

John McCarthy and British hypocrisy

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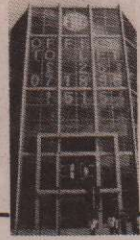
For socialist renewal!



For workers' liberty!

BCCI: as corrupt as capitalism

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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Fascist plague hits Nottingham, London and Tyneside

Stamp out the racists!

By Gerry Gable, Searchlight

The street presence of the fascist British National Party (BNP) is growing — alarmingly. So is racist violence.

There has been a big increase in racist and anti-semitic attacks.

The desecrations of Jewish property continue. A wave of such attacks on Jewish cemeteries and other property which began last year is still rolling.

The authorities have carried out some raids on racist organisations. But nothing like enough to break the organised racist offensive we are now experiencing.

Lady Jane Birdwood is due in court for publishing anti-semitic libels. Another long-time carrier of the racist virus, Colin Jordan has also been raided.

Five National Front (NF) Parliamentary candidates are due to come up in court for an attack in an Indian restaurant in South London.

Richard Edmonds, a number two in the BNP is awaiting a court appearance for possession of a knife during the recent council by-election in Southwark.

Tony Wells, a convicted bomber, is waiting to come up on charges of affray and assault in an incident concerning a young Jewish teacher who was attacked after a BNP rally last October.

Both the BNP and the NF are interested in the forthcoming elections. They have been inspired to new efforts by the growth of the far right in Eastern Europe and of Le Pen's Front National in France.

Some of the hard-line Nazis believe that the 90s will

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1984 protest on racist attacks in East London

Labour and the black community must fight back

Albanians taste capitalist "liberty"

By Tony Brown

Ten thousand refugees from stalinist Albania have just learned that you cannot believe all they tell you about the brave new age of human liberty that has dawned over post-stalinist Europe.

They have just been forcibly deported from Italy as illegal immigrants!

These are people who have spent their entire lives as prisoners in the great concentration camp demented dictator Enver Hoxha made of Albania.

Now that they have gained the right of to emigrate, they find that the iron curtain had two sides to it.

Iron barriers, manned by armed police and soldiers still stand against the free movement of peoples.

Millions of people from stalinist Eastern Europe and the USSR will learn the same lesson when they try to exercise their new freedom.



Albanian refugees carrying their sick children in Bari, Italy

Stamp out the racists!

From front page

be their "last chance" to "save the white race". Some see the solution coming through the ballot-box; some want to start with a reign of terror against their racial and political opponents now.

The NF has about 2,000 members and the BNP about 1,600. The BNP has more activists and they are better organised. The BNP can get 500 on a national demonstration.

The BNP has some very interesting connections — in the Tory Party.

When the Tory Party closed down the Federation of Conservative Students, Stuart Milson, among others went into the BNP. So the BNP has linked itself into the ultra-right of the Tory Party.

BNP leader, John Tyndall, recently did a two-and-a-half week speaking tour of the USA, meeting Populist Party, Klan and Nazi Party members. The BNP may have raised some money as a result of the tour.

The anti-racist magazine, *Searchlight*, is joining up with the National Union of Students and the Union of Jewish Students in a campaign to link student and non-student anti-fascist activists to oppose this nazi threat.

Help us put the hate-mongers out of business!

For more details contact: "Searchlight" at 37b, New Cavendish Street, London W1.

Subscriptions to this monthly anti-fascist magazine are £12 for individuals per year.

• Anti-Fascist Action Carnival Sunday 8 September 2.00-7.00 Hackney Downs, London E5 Live bands • Stalls • Speakers

The lie machine



It is strange to find ourselves agreeing with page 1 of the *Mirror* and *Today*.

But why, I wonder, didn't they have pages like this for the Birmingham Six when they were released after 17 years wrongful imprisonment?



A Di-ful in a Di-ki! Here we have the ultimate logic of tabloid journalism: a royal semi-nude pin-up on page 1.



The Princess Di-Prince Charles second honeymoon has been a great success so far: one minute looming divorce courts, the next, sexy Caribbean cruise.

But can you guess what the Buckingham Palace script writers plan for the next chapter of the Charles and Di pictorial romance?

Enter the *Socialist Organiser* summer competition: write a model script for submission to the palace. First prize, a year's subscription to the *Star*; second prize, a year's subscription to the *Star* and the *Sun*; third prize, a year's subscription to the *Star*, the *Sun* and the *Sport*.

Stopping the NF in Nottingham

By Samina Kauser and Steve Battlemuch

The National Front are trying to get a foothold in Nottingham.

The NF leafleted and sold papers in Nottingham town centre last Saturday, 10 August. The 15 fascist thugs were driven off by anti-racist activists mobilising at short notice.

The NF have been

leafleting in one of Nottingham's major multi-racial areas, Forest Fields and Hyson Green. In this area there have been repeated attacks on the local mosque, and windows broken in local Asian shops.

In the last week there have been attacks on Asian homes and families.

Local police have failed to respond to these attacks.

The local community is not prepared to tolerate this. We are determined to drive

the fascists out and put an end to racism. We will be marching on Sunday 18 August to reclaim our streets. Every house has been leafleted, posters are everywhere.

The black community will be at the forefront of the demonstration, with black community representatives as the main speakers.

Local county councillor and spokesperson for Forest Fields Anti-Racist Action, Mohammed Aslam, has

been attacked by the county council Labour Group. Instead of mobilising against these fascists, the County Labour Party has chosen this moment to attack Aslam for opposing cuts to OAP homes!

We say: Labour must back the fight against racism! Join the demonstration. Meet 2.00, Sunday 18 August, Mosque and cultural centre, Gladstone Street, Forest Fields, Nottingham.

Alert in North-East

By John Clifton

Anti-fascist activists are on the alert in the North East.

The British National Party (BNP) have been peddling their race-hate newspaper on the streets of Sunderland. Last Saturday 65 Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) supporters leafleted central Sunderland, forcing the Nazis out of town.

The BNP have threatened

— through the local *Sunderland Echo* — a "summer of violence" if anti-fascists continue to counter their activities.

Darlington and Consett have also recorded increased BNP activity. The BNP, boosted by a large donation from America, are planning to stand in a number of constituencies in the General Election, including Darlington, and aim for a big profile in the area.

Southwark march on 24 August

By Roy Webb

Thousands of people are expected on a mass anti-racist, anti-fascist march on Saturday 24 August in Southwark, South London.

Called jointly by the Southwark black community's consortium and Southwark NALGO, and sponsored by many other groups including the National Black Sections of the Labour Party, this is the first step in a campaign against racist attacks, following the BNP's move in Camberwell.

In addition to this, there have been a series of attacks on black families' homes by the police in what appears to be part of a new police policy.

Support this demo: donations, messages of support, to SBBC offices at Room 26, Peckham Town Hall, London SE15. Tel: 071 525 7334/5.

Demonstrate! Saturday 24 August, 12.00, Canal Head (North end of Peckham Rise)



Kulwinder Kaur (centre) with supporters. Photo: Mark Salmon

Kulwinder Kaur must stay!

Kulwinder Kaur was ordered out of Britain by immigration officials after her arranged marriage broke up after only three months.

She immediately sought sanctuary in a Birmingham temple near her home in Small Heath. It is getting increasingly difficult for those under threat of deportation to gain any kind of hearing.

Recently a man was deported to Zaire even though he had gained a court injunction to stop the move. And in the run up to the general election the Tories

and the press are increasingly playing the racist card; most recently there has been an attack on deportees' rights to legal aid in fighting their cases.

A sizeable labour movement and community campaign was created during the six weeks that Kulwinder was in sanctuary, and it was this that made the immigration authorities back down and agree not to deport her before an appeal had been processed.

However, the battle is not yet over. As Kulwinder said: "What would be ideal is if the immigration authorities could simply say I have won the fight to stay."

Ireland: partition breeds bloodshed

From back page

of internment, Northern Ireland is still in a chronic state of crisis. The chronic antagonism between Catholics and Protestants continues, moderated by the British army, which is itself guilty of many bloody acts of repression against the Catholic community.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985 has not changed a great deal, though it set up a framework which gives Dublin, acting on behalf of the Northern Ireland Catholics, a direct political voice there. For the architects of that Agreement the next step forward has to be Catholic-Protestant agreement on powersharing in a new Northern Ireland government. The collapse of the recent talks showed once again that getting such agreement is difficult to the point of impossibility.

No progress is likely while the Northern Ireland unit is

maintained in its present form. The tragedy — and right now it is a terrible and immediate tragedy for the victims of sectarian and quasi-sectarian assassinations and their families — is that all the power of the British and Southern Irish states are devoted to maintaining the partition of Ireland.

The only way out of the present stalemate is the creation of a United Federal Ireland with autonomy for the Protestant area within it. That is the only way to create the conditions for unity between Protestant and Catholic workers so that they can win a socialist answer to the poverty and degradation which British, Irish and international capitalism imposes on the workers of Ireland, Catholic and Protestant, North and South of the border.



The return of John McCarthy throws a glaring light on the British prison system

John McCarthy and British hypocrisy

Jubilation over the release of John McCarthy is understandable. We share it wholeheartedly.

The record of his friends' implacable loyalty, and their determined activity over five years to gain publicity for his plight and to win his release is a truly inspiring story.

Of course the press is now diminishing the story of Jill Morrell's loyalty to her friend by trying to cram it into the mould of a con-

ventional romance, for which they demand an immediate conventional "happy ending". That is to be expected.

But not even the all-dirtying tabloids can dirty the tale of friendship and loyalty, which cuts so sharply against the cash-on-the-nail philosophy now dominant in the Britain Thatcher made. It shows up their philosophy for the anti-human crap it is.

The return of John McCarthy throws a glaring light on another aspect of Britain too: the prison system.

"The prison system backs up a monstrous system of 'justice' in which the say-so of self-perjuring policemen sends people to these hell holes."

What a glaring contrast there is between the care and concern for McCarthy's psychological well-being after 5 years incarceration, and the treatment given to 50,000 prisoners in Britain's hell-hole jails!

Of course, McCarthy suffered special stress and uncertainty, and was a pure victim who had done nothing wrong to merit imprisonment. But the recent spate of proven cases of police making up evidence suggests that a lot of people in British jails are no less innocent.

And McCarthy's experience has

much in common with the experience of Britain's own prisoners.

Up to 50,000 men and women (a quarter of them under 21) are locked away in hellish conditions. They live in terrible overcrowding. They get wretched food. Most of them are locked away for all but a couple of hours a day. Most are left to rot with no occupation. With their liberty go old sexual relations and activities. They are beaten and brutalised by warders.

The law of the jungle prevails among prisoners: "inside" the hard men and women rule and terrorisation, bullying, sexual abuse are the norm.

Most of the inmates of Britain's jails are there for crime against property, much of it comparatively petty. Many of them need psychiatric care, not punishment. Nothing is done to rehabilitate prisoners for a return to normal life.

In short, the British prison system ranks with such things as the army of homeless youngsters thronging central London as a major blight on British civilisation. A future better time will look back on what is now done to many tens of thousands of people with the same feelings of disdain and incomprehension with which we look back on the prison system 150 years ago when people were imprisoned for debt.

But it is even worse that that: the prison system backs up a monstrous system of 'justice', in which the say-so of self-perjuring policemen sends people to these hell-holes.

Let us say it plainly: in the system we have now, the police routinely decide on whether someone is guilty (or a suitable frame-up victim) or not and then *manufacture* 'evidence' to get a conviction in court.

This happens all the time, everywhere in Britain (or at least in the cities). That is what happened with the Birmingham Six, for example: idiotic scientists decided the Six men had traces of explosive on their hands (in fact, it seems, traces from a pack of playing cards!) and then the police beat confessions out of them. It is only an extravagantly monstrous example of routine police procedure.

"...this system grinds thousands and thousands of often very vulnerable people — or entirely innocent people — into psychological ruin, and most people in Britain turn a blind eye."

Our hell-hole prisons are filled by lying, thuggish police and irresponsible, caste-minded judges (remember Lord Denning's public statement that it was better to leave wrongly convicted men to rot in jail for the rest of their lives than to give them a belated justice that would discredit the British judiciary?.

Together with the vicious criminals, this system grinds thousands and thousands of often very vulnerable people — or entirely innocent people — into psychological ruin — and most people in Britain turn a blind eye.

There is enough evidence now, publicly available of both the corrupt nature of our police and judicial system, and of the savage, torturing, anti-rehabilitatory nature of the prison system, to make the turning of blind eyes one of the most shameful facts of contemporary British life.

The psychological care given to John McCarthy tells you a great deal about British society and its positively medieval double-standards.

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

Karl Marx

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Into the time warp

I woke up today to find myself in a time warp: I was in a field, surrounded by hundreds of industrial workers, while a union official and then a convenor and then a Labour MP shouted at us through a crude PA system.

The sense of *deja vu* was completed by a show-of-hands vote before we dispersed either back to work, down the pub, or home to sleep off the night shift.

Could this be 1991? Surely, scenes like this belong to the dark, Fordist age of the 1970s? Haven't *Marxism Today* and the *Financial Times* assured us that the days of the mass meeting, the megaphone and the militant majority are long-gone, killed off by the Glorious Thatcher Counter-Revolution?

Actually, it wasn't exactly like the old days: for a start, the sun was shining and the field wasn't either frozen or a mud bath (employers used to ensure that disputes always started in winter). And the show-of-hands vote was called "indicative", prior to a ballot. And the action being called for was not an all-out strike but a work-to-rule and overtime ban. But still, it was enough like the old days to warm the cockles of my Fordist old heart.

The dispute was that most worthy of all possible disputes: victimisation. The place was GKN's Hardy Spicer plant in Birmingham. The victims were two union activists accused of pocketing the takings from the works social club, but cleared of all charges by the Birmingham Crown Court last month.

GKN sacked them last November and now say that they won't be reinstated, regardless of the Crown Court decision.

So 600 out of a possible 1,000 of these men's workmates met in a field outside the factory, to discuss the situation and give an "indicative" vote on action. The vote was unanimous and I hope and believe that the ballot will produce a similar result.

But the point here is that despite all the *Marxism Today* theorising about the "end of the working class", and despite more reputable evidence from the government's *Employment Gazette* (to the effect that recorded strike action is presently at its lowest level since 1942), industrial militancy is still far from dead.

The Tory legal offensive has taken its toll and the economic recession of the early '80s has now been followed up by the recession of the early '90s — with predictable results in terms of strike statistics as recorded by the *Employment Gazette*. What we are now facing is a "War of Position" between Labour and Capital, in which negotiated settlements, compromises and deals are the order of the day. The low strike statistics are misleading because most disputes presently involve only the threat of strike action, or action (like overtime bans) that does not show up on the statistics.

