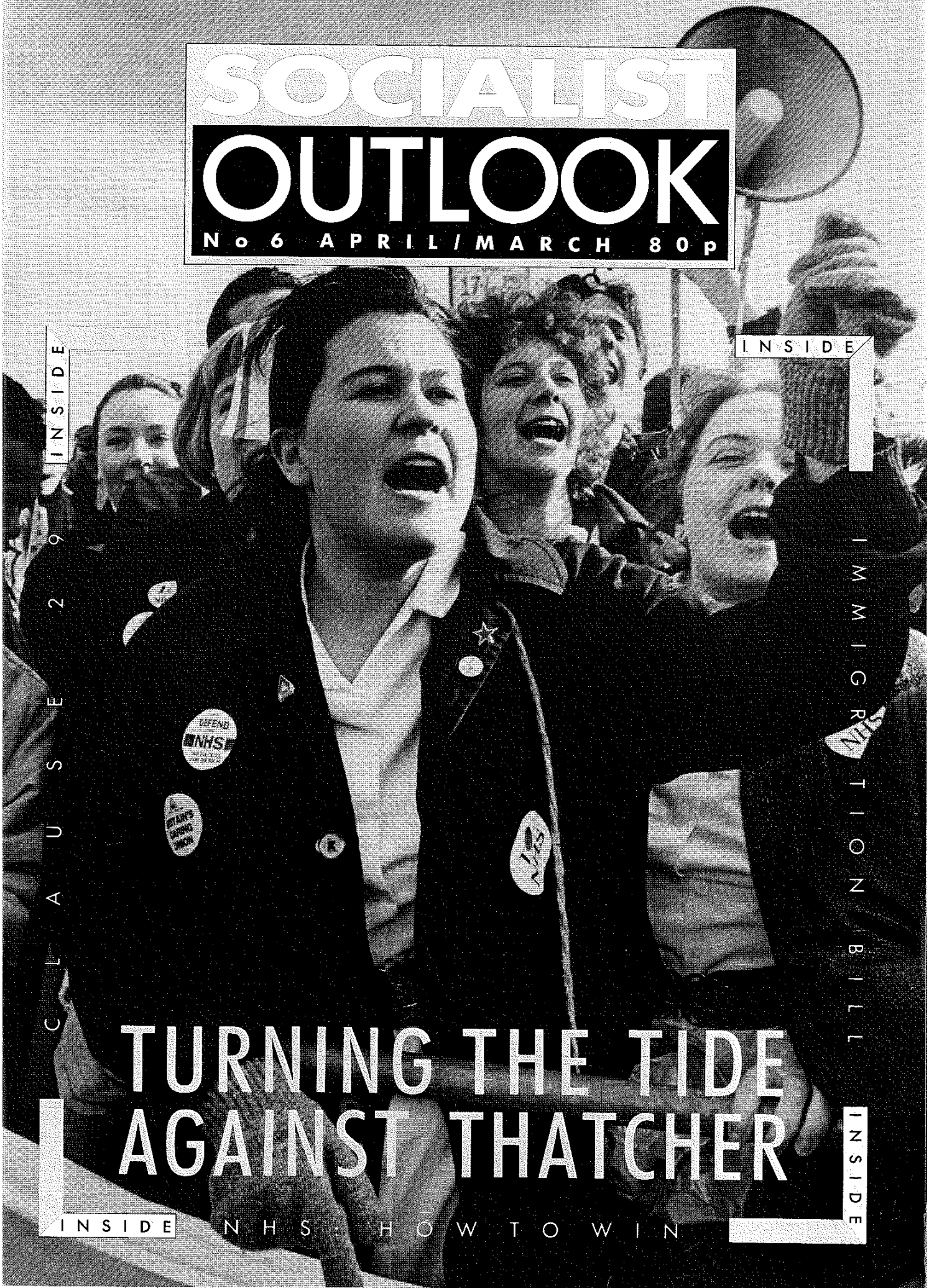
SOCIALIST
OUTLOOK
No 6 APRIL/MARCH 80p



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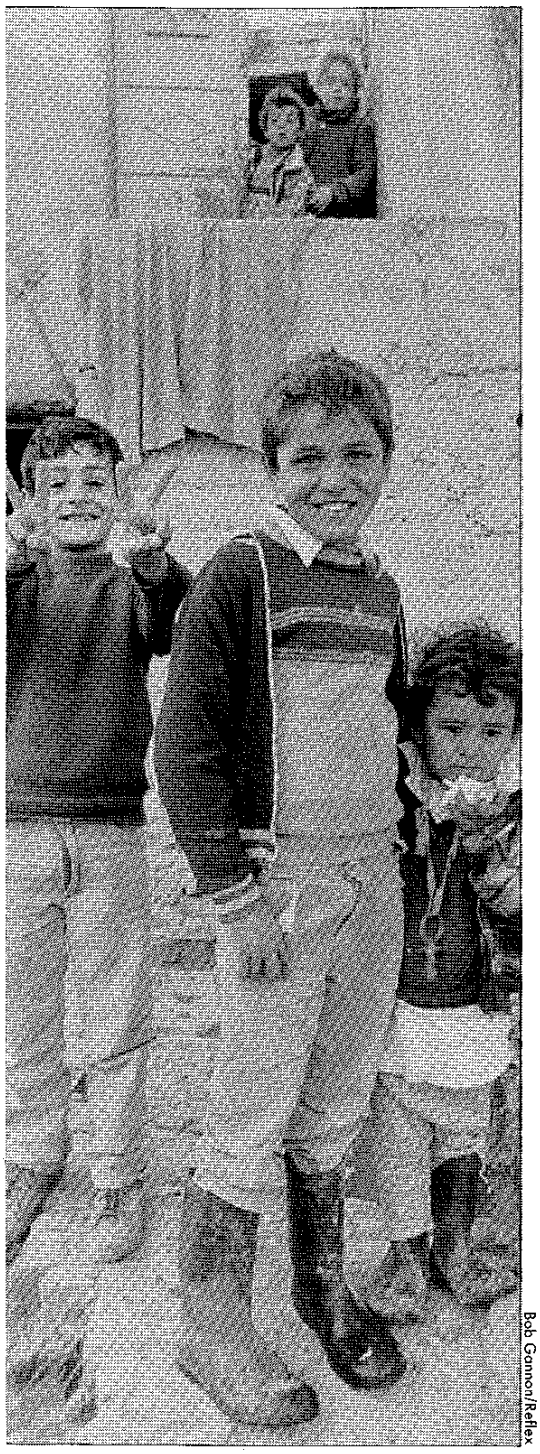

Bob Gannon/Reflex

Socialist Outlook, PO Box 705, London SW19 1HA

Socialist Outlook
Published by **Socialist Outlook**
ISSN 0951-8657
Typesetting and design by Spencers Ltd. (TU), London EC1
Printed by Blackrose Press (TU), London EC1

Front cover photo: 5 March, 100,000 demonstrate in defence of the NHS. Jez Coulson/Reflex.

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Carlos Guarita/Reflex

On 4 February Ford workers hear that the strike is officially on from Sunday: workers are still willing to mount industrial struggle

Has the tide turned against Thatcher?

JUST TWO months ago, all the right wing forces in Britain — from *Marxism Today* to the CBI — were writing off the trade unions and working class struggle as dead. Every trade union office hummed with discussion of 'new' forms of trade unionism — from 'corporate image' to cheap holidays and insurance.

Today, after NHS strikes and strikes in the car industry, and dozens of other struggles often not reported in the media, all that looks pretty stupid. So what exactly has changed? Is it just a flash in the pan — or has the tide turned against Thatcher?

It is true that the Tories have achieved a series of victories against the working class — usually with the active help of the trade union leaders. But they have been unable to impose a definitive defeat. Even the defeat of the miners' strike, their most important achievement in this field, was not that. A definitive defeat, such as in 1926, would not only have stopped

industrial struggle in its tracks but would have made it very difficult for it to re-emerge for an extended period.

In recent years we have experienced something quite different. The rank and file in the unions have been beaten down by the government and the employers' offensive, aided and abetted by the TUC and the 'new realists'. But workers have retained the willingness and the ability to mount industrial struggle despite the serious damage which has been done to union structures at shop floor level in the blue collar sector.

During the second half of last year in particular, militancy developed in a number of sectors despite the further rapid shift to the right at the top of the trade union movement.

