of pre-vocational training in schools.



tion that investment in education would produce economic benefits. In essence the purposes of education remained the same but as the capitalist crisis deepened they were to be pursued with a ruthlessness hitherto unheard of.

In 1977 the Labour government issued a Green Paper outlining the need for an agreed curriculum, assessment of performance at pupil, teacher and school level and closer ties between school and work. Labour was, however, politically too close to local authorities and the educational establishment (many Labour MPs were at that time teachers and lecturers) to make rapid progress with implementation. They did, through the MSC, a non-educational body, begin taking closer control of the school-to-work transition. By the early 1980s, the MSC had initiated a variety of vocational preparation schemes entailing a mixture of education and training in and out of school. This often included tuition in the Orwellian sounding 'Life skills' which entailed engineering youngsters' image and behaviour to that required of the work place. The MSC also pioneered direct intrusion of business interests into the curriculum through vocational education schemes, sponsored schools and business links through mini-enterprise schemes and industrial placements for teachers. These activities are now co-ordinated by the Training and

Enterprise Council.

It was left to Tory governments to carry through the bulk of Labour's strategy for schools. To do this the DES demanded central control. Their thinking at this time can be seen in the following excerpts from interviews with top department officials:

'Our focus must be on the strategic questions of the content, shape and purpose of the whole educational system and absolutely central to that is the curriculum. We would like legislative powers over the curriculum and the power to control the exam system.'

'There has to be selection because we are beginning to create aspirations which society cannot match.'

'We have to select: to ration the educational opportunities so that society can cope with the output of education.'

'We are in a period of considerable social change. There may be social unrest, but we can cope with the Toxteths, but if we have a highly educated and idle population, we may possibly anticipate more serious social conflict. People must be educated once more to know their place.'

To achieve central control the DES first had to ditch the other partners in the settlement of the 1960s. The local authorities were already under wider attack from the Tory government and specifically educational policies were introduced to cripple their influence within state education.

One of the first acts of the Tories was to wind up the Schools Council – the main driving force of curriculum development which had become dominated by teachers in the 1970s. Keith Joseph, describing teachers as 'agents', made it clear that from then on teachers were to lose much of their autonomy, carry out the policies of others and become more accountable.

A central tenet of the new thinking was to eradicate any egalitarian concept of education and to differentiate the hierarchy of educational credentials in order to match the workforce more precisely to 'their place' in the social order. At the same time, it was important to secure the selection of an educational elite for the top scientific, technical and managerial posts. All this had to be achieved without exposing the myth of a meritocratic system.

The creation of an elite

To begin with, the Tories toyed with the idea of reintroducing selective education directly. When this proved politically impossible they looked for other means. Keith Joseph said:

'If...selection between schools is largely out, then I emphasise that there must be differentiation within schools.'

The Tories also hoped to generate differential levels of excellence by means of

market forces, through the mechanism of parental choice, so that 'good' schools would cream off the best pupils. Their initial idea of a voucher system appeared unworkable (the DES told them so), so they looked to implement alternative market mechanisms within the state system, as well as circumventing the state system with new types of school.

By 1987 the main features of Tory policy were defined and these were initiated by the Education Reform Act 1988. Each feature of the reforms plays its part in selection, in stratifying and training the workforce; in disciplining young people to the needs of capitalism and mass youth unemployment and in generating commitment (or subservience) to the ideology of capitalism and the relations of the market place.

National Curriculum, Assessment and Training

The DES officials were quite correct in recognising control of the curriculum as the key to their strategy. A controlled curriculum allows some subjects to be defined as the most important (maths, English and science – the 'core' subjects); for other economically and ideologically important subjects to be made compulsory (eg technology, information technology, RE and cross-curriculum themes such as education for industrial understanding, and citizenship), and for other subjects to be marginalised or excluded (eg peace studies, English literature and media studies). It also allows the context of each subject to be defined (of particular note here is the history syllabus, dominated by British history) and allows little scope for progressive teachers to introduce critical material.

A pre-defined curriculum also is essential in order for it to be broken down into levels of attainment. These small steps encourage a mechanistic approach and further limit the creative interaction between teacher and pupil. More importantly the levels of attainment are a prerequisite for the regular assessment, testing and labelling of children on a basis which can be held out to parents and children as fair and equal. Children will begin to 'know their place' from the age of four. Testing at 11 will provide a simplistic way of selecting and streaming children at secondary school; or even earlier, since this process has already begun in many primary schools on the basis of national curriculum levels of attainment.

By the age of 14 (if Dearing has his way), National Curriculum achievements will be used to select pupils for one of two routes through the exam system – academic or vocational. As with the old 11+, we all know where most of the working class will finish up.

The National Curriculum, and the associated assessment and testing, not only determine what is to be taught but provide a powerful means of selecting and stratifying children. In as much as parents and children come to recognise attainment in the National Curriculum as a precondition for entry to higher examination levels, it is likely to encourage greater individual effort and competitiveness and consequently greater commitment to the system. Since the National Curriculum is pronounced to be the same for all children (an 'entitlement', no less!) failure can be more surely attributed to the individual.

Local management of schools

By transferring responsibility for financial and personnel management to schools the role of LEAs has been greatly undermined. Schools have been forced to become more commercially minded. Headteachers have become managers and schools have been opened up to the culture of business.

Grant-maintained schools

By opting out of local authority control, grant-maintained (GM) schools have accelerated the demise of LEAs. GM schools, being more independent, also allow greater penetration of business mentality. It must not be thought, however, that either local management or GM status provide any escape from central control. On the contrary, as LEA influence wanes schools are left even more exposed to the edicts of central government who indirectly or directly also con-



Harrow schoolboys: 'maintaining an elite pathway for children of the ruling class'

trol the purse strings.

Opting out has been encouraged by government and GM schools are given more generous funding. There can be no doubt that it is hoped that by gaining an advantage GM schools will attract 'brighter' pupils and eventually become centres of excellence that will then begin to select their pupils.

Open enrolment

A parent can now choose to send her child to any school where there is a place, not just to her local school. Of course, in practice this is far more feasible for middle class parents with more time, transport and money than it is for the poor.

It is hailed as freedom of choice for parents. But this is only the freedom of the individual consumer to choose the goods on offer. When parents' organisations began criticising the goods the government were offering, their views were damned as 'Neanderthal' by John Patten.

Parental choice has, however, a crucial role to play in generating a selective system and in ensuring obedience to the system.

Since the locally-managed budgets of schools depend on the number of children on roll, schools begin to compete for pupils. To attract parents they try to improve 'performance'. The most public and easily assimilated indicators of performance are exam and National Curriculum results which have or will be published in league tables. This commits schools to follow the 'system' and generates pressure for exam success through greater internal selection.

If a school can get ahead of its competitors then it will tend to attract more pupils, hence more money and resources, and so achieve further success. Eventually such schools may become so popular that they can begin to select their 'best' pupils.

City Technology Colleges

These are purpose-built secondary schools concentrating on science and technology and partly sponsored by big business who in return have members on the board of governors. They are an attempt to side-step the state system to provide specialist schooling in those areas in greatest demand by industry. Although they can hardly be said to have been a great success (mainly because industry wasn't willing to spend surplus value on them), they have provided a further challenge to other secondary schools in areas where CTCs have appeared. In response some secondary schools have begun to specialise in subjects of particular economic value such as technology and modern languages.

Pre-vocational training

The school-to-work transition has been taken over largely by non-educational agencies but their intention is to make the transition a smooth one, and so they have made intrusions into schools. The schools have collaborated in this. Vocational examinations – BTEC, City & Guilds, and now NVQs – have been expanded.

The results of extending school education, vocational training and removing social support from youngsters who don't participate has been to remove huge numbers of school leavers from the unem-

ployment figures.

It is obvious that there are very few jobs available for them. It is also true that as technology becomes more advanced and demands greater numbers of highly trained workers, the mass of other jobs become de-skilled and need less training, not more. The consequence of this should naturally be cut-backs in education and training, so why has there been such an expansion? This brings us back once more to the importance of schools as institutions of social order. The extension of education and training intensifies the socialisation of young people to values and attitudes that conform to the world of work. It sets them competing for the possibility of a (any) job and so strengthens commitment to the system. And if they don't get a job the fault appears to be theirs.

Over the past 15 years, then, state education has been subjugated ever more greatly to the social and economic needs of capitalism. To do so, the state, hiding behind the cloak of greater accountability and parental choice, has seized control of the curriculum and reorganised schools in order to permeate them with market mechanisms and a greater commitment to the ethos of business and industry. By these means, the state has been able to extend and refine their educational means of social reproduction and control – the system of examination and testing.


The contradiction

Every action of the capitalist state, however, involves contradictions. In the short-term, the incompatibility of some parents' choices with what the state wants them to choose; the opposition to testing and labelling young children, and the greater proletarianisation of teachers might all be sources of opposition. In the longer term, more people will come to see that all the training and retraining in the world is not going to get them a decent job; that mass unemployment is here to stay, and that education under capitalism is incapable of satisfying the human aspirations of the people. ■



It's good to talk — Good for profits

In his second article on the 'Information Superhighway' IAN BRADSHAW shows that telecommunications multinationals, just as much as the giants of the computer industry, are plunged into a helter skelter dash for massive profits. The result will be new forms of super-exploitation of the working class internationally.



FOR SALE

Rich world, poor world

The 2.8bn people living in Asia's lowest income countries, half of humanity, have access to just 25m telephones.

In India and China there are fewer than eight telephone lines for every 1,000 people. This 'teledensity' of under 1 per cent compares with 45 lines per 100 inhabitants in Britain, 60 in the US and 68 in Sweden. Not surprisingly teledensity correlates directly with national wealth. With an average GDP per capita of \$28,000 and a teledensity of 59, Japan is some 70 times richer than India with a GDP per capita of \$420. Such is the inequality of capitalism.

The gulf in living standards between rich nations and poor nations within the capitalist world order dictates completely different marketing approaches from the telecoms multinationals. For the rich minority the emphasis is to provide new 'value added' services down telephone lines that will intensify use and soak up their excess capacity.