The "Waiting for Kinnock" factor is also of importance: most union officials are presently counselling caution in order not to jeopardise Labour's chances at the next general election. Whatever the outcome of that election, union militancy is bound to rise: if Labour wins, trade unionists will be faced with an incomes policy in one shape or form; if the Tories win, we can expect an all-out fight for basic trade union rights.

Meanwhile, good luck to the workers at Hardy Spicer — you're not the past, you're the future!

Some readers may have been a little taken aback by last week's apology to Jack Dromey. Let me explain: Mr Dromey wants to be Deputy General Secretary of the TGWU and is eminently qualified to fulfil that role. His close links with Neil Kinnock and the Labour leadership will facilitate full co-operation between the TGWU and any "National Economic Assessment" that a future Labour government might have to introduce.

Jack Adams, on the other hand, is one of the old breed of ex-shop stewards who still cling to the outmoded idea that representing "the membership" should take precedence over the prospect of a future Labour government: T&G branches should nominate accordingly.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper



Tory MPs in the closet vote for homophobic legislation. 'Outing' those MPs would not have helped the campaign against Clause 28 one bit.

Janine Booth continues the debate around 'Outing'

Born of desperation

Peter Tatchell and Kevin Sexton (SO 494) seem to argue that whilst 'outing' in general a bad idea, that in the case of those attacking lesbians and gays, it is justified. I would like to disagree.

'Outing' celebrities — pop stars, actors, sports personalities — is simply wrong. A person's sexuality, and how they choose to express it, is their own business.

'Outing' a celebrity opens them up to abuse and often physical harassment, and denies them the very important, personally liberating experience of coming out for themselves.

"It would not matter if there had never been one single famous person who was gay — our struggle is for freedom in our everyday lives."

These are principles that we hold dear for friends, family and workmates. To abandon them for celebrities is to go along with the notion that 'loss of privacy is the price of fame'. Every low-life tabloid hack's justification for snooping, muck-raking and gossip.

The tabloids themselves have outed many celebs over the years — Russell Harty, Maureen Colquhoun, Pam St. Clement, Elton John — making their lives a nightmare, and frightening ordinary people preparing to come out.

Is 'outing' really any different? any less of a callous invasion, if lesbian and gay activists or socialists do it? We object to the way that tabloids glibly push genuine



OUT AND PROUD

By Janine Booth

news aside to make way for voyeuristic peering into people's private lives. So why give them the material to do it? Our justified denunciations of tabloid scum 'journalism' lose all credibility when we write their storylines.

But what of celebrities as positive role models? A positive role model for young lesbians and gays is a person who is lesbian or gay and proud of it, not someone dragged kicking and screaming out of the closet. Famous role models misses the point. We want equality and liberation for all. We fight bigotry and homophobia because of its effects on the lives of ordinary lesbians, gays and bisexuals. It would not matter if there had never been one single famous person who was gay — our struggle is for freedom in our everyday lives.

A more controversial area for lesbian and gay activists is the outing of those closet cases who positively harm our struggle — Tory MPs who vote for homophobic legislation, judges who criminalise our sexuality. I believe that this is also wrong — that the above reasons hold true, and that it is a tactical mistake.

The case for outing these people is that it betrays them as hypocrites and traitors to the lesbian and gay community. But I do not accept that they are part of our community in the first place. Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is good and positive and something to be proud of. I do not want a bigot — even a sad, self-oppressed one — to share the identity that is for so many people an assertive statement of our rights.

The problem with such people is that they are bigots, not that they are closets, so let's tackle their bigotry. Is a homophobe who is a closet worse than a homophobe who is straight? I don't think so.

It is also argued that outing gay Tories exposes the vital class differences between lesbians and gay men — that there are those who share our sexuality who will never share our struggle for lesbian and gay liberation and for overthrowing the system that bestows them with such privilege. This is a crucial point that needs to be explained and won politically. There are already more than enough 'out and proud' gay Tories. Let's expose them for their politics, before exposing their Tory colleagues for their

sexuality. I remember a headline in the short-lived 'left-wing' newspaper, *News On Sunday*: 'Spanker Proctor Resigns'. Why not 'Tory Proctor Resigns'? 'Racist Proctor'? 'Vile Bigoted Right-wing Toe-rag Proctor'?

Even if it were possible to construct a socialist case for outing, we could not control the way people respond to it. There are those who would add homosexuality to their reasons for hating the Tories. It would boost the idea that homosexuality is an upper-class recreation, a sad scene of double lives and anonymous encounters. And it would open the door wide open to an orgy of tabloid persecution of everyone and anyone they don't like.

But don't Tory MPs 'deserve' outing? Quite possibly, but they probably deserve shooting as well, and few people claim that would take the struggle forward.

'Outing' is a tactic born of desperation. It stands in a vacuum, and could not form a basis for a mass campaign. It is a retreat from even the ambition of building a mass movement. It is a retreat from the need to bring politics back into the lesbian and gay movement.



A positive role model, famous (like Derek Jarman) or not, is someone who is proud of being gay



Right-wing thugs confront the police outside the hall where De Klerk was "addressing the local bourgeoisie"

3 racists dead, 1 black murdered, 3 policemen shot

South Africa: edging towards civil war

By Tom Rigby

Anyone who may have been tempted to dismiss the South African far right as irrelevant got a rather rude shock last Friday night, 9 August.

This is how the *Independent's* John Carlin, not a journalist prone to crass sensationalism, reported the battle of Ventersdorp:

"For a few moments... it seemed touch and go whether the police might join forces with their white brothers, turn their guns on their commanding officers and storm the hall where F W De Klerk was addressing the local bourgeoisie". This moment came after police had apparently shot dead 2 racists who had attacked a van with 4 black passengers. It was the climax of a night that saw 2,000 plus ultra-racists turn out to protest against South Africa's President.

The racist mob was equipped with hunting rifles and pistols, knives, stones, baseball bats, batons and tear gas. Some were parading their pit bull terriers whilst others had their arms encased in plaster so that they could use them as clubs. Most of the demonstrators, organised by the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB), were kitted up in their Nazi regalia: khaki shirt, black and white and red swastikas and red berets.

At the height of the battle between the racists and the police protecting De Klerk, all power in Ventersdorp went off pointing to neo-Nazi support in the local power station.

Later, the racist mob encircled the local police station forcing the cops to release all the AWB

members they had arrested. Only then did the ultra-racists quit town. How should we assess last Friday's events?

It clearly marks an escalation in resistance by the far right to political reform. Both Terreblanche, leader of the paramilitary AWB, and Andries Treurnicht, boss of the right-wing parliamentary opposition, are talking about a 3rd Boer uprising (the other two were against the British at the end of the 19th century).

There are signs of disquiet in the security forces. According to one South African socialist we spoke to "We don't know exactly what's going on in the police stations, but a fair number of middle-ranking officers are either in the AWB or sympathisers, the top brass are much more committed to DeKlerk's reform programme than the rank and file cops."

There is evidence from Friday's events to back this up. According to Patti Waldmeir of the *Financial Times*, the order was given to 'shoot to kill' against the AWB, but was not carried out.

2 of the 3 racists that died were killed when vehicles with black passengers span out of control after being shot at by the AWB itself.

The demotion of law and order minister, Adrien Vlok, after allegations of police involvement in township killings is hardly likely to re-inforce loyalty to De Klerk.

If he is to stick to his reform programme, the president has no alternative but to use the police against the ultra-right but it is a very risky strategy indeed.

In the worst case, he could witness a severe fracturing of the

security apparatus. This could take many forms ranging from local police units in the racist backwoods defying central control right through to a full-scale uprising against De Klerk.

Meanwhile the ANC are courting some unlikely allies to ensure that they don't go into the battlefield unarmed.

General Holomisa, boss of the Transkei Bantustan, long denounced as a traitor, stooge and puppet of Pretoria, has now become Comrade Holomisa.

He was the number one guest speaker at the first ever legal conference of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe, held in South Africa last week. Rumour has it that Umkhonto chief Chris Hani has been busy infiltrating his cadres into the Transkei army.

A totally-Xhosa dominated ANC armed wing [the Transkei is a Xhosa homeland, and Mandela is a member of the Xhosa royal family] does not bode well for reconciliation with the second largest so-called 'tribal' group in South Africa, the Zulus. Many of whom — voluntarily or not — are still, at least in Natal/Kwazulu, members or supporters of Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement.

For now, De Klerk can use the battle of Ventersdorp to strengthen his position as the only reasonable hope of peaceful change. The threat of the far right also makes many liberals only too willing not to pursue the 'Inkathagate' scandal.

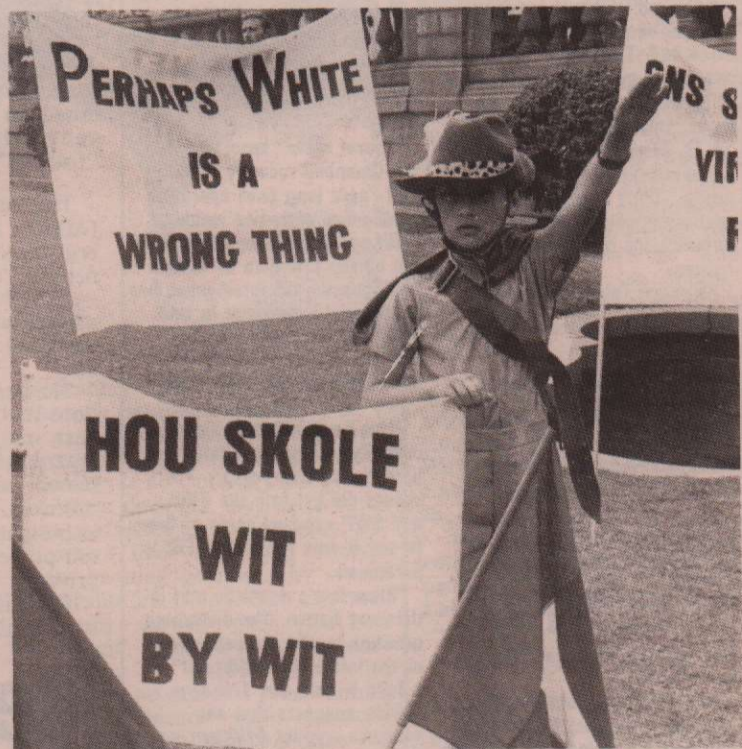
But it would be wrong to see De Klerk as the main beneficiary of the battle of Ventersdorp. We need to be aware of the real danger of South Africa becoming another Lebanon.

reforms.

But this relationship of hostility between the far right and the regime is not fixed in stone.

Should DeKlerk's timid reforms encourage a renewed black revolt on a large enough scale, that represents a real threat to capitalist property, things could change.

Remember, quite a few of the stormtroopers of Ventersdorp probably work as foremen and overseers for the big monopolies who at the moment back DeKlerk.



Vast privileges keep most whites on the side of the regime

What should be done about the whites?

Some whites do side unequivocally with the oppressed blacks. White students and ex-students have helped the new non-racial unions and sometimes served them as officials.

Some white unions, also, have shifted a bit. And some of the independent, non-racial unions even have one or two white shop stewards.

But their vast privileges keep most white workers firmly on the side of the regime. An increasing number have reacted to the rising black revolt by leaving South Africa.

Despite everything they have done, the whites should have equal rights; and indeed, documents like the Freedom Charter, recognise that. Those on the left who mouth slogans like "No to minority rights" rather than focussing on equality for blacks, are being needlessly provocative. Nelson Mandela's approach of saying that he doesn't want to replace white domination by black domination is much better.

The revolution will be easier and less bloody, the more whites it can win over or at least render neutral; and the education and skills of many whites will be valuable to a

new South Africa.

The independent workers' movement should devote some energy to winning over working class whites, rather than assuming that the recipients at the soup kitchen in Johannesburg's white suburbs will automatically turn to the neo-fascists.

Separate self-government or a federal system to accommodate the whites as whites are scarcely possible: in every big city and every area except the bantustans, blacks and whites are closely mixed together. Trying to separate out African areas in Natal, the South African government arrived at 44 separate bits for KwaZulu bantustan, with another 144 "black spots" from which Africans were due to be deported into the bantustan!

The South African whites are not a more or less complete and autonomous community, embracing all classes, but a capitalist class, a middle class, and a thin labour aristocracy, all resting on top of a black working class.

There can be no justice in South Africa unless the whites accept equality. And the blacks can't, won't and should not be asked to wait until the whites accept equality voluntarily rather than having it forced on them.

Where does the right get its support?

Most support for the AWB and its satellites comes from the Afrikaners speaking lower middle class farmers, civil servants and privileged workers.

The National Party which started off as an Afrikaner nationalist outfit is now the party of reform from above. It probably has more support from English speakers than Afrikaners. (South Africa's ruling class is often euphemistically refer-

red to as the 'English speaking business community'). It has abandoned its traditional base in order to further the long term interests of South African capital by embarking on a controlled modernisation and democratisation.

Thus, the AWB is now demanding that the people who originally put the National Party into power, the poorer whites, should now have the chance to kick them out in a whites-only election before DeKlerk presses ahead with more decisive



Only 14.2% this year. We'll have to economise.

Recession? What recession?

GRAFFITI

You may have heard of the Low Pay Unit, but the ruling class has its own version — the IDS Top Pay Unit.

Its annual review of top directors' pay records average pay of £414,049. This year's average rise has been a miserly 14.2% — about £993 per week — rather inadequate compared to last year's 24.2% average.

Interestingly, the report comments: "There is no discernible relationship between company performance and remuneration increases."

Recession Tarquin, what recession?

Senior officials in the Labour Party (ie. the unelected and unaccountable mandarins of Walworth Road) have let it be known through the appropriate Labour Party channels (this Monday's *Guardian*) that the Labour Party will not support the outlawing of men-only clubs, from the MCC to your local working men's club.

This may be just as well seeing that in the last General Election only 20 women Labour MPs were elected, outnumbered ten-to-one by men.

As many of the press commented, John McCarthy seemed lively and well after his five years' captivity in Lebanon.

However, after two days at RAF Lyneham they commented how tired and drawn he was looking.

We can now safely assume that two days being debriefed by British intelligence is far worse than years of being help captive by the Islamic Jihad.

All left papers are run on a shoestring. Many have to miss issues to make ends meet — and *Socialist Organiser* is no exception.

