

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST



## Why we lost

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# DON'T MOURN FIGHT BACK!



**THE GREAT** lesson of Labour's lost General Election is that General Elections are not lost and won in three or four week campaigns.

To win the next election, Labour needs to start now and mount a campaign against the Tory government and against all the Tories stand for.

Labour needs to campaign week in and week out as vigorously as it did for the four weeks before the election. Of course, the four weeks' campaign was not a campaign for socialism — for the replacement of the fundamental fact of British life, the exploitation of the workers by the owners of big property — but it was a sustained and passionate indictment of dog-eat-dog Toryism.

In that campaign Neil Kinnock spoke for millions of working-class people. He spoke out for sanity against nuclear weapons.

But the forces of reaction were too strong. The grip of Thatcherism on the relatively well-off was too deep to be shaken by Labour's appeals to altruism and social responsibility.

Labour's campaign started too late. And it was, probably, also a campaign for too little.

Altruism and love-thy-neighbour politics are better than

Civil Service strikers take on Thatcher. Photo: John Smith

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# The real face of the UDM



ROY LYNK of the UDM has come out publicly and said what he's been saying in private for years.

He has never been a Labour supporter. He has never been a trade unionist, if it comes to that.

Now he has said publicly that miners should not support the Labour Party — they should not support the labour movement.

But the picture we are getting from the pit is that even his own members are telling Lynk: 'You're not going to tell us how to vote'.

At my own pit, the NUM has put out stickers saying 'Miners for Labour', and substantial numbers of UDM members are proudly walking around the pit with 'Miners for Labour' stickers on their helmets.

I think miners know that the Tories have never been friends of the mining industry — except where it can be hived off into the private sector, which only lines the pockets of a few individuals.

The threats to their own jobs, future, and security, looming closer and closer, are persuading people who a couple of years ago rejected the advances of the NUM to fight for the survival of the industry and of their own jobs and communities.

At that time, closures seemed a long way off, and not really an issue to them, but now they are beginning to realise that they backed the wrong horse.

This, on top of the recent debacle of the UDM's supposedly negotiated pay rise, shows that after the present problems have been sorted out you are going to see members rolling back into the NUM in increasing numbers.

The Coal Board are pulling out all the stops to prop up the UDM, but in spite of that it is crumbling at its base.

The Coal Board's fight to remove from the NUM control of Ollerton and Bevercotes miners' welfares is going to court this week. It has taken two years.

The Coal Board had to go to the government to get them to change the law of the land, putting a Bill into parliament. They had to go to the High Court to get some sort of settlement, which shows how desperate they are.

They may well succeed now because, of course, the courts are going to bend over backwards to accommodate the UDM and the employers. But we'll re-take control within the next couple of years.

It will seem like a defeat for the NUM if we lose the welfares, but it is a victory that we have managed to hold on to them for so long.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

Arabs, Jews and socialism

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# Why we lost

**Neil Kinnock said that Labour just started too far behind to make up the ground and win on 11 June. He's right.**

Given our starting point, the Labour leaders did not make a bad job of the campaign itself. There were some good ads and television broadcasts, and Neil Kinnock defended nuclear disarmament and the right to secondary picketing with more vigour than we've heard for a long time.

The Alliance was marginalised, and Labour managed to present the election fairly clearly as a choice, if not between capitalism and socialism, at least between raw capitalism and capitalism tempered by a dose of 'the political economy of the working class'.

But four weeks is too short a time to convince many people of anything, let alone of ideas which in terms of the spectrum presented by the press and TV are radical and left-wing. Labour needed to have campaigned vigorously for health and education services with proper resources, for publicly-provided housing, for trade union rights, and for nuclear disarmament for years before the election.

## Vigorous

And Labour's leaders hadn't done that. For years previously their most vigorous speeches had been against Labour's own left wing.

If Labour had campaigned, we could have convinced more people. And such a campaign would have meant active official Labour support for dozens of workers' struggles — from the great miners' strike to small hospital occupations — which could have made the difference between losing and winning those struggles, and between a rise and a decline in the morale of the working class.

The other factor in our defeat was more deep-seated: the political core of Labour's programme. The Tories replied to Labour's call for more spending on welfare by saying that such spending might be desirable but would cause economic ruin.

Labour's leaders conceded the case in principle and argued only that the increased spending was modest and had been 'carefully costed'. Labour came nowhere near to presenting a different principle for running the

By Colin Foster

economy. Labour did not counterpose planning for need to production for profit, but only asserted that a bit more tinkering with the system of production for profit was possible without disrupting that system. With economic crisis raging all around, it is no surprise that this was unconvincing. The economic arguments got presented as a dispute on techniques for running the Tories' own system, not as a clash of class interests.

## Weakness

This has long been a weakness. When Labour's left was strongest, in the early '80s, it still did not face the economic arguments squarely.

Since then, as the left has retreated, radical policies on women's, black and gay rights have been left as the high-profile issues of left-wing Labour councils, like rocks stranded by an eb-



bing tide. On the principle of seeking the path of least resistance, they have become the channel along which Labour radicalism sought expression once it was stymied in direct class struggle and tied into managing the system.

## Worsen

The result has probably been to lose the ear and even worsen the prejudices of many workers who are not bigoted but who find the business of women's committees, race-relations units, and gay-

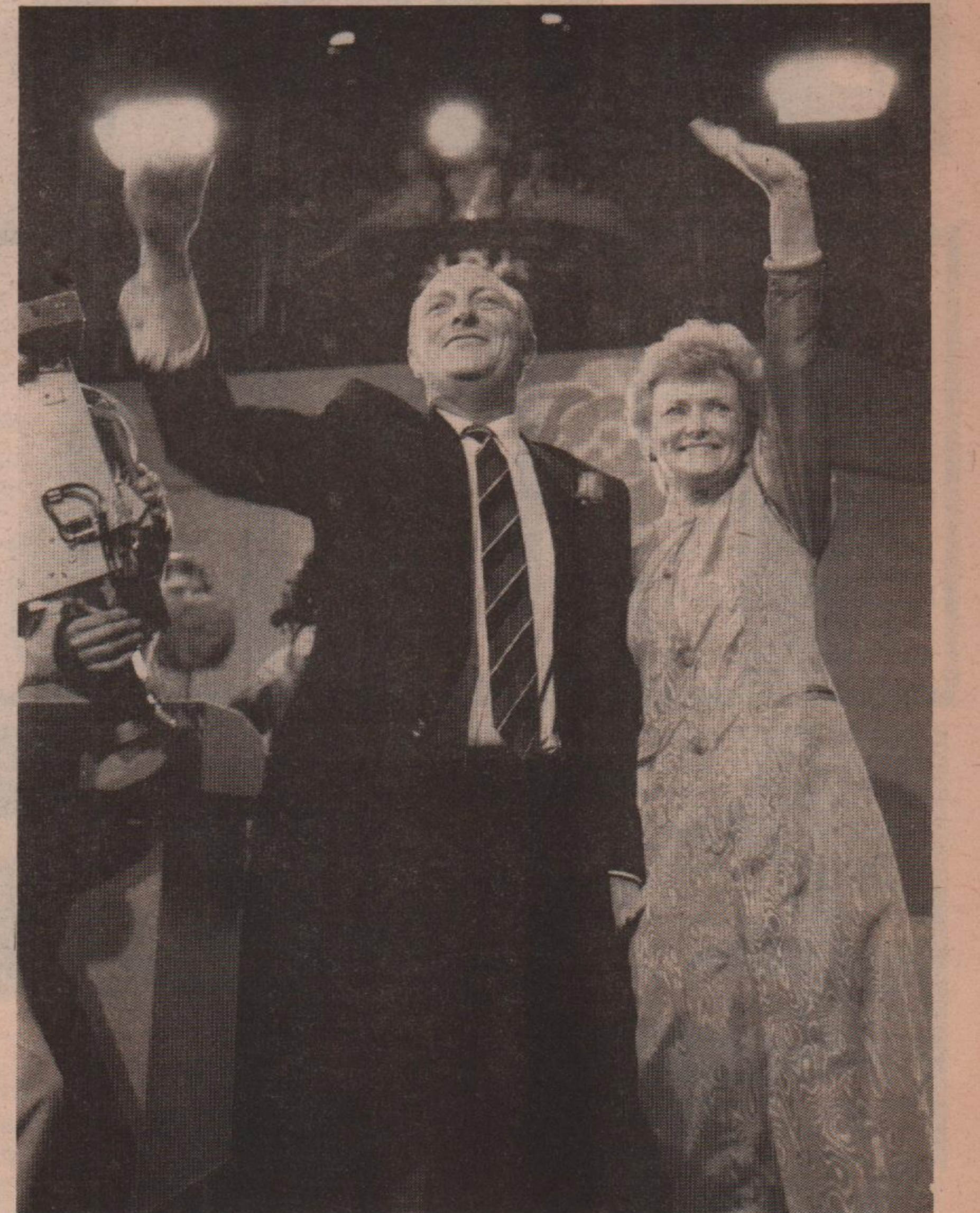


Photo: John Smith

equality projects indicative of odd priorities from Labour councils that can't manage their basic functions like housing and education very well and can't even get up a consistent campaign against Tory cuts.

Probably the immediate result of the election within the Labour Party will be a boost for the Kinnock leadership and a further retreat by the left. But what was best about the election campaign was that Labour's leaders did shift from their approach of the last few years, and begin to challenge the Tories on the central economic issues, if only in very limited terms.

## Boost

The positive thing we have to build on from the election campaign was the degree to which voters did polarise on the lines of unrestrained dog-eat-dog economics versus the principle of public welfare. From that base the left needs to relaunch the

fight for working class socialist politics.

That is the way to arm the labour movement for the necessary industrial fighback in the years to come, and for Labour victory in the next election.



RESULTS SPECIAL: See Pages 4, 16, 17 and Back Page





Teachers: among those in the front line. Photo: Ian Swindale

# Don't mourn, fight back

From page 1

the self-centred piggishness to which Thatcher appeals and which she glories in. But it has a limited appeal.

The dog-eat-dog philosophy of the Tories does sum up how things are in capitalist society.

## Know

People know that's how things are, and they feel they know where they are with the Tories. They may even feel morally

uplifted by the 'self-help' homilies in praise of selfishness delivered by the high priest of swinishness who has just been returned as prime minister for the third term.

Thatcherism sums up the logic and the rationale of capitalism. It is ugly and disgusting, but it is the reality in which people live.

To counter it and to motivate and mobilise people to root it out, you need more than appeals to good will and altruism.

You need socialism. You need a campaign by the labour movement to replace Thatcher and the dog-eat-dog system she personifies with its opposite — a new basis of life, a free society built on social ownership of the means of production, without exploitation and without state oppression.

## Medicine

For now the Tories are back in power on a programme of more and worse of the same medicine that they have been doling out to the working class for eight years. But the labour movement is far from helpless.

We can react and fight back.

## EDITORIAL

The next election campaign begins now — only it isn't a campaign for votes. It is a campaign, or a series of campaigns, to rouse the working class against the Tories on all the fronts where they will attack — industry, education, health, housing, civil liberties.

It will have to raise a storm of protest on specific question. We should where possible make it a campaign of resistance by industrial action.

