

Socialist Organiser

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**FOR
A
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IRELAND!**



An alliance for what?

Socialist Action's 'Alliance for Socialism' weekend event on 16-17 November marked a new phase in their degeneration towards Stalinism.

Socialists, they told us repeatedly, are defined by whether or not you are 'with people in struggle, with the Sandinistas against imperialism; with the people of Ireland; with the ANC against apartheid ...'

Socialist politics is thus dissolved into middle class populism. Of course, socialists are 'with' all these struggles. But so too are many radical liberals - so, too, certainly, are many people who are not revolutionary socialists. Socialist Action, in fact, are not merely 'with' the struggles: they are 'with' the present leaderships of those struggles.

This leads them not only to their characteristic apolitical fawning towards those leaderships. It also leads them to tell lies about the world and to utterly miseducate their own comrades.

The big rally on Sunday morning included a speaker from the ANC - reasonable enough in itself. Yet this ANC representative was permitted to speak without barely mentioning the existence, never mind the struggles of South African workers with complete political endorsement from Socialist Action.

In the debate on South Africa, John Ross (editor of Socialist Action) and Brian Grogan (leader of the ultra-Castroist minority in SA) denounced the very idea of an independent workers' party.

The ANC is the force leading the struggle, said Ross; the ANC's Freedom Charter defines the issues; and so trade unions should affiliate to the UDF.

A workers' party might sound like a good idea, said Grogan. But look at Ireland! There a workers' party was advocated by those who oppose Sinn Fein.

Noticeable also in discussions with individual Socialist Action comrades was the way that Ireland has been used as a training ground for class collaboration. People are first educated in the notion that a working-class political alternative to Sinn Fein is unthinkable, because Sinn Fein represents revolutionary nationalism, and that is what the struggle is about. They then find easy to swallow alignment with the ANC, the Sandinistas, etc.

Yes, a workers' party will be needed eventually, said Grogan when I talked to him afterwards. But it will come out of the ANC. 'In Ireland the forces for a workers' party will come out of Sinn Fein, and anyone who does not understand that will be

smashed - including our own comrades...'

This concept of politics - lining up uncritically behind whatever big battalions are in the field, and seeing a workers' party as something to emerge at a future stage - must have its effect on Socialist Action's concept of socialism itself. Many if not all SA supporters see Cuba - with no free trade unions, no right to form workers' parties or publish papers, no free political debate, etc. - as a model of socialism.

Its political results for Socialist Action, and in particular what is left of their youth, are catastrophic.

The concept of 'critical support' for liberation struggles - a concept absolutely basic to independent, working class socialism - is utterly alien to them. For socialists, support for middle class nationalists has to be combined with a fight for the political independence of the working class.

Socialist Organiser were condemned as "an echo of the Washington Post" for criticising the Sandinistas' banning of strikes! Echoing the Stalinist 'Friends of the Soviet Union' in the 1930s, they lectured us pompously: "we support real leaders of a real revolution. You people just criticise from the sidelines. The question is, are you with the Sandinistas? etc., etc., etc..."

Slogan

In British politics SA's current slogan is 'An Alliance for Socialism'. This means drawing specially oppressed groups into the labour movement and defending their rights. So far, so good. Only the 'socialism' that the 'alliance' is for is so vaguely defined - Ross gave 101% endorsement to Andrew Glyn's recent pamphlet, 'A Million Jobs a Year', which defines socialism basically as a series of government controls over prices, trade, investment, etc. - that the 'alliance for socialism' becomes little more than a quirky version of Jesse Jackson's 'rainbow coalition'.

Ross went so far as to call Glyn's pamphlet "a fantastic document... I say again a fantastic document..."

The idea that socialism in the first instance is about the working class seizure of power and control by the working class over society is complete lost from Socialist Action's politics.

Despite a lot of big-name speakers on the programme - Tony Benn, Peter Heathfield - only some 200-300 people attended the event, fewer than the number of hard-core supporters SA was claiming only recently.

Get propaganda out

Paul Whetton's diary

UNFORTUNATELY we have been forced into a position where we have got no option but to go to court and bow and scrape in order to get the NUM's money back.

It was unfortunate, but something that had to be done. Of course the papers tried to personalise it and say that it was Scargill this and Scargill that, but the fact that the entire executive was present shows some unity. I was pleased to see that.

Lack of money is a hell of a problem for us in Notts. Everything we're doing, we're doing on a shoestring. We really can't carry out an effective campaign without some more cash.

The lads have been absolutely great, but the lack of finance is a handicap.

We're still managing to get some propaganda out. We're trying to concentrate now on the political fund ballot on 4 December. That's something we're hoping to use to get dishing membership cards out and organising the ballot.

The Coal Board is being as obstructive as possible. They still haven't recognised the NUM in Notts despite what the Coal Industry National Reference Tribunal said last Tuesday, 12th.

The tribunal ruled that: 1. The NCB must recognise and negotiate only with the NUM in respect of miners.

2. At local level only the NUM is to be recognised by the NCB.

3. The NCB must recognise area unions such as those in Notts and Derbyshire appointed by the national union to represent its members.

We put this ruling round the pits and it gave the lads one hell of a lift. But then Lynk sent a letter out saying that was all nonsense and the National Reference Tribunal said nothing of the kind.



Organise the minority prepared to fight. Photo: John Harris.

What Lynk has done is taken one sentence out of the preamble, totally misquoted it, and said that the tribunal doesn't see the issue as in their jurisdiction.

But that was the Board's claim. The National Reference Tribunal has ruled that the NCB must recognise only us.

Wavering

People are wavering. Although some are still coming over and signing up with us, others are wavering and saying 'how can you represent us: you've got no facilities and the Coal Board has not recognised you'.

So it's important to the

lads to see that we are recognised.

I've no doubt that there will be certain pits and certain individuals outside Notts trying to scramble onto Lynk's bandwagon, and it's to be expected in the early stages. But it will peter out if the Area leaders pull their finger out and start doing some campaigning.

If they sit back and allow the breakaways to make the running, then it is going to be more difficult.

I went to Stoke-on-Trent on Sunday. There are some good comrades there and I was quite pleased by their attitude at rank and file level. They laid plans for taking the

fight to the membership, getting the women involved and using them to do leafleting where lads have been threatened with the sack - they've got it pretty well understood.

But again I need to stress the point that Area officials have got to get involved. They have got to get out and take the campaign to the members - not sit back and allow the UDM to make the running.

At Bevercotes we should have a NUM pit bulletin out this week with a bit of luck. There's also a special copy of The Miner coming out, I believe, and we shall be putting that around too.

Attempted blackmail

PCL occupied

By Paul Gamble (External Affairs, Manchester University Student Union)

what actually happened at the Waddington meeting and to counter the press lies.

The issues raises some interesting questions. It is quite apparent that the uni-

ly in my view, did not say it would give no platform to Waddington, although we firmly believe that the immigration policies he administers are racist. However, in giving him a platform, we did not guarantee that our members would quietly listen to the man responsible for destroying the families and lives of hundreds of people every week. He was quite clearly shown the strength of opposition both to himself and to the immigration laws he supports.

The Student Union must now build a campaign to defend our autonomy from the dictates of the University officialdom. When the report is published we should picket the meeting of University Council that decides what the University should do to the Student Union.

We are already using our contacts with the campus trade unions, especially the AUT, to safeguard against risks of identification of our members. We must increase these links and also involve Manchester City Council, who have representatives on University Council, to defend our members.

THE administration of Manchester University has attempted to blackmail the Students' Union after the visit of Tory minister David Waddington on Friday 8 November.

After a large and vociferous demonstration Waddington, the minister for immigration, was drowned out when he tried to address a packed meeting of students.

The university administration has reacted by threatening to withdraw £25,000 of Manchester University Student Union's block grant, and is demanding a full inquiry into the events surrounding Waddington's visit which will name all students involved and a letter of apology to Waddington.

The Student Union has already reaffirmed that it will not under any circumstances identify students protesting against Waddington and the racist immigration policies he administers. Neither will we issue a letter of apology to Waddington.

Nor should we answer the University's inquiry into the stewarding of meetings in our own building.

The Student Union, right-

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For a united Ireland!

"... BRITAIN has sold out the Unionists because they could not defeat the IRA. Britain has given the Republic effective joint authority in the North in return for cooperation in defeating the Provisionals..."

That was John McMichael, a representative of the powerful Protestant paramilitary organisation, the UDA. He speaks from a viewpoint which is not ours, but what he says about the reasons for the deal is essentially true.

To undermine and suppress the Republican movement is the immediate goal of the Anglo-Irish agreement. If there are any gains for the constitutional nationalists in the deal those gains are a by-product of the Provisionals' war against Britain.

To say that, and to say that against the British army we solidarise with the Provisionals, is not necessarily to say that it makes any sort of sense from a Republican or socialist point of view to continue that military campaign. But it is to give the Anglo-Irish deal its proper parentage.

Back in 1882, around the time that the Fenian faction known as the Invincibles were conducting a small-scale terrorist campaign in Britain, Frederick Engels wrote: "... All that is left to the Irish is the constitutional way of gradually conquering one position after the other; and here the mysterious background of a Fenian armed conspiracy can remain a very effective element..." (Letter to Eduard Bernstein, June 1882).

Ireland

Who gains from the Anglo-Irish deal? The constitutional Irish nationalists — though that does not tell us whether socialists should support it or not. Under the deal, which will be a treaty registered at the UN:

- An Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers will be set up, modelled on the EEC Council of Ministers. Britain will retain sovereignty in Northern Ireland but formally binds itself to involve the Irish government in a consultative capacity and to seek an agreed common position where different opinions exist.

The southern Irish government is thus given immense authority in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

- The Conference of Ministers will meet regularly to discuss matters of policy and 'security' together with judicial matters.

The Intergovernmental Conference will have its own secretariat, based in Belfast.

- It will deal with all matters concerning the Six Counties now dealt with by British direct rule, until such time as responsibility is devolved to a future power-sharing Six County government. If the Unionists continue to refuse to work such a power-sharing government, they thereby leave control of the province in the hands of the British and 26 County governments.

- Both governments declare that the constitutional position of the Six Counties will remain as it is so long as the majority there want it to. Britain formally commits itself to Irish unity if the majority wants that.

- The two governments pledge themselves to support

the setting up of an Anglo-Irish interparliamentary body to debate British/Irish affairs, including the Six Counties.

- Immediately the Intergovernmental Conference will concern itself with 'security' — that is with coordinating political and military activity against the IRA. High on the agenda will be a review of the British Army regiment, the Ulster Defence Regiment, a 97 per cent Protestant force with an evil reputation for anti-Catholic sectarianism.

Efforts will be made to 'improve relations between the security forces and the Catholic community' as a means of undercutting the Provisional IRA.

Opponents of the Anglo-Irish deal range from the Provisional IRA through to the dihard Orangeists.

Nationalists and Republicans say that the agreement means Southern recognition of partition and explicit agreement that no united Ireland is possible unless a majority in Northern Ireland want it. Yes, it does do that. *But it isn't new.*

That has been the de facto position of all the main southern parties, including Fianna Fail, for many decades. None of them, and least of all Fianna Fail which has ruled the 26 Counties for most of the last 50 years has any serious proposal for uniting Ireland.

British commitment to a united Ireland if the majority in N. Ireland wants it is not new either, though a formal and solemn declaration about it is. It has been Britain's position for decades: the strategic importance of keeping Northern Ireland British disappeared long ago. It has been said repeatedly in the last 15 years, most notably when a Northern Ireland referendum was held on the question in 1973.

However painful it may be to Irish nationalists and those on the left who reflect their views to admit it, it is nevertheless true that the central obstacle to a united Ireland is not British opposition but the opposition of one million Irish people.