For the poor majority of humanity the priority is to build lines into the telecommunications network, so the strategy is to rapidly extend a basic infrastructure. Whether intensive or extensive, the new services are sold as commodities that have to be paid for. In neither case are the multinationals motivated by anything other than the expansion of their capital.

China is, according to *The Financial Times*, 'the world's most breathtaking telecommunications opportunity'. The Chinese government:

'has a target of providing at least 40m new lines by 2000, offering manufacturers and operators the prospect of installing from scratch a network equal to that of two British Telecommunications. Western equipment manufacturers already do brisk business in China. Alcatel, the French manufacturer, is the leader, with about 30 per cent of the market and significant production facilities. Germany's Siemens and Japan's NEC have notable stakes; America's AT&T is eyeing opportunities seriously... Fierce debate is taking place within different tiers of China's government about allowing overseas operators to build and

operate networks.'

No wonder there is fierce debate: fundamental issues are at stake. The Chinese market is worth a staggering \$40bn. To pay for such foreign investment will take the surplus labour of hundreds of millions of workers and peasants.

India, with only 7m telephones, is on the brink of breaking the state telecoms monopoly — a move which will both increase the government's dependence on foreign capital and polarise class inequalities. The ambitious target of installing 13m extra lines, at a cost of some \$13bn, would mean that out of India's 200m 'middle class' just one in ten get a line.

The FT dryly observes that:

'Foreign companies are among the many groups which hope to take advantage of the reforms once they come into force and have been busy lobbying for change. But in framing the policies ministers have also to take into account the opposition of most of the 470,000 workers employed by the government's department of telecommunications, who fear that their jobs might be lost if the market is opened to competition.'

Capitalism embraces technical advance *only* if workers are expelled from production, it creates a population surplus to its requirements. It is the capitalist mode of production that is the root cause of poverty in the Third World, not 'overpopulation' as the new Malthusians would have it.

Telecommuters or teleworkers?

If the Clinton/Gore myth that the information highway is an egalitarian force were to have any substance it would be on the West Coast of the USA. There are indeed some executives who run corporations from high-tech resorts in the Rocky Mountains. But as the communications technology gets cheaper it is being used to capture the labour of those lower down the hierarchy.

In 1993 the number of telecommuters in the US rose by 15% to 7.6 million. There are 600,000 telecommuters, defined as people who spend at least 1 day of their working week at home with a computer link into work, in the Los Angeles area alone. The figure is expected to double this year as a result of earthquake disruption to the conurbation's clogged freeways. Shifting traffic from the highways onto telephone lines is only possible on this scale if the telecoms infrastructure exists to take the extra load.

Like car ownership, the consumption of telecommunications has become a sought-after characteristic of the affluent society. As well as the ubiquitous telephone, 33 per cent of US households own a personal computer (15 per cent in the UK), and 11 per cent have a modem.

But the dream of working when you want in a relaxed home environment that opts out of the commuter rush applies only to an elite of managers and designers. The reality has become a nightmare, and none more so than for women working at home. For the teleworker, as opposed to the more up-market telecommuter, working on the highway is a relentless grind.

A survey by the Economic and Social Research Council found a high proportion of Britain's teleworkers are doing 'the modern equivalent of piece-work in the 19th century'. Employers reduce accommodation overheads worth at least £3,000 per annum, and impose the communication costs on the worker. The women are forced into non-union rates or to be nominally self-employed thus saving the employer national insurance contributions. The rates are so low that although physically separated from her boss the worker is compelled to keep on working. The wordprocessor and modem have replaced the sewing machine as the instrument of the homeworker's servitude.

Cheap telecoms are, in the hands of capital, the means of super-exploitation.

Offshore super-exploitation

A magazine for computer contractors issued this startled warning recently,

'In the wired world of the mid to late 1990s there is no reason why much software work, especially maintenance, cannot be contracted out to cheaper overseas labour. After all the data input industry went, for the most part, off-shore some years ago... There are signs that something similar may be about to smite the UK's software development industry with India being the likeliest threat.'

India's 'threat' lies in 260,000 qualified computer scientists who get paid, at best, one fifth of their British counterparts. With cheap international lines now in place, these specialists can be brought in to create or repair software. British companies already benefiting from off-shore deals include North West Water, the Woolwich Building Society and London Transport. Except that the Indian programmers are not literally brought in, it is the products of their intelligence, not their bodies that are transmitted. The social cost of reproducing these highly skilled workers, products of some 20 years education and training, will be born by the impoverished Indian economy.

As a former British colony, India's workforce's use of English is another attraction. Important software factories have been set there by US computer multinationals IBM, Motorola, Oracle and Texas Instruments. The manufacture of software is beginning to shift to the Third World. In all, India's software exports are expected to grow 60% each year, reaching \$1bn by 1997.

The doyens of capitalism hope that, like the railways a century and more ago, the information superhighway's rapid growth will hugely accelerate the expansion of commodity production. High value commodities pass down the line from the metropolitan hubs, and low value commodities get exported back up from the tributaries. And this line will also provide cheap labour, keeping the labourers confined at arms length in special communications reserves. It is actually easier to transfer data six thousand miles from Bangalore to Basingstoke than to send it just six miles to a local village.

Modern capitalism cannot be egalitarian, its development is based on deepening the division between the

The world is sharply divided between the information rich and the information poor. In 1992 telephone networks carried 42.5 billion minutes of telecommunication, of which 31% came from North America and 44% from Western Europe. 12% of the world's population make 75% of its phone calls.

The Clinton/Gore administration promises that their much vaunted superhighway will provide equal communications access, through 'a global information infrastructure linking computers in homes, schools and offices in even the smallest villages'.

Such technological evangelism resembles the zeal with which nineteenth century capitalism preached the expansion of the railway. Building the information highway, like the railways before it, is both highly profitable and opens up whole countries to further exploitation.

Of the world's five biggest telephone carriers, two are from the US, one is German, another French and then there is British Telecom. These companies are the best positioned to take advantage of any opportunities in the global telecommunications market.

Privatise, globalise, monopolise

The cost of international communication, as with any other commodity, is inversely proportional to the productivity of labour involved. The cost per minute of using transatlantic cable fell from \$2.53 in 1956 to about \$0.02 in 1992. This trend has not abated, fibre optic circuits now cost one ninth of what they did just seven years ago.

In telecoms most of the cost incurred is the initial investment. For forty years post-1945 a handful of international phone operators were able to reap monopoly profits off very low marginal costs. Other sections of big capital in the US and Europe became increasingly agitated that they were paying four times more than the actual cost.

From the 1980s the major powers began to reorganise their national operators, in order to create effective telecoms multinationals. The imperialist states had a two pronged strategy: to introduce sufficient home

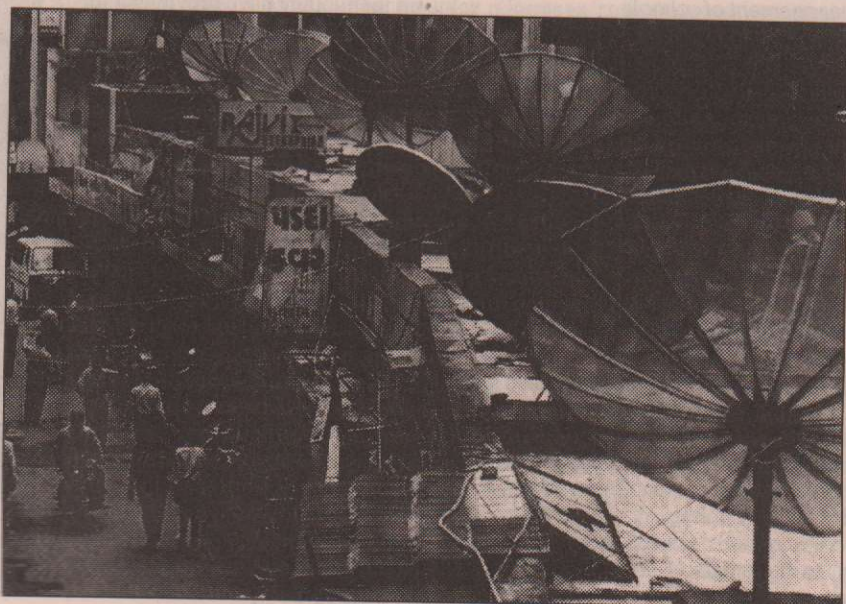
competition to reduce communications costs for capital as a whole, and simultaneously to restructure their national carrier as a multinational company able to compete internationally. Privatisation and globalisation have gone hand in hand.

Alongside the US giant AT&T, British Telecom is the most aggressive of the multinationals. Despite a decade of growing competition BT still dominates 90% of the domestic market and it has taken a 20% share in MCI, the second biggest US telecoms company, forming a joint enterprise that will offer services in 55 different countries.

Telecommunications has outperformed the world economy for the last decade. An era of explosive growth is predicted for the industry. The main targets are Asia and Latin America where, in the first five years of the 1990s, at least 20 state telephone services have been wholly or partly privatised.

Unlike in Europe, where privatisation nonetheless kept control with the national capital, Latin America's sell-offs have given over effective management of telephone systems into the hands of foreigners. The greatest beneficiaries of the neoliberal policy have been the Spanish company Telefonica working in alliance with a handful of US and British financiers.

New monopolies have been entrenched under the banner of free trade, and they are deepening the gulf between rich and poor.



The number of TV sets grows by 10 per cent per year in India

PHILIPPINES

The following document was sent to FRFI by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines. In their covering letter they write:

'We are pleased to inform you that the militant anti-imperialist mass movement of the workers, peasants and petit-bourgeoisie in the Philippines continues to gain momentum. Since February this year, hundreds of thousands have been mobilised in mass actions against IMF-imposed policies being subserviently implemented by the US-Ramos regime. Mass education and mobilisation campaigns continue to be held against the Bretton Woods institutions. The present focus of this campaign is the GATT and World Trade Organisation.'

