

# SOCIALIST

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**ORGANISER**

*It will be socialism or barbarism!*

**AFTER THE CEASEFIRE,  
BUILD FOR WORKERS' UNITY**

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# federal

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# Ireland!

**NO SOLUTION BUT AN IRISH SOLUTION!**



# Building rank and file action to defend the Welfare State

By Jill Mountford

**L** ABOUT FURTHER ahead in the opinion polls than any Opposition has ever been before. The Tories deeply discredited. Their hatchet-work on the Health Service condemned by almost everyone outside a cranky fringe of right-wing ideologues.

And yet the Tories continue their assault on the Welfare State. Elderly people are increasingly driven to the private sector for long-term care — and now for other care, too. A 73 year old woman in Cambridge was recently told that she would have to wait five years for treatment for arthritis!

In Sheffield hospitals, very premature babies are also being excluded from NHS treatment as not cost-effective. The desperate competition between NHS "trusts" in the internal market is producing crazier and crazier results. In London, Guys Hospital and a large part of Barts are on the line for closure.

The Government plans to take away any right for homeless families to get permanent accommodation from local councils, to cut Housing Benefit, and to replace Unemployment Benefit by a restricted Jobseekers' Allowance.

The Tories can be beaten on this sort of issue. They have been beaten on this sort

of issue — by the mass mobilisation against the Poll Tax. What is needed is to draw the existing scattered and often isolated campaigns, defending hospitals, nurseries, benefits, pensions, and schools, into a concerted national mobilisation.

For a long time the Left has shied away from attempting to organise such a mobilisation because the task seemed too difficult, too far beyond our limited forces. Now the Left has taken an initiative.

The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network have sponsored a broad committee — the "Welfare State Network: rank-and-file coordina-

tion to save the Welfare State" — which holds its launch meeting on Sunday 18 September.

Speakers invited for the meeting include Caroline Bedale (UNISON Health Activist Network), John Lister (London Health Emergency), Alan Pottage (RMT executive), Joe Marino (General Secretary of the Bakers' Union), and a student nurse from Guys. The new Network plans to co-operate closely with existing groups like London Health Emergency, the "Defend the Welfare State" campaign, and local initiatives like Manchester Health Crisis and the Birmingham Community Conference. Trade unions, Labour Parties, and local

campaigns, are invited to sponsor the Network and send representatives to the meeting.

**Welfare State Network**  
Launch meeting: noon to 4pm  
on Sunday 18 September  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
London (Holborn Tube).

Contact: Trudy Saunders  
on 071-703 3493, or at 22 Maude  
Road, London SE5.

## Campaigning round-up

### MANCHESTER

LATE IN May the Community Health Services in Manchester faced £1 million worth of immediate cuts. A further £4 million was due to be cut from the Regional Health Authority budget over the next year. By mid-August the Government and the Regional Health Authority had shelved the cuts after resistance from the local community.

Manchester Health Crisis was set up to fight the cuts. At the launch meeting 100 local people attended, prepared to fight to save their local services. They collected over 10,000 signatures on a petition condemning the cuts and calling for improved overall funding of health care in Manchester.

This early success for the campaign does not mean, however, that the fight for health care in

Manchester is over. Far from it! The Health Authority is about to start "consultation" on plans that will include closing two local hospitals. A decision on the closure of Booth Hall and the Duchess of York Children's Unit, Withington, will be taken in January 1995.

Manchester Health Crisis is now evolving into a broad co-ordinating campaign to defend the Welfare State in Manchester.

### BIRMINGHAM

**BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC** sector workers are uniting to build a campaign in defence of their jobs and local services.

The Birmingham Community Conference has been called for Saturday 19 November to discuss a strategy to beat the cuts in council, health and public services and

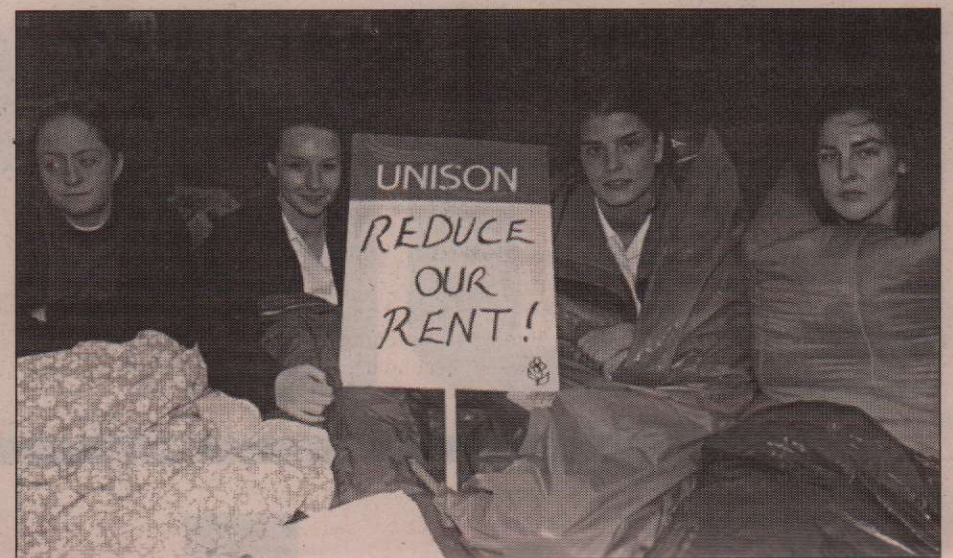
to organise an ongoing campaign.

Speakers include Alan Simpson MP and local campaigns. Discussions will include: defending the NHS; privatisation and the fight for services (Post Office, Rail, Water, Telecom).

The organisers hope to link up public sector workers and users and to unite many local campaigns.

### LEICESTER

IN LEICESTER, the local Young Labour Group is running a campaign for fair benefits for young people. Stalls in the City Centre have been followed by some press coverage, and this week the group began a series of pickets outside benefit offices, Job Centres and so on — trying to make contact with young people on benefits, to bring them into the campaign.



Student nurses at Leicester's Royal Infirmary are continuing their fight for fair rents — the hospital imposed a rent rise of 250% on first year student nurses last April. They responded by organising a march and a sleep-out protest which was joined by members of Young Labour. Future protests are planned, as other hospitals in the area are considering following the Royal's move. Photo: Mark Salmon

## Defend the Welfare State!

### BRIGHTON AND HOVE

Tuesday 13 September

#### Campaign launch meeting

Speakers: Dave Newland (Waufield Avenue Campaign) and Jill Mountford (Welfare State Network)

7.30, Brighelm Centre, North Road

### LONDON

Sunday 18 September

#### Launch meeting of National Welfare State Network

12.00, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn

Thursday 22 September

#### Organising meeting for North London Welfare State campaign

7.30, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road

Wednesday 5 October

#### Launch meeting of Lewisham Welfare State Network

7.30, Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, SE13

# Poverty and privatisation

## DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

5.6 MILLION people claim Income Support. About 20% of Britons (including children and other dependents) now rely on Income Support as their main source of income.

The numbers have risen by a staggering 36% over the past three years. The net result of the increase of Income Support claimants is further poverty.

**NEW GOVERNMENT** housing plans are likely to increase homelessness.

The government intends to abolish the duty of local authorities to provide permanent accommodation to homeless people such as single mothers. Instead there will be a duty to provide "reasonable and suitable accommodation for 12 months pending review." After that presumably you will be on the streets.

These plans coincide with others aimed at expanding the private rented sector. The Government will try to get local authorities to put homeless people into privately rented homes. This means a lack of security of tenure, and poor quality housing.

Such a situation for homeless people will be made worse still by proposals — due to be announced shortly by the Government — to introduce ceilings on housing benefit for tenants in the private rented sector.

**THE TORIES'** health service reforms have meant an increase in bureaucracy and a proliferation of managers.

There has been an increase of 41% in managers and admin staff in family doctor practices. At the same time the number of GPs has risen by only 2.5%.

Numbers of managers in trust hospitals have risen by 12,000 since October 1990, while admin staff have increased by 18,000. Meanwhile nurses get sacked, hospital

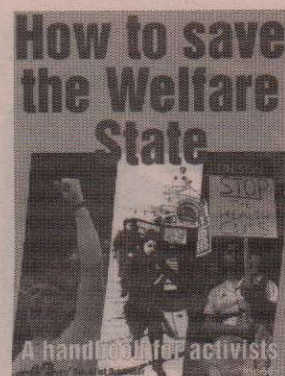
beds get cuts, hospitals are closed...

**IN BRITAIN'S** ailing capital the government plans to pay off up to 80 GPs through voluntary redundancies. These GPs are allegedly "not up to standard."

There are no plans to replace these GPs, many of whom practise in London's poorest boroughs.

**THE Commission** for Social Justice — a Labour-sponsored review of welfare benefits — is due to deliver its final report on 24 October. It looks set to produce some miserable and even retrograde proposals.

The most contentious likely proposal is a move towards more means testing. This is accepting a Tory agenda of "targeting people most in need." In reality "targeting" and more means-testing has meant running down the value of benefits, leaving more people reliant on the miserable poverty-level of Income Support.



**How to save the Welfare State, 95p + 36p p&p from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA**

**DON'T GROW** old or sick in Tory Britain!

Chronically ill and geriatric patients are no longer being looked after on a long-term basis by the NHS. Instead they are being forced into private nursing homes or have to be looked after by their relatives. Private nursing homes have to be paid for by relatives or, after means-testing, by social services departments. Existing guidelines say that no one can be moved to a nursing home against their will, but they are rapidly being eroded.

This is part of the shift away from NHS long-term care to underfunded care in the community.

## Standing up for the Welfare State

Martin Thomas reviews a new pamphlet on "The Future of the Welfare State"

"THE DEBATE on the welfare state", declares TGWU union leader Bill Morris, "is about precisely what the labour movement stands for. Our movement stands for universality, for a decent health service, and for the redistribution of wealth as well as increased production."

In this pamphlet an impressive array of trade union leaders, Labour MPs and academics argue that the Welfare State can be preserved if a Labour government pushes economic policies for full employment.

John Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMBU union, points out: "Young people are sleeping rough on the streets of our inner cities... We have enough bricks stockpiled in Britain to build a four foot high wall all the way to Australia and back, and 480,000 building workers are out of work. It doesn't require much intellect to turn these factors into a housing policy... "Why is the Tory government not implementing such policies? Because high unem-

**Privatisation news...**

1. The first all-private NHS unit is to be built in Swansea. It will provide a 'prestige' cardiology service.

2. Health Minister, Tom Sackville, admitted recently that he was neutral as to whether clinical services — including entire hospitals — were privatised. Sackville has also held talks with Salick, one of a number of US health firms which have tried to win NHS business.

3. Spending on private health care by the NHS has risen to 19% of all UK hospital spending, from 7.5% in 1984.

ployment means a fearful workforce. It means lower wages, weaker trade unions, and a change in the balance of power from working people to employers..."

Dawn Primarolo MP calls for the abolition of the "internal market" in the Health Service, "the centrepiece of the Welfare State."

Jeremy Corbyn MP demands a decent living pension for all pensioners.

Professor Peter Townsend shows that "the richest fifth of the population have gained £35 billion from what might have been expected in 1979. The labour movement must redirect that £35 billion to secure full employment..."

The facts and arguments in this pamphlet will be valuable ammunition for every campaigner for the Welfare State. What's needed now is a rank-and-file activist network to give force, substance, and back-up to this mobilisation of top-level labour movement opinion.

• *The Future of the Welfare State*: £2 plus 50p postage from Campaign to Defend the Welfare State, P O Box 188, London SW1A 0SG.



# Bosses plan to sack the rail strikers

**T**HE TORIES and the rail bosses are out to break the rail union RMT. Their fight with the signal workers is not about wages. They could have met the signal workers' demands many times over out of what they have spent on the dispute.

The stakes are much higher. The Tories and the rail bosses want a profitable, privatised rail network, able to pay huge bosses' salaries and shareholders' dividends. And for that they want shattered, house-trained trade unions, and cowed, fearful workers.

The rail bosses' plan to sack all the signal strikers is clear proof of this. Last Friday, 2 September, the *Guardian* published a leaked lawyer's letter setting out a Railtrack plan for "all strikers [to be] summarily dismissed. They [will be] offered re-engagement with a choice of either the new terms and conditions or the old conditions..."



The Labour and trade union movement should give the signal workers 100% backing.

The rail bosses will probably try a number of softening-up gambits — like the "secondary action" by BR, lending its staff as scabs to Railtrack — before going for all-out sackings. But our working assumption must now be that, unless a fudge or a sell-out ends the dispute first, sooner or later Railtrack will sack all the strikers. It will do to the signal workers what Ronald Reagan did to the striking American air traffic controllers in 1981.

The mass sacking will be costly. It will be unpopular. It will be dodgy in law. At first it may not enable the rail bosses to run any more services than they can already run with scab signallers on the strike days. For the Tories and the bosses, all that is sec-

*"This is no longer just a dispute about the wages of one small section of workers. It is a battle about the future of trade unionism and workers' rights."*

ondary. It is a price worth paying if they can break the union.

If the rail bosses can sack all the signal strikers and keep even limited rail services going, then they can gradually train new scab labour, frighten a proportion of strikers into returning to work, and re-establish their services.

To stop them, the rail unions must shut down the whole network and appeal for support to the whole trade union movement.

It should be united action by all the rail unions — RMT, ASLEF, and TSSA. The drive by the bosses to privatise and to break trade-union strength is a drive against all rail-



Train driver addresses rally for the signal workers, Manchester, 15 August

workers and all rail unions.

AWL and *Socialist Organiser* railworkers have already been arguing for the rail unions to stop the trains on strike days on the grounds that signalling by scab labour is unsafe.

ASLEF leader Lew Adams has said that drivers "will have to consider refusing to work." "My biggest worry", he said, "is what they [the scabs] will do in an emergency — I don't think they'll be able to cope. We're not kamikaze pilots."

RMT leader Jimmy Knapp, too, says he doubts that the scabs "could be properly trained to do a safe job in time."

But doubts, hints, and half-thoughts are not enough! Certainly not against an embittered hard-line employer like Railtrack! The unions should give a clear directive to their members to refuse work where safety is dubious. They should do it right now, for the strike days, and they should certainly do it if the signal strikers are sacked.