What is new in the Anglo-Irish agreement is that the 26 County government is being given a direct supervisory role over Northern Ireland, as Britain's partner. The 'consultative' role is less than the equal partnership with Britain by way of a



No democratic solution is possible within the Six County unit

condominium suggested as one option by the New Ireland Forum 18 months ago. But, with Britain legally obligating itself by solemn treaty to consult the 26 County government through a permanent structure on everything to do with Northern Ireland, it is the nearest thing to condominium — lacking only formal British surrender of half-sovereignty.

From their own point of view the Unionists have a very great deal more to object to than Haughey has.

The new arrangement amounts to an attempt to circumvent the Unionist roadblock on progress in Northern Ireland by substituting power-sharing between the British and Irish governments for the Catholic-Protestant power-sharing within Northern Ireland that they have found it impossible to set up since the Orange general strike smashed the Sunningdale agreement in 1974.

Support?

If the Unionists can be persuaded to share power with the SDLP, much of the power being shared by Dublin will devolve to a Belfast home rule government. But that may not happen, or not for a long time yet.

Does it follow that Neil Kinnock is right to give a cautious 'constructive' welcome to the Anglo-Irish agreement? No it does not!

In the first place, the deal's main intended immediate meaning will be increased military-police repression of a big section of the Catholic minority in the Six Counties. In the second place the deal is merely tinkering with the problem of Northern Ireland.

Ireland has a large minority Protestant/Unionist community. That problem could have been resolved rationally and democratically by way of

recognition of the rights of the Protestant minority to regional autonomy and democratic control over a wide range of its own affairs in a united federal Ireland.

Explicit

But after the 1880s each Irish community was allied to one of the two main parties in Britain, when the British ruling class divided on whether or not to give home rule to Ireland — the Catholic-nationalists with the Liberals and the Protestant-Unionists with the Tories.

Instead of a democratic solution the country was torn apart. Ireland was partitioned — roughly along the line of cleavage of the two communities, but within the Six County state, built to accommodate and express the will of the Protestants, a 35 per cent Catholic minority was imprisoned against its will.

This was a bigger minority as a proportion of the Six County population that would all the Protestants of Ireland have been as a minority within a united Ireland.

The original problem of relations between the Irish minority and majority was transformed into a much more complex and intractable set of problems: relations between the Catholics and Protestants in the Six Counties; relations between the two parts of Ireland; relations between Britain and Ireland.

Partition has poisoned everything in Ireland, including the labour movement. It is not true, as Irish nationalists assert, that partition was the first cause of the communal conflicts. Partition was itself a result of the divisions history had created among the Irish people, and the exploitation of those divisions by Britain.

But partition did in turn itself become a cause of much evil in Ireland: it froze the anta-

gonisms, it intensified the hostilities within the artificial Six County state, where the Protestants feared that their big minority, allied to the 26 County state, would replace their Protestant ascendancy with a Catholic ascendancy.

In 1969 the Six County state broke down into incipient civil war. The British army took control of the streets. In 1972 Protestant home rule was abolished. Since then, except for a few months in 1974, Britain has operated through direct rule.

Britain has firmly refused Orange demands for 'democratic government' in Northern Ireland because that would be sectarian Protestant government; the Protestants have treated Britain's demands for power-sharing with the Catholics with strong hostility.

Nothing shows up the inherent untenability of the Six County unit as much as this. On the one hand Britain defends the Six County entity as the proper, legitimate, and only possible expression of Protestant democratic rights. On the other hand Britain refuses to allow the Protestant majority within the Six Counties to exercise its democracy in majority Protestant self-government — because that would be a restoration of the Protestant ascendancy which ended its 50 year life in bloody chaos in 1969.

Hostility

It is absurd. Ian Paisley and John Molyneux have reason, justice and democratic principle on their side when they demand majority rule (and, now, a referendum) if the Six County entity has any democratic validity.

The Six County entity does not express or embody the democratic rights of the Six County majority because the British government dare not let them

exercise those rights within it.

So at best democracy reduces itself to two vetos maintaining the status quo: the Protestants have a right to veto political progress or any move they think may tend towards a united Ireland; within Northern Ireland the Catholics (the SDLP) have a veto on 'progress' to majority self-government. In both cases the veto is backed up by violence (the IRA's for the SDLP) or the threat of it.

Tinkering with the Six County system is no use. That is why it is wrong for Neil Kinnock to endorse the Anglo-Irish agreement. We cannot have any confidence in Thatcher. And the Labour leaders' endorsement of Thatcher is a commitment that the next Labour government will also work the Anglo-Irish agreement, and continue to repress the Catholics who fight against being an artificial, oppressed minority in the artificial state.

Wishes

The Anglo-Irish agreement merely tinkers with the sectarian bearpit Britain made out of the six north-east counties of Ireland when it partitioned the country against the wishes of a big majority of its people, 65 years ago. What needs to be done is to end the partition of Ireland.

The Six County entity must be replaced by a united Ireland within which the mainly Protestant areas can have autonomy; and Ireland as a whole can then negotiate or establish with Britain whatever relations its government and people think best serve the age-old goals of Irish freedom fighters: freedom from foreign oppression and freedom for Ireland to develop in its own way and according to its own lights.

It may be that once Ireland has solved its 'British question' the Irish people will choose to establish close relations with Britain, relations which express and continue the close ties that, for ill and good, that bound and mixed the peoples of the two islands for nearly a thousand years.

It may be that an Ireland which had finally solved its British question would choose to adopt Karl Marx's programme for Ireland, which he expressed thus in 1869:

"I have become more and more convinced... that [the British labour movement] can never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland most definitely from the policy of the ruling classes, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it by a free federal relationship..." (Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 29 November 1869).

Right now, however, as for centuries past, everything is snarled up by Britain's rule in Ireland — the rule of the brutal power which partitioned the country and created the artificial Six County statelet within which nearly 40% of the citizens suffered as an oppressed minority for 50 years before they revolted.

No real progress is possible except by undoing the partition of Ireland and removing British troops. The only framework for a solution, the only democratic programme that the British and Irish labour movements can fight for, is a united Ireland with regional autonomy for the mainly Protestant areas.

No SO next week

Socialist Organiser will not be appearing next week. Our staff will be working on the first stage of our move to our new premises. As a result, since this issue is designed for a life of two weeks it is slightly heavier than

usual. The production of the paper will be seriously disrupted between now and the New Year because of the move. But after that we'll be back with a regular and, we hope, better paper.

Jeremy
Corbyn MP

The Accord must be opposed

THE much-heralded 'accord' between Thatcher and Fitzgerald is in reality an agreement by the coalition government of Ireland to respect the border between the Six Counties and the 26 Counties.

It is the first time this has ever happened.

My view is that the accord should be opposed for those reasons. Certainly the Parliamentary Labour Party members who are concerned about Northern Ireland are meeting to discuss our position.

It is important that the Labour Party as a whole does not become confused by the accord. In fact it does not lead to a reunification of Ireland, it leads to a more permanent division of Ireland in a treaty which could even be ratified at the United Nations.

Predictable

The reaction of the Unionist politicians is very predictable. Their opposition is on the grounds that the government of the Republic is theoretically involved to a very limited degree in the government of Northern Ireland. They see that as a step towards the reunification of Ireland, as indeed does John Hume. But I think it is more the opposite.

There is enormous pressure being put on Liverpool City Council to cave in on its attitude towards central government.

I feel that the most important thing is to unite the anger against the government rather than the labour movement turning in on itself.

I'm totally opposed to any witch-hunt in the party, and indeed the attacks on Militant are, I think, a precursor series of expulsions from the party. The continual interference in the running of certain constituency parties, and the hounding of Militant, are appalling.

We shouldn't be expelling people, we should be trying to recruit people to the battle against this Tory government.

More from SO on Ireland

'Forum' no.2, setting out Socialist Organiser's analysis and ideas on Ireland, has now been reprinted and is available at 50p plus postage from 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Ireland: 1974 and now

Reforming the

The Thatcher-Fitzgerald deal is, or at least may be, the most substantial British government effort to tackle Northern Ireland since the abortive Sunningdale agreement of 1973-4. John O'Mahony looks at the Orange resistance which shattered that deal, and the anatomy of the Northern Ireland conflict.

FOR OVER 50 years there was democratic majority rule in the Six Counties — but in practice this meant Protestant sectarian rule.

The big Catholic minority — something more than one in three of the population — were treated as second-class citizens because they were seen as a mortal threat to the artificial Protestant state into which they had been incorporated against their will.

For decades the convention prevailed that Westminster did not interfere in Northern Ireland's internal affairs, though it retained overall responsibility.

Until the Labour government after 1964 began to put pressure for reform on Belfast, the Unionists were left to get on with it in Britain's sectarian backyard state.

Then the Catholics revolted, demanding 'civil rights' — equality in jobs and housing, and equal votes in local government elections. They modelled their movement in part on the black civil rights movement in the USA.

The IRA scarcely existed, and almost nobody raised the demand for a united Ireland. The Catholic demands were very much in line with what the British government — concerned to improve relations with the 26 Counties — was pressing for. It seemed that the Catholic revolt could be satisfied and contained.

But the Catholic reform movement triggered a big Protestant backlash, which made the situation very explosive, culminating in serious attempts at anti-Catholic pogroms in Belfast and Derry in August 1969.

The British government was forced to take direct physical control, putting the army on the streets. The Unionists were still left in political control of Northern Ireland.

The attempted pogroms and the arrival of the British army revived and brought to the fore the issue of the basic civil right the Catholics lacked: self-determination. The Republican movement split in December 1969 and January 1970, and the Provisional IRA was born.

It grew into a mass movement at astonishing speed, and by 1971 had mounted a powerful armed offensive against the British army and the Six County state personnel.

Internment without charge or trial was brought in in August 1971, but it roused rather than quelled the Catholic community.

By March 1972 the British Tory government felt it had no alternative but to abolish Six County home rule and rule Northern Ireland directly. Thousands of Protestant workers struck in protest.

There now followed a period of energetic attempts at reform from above and the first attempt to substitute institutionalised Protestant-Catholic power-sharing in the Six Counties for major-

ity — that is, Protestant-sectarian — rule.

Britain, backed by the Dublin government, attempted to draw the Catholic middle class into the administration of the Northern Ireland state. The 'Sunningdale agreement' was signed at the end of 1973 between British and Irish governments.

Sunningdale decreed that an assembly would be elected in the Six Counties but that any government formed must be based on the sharing of power between representatives of the Catholic and Protestant communities. Provision was also made for a Council of Ireland to link the Six and 26 Counties, in an attempt to satisfy the nationalist concerns of the Six County Catholics by recognising the 'Irish dimension' of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Britain's problem now was to find people in Ireland who would make this 'half-way' system work. But between August 1969 when the British troops took over the streets, and March 1972 when Britain took over the government, the Protestant backlash had grown to immense proportions.

For decades the Protestant workers had followed the middle class and pseudo-aristocratic leaders of the dominant Unionist Party, linked to the Tory party in Britain. Now many of them broke out of their old allegiances to follow the radical-talking Orange-Unionist bigot and demagogue Dr Ian Paisley.

Beginning in 1971 the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association grew to have 50,000 members by mid-'72, out of one million Protestants — and it was an almost entirely working-class movement.

'Not an inch'

Their slogan was 'Not An Inch'. They would make no concessions to Britain's demand for power-sharing, and pledged themselves to fight rather than accept anything that smelt of a united Ireland or threatened a future united Ireland.

So who would Britain get to work the new power-sharing system? Britain tried to base itself heavily on the Catholic community and the new constitutional nationalist party, the SDLP.

In January 1974 a power-sharing executive was set up, supported by a coalition of the SDLP and a sizeable Unionist minority splinter led by Brian Faulkner, who now became prime minister. The stable core of this government was the SDLP, which had the overwhelming majority of Catholic votes (Sinn Fein was illegal). Not only were the Faulknerites a minority of the Unionist camp; they reneged on the promises that got them elected when they formed the power-sharing executive.