Oppose US global domination

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organisation (GATT/WTO) signed by 117 member countries in Marrakesh, Morocco on 15 April 1994 is supposed to usher in a new economic world order. It is argued that because of the GATT, world trade will grow by 12 per cent, two-thirds of which will go to Northern countries. The US, Japan and Europe are projected to earn \$161bn. It is clear that the transnational corporations (TNCs) of the monopoly capitalists will benefit most from the GATT. They now control 70 per cent of world trade. 60 per cent of world agricultural trade is dominated by US TNCs.



Child labourers in India

The GATT/WTO in combination with the IMF and the World Bank is an instrument of recolonisation. Although it focuses on trade policies, it uses these to promote the comprehensive economic and technological hegemony of the imperialists, undermine the national sovereignty of countries in the south and the rest of the world and aggravate their underdevelopment or lopsided and shallow development. It pits the advanced developed countries against the less developed, the strong against the weak, the TNCs against the workers and peoples of the north and south.

Moreover, the US has for years lobbied for the abolition of European agricultural subsidies, ostensibly in the name of free trade and fair competition, but in reality to penetrate the farm markets in Western Europe. By attacking European farm subsidies, the US through GATT threatens the food security of the peoples of Europe among others.

A people's movement against GATT/WTO is growing. In the Philippines, a nationwide movement of the Filipino people against the GATT/

The struggle against GATT

The GATT trade agreement (see FRFI 119) is increasingly becoming a focus for popular struggles against multinational corporations and imperialist domination. Whilst at its most intense in the Third World, there is growing interest in the struggle against GATT in Europe. In Madrid, where the IMF was celebrating its 50th anniversary in September, a counter-summit was organised by the French organisation '50 Years, That's Enough' and the Brussels based Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt. The week of counter-activity ended with a mass demonstration joined by some 15,000 young people.

Though much of the counter-summit was dominated by confused social democratic thinking, it is evident that the issue of GATT, the World Bank and IMF is becoming a growing concern among European youth and workers who are now beginning to experience first hand the devastating consequences of the rule of the multinational corporations. Socialists and communists must participate in these campaigns and draw out the common interests which unite the working class in Europe and the Third World. They must show that an effective struggle against GATT and the multinationals who profit from it requires a struggle against the capitalist system and market economy itself which has spawned these organisations which are today destroying the world.

In the past month we have received two documents, one on the struggle in the Philippines, the other on GATT and India, which we print with some minor cuts. Whilst not necessarily agreeing with all the conclusions of the documents, we think they provide a good basis for discussion in Britain about a campaign against GATT and the World Trade Organisation.

WTO is gaining momentum. Drawn into this movement are the farmers, workers, youth/students, indigenous peoples, women and church people.

The rejection of the GATT/WTO is an aspect of the people's opposition to US domination and dictates of the global financial institutions, like the International Monetary Fund/World Bank (IMF/WB) and the TNCs. Filipinos are at one with all those saying '50 years of IMF/WB is enough' and 'No to GATT/WTO'.

The GATT/WTO will not benefit the Filipino people, 70 per cent of whom live below the poverty line. Concretely, GATT/WTO will dislocate 21.5 million in the agricultural sector due to the conversion of more than 3.1 million hectares of land for export production. It will inevitably bring about ecological destruction and biodiversity loss. The Philippines will be obliged to open its market to cheap foreign agricultural imports, shift from food grains production to export cash crops, thus jeopardising our national food security. It will displace 500,000 Filipino workers in the textile and garment industry.

Through the GATT/WTO, the TNCs of the US, Japan and Europe will retard and eliminate Filipino business enterprises, causing more unemployment and massive outmigration. It will worsen the backward, agrarian and pre-industrial character of the Philippines. The GATT/WTO will consign the Filipinos to a bleaker condition. With the GATT/WTO, there can be no sustainable development, only maldevelopment. The GATT/WTO is a blueprint for disaster.

The alternative to IMF-World Bank-GATT/WTO in the Philippines is the empowerment of the people through a democratic state on the basis of a worker-peasant alliance and an economic programme of genuine land reform and nationalist industrialisation.

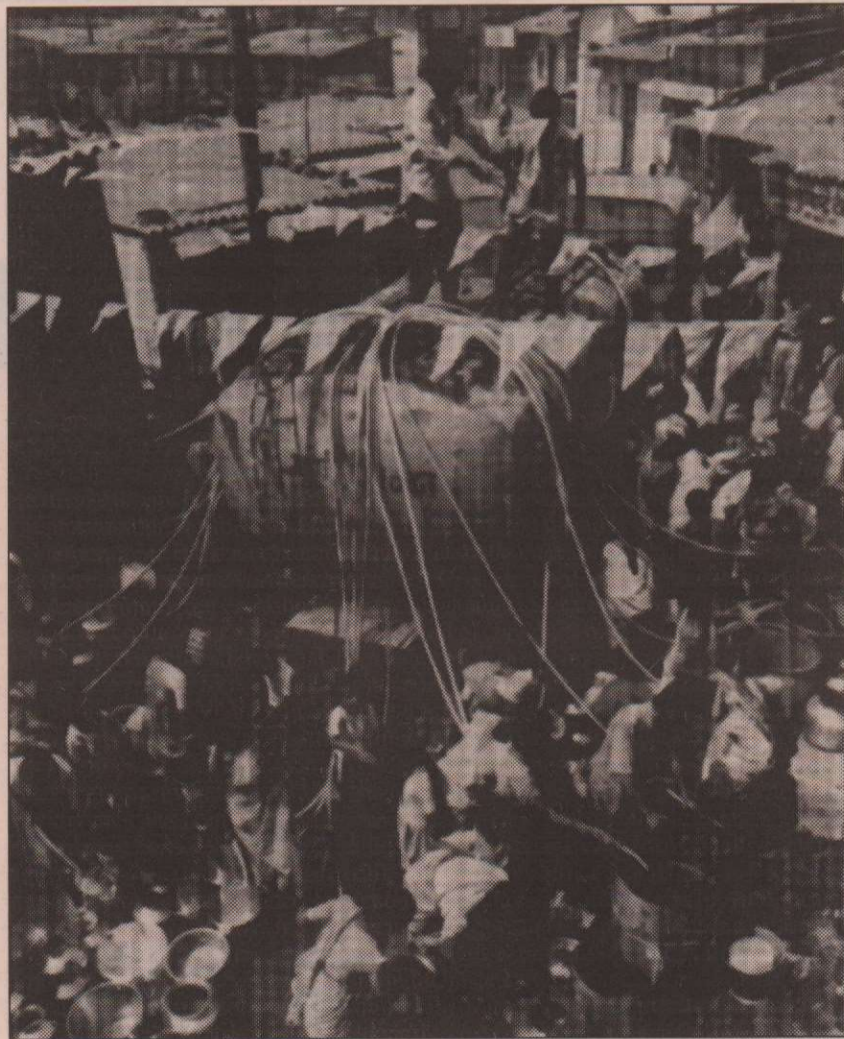
The peoples of Europe and the rest of the world will do better without the GATT/WTO which is dominated by the US and the TNCs.

Unite to oppose global US domination, reject GATT/WTO!

Uphold the national sovereignty of peoples!

Support the Filipino people's struggle against IMF/WB/GATT/WTO!

For further information on the campaign in the Philippines contact the: Anti-GATT/WTO Campaign Committee, c/o Bayan International, Postbus 1422, 3800 BK Amersfoort, The Netherlands.



The campaign against GATT is being waged throughout India

INDIA

On 29 September, during the IMF's celebration of its 50th anniversary, India was hit by a massive strike against the Indian government's imposition of an IMF-dictated 'structural adjustment programme' and its signing of GATT. The protests called by the National Platform of Mass Organisations paralysed the banking, mining, metalworking, insurance and postal sectors. The following letter is from Arun Misra who has just returned to London from a family visit to India.

Unlike Britain, in India there seems to be a great deal of awareness of what GATT stands for and how India's membership of GATT and the World Trade Organisation will affect the lives and livelihood of ordinary people. Unfortunately the people's concern is not reflected by the government which is eager to join the GATT at any cost. Since the late 1980s the Indian government has slowly paved

the way for GATT membership through its economic liberalisation policies. Recently it has conformed to World Bank directives and has started a 'structural adjustment programme'. Prior to these western-led economic reforms, India had one of the lowest levels of indebtedness in the world. By the end of the 1980s she was the third most indebted nation in the Third World.

The Indian government is inadvertently succumbing to the recolonisation instincts of the Western powers. Membership of GATT and the WTO will benefit only a few who will gain immensely for acting as instruments of western capitalist interests. The social and industrial infrastructure and welfare programmes built up since independence from Britain in 1947 will be gradually eroded. The poorest will suffer massively. Within the economy scientific and technical innovation, agriculture, pharmaceutical and financial services will be particularly badly affected.

The GATT treaty aims to protect the interests and perpetuate the monopoly of western patent holders



Low paid teachers march through Delhi

in each and every sector including intellectual property. There are about 3.5 million patents worldwide and of these Third World countries have only 200,000 or about 6 per cent. Third World nationals hold less than 15 per cent of these or less than 5 per cent of the world total. The other 85 per cent are held by multinational corporations and not even 5 per cent of these are used in production in the Third World. GATT extends patent protection for 20 years. Under present Indian law, patents are available for 7 years only for food, chemicals and pharmaceuticals and 14 years for other sectors.

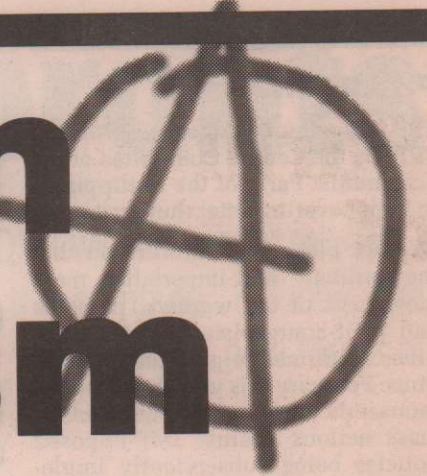
The GATT proposes to phase out 'trade distortions' in agriculture by liberalising trade and removing subsidies. For India this means, irrespective of whether India needs to import agricultural products, at least 4 per cent of her domestic consumption must be constituted of imports by the year 2005. These forced imports even if locally produced goods are cheaper, will lead to a huge drain on India's foreign exchange. The main effect of removing subsidies will be to jeopardise food security. Agricultural production will be directed more towards cash crops for export thus reducing the overall food grain production for domestic consumption.