## Refuse

The labour movement should refuse all cooperation with the Tories. The TUC should break its collaboration with the Tories rather than settling down to 'new-realist' bargaining with them. Labour MPs in Parliament should really fight the Tories, disrupting Parliamentary procedures where necessary.

The watchword of the labour movement now must be **resistance**.

That resistance can lay the

basis for a powerful movement to limit the damage done by the Tories now, and to defeat them at the next election or maybe sooner.

## Reserves

We have had a series of setbacks. But the labour movement has great reserves of strength, even now.

By closing off one avenue of advance, one way of dealing with Thatcher, the Tory election victory throws the labour movement back on its basic resources — direct working-class struggle. Real, deep and bitter class hatred exists now in Britain of a sort not seen since before the war. It can blow up in Mrs Thatcher's smug face.

In his own way Neil Kinnock, conceding defeat, said as much: "My hope is that those who feel themselves to be on the benefiting side of the division don't have to learn the lessons the hard way".

Perhaps, Mr Kinnock, they are only capable of learning the hard way! In any case, a labour movement willing and able to teach the Tories and their supporters a lesson is infinitely preferable to one capable only of suffering pa-

tiently what they do to us.

The left was scarcely visible in the election; it had been eclipsed in all but propaganda long before the four week campaign opened. Labour's failure was the fault not of the left but of the 'moderate' play-for-the-middle-ground Labour leaders. Despite their performance during the four weeks, which was good in terms of where we started from, they must take the blame for their failure to campaign in the months and years before and for their part in steering Labour away from socialism.

## Debate

Neil Kinnock, who spoke during the election in clear and ringing tones with the gut anti-Tory feeling of the labour movement, will probably come out of it with a greatly strengthened authority. Nevertheless, the left must restart the debate about socialism in the labour movement.

We need socialist ideas to understand what has gone wrong; we need them in order to fight effectively now; and we need them in order to win the arguments against the Tories' ideology of unabashed capitalism.

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# GRAFFITI

## The work that needs doing

THE WORK needed to get Britain's housing, schools, hospitals and road into good repair would give a million people useful jobs for six years, according to the 'Charter for Jobs' group.

Based on official surveys, the estimate prices the work at £93

billion — or just slightly less than the increase in British capitalists' overseas investments between December 1979 and December 1984. £55 billion needs to be spent on housing, where the Tories have cut back public spending most severely.

The North Sea Oil boom gave the Tory government an easy chance to improve Britain's basic facilities. Instead they have chosen to run those facilities down and let the oil money move to where the biggest profits can be got.

## Private medicine and public lies

TWICE AS many people have private medical insurance as in 1979, and 78 new private hospitals have opened since 1979 while the Tory government has closed over 200 NHS hospitals.

71% of all managers get free private medical insurance paid for by their employers, but only 1½% of semi-skilled manual working-class people have private medical insurance, and about 2% of trade unionists.

97% of all treatment is by the NHS, and over 90% of people rely entirely on the NHS. But, as waiting lists increase, at least one quarter of all hip replacements and 20% of all heart operations are private.

According to the Tories, NHS waiting lists have fallen. But it's like the unemployment statistics: they've fiddled the figures.

Waiting list numbers now exclude day cases, and there has been a



It doesn't take a genius to work out where Anne Diamond is coming from

special drive to cross of names of those who have died, moved, or gone to private hospitals. A similar twist lies behind the Tories' claim that the NHS is treating more cases. In the name of efficiency, they have

encouraged hospitals to get patients in and out quickly.

A patient who visits hospital twice is counted as two cases, whereas if he or she stayed in hospital for treatment it would only be one case.

## Poverty amidst prosperity

LONDON IS the centre of Britain's wealth. But the heart of the 'prosperous South' is also an area of mass poverty, according to a new report by Professor Peter Townsend.

The average price for a

house or flat in Greater London is now £69,000. London has the country's highest concentration of high-priced luxury homes — and its biggest concentration of homeless. Most of the 19,000

families being paid for by councils in bed-and-breakfast hotels because there are no other homes for them are in London.

1.8 million people in London live in or on the margins of poverty. Manufacturing industry has declined more in London than elsewhere, and the income of the poorest 10% of households has gone down by 23% since 1979.

70% of households in Tower Hamlets, and 65% in Hackney, live on less than £120 a week.

## Burn

"LOONY LEFT gang burn Tory office", according to the front-page headline in the pro-Tory *Star* on 4 June.

Its only evidence for a link between the left and the arson attack on Tory offices in Hackney, East London, was an allegation by Norman Tebbit.

The next day the Labour offices in Hackney were also attacked, with bricks thrown through the windows. This time the report was in the small print.

## Bias

IF YOU despair about the pro-Tory bias of the press, consider one consoling (if puzzling) fact. A survey after the 1979 election found that one-third of *Sun* readers believed that the *Sun* supported Labour.

# How the dice were loaded

By Martin Thomas

NO HISTORIAN should ever vote Conservative, one of them once said. Look at what the Tories have been against — trade union rights, the right to vote, old age pensions, council housing, comprehensive education, the National Health Service.

But it always seemed that the Tories would eventually accept and learn to live with each bit of progress.

No longer! Margaret Thatcher argues for a return to 'Victorian values' in so many words, and claims that the capitalist free market, with as little modification as possible, is the best system possible. She makes no bones about using the word — 'capitalism'.

If the Tories have their way, there will be practically no new council houses or flats built ever again, and as much as possible of the existing stock will be sold off. The Tories are rather more cautious about the Health Service and education, but there too parts of the public services are being privatised, and the private sector is being encouraged.

Trade union rights have already been pushed back to where they were before 1906.

All this gives the impression of a mass shift of opinion to the right. But that has not happened.

Nationalisation has commanded less and less support for many years, because of the bureaucratic and capitalist shape of the nationalised industries we have. Apart from that, mass opinion seems to have moved, if anything, slightly to the left in recent years.

## Nuclear

More people want an equalisation of wealth and income. Most people value services like the NHS very highly. Support for a woman's right to choose on abortion has risen. More voters trust Labour on housing than trust the Tories. Support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, at about 35%, is as high as it ever has been.

So far as can be gathered from opinion polls, most working-class Tory voters believe that the Tory government will do little and care less for people like them.

The Tories can get away with it because of the slump; the defeats, and consequent demoralisation and loss of confidence, suffered by the working class; and the loss of verve by the labour movement.

In 1964 Labour won office on a wave of disgust with the '13 wasted years of Tory misrule'. The Tories, ruling from 1951 to 1964, had made little attempt to reverse the work of the 1945-51 Labour government. The economy had boomed, though less so than those of other big capitalist powers; living standards had risen; but the Tory years finally petered out in decay and scandal.

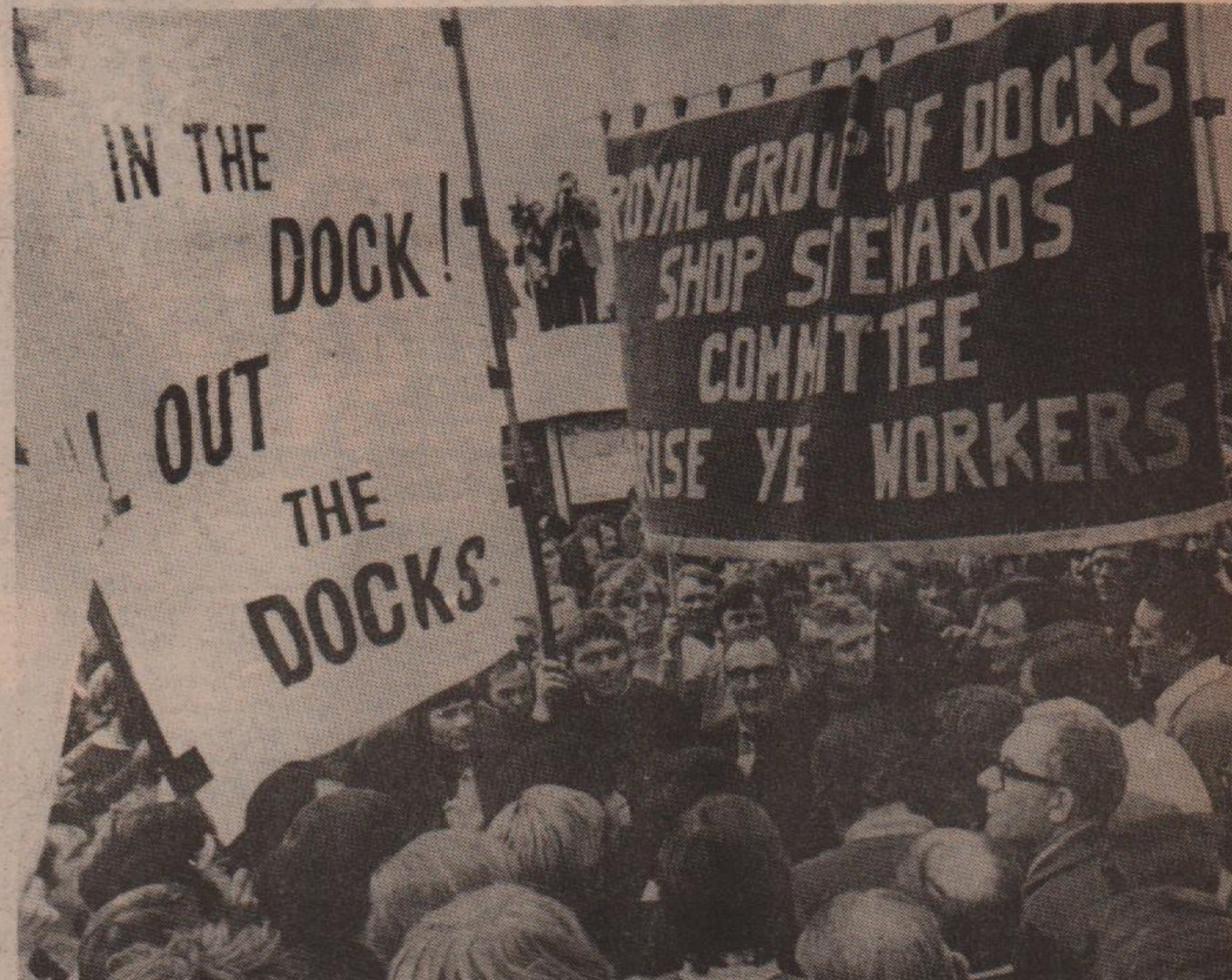
Labour promised a National Plan and a new technological era. These hopes quickly sank amidst balance-of-payments crises.

Labour did introduce enough reforms to win an increased majority in 1966, but after that it came under a double squeeze from an increasingly sick world capitalist system and from trade union militancy. Union organisation, and especially shop stewards' organisation, had built up steadily in the 1950s.

The Labour government turned against the trade unions — with its plans for anti-union laws, 'In Place of Strife' — and ruined itself. The Tories returned in 1970.

Their programme (the 'Selsdon Park' programme) was a first draft of Thatcherism — anti-union laws and free-market economics. But the working class beat them.

The miners' strike, and the mass strike wave to free five dockers jailed under anti-union law, broke the nerve of the Tories in 1972; and a second miners' strike in 1974 forced



July 1972: strikes force the release of dockers jailed under Tory anti-union law. But the labour movement did not have an adequate political alternative to the Tories.

them into an election which they lost.