Now sections of workers have broken through the bureaucratic barrier and created a new upsurge of industrial struggle. Both in the NHS and the car industry there have been particular factors which have added to the general pressure.

A genuine rank and file development has occured in those sectors which has forced its way beyond the official structures and is now creating a differentiation between the trade unions themselves. This is shown clearly in the decision of the health union COHSE to call a national day of action and the decision of the TUC to call the 5 March demonstration in defence of the NHS. A few months ago these kinds of development did not look remotely likely. Nor would they today if it were not for huge pressure from the base of the movement.

SOME SECTIONS of the trade union bureaucracy have been happy to ride the present wave of struggles, to posture as their leaders to recruit members. But the limitations of the movement so far have come from the brakes put on by the union bureaucrats. Three examples of this stand out sharply.

Sam McCluskie's capitulation before the shipowners and the courts has rendered a devastating blow to the seafarers' union, the NUS. If the NUS cannot take national strike action, because it is a union whose members work for different employers and national strike action is therefore 'secondary action', then the NUS is rendered virtually powerless. McCluskie is one of Kinnock's most loyal lieutenants. His betrayal of the Isle of Man ferry men and his other members on strike is one of the most damaging climb downs in recent years.

At Fords, Jim Airlie, former hero of Upper Clyde and still a member of the Communist Party, managed to conspire with Ron Todd — who effectively ran the strike for the TGWU — to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. While Fords withdrew the three year pay deal, nonetheless, the basic issue of Japanese-style labour flexibility remains. It was given away before the ability of the Fords workers to defeat the company was even tested out.

And in the NHS, the panic and desperation of the union bureaucrats at the militancy of their members is almost on public display. NUPE in particular have gone out of their way to try to damp down strike action, especially among non-nursing staff, which they say would 'detract' from the nurses' action.

All in all, and we have just quoted some of the more obvious examples, the action of the union memberships, of the rank and file, has come up against the temporising and betrayal of the union bureaucrats. Noteworthy here, yet again, is the role of *both* wings of the Communist Party. The *Morning Star* went out of its way to explain what a great victory the Ford sell-out was! The *Morning Star* will want, in this situation, to tie itself ever more firmly to the coat tails of the left bureaucrats; while if anything *Marxism Today* will side with the Kinnock leadership in suggesting that perhaps the union leaderships are going 'too far'!

SO THERE is an uneven and contradictory situation. *Despite the sell-outs at Fords and among the seafarers, the mood of militancy has not been crushed.* Fords was probably understood as a *victory* among many workers.

The crying need today is for co-ordination, to unify the struggles, into a general anti-Thatcher movement. The rapid climb down by Thatcher in the fight over the nurses' nightshift allowances and on the blood transfusion service bonus payments, shows the potential for actually inflicting defeats on the government.

There is a new mood abroad that will not be easily defeated or thrown back by one or two defeats, or the disorganising effects of the union tops.

There is something we should add to the general picture which is very significant. Average earnings have been rising at eight and a half per cent per annum, well above the rate of inflation. Of course, this is very uneven: the figures include company directors, and most workers have just seen their earnings keep pace, or go a little above inflation. But many workers sense that there are sections of society who are getting richer, and they want a share. And the stock market crash, in undermining the credibility of Thatcher's 'new Britain' has propelled many people back towards traditional notions of fighting their corner, with a prospect of winning.

Is the current round of militancy like the winter of discontent? While every bourgeois journal tries to convince itself that it isn't, the facts and figures tell a different story. But like the winter of discontent in the late 1970s, unless the movement is given a focus and leadership, then it can peter out or be defeated. However, unlike the winter of 1978/9, there is no general election just around the corner which will change everything in one fell swoop. There is still everything to play for.

The current situation, with well over a million workers taking strike action, shows that our class is alive and kicking. It shows that the main problem of the movement, the question of timorous and treacherous leadership, remains. And it shows, if ever there was doubt, that the opportunity for the left to intervene and provide a perspective for linking the struggles and giving leadership is there. That opportunity has to be seized with both hands ●

UPFRONT

No compromise with Alton!

AS WE GO to press, David Alton's anti-abortion bill has not yet gone into the committee stage where it will be prepared for its third reading. It looks set to go back to the commons around 16 March, three days before the TUC and Labour Party sponsored demonstration against it.

Pro-choice campaigners are fearful that, despite occasional protests to the contrary, Alton would accept a compromise to his one line bill along the lines of a 22 or 24 week limit. It is urgent that we campaign against this as a solution and keep up the pressure to defeat this bill altogether.

The pro-choice members of the committee — led by Jo Richardson and including Audrey Wise, Joan Ruddock and Mildred Gordon — are so far rumoured to be against the compromise. The anti-abortion members are equally hard line. However, such a compromise could still be seen as a way of avoiding the deadlock.

Pro-choice MPs are planning amendments of their own: calling for abortion on demand up to 12 weeks, for example. These amendments are largely for the purpose of filibustering and generally tend to subvert the whole purpose of the bill.

Meanwhile, up in the house of lords, a special committee has just reported on the issue. They recommend no change in the term limit from the current one of 28 weeks. In addition, they pose the question of whether there should be a term limit at all! The sting in the tail is that they do believe that the *grounds* for abortion should be different from 24 weeks on. Their recommendations could well arrive in the commons at the same time as Alton's bill.

Inside the Labour Party women are up in arms against the 55 Labour MPs who abstained or voted for Alton — against Labour Party policy. A campaign is under way for de-selection and the implementation of a three line whip in the next commons vote.

Deputy leader Roy Hattersley has particularly incensed campaigners in Birmingham by declaring that he is opposed to *all* abortions unless the woman is dying. Such MPs will come under even more pressure now that the Labour Party nationally has agreed to support the 19 March demonstration and is producing its own leaflets.

The picture in the labour movement as a whole is good. There are now 22 national unions on the Fight Alton's Bill (FAB) mailing list. A joint liaison commitee between FAB and the TUC is organising the March demonstration.

FAB also plans to have a symbolic handing-in of the petitions collected all over the country when the bill is given its third reading and is producing special publicity about black women and the Alton bill.

The campaign is still desperately in need of funds and donations should be sent to Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London, WC1 where the FAB headquarters are newly re-established ●

JUDITH ARKWRIGHT

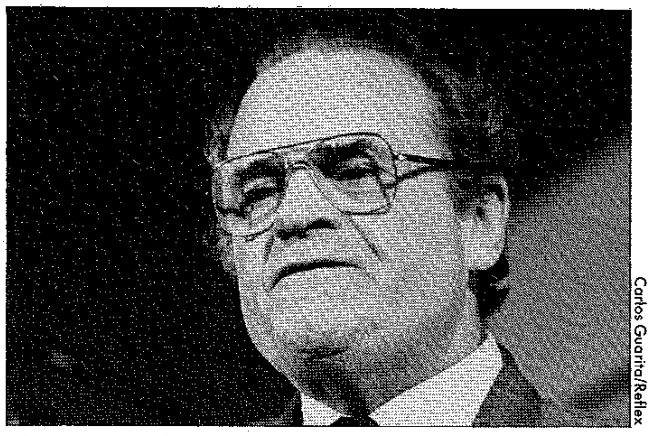
TGWU elections

More a defeat for the right than a victory for the left

THE ELECTIONS for the national executive of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) have produced a shift to the left within the leadership of the union.

This has big implications for the whole labour movement. The effects of the TGWU block vote at TUC and Labour Party conferences are obvious. But the result should not be considered as a simple victory for the left.

The key left victories, which changed a slim right wing majority into a slim left wing majority, were in three trade groups: the power and engineering group, the textiles group and the agricultural group. The left also won in the south-east London territorial division, where Ford worker Steve Riley defeated right wing national president Brian Nicholson.



Carlos Guarita/Reflex

TGWU general secretary Ron Todd: considered to be too left wing by Brian Nicholson

This result, which puts ten new members on the national executive of 39, has produced a broad left majority of about 22-17. This is, however, a difficult calculation, given the extreme diversity of the 'broad left' in the union which ranges from supporters of the hard left to Communist Party members and Kinnock supporters.

The media caused confusion in the run up to the ballot by presenting it as a contest between the soft left and the hard left. In reality it was a contest between the broad left national executive minority and the right wing majority led by Nicholson.