Because Indian laws do not provide patents for food, chemicals and drugs, cheaper alternatives to the patented processes means the cost of many life saving drugs is within the reach of most, if not all, communities. Under GATT all this will change. The cost of drugs will go up beyond the reach of most people. Take the drug Atenolol used for treating heart disease. In 1992 it cost Rs7.50 in India, Rs86.63 in Pakistan and Rs228.36 in the USA. This gives an indication of what might happen to drug prices as multinational corporations start to profit from GATT patent protection.

The service sector is amongst the fastest growing in world trade and accounts for 70 per cent of US trade. The GATT will open up the domestic Indian market in financial services (and provide access to the enormous savings of the Indian people) to exploitation by multinationals and banks. This will have devastating effects on Indian financial institutions and their ability to meet domestic needs.

I agree with John (letter to Editor FRFI 120 August/September 1994) that the most fundamental change in GATT is its extension to domestic policy making. In India there is growing support for the 'Swadeshi' movement. This advocates the notion of domestic production for domestic consumption and self-sufficiency. It seems to be that this may be the saviour of India and other developing countries, given that modern trade rules create a one way street in which resources flow from the poor to the rich. And the rules are made by the rich.

Communism and Anarchism



Anarchism - its first principles

Anarchism has a long and chequered history. Like other trends in the socialist movement it has been marked by measures of heroism, opportunism, sectarianism and charlatanry. We have no intention of visiting the sins of the parents upon their children. By examining past disputes we hope only to bring to the fore some of the principles dividing anarchism from communism.

Anarchism's appeal in the mid-to-late 19th Century was strongest among those classes which capitalist development was then systematically and ruthlessly proletarianising: the impoverished peasantry on its way to becoming a rural or urban proletariat and the urban lower middle classes - artisans, shop keepers etc - whose existence was also threatened by capitalist development.

The anarchist call for freedom from the state appealed to these strata whose individualistic mode of existence was being destroyed by the seemingly invisible authority of the capitalist market, supported by the violent authority of the capitalist state. It was no accident therefore that anarchism won significant support not in the long established working class centres of powerfully developed capitalist states like Britain and Germany, but in the rural and recently urbanised Spain and Italy.

Central to anarchist doctrine is its total opposition to and rejection of all forms of social or political authority over the individual or individual group. Against the authority of society and the state the anarchists counterpose individual freedom and autonomy. Max Stirner, anarchism's first theoretician, wrote in his famous book *The Ego and His Own*:

'For me there is nothing above myself.'

'Away then with everything that is not wholly and solely my own affair! You think my own concerns must at least be 'good ones'? A fig for good and evil! My concern is neither the Godly nor the Human ... but simply my own self...'

'I, the egoist, have not at heart the welfare of this 'human society'. I sacrifice nothing to it. I only utilise it...'

From this assertion of absolute individual freedom and autonomy flows anarchism's rejection of the state and politics, and its concept of revolution. The state represents authority and inhibits freedom, Bakunin (1814-1876), declared, therefore:

'The revolution must from the very first day destroy, radically and totally, the state and all the state's institutions.'

This is 'the whole secret of the revolution' and makes of anarchists the:

'natural enemies of those revolutionaries (such as communists) who... dream of creating new revolutionary states...'

For Bakunin political activity - the organised struggle against reactionary legislation, the struggle to win reforms or the struggle to form a revolutionary government - implies

In Britain anarchism appears to be enjoying a revival as sections of today's young dissidents unfurl its red and black flag. Anarchism has replaced communism as the bourgeoisie's bogey-man. The media and police set anarchists up as targets to test repressive tactics. Anarchists become culpable for all that the authorities disapprove of. All youthful opposition to the hopeless life bourgeois society offers is labelled anarchistic.

But what is anarchism? What are its social, economic and political principles? Can it contribute to building a society free of exploitation? What are the differences between anarchism and communism? In the first of a series EDDIE ABRAHAMS highlights the ideological issues that divided Marx and Engels from the anarchist Bakunin in the 1860s and 1870s.

recognition of the state and is rejected. Early anarchists such as Proudhon (1809-1865) even opposed strikes for better conditions arguing that they constituted a recognition of the capitalist system.

The question of authority

For those opposed to capitalist exploitation, to its mass murder and environmental destruction, there is something 'above myself': it is the collective interests of the oppressed upon whose collective, social labour society rests. For example, when protesters block the building of the M11, they are imposing their collective will in the interests of society precisely against the selfish minority 'nothing above myself and my profit' attitude of the roads lobby and multinational car industry.

Collective social life, including socialism, is impossible without social organisation, and social organisation is impossible without the imposition of collective authority. Any form of social collective restricts the absolute freedom of individuals or groups and inevitably imposes a degree of authority over the individual. Communists fight to create democratic forms of popular organisation in order to democratise authority. Authority is power and the issue is to take it out of the hands of the ruling class and place it in the hands of the majority.

To reject the democratic authority of a collective working class movement is tantamount to abandoning the struggle against capitalism and the ruling class. The working class, individually or as isolated groups, has no power to match that of the capitalist class. Its power comes out of collective action. But collective action requires common agreement and a readiness to accept the authority of the majority. If each individual or group, in the name of autonomy and anti-authoritarianism, rejected majority decisions we could win no battles against the centralised state power of police, army, courts, prisons, schools and social workers.

The question of the state

The anarchists' rejection of authority is turned into a theory of the state and revolution. Engels explained:

'They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority. Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the

population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon - authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries.'

The ruling class never relinquishes power voluntarily and never voluntarily disbands the armed forces it has on its side. Even when overthrown, it relentlessly organises war to restore capitalism. It is for this reason the working class must organise its own revolutionary state.

In 1883 Engels said:

'Marx and I, ever since 1845, have held the view that one of the final results of the...revolution will be...the disappearance of the political organisation called the state...'

But before this:

'...the proletarian class will first have to possess itself of the organised political force of the State... [to]...stamp out the resistance of the Capitalist class and re-organise society.'

'The Anarchists...say the revolution has to begin by abolishing... the State... But to destroy it at such a moment would be to destroy the only organism by means of which the victorious working class can exert its newly conquered power, keep down its capitalist enemies and carry out [the] economic revolution...'

Bakunin's own experience proved this. In 1870 a working class uprising took place in Lyon. Bakunin managed to install himself in the local Town Hall and decreed that: 'The Administrative and Governmental machine of the state, having become impotent, is abolished!' The working class was not organised to suppress the inevitable bourgeois reaction. As a result, Marx commented:

'The state, in the form and nature of two companies of bourgeois National Guards, swept the hall, and sent Bakunin hurrying back on the road to Geneva.'

Some three years later, during the Spanish revolt of 1873, the anarchists, then very influential, refused to stand candidates in the elections. This was political they said. Instead they advised their followers to vote for any candidate they chose. The result was that the working class, which could have had a revolution-

ary presence in parliament, was left voiceless, its votes going to radical bourgeois democrats.

Bakunin equated all politics with parliamentary cretinism. But the essence of working class politics is the democratic unification and organisation of the oppressed classes to extend their influence, seize power and enforce their own collective interests against the minority ruling class.

The anarchist theory of revolution

Bakunin's rhetoric in support of autonomy and freedom turned into its opposite when he set about applying his theories. His rejection of collective, political and democratic organisation led inevitably to a secretive, conspiratorial and manipulative theory of revolution.

In the heat of practical struggle, Bakunin was forced to recognise the need for centralised political leadership:

'...it is necessary that in the midst of popular anarchy...the unity of revolutionary thought and action should be embodied in a certain organ. That organ must be the secret and world-wide association of the International Brotherhood.'

Communists, Marx and Engels noted, try to:

'create this unity by propaganda, by discussion and the public organisation of the proletariat. But all Bakunin needs is a secret organisation of 100 people, the privileged representatives of the revolutionary idea...'

In Bakunin's words, an unelected but 'well organised secret society' is commissioned to:

'...assist the birth of revolution by spreading among the masses ideas that accord with the instinct of the masses, and to organise not the army of the revolution...but a revolutionary General Staff...'

These ideas will be spread not by public leaders 'standing at the head of the crowd', but by:

'...men hidden invisibly among the crowd and forming an invisible link between one crowd and another, and thus invisibly giving one and the same direction, one spirit, and character to the movement.'

Bakunin's secret societies would be 'limited to a small number of persons':

'one hundred serious and firmly united revolutionaries would be sufficient. Two or three hundred revolutionaries would be enough for the organisation of the largest country.'

But they would be, mind you, 'men of talent, knowledge, intelligence and influence'!

This sounds more like Fabianism and the patronising rule of the good rather than a revolutionary theory based on the autonomous self-activity and self-emancipation of the masses. The brain of the revolution is a secret General Staff formed of the intelligentsia whose instructions are executed by invisible men who direct a working class herd governed by instinct! This parody of popular revolution is inevitable if open and democratic political organisation is rejected.

Bakunin and the First International

However, none of these ideological differences constituted a parting of the ways between the anarchists and communists. Marx and Engels recognised anarchism as an important trend in the working class International and argued that:

'The International...in setting itself the aim of rallying under one banner the scattered forces of the world proletariat...was bound to open its doors to socialists of all shades.'

But in the late 1860s Bakunin had different ideas. In 1868 Bakunin failed in a bid to seize control of the bourgeois League for Peace and Freedom - founded in opposition to the International. So he formed an Alliance of Socialist Democracy (whose leadership would be self-appointed, secret and drawn from Bakunin's International Brotherhood) and applied to join the International hoping to take that over instead.