The Labour Party, and the official machinery of the trade unions, had regained credit enormously since 1970. The big struggles of the early 1970s, contrasting with the militant but piecemeal industrial battles of the 1950s and '60s, put them centre-stage.

But the left in the Labour Party was feeble: most activists had concentrated narrowly on industrial struggle against the Tories.

The new Labour government started with reforms which largely undid the Tories' work; and then once again ran foul of a world capitalist crisis, a much worse one this time.

The official union leaders gave their crucial support to wage controls introduced in August 1975, and sweeping cuts (under IMF orders) in March 1976. The working class, baffled and unable to see an alternative, retreated: 1976 had the lowest rate of strikes for many years.

Gradually resistance grew. In 1978 the TUC conference, and then the Labour Party conference, voted against further wage controls. Once again, a Labour government wrecked itself by turning on its own base of support. After the public sector strikes of winter 1978-9, the Tories won the 1979 election.

They had the same programme as 1970, but much more thoroughly worked out and prepared. They had a new hard-line leadership, under Margaret Thatcher, and they had mapped out their confrontations with the working class in advance (the 'Ridley Plan').

They needed every bit of that preparation, and a lot of luck. There was a huge steel strike in 1980. The Welsh TUC called for a general strike. In February 1981 an immediate, unofficial miners' strike made the Tories back down on pit closures.

Labour, moving to the left under the pressure of a powerful rank-and-file reaction against the disastrous muddling of 1974-9, reached above 50% in the opinion polls.

Three things saved the Tories. The Labour and trade union leaders did nothing to bind the working-class fight back into a coherent offensive. A general strike was possible: the TUC stopped it. The steelworkers won a poor settlement on wages and had their jobs decimated.

Then in late 1981 a section of Labour's right wing broke away to form the SDP. They took few Labour Party members with them, and the SDP still has a very feeble party organisation today. But, linking up with the Liberals (who had done very well in the February 1974 election), they were and are enough to deprive Labour of its status as the obvious anti-Tory vote.

The Falklands war of summer 1982 was, however, the turning point for

the Tories' poll popularity. The effect of the war itself was relatively short-lived; but Labour has never regained the initiative since.

The left-wing surge in the Labour Party was petering out, limited by blurred politics and its failure to take up the fight within the unions. The Labour leaders began a long process of trying to neutralise the leftism of 1979-81 and make Labour once again a respectable alternative for the ruling class. At precisely the time when the SDP factor made more positive Labour campaigning necessary, they turned more effort to denouncing their own left wing than to attacking the Tories.

## Shambles

Labour's 1983 election campaign was a shambles, sabotaged by an open attack by ex-prime minister James Callaghan on the party's nuclear disarmament policy. In late 1983 the re-elected Tories pressed home their advantage with Eddie Shah's victory over the print union NGA at Warrington.

This victory — helped by the TUC stabbing the NGA in the back — was decisive in establishing the authority and effectiveness of the Tories' anti-union laws.

By early 1984 the Tories felt confident enough to take on the miners. Even so, there was nothing inevitable about their victory. Only the TUC's failure to deliver what it promised in support of the miners decided that. And at the height of the strike — in July 1984 — Labour was once again leading the Tories in the polls, with 40%.

The labour movement allowed the miners to go down to defeat. The left-wing Labour councils ignominiously abandoned their attempt to defy the government in April 1985. Labour's poll score sagged.

By the time the election was called, the dice were well and truly loaded against all ideas of militancy, resistance to the laws of the market, and working-class self-assertion. Thatcher had established her programme as the radical programme for dealing with the sickness of British society.

The labour movement could not be afforded as a powerful reforming force operating within a capitalist consensus, and was not prepared to offer to reconstruct society on its own, socialist, lines; so it would have to be beaten down.

But the Tories are a long way yet from exorcising the demon of socialism. They will get some surprises yet from those workers who on 11 June abstained in despair, voted Alliance because they couldn't see where Labour was going, or supported the Tories because Thatcherism seemed a hard but necessary cure.



Derek Hatton meets Stalin in a play about Russia, where Derek acts as an extra.

## Hatton's empty bluster

PROBABLY DEREK Hatton doesn't want to help the Tories. It's just that such things rank much lower with him than getting publicity and money for himself.

Last week he wrote a column for the *Mail* on Sunday which gave ammunition for the Tory press's attempt to convince voters that Labour's campaign is only a cover-up for 'extreme' left policies which will dominate if Labour wins the election.

"Sorry, we say when you go, Rambo!" was the headline, and Hatton's text was lurid enough for the *Mail* to be able to pre-

sent it as a promise that Militant will push Kinnoch aside if Labour wins.

This is empty bluster, but it can only make the job of winning over working-class people to real socialist politics more difficult. The fact that the USSR calls itself socialist already gives us enough problems with people thinking that socialism is something that will be imposed on them from above, rather than the self-liberation of the working class.

For the election on 11 June, Hatton's phony claim to call the shots is little better than sabotage.



# NHS: you ain't seen nothing yet

By Terry Ingle

**IF THE TORIES are returned in this week's election, then the working class faces a grim prospect.**

Attacks on our living conditions will continue in the shape of unemployment, more anti-union laws, cuts in benefit, and worse housing.

And the Tories have targeted the NHS — already pared to the bone — for some free-market surgery.

Using experts from the USA, the Tories are devising systems to measure the cost, efficiency, and quality of health care. The data will be used to compare 'performance' of nurses and doctors against that of their colleagues in other hospitals, or in the same hospital.

On a national scale, this could lead to a 'voucher' system where patients were subsidised by the government to enter NHS or private hospitals. And health authorities could operate an 'internal market', by buying operations from one another (or private hospitals) at the most cost-effective price. Thus, 'trade' between hospitals.

Thatcher's friends in the private health meat-market are raring to go. Their Independent Hospitals Association (IHA) met in early April 1987. They "confidently expect an extra 3,000 [private] beds in the NHS by the end of the year".

They want to 'care for the elderly' too — on the cheap. Norman Fowler was at the meeting and full of praise for the IHA.

**'One Tory trick is already widespread. That is the ambulance crews doing weekend, charity events to raise money...'**

Around the same time, a conference was held of the Institute of Health Service Management. Japanese manufacturing, McDonald's, and Marks and Spencer were extolled as models of good management.

The conference was told that managers need to be strong, autocratic leaders who lick sloppy hospitals into shape — and bust up those pesky trade unions.

It makes you wonder if the NHS will 'out-private' the private sector.

One Tory trick is already widespread. That's ambulance crews doing weekend charity events to raise money for defibrillators — a new item of equipment needed in their ambulances — because the Tories won't cough up.

Or there are health authorities setting up their own charities and asking their own employees to 'Give As You Earn'. It's also likely YTS will be extended to hospitals, with trainees assisting — and presumably covering for — nurses.

We need a Labour government. If we don't get one, health service trade unions need to draw up a serious strategy to resist and defeat the Tories. Health workers and the millions of people who use the NHS



Successful lobby of the AHA which decided against the closure of a West London Hospital. Picture Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

must be mobilised in a campaign to stop the Tories' butchery.

But even if we get a Labour government, restoring funding and resources to the NHS isn't enough.

First, there is a crying need to break open the secrecy and unaccountability of health authorities. Communities and health workers need to fight for elected, accountable authorities.

## Funding

Second is the level of funding and resources. Even a benevolent Labour government would put constraints on spending. Money available for health care — or housing, or education — would be limited by what the capitalist system could afford.

Instead, it should be determined by

what the working class needs.

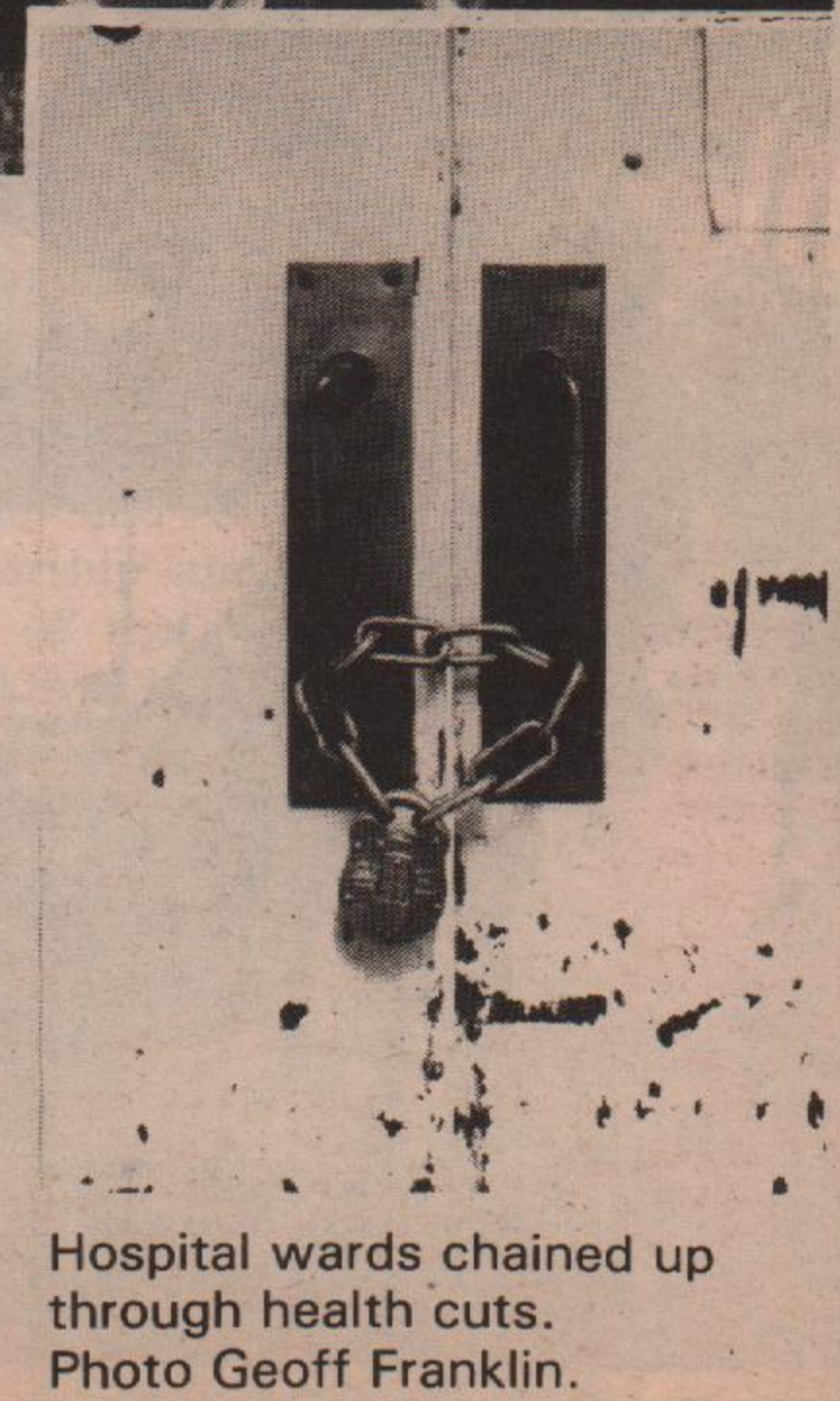
Edwina Currie cares for the working class. She tells us not to eat such bad food, drink, smoke, etc.

Well, we socialists are caring types, too. We care for the capitalists. At present, capitalists get fatter and fatter on bigger profits. They risk heart disease and ulcers from all the dreadful responsibility.