But *Socialist Outlook* are now offering an abject lesson in political will overcoming all obstacles to get their ideas across.

Having valiantly struggled to publish six issues of their paper since April, they have decided to take a "well earned" two-month break.

An exhaustive survey of labour movement activists resulted in the answer "Socialist who?..."

Kevin Costner has made a lot of dollars recently with films about the fight against oppression and injustice.

In *Dances with Wolves* he takes up the cudgel on behalf of American Indians, and in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* he, well, steals from the rich to give to the poor.

And what has our swash-buckling hero been doing with his spare time? Playing golf with the Sheriff of Washington, George Bush.

The television series *GBH*, where the not-Militant left group turned out to be a tool of MI5, has rekindled many left-wing conspiracy theorists.

"Secret state" specialist Duncan Campbell recently stated that "as a long term operation intelligence activities inside *Militant* were more likely to be run by the CIA than by British intelligence... US intelligence has substantial experience in this area: the American Socialist Workers Party was thoroughly penetrated in the sixties and virtually run by the FBI."

(Here Campbell is, it seems, casually picking up a tall story invented by Gerry Healy. FBI agents did get into the SWP, and SWP exposed some of them: to say it was run by the FBI is paranoia.)

"Bleasdale's dramatic plot is thus not fiction. The disturbing question is, did the penetration of the left end at *Militant*."

John Street, the *Tribune* diarist, suggests that any evidence against *Militant* on this score be passed on to the Labour Party, presumably making the *Militant* the first group to be attacked simultaneously for being socialists and for being agents of US imperialism!

Infiltration of left groups and even not-so-left groups undoubtedly happens.

Even trade unions and community groups have been targeted by the security services. The leadership of the Labour Party has been more than happy to go along with this: there is even evidence of the Labour Party leadership using evidence gathered by the security services against the left in the party.

More — there are cases of the CIA funding right-wing groups in the Labour Party. One example of this was the Campaign for Democratic Socialism set up after the 1960 Scarborough Labour Party conference voted through unilateral nuclear disarmament, Denis Healey being one of its main organisers.

It is the right who are the agents of the CIA and MI5 — the left are its victims.

If Duncan Campbell knows anything about CIA or MI5 or KGB infiltration of the left, then he should publish the facts.

It will be a shame if *GBH* makes conspiracy theory respectable. Irresponsible spy-hunters have probably done more damage to the left over the decades than the spies. The idea that *Militant* is run by the CIA (or whoever) is patently absurd.

Tribune's silly little squib shows that the ghost of Gerry Healy is knocking at the door: it should be barred and reinforced against him!

GRAFFITI

Good news, bad news

Trade union leaders, estate agents, and building contractors can take some comfort from the findings of a recent Gallup survey: they all rank above journalists in public esteem.

53 per cent of people questioned by Gallup rated the honesty and ethical standards of journalists as "low" or "very low". This was considerably worse than the next most despised group, trade union leaders (43 per cent).

The survey went on to ask people how they rated the truthfulness of different sections of the media: BBC television and radio received an overwhelmingly positive response, closely followed by independent television. "Quality" papers like the *Times*, *Guardian* and *Independent* lagged behind the broadcast media, but were generally regarded as "truthful".

The mid-market tabloids (*Mail*, *Express*, *Today*) registered as neutral — neither "truthful" nor "untruthful". But the mass-market tabloids (*Sun*, *Mirror* and *Star*) scored minus-57 per cent.

The answers to other questions told a similar story: the vast majority of people regard the press as politically biased, unwilling to correct mistakes, likely to cover up important stories and much too prone to invade people's privacy.

There is nothing particularly surprising about these

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

results: most of us have known (or suspected) all along that despite the anti-TV campaigns of Norman Tebbit, Woodrow Wyatt and Conservative Central Office throughout much of the 1980s, the (regulated) broadcast media is held in much higher general regard than the (free-market) press. Even the most up-market broadsheet papers are less trusted than the TV or radio. But it is the tabloids that really bring the entire British press into disrepute.

Here we encounter one of the great mysteries of our time: surveys like Gallup's must inevitably involve large numbers of tabloid readers; so how is it that millions of people read the tabloids but do not either believe them or approve of them?

The pessimistic explanation would be that most people in this country are hypocrites who operate by a system of dual standards in their choice of newspaper. The optimistic view, that I prefer to believe, is that people buy the tabloids for all sorts of reasons (sports coverage, escapism, enter-



Jill Morrell: the latest victim of press harassment

tainment, titillation) but have the good sense not to believe a word they read.

The good news, then, is that even *Sun* readers maintain a healthy cynicism towards their chosen newspaper. The bad news is that the issue that Gallup respondents felt most strongly about was "invasion of privacy" — and that they did not differentiate significantly between "famous people" and "ordinary people" in their disapproval.

This will provide yet more ammunition for the majority of MPs (of all parties) who are just itching to bring in new laws to curb press freedom. The main effect of any such legislation will be to curtail legitimate, "public interest" investigative journalism and the exposure of corruption in high places.

Things are already bad enough on this score: the *New Statesman* attempted to expose some of BCCI's "irregularities" five years ago, but was silenced by a libel action. As a direct result, the financial journalists of the British press were scared off writing anything critical of BCCI until the shit hit the fan last month.

When (not if) legislation is passed, you can blame the tabloids

and, in particular, the Murdoch tabloids. Time and again, they have abused the concept of "press freedom" in order to harass "little people" — the relatives of disaster victims, for example — in order to provide cheap titillation.

The latest victim of this kind of thing looks like being Ms Jill Morrell, the leader of the "Friends of John McCarthy".

Since the release of Mr McCarthy, the Murdoch press has concentrated its entire coverage on speculation about the state of the personal relationship between Ms Morrell and Mr McCarthy: "Will they, won't they?" was *Today's* headline on Friday; "I love him as a friend" was the *Sun's* front page lead on Saturday; "Give 'em a thrill, Jill (England expects a cuddle)" urged the *News of the World* front page.

For five years Ms Morrell and the other "Friends of John McCarthy" had to fight an uphill battle for even a few inches of press coverage. Now that Mr McCarthy is free, the precise nature of a personal relationship between two people who have been through a traumatic experience is front-page news.

New genes for old



LES HEARN'S

SCIENCE COLUMN

Research into recombinant DNA (inserting "foreign" genetic material into the DNA of organisms) has blossomed over the last 15 years or so. This sounds rather alarming to many people but it is now clear that the process occurs naturally and quite widely throughout the various forms of life.

Whether it is a good or bad thing depends on what gets inserted there. If it's a gene for resistance to a certain type of blight into the DNA of a food plant, this is

beneficial. If it's a gene causing a certain type of cancer (such as is carried by some viruses) then it is pretty bad.

Medical research into recombinant DNA is largely looking at ways of replacing faulty genes or into ways of disabling harmful genes. To illustrate the potential of research, consider cystic fibrosis (CF), a disease in which one gene, active in the cells lining the lungs, is faulty. Healthy copies of the gene would only need to be inserted into the DNA of lung cells, possibly by inhaling an aerosol of disabled viruses, carrying the gene. These viruses would be capable of infecting the cells and inserting the gene into the DNA there but not of multiplying and being released.

But much caution has to be exercised when carrying out such techniques on people. The recombinant genes have to operate in a controlled manner. If they were overactive, or operated in the wrong cells, they could make things worse. Extensive research in animals and in human cells in the test-tube is required to see how the genes would behave.

This was one reason why an unauthorised attempt at gene therapy by a US researcher in the early '80s, was met with condemnation and the loss of his experimental licence. The experiment involved the insertion of a healthy gene for haemoglobin production into cells from the bone marrow of patients with

the serious blood disorder, thalassaemia.

The cells were then transplanted back into the bone marrow, the hope being that healthy red blood cells would be produced.

In the event, the therapy was ineffective but, luckily, neither was it harmful.

Knowledge and techniques have progressed since then, and specific gene therapies have started or are soon to start on a trial basis, after authorisation this time.

One already started, involves putting genes from tumour necrosis factor (TNF) into cells from 38 cancer patients. TNF is a protein that specifically attacks tumours, causing their cells to die. Early results are said to be encouraging. One experiment shortly to start would treat victims of inherited hypercholesterolaemia. Sufferers lack a functional gene for making a cell membrane protein that picks up cholesterol from the blood. The result is high levels of cholesterol in the blood and consequent heart disease.

People with one faulty and one normal gene can be treated with drugs, but people with two faulty genes develop life-threatening heart disease as children. Experiments modifying rabbit liver cells have succeeded in substantially lowering the rabbits' blood cholesterol levels.

A different approach to a particular type of leukaemia, is being investigated in cell

culture and mouse experiments. The disease, chronic myelogenous leukaemia (CML), responsible for 10% of leukaemia, is caused when an accidental breakage and rearrangement takes place during the DNA copying stage of cell division. This accident joins parts of two genes together to make one abnormal one, and the protein coded for by this new gene, is known to cause the cells that produce white blood cells in the bone marrow to go out of control.

The approach adopted involves putting a short stretch of DNA complementary to part of the abnormal gene into the cells. When the abnormal gene DNA unravels so that its code can be used to make the CML protein, the complementary DNA fragment sticks to it, preventing further progress. The process works in cell culture, but is still a long way from being tried in humans.

If studies in mice are successful, perhaps the technique could be used in patients who are in the acute, life-threatening stages of the disease. Alternatively, perhaps a gene for the complementary DNA could be made and inserted into bone marrow cells.

Together with several other therapies for cancer and serious genetic illnesses, these experimental techniques represent the first steps of what will rapidly become an important new branch of medicine.

The case against banning pornography

By Liz Millward

The psychologist Robin Skynner defined pornography as that which attempts to separate sex from love, "to avoid any feelings of tenderness or warmth accompanying the sexual stimulation."

Most feminists would probably agree with this rather neutral view, but would want to add other, political, points to give a fuller definition. If it was as simple as Skynner makes out, we would just feel sorry for those people who use it.

Pornography, for example, is an industry, motivated by profit. It is not in the interests of the pornographers to help people resolve sexual inadequacies in order to enjoy real intimacy — sales would drop! Pornography is also a component part of an ideological system (both capitalist and sexist) which defines women as "other", seen in terms of male desires.

This ideology both derives from and props up capitalism, which relies on the family and women's subordinate role in it. Pornography is an element in Western society and traces of pornographic imagery are found throughout that society.

Maria Exall attempts to isolate pornography from the system which promotes it, and having isolated it, argues that a "ban" is possible and desirable. Either this is an unrealistic demand, raised in order to win people to our ideas, or it is wishful thinking.

It would be possible, for instance, to "ban" pornographic magazines, but this would probably quadruple the circulation of underwear catalogues! Because pornography influences so much visual imagery, society is saturated with pictures of women with a pornographic or voyeuristic "angle". One could not hope to ban all such images.

Even if there was a committee somewhere in Whitehall which could sift through images of women and reject all those which portray female availability — would we want it to? Apart from the dirty mags, these pictures of women are part of the whole visual imagery of human society. I would like to see the balance redressed, to see images of women which are not about women as the "other" and do not put the viewer in the position of the male voyeur.

But I would not want to be

The case for Socialist Feminism



A Women's Fightback pamphlet £1

£1 plus 32 pence p&p from Women's Fightback, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA



Direct action: women picket sex shop in Marble Arch

denied images of women which are, to a greater or lesser extent, informed by the ideas of pornography. Human sexuality is complicated beyond the reaches of feminist morality, and so it is possible to feel pleasure in an image which we would also object to politically.

When attempts are made to give people the images which are ideologically correct, and only those images, it is a sign of a rotten system. Capitalism pushes too much unwholesome imagery on us, and we are certainly corrupted by it, but even capitalism has not yet sunk to the depths of "socialist realism". There is a regrettable body of evidence which shows that state control and banning of incorrect imagery is a good indicator of corruption.

If it were true that society could be changed by people only being allowed to see things that are good for them then Stalin's 5-year plans would have been a wild success. People are capable of distinguishing between what they are told, in pictures and in words, and material reality. Not all the time, and not all the people, but the relationship between ideology and people's behaviour is far from straightforward.

Having said all of that, I would not argue in favour of pornography, or say that we should not demand more positive images of women. We should also demand the lifting of back-door censorship of lesbian and gay images and erotica. But if the state were given greater powers over what we could see and read it is likely that power would be used against greater freedom of expression for those with "undesirable" sexualities. It is likely that romantic or soft-core pornographic heterosexual images (which are "good for us") would proliferate, and lesbian, gay and feminist erotica would be stamped out.

This is a libertarian argument. I do think "we should all be free to choose what we wish that does not harm other". It is the Tory rhetoric which perverts this principle, by proclaiming what is untrue. The Tory rhetoric which says we can have what we want is a lie! Under capitalism free choice is reserved for the few. Free choice is what socialists want — for everybody. I

only mind sharing the Tory slogan of free choice because I know they have stolen it and perverted it.

Socialism is not about creating a society where a committee decides what I can and can't look at. Socialism would bring with it such a flowering of both culture and sexuality that I think the most grossly offensive images would be pushed aside in favour of images which show the whole human experience, not just a tiny, warped part of it. It is also the case that a socialist society would choose not to use voyeuristic images of women to sell shampoo!

Coming down to earth for a mo-

"Pornography cannot be isolated from the society which supports it."

ment, should we argue that pornography should be banned in the meantime? I can see no reason for it. I do think we should take every opportunity to agitate against it, to demand that it is not served up with the breakfast cereal, and that dirty mags are wrapped in brown paper and labelled "degrading images of women, to be read by sexual failures only". There is a case for demanding that public funding of culture goes to people who show positive views of women, so that women (and men) are able to reject "girlie" pictures in favour of something better.

Maria Exall says that "real women are not like this, sex is not like this", ie. not like women and sex are portrayed in pornography. If that is true, there is no case for banning pornography because it has no effect. I think that many women are affected by the ideology of pornography — perceiving their own sexuality as primarily passive.

Many women are brought up to see themselves in the male gaze, their sexuality dormant until turned on by a man. This result of ideology is stifling for women, and needs to be challenged, both through alternative views of women, and through campaigns against the por-

nographic view. Many women see through pornography, see that it does not represent real sex, real women, but the all-pervasive ideology is not so easily escaped.

Maria does not say that women are unaffected by pornography, but nowhere does she really analyse how banning pornography would neutralise its effects. She says that women would gain "much freedom" from a ban on pornography — freedom from the economic necessity of prostitution? unpaid childcare? male violence? No. Women would only gain the limited relief of not having to pretend not to notice the *Sunday Sport*. That would be a nice thing to happen. But women can win that freedom without handing the state yet more power to tell us what we can and can't look at.