Whilst rejecting an Alliance application, the International allowed all anarchists including Bakunin to join branches as individuals or groups, produce their own propaganda, newspapers and work according to their own politics. However within the International Bakunin, using his 'secret society', relentlessly conspired to impose on the International his own sectarian anarchist programme. In 1873 Bakunin was expelled from the International ending one epoch of the many battles between anarchism and communism.

Today in a period of acute capitalist crisis, anarchist trends are once more being nurtured by the proletarianisation of many middle class youth combined with the effects of the unbridled bourgeois culture of individualism. Whatever the differences between communists and anarchists, communists uncompromisingly defend anarchists' civil rights and their right to organise. In the struggle against the capitalist system, communists will work alongside anarchists. Like other trends in the revolutionary movement, anarchists undoubtedly have a contribution to make. But only as part of an open, non-sectarian and democratically organised working class movement. ■

Barlinnie - the end of the experiment

The announcement that the famous Barlinnie Special Unit is to be closed represents clear evidence that 'liberal experiments' in the treatment of long-term prisoners in Scotland are now definitely over. JOHN BOWDEN, from HMP Perth, examines the background.

Created as a safety valve for a prison system convulsed by rebellion and protest, the Barlinnie Unit was heralded as a radical departure from traditional methods of control and punishment, and a precursor of more enlightened penal strategies for dealing with 'difficult and dangerous' prisoners. Therapy and the caring approach would now replace the notorious cages of Inverness and outright physical brutality.

The Barlinnie Unit emerged from the nationwide prison struggles of 1972, when prisoners throughout Britain engaged in a series of extremely well organised and publicised demonstrations in pursuit of greater basic rights. These demonstrations were highly politicised and inspired the first ever national prisoners' movement in Britain, PROP.

Despite the scale of the 1972 protests, the prison authorities inevitably sought to deflect public attention away from the causes of the rebellion (an almost total lack of human rights, institutionalised brutality and over-oppressive regimes and conditions) by claiming that only a tiny minority of 'hard-core troublemakers' were responsible for the 'disturbances', thus paving the way for the creation of 'special facilities' for the recalcitrant few. In England this manifested itself in the creation of the infamous Wakefield Special Control Unit, a veritable psychological torture chamber where 'subversive' prisoners were held in complete solitary confinement and subjected to sensory deprivation and crude Pavlovian methods of behavioural modification. Public disquiet eventually resulted in the Home Office abandoning the experiment.

In Scotland, while the authorities propagated the same views about the need to isolate and segregate 'prison troublemakers', it was decided to sugar-coat the control-unit idea with liberal and humane sentiments; the result was the Barlinnie Unit, designed, unlike Wakefield, not to break 'subversives' but to pacify and seduce them into conformity.

Undoubtedly a progressive alternative to the old-fashioned methods of brutality and abuse, the Unit was hailed by reformers and academics as a pioneering experiment and gained almost international recognition as a prison system success story. Meanwhile, conditions throughout the rest of the Scottish system remained as barbaric as ever, and while the storm of 1972 was weathered by the authorities, the defiance and resentment of prisoners remained. Prior to 1987 and the resurgence of collective unrest and resistance in Scottish prisons, the Barlinnie Unit was permitted to function as a small oasis of liberalism in an otherwise increasingly repressive and austere system, although more openly fascist elements in the Scottish Prison



Service and the Scottish POA agitated constantly for its closure, condemning it as a 'soft option' for 'psychopaths' and 'troublemakers'.

The protests of 1986-7, which included a spate of high-profile hostage-taking incidents, persuaded the Scottish prison authorities that the segregation of individual 'troublemakers' would no longer be sufficient to keep at bay the huge wave of resistance threatening to engulf the system. Greater overall repression was needed and so began a reorganisation that would finally result in the closure of the Barlinnie Unit and its replacement with a number of more obvious control units and a general screwing down of gaol regimes throughout the system. The era of therapy was now over.

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Paralleling the control unit strategy is a grading system for those in mainstream prisons. Acquiescent behaviour is rewarded by allocation to prisons where small privileges are conceded but never substantial rights; uncooperative behaviour punished by permanent allocation to Shotts or an equally repressive gaol. There are no more 'soft options' such as the Barlinnie Unit; you either conform unquestioningly or risk violence and maltreatment.

Male long-term prisoners are now allocated immediately to Shotts in Lanarkshire (once presented as a liberal showcase but, following protest there in 1987, now considered one of the most repressive prisons in Scotland) for 'screening'. Those considered 'difficult' and 'uncooperative' are earmarked for isolation/control units at Shotts, Peterhead and Perth. The reopened Inverness cage cells provide accommodation for prisoners considered particularly 'recalcitrant'.

The 1986-7 Scottish prison uprisings were characterised by their ferocity and fury; the desperate actions of the prisoners involved were symptomatic of years of brutality and dehumanisation. The reaction of those responsible for the barbaric regimes was to increase the brutality and repression to such an extent that rebellion is again inevitable. The cycle of repression and resistance has been intensified to the point of virtual open war in some gaols. It is now only a matter of time before the lid is again blown off the Scottish prison system.

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Inside News

No compassion shown

Jason Roberts is a prisoner in Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight. In August his girlfriend gave birth to a premature baby girl. Jason was moved to Cardiff and allowed a one-hour visit to his daughter, who died 48 hours later. He was informed he could choose between seeing her now or attending the funeral but could not do both; he chose to see her now and was taken to the hospital, remaining in handcuffs the whole time.

The following day Jason was returned to Parkhurst where he discovered it was his right to attend both the hospital and the funeral. He therefore applied to attend the funeral, requesting his handcuffs be removed so he could lay the baby to rest and that he be taken to his home to change before the funeral. Both requests were refused but he was told that if his suit was brought to Newport police station he could change there.

On 30 August Jason was taken to south Wales, arriving at Newport police station at 12.20pm. The funeral was to be at 1.30pm. Jason describes what happened:

"The police officer ... said, 'Right then, I'll search him and lock him up'. I had been told I was only picking up my suit ... so I asked the prison officer what was going on. He said I was being kept at the station until 1.30pm. I explained I needed to be at the church before 1.30pm to discuss arrangements. Then the police officer ... said 'Come on, get your arms up, I'm going to search you'. I said I was not in police custody and he had no right to ... He then grabbed my left arm. I pulled away and said 'You've got no right to search me. That's assault.' At this point I was grabbed from behind around the neck and my upper body was forced down onto the desk where I started to lose consciousness.

"When I came round ... I was overcome with emotion ... and just stood and cried before leaving the police station at about 12.30pm. I was conveyed to Cardiff prison where I remained until being taken back to

Parkhurst the same day, after not being allowed a phone call to my solicitor or family for three hours.'

Jason's MP was sufficiently shocked to begin making enquiries. No doubt the police and the Prison Service will blame one another for the fact that Jason did not get to the funeral. And both will undoubtedly blame Jason himself. We demand the governor of Parkhurst now accede to Jason's request to visit his daughter's grave.

Murder in Long Lartin

On 29 September a black prisoner, Norman Washington Manning, known as 'Bunson', was murdered in Long Lartin. His death appears to have been the work of a group of white racist prisoners, tacitly supported by prison officers who stood aside while Bunson was repeatedly stabbed and beaten. Bunson's family are demanding a full public inquiry and have held several events in Birmingham and a picket of Long Lartin, supported by 40-50 people. FRFI has also heard that black prisoners at Long Lartin who tried to organise solidarity were ghosted to other gaols.

The Bunson Memorial Campaign can be contacted c/o 102 Heathfield Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1HU.

Full Sutton 'mutiny'

Hull police is engaged in a row with the Home Office over who should foot the £350,000 bill (£50,000 for the criminal investigation; £300,000 for 'court security', including armed police) for a completely pointless trial which ended in early November at the city's Crown Court.

Eight prisoners were tried for 'mutiny', the first to actually stand trial on the new charge created in the aftermath of the Strangeways uprising. The 'Full Sutton mutiny' consisted, in fact, of a protest sit-in in the exercise yard in May 1992. It was a very hot day and after a few hours

most prisoners were extremely thirsty and tired and tried to return to the gaol; only to find that prison officers had locked them out.

Four defendants pleaded guilty in return for sentences of three months further imprisonment for those still in gaol, 150 hours community service for the one who had been released since 1992; the other four were acquitted.

Andrzej Jakubczyk's exposé of Full Sutton (see FRFI 121) has now been typeset and is available from K Kavanagh, 14 Rose Lane, Marple, Cheshire SK6 6DS price £2 (free to prisoners).

SOLIDARITY WITH KURDISH PRISONERS

FRFI is asking prisoners and their supporters to read the articles on page 7 and to support the Kurdish prisoners in any way they can. If there are further attacks or these prisoners are suddenly moved, please contact us immediately.

POWs' Birthdays

Hugh Doherty 338636
HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS
3 December

Noel Gibson 879225
HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue,
Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD
11 December

Liam Duibhir MT2485
HMP Whitmoor, Longhill Road,
March, Cambridge PE15 0PR
14 December

Nat Vella B71644
HMP Frankland
24 December

Liam McCotter LB83693
HMP Whitmoor
2 January

More stick less carrot

The prison system is currently being restructured along even more overt 'carrot and stick' lines. In May the Prison Service announced the introduction of 'coherent systems of incentives, with sanctions, that will encourage better behaviour'. In November Michael Howard echoed the message, confirming that prisoners would no longer receive 'automatic privileges' but would have to earn 'good behaviour' a 'core set of privileges', including extra visits wearing their own clothes, access to private cash and extra time out of cells.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s and culminating in the Strangeways uprising in 1990, prisoners fought collective struggles to ensure they were treated with a modicum of dignity and humanity. They established a number of rights: some became statutory, such as legal representation at internal hearings or correspondence with whoever they chose; others were won in practice but officially remained at the level of 'concessions', such as weekly visits and access to telephones. As individuals, prisoners are among the most vulnerable and defenceless members of society but united they demonstrated their strength. The Prison Service's aim now is to woo prisoners away from any future attempts at collective resistance by implementing a system which atomises them utterly into individuals who receive a tiny bit more or less depending on their degree of cooperation.