So we will take their factories — relieve them of stressful responsibility. We will take their profits — slim them down to a healthier weight.

And we will put their profits into health care — so that any remaining sick capitalists can get treatment from a workers' Health Service.

We must have health care, not profit care. And we must have not a bosses' health service but one which the working class controls, owns and runs.



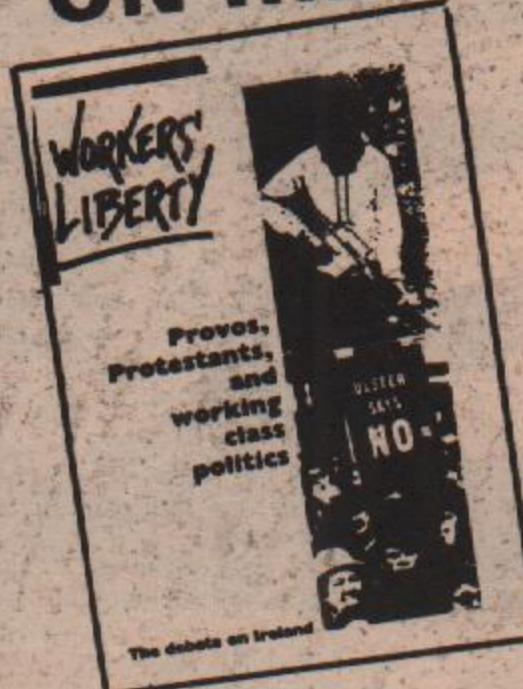
Hospital wards chained up through health cuts. Photo Geoff Franklin.

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# NEVER HAD IT SO BAD

JOHN RENTOUL shows us that today there are more than 280,000 'potentially idle' people in Britain — that is, people who could have an above-average or average living standard on the income from their wealth, without doing a day's work or reducing their wealth by one penny.

There are about 20,000 millionaires and multi-millionaires.

Rentoul argues that Britain is three nations — the 'haves', the 'have-nots', and the 'have-lots'.

The Tories have tried to form an alliance of the 'haves' and 'have-lots', at the expense of the 'have-nots'.

With cut-price council house sales, hand-outs through selling off public enterprises at bargain

**The rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. Patrick Blandford reviews new evidence on how the Tories are developing a dog-eat-dog society.**

rates, and tax cuts for the better off, the Tories have offered gains to the middle class and to some workers. But the big gains have gone to the very rich.

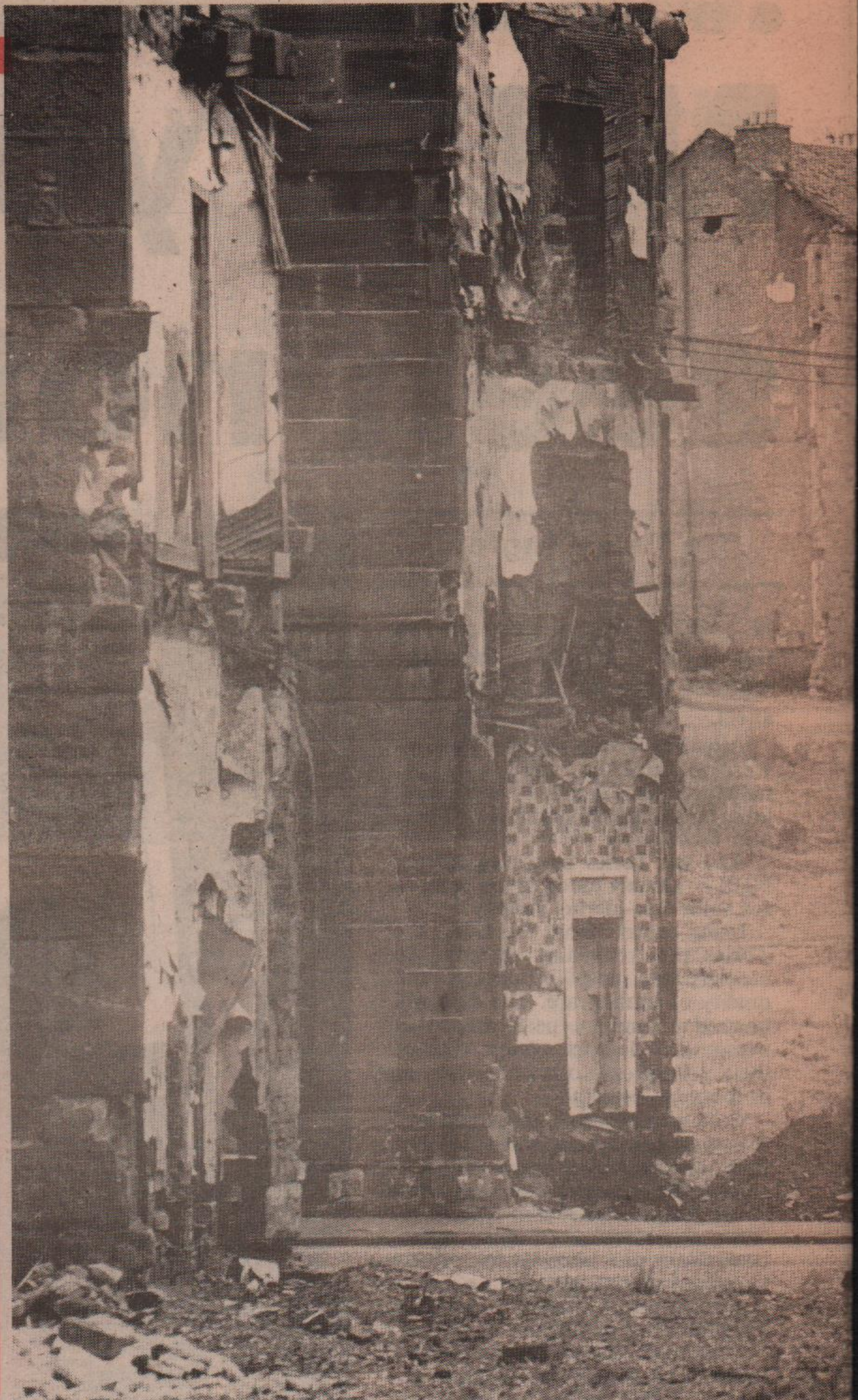
And it has been at the expense of a growing number of 'have-nots'. Some 20 million people now live in poverty (at an income less than supplementary benefit plus 40%). Every working-class family has members in this 'underclass', or at risk of falling into it at a time when jobs are

scarcer and less secure than ever.

Tory Ian Gow claims that "63% of your fellow-countrymen own their own homes". This is not true.

63% of households in England are owner-occupiers. Home-ownership in Britain has risen — from 50 to 56% of the adult population — but almost all of this increase is due to council homes being sold off cheap.

If you don't have a council tenancy to buy at a discount, it is



£50 billion is needed to put Britain's housing in good repair

still almost impossible to buy a home. The Nationwide Building Society estimated in July 1986 that 30% of households "cannot realistically expect" to buy homes.

The present low level of housebuilding offers little hope for the future to those 30%, but it does mean that those who have the money to buy expensive houses in the south east will make big gains as house prices go up

and up. If you spent £100,000 on a Chelsea flat in 1979, you could get £210,000 for it in 1986.

Meanwhile over 100,000 families are officially homeless, and another 100,000 sleep on floors, live with relatives, or are on the streets. Something like £50 billion is needed to put Britain's housing in good repair, and according to the latest estimate (1981), 1.2 million dwellings are unfit for human habitation.

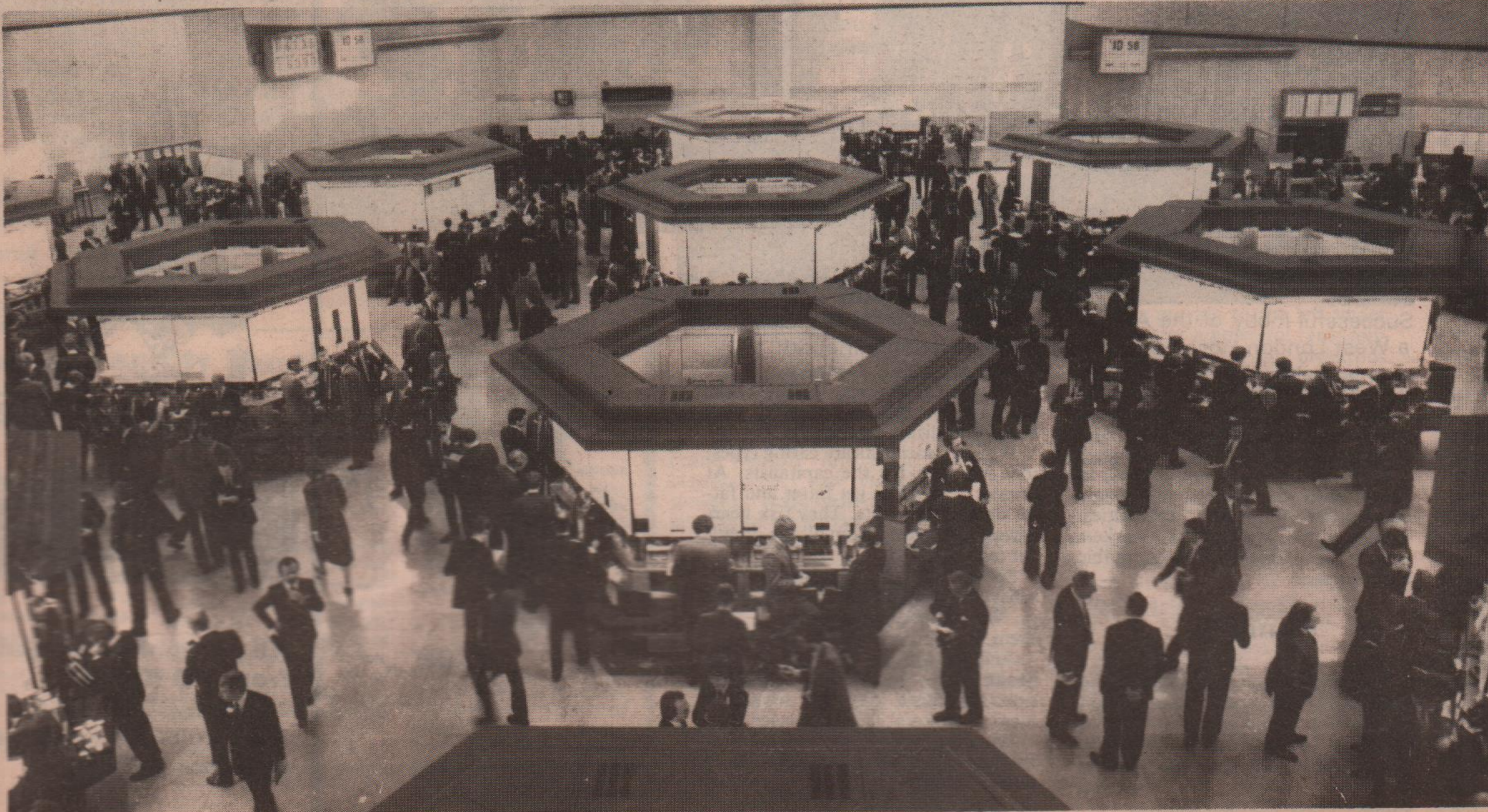
As well as boasting about home-ownership, the Tories also talk about a 'share-owning democracy'. They want to encourage employees to take shares instead of wages — after all, shares go up and down when profits go up and down, and so pay is cut automatically when times are bad for the bosses.