I do not want to suggest that women should wait for socialism when pornography will simply disappear. We should campaign against it (in all its forms) now. We can win limited concessions from the state in this area, but those concessions should be for greater freedoms, not less. We should demand an end to exploitation in advertising, and access to alternative images. Tied to those campaigns are campaigns for material benefits for women, which will change all women's position in society.

Pornography cannot be isolated from the society which supports it, and no talk of "power structures" or "bourgeois patriarchy" will change that. The fight against pornography is part of the fight for women's liberation. Liberation is about freedom, and freedom is not something which can be won by a series of unrelated negative "bans".

It is a sad fact that feminism is becoming politics of control, of "banning" of a rather reactionary morality. Feminists have started to tell us what is "good for us" and are "re-presenting" the concept of crime-thought in a new and alarming light.

Merely because some women want to ban pornography (under the banner of feminism rather than morality) is no reason to switch off our brains, dump scientific and critical reasoning and jump onto the bandwagon.

An important conference for Labour youth

By Steve Mitchell, NUS Vice President (Further Education Union Development)

Labour's annual Youth Conference will be held in Morecambe, 15-17 November. Delegates attend from Young Socialist (LPYS) branches, Labour Student Clubs (NOLS) and trade unions; observers from Constituency Parties without LPYS's.

The Labour Party organisers at Walworth Road have decided that the conference will be twice as big as last year's — guaranteed by doubling delegate entitlements. It would never occur to the student Kinnockites who own the "Labour Youth" franchise, to double the size of the conference by doubling the size of youth organisations on the ground.

Labour has a youth organisation in name only and does virtually no campaigning among young people. Consequently, few youth join the Party and many young potential Labour voters will not turn out to the polls.

The Kinnock bureaucracy is incompetent. But they also have a real problem: any open, campaigning Labour student or youth organisa-

"The Labour Party Young Socialists has effectively not existed since 1987."

tion whose leaders reflect the members, will be left-led. Radical youth, who would make up the members of a democratic youth organisation, did not support the Gulf War and are not pleased with Labour councils sending bailiffs against Poll Tax non-payers.

Labour Students have reaped the reward of years of bureaucratic mismanagement: a middle-class rump which does nothing except serve as a school for careerists.

The LPYS has effectively not existed since 1987. The bureaucrats lowered the upper age limit to 22 and increased the numbers needed to set up an LPYS branch to 10; in the constituencies, YS members were witch-hunted. The Militant, who had been running the LPYS like the semi-Stalinists they are, found the heat too great, and left to do their youth work outside the Labour Party. Now the LPYS exists virtually nowhere.

It is time to change that. It is time to start campaigning and building LPYS branches. Youth, students and young workers must begin to take up the opportunities to organise — even within the bureaucratically limited structures — in the run-up to the General Election. The political situation will open up a little as we move to the election. We must take up the basic issues: the fights against racism, unemployment, slave labour schemes to both fight for youth rights and rally young people to Labour.

For socialist speakers for your LPYS meetings, write to: Maria Apruzzese, c/o West Yorkshire NUS, Brunswick Building, Leeds Poly, Merion Way, Leeds.

As corrupt a

Martin Thomas looks at the BCCI scandal

Nothing succeeds like success, they say. Such is the logic of capitalism: you make millions only in order to make yet more millions, and your success in making millions in the past is your best asset in getting business to make more millions in the future.

In high finance, the rule is that nothing succeeds like the *appearance of success*. As the economist John Maynard Keynes put it, if you owe the bank £100, you have a problem; if you have won enough credit to owe the bank £100 million, the bank has a problem.

That was the principle on which BCCI operated. Starting off with cash levered out of Gulf oil sheikhs, it fiddled its accounts to show ever-increasing assets and ever-increasing profits.

Those ever-increasing figures for assets and profits allowed it to get more deposits, open more branches — and make more big pay-outs to its bosses.

It also gained from being prepared to do dodgy business which other banks were wary of — for customers range from Panama's drug-dealing General Noriega to the CIA and Abu Nidal.

The fact that it had no real national base meant that it could slip dodgy deals through more easily. It also meant that it was even more necessary than otherwise for BCCI to produce its figures of increasing assets and profits, because it had no nation's central bank standing behind it, willing to bale out depositors as the Bank of England would do for British banks that went bust, or the Federal Reserve for US banks.

BCCI was the legitimate offspring of Reagan's and Thatcher's 1980's — of the era of hugely increased, uncontrolled and unmonitored in-

ternational capital flows.

International bank lending rose from \$127 billion in 1983 to \$624 billion in 1986; international bond issues from \$44 billion in 1981 to \$220 billion in 1986; international share issues from \$0.2 billion in 1984 to \$17.7 billion in 1987; and foreign exchange dealing to maybe \$200 billion a day in 1986.

Just how huge these figures are can be gauged by comparing them with the US's reserves of gold and foreign currencies, which totalled about \$170 billion in 1987.

By ripping off even small fractions of those huge amounts of money swishing around, it was possible to become very rich very quickly — much more quickly than by the straightforward old capitalist

of the principles of *fair exchange*, a shameful move away from the ideal of a society of small proprietors, each owning their own farm or workshop, fairly and equally exchanging the products of their labour.

In truth, that economy of "fair exchange" logically and inevitably led to "fair exchange" of capital and labour-power, and thus to profit and a minority getting rich from the labour of the majority. The economy of profit logically and inevitably establishes a regime where you get rich not by producing but by deploying capital, accumulated wealth.

Whether the capital is deployed in the production of brandy or bibles — or not directly in production at all — is irrelevant. Profit, which in the last analysis can only come from grabbing the product of workers' labour, appears to come, and in immediate term does come, from capital's magic ability to expand itself.

And, equally logically, if you can convincingly pretend to own more capital than you really do, then you can make more profits than you otherwise would.

BCCI pursued the logic of capitalism — no more, no less. It seems pretty clear now that a lot of people knew long ago that BCCI was full of fraud, and kept quiet about it. They kept quiet about it because that was the logical thing to do. Exposing the frauds could ruin the bank, and cause trouble not only for the bank's bosses but also for many other people doing business with the bank.

Just why the Bank of England and other authorities chose to crack down is not clear. The thread seems to have started unravelling when the US government and the CIA fell out with their former agent and ally, Panama's ruler General Noriega, and it looks as if the Bank moved when it did for fear that otherwise someone would soon blow the whistle.

But in Switzerland, in Panama, and in London and New York too,

"BCCI pursued the logic of capitalism — no more, no less"

way of setting up production employing workers, and exploiting them.

The best brains, the liveliest talents, of capitalism, went into fixing financial deals rather than producing goods or services.

Some people saw this "casino economy" as a shame and a perversion of capitalist principles: true capitalism, they insisted, was about investing your money in production, plugging away, putting your profits back in and expanding the business.

Their argument was as foolish as the outlook of those in the 19th century who saw then-new large-scale capitalist enterprise as a perversion



there are still thousands of people making themselves millionaires through tricks and deals not very different from the BCCI's. They siphon off much of the wealth produced by the sweat and pain of the working class, and they make the deployment and investment of that wealth a matter not of rational, democratic human choice but of haphazard, crisis-ridden profit-seeking.

Not just the BCCI profiteers, but all the profiteers, should be cleared out, and replaced by public ownership and democratic control of all the banks and financial institutions.

Death threats kept the fra

Former BCCI official Masihur Rahman says he received death threats after discovering fraud in the bank and promising to reveal it. The bank got a court order in Britain in May this year to stop him speaking out in public, but Rahman sent his family to the US, where they were put under government protection and followed himself. Now he has given evidence to a US Senate committee.

Putting oil m the bankers'

BCCI launched itself into international high finance with money from the oil-rich rulers of the Gulf. "The slick men from BCCI found a quick way to [Sheikh] Zayed [of Abu Dhabi]'s heart through falcons. Pakistan boasts the best falcons in the world and soon Sheikh Zayed [was] hot-footing it to Pakistan every year for hunting holidays" (*Guardian*, 6 August).

• "BCCI rewarded senior staff with illegal perks worth more than \$20 million. For years many senior executives evaded tax by having

Trail of fraud and crime stretches from China to CIA

The CIA used the BCCI to send money to the Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas in Afghanistan and (through accounts opened by Panama's General Noriega) to the Nicaraguan Contras. It also used BCCI to pay hundreds of secret agents in Britain.

• The bank was also involved in secret arms sales from the US to Iran in 1986, according to a former US customs official.

• "It is possible that Noriega's contacts with some Colombian drug cartels which used... BCCI... to launder money were part of a scheme by American agencies to penetrate the drug business. It is certain that Noriega used the same BCCI accounts for his own laundering purposes" (*Economist*, 3 August).

• More than \$800 million from China's "Special Economic Zones" was invested in BCCI, leading the Chinese government to intervene to delay the closure of the BCCI branch in Hong Kong so

that it could try to get the money out.

• "An investigator working for the Indian government alleged... industrialists and government officials in India used BCCI to take money out of the country illegally and evade taxes... tens of millions of dollars... diverted by top Indian industrialists and aides to then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi" (*Financial Times*, 3 August).

• Former officials of Peru's Central Bank are alleged to have taken \$3 million in bribes in return for depositing the country's reserves of foreign currency in BCCI on terms "ridiculously" favourable to the bank. Former president Alan Garcia is said to have been implicated.

• In Argentina, the BCCI has been raided by police on suspicion of being involved in a money-laundering scandal centred around President Menem's sister-in-law. BCCI is also alleged to have done deals over Argentine government

money on terms which amounted to "looting" the country. Similar allegations have been made about Jamaican and Nigerian government money.

• Abu Nidal, the maverick Palestinian nationalist leader responsible for many hijackings and murders, did business with London branches of BCCI. According to a former BCCI manager, MI5 knew all about it, and on one occasion the police gave Abu Nidal a lift to Heathrow after his car broke down.

• General Noriega had two accounts at BCCI's Edgware Road branch, in London. In Panama, BCCI's staff worked late into the night counting multi-million dollar cash deposits made by clients who arrived at the bank with container-loads of small bills... often with a military escort provided by General Noriega (*Independent*, 16 July).

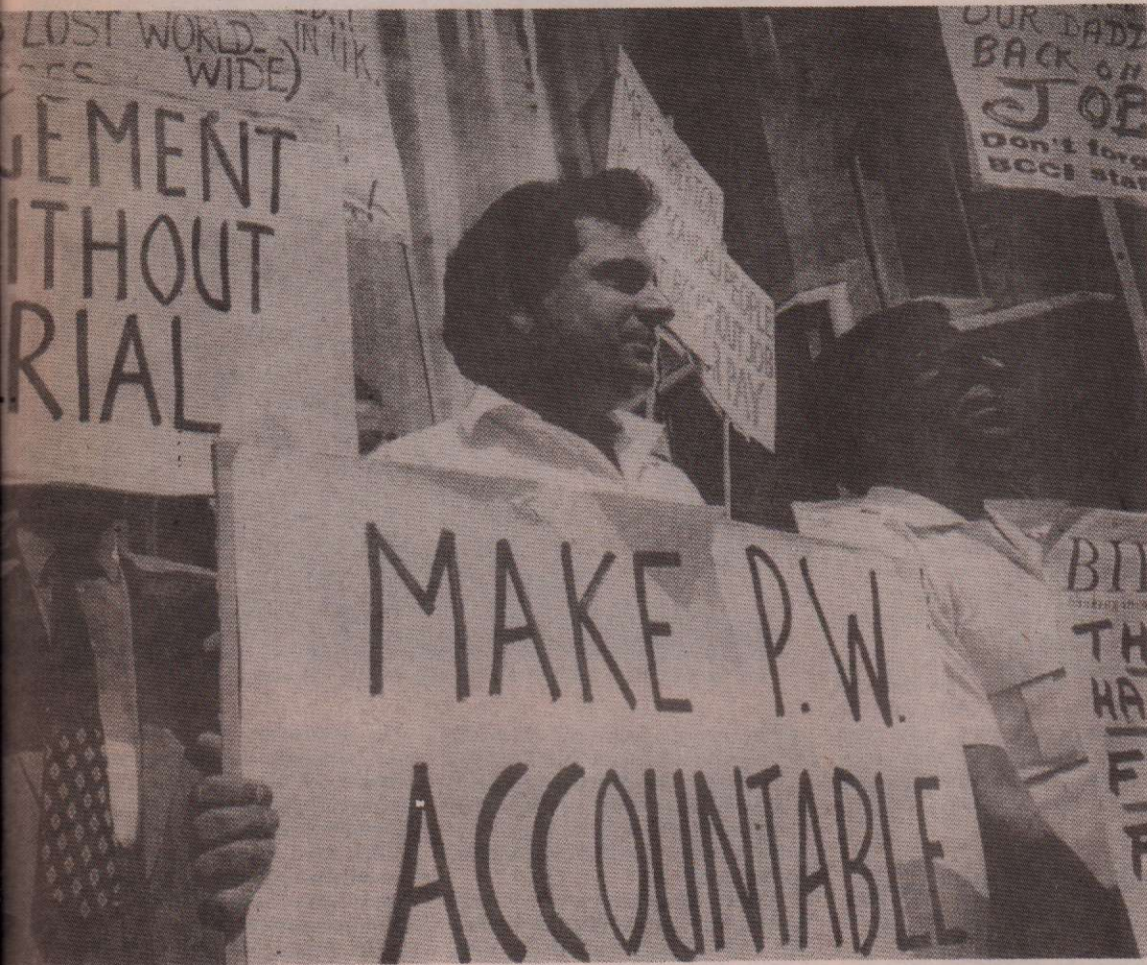
• "Burma-based Khun Sa, who has been called the world's leading heroin supplier... banked at BCCI and stands to lose \$300 million

from the failure of the bank" (*Financial Times*, 3 August).

• Britain's largest private hospital, the Cromwell Hospital in west London, used to be owned by BCCI. The hospital now says that it has cut links with BCCI, but refuses to say who is behind its current owner, a mysterious company based in the Cayman Islands. Cromwell Hospital has recently faced charges from a former manager that it overcharged patients to the extent of £195 a day for a trolley serving instant coffee.

• Former US president Jimmy Carter worked closely with BCCI. Clark Clifford, a Washington lawyer who was an adviser to President Harry Truman and who has been an "elder statesman" ever since, is chair of First American Bankshares, the US bank which was illegally owned and controlled by BCCI. In Britain, former Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan, was a paid adviser to BCCI.

s capitalism



Was BCCI a victim of imperialism?