In June Highpoint gaol in Suffolk was the first to formally introduce a 'differentiated regime'. The governor also added a few ideas of his own: 'quiet periods' (compulsory lock-up at mid-day and evening meals) and, in anticipation of the prisoners' response, 'anger control' counselling for those 'faced with varying degrees of restriction in attempting to access privileges'. However, the offer of counselling did nothing to prevent widespread anger and on 28 September riot police were called in to deal with prisoners protesting at the withdrawal of their rights.

The first 'privilege' to be attacked

across the system is home leave. Cynically exploiting the fears of victims of violent and sexual crime (while at the same time battling to reduce their compensation payments) Howard announced a package of measures designed to reduce home leave by at least 40 per cent, including a new offence of 'being unlawfully large' and more stringent 'risk assessment' involving consultation of victims and the police. What has tenuously been established as a right for low security prisoners (contrary to press hype, 'high-risk' prisoners have never been allowed home leave has been removed at a stroke in order to be 'earned' back as a privilege for those who conform to every demand the system makes upon them.

The ground has been steadily prepared over the last year with massive publicity given to the tiny number of spectacular cases where prisoners of home leave have committed violent crimes and these instances carefully fudged with the greater number of prisoners who fail to return from home leave or who return late to produce statistical 'evidence' of mass 'home leave failure'. Labour's only comment on the change was that it should have been introduced sooner.

Head of the Prison Service Derek Lewis is subject to a rather different system of incentives. In addition to his basic salary of £125,000 he receives a performance-related bonus. In 1993-4 Lewis was on 'good behaviour' and was rewarded with an extra £35,000.

Nicki James

■ Cuba: the untold story

Victims of War – the untold story of the exodus from Cuba Brian Lyons and John Waller, available from Sheffield CSC, PO 93, Sheffield S4 8YZ, price £2 + 30p p&p, 1994

This superb booklet details the events of August and September when thousands of Cuban people attempted to leave the island in home-made rafts. This time, however, the whole truth is revealed, not the distortions and lies of the capitalist press.

The booklet chronicles the hijacking of a Cuban tugboat in July, the seizure of several other passenger boats and an oil tanker in August by Cubans wanting to leave. These events resulted in the death of two Cuban officers and in several Cubans who did not want to leave being thrown overboard from the hijacked vessels.

The booklet points to the spontaneous counter-mobilisation of many thousands of workers and students against the riot by about a thousand people in Havana on 5 August; the mass demonstration by half a million people in favour of the government on 7 August, and further huge rallies to honour the dead officers and by young people in subsequent days – events hardly mentioned by the western media.

The reasons why so many people wanted to leave Cuba are frankly discussed in the booklet. Undoubtedly, they reflect the tremendous economic difficulties being faced by the Cuban people at present. However, they do not, as the imperialists would like us to believe, represent the tip of an iceberg wanting to sink Cuban socialism. As one of the main slogans of the youth rallies reported in the booklet put it: 'For every Cuban without dignity [ie

the emigres], there are 100 more with dignity.'

The booklet points out that Cubans have never been prevented from emigrating by the government and that Cuban coastguards did everything they could to limit risks for those determined to try their luck on rafts. The recent crisis, the booklet demonstrates, was the culmination of years during which the US refused to fulfil their agreed quotas of visas for Cuban immigrants and indeed refused to accept almost anyone unless the US could make political propaganda for their cause.

This was just part of the continuous pressure the US tries to exert in order to destroy Cuba – pressure which, as the authors show, includes the illegal military occupation of Guantanamo Bay, recent measures to further restrict travel to Cuba by Americans, and the sending of cash by Cuban Americans to relatives in Cuba; a constant barrage of radio propaganda and, of course, the continuing economic blockade.

Pavel Diaz, the Cuban youth leader who recently visited Britain, was amazed so perceptive an account of recent events could have been produced so quickly. Anyone familiar with the work of Sheffield CSC and with Lyons' and Waller's previous booklets *Island in the Storm* and on Aids and health in Cuba, will not be so surprised.

Though the immediate events reported in the booklet are now over, the causes still remain. Anyone wanting to understand both the events and the causes should read this clear and concise exposition.

Jim Craven

■ Voices of the Spanish Civil War

■ **Blood of Spain** Ronald Fraser, Pimlico, £12.50 Reprinted 1994

This oral history of the Spanish Civil War compiled by Ronald Fraser is in turn gripping, dramatic, evocative, disturbing and above all deeply humane.

The 300 or so participants who give voice to their experience are all manner of types. The socialist railway worker who got the trains running on time in the midst of upheaval. The lawyer who joined Franco's insurrection to restore order but was disgusted by the criminal fascist murder squads. The Catalan CNT militant discussing stupid mistakes: 'Take the barber shops. What in reality was being collectivised? A pair of scissors, a razor, a couple of barbers' chairs'. Or the trade unionist who shifted all the workshops in Madrid into one underground tunnel so war production would keep going...

Fraser skilfully pieces the fragments together into a brilliant, multi-dimensional mosaic, all the more compelling for its reflection of the historical complexities of the civil war.

But Fraser does more than capture the atmosphere, he is actually conducting a carefully constructed polemic. The two sides in the civil war were closely matched. The air support provided by Germany and Italy gave Franco military advantage, but could this not have been overcome with better leadership to the masses on the Republican side? This question must be addressed with some humility, for if the problems of the civil war had been simple their solution would have been

found, Franco defeated and world history very different.

Fraser gets to the essence of the matter in a section 'War and Revolution,



Revolution and War'. He argues that the working class movement was split and paralysed on the horns of a terrible dilemma:

'If the war were not won, maintained the communists (with the agreement of the republicans and right-wing socialists), the revolution could not triumph. Losing the war meant losing the revolution. Who could dispute this elemen-

tary proposition? Except by standing it on its head: if the revolution did not triumph, the war could not be won. Losing the revolution meant losing the war.' (p323)

Fraser argues that a strategic synthesis of revolutionary war would have led the Communist Party to a different position, risking its unity with the reformist wing of the Socialist Party for the sake of an alliance with the more combative sectors of the working class organised by the anarcho-sindicalist CNT. Was a more revolutionary conduct of the war viable? Yes, according to communist student Paulino Garcia.

'Had this been done we would have avoided the situation in which the Communist Party put the war before everything else and the libertarians made the revolution their prime concern.' (p330)

The annex, 'Points of Rupture', is a set of essays analysing the causes of the war, and a worthy introduction to the major debates. The most fundamental cause of the civil war lay in the land. Fraser quotes a liberal agronomist, 'What I didn't see, and nor did the republicans, was that agrarian reform without social revolution is impossible ... Property in an overwhelmingly rural population – 45 per cent of the working population lived in the countryside – cannot be expropriated by democratic means; it has to be done by violence ... Agrarian reform comes as a result of revolution, not vice versa.' (p516)

This book is highly recommended.
Andy Higginbottom

RCG National Aggregate

Lessons of History

Every two months the Revolutionary Communist Group holds a democratic meeting of all of its members and close supporters. The aggregate discusses major political issues, takes reports from the leadership of the organisation and we examine our current work. We report on the November aggregate.

Spanish Civil War

In introducing the main discussion on the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War, Robert Clough said it had taken colossal terror to defeat the workers' struggle against capitalism. Between 1 and 2 million died in the war, most of them workers butchered by Franco's occupying Nationalist armies and their *falange* militias.

Spain entered the twentieth century as a weak and declining imperialist power. From the left was a growing urban and rural working class, but a class that was split in its political movement between the anarchists and the Socialist Party. On the right, the Catholic church was a major political force, together with a parasitic military and the absentee landlords and rural bourgeoisie. The country had been near civil war since 1917, the contradictions brought to fever pitch in the thirties by the failure of one parliamentary solution after another.

Comrade Clough showed that the critical period of revolutionary opportunity was from the Asturian miners' uprising in October 1934 until June 1937, by which time defeat of the working class was tragically inevitable.

The international situation was unfavourable, the victory of fascism in Italy and Germany had pushed the European working class into retreat. 1935 saw the open abandonment of the communist position by the Communist International. The young Communist Party of Spain joined in the Popular

Front with the aim of uniting opposition to the right wing National Front, but it had to accept a programme that ruled out any attacks on landed property.

The National Front lost a close election in February 1936; in July Franco led his African troops in an army revolt against the new Republican govern-

ments of capitalism, hoping not to alienate the bourgeoisie and to build an alliance with France and Britain.

Clough argued that in this situation of dual power within the Republican side of the civil war, with the armed workers rivalling the Republic's own state power, the Communist Party



Half a million people filled the streets of Barcelona for the funeral of leading anarchist, Durruti

ment. On the Republican side millions of workers took matters into their own hands, on the streets, on the farms and in the factories. The Popular Front government had to fight fascism within the

should have pushed the situation forward beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy, breaking from the Popular Front government in order to advance the revolution. In fact the Communist

Party, backed by arms from the Soviet Union and the International Brigades, increasingly represented a narrow petit bourgeois interest which censured and policed internal opposition, demanding stability for the sake of the war against Franco. The communists, especially the PSUC in Catalonia and in Aragon, ended up acting as agents of counter-revolution against anarchists and other Marxists in the Republican camp.

Clough's interpretation was both developed and disputed in other comrades' contributions: that it is a mistake to analyse the issues as Popular Front versus United Front, rather as alliances between class forces; that the communists did take a sectarian attitude to the anarchist movement and underestimated the collectivisation process; that the Republicans' main weakness in the conduct of the war was their refusal to call for the liberation of Morocco – which would have removed Franco's best troops; that the civil war shows what can happen if significant sections of the population can be mobilised to crush the revolution; that the anarchists' refusal to collaborate with the communists in the war effort was a typical failure; that despite the Anglo French blockade the Soviet Union had supplied whatever aid it could to the leading forces.

The debate was enlivened by Rene Waller, who reported that she had been active nearly sixty years ago with the British Communist Party. She argued that the Soviet Union had been in an extremely difficult position and it feared further isolation and war; the Communist Party had built a broad campaign in support of Republican government, and that it could not have achieved as much had it campaigned for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in Spain.