Widening the dispute in that way could protect the unions against being

sued for "secondary action" by the rail bosses, and strengthen public support. But if and when the rail bosses sack all the signal strikers, those considerations will be secondary. The unions must shut down the whole rail network — by what-

*"The unions should give a clear directive to their members to refuse work where safety is dubious."*

ever means necessary.

*Socialist Organiser* does not argue for defying the Tory anti-union law always and on principle, or pretend that industrial action somehow becomes more revolutionary and

more effective by being unlawful. Where it is possible to wriggle round the law, or manoeuvre within it, effectively, we are in favour of doing that. Where it is genuinely necessary to retreat, we are in favour of retreat. In this dispute, however, the whole future of one of Britain's major bastions of industrial trade-unionism is at stake. And all the conditions are there for a huge political campaign which could defeat any legal action against the rail unions.

The Labour Party and other trade unions must give the RMT one hundred per cent backing — not John Prescott's weaselling, where he says the signal workers have a good case but refuses to back the strikes, or Tony Blair's bright idea that ACAS should resolve the dispute. The activity of the local rail support committees must be broadened and increased.

This is no longer, if it ever was, just a dispute about the wages of one small section of workers. It is a battle about the future of trade unionism and workers' rights.

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

Karl Marx

*Socialist Organiser*, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA

Newsdesk 071-639 7965 (Latest reports Monday)

Printed by: Eastway Offset (TU) London E9

Editor: John O'Mahony

Deputy Editor: Cathy Nugent

Sales Organiser: Jill Mountford

Published by: WL Publications Limited

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of *Socialist Organiser* and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated  
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office



# The only solution i

By Sean Matgamna

The Provisional IRA ceasefire is the best news out of Northern Ireland in many a long year. Is it likely to prove a stable ceasefire? Is it the prelude to a settlement? Why has it come now? What happens next?

It is a very peculiar ceasefire. The Provisionals have not been decisively beaten, still less militarily crushed. They have not lost the ability to continue their low-intensity military activities. They have not been disarmed, either militarily or politically.

They retain their weapons, and may use the peace to improve their position militarily. They are already using it to improve their position politically.

As far as is publicly known, the Provisionals have won none of the objectives of their twenty-three-and-a-half year war. The British declaration that Britain will not stand in the way of Irish unity if a majority in Northern Ireland wants it, is nothing new. Britain made the same declaration 21 years ago, before the March 1973 referendum in Northern Ireland. On the face of it, the Provisionals have gained nothing of substance.

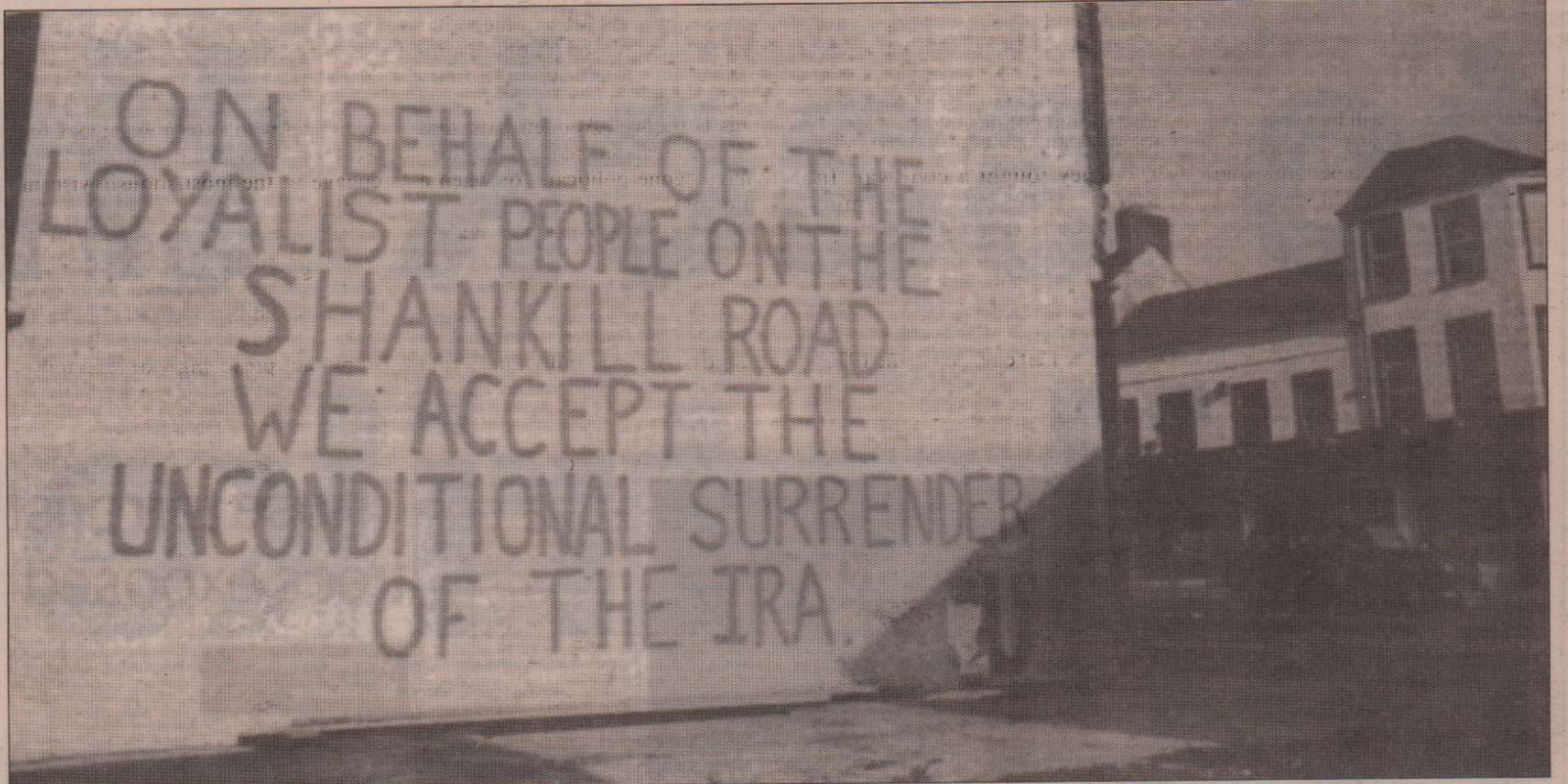
Neither has there been any move by Northern Ireland Unionists towards acceptance of the united Ireland which the Provisionals want. Far from it: the Protestant paramilitaries evidently intend to continue and increase their campaign of murdering Catholics chosen at random.

Not beaten, not victorious, with their forces still intact and, maybe, growing, the Provisionals are beginning to run the film of the last 26 years of Northern Ireland history backwards. The present phase began with large-scale civil rights agitation in 1968. Now the Provisionals have switched back from war to political agitation. Their military campaign grew — after the Protestant anti-Catholic pogroms of 1969 — out of the political agitation of 1968; there is nothing to say that a new phase

of the military campaign will not grow out of the current political phase, if it proves disappointing.

It depends. One of the key, but for now unanswerable, questions is how much of the present move to politics represents a collapse of the Provisional leaders' belief in the military campaign, and how much is the result of a political calculation that a strategy centred on military action can for now best be served by a switch to politics.

There has for long been evidence of a real desire by some Sinn Feiners to go completely political, but the signs right now suggest that the ceasefire is mainly a result of political calculation within an unchanged strategy, and has been "sold" to the IRA as just that. They believe that they can best move forward by way of the so-called "pan-nationalist" bloc, which ranges from Irish Americans, who are still a power (sometimes a very reactionary one) in US politics, through John



The Protestant paramilitaries continue to murder Catholics chosen at random

Hume's SDLP and the Provisionals in the North, to Fianna Fail, the party of government in the South for most of the past sixty years.

The clearest evidence for this is the fact that the Provisionals seem to have made this "political" turn without an IRA split. In the last decade the spirit of pragmatism — the pragmatism of a living movement which, despite its ideology of general Irish republicanism, is really a very narrow movement of only a section of a section of the Irish people — has displaced much of the old Republican reasoning from first principles about such things as the sanctity and purity of "armed struggle". The Provisionals are now a far more reason-bound and far less traditionalist movement. But even so, it is scarcely conceivable that the Provisional IRA could avoid a split if, despite winning no real victory, the leadership simply called off the armed struggle.

Neither the military discipline of the Provisional IRA, nor war-weariness — that would not be uniform: there would always be some willing to go on — could achieve this seeming unanimity.

The Provisional IRA must have been won to a policy of "seeing what the pan-nationalist bloc can achieve". Some of them must believe that the way is open, if they are disappointed, to resume the military struggle. Nothing else explains the seeming unanimity.

This implies that the ceasefire may be anything but final. Many who are now more than eager to paint the political prospects before the Provisionals in the most encouraging colours will change or prove unable to deliver what they now promise. This might prove to be true even of the much-talked-about promise of a river of dollars to wash Northern Ireland clean of its old sectarian cataracts.

Central in determining what will happen is the political goals the

Provisionals continue to pursue. There is no change here, despite the plausible press reports that appeared last year to the effect that the Hume/Adams agreement contained an acceptance by Provisional leader Gerry Adams that there could only be a united Ireland with the agreement of the Northern Protestants.

There is talk now that sounds like that, but it is coupled with demands on Britain to "become persuaders" to get the Unionists to accept a united Ireland, and with international activities to put pressure on Britain to put pressure on the Protestants. The weapons of pressure include the promotion of economic coercion by way of the so-called McBride principles in the USA. Talk of "voluntary agreement" here is only a way of saying international pressure instead of pressure by way of the Provisionals' military campaign.

In the past we have pointed out in *Socialist Organiser* — provoking the *socialism* of many who, otherwise, have time for what we say — that no sense can be made of what the Provisionals do to the Irish Protestant-Unionists, whose consent they need for a united Ireland, unless you understand that their real "strategy" is to compel Britain to coerce the Protestants. Now, with the central stress Adams is publicly placing on the demand that the British become "persuaders", no-one who wants to understand Northern Ireland can fail to see that this, indeed, is their policy. If it does not succeed — and it cannot — then this new peace is likely to break down.

Marxists judge their attitude to wars by who is fighting whom, for what goals. We have an automatic sympathy for the Catholic victims of Partition in their revolt, but no good can come from the political goals of the Provisional IRA.

Much of the brutal stupidity of their military campaign has been generated by the unrealisability of their political objectives — which amount to solving the problem of the alienated half-million Northern Ireland Catholics by forcing the one million Irish Unionists into a united Ireland where they would have equal citizenship but no special recognition of or safeguards for the national identity

which is no less important to them than their different identity is to the Northern Ireland Catholics.

It would take large-scale civil war and the outright subjugation of the Protestants to achieve that. Then they would be the sort of sullen alienated minority in an all-Ireland state that the Catholics have been in Northern Ireland — and some of them would, in the Provisional IRA campaign, have the perfect model of what to do about it.

Whether pursued by way of a military campaign, or by international pressure through the pan-nationalist alliance, the political goal of forcing the Protestants into a Catholic united Ireland makes no sense for the Irish people, or for the Irish working class.

The serious left will have to judge the new phase of political campaigning by Sinn Fein from this point of view. All the campaigning will be grist to the mill of their political objectives. All of it will be designed to build support for those objectives and for their organisation, and to build up their potential to launch a new phase of armed struggle should their calculations lead them to such a decision.

*Socialist Organiser* believes that the repressive measures that have been assembled by the British state during the Provisional IRA campaign should now be dismantled forthwith — the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the no-jury courts in Northern Ireland, the military presence in the Catholic areas, and so on.

We call for an amnesty for the Republican prisoners, and we demand that the British and Irish governments immediately set up talks involving all parties in Ireland to seek a democratic settlement there.

We will continue to argue this, as we have over many years. But no-one on the left should enlist in the new Provisional political campaigns on these and other questions unless they

support the Provisionals and what they aim for politically. If war is the continuation of politics by other means, then these political campaigns are a continuation of the Provisionals' war by other means — and, maybe, preparation for another military offensive, fuelled by the strength the Provisional IRA can gain in this phase.

The fight against these repressive measures of the British state can play a progressive role, that is, counterpose to the present reactionary set-up in Northern Ireland something better and not worse — and escalating Protestant-Catholic conflict is worse, much worse — only if it is made part of a political campaign for a real solution to the conflict, a solution that allows the possibility of working-class unity being developed across the communal divide.

Probably the most significant thing, politically, about the situation after the ceasefire is that the Provisionals' entire focus is now — and undisguisedly, despite soothing words here and there — directed away from an intra-Irish solution, involving agreement between the different communities on the island, and towards an externally imposed, or, in the Provisionals' jargon, "persuaded", solution. Their solution lies in pressure from Dublin, London, Washington and Brussels, not in Belfast.

But the only possible solution is one that builds intra-Irish agreement. We must hope that the "international pressure" approach of the Provisionals does not push back even further all prospect of that.

Finally, let us consider the possibility that what is happening is what much of the media believes is happening: a decisive move to politics and a definitive end to the armed struggle.

The signs are that even if sections of the Provisional leadership have a genuine hankering to go into mainstream politics, that is not what is happening now. But it may be that the Provisionals will divide in the period ahead, belatedly producing a military

*"The Provisionals have hegemonised anti-establishment politics in Northern Ireland for a quarter-century. Their hold will now begin to slacken in the political cross-currents ahead".*

*"The Provisionals' real strategy is to compel Britain to coerce the Protestants".*



# Is an Irish solution!

wing of the 1983 splinter group Republican Sinn Fein on one side and a primarily political group on the other.

If that happens it will be a re-enactment of something seen often in Irish politics, a repetition of a pattern so old that James Connolly could summarise it 100 years ago in such a way as to seem to predict a whole series of episodes in 20th century Irish politics. It is a pattern of people and organisations who have been revolutionaries in military terms, while not

at all revolutionary in social terms, and quickly evolve into more or less ordinary bourgeois and petty bourgeois politicians once they move into conventional politics.

Fianna Fail was part of the IRA of 1922. They fought a civil war. In power after 1932 they were mild reformers and thoroughgoing conservatives. A smaller organisation emerged in the 1940s, led by leaders of the right wing of the IRA of the 1930s. The Workers' Party and the Democratic Left emerged in the 1970s

and '80s out of the IRA of the 1950s. None of these played a notably progressive, let alone a revolutionary socialist, role.