In Pakistan and many other countries, most people see the closure of BCCI as an imperialist plot against Third World enterprise.

There is a shred of truth in this conspiracy theory. There must be many other banks "laundering" drug money — and many other financial outfits riddled with fraud.

A survey two years ago found that nearly one in six of the City's financial institutions had suffered frauds — sometimes very big ones — and hushed them up without reporting them to the police. Right now Japan's big financial firms are knee-deep in scandal — and getting off with no more than a few top officials resigning.

America's "Savings and Loans" companies (its equivalent of building societies) have collapsed en masse, after dodgy dealings fundamentally similar to those at BCCI. All the depositors have been bailed out by the US government, and so far all the bosses are going almost scot free.

Britain's Midland Bank, it was recently revealed, had a secret department dealing with finance for arms sales. The department ran up huge losses, and top Midland bosses say they didn't even know it existed.

When Midland reported bad annual results, earlier this month, the extensive press coverage found not even a single column inch to recall that dirty dealing.

The BCCI did not have the Lords, or the top Washington lawyers and Wall Street supremos, on its board that the big Western-based banks have. It had roped in

only a few marginal members of the Establishment — Jimmy Carter and Clark Clifford in the US, James Callaghan in Britain. When the Bank of England moved against BCCI, it was not as discreet and "gentlemanly" as it would be with a bank run by its bosses' old school friends.

All that said, Third World workers and peasants have nothing at all to gain from rallying to the cause of BCCI. A gang of swindlers, tricksters and profiteers does not become any better for being parvenus or for coming from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia rather than London's Mayfair or New York's Upper East Side.

Indeed, if recent allegations are true, many Third World governments were victims of the BCCI's rip-offs, and the workers and peasants of those countries will have to pay the price.

Third World workers and peasants do not have a common interest with bankers and capitalists from their "own" countries. Those Third World-based profiteers enjoy the same riches and privileges as the wealthy of the West — luxury hotels are much the same in every big city across the world — and they draw their wealth more directly from the exploitation of the workers and peasants of their countries.

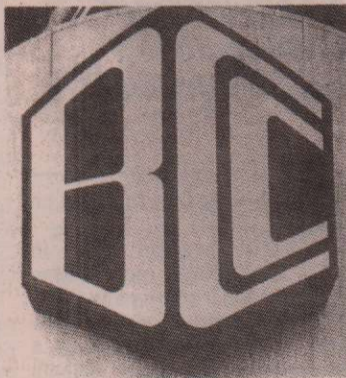
They do not share in the poverty and oppression of the mass of the people in Pakistan, or in the Arab world; they directly profit from that poverty and oppression.

The answer to the swindles and profiteering of all the international banks and financiers is not Third World nationalism, but worldwide workers' solidarity.

ts and collusion ud quiet

- Another BCCI official blackmailed the bank for \$32 million in 1988. His blackmail threat was not to reveal the bank's frauds, but to make public its losses.
- Rahman gave evidence in secret to the Bank of England and the Serious Fraud Office last year.
- An Indian government investigator says that US authorities refused to investigate money-laundering and tax evasion charges against BCCI in 1986 after

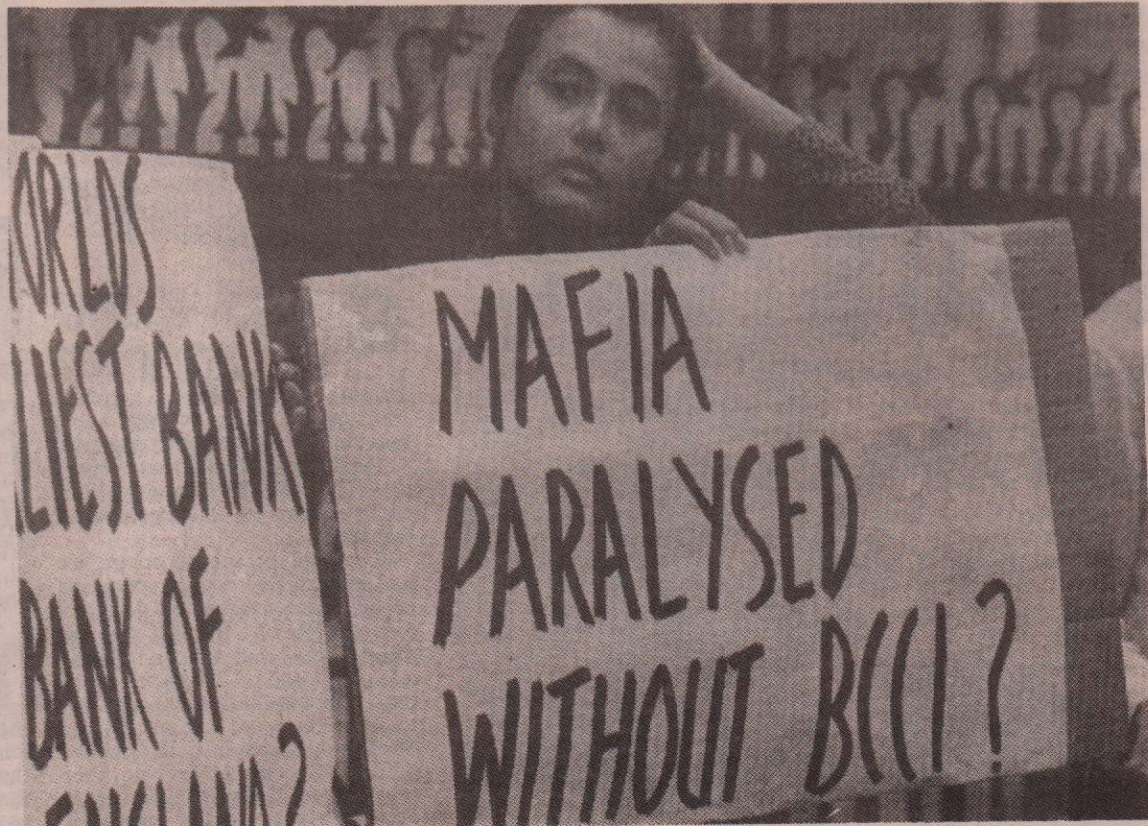
- he gave them evidence.
- US Senator John Kerry has released a CIA memo "showing the agency knew [in 1986] that BCCI had secret [and illegal] control of First American [bank] — and had known this since 1982" (*Financial Times*, 10 August).
- As long ago as 1981, BCCI in London was asking British computer software companies to provide software that would allow them to keep two sets of accounts, one secret and one for public use.
- "Almost a decade ago a bank regulator in Washington told me he had a thick file on irregularities in BCCI which he was waiting to pounce on" (Anthony Sampson, *The Independent*, 24 July).
- Labour MP Brian Sedgemore claims that he told the Bank of England about misdeeds at BCCI four years ago. A former BCCI auditor wrote to Tony Benn MP about fraud at BCCI in June 1990. Tony Benn forwarded the letter to the government, and it disappeared somewhere in the Department of Trade and Industry.
- "BCCI's frauds were not only fundamental to the bank's operations but also required the collusion of a number of its customers and shareholders, and even of other banks... BCCI appears to have been helped by a disinclination among supervisors and auditors to suspect fraud" (*Financial Times*, 6 August).



oney into pockets

most of their salaries paid into offshore accounts... Six-figure mortgages were provided as interest-only gifts with which to buy luxury homes in and around London" (*Observer*, 4 August).

• Agha Hassan Abedi, the founder of BCCI, charged more than \$1.6 million living expenses to the bank in the year ended April 1991. Although he ceased to be active in February 1988, and supposedly he resigned all his positions with the bank in October 1990, he continued to send bills to be paid by the bank for repairs to his houses, medical costs and travel



How the jobless organised in the '20s and '30s

The Anger Marches

Two million officially unemployed, which means a real figure of three or four million – that's the prospect for several years to come. And the unemployed face repeated attacks on their benefits and rights from the Tory government. Lessons from the unemployed workers' movement of the 1920s and '30s are once again relevant. Mick Sidaway reviews the history.

The unemployed movement started with the setting up of Local Unemployed Ex-servicemen's Organisations after the First World War.

Shop stewards and other experienced trade unionists thrown out of their jobs in the years after the war soon took a leading role.

By the end of October 1920 twelve London district organisations came together to form the London District Council of the unemployed. The LDC proclaimed three slogans: "Work or Full Maintenance", "Go to the Guardians" [the local "Poor Law Guardians" who then administered the dole], and the demand for suitable premises for the unemployed to meet in.

The key to the organisation of the unemployed was direct action. The Library in Essex Road, Islington,

was seized by the unemployed who "after taking possession... barricaded themselves in and had a constant guard day and night against being evicted... Whenever anybody left the hall, or wanted to enter it, a strong body of men stood at the door ready to defend the hall if any attempt was made to rush it. This went on for several weeks..."

The same direct action tactics were used against workhouse authorities, Poor Law Guardians and employers. The London unemployed pioneered the factory raid, a tactic which succeeded in cutting overtime in a number of poorly organised factories.

At the Central Aircraft Factory in Kilburn, the employees had accepted reduced rates of pay and overtime was being worked. The LDC had some contacts in the factory who supplied them with a plan. So as not to arouse suspicion as they approached the factory, the raiders all carried football gear. At a signal they all rushed the gates and entered the factory, first finding the power-motors and switching them off. At the same time the telephones were commandeered.

The workers were called to hear the raiders and soon, of course, the manager arrived. The raiders assured the workers that they were with them in their struggles, and that their aim was to see that no overtime was worked.

The incident ended with victory for the raiders. The manager agreed to halt overtime as from the coming weekend. Perhaps he was a little upset, as he had just been beaten up by police who had rushed to the plant, and mistaken him for a raider!

April 1921 saw the birth of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Within months the government had revised unemployment benefit rates, reducing them to the rates in force at the beginning of the year.

The response was quick to come: in August 10,000 Sheffield unemployed marched to the town hall under the sign of the skull and crossbones and the words, "Death is better than starvation". After a series of big and bitter demonstrations in Bristol, the guardians there agreed to raise their scales.

At its conference in November 1921 the NUWM decided to organise to resist evictions of unemployed workers who had fallen in arrears with their rent. Special tenants' organisations were

"When the CP turned to the policy of the popular front... the unemployed struggles declined."

formed, with scouts on foot and on bicycles.

The biggest eviction fight in Glasgow took place on 17 May 1922. It gave the lead to many other parts of the country, and led the Glasgow City Council to set up a special rent fund to relieve tenants who were in danger of eviction.

At the end of July 1922 the Birmingham branch of the NUWM decided to march to London. By winter the local idea had taken on national proportions, and the NUWM was busy organising the first National Hunger March. The 2,000 marchers tramped through blizzards in the bitterly cold October and November of 1922 to "fight for bread."

Shortly before the National Hunger March, the 1922 TUC Congress had received a delegation from the NUWM. On 20 December 1922, with the marchers in London, the NUWM sent another delegation, which proposed to the General Council that a day of action be called for 7 January 1923, to be known as "Unemployment Sunday".

A central organising committee was immediately set up, consisting of an equal number of delegates from the NUWM, the TUC General Council, the London Labour Party, and the London Trades Council. Calls were issued to trades councils, trade unions, and Labour Parties throughout the country to establish similar joint machinery in every centre to organise powerful demonstrations on the appointed day.

So began the brief period — one



East London 1931: unemployed demonstrators fight the police

which ended decisively after the defeat of the General Strike in 1936 — in which the official movement played a useful part in organising the unemployed and bringing about unity between the employed and the unemployed.

After the successes of the Unemployment Sunday agitation, the NUWM approached the TUC with more ambitious proposals.

- Closer relations between employed and unemployed, by establishing a joint committee with equal representation from the TUC General Council and the NUWM.

- That the General Council should circularise the trade unions encouraging the formation of unemployed workers' committees in every locality, attached to the NUWM.

- That at the next Trades Union Congress the affiliation of the NUWM to the TUC should be placed on the agenda.

- When the TUC met that September in Plymouth, a General Council recommendation was accepted, that the first two proposals be carried but the third rejected. It was not until late in January 1923 that the first meeting of the NUWM-TUC Joint Action Committee took place.

The JAC drafted a Charter and prepared for another Unemployed Sunday in June. The Charter's points were explained in a series of six leaflets on Maintenance, Housing, Work Schemes, Hours of Work, Training and state workshops.

By the middle of the next year the TUC's attitude was distinctly cooler. The NUWM's resolution was not even allowed on the order paper at the TUC's Special Conference on Unemployment in 1924. With the right turn of the TUC after the defeat of the General Strike, official support for the unemployed struggles ceased.

The defeat of the General Strike and the subsequent defeat of the miners meant the most intense suffering in the mining areas. The pit owners used their victory to increase hours and throw thousands out of work. Between April and September 1927 300,000 miners were axed from the workforce.

In September 1927 Hannington and AJ Cook, the militant general secretary of the Miners' Federation, addressed a great demonstration of Rhondda miners and their families, calling for a march to London. As for official support, not even the Executive of Cook's own union would support the march.

The Prime Minister refused to meet a delegation of the marchers when they reached London. Eventually the Minister of Labour, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, agreed to meet a delegation.

"One of the deputation inquired whether the Minister thought that a man, wife and four children could live on 16 shillings a week, such as many miners' families were expected to do?"

"In challenging tones he said to the Minister 'Could you exist on such a pittance?' But Sir Arthur only fidgeted in his chair as he evaded the question. When the deputation demanded that all persons who had been struck off the exchange registers should be placed back on benefit, the Minister said 'You are asking me to break the law'."

"'We don't care one jot about your law!' said the marchers. 'We are concerned about saving human lives, and if the law has to be broken in order to do that, then the law should be broken!'"

The Second National Hunger March in 1929 faced the terrible ordeal of bitter winter weather, opposition from the official labour movement and brutality from the police and civil authorities.

It set out from Scotland late in January 1929, determined to break the ruling from central government that the authorities on the way should treat the marchers to "casual conditions" only.

This march had as a particular objective the fight against the "not genuinely seeking work" ruling, which had struck thousands off the books of exchanges and subjected tens of thousands to useless wandering only so that they could meet the expected questions at the interrogations of the Public Assistance Committees.

A Third National Hunger March set out on 30 March 1929 and for the first time included a contingent of women. Other contingents came



The People's Marches of the 1980s were a pallid re-run of the marches of the 1920s and '30s.



from Scotland, Durham, Northumberland, Plymouth, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Notts, Derby, South Wales, Staffordshire, Midlands and Kent.