There is no doubt that communists have to study and evaluate very carefully the lessons of the Spanish Civil War, the aggregate discussion being the beginning of the RCG's evaluation.

Political campaigns

From questions of history we turned to the most pressing political campaigns of today.

There is a new generation of young people involved in struggles, especially against the Criminal Justice Act. The latest CND demonstration, on which the police snatched anarchists off the march with no protest from the march stewards, typifies the new climate. The RCG resolves to support anarchists and all others in defence against state attacks. The 'socialist' left has turned its back on the new political challenges, communists have to address them.

The Labour Party has galloped so far to the right, with Blair nakedly only interested in defending middle class interests, that there are growing signs of anger. The RCG joins in the call for independent candidates in the next election that do represent working class interests.

The RCG mobilised for the Cuba Solidarity Campaign's October week of action, and we will support all forms of activity to take Cuba solidarity out to the people.

The most urgent campaign our comrades are involved with is for the release of Kurdish leader Kani Yilmaz, detained by the British state. RCG comrades have participated in the Kurdish community's continuous protest outside the Home Office.

Sales of FRFI 121 have been good, with new readers amongst students, reflecting the new wave of political activity. We had ten new subscriptions in one week. This is the one thing that all our readers and supporters must do immediately – take out a subscription now!

The first two Communist Forums in London have had the benefit of excellent introductions by comrades from the FRFI Editorial Board with lively debates. If you want to learn more about the politics of the Revolutionary Communist Group, come to our next forum.

IN MEMORIAM

Terry O'Halloran

1 May 1952-23 January 1989

It is now six years since the tragic death of our comrade Terry O'Halloran. Each year, as the anniversary of his death approaches, those of us who worked with and knew Terry pause to reflect on the outstanding contribution he made in his short life to the RCG and the communist movement as a whole. He wrote and campaigned on Ireland and prisons in particular, but also covered a whole range of issues for FRFI and other publications, including homelessness, racism, the police and industrial disputes.

And, as we remember Terry in this way, it has become our habit to reflect also on the events of the past year, wondering what Terry might have thought or said or written about them. Certainly he would have had a strong contribution to make towards an understanding of the 'peace process' unravelling in Ireland. And he would have positively revelled in condemning the ever greater revelations of sleaze and corruption in both the Palace of Westminster and the borough of Westminster, where Terry lived for most of his life.

COMMUNIST FORUMS

A new series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by members of the *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* Editorial Board.

LONDON

Sunday 11 December
Their profit - our loss
The multinationals against humanity
Trevor Rayne

2pm Conway Hall,
Red Lion Square,
London WC1

(nearest tube Holborn)

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 14 December
Their profit - our loss
The multinationals against humanity

7.30pm Friends Meeting House,
Mount Street, Manchester

A new series of Communist Forums will start in 1995. These will be on Sundays, 15 January, 12 February and 12 March in London (all at 2pm, Conway Hall). The first forum of the new series in Manchester will be on Wednesday 18 January, 7.30pm, venue as above.

For details of topics for forthcoming forums, tel: 071 837 1688.

Support Satpal Ram's fight for justice

On 21 June 1993, my lawyers made a submission to the Home Secretary, requesting that my case be referred back to the Court of Appeal in accordance with Section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968. This request was rejected.

After obtaining legal advice, a decision was made to challenge the Home Secretary's refusal by way of a judicial review. Subsequently in May

1994, I was granted leave to appeal by the High Court. The Divisional Court has now listed the appeal for a full hearing on 15 December 1994.

When one considers I have already exhausted all legal avenues within the appeal process, this will be the last opportunity for the British legal system to correct a grave miscarriage of justice. I have now spent eight years in prison for

defending myself against a racially motivated attack. My continued imprisonment is completely unjustifiable and further highlights the blatant discrimination within the criminal justice system. Until the system eradicates discrimination on the grounds of class, gender and race, more and more innocent people will continue to be wrongly convicted. I ask anyone who is concerned to

support me in my fight for justice, by attending the High Court on 15 December. Pressure from the public is the only way I stand a chance to get my case noticed and accepted as a grave miscarriage of justice. I ask you to respond accordingly. 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' (Martin Luther King).

SATPAL RAM
HMP Full Sutton,
Moor Lane, York YO4 1PS
Picket the High Court, Strand, London WC2, from 10am on 15 December

M25 Three fight for justice

Imagine you are me - a 19-year old living in South London. Since you left school you have been mainly concerned with having a good time, scraping together a living, not altogether legally, but nothing too serious. One evening you have a take-away with four friends. After you've eaten, you take a bus together to another friend's house where you spend some time socialising. Later, you and a couple of others get a lift home and you spend the night in bed with a girlfriend.

That same evening, off a section of the M25 far from where you live, a series of crimes take place - cars are stolen, several violent burglaries and a murder are committed by a vicious gang. From the extensive news and media coverage you learn about the crimes. The police are looking for three men, two of whom are white, one with fair hair and blue eyes.

Four days later the house you live in is raided by the police. You are arrested and charged with stealing cars, aggravated burglary, grievous bodily harm, firearms offences and - yes - murder. Your best friend is also arrested and charged. You hear a third man, someone you have met only once, has been charged as well. All three of you are black.

This is what happened to me, Raphael Rowe, in December 1988. After one year in prison on remand a

trial took place. I was found guilty. I am now serving a life sentence for crimes I did not commit.

Those of you who have never been in prison cannot know the unbearable pain of separation from the world, from those you love, the terrible, dehumanising monotony of prison routine and the feeling that every day spent inside is a day stolen from my life.

So, imagine you are me. You have lost everything, convicted of crimes you did not commit, of murder, of taking a life. Your only way out of this nightmare is through a labyrinth of slow-moving bureaucrats, a judicial system and Home Secretary embarrassed by the number of miscarriages of justice already revealed and a police force reluctant to admit to a series of convictions founded on racism and social victimisation. I survive through my will to fight these convictions, and through the support I receive from people on the outside.

The M25 Three are innocent. Please join our campaign.

RAPHAEL ROWE
HMP Maidstone,
County Road, Maidstone,
Kent ME14 1UZ

This letter has been cut considerably for reasons of space. For a copy of the full text, please write to FRFI enclosing an SAE. For more information on the M25 Three campaign see FRFI 121 or write to Raphael at HMP Maidstone.

CND stitch up anarchists

On 29 October the RCG joined the CND March for a Nuclear Free World. The media had been full of stories that the event was being used by anarchists bent on violence and confrontation. Having orchestrated this advance publicity, the Metropolitan Police then attempted to have the march banned. The organisers responded with reassurances that they would ensure there was no trouble on the march.

Two minutes after we'd set off on the ten-minute route from Temple to Trafalgar Square (deliberately avoiding parliament and Downing Street), police snatch squads moved in on what they regarded as 'troublemakers' - apparently purely on the basis of what people were wearing. Nothing was happening at

the time. Highly organised snatch squads surrounded their targets and pulled them out, encouraged by an almost total lack of opposition from other marchers. Those wearing black, a hood or similar attire were grabbed. The rest of the march continued as though nothing had happened.

RCG members attempted to get the demonstrators to stop, and at least to witness the police behaviour and support those arrested, who were being held down and searched by the side of the road. I spoke to a steward, who ignored the police and told the march to keep moving.

The brazen police actions can be explained by their confidence that they had the support of the organisers and could rely on cooperation from sections of the marchers - one woman said to me, 'We're not stopping for them, they're the troublemakers.'

This was barely weeks after the Criminal Justice Bill became law, and had the marks of a rehearsal for a new attitude to policing demonstrations in the future. No one, least of all CND, has forced the police to account for their actions in violently grabbing a load of people and then letting them go (in the event only three people were charged, with minor offences). We expect the police to act in the interests of the ruling class - it's their job and they're well paid to do it. The only way, however, they can carry it out without creating widespread opposition is with unpaid accomplices in the working class movement. One of the stewards came up to me at the end of the march and said, 'I've given back my steward's bib. It's disgusting, what we were being told to do.'

RICHARD ROQUES
North London

Women and Islamic fundamentalism



Muslim headscarves: symbol of women's oppression or issue of cultural rights?

The article in FRFI 121 on Islamic fundamentalism and women was very informative, but I think it should be set in context. The politically motivated Islamic extremists are being used by the West to justify an attack on all Muslims in their own countries and abroad. France has already banned young women from wearing their traditional head coverings in school. The thousands of Iraqi lives lost in the Gulf War are justified in the West on the grounds that they were only 'war-like Muslims'. Much of the racism arising across Europe is directed against largely Muslim Asian communities.

We must be careful not to help the West in its attempt to set up Islam as a scapegoat for all these crises imperialism creates. While the article shows the atrocities carried out by the extremists, it does not follow that Islam is inherently or uniquely repressive. It's by no means the only religion used as an instrument of oppression. Christianity has been as barbarous as any other religion. For centuries it forced unmarried women to take the veil and locked them in nunneries; it persistently attacked and persecuted Jews in Europe, and

has been used as a tool to divide and rule the working class.

Western consumerism puts tremendous pressure on women to conform to their narrow definition of fashionable appearance. High heels, bras and short skirts are often uncomfortable, and are seen by many men as an invitation to harass or rape women. The dietary products industry makes millions out of pressuring women into a futile and unnecessary attempt to lose weight.

It is also important to make clear that when we talk of Islamic fundamentalism, we are referring to a specific political movement and not to mainstream Muslims who believe in the fundamentals of Islam ie the Quran - many of whom buy FRFI. Also, we have to be aware of the debate amongst feminists in Asian countries about abortion. Often rights to abortion are used to encourage or force women to terminate pregnancies if the foetus is female.

I hope the debate on women in FRFI continues, and I look forward to future articles.

JOHN WALKER
Manchester

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OUR NEXT PUBLICATION

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We apologise to readers for the delay in publication of this book which will now be produced in April 1995 to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the Strangeways uprising. Order an advance copy now for £5, post free. £10 reserves you two copies, one for yourself, post free; the other will be sent to one of the 180 prisoners who receive FRFI.