The Nicholson grouping have been a major factor in the union for some time. They have been systematically using their majority on the executive to

Ballot-rigging and the TGWU

IT IS STILL unclear whether the TGWU election results will be challenged on the basis of ballot-rigging allegations.

General Secretary Ron Todd has rejected all tales of ballot-rigging as the 'invention of the media' and there is little doubt that most of them were.

Todd knows, however, that the record of the TGWU in this respect is scandalous and it is this which makes it an easy target for such allegations.

During the national executive elections Todd was forced to intervene in two regions and that may not be the end of it.

Successive TGWU leaders have refused to discipline ballot-riggers even when they have been caught red-handed. They have also refused to tighten up the union's rule book in order to make ballot-rigging more difficult.

A political consequence of this is that the TGWU *Record* is now being openly used to promote and justify the next stage of Tory anti-union legislation which includes postal balloting ●

mount a right wing challenge to Ron Todd's position as general secretary.

Nicholson has used his position on the appointments committee to install hard right-wingers into key non-elected regional secretary positions as they have become vacant. This has led to bitter clashes with Todd in at least two regions: region two (London) and region five (Midlands). The regional secretaries are extremely influential and they administer the elections and arrange the counting of votes.

Nicholson's objective was to consolidate his right wing control of the executive and to marginalise Todd whom he considers too left wing.

The TGWU has in most respects been a part of the 'new realist' project. Todd intervened along with Bill Jordan to create the basis for the recent Ford sell-out, for example. However, it has not been consistent enough or right wing enough for Nicholson. Had he been successful he would have taken the union to a position alongside the AEU or even the EETPU on the extreme right of the TUC.

It is not yet clear how much the union will move to the left in the wake of this result. But it is clear that Nicholson's attempts to move it further to the right have been roundly defeated. The result is also a victory for Todd who is now released from right wing pressure and free to exert his own direction on the union.

Kinnock has expressed confidence that the election result will not change the relationship between the TGWU and his project for the Labour Party. He is probably right. The TGWU under the new executive is likely to support Kinnock on most occasions.

The general secretary's position is very powerful if it is not under threat and the executive is limited in the influence it can exert. It does not, for example, control the TGWU block vote at Labour Party conferences. Here decisions are taken by the conference delegation which has often been well to the right of the national executive. The election result should therefore be understood much more as a *defeat* for the right than a *victory* for the left ●

ALAN THORNETT

Shoot-to-kill, Birmingham six, PTA . . .

Tories cash in on Anglo-Irish accord

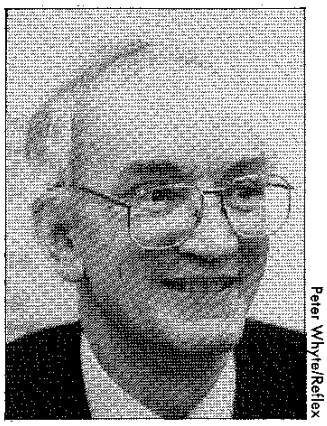
ANGLO-IRISH relations have been under considerable strain over the past few months. The Irish government has felt it necessary to object to some of the more blatant imperialist injustices perpetrated by the British government and state.

But are recent events an obstacle to the process started by the Anglo-Irish accord, or are they, simply, its logical outcome? Let's re-cap some of the events:

● On 25 January Attorney General Sir Patrick Mayhew announced in the house of commons that, in the interests of 'national security', no prosecutions would arise from the Stalker-Sampson investigations into the alleged RUC shoot-to-kill policy. This was despite the fact that the report contained evidence of attempts to pervert the course of justice, perjury and obstruction.

● On 28 January, the three appeal court judges in the 'Birmingham six' case delivered their judgement. There was no police conspiracy, there were no beatings, former Birmingham police officers Joyce Lynass and Tom Clarke are liars and home office forensic scientist Frank Skuse was a competent scientist and a man of integrity. In short, the 1975 convictions were 'safe and satisfactory'.

● On 16 February it was announced that the prevention of terrorism act (PTA) is to become permanent. The decision was leaked earlier but was denied by 'Northern Ireland' Secretary Tom King just before a meeting of the Anglo-Irish conference in Belfast. That night it was confirmed in the house of lords.



Peter Whyte/Reflex

Ex-deputy chief constable John Stalker

● On 21 February Aiden McAnespie from Aughnacloy was shot in the back by a bullet fired from a British army checkpoint near his home.

● On 23 February Mrs Thatcher announced that the Anglo-Irish accord did not give the twenty-six county authorities the right to investigate border shootings. On the same day it was also made public that the only British soldier to be convicted of murder since the troops went in in 1969 was released last year after serving only two years of a life sentence.

These events have provoked public outrage in Britain and throughout the thirty-two counties. The anger has spread through all levels of Irish society including the ruling Fianna Fail party.

Is the British government trying to goad Dublin into ditching the Anglo-Irish accord as some politicians in Ireland now suspect? Alternatively, is Thatcher simply confident that Haughey will be willing to swallow any insult to the Irish people, any affront and injustice, however great? In other words is the British government simply cashing in on the Anglo-Irish accord?

Those who believe that the British government is trying to wreck the accord don't have to look far for circumstantial evidence. Since the accord was signed the British government has shown itself to be totally unwilling to budge on any significant issue. However, events since January have left even Haughey gasping for breath at the sheer ruthlessness and insensitivity to Irish feelings of the British establishment.

Ardent supporters of the Anglo-Irish accord inside Fianna Fail are now either shell-shocked or extremely angry. Whether their anger is controllable is yet to be seen. Limerick Fianna Fail TD (MP) Willie O'Dea reacted to the 'Birmingham six' announcement with the words, 'I wouldn't now extradite a cat to Britain'. (*Irish Post* 6/2/88.)

More telling perhaps was the reaction of former Irish foreign minister Peter Barry to the decision not to prosecute over the Stalker-Sampson allegations. Mr Barry, who was central to the negotiation of the accord, was quoted in the *Guardian* (27/1/88) as saying, 'In matters like this the British suit themselves. We should have known that after so many hundreds of years'.

Urgent meetings of the Anglo-Irish conference were called in late January after the attorney general's announcement. However, even while such meetings were taking place, the situation was becoming more and more volatile.

At the time of writing, the murder of Aiden McAnespie and the news of the early release of another British murderer has led to yet another emergency meeting of British and Irish ministers.

Readers of this magazine and its predecessors will know that contributors have consistently argued that the Anglo-Irish accord represented a tactical move by the British state to draw the twenty-six county government into jointly organising anti-republican offensives. We have always argued against those who saw it as a step forward for the

nationalist community.

The events since January do not contradict that analysis. The British government now feels able to use any and every means possible to suppress the political activity of Irish people and their supporters here and in both the six and twenty-six counties in order to preserve their interests in Ireland.

To this end they have locked up innocent people, tortured and murdered nationalists and made permanent an extremely repressive piece of legislation.

Under the cover of the Anglo-Irish accord, they can do this and still expect safely to ride out any political storm under the guise of continuing to seek political solutions to the so-called Irish problem ●

JEAN REILLY

Black sections facing testing times

WHAT IS GOING on within black sections? Confusion reigns over the so-called 'Morris proposals' (put forward in *Tribune* on 8 January by TGWU deputy Bill Morris) for a 'black socialist society'. How does the existing black sections leadership intend to respond to them?

The questions posed in this discussion are critical for the future of black sections.

The setting up of a black socialist society would require NEC support to succeed. The clear implication is that Morris *can* swing powerful trade union support behind the proposal provided that a 'deal' can be struck with black sections. The key question is what would this mean for the struggle for black self-determination in the labour movement — an advance or self-limitation?

Paul Sharma is the main spokesperson within black sections themselves for dropping the full-blown demand for recognition in favour of more 'realisable' objectives which would increase 'black representation' in the Labour Party.

The LCC have now dropped their previous, purely formal, support for recognition of black sections in favour of Sharma's more 'sensible' approach.

In a recent article (also in *Tribune*) Sharma described those in the black sections leadership still committed to full recognition as a 'mujaheddin' faction.

In fact, the essence of the 'Morris proposals' is that a deal is perhaps available, or at least some substantial trade union support at the NEC, for a black socialist society, on the condition that black sections are *de facto* wound up.

This is not to say that the 'maximum demand' for black sections could not be kept as a formal part of a black socialist society's programme.