While the marchers were on the road the Labour government elected in May 1929 abolished the "not genuinely seeking work" clause and raised the adult rate of benefit from 7 shillings to 9 shillings.

The fall of the Labour government when the Labour Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald went

"With the right turn at the TUC after the defeat of the general strike, official support for the unemployed struggles ceased."

over to the Tories in 1931, unleashed a dramatic rise in mass struggles.

The "National" (Tory) government elected in October 1931 quickly introduced the notorious means test.

For a year the means test was the main focus of the struggle of the unemployed. At the end of that period, in September 1932, three big struggles erupted with barricade fighting and many clashes with the police and, in Belfast, with the army.

"On 13 September 10,000 Birkenhead unemployed demonstrated to the Public Assistance Committee with the following simple demands: Relief to all able-bodied unemployed and an increase of 3s per week; immediate supply of boots and clothes and one hundredweight of coal during the winter; and the starting of work schemes at trade union rates..."

"As the unemployed began to march away, the police interfered with the procession, a conflict took place, and a number of arrests were

made. Two days later the unemployed again demonstrated against the Public Assistance Committee to secure improvements in their relief scales...

"Suddenly large numbers of police were ordered to draw their batons and they began to club to the ground demonstrators and pedestrians, including men, women and children, the aged and infirm."

"This roused the feeling of the whole of Birkenhead, and that night a tremendous demonstration assembled at the park gates as a protest against the police action. After short speeches they formed up and marched round the town, returning to the park gates, and when the demonstrators were just about to disperse to their homes the police, without any apparent reason, made a baton charge."

"Unemployed and employed workers stood their ground, and one policeman was thrown through a plate-glass window. The crowd took up the offensive and the police eventually were compelled to run; but they rallied again and a pitched battle ensued. Workers tore up railings to defend themselves and the fighting went on until eleven at night, 37 policemen being carried to hospital."

In the new year of 1934 another National Hunger March set off — this time, in Hannington's estimation, rallying wider sections of the working class movement than any previous march. Three days before the marchers were to enter London the police arrested five in the Tyneside contingent for "deserting their wives", though each marcher was able to prove he was there with his wife's support.

Seven West Fife marchers were even arrested on the same charge after they had returned home!

On 1 March, 300 succeeded in getting into the outer lobby at Westminster and 24 into the public gallery. Then suddenly a cry rang from the public gallery: "Meet the Hunger Marchers", "We refuse to starve in silence", "Down with the National Government".

When news reached the lobby that fighting had broken out in the gallery, the 300 marchers there started to sing the "Internationale" at the top of their voices.

The April 1923 Budget restored

the cuts that had been made. But the victory was not to last long. The 1934 Unemployed Assistance Board (UAB) Act called for compulsory training for the unemployed. Even the Home Secretary Sir John Gilmour described the training camps as "concentration camps".

The Act also reduced benefits for all over the age of 14; single adult males living with their families lost 7s; subsequent members of the family lost 9s, while a single female worker living with her family also lost 7s. In addition, there were wholesale disallowances of benefit.

Finally, after strike threats by the Cambrian Combine miners of the Rhondda and nationwide marches and protests, including the sacking of the offices of the Public Assistance Committees in many towns, this Act was repealed. Now the campaign was for the immediate restoration of the old scales — and again, finally, the government gave way.

Throughout the history of the unemployed movement, the central organising and initiating force in it was the then-revolutionary Communist Party. After 1935, when the CP turned to the policy of the "Popular Front" — meaning suppression of class struggle in favour of alliances with bourgeois liberals — the unemployed movement declined.

Its core principles — the self-organisation of the unemployed, and direct action to win their demands — no longer fitted with the CP's new line.

Before 1935 the ultra-left line pursued by the Communist Party — the so-called "Third Period" policy of 1928-34 — had hindered the movement. Its effects were limited by the fact that the Communist Party leaders in the unemployed movement, while paying lip-service to "Third Period" dogma, ignored it in practice much of the time, and continued to try to orient the movement towards official politics and the official labour movement.

The combination of direct action and organisation by the unemployed themselves with an orientation to the official labour movement is what is needed today.

(This article draws heavily on *Unemployed Struggles 1919-36*, by Wal Hannington. The passages in quotes are from that book.)

Iran: gains for Rafsanjani, no gains for the workers

PLATFORM

M. Razi of the Iranian Workers' Socialist Notebooks group, analyses the talk of reform in Iran

The recent policies of the Islamic Republic and the clear and open orientation of Rafsanjani's regime towards imperialism, especially since the end of the Gulf War, has caused excitement and anticipation amongst the 'liberal' and 'democratic' forces of the Iranian opposition.

Some are so enthusiastic that they are preparing themselves for imminent return to Iran and servitude to the Rafsanjani regime. Others have already arrived in Tehran hoping to benefit from the new economic climate.

In truth, the nature of the Iranian regime has not changed since the February 1979 uprising. The socio-economic crisis of the late 1970s that led to the February uprising, together with the organisational weakness of the working class in responding to this crisis, allowed the establishment of another form of capitalist state. It replaced the Shah's regime.

The Islamic regime in Iran came to power with the approval of imperialism, whilst relying on the religious hierarchy and the bazaar

"Political and economic democracy and the resolution of the present crisis is impossible under a capitalist regime."

to delude the anti-imperialist exploited workers and peasants.

From the very first day, the new regime's principal aim was to restore the previous economic and international relations.

These aims and ambitions were not achieved as smoothly and as easily as the new rulers hoped. The continuing economic and social crisis, and the active presence of the masses in the political arena after the overthrow of the Shah, did not allow a speedy return to the previous order. The religious character of the regime was also an obstacle.

Some of the religious capitalists expected a feudal, patriarchal manner of resolving all economic and political issues. The factionalism within the regime was caused by these expectations, and continues to this day. The faction labelled 'radical' or 'extremist' — as opposed to 'liberal' and 'moderate' — existed at the same time as the uprising and is by no means a new phenomenon.

There was never any difference

between the two 'factions' in implementing repression, execution, injustices and exploitation. Most of the executions, kidnappings, repression had the complete personal approval of Rafsanjani. The regime remains the same, only the elements have changed place. Secret relations with the US and imperialism have existed all the time and they continue today.

However, the new policies of Rafsanjani, especially the open way in which he invites western governments to invest and his invitations to Iranian and foreign capitalists to return to Iran, demonstrate a change in the balance of forces in his favour. The victory of the moderate faction is more certain.

For the first time in the life of the Islamic regime, Rafsanjani feels confident enough to invite the leaders of imperialist countries to visit Tehran. The French and German foreign ministers and the Austrian president have all visited Tehran.

Iran is expecting to make major deals with western businessmen. Recently, over \$2 billion of petrochemical products were pre-sold to foreign companies. France has signed an agreement to market Iranian crude oil and invest in explorations in the waters of the Persian Gulf, and a consortium of foreign banks has agreed to pay for this joint Franco-Iranian plan.

Iranian capitalists who fled during the Shah's time have been invited to return. Mr Noor Bakhsh, the economic minister, and Adeli, the governor of Iran's Central bank, have met exiled Iranian capitalists to invite them to return to Iran.

On the political front, the Rafsanjani faction is defeating all opponents. Supporters of former premier Bazargan, remain in prison and, for the first time, Mullahs associated with the 'Rajatyoun' (resurrectionists) faction were recently executed in Ghom. The Rafsanjani faction is preparing itself for next year's elections to the Majles (parliament) and, in order to deprive its opponents of any chance of victory, it is proposing new laws concerning candidature to the Majles.

"Peace and freedom" for Iranian capitalists means increasing repression for the oppressed. Contrary to the beliefs of Iranian "liberals" and "democrats" who are anxiously awaiting the democracy and freedom promised by Rafsanjani and western governments, revolutionary socialists have no illusions about capitalist democracy.

Political and economic democracy and the resolution of the present crisis is impossible under a capitalist regime. The working class must use its independent force from within its own organisations to overthrow the present regime.

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The unions and Salmon of Sandwich

Tony Brown reviews *The Permanent Revolution? Conservative Law and the Trade Unions* by John McIlroy



Norman Willis: neither imagination nor fight

Thatcherism failed, writes McIlroy, but new union laws together with other social and economic changes have changed British industrial relations, perhaps irrevocably.

The accumulation of anti-union laws under the Tories has been so dramatic that it is possible that the system that existed before Thatcher's election in 1979 may never be visited again.

In these circumstances both the trade unions and the Labour Party have to consider how best to dismantle the laws in a strategic and realistic manner.

What has progressively changed throughout Thatcher's terms has been a shift in the generation of alternative policies from the trade unions to the Labour Party. Today rather than the TUC proposing what should replace the Tories' laws, all policy proposals emanate from Walworth Road. The TUC is prepared to cop anything, including retaining central aspects of Tory legislation, in order to get a Labour government.

But the biggest absence from the discussions of how best to deal with the Tory's laws is the rank and file union member.

In stark contrast to the healthy shop steward movement, which, because of their organisation and strength, were able to play such a prominent role up until the late 1970s, today the TUC and Labour Party have consciously sought to exclude workers from their policy reviews.

McIlroy's book is a timely contribution to the debate now needed. Even before the book has had time to circulate, Michael Howard, the Employment Secretary, has foreshadowed new legislation further restricting picketing, and compulsory seven day notice periods before industrial action. This new legislation stands a good chance of going one step too far.

Recent opinion polls indicate that people no longer consider the unions to be the ogre so successfully depicted by the Tories over the past decade. A good majority now consider unions to be essential defenders of their rights, and that more anti-union laws are primarily vindictive and motivated purely by considerations of electoral advantage.

If that is so then it is not because the TUC, having waged a war, or even a fight, against the laws, finally came out on top. Far from it. McIlroy's book traces the evolution of the laws and shows that at each crucial moment the union movement exposed itself as being either incapable of mobilising its members, or sabotaged any existing fight to defeat the attacks launched against them, either individually or collectively.

Six major employment laws, and a number of ancillary measures, were passed by the Tories in 1980, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

At first, the 1980 Employment Act was a compromise, and even tentative, step to altering the balance of forces that had developed in the 1970s. Thatcher was determined to avoid repeating what she saw as Ted Heath's mistake in introducing the omnibus Industrial Relations Act. Legislation would be added on to and the unions would not be given a single target to focus on as the need to

register had provided in 1971.

Thatcher also had to accept the reality that she was not yet in a majority in her own Cabinet, and had to be prepared to accommodate, for the time being, the old wing of the Conservative Party.

Her programme was nevertheless clear and had been carefully thought out and planned during her years as opposition leader.

Three reports — Carrington's in 1975 examining Heath's downfall; Ridley's in 1978 which prioritised which unions to fight; and Hoskyn's which focused on the propaganda necessary to make unionism a dirty word — provided a blueprint for the Thatcherites to smash the post-war consensus that Labour, the unions, business and even parts of the Tory party still accepted as ongoing.

In this early period the conflict within the Cabinet was over whether the unions should be given some role in the economy (Jim Prior), or whether they should be decisively weakened and given no role in economic decision making (Thatcher, Tebbit and others).

While the 1980 Act represented a victory for Prior, the eventual winner enjoyed her spoils by making Prior Northern Ireland Secretary.

Restrictive legislation was not new. Labour had tried it under Wilson and the Tories under Heath. What McIlroy argues was distinctive about Thatcher's approach was the combination of legislation with economic policy.

Rather than just take on the unions with new laws and fight it out, Thatcher had determined to "integrate economic policy and legal restrictions so that the unions' strength would be sapped by economic policy at the very moment they were faced with a legal offensive".

Full employment, welfare and subsidies to industry, notably manufacturing industry, which strengthened the unions had previously led to the collapse of anti-union laws. The state had not

backed up its policies with the full force of the law, and here again Thatcher and her colleagues developed new policing methods specifically aimed at dealing with strikers, but which were not unleashed until they considered the time ripe.

An ideological fervour fuelled their crusade. Hayek spoke in terms of enemies, "the real exploiters in our present society are not egoistic capitalists or entrepreneurs and in fact not separate individuals but organisations which derive their power from the moral support of collective action and group loyalty." He went on: "There can be no salvation for Britain unless the special privileges granted to the trade unions three-quarters of a century ago are revoked."

Interpreting these laws once they had been passed was left, of course, to the courts. Throughout the decade each piece of legislation had been interpreted as widely as possible, giving greater scope for its use against workers and providing penalties designed to cripple their organisations.

The NUR asked its members in a ballot in May 1980: "Do you agree to support the executive committee in their fight to maintain the current agreement on seniority and to resist the imposition of organisational changes, unsatisfactory attendance procedures and compulsory tendering by taking strike action?" This seems pretty clear and members voted their support. But when London Underground went to the judges they ruled that the question was unclear and ordered the NUR to stop the strike.

Jimmy Knapp declared that "we are rapidly reaching the position in this country where it is not possible to call a strike and remain within the law."

In the NGA dispute over Eddie Shah's Warrington print plant in 1983, for instance, the union was fined £50,000 on November 17, 100,000 on the 25th, and a further £500,000 in December.

This anti-working class bias is not surprising. In 1987, of the top 465 judges, 17 were women and one was black, hardly a representative cross section of society, yet one that interpreted the laws regarding all facets of employment.

Law Lord Salmon of Sandwich (sic) summed up his brothers' attitudes "we cannot close our eyes to the fact that there are groups very small numerically but extremely cohesive and tenacious who have infiltrated the unions with the intention of seizing power if they can. Their avowed purpose is to wreck the Social Contract and the democratic system under which we live."

How did the TUC respond? The TUC were caught off guard. They didn't understand Thatcherism, and didn't believe that the Thatcherites would carry through with their programme.

They couldn't understand the resolve and determination that Thatcher had to fight for her class because they had none when it came to asserting the interests and needs of the working class.

The fighting words that dominated the 1982 Wembley conference were easily forgotten when the NGA called for support in its fight against Eddie Shah.

By 1983 the TUC were pinning all their hopes on a Labour victory. When that failed they looked to the European Community, employer opposition in the form of the CBI or the IMF, public opinion — anywhere but in the ranks of their own movement.

By the time of the miners' strike in 1985 — the crucial, and probably decisive, trade union confrontation of the decade — all pretence of

mounting a counter-offensive against the anti-union laws had disappeared.

Confusion reigned within the TUC. The 1985 Congress voted for a TGWU motion calling for the complete repeal of all the laws and for a CPSA motion calling for a review to see which laws should be retained, which amended and which repealed.