## Example

The National Freight Consortium is the Tories' brightest example of 'share-owning democracy'. 83% of the shares are held by employees. However, only 60% of the employees have shares, and on average they have less than £10,000 per person, while four of the directors own shares worth more than £1 million each.

British Telecom, where only 0.9% of the shares are owned by employees, is more typical. Probably three-quarters of all privately-owned shares are owned by the top one per cent of the population.

In the US, where for a long time about 20% of the population has owned some shares, 43%



'Share-owning democracy'. Photo: John Harris.





air. Photo: John Sturrock, Report.



Rich, and getting richer. Photo: John Harris.

of the total value of shares is owned by the richest 0.5%.

Over most of this century there has been a trend towards less inequality of wealth in Britain. The equalisation only took place within the top 50%, and a large part of it was statistical illusion, but under the Thatcher government even that trend has been halted.

The poorer 50% of the population owns only one-fourteenth of the total wealth, and the top 1% owns three times as much as the bottom 50%. The top 10% own over half the total wealth.

Such people have been helped by the Tories' abolition of tax on lifetime capital transfers (enabling them to pass their wealth on to their heirs, without incurring tax), and by the abolition of the unearned income surcharge in 1984.

This measure was worth a few pounds to a retired couple in Eastbourne living off Lonrho bonds — and over £1 million to Lonrho boss Tiny Rowland.

With the selling-off of British Telecom, anyone with £250 could make £200, but Telecom chair Sir George Jefferson has gained £88,000 a year in increased salary.

In 1979 Britain had one of the more equal income distributions of the capitalist countries, on a par with Sweden or Australia. After eight years of the Thatcher government, Rentoul reckons, Britain's income distribution is now as unequal as that of America — one of the most unequal in the advanced countries.

"Most of our people have

never had it so good", claimed Tory prime minister Harold Macmillan in July 1957. Employment Minister Lord Young echoed him in May 1986: "We've never had it so good for the 87% of us who are working".

For a start, is it 87%? 38 million people are of working age. 24 million — 60 per cent — are in waged work. The other 14 million, or 40 per cent, are made up of 3.2 million officially unemployed, 9 million 'keeping house', permanently unable to work, or otherwise 'inactive', 1.5 million studying, and 0.4 million on training schemes.

### Worse

How well off they are depends on the wage of the person they live with, or grants or supplementary benefit. About three million of them are worse off now than they would be if unemployment were at the same level as in 1979.

Count the ten million retired people, and Lord Young's 87% becomes only 49 per cent of all adults in waged work. And are those in waged work better off?

According to official statistics, the average figure for 'personal disposable income per head' rose by 11% after inflation between 1979 and 1986. But about one third of those in waged work are worse off now than in 1979.

Overall, Rentoul reckons, 45 per cent of people are worse off than in 1979, 42 per cent are better off, and 13% are in the same position.

The rich have got richer, but the poor are getting poorer.

State intervention has helped the workings of the market economy to achieve this result. The total tax burden has increased since 1979, but its balance has shifted.

### Reduced

In 1979 the top income tax rate was reduced from 83% to 60%, so anyone getting £50,000 a year increased their take-home income by 58 per cent.

If taxes had been the same in 1986-7 as they were in 1978-9, then the richest few per cent would have paid £3.6 billion more in taxes. If social security policy had been the same, then the government would have paid £2.8 billion more in benefits.

In round figures, the Tory government has taken £3 billion per year from the 'have-nots' to give to the 'have-lots'.

Tax relief schemes have also benefited the 'have-lots', and state intervention to drive down wages has increased. For example, under the New Worker scheme, employers are given £15 per week per worker to pay their workers less than £65 (or £55 for under-20s).

Rentoul reports an opinion poll in 1985 where 79 per cent of people agreed that the rich were getting richer, and the poor poorer. Only 13% disagreed. Sixty per cent agreed that 'income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary working people'.

Rentoul wants to defeat inequality "by skill rather than bludgeon", and part of his book

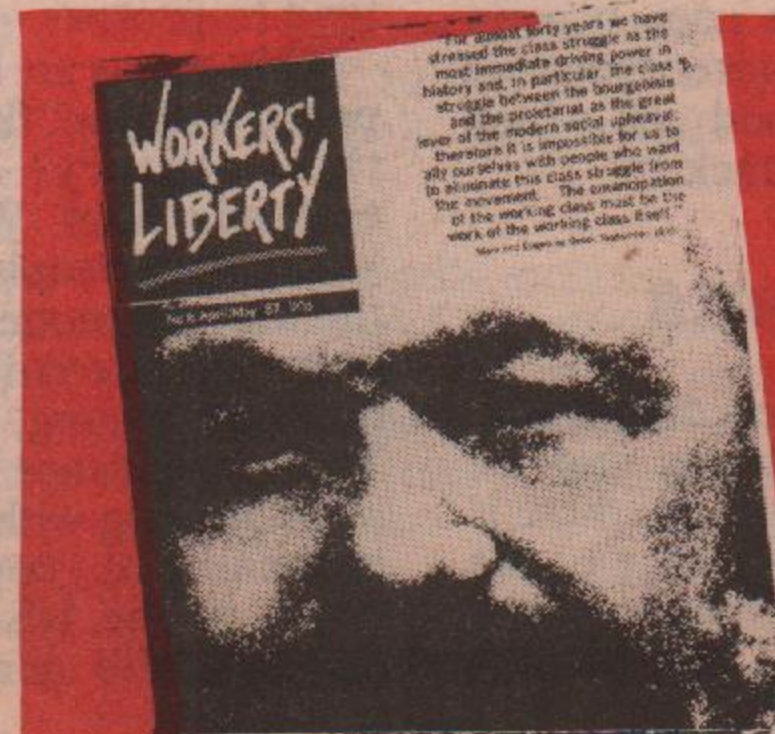
is taken up with detailed discussion of tax systems that could bring more equality without too much of a backlash from the rich.

But such tinkering is increasingly futile. The vast accumulations of wealth need to be taken from the small minority who own them, and brought under the ownership and democratic control of the majority — of the working class. Bureaucrats' and

managers' privileges should be scrapped, to be replaced by democratic administration with officials at workers' wages.

That is the only way to get equality, and the only way to reorganise the economy to guarantee decent, useful jobs for everybody.

\* 'The Rich Get Richer' by John Rentoul. Unwin £4.95.



Is the working class going out of fashion? Workers Liberty No.6 provides an answer. Plus Bob Fine on the Freedom Charter, Vladimir Derer on the Labour Party, Martin Thomas on the Third World and much, much more. Available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 90p plus 20p p&p.



## Workers can still win after 12 months of emergency rule

# A great workers' victory

**THE THREE-month strike on South Africa's railways has ended with a significant victory for the black workers and their union, SARHWU.**

Some 16,000 workers sacked by the South African Transport Services (SATS) have been reinstated. Permanent status has been granted to all black workers with more than two years' experience on the railways.

### Promises

In addition, SATS has promised £3 million to upgrade railworkers' hostels.

It is not clear whether SARHWU has been recognised by SATS, or what is to be the fate of the 200 or more strikers detained during the strike. Nor is it clear what will happen to the thousands of white scabs recruited over the last few months.

Nevertheless this is a very significant victory, achieved against heavy odds.

Repression has been severe. Strikers have been shot, hostels raided, and the union's entire negotiating team arrested.

Yet the union managed to continue functioning, and in fact build itself and consolidate its structures.

When the strike started, many sympathetic analysts and militants in the independent unions took a

By Anne Mack

pessimistic view. They argued that SARHWU was too young and weak, and had become involved in a full-scale all-out national confrontation in conditions not of its own making. The union was dangerously overstretched. *Socialist Organiser* shared this view.

Thankfully, events did not work out as we feared. Rank and file railworkers proved more than capable of running the strike despite the detention of their leaders. They managed to spread the action outside the Transvaal, to the Eastern Cape.

The outcome of the rail strike will boost working-class militancy more generally. The massive strike wave that has swept South Africa over the last few months shows no sign of receding.

New battles loom on the horizon in the metal industry and the miners.

However, the fact that SATS backed down does not necessarily mean that the Botha government is going to allow the unions the same amount of space to organise that they have enjoyed over the past few years.

Rather, it appears that the government believed that a settlement to the rail strike might calm things down — leaving the authorities the option of a turn to more open repression, in circumstances more to their liking, at some stage in the near future.



Striking railworkers

## 'Hands off COSATU' campaign

**SOUTH Africa's giant black trade union federation COSATU has launched a campaign designed to highlight state attacks on the labour movement.**

Launching the 'Hands Off COSATU' campaign, the federation's general secretary Jay Naidoo said that "The regime wants to smash the labour movement".

Naidoo said COSATU demanded the right to "speak freely without intimidation, meet freely without harassment, organise freely without

victimisation, and campaign for a stake in a future unitary non-racial South Africa".

Over the past few weeks COSATU offices have been raided several times and then bombed, and many union offices have been burgled or vandalised. Vigilante attacks on trade unions have increased. And the recent rail strike saw large-scale deten-

tions.

COSATU is appealing to "all democrats" to support their campaign, and has directed a lot of its fire at the South African Broadcasting Corporation for its coverage of workers' struggles, particularly the rail strike.

The priority for COSATU still remains physical defence against state attacks.

## Times are a'changing for the AIDS virus

**Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is evolving rapidly. This means that its genetic material is mutating or changing at a very high rate, perhaps five times that of the 'flu virus. This has several implications for the fight against AIDS.**

Firstly, it confirms the theory that HIV has only recently discovered its new niche in life — infecting humans. There is little pressure on it in its new environment as our immune system cannot threaten it and there is little competition from other viruses. So mutations in the genetic material (RNA) which might normally make a virus less able to survive have no effect.

Secondly, it brings forth the possibility that HIV will evolve so that it can attack other types of cell apart from the white blood cells called T4 lymphocytes. It might then cause other diseases apart from

AIDS. Already, it seems HIV can infect brain cells, causing encephalitis and brain damage.

Thirdly, and most depressingly, it makes it less likely that an effective vaccine can be easily developed. 'Flu virus is notoriously difficult to immunise against because, as soon as one vaccine is developed, a new strain of the virus develops which is unaffected. A vaccine usually stimulates the white blood cells to attack the coat proteins of the virus and without its coat the virus cannot infect. A mutation which alters the make-up of the coat protein makes the virus unrecognisable to the white blood cell which will no longer attack it.

### Mutants

Fourthly and less depressing, some of the mutants may be less harmful. After all, there is no particular advantage to the virus in killing off its host, the AIDS victim. If the victims



## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

suffered only mild illness, they would survive longer and might therefore infect more people. Such a virus would tend to prosper.

This seems to be what happened with the 'flu virus earlier this century. The great epidemic after World War 1 killed more people than died in the war, yet modern 'flu causes only mild discomfort (except to the old, young, and weak). There is evidence that this may be happening with HIV. At the international conference on AIDS in the USA last week, Robert Gallo announced that

two new strains of HIV had been found in Nigerian patients which seem to cause a milder disease.