Morris represents that wing of the trade union bureaucracy least hostile to the development of anti-racist policies and more receptive structures for black members. But, he cannot and will not support demands for real black self-organisation in the labour movement. To do so could cost him his job.

Other sections of the bureaucracy are completely hostile to making any concessions to anti-racism and to their black members. It is clearly in the interest of black sections and black caucuses in the unions for this policy division in the labour movement bureaucracy to be intensified.

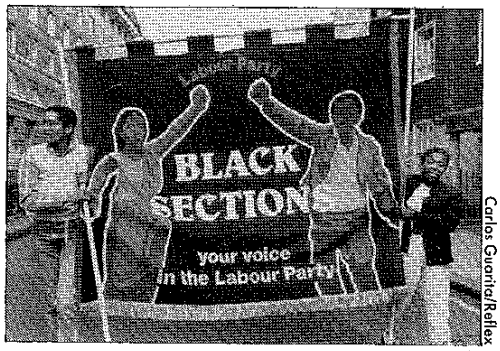
Yet, this can only be done successfully from a position of strength. If the Labour leadership is prepared to concede a 'partially liberated zone' in the form of a black socialist society then so be it. Its basis must be absolutely unconditional.

Why is it that so much support has coalesced around the minimum demand of a black socialist society leaving the maximum demand for black sections looking like 'pie in the sky'?

This is both an objective problem and also a problem of leadership. The trade union block vote remains an apparently impregnable obstacle to any advance at Labour Party conference.

At the same time a series of internal tensions have riven black sections themselves.

The debacle over the defence of Sharon Atkin, the new black MPs' predictable lack of accountability, leading figures' support for huge local authority cuts, and possible disarray over how to respond to the education bill and its ramifications for 'black' (actually religious/ethnic) schools have all contributed to a crisis of direction within black sections.



Carlos Guorild/Reflex

Black sections on the march

The leading figures in the national black section are in the political camp of the 'Labour Left Liaison' (LLL) — the 'soft' wing of the hard left.

In common with their political co-thinkers in LLL they talk 'left' on future policy for the Labour Party. But they take an ambiguous or evasive approach to current struggles and basic questions of socialist principle.

It is this lack of clear leadership that has undermined black sections' credibility and lent credence to the accusations which have dogged black sections from their inception of being a vehicle for 'opportunistic careerists'.

By bending to the right wing 'wind of change' in the Labour Party over the past two years the black sections leadership has in some senses fulfilled that prophecy.

The foundation of black sections was the product of a particular phase of development in the Labour left and in 'autonomous' black politics.

In the same way conditions for further advance by black sections will be determined by a shift in the general political climate. Exploiting more favourable future conditions successfully, however, depends on the way the black sections leadership conducts itself in this current phase of relative isolation.

Few gains have been made by black sections since its role in the MP re-selection process.

Maximum gains out of a future phase of 'upturn' are perfectly possible provided the hard left moves black sections forward on four key policy planks.

First, support for and co-ordination with black self-organisation within the trade unions and disputes involving black workers.

Second, a thorough approach to carefully chosen campaign issues and campaigns against state racism.

Third, developing a clear socialist strategy in defence of black peoples' interests as workers and users of public sector services.

And fourth, prioritising solidarity work with key national liberation struggles: notably South Africa/Azania and Palestine.

Preparations can be made now for the day when black self-organisation in the labour movement can wrest *real* concessions from the bureaucracy in one of *its* inevitable moments of weakness ●

DAVID CURTIS

Socialist Outlook wants your letters! If you feel moved to write — and we hope you will — please try and keep to a maximum of 300 words. Send to: PO Box 705, London SW19 1HA.

Gorbymania

Dear comrades,

Like Sue Owen (*Socialist Outlook* 5), I feel that Oliver MacDonald's article on 'Gorbachev and the left' *(Socialist Outlook* 4) was affected by a touch of 'Gorbymania'.

However, I cannot agree with her when she criticises Oliver MacDonald's statement that 'the working class throughout the world has shown itself over and over again to be prepared to pay an astonishingly high economic price for greater political freedom', with the remark that 'the *leaderships* of the working class are willing that the workers should pay an extraordinarily high economic price for a political "freedom" whose principal beneficiary will be the leaders, not the workers themselves.'

Is Sue trying to tell us that workers have no interest in basic political freedoms? For one thing such freedoms are necessary for the conduct of the economic struggle itself — through permitting the uncovering and denunciation of the gross inefficiencies and injustices of the present system and in allowing the necessary opportunity for a discussion and mobilisation around alternatives. But apart from that, to suggest that workers have no interest in such things as artistic or religious freedom implies a highly idealist and reified view of the working class.

A basic criticism of Gorbachev in my opinion is the fact that he has no commitment to a real democratisation of Soviet society. His *glasnost* policy is employed under strictly controlled conditions, for centrally determined and limited objectives.

I agree with Sue Owen that we should not identify ourselves with Gorbachev and his '-ism'. But in so doing we should not give any grounds for suspicion that we feel sympathy for those sections of the bureaucracy who will obstruct him from the 'left', defending entrenched corruption in the name of a working class interest defined in the most narrowly economistic and anti-intellectual form.

The totalitarian methods, often mixed with xenophobia, characteristic of the left face of stalinism do just as much, if not more, damage to the socialist cause and to the development of genuine class consciousness amongst workers as direct deals with imperialism.

In any case both the 'right' and 'left' sides of stalinism operate together at all times in the permanent counter-revolution in defence of the interests of the bureaucratic caste. A central part of our opposition to stalinism is the defence of human rights whether collective or individual ●

Colin Meade

Child abuse

Dear comrades,

The letters from Phil Hearse and from Stevi Jackson and Julian Wilson (*Socialist Outlook* 4) misunderstand the article I wrote in *Socialist Outlook* 3 with Judith Paton.

Neither letter understands what we meant by empowerment. It is not a 'legalistic' concept, and it is not restricted to the way abused children are treated after the abuse has been discovered. Nor is it something that belongs in the realm of socialist 'utopia'. It is an idea which is applicable immediately but which has far-reaching implications for the whole organisation of society.

The immediate demands we outlined in our article lead to a thoroughgoing re-appraisal of the way the care system, the medical establishment and the police and courts are organised and the way they perceive children.

The principle we wish to establish is that children should, wherever possible, be in control of their lives.

It is true that some children will not have the knowledge or experience to make complicated and difficult decisions. However, it is obviously impossible to choose an age at which we deem children capable of deciding. Hence the only practical way of determining when adults should intervene is to allow intervention only when a child says she or he doesn't know or doesn't understand.

It is their very powerlessness within the family and in society which makes children vulnerable to abuse and which isolates them from possible sources of support and solidarity.

Both letters claim that we said sexual abuse is 'not about sexual desire'. This is not true. A consideration of the way sex and power are intertwined in capitalist society is vital in this discussion.

To appeal to agencies of the capitalist state to protect children, as Phil Hearse does, implies putting the blame onto 'abnormal' parts of society: the dysfunctional family rears its ugly head again.

One does not have to argue for the abolition of the welfare state as a consequence of recognising that the whole framework in which social workers, paediatricians and other professionals operate is geared to the needs of society as it exists now. This framework works against the interests of children.

My final criticism of both letters is that they approach the subject in a very polemical style, and, in the case of Phil's letter, with seemingly very little background knowledge of the research and discussion which has already taken place. It is an essential part of what we are trying to say that the sexual abuse of children is a widespread phenomenon, which will probably affect everybody, directly or indirectly, in the course of their lives. As such, the discussion is not an abstract or theoretical one.

I hope that this necessary debate will continue in a spirit of sensitivity, of comradely discussion and of joint exploration of important and difficult ideas ●

Dani Ahrens

NHS: stepping up the fight

Defence of the National Health Service is the driving force that has animated protest strikes by tens of thousands of health workers and brought a wave of support from other trade unionists.

This is a tremendous strength. It means that only a substantial reverse in government policy — a decision to provide major new cash resources for the NHS — can defuse an escalating struggle which has vast popular support. **HARRY SLOAN** reports.

EVEN IN THE unlikely event of an unexpectedly generous settlement for nurses in this year's April pay review, it would produce only a temporary slackening of the fight, since government policies are already set to sharpen the NHS crisis.