This is the well-trodden path that the Provisionals are taking if they really have "gone political", or when a section of them do. They are narrower than all their predecessors emerging into bourgeois politics out of the Republican chrysalis, because they are based primarily on the Six Counties Catholics, not on support all across Ireland. Individuals who

will form an Irish revolutionary socialist movement in the real tradition of James Connolly may come out of the Provisionals. To look to the movement as a whole for good things for working-class socialism would be to engage in the most foolish wishful thinking.

The great need in Northern Ireland is for an independent working-class socialist organisation — preaching not the vapourishness of the Provisionals' "New Ireland" but a Workers' Republic, preaching workers' unity

as the way to it, and advocating, as the basis of immediate working-class unity, a democratic political settlement of the dispute between the communities, which can only be a federal Ireland.

The Provisionals have hegemonised anti-establishment politics in Northern Ireland for a quarter-century. They are likely to do so for a while yet. But their hold will now begin to slacken in the political cross-currents ahead. International socialism can begin to come into its own.



Celebration in Belfast

## In Belfast's Catholic community: celebration, and a new mood for reconciliation

Tony Delaney reports from Belfast

WEDNESDAY 31 August, the day the IRA called off the military campaign, will be remembered by everybody in Northern Ireland. Catholics everywhere greeted the news in a mood of celebration.

Catholics were also mindful that the Protestant paramilitaries had not announced a reciprocal ceasefire. Protestants greeted the ceasefire with suspicion and fears that the British government were stitching up something behind their backs.

There is little opposition among Catholics to the ceasefire. Nationalists seem to have realised that the military campaign was in a dead end, not bringing a united Ireland nearer, and that the chief effect of the IRA's military campaign was to alienate the Protestants further and reinforce their opposition to reunification. There seems to be a new mood for reconciliation.

Northern Ireland of course has seen many false dawns before. But the shift in republican politics away from the military road to a more political strategy appears to run deep. Opposition to the ceasefire has been limited to the small forces of Republican Sinn Fein (a small split away a few years ago from Sinn Fein, based around sections of the pre-Adams leadership).

Northern Ireland remains deeply divided. The contrasting reactions from the two communities to the ceasefire is testimony to the deep division.

Many Protestants believe the British government has been negotiating secretly with Sinn Fein and don't believe the assurances from London that the constitutional position won't be changed without the consent of a majority within Northern Ireland. But a majority of Protestants do hope the ceasefire will hold.

A permanent peace is conditional on a developing a settlement based on a democratic acceptance of two communities, each with rights. Peace and justice depends on winning consent for a united Ireland where the Protestants will have guaranteed rights as a legitimate minority community.

*Socialist Organiser* for a number of years has argued for a federal united Ireland as the most consistent democratic settlement. A long-lasting peace depends on getting a united Ireland, but a united Ireland where the fears of the Protestants will be addressed, and their rights respected. Such a settlement is still some way off.

To break down the divisions also means breaking through the log-jam of politics being dominated by a Catholic/Protestant, Nationalist/Unionist split. It can only be broken by developing a united workers' movement which can inter-

vene into the political arena.

Throughout the conflict the trade unions have managed to maintain some limited form of united workers' movement. The trade unions have actively banned "politics" from the workers' movement to maintain unity. This has left them unable to effectively combat sectarianism by advocating a democratic settlement.

Workers' unity needs to be built — socialists depend on it — and it is for this reason socialists should advocate consistent democracy. We need to advocate the trade unions take the fight for workers' unity on to the political arena by forming a Labour Party.

The Tory government's nitpicking over the IRA's statement and their demands for a "permanent renunciation of violence" should be condemned. Talks should be reopened with Sinn Fein at the negotiating table, representing the one in three Catholics who vote for them. A whole range of issues needs to be addressed by the government to demilitarise the situation.

Tonight (Sunday 4 September) a bomb explosion can be heard across Belfast. Protestant paramilitaries have exploded a car-bomb near Sinn Fein's offices. The present situation is still on a knife edge. Republican hardliners may argue for a resumption of the "war", but at present they appear in a very weak position.

## How Sinn Fein explains the ceasefire

By Dale Street

THE 'ARMED struggle' has not succeeded in forcing the British government to get the Northern Irish Loyalists to accept the idea of a united Ireland. So now let's see if the 'Irish nationalist alliance' can do the job instead.

This is how Sinn Fein National Executive member Dodie McGuinness explained the reasoning behind the IRA's ceasefire to a Labour Committee on Ireland meeting held in Glasgow last Saturday (3 September).

The IRA was "unable to win this struggle on its own." The task in hand was therefore to "build alliances to put pressure on the British government to end the Unionist veto." Such an alliance had already been created: the 'Irish nationalist alliance', consisting of Sinn Fein, the SDLP, and the Irish government.

Republican supporters and activists in Britain should add to the pressure on the British government and also campaign for specific demands such as withdrawal of British troops from the streets, and the disarming and disbanding of the RUC and the RIR.

Challenged by a member of Republican Sinn Fein on how Catholics should respond to attacks by Loyalist murder gangs, Dodie McGuinness's reply was that it was the responsibility of the RUC, the UDR and the British Army to stop such attacks.

In other words: the RUC and the RIR should be disbanded — but they should also stop Loyalist assassins. Similarly the British Army should be taken off the streets — but it too should prevent a new round of Loyalist killings and disarm and disband the RUC and the RIR.

Asked why Loyalists would be more amenable to the idea of a united Ireland under the pressure of the Irish nationalist alliance than they had been under the pressure of the 'armed struggle', Dodie McGuinness's reply was that they would have no choice but to face "reality."

In fact, she claimed, Loyalists were

already either talking or preparing to talk to Sinn Fein. Only Ian Paisley and his followers were out of step with the rest of the Loyalist politicians.

Suggestions that the SDLP would gain in electoral influence at the expense of Sinn Fein were dismissed by Dodie McGuinness, who thought that SDLP voters were now more likely to switch to Sinn Fein, given that the IRA had called a ceasefire.

A grim finger-wagging warning from a *Socialist Outlook* supporter that Sinn Fein was in danger of "getting into supporting British rule in Ireland" was curtly brushed aside by Dodie McGuinness. Sinn Fein could

*"Irish unity continues to be seen by Sinn Fein as something to be engineered by the British government."*

do without such advice, thank you very much. Here, as on Palestine, these kitsch-Trotskyists are more nationalist than the nationalists.

Despite the IRA's ceasefire, it is clear that little has

changed in the political thinking of Sinn Fein.

In the past the 'armed struggle' was to be the lever which would force the British government into 'ending the Unionist veto.' Now it is to be the 'Irish nationalist alliance' which performs that function.

Irish unity, in other words, continues to be seen by Sinn Fein as something to be engineered by the British government, rather than as the product of a reconciliation between the communities of Ireland themselves. Whatever happened to 'ourselves alone'?

Dodie McGuinness's unlikely electoral scenario likewise remained trapped in the same cul-de-sac. Even if Sinn Fein were to pick up votes from the SDLP, it would remain a party with roots in only one of the communities of Northern Ireland, and would remain incapable of breaking out of that political ghetto.

Ceasefire or no ceasefire, there is no prospect of Sinn Fein making any electoral breakthrough in the South of Ireland.

But the major question left unanswered by Dodie McGuinness was why, given that "the IRA is unable to win this struggle on its own", it has taken so long for the IRA to call a ceasefire.



## The socialists that could not think

**S**herlock Holmes, you may recall, remarked on the dog that did not bark in the night. That, he said, was what was odd about the case. Last week *Socialist Worker* did not bark either. While the rest of the world's press were sending up a crescendo of comment on Ireland, *Socialist Worker* managed little more than a yap on the biggest news out of Ireland in twenty years. They managed only one article on the back page entitled "Is Ireland on the way to peace?". Well, is it? The answer was cryptic: "A cease-fire by the IRA cannot begin to unravel the injustice done to Catholics". So is it a good thing, or a bad thing? The SWP either don't know or won't say. Tony Cliff is probably thinking about it.

As SW was going to press in one part of East London, in another part the printing presses were rolling too — this time in Wapping. The *Sun* on Wednesday managed to carry over twice the number of words on Northern Ireland than the SWP did, as well as some editorial comment — something the SWP managed to avoid altogether. Maybe this is a little unfair but the next day the *Sun* did publish an eight page special on the cease-fire.

Although on paper you might think that SWP might have a firmer grasp of politics (at least they finish their article saying any solution must be one that "unites the working class") the *Sun* managed, without a huge amount of insight, to predict that if the cease fire collapses the most likely consequence will be bloody inter-communal civil war.

Next week: Sherlock Holmes investigates the socialist intellectuals who did not think.

**N**EW policing methods were revealed in court case last week when PC Colin Phipps was charged with breaking the nose and cheekbone of Jason Stubbs while arresting him for non-payment of a fine. Pursuing Stubbs, the police crashed their car and then one of them fell over as he jumped out of the car. Stubbs was convulsed: "I was laughing so much that my eyes were closed" said Stubbs. It was at this point that PC Phipps saw his chance to be a hero and Stubbs felt the long arm of the law, with Phipps's clenched fist at the end of it. PC Phipps was acquitted of GBH after he claimed he had punched the dangerous fine evader in self defence. Stubbs had, he claimed, "raised his fist".

### GRAFFITI

VIVELA REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

**B**RITISH athletes are popping hormones all over the headlines these days, so isn't it time that wider steps were taken to counter dangerous hormonal excess? Why not start with the large number of young men in flash cars who plague our roads, pumped so full of testosterone that they believe themselves to be really good drivers. Random roadside testing should be instigated at once for anyone under the age of 25 found driving a BMW, Mercedes, or any car with 'go-faster stripes' or with letters like "GTI" on the boot.

I'm not a biological determinist, but surely there is a case for anyone found guilty of carrying excess hormones in possession of a flash car immediately being forced to take a dip in one Britain's rivers (especially the ones with so much pollution that all the male fish are developing, well, er, feminine characteristics).

**P**EASANTS in medieval Europe were making an obvious metaphor when they told stories of vampires, nobles who came amongst the ordinary folk of the village and by draining their life blood remained young for ever. Well, perhaps the population of China ought to be telling such stories.

While the average Chinese peasant may hope to make it into his 60s, there seems to be a disproportionate number of the rulers who, like Deng Xioping, make it into their 90s. Better health care, living conditions and diet paid for by the sweat of the workers? Maybe. But now a more sinister feature in the equation has come to light. Government officials have privileged access to the organs of convicted and executed criminals. It even seems that some executions are deliberately botched so as the spare parts can remain fresh for some ailing bureaucrat.

The poet Shelley told the truth about the relationship of all ruling class to those they exploit when, prophetically, he wrote to raise the people of England against those who "would drink your blood". Now it's steal your limbs.

# Don't give peace a chance

### PRESS GANG

THE GUARDIAN TODAY  
SUNDAY EXPRESS  
THE WORLD PRESS

By Jim Denham

upon sales in Northern Ireland to stay afloat. But the basic message was the same: "we fear the IRA's cease-fire could just be a shabby trick."

Compared to all this, the *Daily Mirror's* "Give Peace A Chance" line was like a breath of fresh air and for once the paper lived up to its slogan "Honesty, Quality, Excellence".

An article by Colin Parry — father of Warrington bomb victim Tim Parry — brought tears even to these cynical eyes and should have put the reac-

*"The abysmal Daily Star followed the Tebbit/Paisley line in an editorial rant whose flavour can be gathered from its headline: 'Can mad dogs be curbed?'"*

tionary bigots at the *Star* and the *Sun* to shame. But I doubt it did.

By Friday the *Tory* press, the *TV* and the *radio* had a new angle from which to pour cold water on the prospects for peace: the transfer of prisoners from mainland Britain to Northern Ireland. All the evidence is that this was a totally synthetic story, prompted

by a leak from John Major's office, to the affect that he was "livid" and had "ordered an inquiry". The rabid *Daily Star's* front page headline

"Deal with the Devil", reflected the Paisleyite conspiracy theory that this routine transfer, agreed long before the ceasefire, was either part of a secret deal with the IRA or a blunder of disastrous magnitude. Never mind that Protestant spokesmen the Rev. Roy Magel and David Trimble understood the transfers to be standard policy and nothing to do with any supposed "deal". The ranting continued over the weekend, with the *Mail on Sunday* leading on Mrs Thatcher's, supposed, "outrage" and *Sunday Express* editor Brian Hitchens (formerly of the *Daily Star*) opining that prisoners "should have been sent home in coffins".

The British media does not have much to be proud of in twenty five years of covering the 'troubles'. The broadcasters have given in to successive government bans and restrictions, while most print journalists have been content to denounce IRA terrorism ('loyalist' terrorism, strangely, was always played down). Now that there is at least some small sign of hope, they're running true to form, banging the Unionist/Tory drum.

## Ernie Roberts 1912-1994

**E**RNIE ROBERTS died on 29 August.

After working for 25 years, as an engineer in Coventry he became Assistant General Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union in 1957.

He had been expelled by the Communist Party in 1941 for opposition to the Stalinist Party's attempt to end the class struggle during the "war against fascism".

Roberts became Labour MP for Hackney North in 1979 at the age of 67. The Labour Party bureaucrats had tried for a long time to stop him becoming an

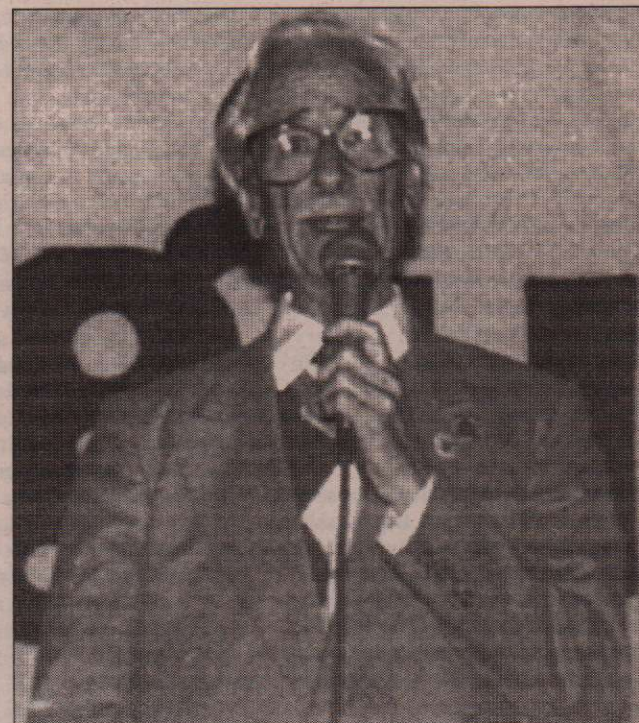
MP.