Humans, too, have mutations in their genetic material. As with viruses, these occur at random and usually have either no effect or a harmful effect on the particular individual.

But some individuals may possess a mutation that makes them less susceptible to infection by HIV or more resistant to it. Perhaps a proportion of those currently infected by HIV but without the full AIDS has such a mutation. The gene

for resistance would be able to spread through the human population as such people had children while the susceptible people tended to die without offspring.

This would be a slow process as human generation times are around 20 years. In contrast, the HIV's life cycle takes a few months or years. If the spread of resistance was our only hope then we would have a dismal future in prospect as we waited for all the susceptible people to die. The process could in any case only progress significantly if HIV was a lot more infectious and widespread than it is.

### Limit

Fortunately, other possibilities exist. Best to limit the spread of infection with safe sex practices, changes of life style, hygienic use of needles, sterilisation of blood products, etc. Next is the development of drugs that help

victims to resist infection. Last is to develop vaccines. This task has not been rendered impossible by the high mutation rate of HIV — merely made more difficult.

As a footnote, the analysis of the different strains of HIV sheds some light on the dispute about who discovered HIV first (and therefore owns the rights to the potentially lucrative AIDS-testing industry). This has been resolved by a compromise between Luc Montagnier's group in Paris and Robert Gallo's group in the USA. Nevertheless, the contention that Gallo's version of the virus was in fact grown from a sample given him by Montagnier is supported by the present research. A family tree of all HIVs analysed puts the Montagnier and Gallo viruses together as adjacent "twigs" on the same branch. Such a close relation would be incredibly unlikely between separate samples of virus found on separate continents.

Information: *New Scientist*.



# The cause of Poland

**THE INTERNATIONAL Workingmen's Association, the so-called First International, was set up in 1864, the first — and for a few years, a highly successful — attempt to establish an international working-class party.**

Karl Marx eventually became one of its central leaders.

The political issue that first brought together trade unionists from France, Britain and Belgium to launch the International was *Polish independence*. There had been a Polish insurrection against the Tsar in 1863, and throughout working-class and radical Europe there was great sympathy for the Poles.

Karl Marx believed that the issue of Polish independence was a powder-keg at the foundations of Tsarist Russia — that great 'prison-house of nations' — and that it could be used to undermine and destroy Tsarism.

Today, the question of Polish independence is a powder-keg at the foundations of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy's empire in Eastern Europe.

## Paddy Dollard reviews a new television series

Seven years ago the Polish workers rose in revolt against Stalinism and established 'Solidarnosc', a hybrid trade union/political party. One of their demands was for Polish independence. One of the turning points of the development of Solidarnosc was the decision in late August 1980 that it would accept the status quo and try to change it from within rather than overthrowing it by revolution.

Solidarnosc made that decision under pressure of the fact that if they did try to overthrow the regime — and they probably could have done that — then the Russians would have invaded, as they had invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Hungary in 1956.

'The struggles for Poland', the first part of which went out on 7 June on Channel 4, more or less tells the story of what happened in Poland between the 19th century and Solidarnosc.

Poland was a great medieval kingdom — at one time the most

populous state in Europe — which failed to become a centralised monarchical state like France, Prussia, Russia, or even England. It could not compete, and was destroyed in a series of partitions at the end of the 18th century and in the early 19th century.

Poland was divided between Austria, Prussia, and Russia, more of it going to the Russian state than to the others. But Poland did not die. A nationalist tradition persisted all through the 19th century.

'The struggles for Poland' picks up the story at the end of the 19th century. In Russia the Poles were suppressed. In the Austrian empire they were treated quite liberally, as were all the nationalities — a Polish university was established in Austria, and the preaching of Polish nationalism was more or less legal.

But what of Polish socialists? The Polish Socialist Party came out for Polish independence. A dissident socialist minority, led by Rosa Luxemburg, came out in the 1890s *against* Polish independence.

It was retrograde and pointless, said Luxemburg, the great heroine of Polish and German revolutionary

socialism who was murdered in 1919. Poland was economically integrated with the Tsarist Empire, and was the most economically advanced part of it. What sense did it make to talk about Polish independence?

Socialists should fight for socialism — and under socialism Poland and Russia would be united, naturally and organically.

Lenin and the Russian Marxists did not disagree with Luxemburg on that. But they did disagree with her by insisting that Russian Marxists should preach the *right* of independence *if the Poles wanted it*.

## Nationalism

The Polish Socialist champion of Polish nationalism was Josef Pilsudski, who eventually became a nationalist first and shed his socialism (though even as head of state of an independent Poland, Pilsudski did resist, albeit feebly, Polish chauvinism and such of its expressions as anti-semitism).

As the great powers squared up for World War I, the Poles in Austria were allowed to organise a Polish Ri-

fle Regiment. After 1914 they were allowed to organise a Polish Legion, with Pilsudski at its head.

When the Germans advanced into the Tsar's empire and captured Warsaw in 1915, pro-German Poles helped set up a 'kingdom of Poland' — a phantom puppet kingdom without a king.

The Russian Revolutions of February and then October 1917 created new conditions. The Bolsheviks preached the right of every captive nation in the Russian empire to independence. Pilsudski broke with Austria. An independent Poland came into existence in the welter of war and revolution that engulfed Eastern Europe.

The victorious Allies, meeting at Versailles in 1919, recognised an independent Poland, but they did not define the borders. They did specify that minorities in Poland should have national rights, like the more than three million Jews, most of whom were later to be exterminated by the Nazis.

Poland established its borders in bitter ethnic-communal conflict with Germany and in full-scale war with the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1920 Lenin believed that it made sense to respond to a Polish invasion with a war which would help the Polish workers (about a third of them had voted for the left-wing parties) and maybe also the left-wing workers in Germany. He called it 'prodding Europe with the bayonet'.

Trotsky — and even the Polish Jew Karl Radek, who basically shared Luxemburg's views on Polish nationalism — disagreed with Lenin's idea of following the defeated army of Poles who had invaded the workers' state over the borders of Poland.

Lenin's approach was permissible in principle. But, disastrously, it failed to take into account the feelings of a long-oppressed nation. The Poles rallied against the Russians, and at the battle of the Vistula in 1920 the Bolshevik tide flowing from the East was stopped. Poland wound up holding large areas of the Ukraine.

But Polish independence lasted less than 20 years. In 1939 Russia — now ruled by Stalin — and Nazi Germany agreed on a new partition of Poland, and in September jointly invaded.

Trotsky described the areas controlled by Germany and those controlled by the USSR as Hitler's slavery and Stalin's semi-slavery.

## Russia

In 1944 the Russians conquered the whole of Poland. They kept much of the territory in the Ukraine they had annexed in 1939, and — as a means of tying the new Polish state to the USSR in perpetuity — gave Poland much of what was East Prussia. Ten million Germans were driven out. A Poland ethnically united — and religiously united as never before, after the destruction of the Jews by Hitler — resulted.

Today, as in Karl Marx's time, the cause of Polish nationalism is not only a just cause in its own right, but also something more — a powderkeg at the foundations of the Russian Stalinist empire.

Many socialists, however, remain aloof because of the preponderance of Catholicism in the workers' movement. That is utterly short-sighted.

There can be no greater force for socialism in Poland than the Polish workers' movement. If Catholicism rides so high, it is partly because it is the alternative to the totalitarian state and its epigone — Marxist — quasi-religion. The way to begin to liberate the Polish workers from Catholicism is to liberate Poland from the dead hand of Russian rule.

'The Struggles for Poland' is an important series. The labour movement needs to know about the history of Poland, which is central to understanding Solidarnosc, the most wonderful and encouraging development in working-class politics, East or West, for many decades.

# THE SUFFERING AFTER VIETNAM

## Belinda Weaver reviews 'A Street to Die'

**WE KNOW now that Agent Orange and other defoliants used in the Vietnam war caused cancers and other physical and mental disorders.**

But we didn't always know it. It took the suffering and death of many Vietnam veterans and their struggles to have their illnesses recognised as caused by Agent Orange before anyone sat up and took notice.

'A Street to Die' is a fictionalised account of the death of Colin Simpson (called Turner in the film), a Vietnam veteran contaminated by Agent Orange.

After his return to Australia from Vietnam, Turner (Chris Haywood) and his wife Lorraine (Jennifer Cluff) search for a new home and find a house in an area set aside for returned soldiers. On one side of the street live World War 2 and Korean vets, on the Vietnam vets.

The street looks similar to many in the sprawling western suburbs of Sydney. But it's not long before Col and Lorraine realise that there is something weird about their side of the street.

The little girl next door has strange, violent fits. Their neighbour has rashes on his arms. The woman next door keeps miscarrying.

Col himself has rashes and lumps he can't get rid of, and soon he's feeling tired and unable to do his morning run, and falling asleep on the train home from work.

The Turners' slow realisation of the truth about Col's deteriorating health and its relation to Agent Orange is well done. Little snippets from the neighbours and from a survey done by a Vietnam veterans' association soon form a coherent picture.

Col learns he will die from lymphoma. But he doesn't knuckle under. He tries to get compensation and official recognition that it was



Col (Chris Haywood) with Lorraine (Jennifer Cluff) before Agent Orange kills him

Agent Orange that killed him. He tries to set a precedent so that others will also be able to make and win claims.

Col doesn't live to see his victory, but his case did set a precedent — it was the first (and so far only) time any government in the world had admitted liability.

Millions of litres of Agent Orange were dumped on Vietnam during the war. Agent Orange contains 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D — both deadly poisons.

The poisons were dumped by air over wide areas of Vietnam, and contaminated people as they drifted and got into the water. Agent Orange caused the rashes known as chloracne, cancers, stillbirths, birth defects, respiratory diseases like asthma, and also a wide range of mental disorders.

Its effects may not be immediate. Colin Simpson died 11 years after his exposure.

At first Col is a lively bloke, fond of a drink and a smoke, keen on racing and betting, not politically-minded or militant but a union rep at work. To see him slowed down by his advancing illness is shocking.

When he learns the truth about his symptoms, he is not eaten up by resentment, but he does want justice. He wants something for the others who are suffering, and for his own family too. The film may sound harrowing, but it's not — Col and Lorraine are such positive characters that the film ends on an upbeat, defiant note, rather than seeming defeatist.

Simpson's case got a lot of publicity in Australia and opened the way for Vietnam veterans to fight back,

the way similar cases in the States united the larger Vietnam vets group there.

Once Col figures out the link between his illness and Vietnam, it's as if the blinders have been taken off. All around him are veterans suffering similar or related problems. And Col is horrified to see 2,4,5-T sprayed near children's playgrounds to kill weeds.

But the deadly poisons in Agent Orange — 2,4,5-T and dioxin — are still in use today in many countries. The Italian city of Seveso had to be abandoned when a dioxin accident took place there some years ago.

And no-one knows what the Vietnamese have suffered from Agent Orange — without any hope of redress at all.



1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

## Sunday 14 May

Prime Minister Lvov orders the release of General Petrov, arrested earlier in the month by the Sevastopol Soviet for corruption and embezzlement. The Vyatka Soviet declares its support for the coalition government. The Tiflis Soviet of soldiers' deputies supports the Provisional Government and the entry of representatives of the Petrograd Soviet into it.