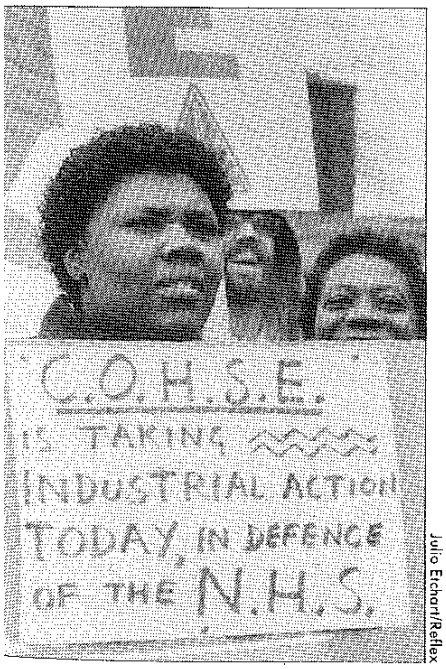
1987 saw the NHS close at least 3,500 beds, and cut many basic services, as it grappled with a shortfall of over £230m. Yet government spending figures for 1988-89 mean a further shortfall of almost £400m. These cuts come on top of a cumulative shortfall (estimated by an all-party commons select committee) of £1.8 billion since 1980.

Despite the unprecedented focus on NHS spending in advance of Nigel Lawson's 15 March budget, the Tories are quite adamant that they intend to hand out huge tax-breaks to the rich, and make no extra cash available for health services. The new financial year will therefore launch a new round of cuts — meaning more problems for nurses and the other sections of healthworkers who have already begun to fight back.

Thatcher's threatened 'review' of the NHS, which is almost certain to involve imposition of new, means-tested charges for treatment, is due to be unveiled by late summer — just as the 1988-89 cuts begin.

Add to this the strong likelihood that this year's NHS pay round will anger almost every section of healthworkers; and add the extra inflammatory factor of a battle over London weighting payments (the government has offered a miserly £51 per year increase on the £950 London weighting, against an all-union demand for an extra £1000), and we have every reason to expect NHS struggles to continue and escalate.

Naive outsiders might expect that the opportunity to lead a united trade union membership in a hugely popular crusade against a vicious government would excite and delight trade union and Labour leaders. No such reaction can be seen from the same timid, spineless TUC and Parliamentary Labour Party team that has brought an unbroken series of retreats, betrayals and sell-outs since Thatcher took office.



Julio Etchart/Reflex

Nurses from Homerton hospital, London on strike 3 February: the question is how we move from the present stage of struggle to create conditions for a general strike

The enthusiastic mass upsurge of rank and file nurses, which led to the success of the 3 February day of action may have inspired most activists; but it was regarded as an embarrassment by Neil Kinnock. It also appears to have frightened the life out of a NUPE leadership besotted with Tom Sawyer's defeatist 'new realism', and a TUC leadership politically dominated by the hard right.

Apart from the Scottish TUC day of action on 24 February, NUPE leaders have (with some honourable exceptions) for the most part been working to prevent or restrict further strikes, and have actively attempted to sabotage the call by COHSE for a day of action on 14

March — the eve of the budget.

Instead of following the Scottish example and calling a TUC day of action, or pressing for other unions to back the COHSE call, the NUPE leaders, Norman Willis and the other TUC heavies called in COHSE's Hector McKenzie — and rapped his knuckles for having called on his own members to take action!

COHSE's rather different response to the NHS crisis arises partly from its less rigid bureaucratic control over the rank and file compared to NUPE, and partly from recognising an opportunity to recruit new members, especially dissidents from the no-strike Royal College of Nursing (RCN). It is ironic, after militants have argued for years against the inter-union rivalries in the NHS, that precisely these divisions have opened up the best possibilities for action: if NUPE leaders were in total control, there would be little strike action taking place!

The TUC's one initiative — decided only after an agonising five-hour debate (which began with a call for an indoor meeting) — was to call the 5 March national demonstration in defence of the NHS.

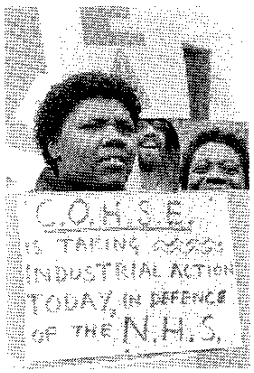
'health unions should boycott all work to implement cuts and closures'

Clearly the task is to use this mobilisation, and the opportunity to build solidarity on the 14 March COHSE action, to build for escalating action to defend the NHS.

Simply to state the truism (as some do on the sectarian left) that what is needed to defend the NHS is a general strike to defeat the Tories is to state the problem rather than the solution.

Given Thatcher's intransigence, a general strike is needed to win; and defence of the NHS is one of those issues around which, in the right conditions, a general strike could be achieved. Every previous major struggle by healthworkers has seen supporting strike action by industrial unions, and already we have seen Vauxhall workers, miners, local government and other workers take supporting action.

The question is how we move from the present stage of struggle to create conditions for a general strike. This can only develop if we take seriously the organisation and mobilisation of the health unions themselves: we must avoid empty propagandist sloganising, but also oppose the kind of 'grand old Duke of York' official tactics of endless single 'days of action' which led to demoralisation and defeat in the 1982 pay fight.



Serious, sustained action is needed: but to achieve this, healthworkers must be convinced that there is no other way out, and that the short-term inconvenience it will mean to some NHS patients will be made good by the long-term defence of the NHS. At present, many of the nurses and other staff who have readily responded to one day token strikes remain reluctant to take any more prolonged action (even with emergency cover).

Some fear it would hurt patients; others recognise that an escalation to longer strikes would change the character of the dispute and end the unreal 'honeymoon' period of favourable press coverage: it could also cost them heavily in wages — and few have any savings to fall back on. In addition there is the problem of the active scabbing role of the 250,000-strong RCN whose national leaders generally regard it as their job to attack the health unions rather than the government.

These problems could possibly be overcome by a firm and united official call for action by the health union leaders: but this is not likely in the short run. They could also be overcome by a process of organisation and escalation of the dispute which can create the conviction that only sustained strike action can win, and the confidence that the health unions are strong enough to undertake it.

The fact is that the mobilisation of healthworkers so far has to a large extent remained at a rank and file (therefore patchy and spontaneous) level: whole hospitals — and indeed whole unions — have lagged behind, with manual ancillary staff in particular less active this time than the nurses.

This is why it is essential that vigorous campaigns in each hospital and action against *local level* cuts and closures are combined with calls on national leaderships for more generalised action.

This means:

- Health unions in each locality should be linking up with each other, with trades councils, Labour parties and community organisations, to build campaigning health emergency-type organisations which set out to expose and combat every cut and closure in local hospital and community health services.
- Local forms of industrial action, if necessary short of all-out strikes, should be taken to combat management attacks. In Edinburgh a seven week work-to-rule and overtime ban by nurses last autumn won 60 extra posts.

Since much nursing overtime is unpaid, and many nurses work unacceptably long hours, overtime bans can also help focus the fight for union organisation and win union members from the RCN. Management can be obliged to hire expensive agency staff to cover wards, often negating the 'savings' from cuts and closures.

- Some unions still have formal 'no-cover' policies for unfilled vacancies, which can be enforced to expose management's 'hidden' cuts. Other ways too can be found in each hospital to disrupt the workings of management while preserving patient care.

'the TUC should call an all-union day of action in defence of the NHS'

- In particular health unions should boycott all work to implement cuts and closures — whether this be moving beds or patients, or clerical and other work. This policy can win widespread support from non-health unions.
- Where hospitals or facilities are threatened with closure, the tested tactic of occupation (or 'work-in') has proved successful in Oxford and London, and has prolonged the life of other hospitals (sometimes for years). As long as patients stay in the hospital (protected by pickets on the gates), management must ensure it is staffed — and pay those who work there! This form of action has proved ideal for building solidarity and supporting action.
- Boycotts on private patients who queue-jump their way into NHS hospitals could also be considered as more managers look to step up the role of private blocks as a means of 'income generation'.
- Publicity is vital for all these activities — and tremendous impact can be achieved through 'opening the books' of local management — revealing the real growth of waiting lists, financial incompetence, hidden losses on private treatment, secret plans for cuts, and horrendous 'options' being considered. Any-

thing like this helps stoke up public anger and build local campaigns.