Roberts and his Constituency Labour Party were early backers of *Socialist Organiser* and the *Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory*, launched in 1978.

He was also was a central figure in the late 1970s Anti-Nazi League.

### Strike Back

Ernie Roberts' autobiography, *Strike Back* is published this week. It is available for £5.95 (plus £1 p&p) from 13-15 High Street, St Mary Cray, Orpington, BR5 3NL. (Cheques to "Ernie Roberts Strikes Back").



Ernie Roberts





Removing the "right to silence" will end in more miscarriages of justice, more innocent people imprisoned. Picture shows the Birmingham Six released from prison in 1991. Photo: John Harris

**YOUTH FIGHTBACK**

**Rebellion**

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

**Editor:** Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967

for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

*Youth Fightback is...*

# We can stop the Tories' criminal bill!

**Stop the Criminal Justice Bill!**

**Sunday 9 October**

**Assemble: 12 noon, Embankment, London**

**I**F YOU go to parties or festivals, if you go on protests or marches, if you squat or you can't pay your rent, or if you are a traveller, the Criminal Justice Bill, due to become law in October, might well make you a criminal! The Criminal Justice Bill has 117 clauses, many of which breach the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political

**Rights.**

The Bill introduces a new crime of "aggravated trespass" for "disrupting or obstructing any lawful activity or protesting on any land without the owner's permission." This could be used against any demonstration, lobby, picket, vigil. Under the Bill, outdoor raves and parties can be banned by the police, and anyone suspected of going to the event can be arrested within five

miles of the venue.

The Bill criminalises squatting, giving property owners the power to evict squatters with only 48 hours' notice. Squatters have no right to a court hearing or appeal and will be committing a crime if they don't leave in 48 hours. The Criminal Justice Bill will remove the "right to silence" when arrested. This will lead to even more cases where the police fright-

en or bully people they arrest into making false confessions. The Bill also introduces a law allowing the police to search people on suspicion that they will commit a crime. Refusing to co-operate will be a crime. The old "Sus" law was used by police to harass youth and was scrapped after riots in the early '80s sparked off by police harassment in inner-city areas like Brixton. The Criminal Justice Bill brings back a "Sus" law.

There are many other attacks on civil rights in the Criminal Justice Bill, including an all-out attack on travellers.

Despite the Government's claims, it has nothing to do with cracking down on crime. It creates more crime and criminalises tens of thousands of people.

The Government's real motive is to attack the least well-off, criminalising squatting when over 860,000 homes lie empty and hundreds of thousands are homeless.

In attacking "marginal" groups they hope to scapegoat the young and poor for the economic and social crisis of their system.

The good news is that a massive wave of opposition is building against the Bill.

Like the Poll Tax, the Criminal Justice Bill can be defeated by mass opposition and mass defiance.

Already, hundreds of thousands of people have been involved in action against the Criminal Justice Bill. And there will be a massive national demonstration in London on 9 October. Anyone who wants to defeat the Bill must build the demonstration.

Shamefully, Tony Blair told Labour MPs to abstain on the Second Reading of the Bill in Parliament. Labour must vote against the Bill which goes for its Third Reading in the House of Commons in mid-October — lobby your MP to vote against it.

Organise a protest at their surgery. Put motions to your local Labour Party or Young Labour Group demanding that Labour oppose the Bill and calling on Labour MPs to vote against it.

Organise stalls with petitions against the Bill. Contact the Freedom Network, who are organising opposition, and get involved in your local campaign.

**The Freedom Network,**  
372 Coldharbour Lane,  
London SW9 8PT;  
tel: 071-738 6721;  
fax: 071-737 4320.

## Ideas in revolt '94

By Alan, Canterbury

**H**ELD OVER three days in Manchester, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty youth school brought together about fifty young comrades from around the country.

"Without revolutionary theory," wrote Lenin, "there can be no revolutionary movement." The aim of the school was for younger members of the AWL to challenge and develop our theory, in sessions organised by and for, and led by, our peers.

The school also attracted a small group of people not involved with the AWL. That three of them joined over the course of the weekend is testament to the strength of our ideas.

Whilst those ideas were at the top of the agenda —

with sessions ranging from Marxist fundamentals such as how capitalism exploits workers and Trotskyist sophistications such as permanent revolution, to analyses of the current situation in Northern Ireland and South Africa — the more practical concerns of the AWL were also looked to. Student and youth fractions made plans for the year ahead, and we had sessions on basic political skills — from intervening at a meeting or writing a speech, to organising a branch.

A recurring theme of the weekend, in fact, was that the theoretical and practical should go hand in hand; that, unlike some of our "comrades" on the left, we are not just a ra-ra-recruiting drive with nothing on the end of it, but part of a living movement with a living theory: revolutionary socialism.



# SOUTH

# THE WORK

A massive strike wave is spreading across South Africa. In the last couple of months supermarket workers, truckers, court translators, platinum workers, car workers, textile workers hospital workers and public servants have all taken action.

The strikes have been met by determined opposition from the ANC/National Party coalition government of National Unity.

Over 800 strikers have been arrested. Many strikers have been killed by a police force under the "command" of leading Communist Party member and ex-trade unionist Sydney Mufumadi.

Alongside the repression have come attempts by the ANC and their friends in the bosses' media to portray the strikes as the work of a tiny minority of "ultra left" "Trotskyist" troublemakers notably the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) and the Workers' List Party (WLP).

The ANC government could well be preparing for a major clampdown against the workers' movement — or at least on the left of that movement.

On this page we print an appeal from the Workers' List Party in South Africa asking for support from British workers, also an example of the witchhunting material that is appearing in the mainstream mass-circulation press.

## A letter from Johannesburg: "The hysteria against us has reached a crescendo"



Mandela, De Klerk and Buthelezi: united against the strikes

**A**S YOU PROBABLY are aware, a wave of strikes has swept South Africa. Quite predictably, the WLP and many of our individual members have been singled out for being responsible for many of these actions. This is done in order for the state and the bosses to deflect attention away from the real demands and grievances of the strikers. While most WLP members are directly involved in the strikes and in support activity, it is absurd to claim that there exists a "clandestine conspiracy", and that we have "masterminded" the strikes. This is a transparent attempt to undermine the independent activity of the workers and to set up both WOSA/WLP and militant workers for repression. Already many strikers have died on the picket line.

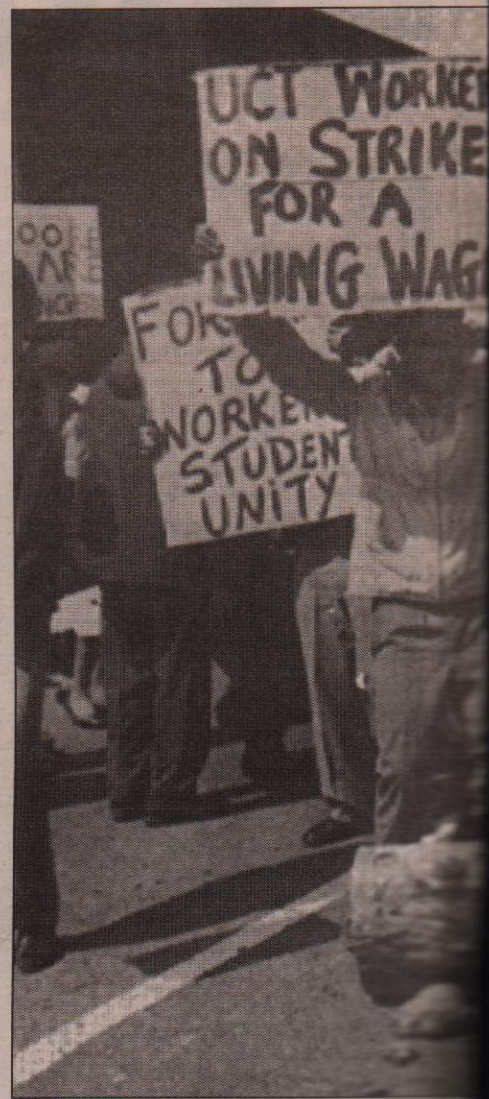
The hysteria against WOSA/WLP has now reached a crescendo. The bourgeois media, the bosses and sections of the state are now openly calling for direct repression against WOSA/WLP and militant workers. We send you just one example of the threats we face and also of the crass sensationalism that exists [See facing page]. There are many other examples in other newspapers around strikes in other industries.

Our comrades among the 3000 truck drivers who blockaded roads ask for your messages of support. Please send messages to our fax number (+27 11 337-8423), addressed to "Turning

Wheel Workers' Movement". Leading and militant shopstewards among the truck drivers are daily facing physical threats and ambushes on the road.

We assure you that despite the threats the WLP will continue supporting the ongoing strikes. Our work has made us very popular among militant sections of the working class and we are growing rapidly in size.

Yours for proletarian internationalism,  
Salim Vally, for the WLP Secretariat.



The lines are now drawn clearly.

## "The attacks against WOSA and the Workers' List Party are continuing"

Patrick, a Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) activist, reports from Johannesburg.

THE ATTACKS against WOSA and the Workers' List Party are continuing.

As well as the red scare against us and the Turning Wheel movement because of the truckers blockade, we are also being blamed for the mass student action at Wits university where the students are refusing to pay their fees.

For instance the Weekly Mail (a liberal but pro-ANC newspaper) had an article in the latest edition accusing us of taking over the South African National Students Congress branch at Wits and detaching it from the ANC alliance.

The wave of strikes is also continuing. Despite attempts by top ANCers like Deputy President Thabo Mbeki to sell a deal to the auto and engi-

neering workers, they have stayed solid.

The workers rejected a "compromise" offer stitched up by Mbeki in a ballot and are holding out for their full claim. Although the difference between the last offer and the full claim isn't much the workers — and a large section of their leadership — see winning it as a matter of principle.

Elsewhere the pro-ANC forces in the unions have succeeded in getting the Durban hospital strikes called off.

The stewards were intimidated into accepting a return to work without their demands being met. It was their own national union officials who told them that they were "sabotaging" the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

This was done against the backdrop of the threat of mass sackings.

What's becoming clear is that large numbers of workers expected a lot more from a democratic South Africa than they have so far gained.



# AFRICA:

# ERS ERUPT

"We can expect fronts for left wing extremists to crop up in all industries"

This article appeared on the front page of the Weekend Argus, a major mass-circulation paper, on 28 August 1994

**M**ILITANT, ULTRA-LEFT Trotskyites — many with international revolutionary connections — pulled off a major coup this week as part of a plot to shake the ANC-dominated government leaders while 68 trucks containing highly inflammable substances sat like powder kegs on the N3 highway between Durban and Johannesburg.

The devastating, out-of-the-blue truck blockade had all the hallmarks of classic Trotskyite subversion, said a political analyst. It came at a critical phase in the life of the new government following the heightened expectations caused by polls victory, but before concrete RDP progress was made [i.e. progress on the ANC's "Reconstruction and Development Programme" of reforms].

Avowed communist and Workers List Party member Richard Madime spearheaded the blockade as leader of the mysterious Turning Wheel International Workers Movement.

It was Mr. Madime's clandestine movement, allegedly linked to the Workers' List Party and the Workers' Organisation for a Socialist South

Africa, which called for a truckers' "meeting" at the Mooi River toll plaza at noon on Monday and saw him rocketed into the limelight as champion of truckers' legitimate demands as the blockade gathered momen-

## WHAT THEIR PAPERS SAY

tum. Ultra-leftists believe in the theory of "permanent revolution" and would regard the ANC government as "sellouts". They work in small cells, recruiting only small groups of loyalists to act as a "vanguard" for their revolution.

In working towards the overthrow of a government they plan spectacular gestures aimed at causing destabilisation, but which are seldom followed up.

A main focus of their strategy, according to the analyst, is to portray the organised trade



union movement as inept and dull. A similar attempt to destabilise the Zimbabwean government came in the early 1980s, when Trotskyists - including white South African exiles suspended from the ANC for their militant positions - tried to mobilise protest in key areas such as defence and education.

Robert Mugabe's government cracked down by deporting the Trotskyite ringleaders, but also in the process effectively paralysed the fledgling independent union movement.

Government sources acknowledged to Weekend Argus there was a possibility small cells of ultra-leftists were behind this week's blockade and could have international links. Sources noted the freeway blockade was "totally unlike anything this country has seen" and

said police would protect non-strikers. Neither the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) nor the Motor Transport Owners' Association (MTOA), major players in the trucking industry's labour negotiations, knew anything about Turning Wheel's existence on Monday, and the blockade took both by surprise.

In fact, while the blockade was being set up, purportedly to address truckers' grievances, the TGWU and MTOA were engaged in "cordial discussions" only days away from finalising establishment of a National Industrial Council through which would address truckers' grievances.

So when KwaZulu Natal Transport Minister S'bu Ndebele contacted MTOA president Johan van der Walt on Monday afternoon to inform him of the blockade, Mr van der Walt replied incredulously: "That can't be so."

Tense negotiations which ensued at Mooi River were complicated by the presence of non-unionised truckers, the "unknown" Mr Madime and established figures like TGWU general secretary Randall Howard, TGWU national organiser Thulani Dhlamini and Cosatu assistant general secretary Zwelindzima Vavi.

Meanwhile, several truckers had been told they may "have to set trucks alight", sparking anxiety.

The risk of a fireball along the N3, which, as Labour Minister Tito Mboweni explained to parliament, would have obliterated the town of Mooi River, effectively ruled out police and army intervention and gave militants a powerful hand as the country became paralysed.

An MTOA spokesman told Weekend Argus: "Turning Wheel hijacked our negotiations."

The TGWU, left with egg on their face, immediately started their own investigations, and told Weekend Argus they had linked Turning Wheel movement as "a front" for the revolutionary Workers' List Party, who were "working underground to create havoc, bring down the government, undermine the Reconstruction and Development Programme and discredit the unions."

"We can safely expect a lot of such fronts for extremist, leftwing socialist organisation to crop up in all industries," an angry TGWU's Mr Dhlamini told Weekend Argus.

*"Avowed communist and Workers' List Party member Richard Madime spearheaded the blockade... and rocketed to the limelight as champion of the truckers' legitimate demands."*

expressed the fear that it could "set a precedent".