Gradually the TUC had abandoned making policy on union rights and handed it over to the Labour Party. The Labour Party's policy reviews of 1989 and 1990 now commit it to retain key parts of Tory legislation.

Sequestration is to remain though it would stop short of total confiscation of a union's resources; ballot would be modified but its essentials remain; solidarity action will remain illegal; secondary picketing will be permitted only where the second employer was "directly assisting the first employer to frustrate the dispute"; sympathy action will be legal only where the second employer was taking over the work of the first employer or where the outcome of the dispute would "necessarily or probably" affect terms and conditions; the freedom not to join a union will be officially recognised.

The 1990 TUC Congress accepted Labour's proposals and hence central aspects of Thatcher's legislation.

McIlroy doesn't accept this as the best way to attack the legislative edifice, although he is unequivocal about the need for a Labour government at the next election.

What he argues for is the labour movement to take the initiative and fight for positive rights. The positive right to organise, to bargain, to strike, and to picket. Such an approach could be linked to the demand for wider constitutional reform, particularly reform of the judiciary and new methods for adjudicating industrial disputes. It could assert a new social legitimacy for trade union purposes.

With trade union membership having declined from over 12 million to 8.5 million under Thatcher, the new industries of the 21st century looking at this stage as though they may be relatively union free, and the composition of the working class also being significantly reordered, the time for a positive, assertive, and imaginative fight for union rights is critical.

Neither the imagination nor the fight will come from Norman Willis or Neil Kinnock.

McIlroy's book will assist workers who want the background to, and the detail of, the anti-union laws introduced over the past 12 years, and hopefully help in the construction of a militant pro-working class fight back.



Those who do not learn from history are condemned to relive it

"The rights of man and of the citizen"

Under this banner the French Revolution, which began in July 1789, confronted the old world, demanding "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" for everyone.

On the other side of the Atlantic the black slaves in a French colony, now Haiti, heard the message and made it their own.

Led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, they rose in revolt.

When the English sent an invasion force as part of their war on Revolutionary France, which in 1794 abolished slavery, the blacks defeated them.

But, as the decade wore on, politics in France shifted to the right. Napoleon Bonaparte

marched towards an imperial crown. Bonaparte decided to restore "the most profitable" system in the colonies, and that was slavery.

The French army now launched a war of extermination against the unconquerable ex-slaves, to clear the island for fresh, docile slaves. Bonaparte's army confronted blacks singing the songs of their own revolution, and was defeated by them.

Finally, the French withdrew, defeated, leaving Haiti to its own primitive resources.

They captured L'Ouverture, who died in a dungeon in France in 1803.

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Images into a show

Cinema

Vicki Morris reviews *In Bed with Madonna*

If you don't like Madonna's music don't see this film. If you do, go, but prepare to be tested... I felt more ambivalently about her *after* seeing it than I had ever before.

"In Bed With Madonna" is the story of her 1990 world tour with scenes in colour from the shows, and irritating grainy, black and white ['cinéma vérité' Ed], in the main, video footage from behind the scenes.

The scenes from the show fail to impress as much as they might on two counts: they are real takes from the shows but filmed as though they are a pop video, so they don't convey much sense of the exciting live performance that the distantly perceived audience are enjoying, whilst being, simultaneously, not nearly glam and polished enough to serve as the video accompaniment to your newly-bought Madonna CD played at home.

This said, still there isn't actually enough of this footage, because it *does show*, albeit imperfectly, that the show is a technical and artistic extravaganza.

"Madonna exaggerates the most unpromising images and turns them into a show."

The film's other contrivances are too painfully reminiscent of college drama productions to do anything other than convince me that, if Madonna is nice underneath, I'd rather see that than her trying so hard to live up to her image.

Sometimes she is downright pretentious. Maybe she does feel maternally towards her dancers — you have surely heard about that — but it's hard to imagine that their lives are genuinely enriched by her treating them as 'very young', 'emotional cripples' from 'poor backgrounds' with 'family problems'. Doesn't she care enough about these people to let them define themselves a bit? There's no doubt about it, she has *got* to be in charge. She admits as much, but, whereas that turns out good, where the dancing, singing and costumes (the stuff that matters) are concerned, I'm sure glad she ain't in my family.

Speaking of family... the girl got talent. She can use the most unpromising material to some advan-

age. Her family, appearing at intervals, are downright homely, yet she lavishes filial affection on them. That way we are reminded that she's just like the girl-next-door all the Wannabes remain.

And she probably is just about as enigmatic as them, for all her mother died when she was very young (grossly exploitative scene of Madonna visiting mother's grave and sentimentalising about a woman she can scarcely possibly remember — yes, with Madonna all is grist to the mill).

As for her stock-in-trade, she's probably about as raunchy in real-life as the person sitting in front of you in the cinema. The difference being that what we all do, she simulates on stage — and what modern dance troupe doesn't go in for a bit of that? (Not a nude body in the whole film by the way for all the dirty talk and unlike most of the theatrical circles I ever moved in.)

Well, perhaps that is her main appeal, and why she is taken as a rôle model by so many young people.

Forget the 'madonna-whore' dichotomy reviled by many feminists today, and which she does *not* use — the real Madonna uses the most unpromising images of womanhood in terms of their potential for commercial exploitation. All that corsetry, the evidently bleached hair, the jumble-sale outfits and gum-chewing of her earlier incarnation, she exaggerates and turns into a show.

Likewise, in her film, she is careful to appear as often as possible in the backstage scenes without her make-up, in her dressing gown and shower cap, telling winsome rhymes about farting. Well, she isn't much unlike you and me. And like you and me, she can appear in her utmost finery and act like a superstar when the mood takes her.

That's something a lot of women can relate to. There's also an awful lot of hard work behind Madonna, and that's something else most women can relate to. The difference is that she works creatively and with evident enjoyment that most of us never get the chance to experience.

At the end of the film, whether you think the flesh and blood Madonna is a pain in the bum is neither here nor there. For, while it is true that under capitalism few of us get the chance to 'express ourselves' like Madonna, whilst many are called but few are chosen, the truth is that sitting like cinema seat potatoes munching our popcorn, most of us never even *tried* to do half as much as she does with her body and her imagination.

Starlets manqués, indulge that showbiz taste for bitchiness at her personal expense, as do some of her dancers, but acknowledge the woman's talents, evinced imperfectly here.

A short way with mavericks

By Liz Millward

In the Middle Ages, people were locked up in dungeons and starved and beaten to death. Ideas of justice were primitive at best. Something very like that happened to Frances Farmer.

Not in the Middle Ages, but in the mid-1940s. Not in Europe, but in that "Land of the Free and Home of the Brave", the USA.

And she was not some obscure peasant, but a well-known Hollywood film star.

Seeing her name in the credits for an awful 1940 movie, *South of Pango*, on TV recently, I was reminded of her story.

On contract to a small studio, she had a routine studio-contracted film star career in the late '30s. This meant that she had no control over what she worked at.

But Frances saw herself as a serious actress. She went and worked for a while with the left wing Group Theatre in New York, where people like director Elia Kazan, writers like Clifford Odets and the later Hollywood actor John Garfield were active.

Garfield, once very popular, was destroyed and driven to an early death in the McCarthy witch-hunts of the early '50s; Kazan and Odets informed on their friends, and survived.

Highly-strung and emotional, Frances Farmer was in earnest about her art and her politics, and hated Hollywood "except for the money". She kicked against the system.

Late in 1943 she went through an emotional crisis, triggered by the break up of her marriage, and then of her affair with Odets. She was arrested for drunk driving. She traded abuse with the cops and was given a six months suspended jail sentence.

In a bad state, she failed to report to the parole officer, and the cops came after her. Guns drawn, they broke down her door and hauled her off to jail, naked through a hotel lobby.

Defiant and emotional, she threw an inkpot at the judge when she came up before him again. This time she went to jail. Without proper legal care, abandoned by her studio as a troublemaker, she was alone, caught in the spirit-breaking wheels of the system. To account for the way the people running it treated her, you have to assume willful malice.

Still defiant, she refused to work in jail. Now her mother, who seems to have hated her, took a hand. She had her committed to a mental hospital. The evidence is that, though overwrought and in need of help, she was in no way mad.

She spent over 10 years in the mental hospital, and was there lobotomised (a personality-changing puncturing of the frontal lobes of the brain).

They had a short way with emotionally disturbed, defiant people in that era, especially left wingers.

An autobiography was published after her death, with the title: "Will there be a morning?" Frances Farmer already knew by then that there would be no bright morning, and no happy ending.

She died in 1970 at the age of 56.



Frances Farmer: from film star to prisoner



Racism and capitalism

Book

Colin Foster reviews *The World Labour Market: A History of Migration* by Lydia Potts (Zed Books)

Lydia Potts' book describes how capitalism has never been satisfied with the relatively free labour of its metropolises, but has always reached out to grab slave and semi-slave labour from the rest of the world.

Long before capitalism, it was normal for communities to make slaves of prisoners of war from other communities, and there was even a big slave trade from Africa to the Arab countries. But slavery first became a major pedestal for capitalist development when the Spanish conquerors enslaved the native "Indian" peoples of South and Central America in the early 16th

century.

Direct slavery was soon replaced by semi-slave systems of forced labour, but under the most horrible conditions. Barely one in five of the conscript workers survived one single year in the huge silver mines of Potosi.

This ultra-exploitation, and imported diseases, almost destroyed the "Indian" population, and soon slave labour was being transported from Africa.

In the heyday of the Atlantic slave trade, between 1700 and 1850, perhaps 40 million people were seized. Half died in the slave raids or en route, and half became chattels of American slaveowners, often worked to an early death because it was cheap to import new slaves.

On the ships, "slaves... often had less room than they would have had in a coffin".

The slaves' conditions eased a little after the Atlantic trade stopped, and slavery in the southern USA was finally abolished in 1865. But the slave trade was replaced by a new form of international forced labour, scarcely less brutal — "coolie" labour.

Between the 1830s and the 1930s,

some 30 million people left India as "coolies" or "indentured" workers, on contracts which effectively made them slaves for a limited period. Many of them never made it back to India again. "Coolies" were also recruited from China and other countries.

Meanwhile, in Europe's colonies in Africa, forced labour of various sorts was widespread as late as the 1960s.

Systematic anti-black racism — as distinct from casual prejudice or dim-witted suspicion of foreigners — developed over the centuries as the ideological counterpart and prop of these systems of forced labour.

Today, Potts estimates, some 20 to 30 million people are migrant workers. Many migrant workers in the west have no more rights than the contract workers of former days, because they are "illegal" migrants, unable to claim any legal rights for fear of being deported.

Racial and national divisions between workers have always been one of the capitalists' main assets. Solidarity between workers of different races and nationalities, and support for the rights of migrant workers everywhere, are as urgent as ever.

The results of independence

The issue of whether or not we should support independence for Croatia and Slovenia is more complex than Tony Dale implies (SO 494).

Of course the general principles than Tony quotes from Lenin do apply, but the question becomes more difficult when looked at concretely.

Taking Slovenia first, it is evident that Slovenia will now break away (unless militarily subjugated, which socialists could not support under any circumstances). Slovenia is almost ethnically homogenous and no new oppression is likely to result within the borders of an independent Slovenia.

When Slovenia declared independence on 25 June, all

accounts described the population as being unenthusiastic or apathetic about independence, but since then the Slovenian people have fought a war of national liberation against the Federal army, and we cannot turn the clock back.

With Croatia, the declaration of independence has led to fighting within the republic. The 600,000 Serb minority has declared independence from Croatia, and we now see the forcible expulsion of Croats, Hungarians and others from areas where the Serbs live, and fighting over contested areas in an attempt to redraw the borders.

However the borders are drawn, there will be oppressed communities within the



Croatian fighter takes a break in battle against Serbs

new state. Whereas a loose federation, such as under Tito's 1974 constitution but with more regional autonomy, would I think be

more successful in safeguarding the basic rights of all the Yugoslav peoples.

Steven Holt
South London

Asking for leniency

In last week's Women's Eye column Liz Millward argues a plea of manslaughter cannot be justified where a woman claims she was provoked into killing her husband when previously she had made several threats to kill him.

But how can you tell whether such a plea seems credible if you do not know the exact circumstances of his killing? The Appeal Court's ruling in this case seems to be to be very dangerous.

By the same logic, are we to assume that a woman cannot accuse a man of rape if prior to that rape she had told all her friends she wanted to sleep with him?

Liz's arguments seem quite confused but she does appear to be saying mitigation, or special pleading, from someone who does not deny their guilt — in the case of murder — is not acceptable. If she is making this conclusion, I think she is wrong.

First let me get out of the way some common ground. I would assume Liz does not think killing in self-defence is in the same category as premeditated killing. Also I do not believe that people can or should opt out of responsibility for their action even if you can find tangible causes (such as violent abuse within the family) for violent and destructive behaviour. I also see the point of Liz's argument about double standards. Of course men and women should be treated the same by the law.

But that does not mean we should pay no attention to what a murderer may use as evidence in mitigation.

First you would have to apply this rule to all crimes. For instance, a pensioner who forgets to pay for some shopping would be convicted of shoplifting. That's pretty unreasonable. Of course this is a stickier subject in some instances.

For example, a man, not denying rape, might say he was confused or mistaken because his victim did appear to be willing. But you can't prove a point through good and bad examples.

Someone convicted of any crime should have the opportunity to explain themselves,

to ask for certain factors to be taken into account, to ask for leniency. This seems to me to be progressive and humane.

Capitalist laws work badly. They are never straightforwardly progressive or humane when they seem to be. For instance in the US — as far as I understand — there is a very complex system of charges and acceptable mitigation surrounding the crime of homicide.

You can commit murder in so many different degrees — depending on the state you are in. However, the courts

and police will opt for a charge which is administratively efficient — the one they hope they can get a conviction on. So, far from being a humane system, it is a bureaucratic farce. This does not mean we do not defend progressive elements within bourgeois law because of the way they are implemented.

There are situations, maybe even the one Liz writes about, where murder is more complex than Liz makes out. I have read the story of one woman who was locked into a violent relationship. She had in the past had the sup-

port of Women's Aid without being able to find any self-esteem; she continued to stay in this relationship; she regularly threatened to kill her partner, kill herself; he regularly threatened to kill himself, kill her.

Who was killed in the end might have been just a matter of pure, terrifying, horrible chance. This experience is actually very common. And if she had killed her partner, I would not like to say well, the law is the law, and murder is murder.

Cathy Nugent
South London

No return to the good old days

It is certainly true that some of the Tories' anti-union legislation has backfired on them.