With a firm footing of local mobilisation, demands must be made for action at national level by the TUC — and by the Labour Party, whose scandalous inaction on the NHS helped Thatcher win her third term of office, and which is now missing the chance to build a massive grass-roots campaign reaching the whole working class (and deeper into the middle classes than any of Bryan Gould's loopy share schemes).

The Labour Party nationally should be working flat out on the issue, and urging local parties to build health campaigns and to leaflet wards — especially council estates — mobilising local support.

The TUC must be told to call an STUC-style day of action by all unions in defence of the NHS: this would alert the whole movement to the crisis and produce a one day general strike bigger than that over GCHQ. We must also demand the Labour Party and TUC call a full-scale demonstration (or simultaneous regional events) in July to mark the fortieth anniversary of the NHS.

Healthworkers in NUPE must fight at branch, division and national level for resolutions demanding solidarity in action with COHSE; and healthworkers in NALGO, the GMB and TGWU must likewise demand that their unions join the mobilisation in defence of the NHS.

We should be calling on health unions to launch a national nurses' work-to-rule and overtime ban, with supporting action from ancillary staffs: they should also set a deadline for escalating this to strike action (with a call for support from the whole workers' movement) unless the government stumps up the £2.5 billion needed to restore the cuts it has made in the NHS.

A fight developed and escalated along these lines could revive the best traditions of working class solidarity from the miners' strike — on an even wider level. Over 90 per cent of voters (including over 80 per cent of Tories!) in opinion polls favour spending more tax revenue on the NHS: over 70 per cent support the nurses' strikes; 70 per cent say they would pay *extra* taxes at once for the NHS. Only the timidity of the union leaders stands in the way of tapping this support.

Combined with the evident rebirth of militancy at rank and file level in many unions, mass trade union action to defend the NHS could provide our best chance yet for a combined onslaught that could rock or even unseat the Thatcher government ●

Labour and the NHS

JAN TURNER

GOVERNMENT COST cutting measures and the financial crisis they have engineered have driven the NHS to breaking point. With official government inquiries and right wing think tanks jostling for position in the race to produce proposals which 'review' (i.e. fundamentally undermine) future NHS financing, 1988 is a crunch year for the NHS.

The public know there is a severe problem, they know who is ultimately to blame and they want it put right. They

'Labour has barely yet managed to dent Thatcher's lead in the polls'

may not necessarily know how, but in the short term they want more public money put into the NHS. Poll after poll shows continuing public support for decent funding for the health service — even if it means forgoing tax cuts or increasing the tax burden on the rich.

Of course the continuing action — including strike action by nurses, ancillary and other health service workers and extending to a wide range of protest actions staged by all sections of the NHS workforce (even including consultants and some managers) — is feeding the public pressure to defend the NHS. This is Thatcher's greatest weakness and Labour's big chance.

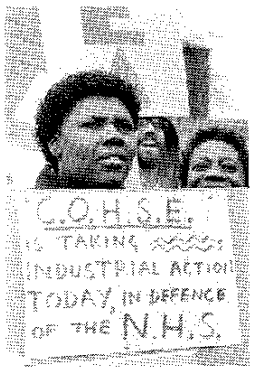
Here, you might think, is Labour's golden opportunity to make its case for an alternative to the economics of Thatcherism. A chance to argue for socialism. Or at the very least to (re)state the principles of the limited commitment to public ownership and provision that the welfare state was built on. But no.

Apparently oblivious to the clear political need, and tremendous opportunity, to establish an alternative political pole around which to build support for Labour from this opposition to Thatcher, off go Labour's leadership trundling into the ground tried, tested and failed by the SDP.

With superbly bad timing, at a National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting held just two days after the successful first wave of NHS strike action on 3 February, Kinnock and Hattersley issued their 'aims and values' statement

On the picket line at Whittington hospital, London: the mobilisation of health workers has to a large extent remained at rank and file level

David Lurie/Reflex



which rescues the market from the dustbin, where successive Labour Party conferences have attempted to throw it.

This dreary and defeatist document basically accepts the legitimacy of the role of 'market forces' and values, and de-prioritises Labour's commitment to public ownership and provision.

At this same meeting the party leadership also tabled a resolution giving little more than qualified recognition to the NHS strikes, in opposition to a position put by left members to fully support the current — and any further — strike action taken by healthworkers.

The leadership were supported, as they always are, by the trade union representatives on the NEC, who later accused the left of 'patronising' nurses by supporting them in this way and demanding Labour give a lead to their struggle — preferring their own brand of condescension (and cold feet) that tries to turn a grassroots strike movement into a 'protest'.

Small wonder then, that even with the Tories vulnerable on the health service, and with the SDP-Liberal merger fiasco fresh in the public's minds, that Labour has barely yet managed to dent Thatcher's lead in the polls, gaining only at the expense of the Alliance, and that Kinnock only manages to scrape level with Steel — a miserable 39 per cent of punters rate each as 'good' leaders.

Perhaps predictably for readers of this journal (but also unusual, and even reassuring insofar as it is confirmed by polls commissioned by the *Daily Telegraph*) it is clear that the problem for the labour movement comes down to the problem of the leadership of the trade unions and the Labour Party.

That there is a groundswell of support for the NHS is indisputable. The breadth and commitment of that support has been heartening. Much of it has come from outside the traditional confines of the labour movement: from patients, doctors, consultants and surgeons; as well as from those professional organisations like the non-TUC and no-strike RCN, who have sometimes been almost as willing to attack the Tories as they are to attack striking nurses.

NUPE's Rodney Bickerstaff addresses nurses on the picket line at Homerton hospital, London: health service workers are looking for leadership to challenge the government effectively over the NHS

Julio Etchart/Reflex

But it is the strength of feeling and the eagerness of NHS workers to take action in defence of the health service that poses the greatest problem for the labour movement leadership. Because what the left of the movement have been advocating coincides with a mood for action at a grassroots level.

Health service workers, and with them the wider public, are looking for leadership to challenge the government effectively over the NHS. Those presently in control of the labour movement are in danger of being outflanked from both the left and the right — and it's got them running scared.

Of course their first reaction to the groundswell of opposition has been to look for a way to control — and contain — it. Robin Cook, Labour's shadow health minister, weighed in quickly with a warning to nurses about striking, a point picked up by Kinnock in his speech at the local government conference in Edinburgh.

Even the trade union leaders — who at least stand to gain members from showing the slightest willingness to lead

'strike action feeds the public pressure to defend the NHS'

an effective campaign — shy away from the use of even limited industrial action, or indeed from any campaign of substance with any real base in their membership, in favour of 'imaginative', solely PR-based initiatives.

Given the direction of Kinnockism it's not surprising that the retreat to the 'moral high ground' has left the movement's leadership high and dry and cut off from the mood — and needs — of the rank and file it left behind.

Cowed by Kinnockism, the movement has been left demoralised and timid of asserting even its most basic values, and lacking confidence in the use of its traditional strengths. Having hitched themselves so firmly to Thatcher's free marketeering bandwagon and her cynical sham 'championing' of the 'consumer', Kinnock et al, having dozed off for a bit, are now waking up with a bump and are getting their bums scraped as they're pulled along behind her.

Labour's response to Thatcher's challenge on NHS funding (which might yet see her through the crisis, and could well leave the Labour movement out in the cold and more of the NHS's million workers in the private sector or on the dole and either way not in a union) has been slow in coming, basic at best, and certainly confused and patchy. 'Solutions' proffered by Labour range from Kinnock's own initial 'agnosticism' on the question, through a basic demand for a couple of billion pounds instead of tax cuts, to Labour MP Frank Field's public toying with the idea of health stamps and lotteries.

Everywhere Labour politicians are scrambling to assess the amount of damage that can be limited and the bottom line that they can live with. Plus having cut policy and research resources at Walworth Road, the Labour Party have suddenly realised that they need ideas and are desperately trawling around for 'think-tanks' to produce them.

But most importantly Labour's leaders lack the political commitment, or even their own much acclaimed PR strategy, to stake a claim for the socialist alternative model for the health service. Even under the terms of their own inadequate scheme to simply harness public support through monitoring, identifying and targetting public opinion (not itself invalid as a device) — they've flopped.

Because with their battallions of private pollsters and 'Labour listens' fiascos, they've only attempted responsive propaganda — to tailor campaigns and policies to particular perceived snapshots of public opinion.

They have failed, by not even attempting, to go on the offensive — to create and 'sell' a vision and practical possibility of a genuinely public health service ●

What are the Tory plans?