Still, the prospects for Britain's strategy did not seem



Loyalists go mad

entirely bleak at the beginning of 1974. The IRA seemed to be in decline. The SDLP and the Faulknerite Unionists had a majority in the Assembly. The Paisleyites and similar die-hard Orange supremacists were bottled up as a minority in the Assembly and reduced to seemingly impotent demonstrations and threats.

Britain would put in money to nurture, sustain and ultimately give autonomous life to its creation. Jobs and patronage at the disposal of the executive would help it build up support. In four or five years, before the next election, things would change.

The transplanted political organs would take and hold in the Six County body politic. The sectarian state would be transformed into its opposite. Inter-communal democracy would be substituted for the drum-beating Orange supremacist democracy of the Northern Ireland state's first 50 years ('the Protestant majority rules — OK').

But it was like transplanting the heart and brain of a man into the body of a dog.

The Six Counties was designed for sectarian majority rule so long as the Protestants wanted it — and no other democratic system was possible there.

In the event the British miners' strike smashed all Britain's hopes of a new start a mere matter of weeks after the power-sharing executive was set up. Trying to browbeat the miners, prime minister Edward Heath decided to go to the electorate with the question 'who rules, the government or the miners?'

The Tories lost the election in Britain, but that didn't matter too much to the ruling class be-

cause it was Harold Wilson who won it, a reliable person to pull the ruling class's chestnuts out of the fire and demobilise the working class.

But for the British and Irish

ruling classes' policy in Northern Ireland the February 1974 election brought catastrophe.

The Orange die-hards were no longer bottled up as a minority in the Northern Ireland Assem-

WHAT THEY SAY

Sinn Fein

ACCORDING to Sinn Fein, by agreeing to a Loyalist veto on a united Ireland and by formally recognising the Northern Ireland state, Garrett Fitzgerald's government "has torn up Articles 2 and 3 of its constitution". The "cast-iron guarantees" given to Loyalists showed that Fitzgerald had "capitulated" to Mrs Thatcher's rejection last year of the Forum report.

Sinn Fein's statement continued: "Mrs Thatcher's interest is to stabilise the Six County state and to neutralise Irish nationalist aspirations through a mixture of appeasement and ongoing repression to which Garrett Fitzgerald has committed the Dublin government."

"The reaction of outrage from Loyalists is as predictable as it is stupid given Thatcher's assurances and Fitzger-

ald's agreement that their veto remains and is to be copper-fastened in a 'treaty'

"The reaction of outrage from Loyalists is as predictable as it is stupid given Thatcher's assurances and Fitzgerald's agreement that their veto remains and is to be copper-fastened in a 'treaty' at the United Nations.

"Sinn Fein believes that the claims of progress made by the Dublin government, and which will undoubtedly be heralded by the leadership of the SDLP, are hollow claims. The formal recognition of the partition of Ireland is a disaster for the nationalist cause and far outweighs the powerless consultative role given to Dublin.

"Garrett Fitzgerald insults the long-suffering nationalist people of the Six Counties when he tells us in Gaelic that we can now raise our heads. It is because we have raised our heads and made sacrifices for our civil and national rights that the running sore of British involvement in Ireland has been

irreformable

bly. The election allowed them to conduct what was in effect a referendum on power-sharing. And they won 11 out of the 12 Six County Westminster seats.

A shattering blow was thereby struck at the executive, and the die-hards were immensely encouraged. The situation inevitably become more and more explosive as Faulkner and the SDLP tried to press on with the Sunningdale programme.

The spark that blew the new structure apart was struck in May 1974 when the Assembly majority voted to activate the Council of Ireland provision in the Sunningdale agreement. A general strike was called by the UDA and the 'Loyalist Association of Workers', an unofficial trade union body which had much support in the Belfast shipyards and other Northern Ireland industries.

Due to anti-Catholic discrimination in employment, Protestants dominated most of Northern Ireland industry. As early as the beginning of 1971 workers from the shipyards had marched to demand internment, led by Billy Hull, a one-time Northern Ireland Labour Party candidate.

Now — perhaps learning from events in Britain — the Orangeists were playing the industrial card, attempting to use one of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of the working class to bring down power-sharing and the Council of Ireland and to restore majority rule — that is, Protestant Ascendancy.

At first response to the strike was tepid. Intimidation by the UDA and other militants was necessary. But intimidation alone could not have produced the tremendous strike movement of bitter opposition to power-sharing and the Council of Ireland that now rolled across much of Northern Ireland. The British authorities responded

weakly, and soon the whole of Northern Ireland was at a standstill.

The reactionary Protestant backlash had found its weapon: the revolutionary general strike, and used it for its own purposes.

Like Republicanism in Wolfe Tone's time, the die-hard Orange cause too was now reduced to reliance on 'the men of no property'. And the Protestant men and women of no property faced the Catholic men and women of no property, glaring at each other murderously, guns and bombs in their hands, across the sectarian divide.

Caricatures

Everything in Northern Ireland politics is a nightmare world of caricatures, ghastly parodies and hopelessly scrambled identities: Loyalists who organise rebellion against their own government; reactionaries who use the general strike; Republicans on whom circumstances have stamped a mere Catholic nationalist identity; and now Official Unionists who accuse Mrs Thatcher of running a 'colonial administration' in the Six Counties to the disadvantage of the majority community there!

Early in the 1974 general strike the TUC attempted to organise a march 'back to work' in Belfast. A few hundred immensely brave workers marched behind TUC general secretary Len Murray. But the TUC had no weight or support. And the government continued to do next to nothing.

Some commentators have talked of politically-motivated refusal by sections of the British Army to act against the Orange strike. Others explain the government's passivity by its inability to run the power stations with troops alone. Whatever

the reasons, the Labour government did not try to break the strike.

After two weeks of paralysis the Faulkner Unionists resigned and the Labour government capitulated. The Faulknerites were to blame the inactivity of the Labour government for their inability to carry on and for their own subsequent political destruction.

The attempt to graft power-sharing 'pluralist' political structures onto the Six County entity which had been deliberately carved out, weighted, balanced and designed to be run by an entrenched Protestant majority had failed. Northern Ireland society had rejected the alien structures. It was back to direct rule.

The Labour government had run away from the Orange challenge. But it chose to spend the subsequent 18 months pretending it hadn't allowed all hopes of power-sharing to be smashed in May 1974.

Sunningdale had been a deal between political parties and governments. Labour announced that there would be a new approach. A constitutional assembly would be elected which would meet for as long as it liked and thrash out agreed proposals for Northern Ireland's political and constitutional future.

Britain insisted that any new political structures would have to be according to the principle of power-sharing. But it was a foregone conclusion that any such assembly representing the people of the Six Counties could not come up with proposals that would meet Britain's minimum conditions. The venture was a dangerous exercise in helpless procrastination.

The constituent assembly sat through 1975 and into early 1976, and finally produced a majority report which called for majority rule. There were serious fears in 1975 that the constituent assembly majority would declare itself a provisional government.

Early in 1976 Britain dissolved the assembly and settled into a long period of direct rule. It was stalemate and stasis. The constitutional nationalists in the Six Counties (backed implicitly by the IRA) had now got a veto on change within the Six Counties to parallel the Orange veto on change in the relations of the Six and 26 Counties.

From 1972 to this day a 'temporary' 'Act of Union' has been restored between Britain and Northern Ireland. Thus the British government registered, without admitting it, that Northern Ireland on its own is a non-viable political entity, on any basis other than sectarian majority rule.

The long period of direct rule was to see the Labour government take back concessions made by the Heath government to the political prisoners and set in motion the chain of tragic events that led Republicans, refusing to comply with new prison regulations designed to emphasise their status as common criminals, to spend years in filthy cells wrapped only in blankets. This culminated finally in the deaths of ten hunger-strikers in 1981.

The next attempt to graft alien power-sharing political structures onto the sectarian bearpit state came in the wake of those



Everyday life in Ireland. Photo: Camerawork.

hunger strikes, in 1982.

An assembly was elected and told it could be a powerless talking shop or cumulatively acquire control of government departments according as it could agree to power-sharing in any of them. This was called 'rolling devolution'.

The assembly has existed for three years now, sitting in the old government building at Stormont. Both the revolutionary nationalists, Sinn Fein, and the constitutional nationalists, SDLP, boycott it, and it is no more than a Protestant talking shop. The UDA recently made the demand that it should set up a provisional government, but the assembly counts for nothing.

Depend

The Anglo-Irish agreement is a much bigger structure into which the assembly may eventually fit as a subordinate part.

The essential feature of the Anglo-Irish deal, compared with the approach tried at Sunningdale, is that it does not depend on agreement between the Northern Ireland communities, nor on any agreement between a representative elected body in Northern Ireland and the Dublin government. The big two in Dublin and London have dealt directly with each other, acting 'in loco parentis' for the two Northern Ireland communities.

Power-sharing has now become power-sharing between Dublin and London. If it is eventually paralleled by power-sharing 'on the ground', well and good. But it does not need to be, for now. The deal does not depend on it. It will not collapse without it. Anglo-Irish power-sharing can survive without Pro-

testant-Catholic power-sharing.

If the Protestant and Catholic leaders in Northern Ireland want it to, the existing assembly can take on most of the functions now in the hands of London — with Dublin admitted in a consultative capacity. The exception is 'security', included in the agreement for Dublin consultation, but not open to be taken over by the assembly.

But the deal does not depend on the assembly doing anything. Even should the Orangeists manage to achieve something like the 1974 general strike, there is no obvious target they can hit, no locally-based, vulnerable keystone to the whole edifice like the assembly-based power-sharing executive was in 1974.

Decisive action against this system will be very difficult. The main weakness of the structures now being set up will probably lie in the South: Charles Haughey's opposition is more likely to smash it than Protestant direct action is — though Haughey's opposition may be less hard if he comes to form a government in 1987.

Flexible

The parallel is with the Prior-Tebbit anti-union laws, which were drafted to be far more flexible and to offer fewer targets for direct action than the Carr-Heath anti-union law of the early 1970s.

The decline in working-class militancy stopped the Prior and Tebbit laws from being put up against the sort of working-class direct action that smashed the Carr-Heath law. Militant opposition to the Anglo-Irish deal may

well be much fiercer than opposition to Prior-Tebbit. The odds are heavily against them at present, but the Six County Unionists may make Northern Ireland ungovernable.

And then what?

What the Anglo-Irish deal shows above all and yet again is that the Six County entity is a nonsense. After 13 years of (rightly) refusing to let the Six County majority whose democratic rights the Six County statelet is supposed to express and protect, exercise those political rights to self-government there, Britain got together with the Irish government and decided on a version of power-sharing which dispenses with the consent of the majority of the Six County population! Their formula is inter-state power-sharing over the heads of the people and against their wishes. They are not too far from Bertold Brecht's fable of the government which 'elected' a new people when the existing one displeased it.

Geoff Bell, author of 'The Protestants of Ulster' and other books on Ireland, who was Hackney North constituency delegate to Labour Party conference, has written a reply to John O'Mahony's article assessing the debate on Ireland. This will appear in the next issue of Socialist Organiser.

ABOUT THE DEAL

addressed at all.

"Today's agreement amounts to the total abandonment of SDLP, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail assurances that they would not accept any internal Six County arrangement.

"Sinn Fein's position remains clear. We will continue to give principled leadership to the nationalist people. We reject British involvement in Irish affairs and we reaffirm that real peace can only be achieved through British disengagement and the Loyalists coming to terms with the rest of the Irish people".

(Source: Irish Times)

SDLP

JOHN HUME, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the constitutional nationalist party in the Six Counties, is considered the originator of the process which last Friday produced the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The Anglo-Irish agreement could therefore be expected

to find favour with the SDLP. In fact it looked for a while as if a serious rift had appeared in the SDLP over the terms of the agreement.

Deputy leader Seamus Mallon was reported to be in step with Charles Haughey's criticisms of the deal. In fact Mallon as well as Hume welcomed the deal, saying that it gave some hope to Northern nationalists that "at last the closed and shuttered doors of Northern Ireland have been slightly prised open.