A workers' mass meeting in Revel, numbering some 2,500, demands immediate publication of secret treaties, supports fraternisation at the front and condemns the coalition government. An 8,000-strong mass meeting of workers and soldiers in Moscow calls for an immediate end to the war and declares its lack of trust in the Provisional Government. On the South-Western front soldiers of the 172nd infantry division adopt a resolution calling for an immediate end to the war.

In Novochoerkassk a Don regional peasant congress calls for all private estates to be transferred into a communal fund, and declares support for the coalition government and a continuation of the war until victory.

## Monday 15 May

A mass meeting of 3,000 workers of a Moscow military uniform factory passes a resolution of no confidence in the Provisional Government and calls for the publication of secret treaties. By 24 votes to 11 the Executive Committee of the Ufa Soviet approves the entry of socialists into the Provisional Government, as the representatives of the soviets in the government. A general meeting of miners from the mercury and coal mines in the Gorlovko region condemns the entry of representatives of the Petrograd Soviet into the coalition government and calls for the transference of all power to the Soviets. In Helsingfors a meeting of crews from three cruisers calls for an end to the war, but also declares their readiness to "repel the enemy from wherever he may appear" as long as the war continues.

## Tuesday 16 May

In articles entitled "Subscribe to the Freedom Loan" and "What the New Government Wants", the paper of the Petrograd Soviet appeals for the entire population of the country to subscribe to the freedom loan to finance the war effort; only 866,407,870 roubles have been collected to date, while daily costs of the war run at over 40 million roubles.

By 320 votes to 160 a joint meeting of the Moscow Soviets of workers' deputies and soldiers' deputies declares its full support for the coalition Provisional Government. A meeting of the Zlatoust Soviet welcomes the entry of socialists into the Provisional Government. The Baku Soviet declares its complete confidence in the Provisional Government.

The Marienburg Soviet of workers' deputies declares the Provisional Government to be a tool in the hands of the propertied classes, and thereby incapable of ending the imperialist war or solving the economic crisis. The Kronstadt Soviet endorses the decision of 13 May of its Executive Committee to declare the Soviet the sole power in Kronstadt.

## Wednesday 17 May

In a circular to provincial commissioners, Prime Minister Lvov urges them to take action against attacks on private property and the sacking of managers from their positions by their workforces. All printworkers in Perm come out on strike for higher pay and an extension of rights at work, which ends in victory seven days later.

The Melitopol Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies declares full support for the coalition Provisional Government. The Samara Soviet elects a commission to organise Red Guards.

On the Northern front, a meeting of soldiers (539th Borovsky infantry regiment) declares support for soviets and for the distribution of socialist papers amongst soldiers. In Riga, a meeting of soldiers' deputies (Lettish rifle regiments) votes 200 to 1 in support of fraternisation at the front and for all power to the soviets. On the Rumanian front, soldiers in regiments of the 103rd Division refuse orders to advance to the front reserve trenches.

## On our side

By John O'Mahony

**CONSTANCE GORE-BOOTH led the well-off life of an 'Anglo-Irish' ruling class family until she was 40 — introduced as a debutante to Queen Victoria in the late 1880s, art student in Paris, part of the aristocratic hunting fraternity in her home county of Sligo.**

She married a Polish count, Casimir Markievicz, and thereafter was known as Countess Markievicz. She was an early advocate of votes for women, but apart from that there was nothing unusual about Constance Gore-Booth — except, maybe, her sister Eva, who went to live in England and became a suffragist and a socialist.

Then something happened to Constance. The Irish working class was stirring and moving. Jim Larkin, a Liverpool Irishman working in the docks as a foreman, was sacked because he sided with the dockers in a dispute with the bosses, and was sent to Ireland by the National Union of Dock Labourers to organise dockers in Belfast.

It was the beginning of a drive to organise the 'unskilled' workers of Ireland. Soon Larkin was at the head of a growing movement of militant workers.

They used the weapon of the sympathetic strike (what is called 'secondary picketing' in Thatcher's Britain) to build up the labour movement. No workers were left to fight alone: every connected trade was brought into even limited trade union battles.

For example, the Dublin dockers struck until the seamen working the port of Dublin were allowed to join the seamen's union. In 1913 the Dublin bosses combined to lock out the workers who were members of Larkin's union. A bitter class war followed. Dublin's workers even organised their own militia, the Citizen Army.

## Decades

At the same time the Irish workers' movement became drawn into the militant nationalist movement. For decades the Irish nationalist cause had been in the hands of a Home Rule party dependent on the Liberal Party in the British Parliament.

But after 1910 the Liberals tried to bring in Home Rule. They met strong resistance from the Irish Protestants, and a small-scale mutiny in the British Army. The Irish nationalists armed themselves and became more militant in response, while the Liberals retreated and moved towards the partition of Ireland.

Constance Gore-Booth was drawn into this maelstrom. She threw herself into the trade union struggle, organising soup kitchens during the 1913 lockout. She took part in the nationalist uprising of Easter 1916, and was sentenced to death for it.

15 men were summarily shot and one, Roger Casement, was hanged in Pentonville Jail after an Old Bailey trial. Constance Gore-Booth had her life sentence commuted to life imprisonment solely because of her sex, benefiting from the uproar about the Germans, nine months earlier, shooting a nurse who had helped escaping British soldiers, Edith Cavell.

In fact she was released after a year, but spent much time in jail thereafter — in 1918, in 1919-20, and then in independent Ireland, in 1923.

She was elected to the House of Commons in December 1918, the first woman MP. As a Sinn Fein MP, however, she took her seat not at Westminster but in the secessionist Dail Eireann, in Dublin.

When the Irish nationalist movement split in 1921 over the issue of whether or not to accept 'Dominion status' for the 26 counties of southern Ireland within the British Empire, Constance sided with the



Constance Markievicz

Republicans who rejected that status. The Republicans lost the ensuing civil war. When De Valera split Sinn Fein in 1926 and founded Fianna Fail on a policy of participating in the 26 counties parliament, Constance followed him.

Aged 59, she died in a hospital for the poor before she could take her parliamentary seat.

Diana Norman's biography of Constance Markievicz is a very supportive, loving, indeed even polemical, exposition of her life. She thinks Constance has been unjustly neglected by historians and misrepresented by those who can't play fair with a women revolutionary because they can't play fair with women.

She exaggerates: surely it is not really true that most politically educated people have not even heard of Constance. But she does make a convincing case that Constance has been slandered and diminished by the standard historians. For example, she cites the widely-accepted canard that Constance shot an unarmed policeman in cold blood at the start of the Easter Rising, and shows that it could not be true.

She effectively shows up the idea that Constance was stupid by quoting extensively from her writings.

Norman says that she finds Constance one of the nicest people imaginable — and she justifies that assessment in her portrait.

Constance wound up as 'Minister for Labour' in the Sinn Fein Provisional Government, and as a founder of Fianna Fail, the party which has represented the Irish bourgeoisie for most of the long period of class struggle in Ireland since 1932.

Still, whatever the political com-

ments that can be made sixty years later, Constance Markievicz was someone who came over to our side — completely. She went to live with the poor of Dublin. She used what money she had to help them. She starved herself. She humped bags of turf (peat) up the stairs for people too ill to do it for themselves. Something like 100,000 Dublin working-class people walked past her coffin.

## Accept

In the Dail Eireann debate on whether to accept the Treaty with Britain in December 1921, she objected to the Treaty because it gave guarantees to a ruling class that had always "combined against the workers [and] used every institution in the country to ruin the farmer, and more especially the small farmer, and to send the people of Ireland to drift in the emigrant ships..."

My ideal is the Workers' Republic for which Connolly died. And I say that this is one of the things that England wishes to prevent. She would sooner give us Home Rule than a democratic Republic. It is the capitalists' interest in England and Ireland that are pushing this Treaty to block the march of the working people in Ireland and England".

Still, she became a supporter of De Valera. Would she have gone all the way with Fianna Fail after 1927, when it became the main opposition in the Dail, and after 1932, when it became the main government party?

Perhaps, but I don't think so. An honest and sincere woman, she would probably have just died. Diana Norman thinks she did just that, partly because she found the Irish civil war and its aftermath unliveable.

From the mid-1980s, Norman's

book might perhaps be more critical of the Irish nationalist movement in which Constance Markievicz flowered. But on the whole I think the loving and appreciative tone of the book is right. Constance was a great heroine of the labour movement — not just of Irish nationalism — and it's time she got her due.

Reading about Constance's last period, when she lived — by choice — on the edges of the Dublin slums which an official report before World War I said were worse than the slums of Calcutta, I recalled a conversation with a supporter of the 'Mandelite' Trotskyist current.

An upper-class Indian, very rich, much-publicised, globe-trotting, self-serving and self-regarding in all things, he explained to me that in Sri Lanka the gap between the workers and the petty bourgeois and bourgeois-like himself was just too great for the upper-class 'Trotskyists' to go and live with the workers and build a mass working-class Trotskyist movement.

Constance Gore-Booth went to the workers. She held nothing back. The tragedy was that her socialism merged into left-wing nationalism and became populism. Her fate was that of a whole generation of Irish socialists.

But she was a socialist — and she lived and died a socialist in a way that is foreign to most of the British socialist movement today. She deserves to be remembered and honoured and — I think Diana Norman is right — loved as a socialist and feminist pioneer.

\* 'Terrible Beauty: a life of Constance Markievicz', by Diana Norman. Hodder and Stoughton, £14.95.



# The issues at Scottish NUM conference

The Scottish NUM conference meets in mid-June. At that conference the victimised miners should be the main issue, in my opinion.

There are still 106 out of the original 205 not re-instated in Scotland. My own branch, Castlebridge-Castlehill, has passed three resolutions for conference — one on health and safety, another on travelling time and a third on the victimised miners.

Travelling time is a big issue as closures now mean men have to travel often two hours per day to and from work and are not paid for this increased travelling time.

But the biggest issue of all is the

## Phil Cowan, NUM member, Castlebridge, Fife.

fight to reinstate MacGregor's and Thatcher's victims.

We definitely need a campaign. We need to help the victimised miners to campaign more on their own behalf, as seems to have happened in the Midlands. We still have over 50% of victimised Scottish miners not reinstated. We should work for an overtime ban which would be very effective in putting pressure on the NCB. We need more information on what is happening elsewhere and the Scottish NUM leadership should be more supportive.

Since the 1984-5 strike, manage-

ment aggression has increased, leading to more local disputes and in response they now want tighter procedures. So dispute procedure is becoming a lively issue as the NCB tries to tie us up with "procedure".

Unfortunately my own branch voted last week for these procedures, but the membership still have to vote on it in a ballot and I hope they will reject it. The branch was no doubt influenced by the attitude of their officials who did not argue for rejection.

In a recent interview in the Scottish Trade Union Review, Mick McGahey

states "safety standards have improved. They had a knock back during the 1984-5 strike but we are coming back, and the attitude of management is changing again, coming back to recognise the role of the union."

I think McGahey is being over-optimistic. Management had put the pressure on for more production and there has been an increase in injuries and fatalities. The reason is under-manning. Men are more afraid for their jobs and less inclined to complain. Scottish NUM membership has fallen below 4,000. We had 11,000 before the strike. McGahey says we have reached "the base point". That's hard to say.

A Thatcher government could mean more privatisation. Some pits, like my own, have had big investment, but I am not hopeful if we face privatisation. There is also the threat of more nuclear power with Torness coming on-stream.