SHREWDLY, the Tories have opened their secretive, soul-searching, mould-breaking 'great debate' on the future of the NHS only *after* the 1987 election.

They know that the simplest and most efficient way to fund the NHS (endorsed by 90 per cent of the public and 80 per cent of Tory voters) is to increase tax-funding to meet its increased workload.

But Thatcher prefers ideas that will inject 'private' money into the NHS, and thus undermine it. There are two main types of 'private money':

- **One is *your* money — as a patient paying new charges or as a customer (willing or not) of private medical insurance.**
- **The other is *company* money — invested in ways to make a *profit* out of health and the NHS.**

In general, any injection of company money will mean more patients paying charges for treatment — so in the end there is only *one* source of 'private money', and that is *your* purse or wallet. To hide this uncomfortable fact, the Tories are flirting with several schemes.

- **'Voucher' schemes dress up the imposition of charges for treatment and the establishment of a 'two tier' health service for rich and poor as an extension of 'consumer choice'. Everyone would receive basic vouchers to spend in NHS or private hospitals — until they run out!**
- **'Hotel charges' has become the deceptive term used to cover up plans to force patients to *pay* for each day and night in a hospital bed. The term 'hotel' suggests idle luxury — but of course few would choose to spend their fortnight's holiday in a gynae or kidney ward.**

Two big problems are that the 'hotel charges' would need to be means-tested (since a majority of in-patients are pensioners, children, or unemployed); and patients caught for the full charge would have to pay a relatively large amount to compensate for the large numbers of exemptions and the huge extra costs of administration.

Creating an 'internal market' and competition within the NHS also sounds trendy: but without extra cash many major hospitals, especially in London, will need to continue *reducing* their caseload. What comfort would it be for Londoners to hear of 'competitive' hospitals in Liverpool or Devon? And if London hospitals *did* increase their 'market share', this would reverse the government policy of diverting NHS resources out of the capital to other regions.

'Greater cooperation' between the NHS and the private sector is another deception. The whole burden of training nurses and medical staff, and of providing expensive emergency services and long-stay care for the elderly, mentally ill and handicapped falls on the NHS and local authorities. No wonder private firms volunteer to 'cooperate' in providing easy, profitable waiting list operations.

Some propose a state lottery for the NHS. This only confirms that it is dogma, not economics that is the driving force in Tory thinking.

Why else consider going to the bizarre lengths of administering lottery ticket sales, calculating winners, and paying out prizes — when almost the whole population (with the exception of cabinet ministers and their 'think tanks') favours spending more tax revenue on the NHS? ●

JOHN LISTER

Julio Etchart/Reflex

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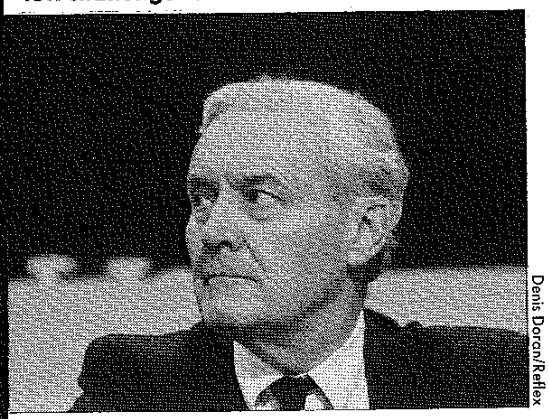
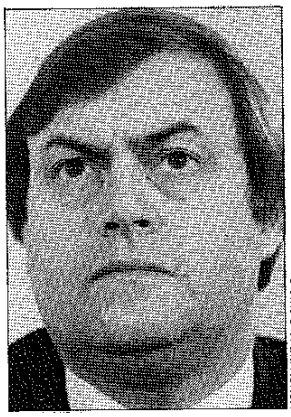
Tony Benn, the obvious candidate for a left challenge to Kinnock



Denis Doran/Reflex

Challenge Kinnock — don't delay

Roy Hattersley: speaking no evil? Unfortunately not!



Denis Doran/Reflex

John Prescott

AT THE TIME of writing, it is still unclear whether anyone will oppose Kinnock and Hattersley for leader and deputy at this year's Labour Party conference.

The Campaign group of MPs has voted by a large majority that there should be a challenge, and most constituencies with Campaign group MPs support such a challenge. But Tony Benn, the obvious candidate, is still undecided despite the sharpness of his attacks on Kinnock. The three women MPs mooted as candidates for the deputy leadership have withdrawn for one reason or another.

The longer the indecision, the less likely a challenge. The chances of launching a serious campaign diminish by the day. Yet the conditions for a leadership challenge are better than they have been for several years.

Kinnock has already said that such a contest would be a 'diversion'. It is not clear whether he means a diversion from his obsession with witch-hunting Labour party members or from the fight against the Tories. It is *because* he refuses to lead any fightback (and indeed is closing his eyes to that which is going on) that a contest is necessary.

With Thatcher's programme for her third term more radical than ever, the Labour and trade union leaderships have sunk even further into ineptitude in response. Continuing down the path set in the Tories' previous two terms, they have whinged and moaned while opposing any attempt to resist Tory attacks. Indeed they have gone half way to meet them on many issues.

Ironically, it is on the two issues on which the Tories are least popular, the NHS and poll tax, that it is most blatant. The best the Parliamentary Labour Party can do on fighting the poll tax is to support the amendments of the Tory 'wets'. Meanwhile, Kinnock tours the country telling the labour movement that the one thing which would ensure Thatcher's proposals went through unaltered would be to *organise* against the poll tax — either by local authorities refusing to implement it or by a 'won't pay' campaign!

On the NHS, NUPE bureaucrats bend over backwards to squash the developing militancy; Kinnock refuses to associate the Labour leadership with the strikes and merely asks the chancellor to 'find more cash' in the budget.

Thatcher can again appeal to the 'better off' sections of the working class by saying that Labour is the party of higher taxes. Other strikers, such as the seafarers and Ford workers have not even been awarded the token 'sympathy' of the Labour leadership.

On many other issues, Kinnock's only difference with Thatcher has been on how best to implement her policies. In

the *Spycatcher* case, Kinnock accepted the Tory argument of the importance of national security. He has supported the refusal to prosecute anyone in the RUC associated with the 'shoot-to-kill' policy. Many Labour MPs voted disgracefully for Ken Livingstone's expulsion from the commons for pointing out that the attorney-general was 'an accomplice to murder'.

The reaction of Labour's front bench to the notorious clause 29 attack on lesbian and gay rights was to *welcome* it before the tide of opposition forced them to change tack. A similar failure to pay the slightest attention to party policy has occurred on the Alton bill, with a refusal to apply a three line whip which could have defeated it at the second reading.

For those who refuse to accept that Kinnock is intent on a fundamental shift in Labour's policy and argue that the left should welcome the much-vaunted 'policy review' in which Labour listens to everyone but the organised labour movement, he and Hattersley spelt it out in their policy statement on 'democratic socialist aims and values'.

Here they codify the direction in which they have been taking party policy in the last few years. For them the allocation of goods by the market is 'generally satisfactory' and nationalisation outside utilities is unnecessary. Gone is even a formal commitment to clause four's 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'.

This statement provoked criticism from wide sections of the bureaucracy. It was too much even for Bryan Gould, famous for his support for Thatcher's 'share-owning democracy'. David Blunkett saw the way the wind was blowing and got in with his woolly counter-statement first.

Beyond the policy statement, disgruntlement with Kinnock's leadership is rife amongst sections of the bureaucracy who have been his willing helpers in beating back the left. Murmurings about ignoring the unions were heard immediately after the general election and came to a head with GMB right-winger Warburton's open attack.

But a leadership challenge cannot be based on such a mixed bag of dissent. By their treatment of Prescott and Warburton the Labour leadership and its trade union backers showed their reaction to any rocking of the boat. They may have disagreements with Kinnock's style and methods, but not his basic project and they are not prepared to open the floodgates which would allow the rank and file to raise more serious issues.

After all, these hiccups can be sorted out in time-honoured fashion in the corridors of congress house. Unlike 1981, little support will be found amongst union executives for any challenge. Most of them have swallowed 'new realism' hook, line and sinker and are now more concerned with holding back their members than defending their jobs and conditions. The battle for union support will have to be fought out in the membership and on the conference floor.