The government vowed to get tough. KwaZulu-Natal's ANC Minister of Transport S'bu Ndebele said such a labour protest would not be stood for and the ANC Minister of Health in KwaZulu-Natal, Di Zweli Mkize, said he would seek to interdict tomorrow to ban striking hospital staff.

SA National Defence Force Natal Command said on Friday about 70 military medical personnel were sent to Durban from Pretoria. He



...with the bosses and the government



Lula support group set up in Britain

# Victory to the Brazilian Workers' Party!

**T**HE LULA Support Group was launched last May and has been actively working for the Brazilian Presidential election campaign of Lula, who is the leader of the left-wing alliance in which the Workers' Party (PT) is the main group.

Lula's election would have enormous impact in Latin America and throughout the world. Brazil has a population of over 150 million. The election of a PT government would be the biggest electoral triumph in the history of any socialist party.

The PT was created in 1980 when its founders brought together the grass-

roots movements that played a key role in opposing the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1984. Metal workers and other trade unionists were joined by human rights campaigners, landless peasants, organised movements of women, black people and students, liberation theology groups and shanty town activists.

In 1989, Lula — an ex-metal worker — won 31 million votes (38%) against the 35 million (43%) of the conservative and corrupt Collor de Mello, who was eventually impeached.

Lula's victory in the next elections will lead to the much needed social reforms like agrarian reform that can

help hungry peasants and urban workers and bring real income redistribution. With the help of our grass roots allies we will hopefully find the right policies to boost our battered economy and to increase investment in more jobs, housing, education and

health.

Here in Britain we have a strong group supporting the campaign. We are organising fund raising activities and political debates to discuss the party's proposals. But we are still missing you.

## Support the campaign

If you can help the support campaign in any way please get in touch or send your donation to:

- Lula Election Appeal, Sort Code 08-60-01, Account number 507-27-77-3, Unity Trust Bank.
- Lula Support Group, Brazilian Workers' Party, PO Box 3698, London SW2 1XB. Tel: 071-916 2114, or 071-733-3234



Lula: a socialist ex-metal worker could win Brazil's presidential election in October

## The SWP: not taking young people seriously

**W**E ARE two very pissed-off ex-SWP members. We were both recruited on single issues with no mention of the level of commitment expected, never mind smashing the state or revolutionary politics. Agree on just one issue and you'll be the proud owner of a lovely new, shiny, gold membership card.

These cards tell you as much about the politics of the SWP as the members themselves. It contains one quote from Karl Marx and the level of subs you're expected to pay.

Education in the party is non-existent, although we should admit we were never regular attenders of branch meetings. This was primarily because the meetings tended to confirm what we already knew without

challenging our ideas. Disagreements within the branch were very rare and meetings were dominated by one or two "leading" members.

In a society where revolutionary socialists are in a minority it is essential that socialists speak to workers armed with knowledge and answers to everyday problems. How can young people be expected to do this if they have no knowledge of class

history or even of their own organisation? One of the SWP's favourite activities is to send newly recruited young people out fly-posting. This is supposedly a fun activity and of course requires no intelligence.

Our disagreements with the SWP's line were seen as insignificant. Why were we engaging in the battle of

*"How can young people be expected to talk to workers if we have no knowledge of class history?"*

## US International Socialists beat up left critics

**O**N WEDNESDAY 27 July a group of three Spartacus Youth Club activists, including a young black woman, were set upon by thugs in the hallway of Boston University's Marsh Chapel outside an anti-death penalty forum. Literature and petitions to save the life of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal — a former Black Panther Party member were ripped out of our comrades' hands, seized in stacks off our literature table, torn to shreds and thrown out on the street.

Who is responsible for this despicable act of racist violence? Skinhead fascists? Kill-crazy, pro-death penalty, "right to life" terrorists? "Off-duty" cops? No, this was the work of members of self-avowed "socialists", the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) [US offshoot of the British Socialist Workers' Party].

This attack took place outside a forum which was publicly advertised in the ISO's July *Socialist Worker* and was led by Boston ISO branch leader

Brian Kelly. Kelly kicked a high school student in the chest and bellowed, "I'm going to kill you." The ISO goons "justified" their physical violence to other people attending the forum with the lie that the Spartacists are "disrupters."

Violence and slander are the tactics of the capitalist ruling class which seeks to suppress militants and divide the working class and revolutionary movement with dirty tricks, strike-breakers, gangsters, cops etc. For these same tactics to be used by the ISO against other leftist organisations can only play into the hands of reactionaries. Such methods poison relations between various sections of the left and block the development of socialist class consciousness by rendering free discussion of ideas impossible. They don't have to consider other theories, they just beat up anyone who raises a dissenting view.

This attack is not an isolated incident but an example of the gangsterism for which this tendency is known internationally.

The American ISO is a satellite of the British Socialist Workers' Party. The SWP's thuggery prompted *Socialist Organiser* to call for a labour movement inquiry into violent assaults on their supporters just one year ago at the SWP's "Marxism '93."

In August 1992, the ISO's Canadian group launched a brutal attack against our comrades outside a "public" debate, dragging a small woman comrade and bashing her, spread-eagled, against a door divider. This misogynist outrage prompted an independent witness to publish a protest letter.

But the ISO continues to substitute the fist for the brain, seeking to draw a blood line to seal off new members from political debate. Organisational loyalty founded on unreasoning hatred instead of political programme makes for an inherently unstable group and can serve to drive honest militants out of left politics altogether.

• Condensed from a statement of the Boston Spartacus Youth Club, 31 July 1994

ideas when we could be doing something highly constructive and thought-provoking — like fly-posting?

Were they taking our ideas seriously? It didn't appear so.

Surely they valued our membership? Well they valued the gold bits of card.

Were we not able to think for ourselves? Apparently not.

We have witnessed members of the AWL being turned away from so-called public meetings. For the revolutionary left this is a disaster. To censor debate is both destructive and undemocratic.

Do the SWP imagine that they alone have all the answers? Our reasons for leaving the SWP were purely political even though some SWP members have chosen to make it personal. This letter is not meant to be purely an attack on the SWP. We feel our experiences are fairly representative of other young SWP recruits and perhaps the SWP need to reassess their attitude towards young people.

Nicky (Sheffield) and Suki (Chesterfield)

## Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

### MANCHESTER

Thursday 9 September

*"The IRA ceasefire and the prospects for peace"*

8.00, Unicorn pub, Church Street

### SOUTH LONDON

Wednesday 14 September

*"Nigeria in crisis"*

7.30pm, St Giles Centre, Bennhill Road, SE5

### NORTH LONDON

Wednesday 14 September

*"How to beat the Criminal Injustice Bill"*

7.30pm, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross

### LONDON

Saturday 1 October

*"The History of American Trotskyism"*

12.00-5.00, South London

For details of reading and venue write to London AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

### NOTTINGHAM

Thursday 22 September

*"The IRA ceasefire — will it mean peace?"*

7.30, ICC, Mansfield Road

### LANCASTER

Monday 12 September

*"The IRA ceasefire — will it mean peace?"*

7.30, Albert pub

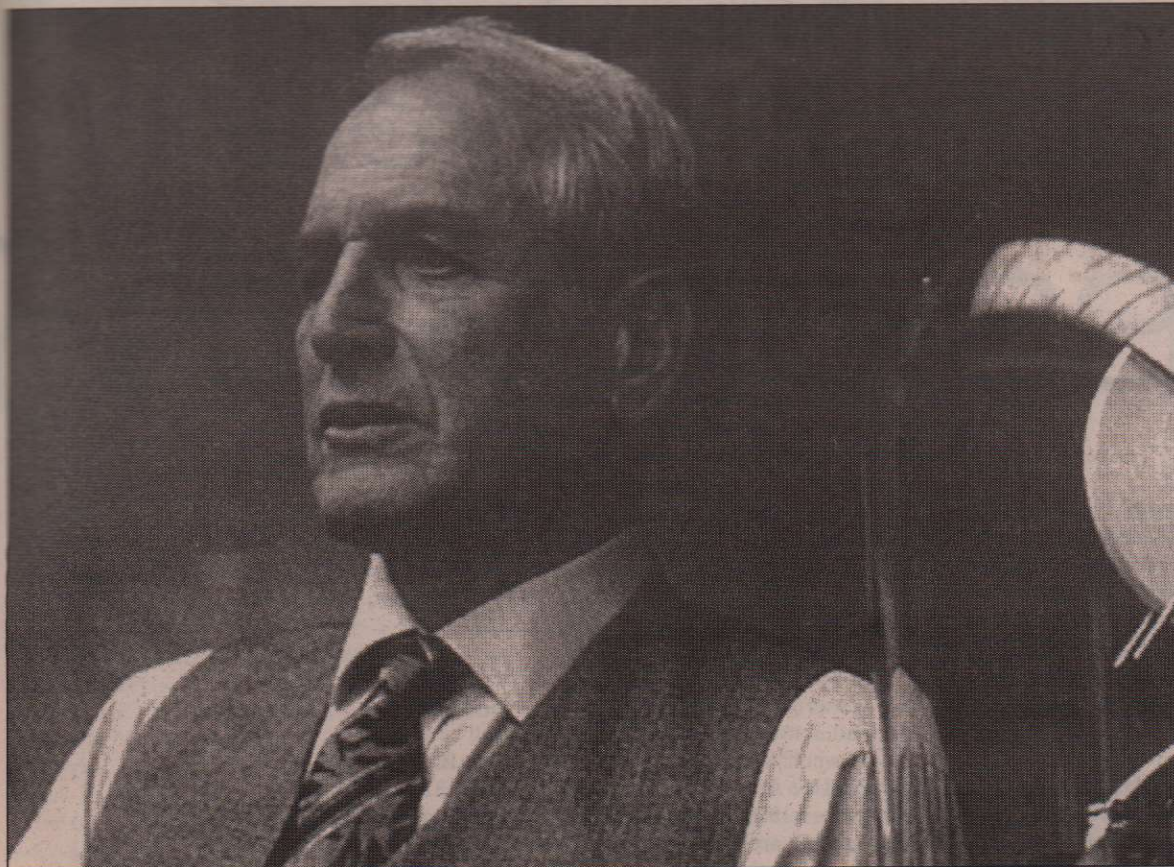
### SHEFFIELD

Thursday 15 September

*"Is socialism possible?"*

7.30, SCCAU, West Street





Paul Newman plays the evil Sidney J. Mussburger

# Too many feel-good factors



Matt Cooper  
reviews  
*The Hudsucker  
Proxy*

Directed by  
Joel Coen

THE writing-directing-producing Coen brothers, Joel and Ethan, come to *The Hudsucker Proxy* with a fine pedigree — the 'eighties nouveau-noir thriller *Blood Simple*, the dark satire *Barton Fink* and the thinking-person's gangster thriller *Miller's Crossing*. All these films were so far above-the-average Hollywood fare that no other recent films could compare with them. Not surprisingly, none of them were big hits despite *Barton Fink* almost collapsing under the weight of the prestigious — but largely European — awards bestowed upon it.

Perhaps this is the root of the problem with *The Hudsucker Proxy*. It wants so desperately to be liked, it wants to make money, it wants to be a big dollar spinning hit. Unlike the Coens' previous

*"Unlike the Coens' previous films, it brims with feel-good factors and tries to be a Hollywood-style light comedy."*

films, it brims with feel-good factors and tries to be a Hollywood-style light comedy.

The film's creative origin is clear from the plot: Hudsucker, a successful Manhattan businessman, unexpectedly throws himself out of the window during a board meet-

ing. Later we discover that, although successful in business, he neglected his personal life. The board — led by the gloriously over-acted company vice-president Sidney J. Mussburger (Paul Newman) — for murky reasons of their own, appoint a naive country lad from the post room, Norville Barnes (Tim Robbins), as company president.

Will he really turn out to be an idiot and ruin the company as the board would like? Or will his innocence and idealism prove to be more than a match for their cynicism? And will he get the girl? She is the hard-bitten newshound Amy Archer (Jennifer Jason Leigh). Archer, incidentally, is one of the best imitations of a role from a film made fifty years ago you are likely to see.

The answers may seem obvious but the film unravels them freshly enough and never lapses into predictability. The whole set-up will, however, seem surprisingly familiar to anyone who knows the films of Frank Capra. In *It's a Wonderful Life* James Stewart is about to kill himself, and an angel shows him what the world would have been like if he'd never been born.

Although *The Hudsucker Proxy* pays homage to, and borrows liberally from, these light comic morality plays of the '30s and '40s, it is not straight imitation. Robbins is clearly not James Stewart and he adds to the spice of surrealism and darkness that pervades the film.

But the darkness sits uncomfortably with its attempt to be some kind of "family entertainment." The problem here is not the dark view of human fragility that the Coen brothers have developed so well in their previous work. It is that now they compromise and make a film that attempts to be more populist than any of their previous works. *The Hudsucker Proxy* is not a bad film, but the makers are capable of far greater things. But at least this film has a plot and characters, rather than just an ensemble of special effects, like so much on our screens is at the moment.

dinners! She tackles the topical issue of dykes who sleep with men.

Dario finds herself justifying the sex she has with a male friend to a hostile jury of unconvinced lesbians, who see her as "collaborating with the enemy."

The political significance here is one of self-definition and choice and Dario successfully attempts to counteract some stifling attitudes and labels about sex and sexual relations — a hang-over from radical feminist influence in the lesbian and gay community.

As Dario insists: "When a gay man sleeps with a woman he's still gay, but it's different for dykes."

Lesbians need and deserve a film like this, as we have long been under-nourished in the film department. The verdict on *Go Fish*? Go see!

# A positively sexy film

Charlotte Wade reviews *Go Fish*

AT LAST, a film about lesbianism that doesn't document a tortuous coming-out process or feature a woman who realises she's straight after all.

Instead we have a positively sexy film that tells us what we knew all along: it's cool to be a dyke-about-town in the 1990s.

The film follows the lives of a group of urban lesbians in their day-to-day work, banter and romance. They're hugely amiable, tell vocal homophobes to "fuck off" in the street and have lots of hot, raunchy sex.

Max gets together with Dario's room-mate, Eli, a somewhat reformed hippie after a recent haircut, while Dario herself has more girls than hot

# Not subtle, not social and not scientific



Edward Ellis  
reviews *The  
Human Animal*

BBC1  
Wednesdays

CATCHING THE last half of the *Best of 'Allo 'Allo* on BBC1, I was thinking that nothing could possibly compete as *Biggest Pile of Crap* on TV. That same night, on that same channel, I was proved wrong. Desmond Morris' *Biology of Love*, the latest in his *Human Animal* series, was — incredible as it may seem — even worse than 'Allo 'Allo.