A good example is the ballots on the unions' political funds. The result is that there are now more unions with funds than ever before.

John McIlroy points out (SO 493) that the Tories want to make it harder for union members to have their subscriptions deducted from wages. Socialists have usually argued that this system is bureaucratic anyway and that it makes the union and union activists lazy for them

to have to rely on the goodwill of the bosses. But I am not too sure.

Wandsworth Council has stopped deducting union subs from NALGO (and only NALGO) members. There has been a union response to get members onto a direct debit scheme. This has reactivated many members and new members have been recruited.

However, after five months, we are still well below two-thirds of our previous membership. Many people have simply dropped out of the union. Undeniably, many of these were paper

members, but I think, on balance, that's better than not a member at all.

We have also noticed that many of our stewards are really only union distributors. It is only partially true to suggest that if stewards have to collect subs that brings them into more contact with members. That ignores the situation we are in now. Often people have to be pushed to be stewards. We could see the literal collapse of the union in some sections. At present stewards can talk to members — as they give out circulars, for example. This is probably easier than when collecting money!

We have had 12 years of defeats and a lot of people are demoralised and at best wait for a Labour government. If the check-off proposal becomes law it will mean three things.

First, it would mean that the Tories had been re-elected again — a very bad thing. It would also demonstrate that this "treason-loving" government was further interfering into union affairs. Also, I think, it would result in a sharp drop in union membership.

Personally, I would like to see a future Labour Wandsworth council reintroduce the check-off system. The good old days of stewards collecting money off a willing membership is romantic and impossible in a lot of places.

Dion D'Silva
Wandsworth NALGO

Marxism, Stalinism and the Militant

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty has just reissued a pamphlet first put out 6 years ago. It analyses the reasons for the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and the arguments of the kitsch-Trotskyists who supported the Russians against the Afghan peoples.

It deals in particular detail with 'Militant's' arguments for backing the Russians against what an article in 'Militant' by one of that group's leaders, Alan Woods, described as 'the dark masses' of Afghanistan.

In this extract from the introduction to the new edition John O'Mahony explains how we tried to function as Marxists within the false theoretical framework we then shared with 'Militant' and others.

The debate in these pages is a debate between two versions of the so-called 'orthodox Trotskyist' assessment of the class nature of the old Stalinist states, which we described as degenerated and deformed workers' states.

Socialist Organiser has since formally abandoned that conceptual framework. The Stalinist bureaucracies are, we now believe, ruling classes, and the Stalinist states are a variant of class society.

The consequences of this change for the validity or otherwise of the ideas I express in this pamphlet are less than you might expect. The reason for this is that the descriptions in Socialist Organiser (and before it, Workers' Action, and before that, Workers' Fight!) made of the workings of Stalinism were to a large extent uninfluenced by adherence to the 'workers' state' schemas. We saw and described the ruling bureaucracy for what it was, and we saw and described its foreign policy — in Afghanistan and elsewhere — for the imperialism it was.

It is these realities that are dealt with in this polemic. Where our awareness of those realities jarred against the prevailing assumptions of 'workers' statism' we tried to face the facts and the contradictions, not smother them in dogmas.

For example, the usual 'workers' state' way of denying the reality of USSR imperialism went something like this (and I intend no caricature: "Imperialism is a stage of monopoly capitalism: the USSR is not capitalist: therefore, the USSR cannot be imperialist."

Never mind that the USSR enslaved and plundered many countries; never mind that this pseudo-Leninist definition of imperialism implied that there had never been empires before the rather narrow stretch of history within which the imperialism Lenin described existed.

Never mind that Trotsky had been sufficiently free of the sort of dogmatism as to accurately describe pre-war Czechoslovakia as imperialist (for its aggression of its then German and other minorities). Never mind that Trotsky had in 1939 and 1940 explicitly recognised elements of imperialism in the USSR's foreign policy.

When the material in this pamphlet was written 'workers' statism' meant for

us only the idea that the fully statified Stalinist economies were historically post-capitalist. And we were already implicitly questioning that when we insisted on the centrality of Trotsky's way of putting the question in 1940: such nationalised economy is only 'potentially progressive'. It is not, without qualification, progressive now. That potential will become real only on condition that the working class makes a new revolution.

For technical and dogmatic reasons we described that revolution as a 'political revolution', but when we spelled it out to include the 'smashing of the state' we described and advocated a full revolution of one class, the working class, against another, the bureaucracy.

In fact, Trotsky's way of posing things at the end of his life implied jettisoning the whole 'workers' state' schema once it became clear — as it did in the early or mid '40s — that Stalinism was no mere episode in the history of the degeneration of the workers' state set up in 1917 but a comparatively stable system capable of replicating itself (and going on in the old way for another half century, as it turned out).

The entire 'workers' state' framework was radically wrong. The whole notion that Stalinism was 'post-capitalist' was radically wrong (right now it looks more 'pre-capitalist'!).

We should have long ago shed that framework. What we did instead was slough it off by way of dealing concretely and honestly and without dogmatic blinkers with the Stalinist reality. As in the discussion in this pamphlet, this led us, despite the workers' state schemata to which we still — just about — subscribed, to deal with the class reality of Russian imperialism. Looking at the horrible reality of the USSR's attempt to subjugate Afghanistan, we rejected the idea that 'workers' statism' implied support for Russia's Vietnam war.

A clear rejection of the 'workers' state' schemas would have been better; nevertheless, even with it we grasped more or less adequately the class realities of the Russian-Afghanistan war. Nothing — throughout our history as a tendency — in our version of 'workers' statism' ever implied for us adopting the viewpoint of the Russian ruling class.

Marxism, Stalinism and the Militant

The case of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan



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Talks breakdown leads to spiral of killings

Ireland: partition breeds bloodshed

By Gerry Bates

The freelance sectarian butchers are busy again in Northern Ireland. As Catholics there mark the 20th anniversary of internment, a new round of tit-for-tat sectarian killings has broken out.

The trigger for this continuing ricochet of fear zig-zagging from community and back again, was pulled by the Provisional IRA when it shot a Protestant political activist six weeks ago.

The Provisionals claim those they kill are members of Protestant assassin squads: the Protestant killers always claim that their victims are members of the IRA.

Security force-gathered information is available to the Protestant killers. The police gather information — which may be grossly inaccurate — and lodge it in the files. When it "leaks" to the Protestant killer groups it may be a death sentence for the Catholic concerned.

How the Provisional IRA identifies its victims is less well documented. Scrupulous they are not. Last Friday (9 August) the IRA shot Gary Lynch, an admitted Protestant political activist alleging that he was a member of the "Ulster Freedom Fighters", an assassin squad. But they also tried to kill the 18-year old workmate who was walking with him. He was saved only because the gun jammed.

At best this is a murky war in the dark. The Protestants do not always bother to justify the killing of Catholics in "political" terms: the IRA — which in theory believes all Irish people, Protestant and Catholic alike, are equal, though in fact it is a Catholic movement — always does try to justify the killings in political terms. Its victims are always alleged to be either sectarian killers or "collaborators".

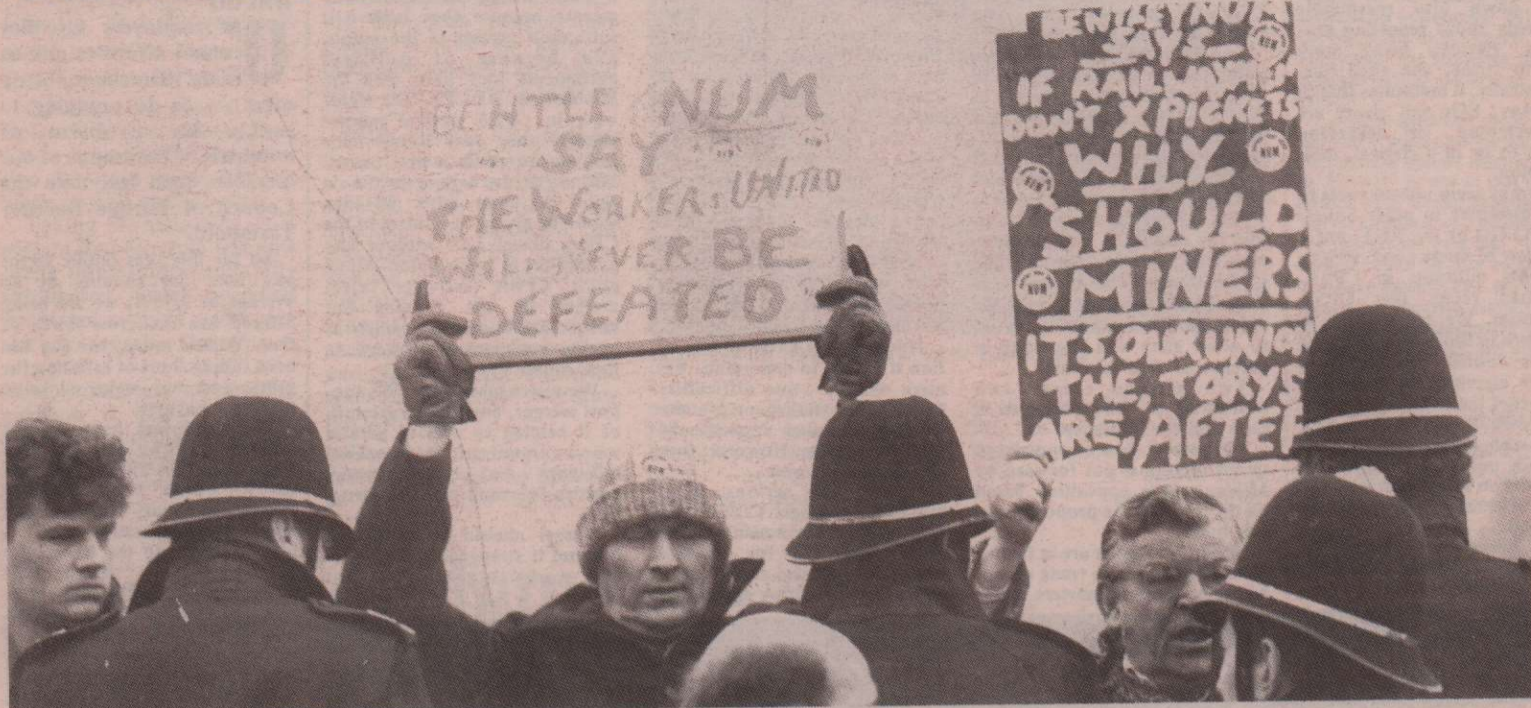
Since the IRA defines all workers having anything even remotely to do with work that can be claimed as servicing the British state forces and claims the right to kill them, its claims to be not sectarian but "political" are a game with words.

The Provisionals define two-thirds of the people of Northern Ireland as deserving a bullet if they do anything to further to preserve their heartfelt sense of unionist identity and political allegiance.

The best comment on the IRA's recent activities came from Catholic bourgeois politician, the SDLP's John Hume MP, when he said that, just as the Provisionals are about to lead demonstrations marking the introduction of internment without trial 20 years ago, they are going around Northern Ireland practising "execution without trial now".

It is the recent collapse of the talks between Catholic and Protestant politicians which lies behind the latest outbreak of killings. No progress was made by the constitutional politicians: the ball is back at the feet of the paramilitaries, or so they are busy asserting in blood.

20 years after the introduction
To page 2



The spirit of solidarity has not been destroyed. Bentley NUM flying pickets 1984. Photo: John Harris

Miners draw the line

Walkouts spread against victimisations

By Karen Waddington and Matt Cooper

It's murder down there at the moment. Management think they can get away with anything. Even scabs who fought for the 'right to work'

during the strike are leaving in droves."

That's how one activist in the South Yorkshire NUM described the situation in the pits at the moment.

But the National Coal Board offensive is starting to come up

against some very firm resistance from the NUM rank and file.

In the last fortnight two strikes have broken out in the South Yorkshire coalfield. At Armthorpe 800 miners struck for three days in solidarity with 12 men who were sent home by management after refusing to work in intolerable conditions of up to three feet of water without the usual extra payments.

The unofficial walkout was solid, but management stood firm and NUM area officials and lawyers instructed the strikers back to work. They argued that action was in danger of bringing the union into conflict with the 1990 Employment Act. This law was brought in by the Tories after the 1989 Tube workers' strike which was built on the basis of rank and file organising unofficial action.

It has two parts applicable here. Firstly, local branch leaderships are financially responsible for any losses incurred by their employers because of unofficial action. Secondly, even if a ballot is called while the unofficial action is on, then

the action remains unofficial. So, to turn unofficial action into official action strikers have to go back to work.

Meanwhile, at Frickley colliery an all-out strike started last week in support of a victimised fitter. He is accused of having been asleep at work but, (i) he had nothing to do at the time and was waiting for necessary equipment to arrive; (ii) he has a young family that had kept him up the night before. He was on the morning shift which started at 5.30am. He was found asleep at 10.30am; (iii) management has admitted that he did not fall asleep intentionally, and that he has a good work record. It is very unusual for a miner to be sacked for falling asleep.

The strike ballot got 71% in favour of action.

On Monday (12th) miners at the nearby Bentley pit came out in solidarity. The management has written to the branch secretary threatening the branch committee under the 1990 Employment Act.

Again, the strikers have decided to return to work confident that they can win a ballot for official action this Friday. Local activists are planning a mass meeting for Saturday to decide how to spread the action, probably by lobbying the Yorkshire panel to spread action.

The employers are scared to use the full weight of the law

I'm not surprised that there has been some reaction in the Yorkshire coalfield.

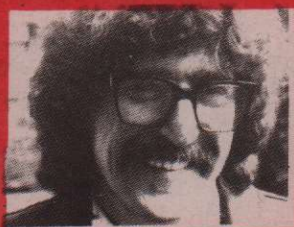
The bosses have been trying things to test the workers, altering contracts and demanding ridiculous things.

The employers seem to be using the 1990 Act as a means of blocking action. There are those who say that we must wait for a Labour government — but Kinnoch and the leadership can't be relied upon. We must beat the laws.

The law will have to be tested. The employers seem scared to use its full weight. In Liverpool and on the buses management have backed off.

Sooner or later the law will have to be tested in the coalfields. But now anger over other things will lay the base for a real fight against the Coal Board and the Tories.

WHETTON'S VIEW



Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire, and was secretary of the Notts Miners' rank and file strike committee during the 1984-5 strike.

Socialist Organiser will miss an issue next week for the Bank Holiday. No.496 will be out on 28 August.

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