"The statement in the agreement that the British government would bring forward legislation to establish Irish unity if and when a majority in Northern Ireland so wished goes further than any previous statement by the British government on this issue".

Mallon added that Fitzgerald had indicated that the Dublin government would not ratify the European Convention on Terrorism until changes had been made in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

DETAINEEES SPEAK OUT

This report taken from FOSATU Workers News tells of several workers and trade union militants arrested by the South African security forces.

The fact that the paper covers such issues shows that FOSATU does not limit itself to campaigning and fighting on simple bread and butter issues.

The Helicopter: The victim's hands are handcuffed beneath his knees and he is suspended somehow on a stick between two tables. He is kicked so that he spins on the stick. While he is spinning on the stick, the victim is beaten with sjamboks.

This is how Siyolo Mashiqana, a worker at Pilkington who was detained on July 25, describes a common form of torture allegedly used in interrogation at the Louis Le Grange police station in Port Elizabeth.

Tales

His is just one of the many tales of police assaulting detainees. Brother Mashiqana's affidavit along with others was used in support of a Supreme Court application brought against the Minister of Law and Order and several high ranking Eastern Cape police officers on September 25.

In another affidavit, Vusumzi George describes how on July 21 at about 2.30 a.m. the police woke him up by throwing stones on the roof of his house and hammering on all the windows and doors.

'Eventually the police gained entry by breaking and climbing through the window'.

'Two plainclothes policemen entered my bedroom where my wife and I were sleeping. My wife was nine months pregnant but the police nevertheless beat her and myself with quirts'.

'Shortly after the arrest but before I was placed in the back of the land-rover, I was assaulted by being dragged violently across a wooden fence pole and having my foot heavily stamped upon'.

Vusumzi George was taken to St. Albans prison where he was placed in a cell with 10 to 15 other detainees.

One week after he had arrived in prison, he says, he was taken to Louis Le Grange police station for interrogation.

'While questioning me...they made me sit on the floor with my hands handcuffed behind my back and forced my legs open by beating the insides of my thighs with sjamboks. They then



Soweto 1976

attempted repeatedly to kick me in my private parts'.

'They then asked me if I had seen Dennis Neer. I said I had and that he had a bruised face. They then said that if I did not tell the truth I would end up like Dennis.'

'They then beat me with a sjambok on my back and chest and smashed my toes and head with a short wooden stick. They then took me to another room and four black policemen forced me to do physical exercises until I was exhausted.'

'They then made me hold a chair above the heads of the other detainees, while I was forced to crouch in an uncomfortable position. During this no questions were asked.'

'Then Tungata, another security policeman, came in and ordered me to stand as if I was embracing a metal filing cabinet. He then began punching me in the kidneys from behind and hammering me on my shoulders with two fisted blows. He repeated this type of assault a number of times and then beat my ears with open hands. He then threw me onto the floor while kicking me and asked me questions.'

'Two other policemen entered the room and assisted with the general assault which lasted about half-an-hour.'

'Tungata and two other policemen who had recently entered the room, took me to the next door room and beat me with their fists and their open hands until I began screaming. Two or three white policemen then came into the room and one of the three brought a wet towel which was placed tightly around my face and head. While the towel was suffocating me they beat me. They then removed the towel from my face and throttled me,' said Vusumzi George in his affidavit.

Steward

A National Automobile and Allied Workers Union shop steward at General Motors, James Tamboer, was detained at 3.30 a.m. on July 22.

He writes in his affidavit that during interrogation two policemen instructed him to sit on the floor.

'The white policeman held my hands behind my back while the other walked on my ankles. It was very painful...

He then put his hand against my forehead and banged the back of my head hard against the wall twice. He said 'Sit daar jou striker'. I still have headaches from these blows.'

Other detainees in their affidavits speak of how fellow detainees would arrive back from interrogation with gashes, bruises, swollen faces and some were hardly able to walk.

Siyolo Mashiqana describes how Dennis Neer, general secretary of the Motor Assembly and Components Workers Union of South Africa, left the cell one morning 'well and able to move normally' but when he came back in the evening 'he moved very slowly as if in great pain'.

'His right cheek was bruised and swollen and he cradled one forearm with the other. When he removed his jacket I saw the arm was swollen from wrist to elbow. He also had swollen marks on his back near the kidneys'.

Siyolo Mashiqana in his affidavit says that Dennis Neer was eventually taken to Livingstone Hospital on July 25. He returned to his cell on August 30 with his arm bandaged in a sling.

The experience of the miners' strike and recent events in Handsworth, Brixton, Tottenham and elsewhere have shown that the police are a force out of control. LOUISE CHRISTIAN looks at the new powers for the police promised by the Tories in the Public Order Bill and what this means for us.

The lack of any coherent Labour Party policy on policing and the state was again evident when the main announcement in the Queen's Speech was made of a forthcoming new Public Order Bill.

The Labour Party's response to the moral panics surrounding riots, football hooliganism and "troublemaking" is so confused that its rather tentative opposition to the Bill can barely have registered in the public mind. The Tories shot up the opinion polls again.

Plot

Meanwhile a species of judicial plot ensured that a football hooligan was sentenced to life imprisonment for riot in the same week. The person in question had carried out a particularly vicious attack for which he was rightly convicted of grievous bodily harm.

He could have been sentenced to life imprisonment for this (whether it would have been right to do so is another question). Instead he was given the life sentence for the superfluous additional conviction of riot. And the right wing press said this proves there should be life imprisonment for riot.

The point of the plot is that the new Public Order Bill is to create a new statutory offence of riot (which it is hoped will make it easier to secure convictions from juries — an especially urgent need since the failure to do the miners for riot) but at present the proposed potential sentence is "only" ten years imprisonment.

The new Public Order Bill will be a "Mark 2", an addition, 50 years on, to the existing Act of 1936 which was supposedly brought in for use against striking miners and has been used against the labour movement and anti-fascist protesters ever since.

The White Paper on Public Order Law published in the summer paved the way for the proposals in the Bill. Despite its bland civil servant language it is a hysterical and paranoid document. Its basic premise is that peaceful demonstrations can be distinguished from those where the demonstrators' "real aim in demonstrating is not to persuade others of their point of view, but to prevent them by force from doing what they have a lawful right to

WORKERS' LIBERTY

Breaking the chains



Black workers and the struggle for liberation in South Africa

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INDEPENDENT UNIONS: PREPARING FOR UNITY

Plans to unite the majority of South Africa's independent non-racial trade unions into one major federation are far advanced.

This report from the October issue of FOSATU Workers News (paper of the largest federation at the moment) describes the preparations.

There are less than 30 days to go before the launch of the largest progressive trade union federation this country has ever seen.

Thirty-six trade unions, with a total signed up membership of close on half-a-million members, are moving swiftly towards the Inaugural Congress which will be held in Durban over the weekend of November 30-December 1. On the Sunday, December 1, a mass

rally will be held in Durban to celebrate the federation's launch. Tens of thousands of workers will be bused in from all areas of South Africa.

For the first time in South Africa's labour history, there will be a federation which will really cover all areas of this country.

Judging from an assessment of where the membership of the unions is located, there could be as many as ten regions although the federation is likely to initially start off with less than that.

The major goal of the federation will be to form one giant union in each of this country's industrial sectors.

And in order to achieve this as speedily as possible, the credentials committee has drawn up a list of industrial sectors and meetings have been

held between the unions in particular industries to discuss the possibility of mergers.

At the Inaugural Congress each union will be represented on the basis of one delegate for every 500 members up to 20,000 and then thereafter one delegate per 1,000 members. At future congresses this will revert back to one per 500 members.

The major function of the congress will be to accept the draft constitution, elect the office bearers (all of whom will be workers) and general secretary, and then debate the various resolutions submitted by the unions.

The congress will also have to decide on a name for the federation (at the moment the firm favourite is 'Congress of South African Trade Unions') and select the symbol.

New powers for Old Bill



Police occupy Broadwater Farm estate, Tottenham. Photo: Andrew Moore.

do, or simply to foment disorder." It starts by an emotive comparison of these sorts of demonstrations with those by fascists in the 1930s. By the end of its proposals it is however clear that all of the following would certainly be included by the government in the "coercive" category: animal rights protests, the Stop the City demonstrations, and mass picketing at Grunwicks, Warrington and (inevitably) in the miners' strike. There is also mention of the 1979 Southall demonstration, Greenham Common demonstrations and demonstrations by the "anti-nuclear" (or "peace?") movement generally. The sole criteria adopted is "public order" so marches by the National Front and football hooliganism are lumped in too. The paranoia is traceable to that

A new campaign against the Public Order Bill has been set up and welcomes new members and group affiliations. Contact the Campaign for the Right of Assembly and Dissent (CROWD), 35 Mount Pleasant, London WC1V 0AP, tel 01-833 2701. Affiliation fees are: Groups, £7; Individuals, £2; Unwaged, £1.

speech of Thatcher's when she said that democracy was being threatened by pressure groups and people who disagreed with the government; and displays the same sort of logic.

Apart from new statutory offences of riot and affray, the Bill will create a number of additional offences. The new offence of "violent disorder" is to become "the normal charge for serious outbreaks of public disorder". But the White Paper adds that: "...it will be capable of being applied over a wide spectrum of situations ranging from major public disorder to minor group disturbances involving some violence".

Offence

The new offence will cover three or more persons using or threatening unlawful violence against persons or property, and will carry a huge potential prison sentence of five years. It will cover Greenham Women cutting down fences; animal rights protesters freeing animals and almost any occasion when three or more people come into conflict with the police in one incident, whether on the streets of Brixton or in a demonstration.

It is quite clear that the intention is to start sending people arrested in these circumstances to prison in much

greater numbers.

Another entirely new offence which is to be created is that of "disorderly conduct" punishable by a fine of £100 and aimed at "hooliganism on housing estates" or "turning out the lights in a crowded dance hall" or, perhaps, having a haircut the police don't like. The new offence is so vague that the White Paper admits that it will be difficult to define!

Its effect will be to criminalise working class youth out on the streets. It will result in them being arrested for precisely the sort of incidents which the police should (in the name of community policing) be being made to deal with without playing at 'Starsky and Hutch'.

It is a measure of the Labour Party's total lack of courage or understanding on the issue of policing that Gerald Kaufman has actually welcomed the creation of this new offence. This means that there is no opposition in Parliament to it.

There is an urgent need for someone to point out that the new Bill is not just about "football hooligans" or "demonstrators", it is about giving increased powers to the police in general.

The unbalanced nature of the White Paper is even clearer in its treatment of

picketing. During the miners' strike the police were widely criticised for reviving an ancient criminal offence of "watching or besetting" under an 1875 law (s7 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875). The phrase "watching and besetting" appears to mean no more or less than picketing.

Despite the Paper's frank admission that it was used in the strike against pickets as well as those demonstrating outside private houses, it simply claims that: "the circumstances of the miners' dispute have shown how important it is to have an offence penalising conduct of this kind."

Arrest

Important, one may well ask, to whom? Clearly it is important to the government since they propose to make it arrestable and to increase the maximum penalty from three months imprisonment or a fine of £100 to six months or a fine of £2,000.

If this seems like a knee jerk reaction to the experience of the miners' strike, it is as nothing compared to the new powers proposed to be given to the police to impose any condition on pickets and static demonstrations as well as marches, as to numbers, location and duration.

At long last the police are to be given

the power they wanted so much in the miners' strike, to restrict the pickets to six in number and disperse the rest. The "voluntary" Code of Guidance on picketing under the 1980 Employment Act is to be voluntary no more. Anyone who knowingly fails to comply with conditions imposed by the police will be subject to a maximum fine of £400 but organisers and 'inciters' of mass pickets which break conditions will be subject to a maximum penalty of three months imprisonment or a fine of £1000.

It is not too far off what the unpleasant Tory MPs baying for Scargill's blood wanted. It means that organisers of community protests will have to go "underground" and disguise their identity.