Morris brings to these programmes (and this is just a more visually risqué version of his 'seventies show *Manwatching*) the authority of Science. Morris himself seems to be a sociologist, biologist, psychologist and zoologist all rolled into one TV-friendly package. In fact he is a zoo keeper who also paints. His knowledge of sociology is so rudimentary that one wonders if he has ever lived in society at all, or if his knowledge of it is gained exclusively through watching voyeuristic hidden-camera footage of boys on motorbikes chatting up girls with long hair, or couples in restaurants holding hands.

Whether he has any knowledge of psychology whatsoever is open to question. Certainly, the most disturbing thing about his programmes is that while they barely contain a single statement that is not highly debatable, not to say absolute nonsense, they are presented, and unfortunately probably taken by many viewers, as state-of-the-art Scientific Knowledge.

This programme was supposed to explain the 'function' of love. Unsurprisingly, this turned out to be making babies. Morris presents us with a series of images of human behaviour, which he asserts are instinctive rather than cultural, and therefore essentially similar to the behaviour of monkeys, birds and even insects, and happily ignores anything which might contradict his assertions.

Actually, he does worse than ignore them. He mentions them, only to carry on regardless. Thus, after twenty minutes of informing us that an attractive woman must have big breasts, full red lips, long legs and no body hair (the chief evidence for which being provided by a couple of fashion editors doctoring photographs) we are shown a South Indian village where the men like their women hairy. This contradicts the last twenty minutes, doesn't it? Far be it for our scientific expert to notice.

Similarly, after being told that it is 'universal' for male beauty to consist of firm muscles and wide shoulders (if women wear shoulder pads, it is only to imitate men), we are introduced to the Masai tribe, who evidently don't share this prejudice. Once again, the fact that this contradicted everything previously said, which explained attractiveness according to certain biological imperatives, was overlooked.

Morris loves his hidden cameras,

eavesdropping on, among others, a couple allegedly on their first date. (How the cameraman knew they were on their first date is not explained; nor are we given any assurance that the subjects did not at least suspect they were being filmed). We are shown what is self-evidently a 'courtship ritual' unique to a very specific set of social circumstances (you would not, for example, witness the same scene in contemporary Saudi Arabia, never mind, say, the Middle Ages), and grandly informed that the behaviour of these people is much the same as that of a particular species of bird.

For a programme about Love, it was pretty weak in defining Love. It was, we were promised, more than just sex. But once again, the idea that Love might be a socially-constructed concept was too much for our scientific expert. Arranged marriages got a mention, and we were indeed treated

*"It is an outrage that this nonsense can be pumped into our homes, presented as irrefutable truth, without so much as a discussion programme to balance it."*

to a short film of a Moslem man holding the hand of his bride, whom he had never seen (including at this moment, for she was completely covered). But Desmond: do you not think this couple might find your concept of Love a bit hard to grasp? Not even a glimmer of recognition from the scientific expert that the world could be a teeny bit more subtle than he supposes.

What resolutely did not get a mention was homosexuality. Indeed, according to Morris' flat-out biological reductionism, homosexuality shouldn't exist, and certainly couldn't qualify as love, there being no apparent biological cause of it ('function' for it, in Morris' phrase). Homosexuality clearly presents a big challenge to Morris' entire theoretical approach. So he simply ignored it altogether.

The BBC carefully describes this series as a 'personal view' which means they aren't taking any responsibility for it. But this will not do. If Morris was less pseudo-scientific, it would be less of a problem. But it is an outrage that this nonsense can be pumped into our homes, complete with heat-sensitive photography of a woman having an orgasm and film the insides of her sexual apparatus (rather less of the man's), presented as irrefutable truth, without so much as a discussion programme to balance it.



# The Liberal tradition on Ireland

## A discussion with T

Early this year Tony Benn tried to get the House of Commons to accept a Bill committing Britain to withdraw from Ireland. He has tried to move the same Bill — modelled, he says, on the Bill which paved the way for Britain's relinquishment of sovereignty in Palestine in 1947-8 — a number of times in the past, with equal lack of success.

On Ireland, Benn, who was a member of the British Cabinet when the troops were put on the streets in August 1969, and now is a fervent advocate of "Troops Out", sees himself as the living embodiment of a very old tradition in mainstream British politics, the Liberal Home Rule tradition.

He is proud to recall — he did it again on Newsnight on 31 August, the day the Northern Ireland ceasefire was announced — that his grandfather was elected as a Home Rule Liberal in 1892, the year Gladstone got a majority for Home Rule in the Commons only to have the House of Lords veto it, and that his father too was a supporter in the House of Commons of Home Rule and then of Dominion status for Ireland.

John O'Mahony reports on a discussion with Tony Benn

**M**ARK OSBORN AND I went to talk to Tony Benn earlier this year. We found the man who has been the most important leader of the mainstream left of the labour movement in his house in Notting Hill Gate, where the basement has been transformed into paper-crammed offices. Despite his 69 years, Benn, who was first elected to the House of Commons in 1951, seems youthful and vigorous. Beginning amicably enough, the interview very quickly became an antagonistic debate.

As regular readers of *Socialist Organiser* will know, we believe that only some form of federal Ireland, with local autonomy for the Protestant-majority area and linked loosely to Britain and to Europe, can provide a basis for ending the present bloody impasse and building Irish working-class political unity. We condemn Britain's record in Ireland, we side with the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, we believe that no viable or democratic settlement is possible within the botched Northern Ireland unit, and we are for British troops out — but we believe that troops out has to be linked to a political settlement. Without

a political settlement, "troops out" could only trigger a drive for "Protestant self-determination" and thus bloody civil war and repartition.

We outlined to Tony Benn why we thought the left was confused and why it was important to discuss Ireland from first principles, as it were. "In one way you represent not only the Labour left, but a whole tradition from way back. How do you see the central problem in Ireland?"

It's a complicated problem. It's a problem of the British conquest of Ireland. It's a problem of settlement in Ireland. It's a problem of economic interest at one stage, which I think has disappeared, in fact I think it's now quite the opposite.

It's a defence problem because of the attitude of the British during World War Two. And the American attitude has been firstly one of protecting Western approaches from the U-Boats and then seeing there was not an independent Ireland between themselves and the Red Army. There's a religious element in it. There's a big class element in it, and trying to disentangle the ingredients of it and make sense of it all is quite complicated.

I think one of the reasons it's difficult is because the question of Irish unity and the question of British jurisdiction are separate questions and they always try to present them as the same question. My understanding is that now the British want to get out. The Americans have got no interest apart from having an Irish-American population which is pro-nationalist in general terms. The British have no economic interest in it.

Mr Major allegedly depends upon [Unionist leader James] Molyneux, but I don't think that is a factor because actually they are never going to bring the government down and end up with a Labour government, so therefore Major is absolutely free to do what he likes. There will be no revolt against him. The last thing any Conservative wants is an election. So, Major is totally secure.

Dublin has no interest in taking over the North. The last thing they want is to find Ian Paisley sitting in the Dail and Loyalist paramilitaries working in a United Ireland. Sinn Fein know you can't force the North into the South. I was trying to unpick it all and see if the bits of the jigsaw puzzle weren't starting to become apparent.

If you are going to get a settlement, first of all you've got to have talks between the two communities in the North. That is absolutely essential. Hume has talked to Adams but now we've

*"The problem is the extrication of the British and the beginning of some serious discussion in the North."*

got to get Sinn Fein talking to everybody else. If you want the British out, you've got to think what the long term relationship is going to be. It is important that the exclusion orders and the Sinn Fein ban, which is now almost irrelevant, are removed.

And when the British government says that it has no economic or selfish interest in Northern Ireland, it must make it clear that there will be a point when British jurisdiction ends. The Bill which I've introduced puts this point at 31 December 1999 — simply to put a marker so that people are starting to move to a new perspective. The thing that has got to be tackled if it is an Irish question — which it is very largely — and if the British occupation is no longer an issue, then how do you get things going?

What I've given is a sort of tour of the ingredients. I think it's very important to understand all these different elements if we are going to be helpful and useful.

And in the end it is of course class, however you look at it, the poor Protestants and the poor Catholics, and the opening up of the possibility

of some class unity within the context of an Irish solution. Then, if the North sorts itself out, its relationship with the South is less of a problem. You can imagine all sorts of arrangements. I don't think that is a problem. The problem is the extrication of the British and the beginning of some serious discussion in the North about its future. I've

telescoped it all, and it's very simplistic, maybe, but that the way my mind is working.

We asked Tony Benn briefly to outline his Bill for us.

It's the fourth bill I've introduced on this point of view. I introduced the first one in 1983, then another one while I was out of the Commons (somebody did it for me), then again in 1984 — basically the same Bill every time.

It's a unilateral act of revocation of jurisdiction. It was based really on the precedent of the Palestine Act of 1947 which simply said that on a certain date, British jurisdiction ended. The latest one has had the date pushed forward to 31 December 1999. But in my opinion, in order to create a framework within which meaningful talks can go on within the North, you have to have a clear date set by the British government after which the Irish have to resolve matters.

"You know what happened after the Palestine Act? War, massacres, struggles for territory?"

But you have to see the alternative. We've had 25 years of bloody war.

"Very low-intensity war".

That's an argument for staying and putting it right. But if there was a date when British jurisdiction ended, one of two things would happen — either there would be a massacre or there would be a settlement.

"Wouldn't it be a massacre?"

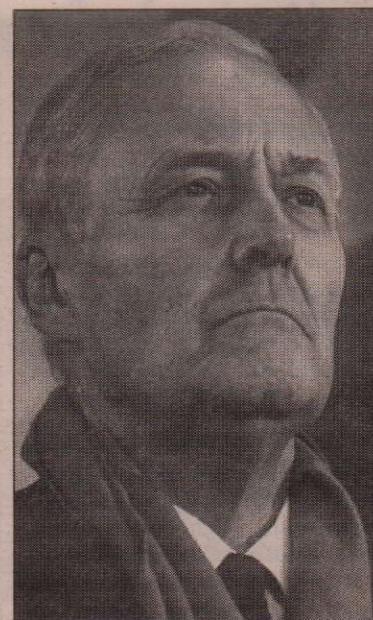
I don't believe it would be for one minute. It's not in the interests of anybody to kill anybody else. What is the interest?

"In Yugoslavia, before it broke up, probably the majority wanted a federation as the most rational thing. Then it fell apart — and the tough guys in the various communities set the pace. They forced people targeted by communal and national opponents to line up behind them. Why would that not happen in Ireland?"

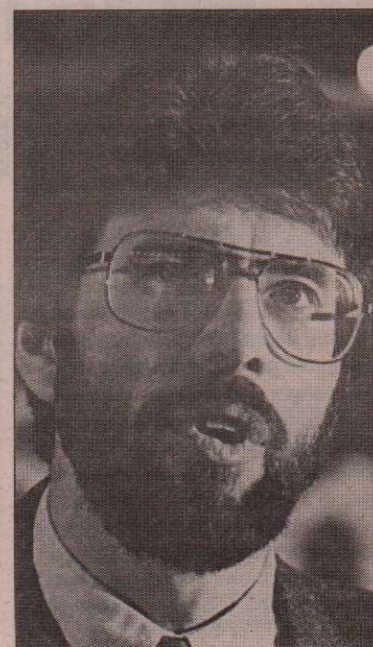
In order to have a massacre, you have to have support for a massacre. What support would there be? There'd be the gunmen, but what interest is there? If there is a massacre you bring somebody else in, you don't bring the British in.

"The UN?"

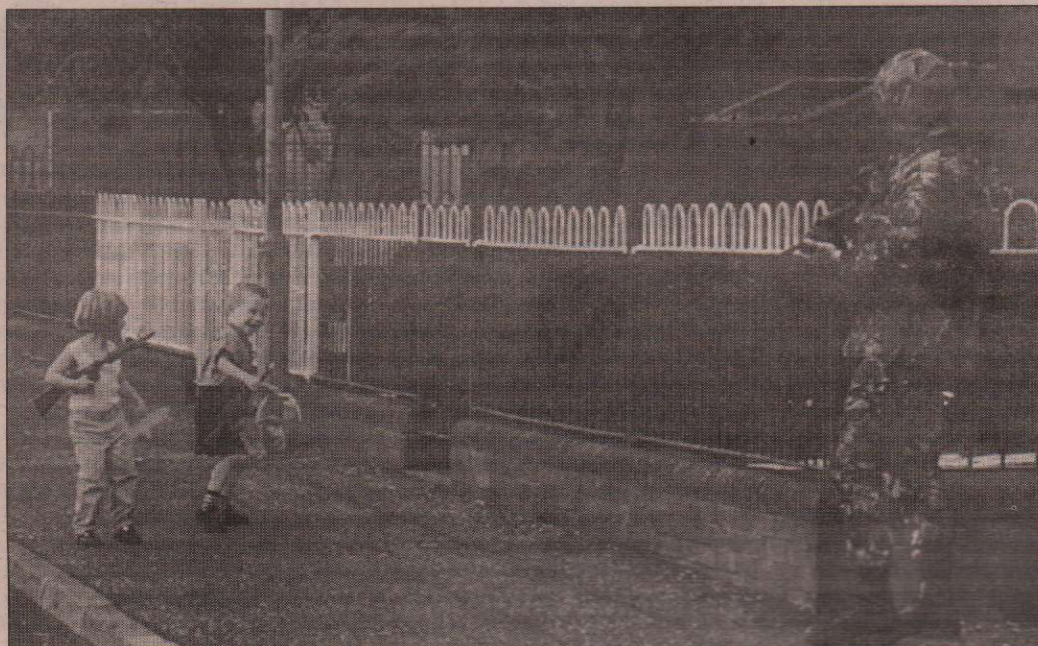
Well, Dublin suggested that in 1969 and I picked it up and used it. But the British troops are the problem. They have no peacemaking role. They



Tony Benn



Gerry Adams



Children play with guns in the Falls Road, Belfast, under the ever-present gaze of British troops



# Tony Benn

have an enforcement role.

We put it to Tony Benn that there is not only the much-discussed Protestant veto, but a dual veto. The Protestants have a veto on a united Ireland; and, since the abolition of Stormont and the failure to establish a replacement in 1975-76 there has been, in effect, a Catholic/IRA veto on Protestant majority rule in Northern Ireland.