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I would like to join/ receive more information about the RCG

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FRFI READERS & SUPPORTERS GROUPS

NORTH LONDON

Monday 19 December
Britain on the Breadline
Thursday 19 January
The Criminal Injustice Act
Both at 7.30pm, Neighbourhood Advice Centre, Greenland Road, London NW1 (Camden Town tube)

SOUTH LONDON

Thursday 15 December
The Criminal Injustice Act
7.30pm, The Old White Horse pub, Brixton Road, London SW2 (Brixton/Oval tubes)
Tuesday 10 January, 7.30pm
Britain on the Breadline
7.30pm, Selkirk Arms, Selkirk Road, London SW17 (Tooting Broadway tube)

For further details of these meetings, or information about FRFI readers & supporters groups in your area, tel 071 837 1688

FRFI CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

Saturday 17 December 8pm till late
Tut'n'Shive pub
235 Upper Street, London N1 (tube: Highbury Islington)
Food, late bar, live music
£5 wages, £3 unwaged

Campaign against the Criminal Justice Act

Something's happening here!

The campaign against the Criminal Justice Bill – now the Criminal Justice Act – has brought tens of thousands of young people into political activity for the first time. As our reports show, opposition is organised countrywide. The Act increases repressive powers while at the same time scapegoating any group which challenges middle-class interests – travellers, anti-road protesters, young people going to raves, hunt saboteurs. But the law has also encouraged many disparate groups to stand up for their own rights, and most crucially, for each others.

A network of groups has grown up throughout the country organising marches, occupations, pickets, illegal parties and direct action against the new law. Within two days of the Bill becoming law 8,000 people marched through Glasgow in the biggest illegal demonstration seen in Britain for decades.

In Brighton, the local anti-CJA group *Justice?* occupied the massive old Courthouse in the centre of the town for 52 days in protest at the law. They turned a derelict building into a lively community centre offering cheap food, a free creche, advice for the homeless and a centre for political discussion and activity. Literally hundreds of workshops, social events and meetings were organised in the building involving speakers such as Women Against Pit Closures – who travelled down from Lancashire to show their solidarity. The squat was so successful that copycat squats soon started

appearing across the country.

The anti-CJA movement has grown out of various other movements, such as the anti-roads movement, the soon-to-be-criminalised dance scene and hunt sabs. Together, these groups represent a rejection by hundreds of thousands of young people of a system that offers them no future and is quite willing to destroy the planet to make it safe for profits. They are organising in a way completely outside the control and understanding of politicians left and right.

The Labour movement and its supporters in left-wing groups like the SWP and RCP have often opposed real movements of the oppressed in other countries for not being socialist enough, so it comes as no surprise that they don't support or understand this one. In Parliament, Labour abstained on the Bill in case they were seen to be 'soft on crime' by middle class voters.

Since protest groups began to organise, some left groups have tried to dominate the movement with their undemocratic and cowardly ways. When the SWP-dominated Coalition against the CJB organised its national march in October they refused to allow a sound system to be played through the PA that had just been used by speakers calling for defiance of the law. The reason? It would have been illegal! The police, of course, needed no excuse to attack the demonstration and hundreds of riot police did just that in battles along Park Lane.

The new movement faces problems of

course – there are many lessons to be learned and real divisions within it about how to organise, how to deal with police violence and so on. Crucially, the movement will face the questions of defending prisoners and building alliances with the poor, the unemployed and others who are offered nothing by this system.

If Brighton is anything to go by, the signs are good. Since being removed from the Courthouse, *Justice?* has been holding weekly meetings of over 80 people to support hunt sabs (the first group to be criminalised under the Act), help local squatters and connect up with other local

groups. Money is already being raised to defend prisoners. 'Awaydays' – involving such events as the recent invasion of Michael Howard's house – are part of the crowded diary of pickets, protests and fund-raising parties. At the last meeting of the group, the chair couldn't finish the meeting for 20 minutes as announcements of activities were made! As one of the Women Against Pit Closures speakers who visited Brighton said: 'If you're organised and you keep fighting they can never really beat you'. It's a message this movement is taking very much to its heart.

Colin Chalmers



HOMING IN ON INJUSTICE



'Injustice is not anonymous. It has a name and address.' With this quotation from Brecht emblazoned on our banner, on 20 November 300 protesters, including RCG members, homed in on the new country mansion of Home Secretary Michael Howard, in an act of mass trespass against the Criminal Justice Act. While a People's Court was set up in his garden to try him and the government for acts of criminal conspiracy and criminal negligence, over 60 riot police stormed in to protect the empty house. A police helicopter circled overhead. However, we refused to be moved off the property. Witnesses – including hunt saboteurs, anti-road protesters, squatters and travellers – gave evidence about the severe restrictions the new law would impose on their democratic rights. Howard had been invited to defend himself, but did not appear: condemned by his own law which interprets silence as guilt, he was convicted. From the roof, protesters unfurled another banner – 'Carry on trespassing'.

Hannah Caller



Night of the Zombies

On 19 October, when the CJB began its final reading, thousands of riot squad police turned Parliament Square and the surrounding streets into an armed camp to prevent a few thousand young people lobbying their MPs. The main provocation came from ranks of mounted riot police lined up to 'protect' Parliament, and the shield- and truncheon-bearing zombies who blocked the streets with armoured vehicles and attacked peaceful demonstrators. Above: On 4 November, the day after Royal Assent, five protesters broke the security surrounding Parliament, scaled the walls and staged a protest on the roof of Westminster Hall. They stayed for more than five hours – the police were stumped: how do you climb a wall in riot gear?

Hyde Park Hooligans

On Sunday 9 October aggressive policing turned what was a peaceful demonstration into the Battle of Park Lane. The massive, joyful turnout at the Embankment showed the breadth of opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill. There was a carnival atmosphere as the lively march set off – at Hyde Park we were met by a massive police presence. The rally was, however, very peaceful with a sociable atmosphere – we had no problem selling FRFI!

The march was still entering the Park when we heard music and whistles from Park Lane. The police had blocked a float followed by thousands of people dancing from entering the Park. This led to a head-on confrontation when the police let off CS gas. Most people were not aware of the situation until they were surrounded by heavily armed riot police with new long truncheons whose rapid arrival showed that this confrontation was organised. The marchers, mostly teenagers, did not understand that the police aggression was directed at them – they carried on dancing and sitting around.

The riot squad would not allow anyone into the area and started sweeping the roadside clear of by-standers. They obviously had no intention of handling the situation with anything other than brutality.



Eventually the marchers dispersed peacefully into the Park where the police had directed us. Big MISTAKE!

By this time the rally had finished but thousands remained dancing, giving the Park an ecstatic atmosphere. It wasn't long before the police attempted to move the crowd again, this time with mounted riot squads. A helicopter circled above to monitor the crowd while the horses charged. This continued until the crowd organised behind the police horses and chased them out of the Park. The protesters assembled around the railings on Park Lane, where any bystanders outside were forced into the Park by police charges. This was the beginning of the Battle of Park Lane.

The police charged at the railings to intimidate us. The stupidity of this situation was that the protesters had no way of leaving the Park. Inevitably some people armed themselves as protection and thousands of people remained to witness the insanity of the police action. The presence of communal fires and ravers who hadn't stopped moving, and the eventual arrival of a bicycle contraption with a sound system, created a very surreal vision that will stay with us forever.

There was a general consensus that the police action was futile, and sensing victory the remaining protesters began a parade out of the Park, led by the bicycle contraption. Having reached the exits the protesters were set on once more by the full force of the police, lined up and waiting to charge. People scattered down Oxford Street chased by riot police on horses. Within seconds the famous high street was swamped: riot police engulfing tourists, businessmen and demonstrators alike.

Eventually we were able to leave. Witnessing the police attacking a passive protester who was leaving the area made us realise who were the real Hyde Park Hooligans!

Helen and Val

Scottish defiance alliance

On 18 November thousands marched in the major Scottish cities in a coordinated act of defiance against the Criminal Justice Bill. All the demonstrations were illegal and the organisers have been charged under the 1986 Public Order Act. Unity and defiance was declared as political organisations, ravers, young people and students showed their determined opposition. In order to move forward the old sectarian traditions of the labour movement have been left behind; everyone was able to speak and distribute literature.

In Dundee, the RCG and supporters of FRFI have been working to keep this defiance alliance active, open and democratic. At the rally after the local march the RCG speaker made two main points: that we would only protect the rights that we were prepared to organise and fight for, and that the fight belongs to all involved, not any single group.

The organisers of the illegal demonstrations presented themselves at Stewart Street police station in Glasgow on 14 November, accompanied by 250 other people who also claimed responsibility. The police gave up and charged no-one.

However, the first arrests under the Act took place a few days after it became law when hunt saboteurs were charged with aggravated trespass. Travellers in Scotland are also coming up against the Act.

Mike Taylor

Out on the streets

Such is the widespread hostility to the Criminal Justice Act that the campaign of opposition is active even in the depths of rural Lincolnshire. Protesters in Lincoln have set up a drop-in centre to coordinate action, which has so far included street meetings, public protests and a 'Knees up, Mother Earth' rave. One member of the group has got himself banned from the local Tory MP's surgery; the local rag *Lincolnshire Echo*, has been forced to give publicity to the campaign – after being threatened with a Press Complaint. On the day the Bill became an Act, several protesters showed their contempt for the new law by trespassing over the site of the new Leadenham bypass. Far from declining now that the Bill is law, the local campaign is growing stronger. The co-ordinating group now involves environmentalists, civil liberty groups, students and socialists with co-operative links to hunt sabs, ravers and squatters. The struggle goes on.

Jim Craven

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

'Here in London the government has nearly produced a rising. The Englishman first needs a revolutionary education of course, and two weeks would be enough for this if Sir Richard Maine (Commissioner of Police) had absolute control. In fact the thing only depended on one point. If the railings had been used offensively and defensively against the police and about 20 of the latter had been knocked dead, the military would have had to 'intervene' instead of only parading. And then there would have been some fun.'

Letter from Marx 27 June 1866