Picketing

The tests for the imposing of conditions on marches and pickets will be firstly serious public disorder (including damage to property), secondly "to prevent serious disruption of the normal life of the community" and thirdly "to prevent the coercion of individuals". In relation to picketing the third test is crucial.

During the miners' strike the courts decisively rejected the idea that any mass picket, however peaceful, could be non-intimidatory. In his judgement in *Thomas and Others v NUM* (South Wales Area) and *Others* (a case which created a new civil wrong of mass picketing) Mr Justice Scott stated that: "sheer weight of sufficient numbers on the picket line would be sufficient by itself to be intimidatory". He rejected the submission by Counsel for the South Wales NUM that: "a large number of sullen men lining the entrance to a colliery saying nothing but simply standing and glowering" would not be intimidatory.

He also presumably rejected a similar submission made at the same time (to which he did not refer in his judgement) that the non-violent resistance movement led by Gandhi in India could not have been intimidatory. His judgement means that there is no such thing as peaceful mass picketing recognised by the courts.

The claim in the White Paper that the police will have to be reasonable in imposing conditions on pickets because their decisions can be challenged in the courts is therefore meaningless. The new power is no less than a blanket licence to the police to stop a large number of people exercising their right to demonstrate or picket.

Forcible dispersals of demonstrators — such as have recently been seen outside the South African embassy — will be wholly legitimised.

Finally, march organisers will have to give seven days notice to the police or again face being arrested. This will criminalise spontaneous community protests and give the police enormous power and control over protests generally.

The similarities between S.Africa and this country are no longer just in the pictures we see on our television screens; they are beginning to be reflected in the laws themselves as well as in the practices of the law enforcers.



The results of contra activity: a cooperative destroyed in 1984

'Nicaragua must survive: a history of US destabilisation' provides a short, useful introduction to the Nicaraguan revolution and the US campaign to overthrow the Sandinista regime.

Produced by the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign with assistance from War On Want, it catalogues the Reagan Administration's attempt to strangle the Nicaraguan economy, beginning in February 1981, one month after Reagan's inauguration as president, when he blocked the remaining \$15 million of the \$75 million aid and credit package promised by Carter.

The US has, since 1981, used its influence to delay or block Nicaraguan applications to financial institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In May of this year the US imposed a complete import-export ban with Nicaragua. The estimated cost of this embargo in lost trade is \$57 million.

Campaign

Still worse is the military campaign which includes the training of Contras in Florida and southern California; regular exercises off the coast of Nicaragua and in neighbouring Honduras; mining Nicaraguan ports; and according to South magazine in June 1984, the use of US helicopters to fly supplies to the Contras inside Nicaragua.

US policy towards the Sandinistas is fully supported by the British government. British aid to Nicaragua is now far less than it was before the revolution in 1979. And aid to neighbouring Honduras — with an appalling record of government and military corruption — is far greater.

NICARAGUA MUST SURVIVE

Tim Anderson reviews 'Nicaragua Must Survive'

And now Britain has a *secret* embargo on Nicaragua. The pamphlet cites an internal government memo, quoted in 'The Observer' (12 May 1985):

"There is no need to amend our voting policy towards Nicaragua...The problem of explaining it in public, however, will persist and we shall need to stick to our present line of *claiming* that our opposition is based on technical grounds." An official has noted in the margin: "If we can find them".

Britain has also vetoed special EEC aid programmes for Nicaragua.

Meanwhile, the US is doing everything short of actual military invasion to undermine the Sandinistas. In addition to creating the mercenary, anti-Sandinista army of counter-revolutionaries, or 'contras', the US had itself played a significant military role.

Contras have been trained in the US with Reagan's blessing.

In July 1983, the US sent 19 warships, with 140 warplanes and over 16,000 troops, to the Nicaraguan coast, to bully the Sandinistas. Simultaneously, 5000 US troops were carrying out joint manoeuvres in Honduras.

In February 1984, US Navy and CIA advisers took part in mining Nicaraguan ports.

In 1984 alone, 1,326 US spy

planes flew reconnaissance missions over Nicaragua. And in the first two weeks of this year, 35 air and naval incursions into Nicaraguan territory were reported by the Nicaraguan defence ministry.

The pamphlet details the build-up of the contra war. By 1983, the contras were receiving planes and boats from the CIA, enabling them to attack Sandinista positions; and by 1984 were mining Nicaraguan ports. Although an international outcry put a stop to this, the US government never repudiated the actions.

In October 1984, a CIA manual was leaked, entitled 'Psychological operations in guerilla warfare'. The manual proposes murder as a tactic to subvert the Sandinistas. "It is possible to neutralise carefully selected targets, such as court judges, police and state security officials".

The National Security Council, a branch of the White House, has continued to work closely with the contras despite a ban by Congress on such activities.

The US-backed contras use the torture methods characteristic of US-backed regimes in Central America on their enemies. 'Nicaragua Must Survive' provides some accounts of these methods:

An American nun describes an attack on a peasant family:

"The contras came during the night and machine-gunned the house. One bullet killed the four year old in his bed. Another bullet pierced the leg of the father and eight year old. Another wounded the mother in the head. Then the contras entered the house and took the father and uncle outside...They fired four shots, the first of which killed the uncle. The father was only wounded, and they slit his throat...The mother was still alive. Three days later, other members of the family found bodies in the river. The contras had...stripped all the skin off the mother's face."

Contra

A contra is quoted from the US magazine 'Newsweek': "Come the counter-revolution, there will be a massacre in Nicaragua. We have a lot of scores to settle. There will be bodies from the border to Managua."

And yet Reagan has this to say about them: "They are our brothers, these freedom fighters. They are the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers, and the brave men and women of the French resistance."

There are problems with this pamphlet.

It insists on describing the Soviet Union, and by implication other anti-working-class, Stalinist states as socialist.

While rightly praising the Sandinistas on their literacy campaign and the improvements in health care, and the increase in unionisation of workers, the pamphlet does not comment on the illegality, for much of the period since the revolution, of strikes.

But it's a concise guide to the basic facts about the US war on the Nicaraguan revolution. Activists should use it to help spread knowledge of these facts. The Nicaraguan revolution is under threat; and the labour movement internationally needs to be alerted to what Reagan is doing. We have a responsibility to come to the aid of the Nicaraguan people.

Nicaragua Must Survive: A History of US Destabilisation, published by Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, with assistance from War On Want, 50p.

Socialism is not just a vague and remote ideal, but the necessary working-class answer to the problems posed by capitalism now, argues Eric Heffer in this article, taken from a speech delivered in Cambridge on 2 November.

Is a Broad Left strategy possible? I believe it is, but the first question surely must be, what is meant by a Broad Left?

There are those who argue that socialism is not at present on the agenda, that it must be postponed until we have a Labour government, possibly in alliance with other Parties, in order to defeat Thatcher. It is a view I do not hold. To me, the struggle against Thatcherism is also the struggle for socialism. Like the struggle for democracy, they are indivisible.

The discussion is similar to that which took place in the late 1930s due to the rise of Fascism, when in the labour movement there were fierce arguments about the need for a Popular Front. The Communist Party had renounced its previous "class against class" policy, the so-called Third Period) and developed its Popular Front strategy.

This was never accepted by some in the labour movement, who argued that what was required was not a 'Popular Front', which could include Liberals and other bourgeois parties and groups, but a United Workers' Front — a view in Britain held by the Independent Labour Party (ILP), together with the various minuscule Trotskyist groups, and given form in Fenner Brockway's book the "Workers' Front". It was this fundamentally different view of things which led to the Barcelona uprising in Spain, during the Civil War there, the POUM being the Spanish equivalent of the ILP.

The Labour Party leaders, together with the trade union leaders, rejected both the Popular Front and the Workers' Front ideas. They settled for a Labour Party and TUC which was totally reformist in character, keeping its "purity" from both the Communists and their allies, on the one hand and the Liberal/bourgeois (so-called democratic forces) on the other.

Clearly the situation is not exactly the same today as it was in the '30s. Nevertheless, here in Britain, we have a most reactionary (although not fascist) Tory government which is counter-revolutionary in character, and which is undermining the Welfare State, getting rid of public ownership, wrecking the NHS, and letting unemployment rise as part of its strategy to weaken and if possible destroy the trade unions.

The trade unions are definitely in a weakened position because of anti-union legislation, high levels of unemployment and the terrible setback of the miners' defeat. I say miners' defeat because if we are serious, we should not pretend otherwise. That is not to attack the miners' leaders, or the miners, who fought a magnificent series of battles.

Politically, we have seen the Labour Party become partially divided with the right wing breakaway to create the SDP. We have seen the

Communist Party divide, with the Morning Star no longer under Party control, and with a number of leading Communist Party members like Ken Gill expelled.

The problems are easy enough to talk about and diagnose; the answers, however, are much more difficult to work out.

We must begin, I would suggest, with a perspective that it is essential, in fact vital, to get rid of this Thatcher government, and get a Labour government elected, even if it is not Left-orientated and totally reformist in character. The Tories must be defeated at the next General Election to save our people, especially the working class, from even greater suffering. Any broad left strategy must have that as its objective.

The questions then surely are, do we need to water down our socialist objectives to get rid of Thatcherism? How far does the Broad Left stretch? Does it stretch far enough to argue that we should be advocating an agreement, and (possibly a coalition government) between the Labour Party and the Liberal/SDP Alliance?

There is also the associated question, one of great importance. Is the working class a diminishing force, greatly changed in character, and therefore, not as important politically as it used to be in the past? Should the coalition of the workers (at present through the TUC and the Labour Party) be superseded

"The class struggle involves all those who are discriminated against."

by other types of coalition which include the Women's Movement, the Blacks, etc., and other groups such as Gays and Lesbians? These are all important questions which need serious answers, and which cannot be swept aside.

Let me first say something about the strength of the working class. It must be clearly understood that the working class as a whole never fully supported the Labour Party, or any other Socialist Group or Party. Certainly the organised workers, through their trade unions and especially those affiliated to the Party have supported Labour (they were the real force which created the Labour Party and kept it going) but always some sec-

Under whose flag?

A NEW issue of Socialist Organiser's magazine *Workers' Liberty* has just been published. Entitled 'Under Whose Flag?', it deals with the politics of the mainstream of post-war would-be revolutionary Marxism, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

In Britain, the main currents in the USFI are represented by *Socialist Action* and more recently *International*.

Articles cover the main issues that distinguish *Socialist Organiser* from this mainstream — in particular our stress on the centrality of independent work-

ing-class politics as opposed to a conflict of 'blobs' or 'camps' in world power-politics.

They show how for the USFI, even the healthiest currents in it, this 'campism' leads to political accommodation to Third World nationalism and Stalinism.

The magazine includes an important survey by Martin Thomas of post-war Marxist theories of imperialism, examining their shortcomings and pointing to a socialist alternative both theoretically and politically.



Available from SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY, for 60p plus 18p postage.

Yes, socialism is on the agenda

tions and groups of workers, supported either the Tories or others, and in places like Liverpool defended the Tories on the basis of Orange Protestantism.

There have also been splits in unions before, such as the Notts Miners' (Spencer) Union in the 1930s, but in those days they did not have the SDP bolt hole to look towards.

Because of the decline of older industries, like the docks, shipbuilding and ship repair, shipping, engineering steel, textiles, mining, the railways etc., the numbers of union members in those industries has declined and with it the organised trade union support of the Labour Party. They were after all rather tightly-knit working class groups, living mainly in tightly-knit communities.

It would, however, be wrong to draw the conclusion that because of such a decline the working class is no longer there. It is, but to some extent it is a different working class.

It is either unemployed, or has gone into local authority or service industries of one kind or another. To that extent, its class consciousness is slightly affected. That, however, can be restored and developed, providing the movement realises what has happened to the class and does something about raising its consciousness. The important thing also is for trade unionists to ensure that service industry workers are properly organised.