After all, the policy followed by Stormont broke down. The reason we sent in troops in 1969 - I was in the Cabinet at the time - was that the B Specials were attacking Catholics, so we were going in allegedly to assist the Catholics from the oppression that was coming from Stormont. But it didn't take five minutes for it all to turn back into another period of repression.

If you talk to Labour ministers involved in Northern Ireland, they will say "We agree with you. We've got to get out of Northern Ireland. But you can't say it". You had a double standard. People thinking one thing privately and saying another thing publicly.

"So you were saying privately in 1969 that Britain should get out?"

In effect, yes. I put it in a paper, I rebuked myself for having left it so long, and sent it to Mason and Callaghan at the end of 1978, saying isn't it time we discussed Ireland. But we never discussed Ireland. There is no interest in Ireland in Britain, no interest in the Cabinet in Britain.

If the Protestants could be absolutely assured that they weren't to be forced into the South, as they can't be, then I think there's a possibility of some discussions going on in the North, and I feel that's what we should be working towards.

"You say that the Protestants can't be forced into the South. So if Britain withdraws, or declares it's going to withdraw, what then? Suppose you're wrong? Suppose there is a sort of Bosnia. What happens then? You think the solution is the UN?"

Well, it's a bit of divide and rule. We are there to protect a million working-class Protestants. I've never known the Tory Party to be interested in the working class in Britain, Northern Ireland or anywhere else, so I didn't ever think that argument was true. But there is a great desire for peace. You may say it's only a limited, low-level terrorism that's going on, but it's killed a lot of people and frightened a lot of people.

"I meant they can live with it".

Well, or die with it, of course.

"I mean the British Government can live with it".

Well, the British Government can and can't, but it's very expensive. I think there is another factor entering into it. The Treasury must be saying "why the hell are we spending all this money on war in Northern Ireland? We can't win".

Talk about a peace dividend! The biggest peace dividend pro-rata in the world is Ireland, because you've got two militarised states and huge poverty.

"But I can't understand what basis you have for believing there would not be a civil war and repartition".

Well, you've got to tell me why there would be.

"Because of what you said yourself. The Protestants can't be forced into a united Ireland".

This is the absolute confusion, that Irish unity and a British withdrawal are the same thing. They are totally separate issues. I'm saying, until it's clear that the British are not going to seek to exercise jurisdiction, serious discussion will never go on.

"But are you saying that the sectarian civil war which would certainly follow within Northern Ireland would not matter?"

I don't accept that it is inevitable. It's the argument every Unionist has always used. I'm not saying that you're putting yourself in that posi-

tion.

But if that is the argument, then frankly the conflict will just go on for another 500 years.

"The problem is, the Northern Irish Protestant people say they're British".

Yes.

"If you put it to them, they say they're British. That being so..." But Benn saw where that was leading and interrupted.

Well, they're all members of the European Union, aren't they? We're all citizens of a single union now, so, in a sense, the question of nationality has been totally dissolved. The Queen now has to have a vote! She can vote in the European elections this summer. So even the monarchy has been removed by the European union.

"Whatever the legalities", I replied, "in real terms nationalism is very powerful, especially in Ireland, and the Northern Protestant Irish say they're British. They are also a compact majority in north-east Ulster, though not in the whole Six Counties. They are a clear majority in about half...."

Well, that's the doomsday scenario, repartition.

"The question is, from what principled point of view should those Protestants be forced out of the UK?"

On what principle...?

"They say they are British".

But who partitioned them? We did. By the bul-

let. We created the Northern Ireland state. It's very easy. I could create a little republic of 12 Holland Park Ave and say we don't have to obey any external laws because there is a 12 Holland Park Ave veto. "I'm not paying the poll tax or the TV licence". And you would say that's democracy? That isn't

democracy at all.

Clearly Tony Benn likes old movies. This was reducing the Northern Ireland question to the old Ealing comedy, "Passport to Pimlico." I continued: "There is no comparison. In Northern Ireland there are one million people who say they are different from the rest of the Irish. They are Irish, but they are a different sort of Irish to my Irish".

Well, they are Scottish settlers, actually.

"Scottish and English settlers - 400 years ago".

Well, it's a mixture. There is a Protestant minority in the South. There's a Catholic minority in the North. There's a Protestant minority in the whole of Ireland. There's an Irish minority in the whole of the UK. Once you start playing the minority game, then I think you are in a difficulty.

"But you see, they are a minority. Gladstone talked about some form of...."

Home rule.

"For the Protestant entity too. He didn't do anything about it." I put it to Benn that the radical tradition in which he stands has a bad record. "The root problem now is that, as you say, Britain's imperialist considerations have more or less gone away, but the division between Irish people remains. It was there before British politicians started playing the Orange card, and it remains now that they have more or less stopped. If you get the British to pull out without a political settlement, there is no reason why you won't get a Protestant/unionist drive for self-determination".

It depends how you see it working. You could imagine circumstances where the North was self-governing without the British troops, then working out a relationship with the Republic.

"The present Six Counties unit could not hold together. It would fall apart. The North would dissolve into civil war. The two communities are clearly divided, though interlaced geographically. There would be Bosnian-style ethnic cleansing".

I understand that. I know you are approaching it from a totally different perspective. But what you are saying in effect is that the Partition was right, it has to be sustained, and the troops have to stay.

"No, I'm not. Listen to what I say".



Protestants protest at the Anglo-Irish deal, claiming that Thatcher was "selling them out" to Dublin.

Well, that's how I read what you say. You say the Partition was to take account of the cultural identity of the North. It was a funny Partition because it included a lot of Catholics who couldn't be put back into the republic.

"It was an imposed partition, not a democratic, intra-Irish settlement".

Because it was done by the Black and Tans and the British. It never was intended to have any ingredient of democracy in it. It was a gerrymandered state which hasn't really worked, and you are saying that if we now were to try a new approach, then it would dissolve into massacre on a Bosnian scale. Now, if you're right about that, and that is the view that some people have taken, then it's quite clear the status quo must go on.

"No, the status quo can't go on. I didn't say that the North represented democracy. I said that the Partition was imposed by Britain, imposed by a Cabinet containing people who had been Unionist, anti-Home-Rule rebels in 1914. It was particularly brutal, so much so as to destroy their possibilities of a viable 'Protestant' state. There is a democratic element, but it's smothered by the vast size of the Catholic minority, which is now over 40%. In a sense, they were so greedy that they destroyed the possibility of a long term settlement".

Well, you are pointing to a repartition, then.

"I'm not sure I am. I'm pointing probably towards the idea that the only basis for a united Ireland is a federal Ireland".

Well, that's what Trotsky said about Yugoslavia in 1911. But then a federal arrangement is not so very different, not so totally incompatible with a withdrawal of British jurisdiction.

"British troops out is a good idea, as one part of a solution. What concerns me is that on the left it is presented as a single demand promising, in and of itself, a solution - not only a solution, but a united Ireland. People think it means a united Ireland, and it doesn't. It can't".

I've never said it does. I've said that you must differentiate between British jurisdiction and Irish unity, as totally different questions. They are absolutely different.

Sinn Fein know you can't force the North into the South. You can't do it, they know that. That's the big change that's occurred. Everybody has crossed the Rubicon.

The British don't want to take it over. Dublin doesn't want to go into the South, and Sinn Fein know they can't force them in. You are facing a new situation here.

A federal arrangement might be the right answer,



## WORKERS' LIBERTY

## TONY BENN ON IRELAND

but the only reason I don't advocate it is that then I'd be saying how the Irish should govern themselves. The two communities in the North have got to sort out their problems.

"The status quo and work for a political settlement?"

The status quo plus a political settlement is just saying the IRA should give up their weapons and come and sit round the table.

"Wouldn't you say that?"

My own opinion is, with the likelihood of loyalist violence, you have to face the reality of IRA violence, and the IRA violence is there. Major is saying "Give up your weapons, sit round the table and it will all be all right". The problem there is that Adams could say that tomorrow, but it wouldn't happen.

That was a quick and surprising this-is-my-side response from the ex-Cabinet minister. Now he checked himself, when I asked: "You don't think there is any prospect of an IRA ceasefire short of a British declaration to get out?"

Well, I don't know. I am a believer in non-violence. I'm not an advocate of violence. The reality is that there is a very strongly entrenched group of people who think that Partition was wrong.

"Isn't there a big element here also of Nationalists wanting land where there has been a different community for three or four hundred years?"

I understand what you are saying, and I've met lots of people who have said it, in the Labour Party and the Conservative Party.

"Is it true?"

Yes. Which is roughly, there will be a massacre if you get out. Stay and hope it all quiets down. It's a perfectly permissible argument, but you have to live with the consequences of your own decision.

"You say that you wouldn't presume to tell the Irish how to govern themselves, and thus you would not advocate some federalist solution. Against that there is the fact that many Northern Ireland people say they are British; the fact that Britain is now in control; and the fact that by pulling out without a political settlement Britain would be making decisions for the Irish people.

"Isn't it better to accept those facts and be positive, and for Britain to seek a realistic solution based on the recognition that there are one million people who would fight to control their own area of Ireland. You base your Bill on Palestine. You know what happened there. Britain abdicated, and the Jews and

Arabs set to fighting for control of hills and towns and advantageous positions."

On that basis you would have stayed in India in order to avoid partition.

"Would anyone seriously dispute that Britain might have withdrawn from India in a less bloody fashion?"

The point is that, unfortunately, major transfers of territory can lead to trouble. If I were to accept your argument, which I don't for one minute because you are putting forward John Major's view - on that basis you would have stayed in Palestine. You'd have had a bloody great war there. You would have stayed in India and maybe partition wouldn't have occurred and so on. I just don't think that is a tenable position.

"There is at least one difference" I pointed out. "Neither in Palestine nor in India were the people British". Benn wouldn't have that. Yes they were, he said, just as British as the Northern Ireland Unionists.

Well, they were. They were in the British Empire.

"They were not British". They were. They were British citizens. Their passport said "British Citizen". They were exactly the same, and there were a lot of people in India who didn't want us to go.

I remember meeting a Maharajah in 1931 when he came here. He was British. He had been given honours by Queen Victoria. The issues over the withdrawal from Empire was like the Falklands. I mean, your argument is a justification for the Falklands war.

"But I put it to you again, there is a difference".

I don't think there is any difference at all, not the slightest bit of difference.

"It doesn't matter, then, that one million people in Ireland are British in reality and say they are?"

What you've got to do is find a way that safeguards their interests without 20,000 British troops being there and repressing a minority which is growing - you say it's 60%, I don't know - probably with birth rates and so on.

"There has been quite spectacular growth recently".

Maybe in 50 years time there will be more Catholics than Protestants.

"But that doesn't solve anything, because the Protestants would still say: we have a distinct identity and we will not surrender it".

You say it wouldn't. Look, I do understand what you are saying, and you are putting a perfectly fair argument to me. It is an argument that is iden-



A man lies dead after the "Bloody Sunday" shooting of a peaceful Catholic demonstration by British troops in 1972.

tical to Major's argument, though approached from quite a different perspective.

"But one can't say that because Major says it, it must be wrong..."

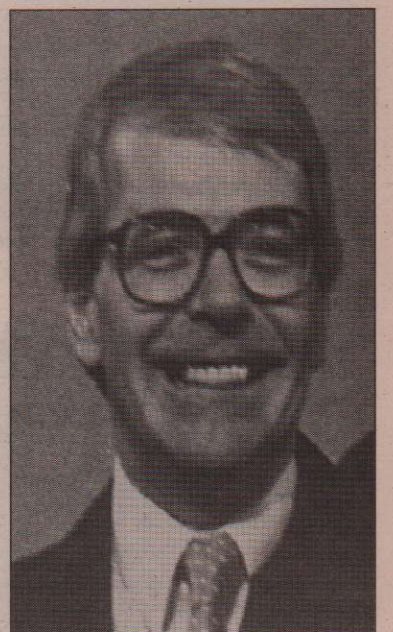
I'm not complaining. I fully understand it.

"Even Major may sometimes be right!"

Well, fair enough.



Albert Reynolds



John Major

## Afterword

BENN WAS NOW impatient to be done, and plainly we had taken it as far as we could go. As we left I found myself reflecting on the oddities of politics and thinking back to 1975, after the Labour Government introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act in response to the terrible Birmingham pub bombings.

With a handful of others, I organised the first public demonstration against the Prevention of Terrorism Act in London. The atmosphere was one of heavy repression - the offices of *Workers' Fight*, forerunners of *Socialist Organiser*, had been raided by armed police at the end of 1973 - and uncertainty: we did not know how severely they would use the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Having chosen to keep an Irish passport, despite many years in England, I seriously feared deportation, and we discussed contingency plans to meet it. And here I was now being called a Unionist by a senior member of the government that brought in the Prevention of Terrorism Act to enable the police to hold Irish people in jail without charge

or trial and to deport them! I thought once more that Benn's belief that he embodies the British radical tradition on Ireland is indisputably true.

He was a member of the Government that put the troops on the streets in 1969, and of the Government that surrendered to the Orange general strike in 1974 and brought in the Prevention of Terrorism Act at the end of that year. He was still a member of that Government when from 1976 they withdrew the political prisoner rights conceded by the Tory government after 1972 and thus sparked the struggles in the prisons and internment camps of Northern Ireland which lasted for years - with men wrapped in blankets through five-year sentences because they refused to wear prison clothing - culminating in the hunger strikes of 1981, when ten men died.

In fact Tony Benn combines the old imperialist-Liberal attitude to the Northern Ireland Protestants with a British-nationalist attitude to Ireland as a whole. Unlike many on the left, he knows that British withdrawal without a political settlement can not lead to a united Ireland. He asserts that the Northern Ireland entity could survive and find a new harmony if Britain abdicated - not come to resemble Bosnia or Palestine in 1947-8. But there is no evidence for this, nor any rational reason for believing it: Benn's attitude, in practice, comes down to indifference to the consequences for Ireland.

There is a very revealing vignette in Tony Benn's diaries for 1979, at the last meeting of the Labour Cabinet which had lost the general election. The man now so impressed with



Protestant paramilitaries too see their fight as "against imperialism"



# Second front on the Tube?

By a Central Line guard

AT LAST IT looks like things are starting to look good for tubeworkers.

After the bitter harvest of defeat we've reaped over the past few years due to disunity between RMT and ASLEF (the two main tube unions) we've now got the prospect of united fight over pay.