The Labour Party has made a commitment not to close pits for "economic reasons" and they support coal as a source of energy. A Labour government is more likely to do something for the victimised miners because it is more open to pressure. As a committed Labour Party member I have been campaigning for the return of a Labour government.



CPSA

## All-out action to win

A NATIONAL ballot in the CPSA and SCPS has decided to continue industrial action over pay, and the continuing action began with an all-out strike throughout the civil service on 8-9 June.

It has been nine weeks since we

By Jill Feathers

on Merseyside have been asked to take strike action. Although local figures are not available, most offices were closed.

The march and rally were certainly

smaller than the initial one at the start of the action.

Despite this, it is certain that the majority of union members heeded the strike call. Action at the ports and airports gained most of the media attention, with only half the normal air traffic flying and hundreds of lorries queuing at Dover. Also significant was the strike action taken by 15 staff at GCHQ, who may now face disciplinary measures.

John Macreadie, fresh from his victory as deputy general secretary, spoke in Merseyside. In answer to a question about all out strike, he said that at the end of the selective action and the three week regional strike action, the campaign may well be stepped up but this will be up to the membership.

The North-West comes under the programme of regional strikes again on 2-3 July. CPSA conference this year voted for the line put forward by BL'84 and the Moderates, to continue the selective strike action with the proviso that the NEC would call for an all-out strike when the NEC sees fit.

But if our Broad Left dominated NEC does decide to call for all-out action, there will have been a 12 week gap between beginning of the action and the all-out call.

15% may seem like a high demand, but since 1980 civil servants have seen their pay slump in real terms year after year. Many earn less than £6000 a year and are themselves claiming various state welfare benefits. The Tories have used the service as their whipping boy in their attempts to keep down wages in the public sector. Now they — and whatever government is in power after 11 June — have been shown that CPSA and SCPS members will no longer take such shabby treatment lying down.

## Broad left take control

By Mike Grayson

THE BROAD LEFT has taken control of the National Executive Committee of the largest civil service union, the CPSA.

The results of the annual election are normally declared at the union's conference in May. This year, they were delayed for three weeks following accounts that returns from many branches had mysteriously gone missing in the post.

When finally declared, the results showed that the Broad Left had taken 18 out of 26 seats on the NEC, and had also won one of the two vice-president posts.

Right-winger Marion Chambers retained the presidency, with her aging mentor Kate Losinska taking the other VP post. However, they have only six allies on the new executive.

The soft left/Stalinist grouping BL84 could only manage two seats on the NEC.

In the election for deputy general secretary, John Macreadie, a well-known supporter of *Militant*, gained 23,027 votes — well ahead of his right-wing rival Terry Ainsworth, who got 16,913. The BL84 candidate,

Veronica Bayne, trailed in a poor third, with 11,740 votes.

The press has been swift to scream headlines like 'Militant takes over CPSA', but few have pointed out that CPSA's electoral process is extremely democratic.

Each member receives a copy of the candidates' election addresses, in which *Militant* supporters and all other Broad Left members state their political allegiances openly. Voting is, then conducted at workplace meetings, with everyone having a secret individual vote.

The simple fact is that CPSA members are tired of a right-wing leadership that defies conference decisions and delivers nothing to workers who do shitty jobs for lousy pay. Nor have members been taken in by the careerist poseurs of BL84, whose main energy these days is spent on attacking the 'Trots'.

The Broad Left now finds itself in the spotlight, with the members' expectations high. CPSA has been notorious in the past for swinging from right to left to right in successive years' elections, but this is the first time since the original Broad Left split in November 1984 that the left has won a majority on the NEC.

It must prove itself capable of being a democratic, accountable leadership, and delivering real benefits for CPSA's members.

## Build the fightback

By Ian McCalman

The annual conference of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) will, hopefully, lay the basis for a campaign on staffing and resources by passing a motion from Aberdeen and Glasgow Local Associations stressing the need for action in the event of the current review of these questions proving unsatisfactory.

The setbacks suffered as a result of the derailment of the recent pay and conditions campaign can be partially offset by rallying the membership around the implementation of this resolution.

While it will continue to be necessary to draw the political and trade union lessons from recent events, we must also provide a focus around which the membership can rally both in terms of confidence and combativity.

Concern as to the implications for conditions as a result of the recent agreement is reflected in the large number of resolutions before the conference on that theme. A key resolution is that advising members not to cover for teachers participating in in-service where no replacement has been provided.

A recent agreement providing for cover after three days absence and on day one in the event of notified absence has not been spelled out as covering in-service. The agreement, while representing a major advance (won, it should be said, by the tenacity of the Strathclyde membership, led by the Regional Executive), needs to be extended to cover that issue.

Another major debate is likely to be that on salaries strategy with a challenge to the minute calling for the flat-rating of the bulk of any salaries settlement. Recent agreements on a

Westminster Council

## NUPE, NALGO: No sell out

By Paula Watson, Westminster South CLP

It now looks as if NALGO, as well as NUPE, is preparing to sell out to Westminster City Council's privatisation plans.

The NALGO branch motion calling for a strike ballot to start on 27 May has been blocked by the District Organisation Officer and the National Emergency Committee.

Instead there will be an entirely spurious ballot on non-compliance, starting on 1 June at workplace meetings. It appears that the officers will there urge acceptance of in-house tendering. Yet these same officers must already know that the contracting out of the social services catering department has already started, and an in-house tender for the caretaking has no chance of success.

Even in those sections where an in-house tender might be accepted, it will result in job losses, pay cuts and

worse conditions. In refuse collection, for example, the number of men on each wagon will be reduced from five to four.

In NUPE, meanwhile, plans are afoot for a series of section meetings ostensibly to discuss the issue, but in fact to enable the officers to push acceptance of in-house tendering as the only possible alternative. So set are they on this course, that at a very violent meeting on 28 May those workers from Westminster Workers Against the Cuts calling for strike action and a real fightback were subjected to verbal abuse, physical attacks and intimidation.

An emergency joint NALGO-NUPE meeting has been called for 9 June, at which WWAC intends to distribute a leaflet setting out the true facts of the case and calling for a Westminster-wide strike. They are expecting further violence.

One of the problems seems to be that the NUPE shop stewards, Len Showell and Larry Quilty, appear to be backing management. Is it significant that they are both supervisors and their jobs are not in danger?



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Marxist gets best swing

By Marie Becall

**THE BIGGEST** swing to Labour in England was achieved in Wallasey, where Lol Duffy came within a recount of becoming the first Labour MP since the seat was created in 1912.

Labour won 41.9% of the vote, and closed a 13.5% Tory majority to a hairsbreadth. Only the intervention of Frank Field, the right-wing Labour MP for neighbouring Birkenhead, saved the seat for Tory minister Lynda Chalker.

Field let the local *Wirral Globe* newspaper know that he gave no support to the Labour candidate in Wallasey because Lol Duffy is a Marxist and was a leader of the Cammell Laird shipyard workers' sit-in to stop the closure of their yard in 1984. The *Globe* splashed this as its front-page story.

### Tribute

The result was a tribute to Labour's campaign, which combined street demonstrations against hospital closures and support for local picket lines with painstaking canvassing. A major effort on 11 June itself turned out 78.5% of the Labour promises won during canvassing.

One pensioner told us on Labour's third canvass, "To vote Tory now means something quite different than in the past. After eight years of Thatcher it means careless, mean, and shameless government. It's about time Wallasey had a Labour MP".

A young mother told us that she had not voted in 1979 and 1983, but after four hospitals had been closed locally and maternity benefits had been cut by the Tories, she decided she must use her vote. On the first two canvasses, she was doubtful about voting Labour, having read that Lol was a 'jailbird' and 'self-confessed Marxist'.

On the third canvass she told us she was voting Labour. She had read the leaflets, she had met Lol in person, and she had seen Labour activists almost every day on the streets, outside her daughter's school, at the health centre and the DHSS offices. Meanwhile she had not even been canvassed once by the other two parties.

When we were leafletting shopping precincts, it was not unusual to be shaken by the hand or even cheered. A first-time voter said to me during a walkabout with Billy Bragg and the Housemartins, "It's clear that Labour is the only party that even considers youth as a special group with different problems and needs. I'll be proud to vote Labour. The Tories intend to put me on one job scheme after another. I want a real job with real training".

The fight won't stop here. Wallasey Labour Party has recruited many new members in its election campaign. Those members will be out campaigning against the Tories non-stop from now until the next election, when Wallasey will certainly return a working-class fighter as its first Labour MP.

**Join the Labour Party now!**  
Write to 150  
Walworth Road  
London SE17



Lol Duffy makes a point. Photo: John Smith

## The battles to come

**TEACHERS AND civil service workers will be the first to come up against the re-elected Tories, as teachers fight to protect their conditions of work and civil servants for their pay rise.**

The Tories will continue their drive to beat down trade unions. They have already deprived teachers of the right to negotiate their pay and conditions. They have promised new anti-union laws enforcing *postal* (not workplace) ballots for the election of union officials, and forbidding unions to penalise scabs even if the strike is legal after a ballot in full Tory-approved style.

The unions' ability to mobilise effectively in their present struggles will affect the chances of resisting the Tories on other issues, too.

The Tories plan to force all young people into cheap-labour 'training' schemes on pain of otherwise having their benefit cut off. Any chance of campaigning against that depends a lot on the civil service unions, whose members will have to enforce the

Tory decree.

In education, the Tories have ill-defined plans to hive off some schools from the bulk of the state sector — to some extent or another they will be reintroducing the grammar schools, maybe even with school fees. This will be the next battle for teachers after their current conflict on pay and conditions.

### Frontline

Labour councils will be put into the front line as well as the trade unions. In recent years, most left-wing Labour councils have had a strategy of getting through to the general election by heavy borrowing, and hoping for a Labour government.

Now they faced a re-elected Tory government. What are they going to do about their huge accumulated debts? Soon they will have to make direct cuts — or turn and fight back seriously, mobilising local unions and communities.

They will face two further issues besides the general financial squeeze. The Tories will do

their best to stop councils building *any* new council housing. They will reduce tenants' rights to encourage private landlordism.

And they will try to get council tenants to take their estates out of council ownership and put them under housing associations instead. Already, just before the election, the Tories passed a law to enable councils to *evict* tenants to clear estates for sale to private developers. Westminster's Tory council is likely to be the first to use this law.

First in Scotland, and then elsewhere, the Tories will replace rates — which, for all their faults, at least fall more heavily on the rich than on the poor, and draw money from businesses too — with a poll tax, the same for every adult individual. Even the unemployed will have to pay 20% of the standard rate. One survey reckons that unemployed householders in Scotland will be on *average* £3.71 a week worse off as a result.

The Tories want to break up the big Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority. Having failed in moves to abolish it, they will give boroughs the

right to opt out. Westminster is already preparing its application to break away.

During the election the Tories claimed they would support the Health Service. In fact, erosion in the name of efficiency and market principles will continue (see inside, page 5).

### Attack

With the decimation of manufacturing since 1979, the public sector is now the strongest concentration of trade union organisation. The Tories will attack it both directly, and by trying to break it up through privatisation of bits of the services.

Tory success is far from inevitable. As tension between the US and Japan increases, world economic prospects for capitalism are grim, and the Tories have now exhausted the economic padding which North Sea Oil gave them. Before long their claims of an improving economy may look very sick indeed. The labour movement must be prepared to lead the fight back.