I believe we must not accept a coalition with the SDP/Liberal Alliance. They are the other side of the Tory coin. On most political issues like the trade unions, they are just as reactionary as the Tories, as they are on issues such as defence and the publicly-owned industries. The Alliance may be slightly less reactionary in certain areas, but they are dedicated to the maintenance of the capitalist system which David Owen calls the "Social Market".

In any case to talk about a coalition government before an election is to suggest that Labour cannot win, a proposition I cannot accept. I do not accept either the argument advanced for proportional representation. I know the Communist Party, Stan Thorne MP and Arthur Scargill do, but I believe under British conditions they are wrong.

I take the view that it is only with socialist policies with a majority Labour government advancing a socialist programme, that can deal with the crisis of British and Western capitalism. That is why public ownership, based on Clause IV, of various types (not just nationalisation), democratically controlled, must be an essential part of any "Broad Left Strategy".

Unemployment is basically



Photo: John Harris

a product of the capitalist system, and it cannot be totally eliminated unless capitalism is destroyed. Therefore, any Broad Left Strategy must be based on the struggle to eliminate, not only Thatcherism, but also the capitalist system.

That does not mean that we should not seek allies further afield than those who are part of the labour movement. Clearly, under Thatcherism, small businesses have suffered. Those involved can be recruited as allies. It is important that small business people are brought into alliance with us against the big business interests.

The struggle for women's rights has always been part and parcel of the struggle for the emancipation of the working class. In the days of the suffragette movement, it was Keir Hardie and other Labour and socialist stalwarts who were involved in the struggle for women's rights. That is especially true today.

Also, all groups who suffer under the present system, gays, lesbians, blacks and Asian people, are natural allies of those who are struggling to end capitalism. They suffer because of capitalism. They have special problems which are there, but which are exacerbated by the capitalist system.

The class struggle involves all those who are discriminated against in capitalist society.

It is wrong, because one accepts that the road to socialism can be democratic, parliamentary and hopefully peaceful, to believe that the class struggle is dead. It is not, as long as class society exists, so too will the class

struggle exist. It cannot be wished away.

The Labour Party, whether some like it or not, is basically a class Party, so if we are talking about a realignment, we must talk about a realignment of those who basically accept the need for class struggle in order to get rid of the capitalist system. I have always taken the view, we must be firm on principle, but flexible in application. The Broad Left must be a Left who accept the need for socialism, not a coalition of disparate groups, who accept

"I believe we must not accept a coalition with the Alliance."

welfare capitalism, something which in any case has no future. The days of welfare capitalism are numbered.

It is my view that we should not accept any Stalinist or narrow so-called 'Democratic Centralist' approach. Elitism should be a thing of the past. We need a policy which I would call 'revolutionary reformism'. That is, we seek a revolutionary

socialist society by consent, hopefully by Parliamentary reformist means. At the same time we must defend our democracy, which has been fought for over the generations, by every means, including force, if we have to.

What I fear is that in order to get Thatcher out, some in our movement would abandon their socialist concepts. We expect the Right in the movement to do so, because they have never really accepted socialism, but if the so-called leftwingers do so, then we are in serious trouble and in the long run we could not win.

The struggle for socialism will be long and hard. There cannot be any short cuts, and neither can it be secured by Sectarianism or right wing concepts.

Clearly, in the movement as a whole, a period of reappraisal as well as revisionism is taking place. It naturally arises out of the Labour defeat of 1983, the subsequent defeat of the miners, and the retreat by most Labour Councils from the policy of non-compliance with Tory legislation.

Revisionism should not be dismissed out of hand. Most revisionists are right on something, if not on everything. No-one should remain in entrenched positions, certainly not, if the enemy has either passed by or over them. Looking back at history, everything that Bernstein said was not incorrect, everything that Kautsky said was not incorrect, and in the British Labour Party everything that Crosland said was not incorrect. But enough was wrong not to accept the bulk of their argu-

ments.

Sometimes modification is acceptable. What is important is to know what is a modification and what undermines the basic principle.

I fear today that some of the modifications proposed are hitting at the basic principle of socialism, as for example some of the economic arguments and policies being advocated by Roy Hattersley, and the weakening of class concepts by some if not all of the Euro-Communists.

What sort of realignment are we thinking about? There are those who say, what is required is a new realism. That what is required is a "Broad Left" front of the CP Euro-Communists, and the Tribunitians in the Labour Party. There are others who say we need a realignment of those connected with the Morning Star, the Campaign Group of Labour MPs and others surrounding various newspapers, but excluding those around Militant, etc.

There are others who look at "The Left" on a very wide basis, a Left which would include the Labour Party, the Communist Party, CND and various other groups, and even the Liberals and the SDP.

The fact that the "Left" should look for alliances in my view cannot be disputed. It has always been necessary for the Left to seek allies. But if we are talking about a real Broad Left, then it must have a number of basic principles. Such a Broad Left should exclude no-one who accepts and agrees with these principles.

I would say that means a belief in democratic social-

ism, a belief in the class struggle, a belief in nuclear disarmament, and the ending of the NATO and Warsaw Bloc, a belief in and support of those in Nicaragua and Chile, in fact in all countries fighting for liberation and seeking to establish a democratic society free of US control, a belief in democratic free elections, in freedom of speech, freedom of publication, thought, etc., a democracy going beyond bourgeois democracy.

That means being prepared to criticise the Soviet Union etc., over human rights as much as we do over the loss of human rights in right-wing countries. The struggle against all imperialist policies is essential for those who believe in a new alignment on the Left.

That of course creates problems, because if we look at the recent divisions in the Communist Party, both sides are right and both are wrong. Those who are in favour of almost uncritical support of the Soviet Union are wrong, but also are those who are opposed to class politics. What is required are friendly, comradely discussions, not name-calling. There are honest opinions on all sides, but if one accepts certain principles, then one must decide where one stands on those principles.

I repeat, I believe, a Broad Left Strategy must include the type of propositions I have outlined, and that must include accepting principles, not individuals. The cult of the individual is as unacceptable in Britain in the Labour Party and the Unions as it is in the Soviet Union or elsewhere.

"The struggle against Thatcherism is also the struggle for socialism"

There is a danger at the moment that because of the defeat of the miners, because of the right-wing position of most of the Shadow Cabinet, because of the drift towards rightist concepts by those on the NEC of the Labour Party, that others will find it necessary to trim, to vacillate and move increasingly to the right. So I urge all who are genuinely seeking a Broad Left Strategy to ensure that the strategy is left wing and socialist, not social democratic. Also, that it is not sectarian, Stalinist or so-called 'democratic centralist', but that it accepts pluralist concepts and at the same time it accepts the class struggle without ignoring the lack of freedom that exists in the so-called socialist countries.

Socialism and democracy are synonymous, one without the other is impossible.

Let us have a Broad Left Strategy for the end of Thatcherism, for socialism, a strategy which does not accept the cult of the individual, one which believes in a critical examination of all issues based on socialist principles not expediency or image building.

Good clean fun

Edward Ellis reviews *'My Beautiful Laundrette'* (15), a film by Stephen Frears.

OMAR, the son of a Pakistani immigrant who had been an important writer and friend of Pakistan's President Bhutto, shares a stark future of long-term unemployment with many contemporary British youth, until taken under the wing of sharp businessman uncle Nasser.

Under Nasser's guidance, and with the more sinister assistance of cousin Salim, Omar takes on the job of managing a laundrette in Lewisham. Therein lie the complications.

First, to finance the endeavour, Omar has to hijack the import of a consignment of hard drugs, intercepting the ill-gotten gains of his cousin, who has already beaten him up once.

Second, to do up and run the laundrette Omar employs the services of an old school friend, Johnny, a white person. Johnny is not only an ex-fascist and followed about by a threatening bunch of thugs who view his new job as an unpatriotic betrayal; he also becomes Omar's lover.

Omar, despite his bourgeois family, is a casualty of Thatcher's Britain. His escape route is through family connections, although his father would prefer him to go to college. Yet entanglement in this web of connections threatens to tie him down in family traditions, and in the more modern fabric of the tough man's world of making money at whatever risk.

Johnny is a different sort of

casualty, a lumpenproletarian white youth whose lack of hope has led him to flirt with fascism. His escape route is tied up more and more closely with Omar's; yet this threatens his relationship with racist former friends.

They do escape, by transforming their laundrette into a neon-lit masterpiece with frescoed walls and piped muzak. It is an unreal palatial fantasy; yet reality lurks below the surface.

And the reality is nasty. There is no time off from the laundrette: it consumes their lives, and must consume their lives if they are to survive. It is a lowly form of success; as Omar's father reminds Johnny, "you are an underpants cleaner". And the racists waiting outside always threaten to destroy it, physically and violently.

Touching

'My Beautiful Laundrette' skilfully weaves together these themes, and weaves them around a touching love affair. It is because this gay relationship is at once the centre of the film and yet so underplayed, so underdramatised, that this is such a fine film.

The gay love affair is not, in itself, a source of conflict or trauma. It is, indeed, far less traumatic than the entirely heterosexual if adulterous affair of uncle Nasser with a white woman.

Thus there is no suggestion of personal angst, either on the part of Johnny, despite his macho associations, or of Omar — known, in a reference both to soap powder and to sexual orientation, as Omo. There is no heavy 'coming out' scene. There is not even any



Johnny [Daniel Day-Lewis] and Omar [Gordon Warnecke]

verbal reference to homosexuality as an issue. Omar and Johnny merely love each other, as naturally as a heterosexual couple.

Conflicts between them do not arise as a result of their sexuality. They derive from external factors — the pressures on Omar to marry, the pressures on Johnny to rejoin the racists in the street.

Uncle Nasser and his daughter, Omar's intended wife, have suspicions. But such suspicion is the least of their problems. Real

issues — Nasser's break-up with his mistress, his daughter's dissatisfaction with life — form the substance of their personal crises.

And so as a film about gay men this is something of a breakthrough. Until recently images of gay men in movies have been largely negative (images of lesbians have been fewer but equally unattractive). Latterly, there have been more positive presentations, though self-conscious attempts at 'posi-

tive images' like the American film 'Making Love' have suffered from a plot that would have been rejected by Mills and Boon.

Omar and Johnny neither suffer psychologically for their sexuality, nor — as is often the case where 'positive' images are attempted — is their sexuality in fact hidden from us. The picture does not respectfully fade as soon as they kiss.

No doubt it could be objected that this is not plausible. Omar's and Johnny's relation-

ship would be obvious to all, and tolerated by none. Perhaps. But *this* lack of credibility seems to me to be a sacrifice worth making if it results in such a subtle treatment of the issues.

'My Beautiful Laundrette' deserves the critical acclaim it has received. Hanif Kureishi's script is witty and entertaining, if a little stagey. There are some excellent performances, especially from Saeed Jaffrey as uncle Nasser. I suggest you see it.

Science

Beneath the volcano

By Les Hearn

The eruption of the volcano at Armera in Colombia may not turn out to be the worst this century — that was the eruption of Mount Pelee which killed all but two of the 30,000 inhabitants of St. Pierre in Martinique in a few minutes of 1902. Nevertheless, the eruption at Armera, which melted the mountain's ice-cap and engulfed the villages below in mud, has claimed upwards of 22,000 lives.

It follows closely the earthquake which caused such devastation in Mexico City, some 2500 kilometres north. Was this a mere coincidence or is there some connection between the two — and with the Nicaraguan earthquake in the '70s and the eruptions of Mt. St. Helens in the last few years?

A look at the map reveals a string of volcanoes the length of the West coast of the Americas. This string marks out the path of an earthquake zone whose activity has become proverbial ("small earthquake in Chile — not many dead").

Other manifestations of this zone include the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the Alaskan earthquake of 1964. The zone continues round the top of the Pacific Ocean, down through China (where the Tangshan earthquake of the '70s claimed over half a million lives); Japan, with its sacred volcano Fujiyama and its frequent earthquakes;

Indonesia, where most casualties of volcanoes have lived and where possible the worst eruption in human history occurred 102 years ago at Krakatoa; and most of the other groups of islands bordering the Pacific. This gives us the "Pacific Ring of Fire".