Management have arrogantly imposed their derisory 2% pay offer.

ASLEF held a referendum where 72% voted to reject the offer. RMT and ASLEF will now be holding synchronised ballots. The news that the two unions are working together has gone down really well and boosted confidence.

A vigorous campaign should see solid mandates for action and help to link-up the rank and file tube-

workers across the unions and grades. Also, while the fight is over pay, it is against a backdrop of the threat of £48 million of cuts and contracting out of train maintenance, which together would mean the loss of thousands of jobs. Train maintenance staff are also likely to be balloted sooner rather than later. The issues are obviously linked and a solid fight over pay would very likely lessen management's appetite

for further fights over both cuts and contracting out.

The signalworkers' strike has encouraged tubeworkers and the news that we are going into dispute as well should give them a boost. Railtrack and the Tories will clearly be put under a lot more pressure. The last thing the Tories want is a second front opening up. Hopefully that is just what they'll get! Here's to a winter of discontent!

## Signalworkers noticeboard

### LONDON

Monday 12 September  
Public meeting with RMT and Labour Party speakers  
7.30 Red Rose Club Seven Sisters Road N7

Tuesday 13 September  
Speakers: Jeremy Corbyn and Jimmy Knapp  
7.30 ULU, Malet Street, Euston

Thursday 15 September  
7.30 Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, SE13

### CANTERBURY

Wednesday 14 September  
RMT speaker  
8.00 Sidney Cooper Centre

### GLASGOW

Thursday 8 September  
Speakers from RMT and Mike Watson MP  
7.30 Langside Halls, Pollockshaws Road

### BIRMINGHAM

Wednesday 14 September  
Speakers from the RMT  
Rally at 1.00 in Chamberlain Square.

### LEICESTER

Wednesday 13 September  
7.30 Castle Rooms

### NOTTINGHAM

Tuesday 12 September  
7.30 ICC, Mansfield Road

## Knowsley Care workers fight pay cuts

UNISON members employed by the Knowsley Care Society, mainly low paid women workers, striking against proposed cuts in pay and conditions of service of between 10% and 36%.

In 1991 Knowsley, a right wing Labour Council, privatised the Aged Persons' Homes. As a result of union opposition they guaranteed existing pay and conditions, and trade union negotiated rates for the future. The transferred employees also received personal letters from

the then Director of Social Services further guaranteeing re-employment with the council if the Knowsley Care Society folded.

Now they are told that these promises and assurances are not worth the paper that are written on. They face pay cuts due to a financial crisis at KCS, and have been forced to strike.

• Contact, Knowsley UNISON, 60 Admin Buildings, Kirby, L33 2XP

## New TUC, old waffle

By Tom Rigby

THE FIRST annual Congress of what John Monks claims is a relaunched, new, fresh and campaigning TUC seemed very like previous conferences of the tired, old and bureaucratic TUC.

The class struggle in the world outside — and the signalworkers' strike in particular — failed for the most part to impinge on the proceedings of the 126th annual gathering of the parliament of labour. Instead, delegates were forced to sit through what seemed to be an endless succession of General Secretaries waffling on about nothing in particular.

The first serious debate over an issue of real substance came on Tuesday afternoon with the NUM's motion on the anti-union laws which called for "a clear commitment that the next Labour Government will repeal all anti-trade union laws introduced by the Conservative Government since 1979. Congress also calls upon the Labour Party to express its support for positive trade union rights in line with ILO conventions and the United Nations Charter.

"Congress declares its determination to continue to campaign for the repeal of all anti-trade union legislation introduced by the Tory Government since 1979 and urges the Movement to refuse to co-operate with laws which are

designed to render ineffective the rule books and constitution of trade unions, together with the democratic rights of members."

Last year a similar motion won over a third of the votes, but this year, with the giant 1.5 million UNISON not backing the NUM, as it did last year, the margin was far less favourable to the left.

Wednesday will again see the NUM pushing for a fighting alternative.

Their amendment to an exceptionally vague motion on full employment calls for a 32 hour week with no loss of pay, and a ban on non-essential overtime as part of an economic policy based on the principle contained in Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution. Unfortunately the amendment is doomed to fail, with only the RMT and UCATT of the major unions likely to back it.

Those delegates who have gone to Blackpool with the intention of discussing what to do to back the signalworkers will have to wait till Thursday — the last day of Congress — to do so.

That's when the RMT's motion calling on the TUC to organise a £1 levy on all trade unionists for the signalworkers will be heard.

If that policy is passed it will give a real boost to the confidence of the signalworkers and provide a very concrete example of the kind of activity that a campaigning TUC should be trying to organise.

## Victory at Sheffield DSS

By a Sheffield CPSA member

OVER THE summer in Sheffield DSS, claims have built up, waiting areas have been full, the telephone has not stopped ringing. A case for more staff you might think? Apparently not!

Management decided to implement the Government's 7% budget reductions, resulting in fewer staff to do more work.

CPSA and NUCPS members in Sheffield West decided enough was enough. We submitted a claim for 26% extra jobs. Management made a final offer well short of our demands. A joint union meeting in both offices then voted by 116-1 to ban all overtime and request authority for a 3 day strike ballot.

Management offered a further 7 extra staff on top of 7 already conceded. Later they then dropped their insistence on bringing in casuals as a temporary measure and made it clear that extra permanent posts would be arriving in October.

Joint meetings on 6 September overwhelmingly agreed to accept the extra staff, and suspend our action pending the annual arrival of the extra jobs in October. If these are not enough the action will be re-instated.

This local victory demonstrates that even in a difficult situation where jobs are being cut everywhere, united action can force management to back down.

## BT engineers reject new attendance patterns

By a Central London BT engineer

IN A CONSULTATIVE ballot (with an 80% turn-out) 85% of BT's 27,000 customer service engineers have said no to changes in attendance patterns, including a one-off payment of up to £1,000. The ballot followed an end of negotiations with BT over the changes.

The new attendance patterns included working Saturday as a rota day with no premium payment, lengthening of cover on all working days, and management flexibility on start/finish times.

At first the Executive said it would recommend neither acceptance or rejection in the ballot. This position changed, after pressure from several Broad Left Executive members, to recommending a no vote.

The union had asked BT for a reduction in the working week, premium payment for Saturday working, and volunteers only. None of these demands were included in any

serious form in the final proposals put to the ballot.

The Custom Service Improvement Programme (CSIP) has been pushed aggressively by management for the last two years — yet negotiations with the union only finished (unsatisfactorily) a couple of months ago. Each time CSIP is mentioned to staff, it is introduced as inevitable, and something management will compromise on. Yet it gets put off and delayed another 3 months, 6 months, a year.

The CSIP includes the changes in attendance patterns BT wants but also other changes to work practices — like gauging vans at home, receiving the first job of the day at home etc. It is part of an overall strategy to change our patterns of work.

How BT will respond to the ballot result? Firstly, they may return to negotiations with the union and come up with different and more acceptable proposals. But then the NCU would be negotiating from a

position of strength and would demand more from BT. The question is: is BT prepared to concede on CSIP?

Secondly, will BT go ahead with their proposals and force the union to a strike ballot?

The union has told all PCD members not to volunteer for any options to change attendance patterns, and NCU members will stick to this. Any coercion on BT's part would probably lead to confrontations with members being suspended. BT could also consider attempting change in other divisions. Other divisions are waiting on the result for the PC Division but this issue is affecting the whole of BT. The driving force behind the PC changes is the director of Worldwide Networks, Andy Green. Any changes in other divisions would therefore indicate a decision at Board-level to go along with the approach Green has initiated.

Tony Young (the union's General Secretary) and Jeannie Drake (the

Deputy Gen. Sec.) are looking to hold back on industrial action, it seems, hoping for concessions from BT. But they don't know BT will concede anything. Delaying a strike/industrial action ballot is very bad as the whole procedure takes 4 weeks.

By 16 September all PC engineers will be expected to have volunteered for different attendance pattern options. The union is telling all the PC engineers to not volunteer. What happens when, after 16 September, the management still want volunteers?

The first notice of changes to attendance patterns in PC came in an official letter back in July. BT could claim this was a notice of change of contract. By early October they would be able to say the 3 months statutory notice is up. The NCU needs to prepare now and the Executive should decide to put an industrial action ballot into force when it meets this week. We need to show BT that CSIP is totally unacceptable.

## Can John Monks upstage Gene Autry?

THIS IS THE week of the TUC Congress, the supreme council of British trade unionism. Time was when you could follow the debates live on the telly, just like party conferences. I thought that at least Channel 4, with its concern for minority interests, might give events in Blackpool some coverage. But no: when I tuned in on Monday morning, hoping to catch the Mayor of Blackpool's welcome to delegates or John Monks' opening address, all I got was the Gene Autry Story.

Tories and others with a predisposition to write off the trade unions would, no doubt, point to this as evidence of the terminal decline of the movement.

John Monks, however, appears unconcerned at being ousted by a singing cowboy: "Trade unionism is poised to re-emerge as a vital force in British society and this week's Congress will show that the relaunched TUC, with its theme campaigning for change, is gearing up to transform the movement's potential into reality," he told the Morning Star.

Monks is not just whistling in the dark. He can point to some solid grounds for optimism: a national opinion poll commissioned by the TUC shows that 9 out of 10 people think unions are "essential to protect workers". Public support for the signalworkers has confounded the pundits.

Given the importance of opinion polls in Monks' strategy, this no doubt explains the unexpectedly forthright support he gave the strikers at the eve of Congress rally.

The relaunched TUC is upbeat on the European front as well: it has grabbed EC money to open an office in Brussels and is establishing a database that will identify over 100 British multinational firms who will have to set up works councils under a new European law. The old committee structure has been abolished and replaced by "task groups" which are "outwardly focused". Des Wilson, the veteran Liberal PR guru, has been commissioned to advise the "Relaunch Task Group" and management experts have been enlisted to oversee the "Representation at Work and Human Resource Management Task Group". The "special relationship" with the Labour Party is being played down (much to Tony Blair's satisfaction) and bridges are being built with the Lib Dems, CBI, Archbishop of Canterbury and other worthies.

And yet the cruel reality of membership figures cannot be denied: from a high point of 12 million in 1979, TUC — affiliated membership is dipping towards 7 million. Unions (including non-TUC staff associations) represent only one in three employees, according to the government's Autumn 1993 Labour Force Survey. Union "density" (the proportion of workers in unions among different sectors of the workforce) fell from 32 per cent in 1992 to 31 per cent in 1993. More importantly, perhaps, the curve shows that the worst falls in density have been amongst non-manual workers while amongst manual workers it actually rose.

This last statistic will be surprising to many observers who have noted that the general trend over the last 15 years has been a decline in both absolute numbers and density amongst manual workers and an increase amongst professional and technical occupations — especially teachers, civil servants and medical staff. This unexpected development should give Monks and his task group 'experts' pause for thought: their entire strategy has been based upon the idea that the future lies with white collar grades and 'professionals' plus a corresponding assumption that what such workers want from a union is 'services' (ie legal advice, tribunal representation, etc) rather than a collective organisation at the workplace. In the words of MSF general secretary Roger Lyons, "We must start from the individual because we care about each and every member". In fact, all the evidence suggests that people join unions first and foremost to get collective protection and rights at the place of work. Common sense should tell you this, but if John Monks and his task groups want the evidence, they should take a look at some recent research by Colin Whitstone and Jeremy Waddington of Warwick University.

Slick PR and improved internal organisation is fine; good services are self-evidently a good thing and may determine which union someone joins. But if John Monks really wants to re-establish the TUC as a force to be reckoned with in British Society, he should resist the services-based "AA" model of trade unionism and concentrate on promoting "old fashioned" shop-floor organisation. It might even get the Congress back on the telly next year.

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper



# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

# Help Labour beat the BNP!

# Solidarity with the signal workers

By Davis St. Marthe

**V**OTING IN A by-election in Shadwell ward, Tower Hamlets, East London will take place on Thursday 15 September.

Labour faces opposition from the fascist British National Party (BNP) and from the notorious Tower Hamlets Liberals.

In the May elections the BNP averaged 20-30% of the vote in the seats where they stood in Tower Hamlets. In Shadwell these nazis are running a low-level leafleting and canvassing campaign focusing on problems faced by white people.

Local Labour agent Rob Shooter told *Socialist Organiser* that he was confident of a Labour victory and hoped to drive the BNP vote down to 15% or lower.

In the May local government elections Labour took 55-60% of the vote in Shadwell, winning the seats by a majority of 900.

Shadwell has a higher proportion of Bengali voters who turn out solidly for Labour — 30% — than Millwall on the Isle of Dogs where the BNP won a council by-election.

In May Tower Hamlets Council was spectacularly taken from the Liberal Party by Labour. Labour were elected on a platform of providing 1,000 new homes during the next four years. According to Rob Shooter plans currently under way suggest that target may be met by the Labour Council.

*It is important that Labour routs the fascists in the Shadwell by-election. If you, your Labour Party or your trade union can help to canvass, meet at 11 Shadwell Gdns, London E1 at 6.00 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, or 11.00 on Sunday morning.*

**T**HE signalworkers' strike is perhaps the most important dispute of the decade so far. If the signalworkers win they will blow a hole in the Tories pay freeze policy and thus encourage other groups of workers to take on this weak and desperate government.

If the signalworkers lose it will be a major blow against trade unionism on the railways. It will strengthen the hand of those defeatists in the labour and trade union movement who say that workers should not dare to take on the Tories and the bosses.

For that reason it is the job of every serious socialist and trade unionist to do everything they can to help the

signalworkers win.

- *Organise workplace and street collections for the signalworkers' strike fund. The RMT are asking the TUC to levy every trade unionist £1, but the money will only materialise if rank and file trade unionists do the work.*

- *Invite a signalworker or RMT activist to talk to your union, Labour Party or student organisation.*

- *Set up a signalworkers support group with other trade unionists in your area in order to better co-ordinate solidarity activity.*

- *More: pages 3 and 15*

• Solidarity with the signal workers •

**RMT Southern District Council  
and London signalworkers'  
support groups**

# London rally

**7.30pm Tuesday 13 September**

Manning Hall,

University of London Union,

Malet Street, WC1

Come along and hear

**Jimmy Knapp • Jeremy Corbyn MP • John Tilley**  
(Chair RMT Strike Committee) • *plus rank and file  
signalworkers and Underground workers*

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