Most other earthquake/volcanic zones are associated with seas or oceans. The pattern in the Atlantic Ocean is one of a line of volcanoes down the middle, joining Iceland, with its geysers and its new island, Surtsey, created over the last twenty years by submarine eruptions, to Tristan da Cunha, where a volcanic eruption forced the temporary evacuation of the islanders in 1962.

So what is going on? The answer has been provided by the Theory of Plate Tectonics (or "Continental Drift"). This theory has revolutionised geology and, like all revolutionary theories, it was not easily accepted, the Russian geologists holding out till quite recently.

It has been known for some time that the ground gets hotter as you go deeper, the temperature rising some 30°C per kilometre of depth. The crust of the Earth (solid ground to us) is an average 30 kilometres deep so at the bottom it's getting pretty hot.

Below that is the mantle, some 3000 kilometres thick and made of rocks with a peculiar property. The heat and pressure



The world's earthquake zones

make them behave like toffee. If struck a sudden blow, they shatter, but under a continuous force they can also flow very slowly, like an incredibly viscous liquid.

The temperature keeps increasing with depth right down to the core of the Earth, some 6000 kilometres across and made of molten iron and nickel. The layers of mantle nearest to the core are hotter and therefore less viscous. Here the rock can flow quite easily.

So the crust rests on a liquid which is hotter at the bottom than at the top. Just like a saucerpan of custard, convection currents carry hot mantle material up and cooler material down and these currents move the segments of crust about like the skin on the custard, piling up the continents to form mountains,

splitting them and shifting them about the surface of the Earth.

This theory explained some singular facts: firstly, that fossil remains indicated that some lands had had a drastically different climate in the past; secondly, that lands with no connection had similar animal life; thirdly, that the West coast of Africa and Europe seemed to match the East coast of the Americas, with Greenland and Antarctica filling in the gaps.

The continents had originally been part of one gigantic super-continent hundreds of millions of years ago. They have subsequently drifted apart (and presumably had previously drifted together). The Atlantic Ocean is still widening at about one centimetre per year.

Now, in order to do that, the crust in the centre of the Atlantic

would have to stretch and crack, with new material pushing up from the mantle to form the volcanic islands of the mid-Atlantic ridge.

Conversely, the Pacific is shrinking and its crust is being destroyed by being pushed under the edges of the continents to be swallowed up by the mantle. The strain fractures the land above, causing earthquakes, while the heat of the friction of sliding crust melts rocks and sends them up as lava and ash.

The Theory of Plate Tectonics tells us that there will be earthquakes and volcanic eruptions as long as there is enough heat in the Earth's core to keep the mantle molten. We are of course more keen to know *when* and *where* the quakes and eruptions will be. The "where" is not so much of a problem as the "when" and we are unlikely ever to be able to predict precisely or even approximately when any eruption or earthquake will be.

There is a partial exception in that the Chinese have achieved some success in predicting earthquakes. They have found that odd behaviour by animals can often denote a coming earthquake. It seems that animals can detect the gases released by the rocks as they come under increasing strain. However, even the Chinese were unable to predict the massive Tangshan earthquake.

The amount of strain in the

rocks can also be measured. This tells us, for instance, that a quake is due along the San Andreas fault on which San Francisco lies but doesn't get us much closer to "when?" than "soon!"

Volcanoes can also be observed — Mt St Helens was seen to bulge for quite a time before it blew. The Armera volcano had been dormant for about 400 years when it started to emit steam and fumes last year, but even so this eruption was still a surprise. After it, we have no idea if it is just going to make a few more coughs and grunts or if what we have seen is just the prelude to a massive blast.

In an ideal world, perhaps people would be immediately evacuated if a volcano showed any activity or would not live near them in the first place. However, in present-day Colombia and in other volcanic areas, people are forced by economic necessity to chance it to cultivate the fertile volcanic soils.

It is possible to reduce the toll of earthquakes by using earthquake-resistant designs for buildings. Much of the destruction and death in Mexico City was a result of architects and builders ignoring established guidelines to increase profits.

At the moment, the most that can be done in volcanic areas is to establish evacuation procedures and develop methods of observing volcanoes to try to detect warning signs.

LIVERPOOL: NO TRICKS!

IN ALAN Bleasdale's 'Boys from the Blackstuff' the terminally ill Georgie Malone has to explain to his granddaughter what happens when you die. After an embarrassed silence the firmly non-religious activist explains that no-one knows what will happen next.

For activists in the Liverpool labour movement, developments in the city's budget crisis are often as difficult to fathom.

Unless Liverpool District Labour Party agrees to a large rate rise and/or cuts, the city's finances can only be straightened out by a large injection of cash from outside.

Up to now the Tory government has refused to budge an inch towards returning some of the central government grant cut from Liverpool in recent years.

The so-called Blunkett initiative to raise up to £10 million from unused capital resources of other councils looked like a possible stop-gap. It has now become quite obvious that, under the influence of the Kinnock/Cunningham/Straw school of 'don't rock the boat' class collaboration, any meaningful sum would have been raised only at a price which the Liverpool working class could not afford.

Last week's news that the sum raised was only £900,000 - a tiny amount on the scale of councils' budgets - was a transparent move by Kinnock and his associates, with their allies in the trade union bureaucracy, to force Liverpool council to adopt a package based on a rate

By Kevin Feintuck

increase together with cuts.

Rather than pass a Tory-inspired budget, Liverpool District Labour Party has agreed that the council will not pay its workers from 22 November.

The refusal of the 48 Labour councillors to do the Tories' dirty work is worthy of total support. On the other hand, socialists must question how and why we are left in a situation where the real fight has been left to 48 individuals in a council chamber rather than to the mass mobilisation of the working class both locally and nationally.

The fact is that both in the campaign up to the 1984 rate settlement and certainly in the last 18 months the working class has been used as a stage army to be called onto the streets as required.

Consultation has consisted of policies evolved by a central clique on the Executive of the District Labour Party being passed down via the more compliant local authority trade union stewards to the mass of the members. Even the stage-managed rallies with hand-picked speakers have faded away in recent months.

The only point at which this top-down political approach appeared to hiccup was in early June, when it was widely believed that the District Party leadership was preparing a rate rise of around 20% which would have been trumpeted as a grand victory. It is generally accepted that only an intervention by a group around GMBU convenor Ian Lowes



within the inner circle prevented this taking place.

The worst example of this bureaucratic method was when the council's decision to issue 90-day redundancy notices to its workers was ratified by the District Party. The thinking behind this was that the Public Works Loan Board, who had imposed a moratorium on lending to Liverpool, would now be convinced that the council intended to balance the books. It has also been argued that the redundancy notices were a cunning device to help push local authority workers into strike action.

In the event, of course, the Public Works Loan Board proved that our class enemies do have at least half a brain, and the disastrous confusion sown in the workforce has been one of the main contributory factors to the divi-

sions in the city's local authority unions at this vital moment.

Regrettably there are no signs that the local leadership are either able or willing to change the campaign into anything other than an event clearly directed from above.

Provision

For instance, the DLP resolution passed on 14 November carries a blueprint for emergency provision in the event of services collapsing. Emergency services are to be organised by an emergency committee of councillors with local authority trade unionists co-opted.

This completely bureaucratic structure is far more like the Tories' nightmarish plans for running services after a nuclear holocaust than a working-class plan. Such a

structure would be of little use against the most limited pressure from the Tories - commissioners, Department of the Environment hit-men, or the use of the armed forces to run services.

Socialists must pose the demand for a genuine labour movement conference to establish a body in the city capable of building and generalising support for the fight against the cuts and also maintaining essential services in the interests of and organised by the working class.

Meanwhile, back to the next episode. No-one can rule out the possibility of a rabbit appearing from the hat at the District Party meeting on 20 November.

At the time of writing, 18 November, this does not seem likely, although there may be some financial adjustment to create a further delay.

Also, the High Court action by the teachers' union, the NUT, due to be heard on 20 November, may well result in the judges declaring the June rate settlement to be illegal.

Such a decision would probably mean a further full council meeting to set a new rate. If so, forces such as those around the Communist Party who have spearheaded the NUT campaign for totally reactionary reasons, would hope to pressurise one or two of the 48 Labour councillors into joining the five who have already scabbed and voting for a Liberal/Tory budget.

The genuine left in the labour movement must certainly make every effort to ensure that the 48 stand firm.

Forgemasters strike for recognition

Statement by Forgemasters shop stewards.

SEVEN hundred members at the Atlas site of Sheffield Forgemasters have been on all out indefinite strike since Wednesday 16 October 1985.

They are striking in defence of trade union recognition, pay and conditions, but then withdrew the offer.

* PAY. Over the last five years the members have not had a pay increase anywhere near the rate of inflation, and in two of those years no increase at all. This year, with the Atlas site making a profit, management offered a £4 'across-the-board' increase, but then withdrew the offer.

The £4 was later reintroduced but with so many strings it was made impossible for anyone to accept.

* TRADE UNION RECOGNITION. Management have made the full-time convenor redundant, and are refusing to recognise the elected shop stewards. Their argument is that the Atlas site is five separate companies with in Forgemasters plc, and so there is no long a need for such a well-structured trade union organisation.

At the same time management are preserving their own central negotiating/advisory structure.

* CONDITIONS. Management have so far without prior consultation or negotiation given termination notice

on such items as enhanced redundancy pay, joint works health and safety, and short time working arrangements.

The shop stewards are very fearful that if this trend was to continue next on the list would be cuts in the company's pension scheme and even cuts in pay were not ruled out.

For many of our members the last straw was being told who could and who couldn't represent them. Under the circumstances the members had no alternative but to take the action they have taken.

For fuller information and speakers please ring the dispute centre at the AUEW House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield, 0742 79042.

By Rob Dawber

Sheffield Forgemasters managing director Peter Wright has now claimed that all he intends to do to the shop stewards committee is 'bring it up to date' so that it may 'play a more effective role'.

The shop stewards have replied: [Mr Wright] "is very anxious that we should not have an old-fashioned central organisation, one that is able to represent all the Atlas workforce."

"Instead he would much prefer to have a divided organisation, one where the right hand does not know what the left is doing."

"It's very kind of Mr Wright to be so concerned about our members' welfare but, if it's all the same to him, we'd much prefer the members to elect their own representatives..."

The workers have now been out for five weeks, and are feeling the hardships -

not least because the government docks £16 assumed strike pay from their social security money.

At a demonstration held to back the dispute on 16 November in Sheffield, little was offered by the speakers in the way of spreading the action, even to the rest of Forgemasters.

And nothing is being done to involve wives and girlfriends on the model of the miners' strike.

The labour movement is suffering some depression in the aftermath of the miners' defeat. But we also have a wealth of experience - in this area especially - which can be tapped to win this dispute.

Miners' amnesty month of action

The National Union of Miners has carried out the longest and most militant strike in Britain this century. The strike has been defeated, and although the NUM and its membership are committed to a continued fight to defend the coal industry and the mining communities, the union faces a continuing brutal onslaught on many fronts.

Miners' families are in heavy debt, the union's local organisation has been shattered, and its militants victimised, jailed and sacked. The scab Union of Democratic Miners is now clearly established with a base extending dangerously beyond the Notts coalfield; it is the

single major threat preventing the NUM defending the needs of its members.

Yet activists in the NUM, in other unions, and in the Labour Party and support groups have not given up. In October a national conference of active miners' support groups met to co-ordinate policies and activities, and to revitalise the movement.

At Labour Party Conference, a broad National Miners Amnesty Campaign was set up by Trade Union Briefing and the Campaign Group of MPs, with the aim of organising this national support and directing it towards forcing the trade union and Labour Party leaderships to act on their conference policies in defence of the NUM and of the labour movement as a whole.

In London the majority of miners' support groups have come together to organise the first Month of Action. They did so with Kent NUM's sponsorship and the support of the Campaign Group but in the complete absence of all those left groups who worked in the support groups during the strike. Nevertheless the Month of Action began with a successful picket of NCB headquarters addressed by Jeremy Corbyn MP; it continues with the events listed below, and which need the support of the left. The aim of the Month of Action is to rebuild the links between activists across the unions and in the Constituency Labour Parties, and with the mining communities themselves, as well as keeping this issue at the forefront of the agenda. The Month of Action includes benefits, workshops, political rallies and a series of workplace meetings (which will continue after this Month of Action) bringing sacked miners to speak from Notts, South Yorkshire and Kent. These

events must be supported and similar activities need to be built regionally around the country.

They can link in with the work of the National Miners Amnesty Campaign, to intervene in regional TUC and Labour Party conferences.

LONDON MONTH OF ACTION: MAIN EVENTS

November 21: Benefit at Islington Town Hall, with speakers from Cynon Valley, South Wales. Bands include The Mekons, Jumping Jehosophats.

November 23-24: Three workshop meetings: 1. Energy - Coal or Nuclear? 2. The Media: Channel, Press and Whitewash. Speakers include Dave Douglass (NUM Hatfield Main), Marx Wadsworth (Black broadcast journalist). 3. Criminalisation: All 'Enemies Within'. Speakers include Peter Doody (NUM Fitzwilliam village), John La Rose (Black Parents Movement) Gregg Taylor (Welsh Miners' Barrister), Broadwater Farm Defence Committee, plus screening of two new videos - 'Warning' and 'This is not the End'.

November 28: Rally, Camden Town Hall (Judd St entrance) at 7.30 p.m. Speakers include: Chair, John Moyle (Secretary Betteshanger), Billy Etherington NUM NEC, Member Durham Mechanics, Bernie Grant, Leader, Haringey Council, Jack Collins, General Secretary, Kent NUM, Elaine Robe, National Rank and File Miners Movement (Doncaster), Sian James, WAPC, South Wales.

November 29: Benefit, Station Recreation Centre, Station Road, SW9. Speakers from SACTU, S. Wales Miners NUM/WPAC. Bands include One Thousand Mexicans.

Months of Action contacts: 01-226 9405. Workplace meetings speakers, contact: 01-381 3193 or 01-736 7148. National Miners Amnesty Campaign, 49 Milner Square, Islington N1.

Danish unions boycott S.African trade

TRADE UNIONISTS in Denmark started a boycott of all trade with South Africa from Monday 18 November.

Jette Kromann, a Danish socialist, told Socialist Organiser:

"Denmark's main import from South Africa is coal for the power stations, which are state-owned. The government 'asked' the power stations to stop getting coal from South Africa, but they refused. Then dockers decided that they themselves would stop the coal.

There is a group of militant syndicalists among the dockers, and they had a long strike last year over an attempt by the government to cut the state benefit they receive on days when there is no work in the port.

Now three unions are supporting the boycott: the SiD, which is the Danish equivalent of the TGWU in Britain, the metalworkers, and the hotel and restaurant workers.

The unions have been denounced by the bosses' organisations. The action is not legal according to Danish law. The bosses are likely to take the unions to court, and the unions could be fined very heavily.

Some companies are also threatening to shift production to other countries because of the boycott.

The unions involved are led by Social Democrats, and the Social Democratic party is supporting the boycott, but they are not campaigning very actively."

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"The fight for union democracy" 20p & p&p and
"The Broad Lefts" 35p & p&p. From 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

THE PROBLEMS of Liverpool in particular and Merseyside in general did not begin with the election of a Labour council in 1983.

I was born in Liverpool in 1923 in the heart of the slums of that city. During all my life there I experienced, worked and lived with and went to school in abject poverty and misery. Throughout that period, Liverpool city council was in the hands of the Tories, and that remained the position until the late post-war period...

I am not talking of a thousand years ago or even of the Victorian era. The slums were there long after the war. I recall the misery of the courts, with 12 people to a court, with one tap and one lavatory at the end of each court for that number of people.

Slums

After the war, Liverpool had high hopes for the future as the slums began to be cleared and industries came to Liverpool and Merseyside. A new dawn had broken, in the view of the people of the city.

But over the years, running into the 1970s, we saw the role played by the Liberal party, with an era of hung councils, Tory-Liberal administrations and one financial cut after another, all against a backdrop of poverty, misery, and rising unemployment.

They too have a clear respon-

The Tories must pay up!

By Eddie Loyden

sibility for the situation in Merseyside, especially in Liverpool... Not a single public sector house was built in the four years when the Liberal party was in office. The Liberal council had no regard for the misery and poverty of the people.

It was rightly kicked out, to bring in a council that was prepared to do something...

In 1983, the Labour party came to power. It was prepared to tackle those problems, many of them for the first time. Labour councillors began to tackle the problems of the housing estates and high-rise flats.

They began to put parks in working-class areas where they were needed and where they had not been before. They built sports centres in working-class areas where people had never seen such centres.

Those acts are now judged

criminal. The retention in work of people who are not prepared to be added to the lengthening dole queues in Liverpool is regarded as a criminal act.

It is a scandal and a shame that honest and decent men in Liverpool fighting against the ongoing decline of the city and trying to push back the barriers of poverty and misery are condemned as criminals by the Government.

Neither can Liverpool be seen in isolation. The city is a microcosm of what is happening in all our major cities, especially the old industrial cities in the northern regions. If no immediate action is taken, this country will reap a whirlwind that we have not seen in this or previous centuries.

Recent statements have been made in the Stonefrost report and by the Secretary of State.

Usually, the Secretary of State conducts his dialogue about 240 miles away from Liverpool. He has never attempted to meet councillors around the table to discuss the problems. He has not attempted to recognise the enormity and seriousness of the crisis in the city.

Disregard

No Government have the right to disregard the plight of a major city and its population as this Government are doing. Whatever the council does — if it fiddles around with its budget and increases rates by 15 per cent or, in reality, 24 per cent — commerce and industry are threatening that they will fold up their tents and go if rents rise in Liverpool.

On numerous occasions they have said that the margin upon which they work will become

intolerable and they will go away.

Do the Government want to conduct a vendetta against the people on Liverpool city council, the majority of whom are not members of Militant Tendency but Labour Party members? They are youthful and dynamic and want to tackle the city's problems.

Are the Government waiting for the city to surrender to them and to the Secretary of State because they do not like the faces or the behaviour of some of the people?

The Secretary of State must recognise that the problem will not go away. The crisis will be there tomorrow and the next day unless the Government intervene and say that they will have discussions with the Labour-controlled city council to enable the city to continue the good work that it has been doing to ease tension where tension has been growing. Tension arises from the conditions in which people live.

The city has remained the same throughout two world wars. It has always had double the level of national unemployment. That is the story of Liverpool to which the Government and the Secretary of State must listen.

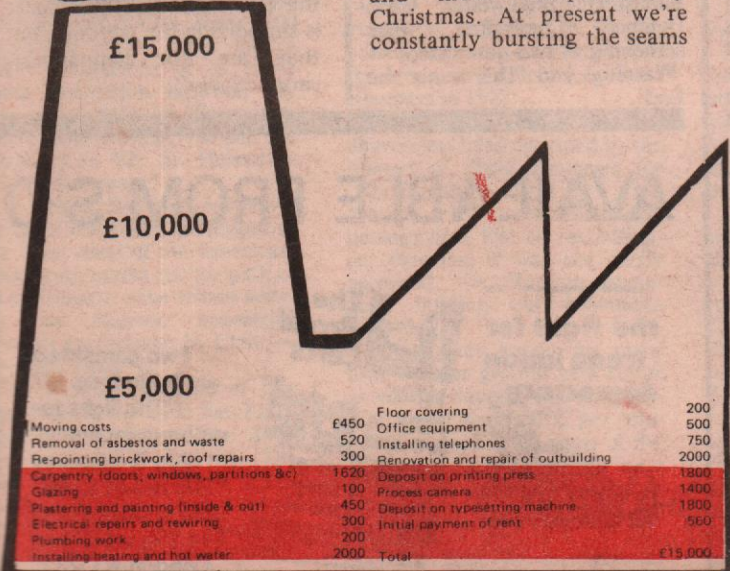
No Government can disregard the need for intervention to put the city on its feet and enable the council to do its necessary job.



Abridged from Eddie Loyden's speech in Parliament on 18 November.

Why we need £15,000

The bills come in



Heavy expenditure is now beginning on our move to new offices.

We've paid the first quarter's rent — we now have a year rent-free in consideration for the work to be done on the premises — and the bill has just come in for clearing the asbestos. Work is beginning on carpentry and on rewiring.

We hope to have the work and move completed by Christmas. At present we're constantly bursting the seams

of our physical resources — the new place will give us resources to do our work properly and scope to expand.

But we need £15,000. And for a socialist paper with no wealthy backers — and indeed with many of our supporters unemployed or on very low wages — that is not easy.

As a solid base for the fund drive, we're asking every organised supporter to give a week's wages between now and Christmas. Student comrades are asked to give a week's grant, unemployed comrades to give what they can — some have given a week's dole.

Thanks this week to: Steve Battlemuch, £75; Linda Mouldsdales, £20; Mike Grayson, £20; Les Hearn, £50; Cheung Siu Ming, £50; Michele Carlisle, £80; Ian Swindate, £50; and Chris Bright, £10.

As well as the bigger donations, scores of fund-raising activities will be necessary.

East London SO ran a jumble sale last Saturday, making £40. Merseyside SO are running a sponsored swim. Nottingham SO, who already have one of the best local records of fund-raising,

ran a social last week (money not in yet) and have a stall booked at a flea market on 11 December.

Stoke North SO have collected numerous individual donations; Arthur Bough reports "We are also holding a raffle for a bottle of whisky, and other ideas for fund-raising include a sponsored darts match. In addition we hope to raise considerably more from donations in the next week or so".

Thanks to: Arthur Bough, £10; P Etheridge, £0.75; R Windsor, £2; R Minton, £1; N Dawson, £1; L Wilmot, £2; J Ellis, £5; R Birznieks, £2; P Barnett, £0.50; A Bough snr, £1.

Also to: Colin Waugh, £3.

Two other things for supporters to bear in mind: we want those in good credit standing with their banks to give us loans so that we can spread the fund-raising out over a longer period; and a quick turnaround on money for the two issues of Workers Liberty — the one on South Africa and 'Under Whose Flag' — will help our finances considerably.

Send all money to: SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Local Group	Target	Raised so far (since 22 June)
Central/general	£5000	£410.00
Aberdeen	£20	
Basingstoke	£560	
Birmingham	£100	
Canterbury	£90	
Cardiff	£600	£254.00
Colchester	£100	£23.80
Coventry	£350	£15.00
Durham/North-East	£200	£4.00
Glasgow/Edinburgh	£560	£49.05
Leeds	£60	
Manchester	£1000	£10.00
Merseyside	£500	£100.00
Nottingham	£1000	£342.97
Oxford	£40	
Sheffield	£400	£15.00
Southampton	£60	
Stoke North	£200	£25.25
Stoke South	£200	£50.00
York/Harrogate	£300	£145.00
East London	£760	£253.95
North London	£1600	£207.05
South London	£800	£395.00
West London	£500	£180.00
Total	£15000	2480.07 (16.5%)

* I enclose a donation of £.....

* I pledge a weekly contribution of over the next six months

* I will contribute £..... each month for the next six months by standing order

To bank branch
Please make payments to the debit of my account as follows:

Name Account no.
Payee: Socialist Organiser, account no.50424830 at the Co-op bank, 1 Islington High St, London N1 9TR (08-90-33).

Amount: £..... Payment to be made on 1985, and thereafter monthly for six months

Date..... Signature

* I am prepared to help with fund-raising activities in my locality. Please put me in touch with the local SO group.

Delete as appropriate and send to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.