Any real attempt to build an alternative leadership to Kinnock and Hattersley must appeal to the rank and file of the movement, who — in stark contrast to the bureaucracy — are showing a renewed willingness to fight back.

The support given by Campaign group MPs to this fightback shows that a leadership challenge could provide a focus for drawing together these issues, while putting forward policies which pose a real alternative to Thatcherism.

With the new upsurge in struggles, there has been no better time since the miners' strike to contest the leadership. If the challenge is ducked it will be a setback for the whole left and be seen as a victory for Kinnock.

While such a campaign will, realistically, have little chance of booting out Kinnock and Hattersley, it could begin the job of building an organised left opposition. This is something many in the Campaign group have shied away from in the past ●

PETE FIRMIN

Who is Labour 'listening' to?

A POLL of Labour MPs found 40 per cent sceptical of the whole 'Labour listens' and policy review process.

According to the *Independent*, when 'Labour listens' is mentioned, many MPs 'snort, grunt, shake their heads or suck their teeth'. This is, of course, standard behaviour for the house of commons. But it is also a sign of cynicism about the party leadership's public relations efforts.

So what is behind 'Labour listens' when even our parliamentary representatives are wary?

Opening 'Labour listens' in Brighton, Roy Hattersley said the project was 'intended to provide an opportunity for individuals and groups outside the Labour Party to offer their advice . . . we cannot promise to accept your advice. But we do promise to listen to it with respect'.

Besides implying that Labour has never listened to anyone before, such an approach reduces still further the role of party members and constituency organisations in the development of policy. It is not the rank and file who are being listened to.

Those issued with tickets in Brighton included trade unions, community and pressure groups which Labour should, anyway, be in constant dialogue with.

Much more worryingly, equal weight was given, for instance, to the local trades council and Brighton and Hove chamber of commerce. Similarly, in Bournemouth, Labour was concerned to 'listen' to local bosses.

This brings us to the real point of the exercise. Hattersley insists: 'nobody should delude themselves into thinking . . . that the basic beliefs of the Labour Party will be changed'. However, 'Labour listens' takes place simultaneously with a policy review in which, we are told, no policy is sacrosanct.

Don't imagine that the 'Labour listens' replies go straight in the bin. 'Experts' will analyse them. The 'results' will be fed into the policy review. The whole process will be used to shift the party even further to the right.

Nobody is saying Labour should not listen. Labour leaders *should* be listening now . . . to the Ford workers, the nurses and other NHS workers, the seafarers and the local government workers struggling against Labour-imposed cuts in jobs and services.

But this would go against Hattersley's dictum that 'a great national party must not speak for one group, one *class*, or one region'.

Labour may be 'listening'. But it is being very selective in what it hears. And it's not listening to you or me.

With carefully selected audiences and carefully chosen questions, the leadership intends use what it hears to rule out any consideration of socialist policies ●

DAN CARTER

Julia Eichart/Reflex

No to 24 weeks — free abortion on demand!

In the past few months thousands of people have marched, lobbied and picketted against David Alton's attempt to reduce the abortion time limit to 18 weeks. The TUC and the Labour Party have now agreed to sponsor the March 19 demonstration organised by Fight Alton's Bill (FAB). The Alton bill is now in parliamentary committee, due for its third reading in May. It is now likely that when the bill is voted on the proposed time limit will not be 18 weeks but 22 or 24. The focus of the argument is now whether a 24 week limit is reasonable. While nearly 6000 women had abortions later than 18 weeks in 1986, less than thirty had abortions later than 24 weeks. Why then is it so important for the pro-choice movement to defeat an amended bill, and what arguments should be used against it? **GILL LEE** reports.

THE ANTI-ABORTIONISTS hope by passing the Alton bill to prepare for other restrictions to the 1967 act.

David Alton and his supporters in Life and SPUC believe that all abortion is murder. For them getting the bill passed, in whatever form, would be the first real anti-abortion victory since the 1967 act was passed. It would be the first stage in a struggle to outlaw abortion completely, and to criminalise women who have abortions.

The '67 act was one of the major gains of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s. For the first time many women were freed from the tyranny of unwanted pregnancy and the horrors of back-street abortions.

Alton's supporters polemicise against the 1967 act as having given women 'free abortion on demand'. But in fact the 1967 act did not legalise abortion. Instead it created some exceptions to the general situation of illegal abortion. A woman was allowed an abortion if she could convince two doctors that the risk to her health or that of her existing children was greater than if the pregnancy was terminated; or if the foetus she was carrying was abnormal.

The operation of the 1967 act was restricted by the reluctance of GPs to allow women abortions, by inadequate facilities and most recently by cuts in the NHS.

Some within the FAB campaign — for example the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) — argue we should not defend the 1967 act precisely because it does not establish women's control over their fertility as a right. But if the Alton bill were passed it would restrict even further the right of women to abortion and would make the struggle for free abortion on demand even harder. The anti-abortionists understand this. So should we.

The fundamental argument against any amendment to the 1967 act is that we have to establish the principle of a woman's right to decide if and when to have an abortion, and to oppose further restriction of that right.

In no society in the world, with the exception of the Soviet Union under the Bolsheviks, has abortion been available on *women's* demand. This is not a coincidence. Abortion is a class issue but not only in the way the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) pose the issue — that rich women will always be able to afford illegal abortions while poor women will not — although of course this is true.

Abortion is a class issue because at present the state takes as its right the decision on something which is fundamental to women's ability to control their lives. For women to control their fertility would be an important challenge to the right of the ruling class to control the conditions of production *and* reproduction. It would challenge the idea that women's role is simply that of the reproduction of the workforce.

As well as being a class issue, abortion is a women's issue, affecting all women of all classes, although affecting them differently. Both rich and poor women are criminalised by having illegal abortions, and all women suffer from the ideological implications of lack of control over fertility, from the idea that they are

Left: an NHS nurse protests against the Alton bill: cuts in the NHS have helped restrict the operation of the 1967 act

Below: Wendy Savage speaking against the Alton bill at Central Hall, Westminster before the bill's second reading: the best way to end late abortions is to campaign against the conditions which cause them

Julio Etchart/Reflex

incapable of deciding for themselves.

While the radical right — such as Tory MP Theresa Gorman — support women's right to abortion on the basis that women have the right to dispose of their own property, the *mainstream* position of the ruling class has always been one of opposition to women having the right to choose on abortion, while sometimes supporting abortion in individual cases. For example, the ruling class has traditionally recognised that some mothers are not 'fit' mothers, and has allowed them, sometimes forced them, to have abortions.

Former Tory cabinet minister Sir Keith Joseph is on record as advocating abortion for women of low status groups (such as black or poor women). Imperialism uses population control, including forced sterilisation and promotion of abortion, in a racist way to assert its dominance.

The ruling class has no qualms about the 'morality' of abortion. The ruling class is, however, very clear that women should not have the right to *choose* on abortion. Instead parliament should lay down the parameters for exceptions to abortion's illegal status, and doctors should decide if women fit into these exempted categories.

The 'viability' argument

THE MAIN argument used by those who argue for a time limit of 24 weeks is that of 'viability'. Both the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists have indicated their support for a 24 week time limit, although they have indicated that they would prefer to see this done through an amendment to the infant life preservation act (which currently lays down the 28 week limit in England and Wales) rather than to the 1967 abortion act.

The crux of the argument on 'viability' for its supporters is that a foetus of 24 weeks is capable of life and therefore is entitled to the state's protection, irrespective of the wishes of the woman carrying the foetus. But, in reality, a 24-week-old foetus is in a fundamentally different relationship to the woman than a 24 week premature baby. The one is completely dependent on the woman for its food, its oxygen, its very existence, the other is dependent on the artificial creation of the atmosphere of the woman's body, temperature, food supply, artificial oxygen, by hospital staff.

A 24 week-old foetus which would be aborted is to the woman something which is unwanted, affecting her life in a way she does not desire. A 24 week premature baby is wanted by its mother, and therefore everything should be done to keep it alive.

The anti-choice movement have long used horror stories of live foetuses, resulting from late abortions, as an emotive argument against women's right to choose.

The most well known of these stories were those contained in the now discredited anti-abortionists' bible *Babies for burning*.

The point of an abortion is to abort the foetus, with as little stress to the woman as possible. Abortions properly performed should never result in live foetuses. The much publicised stories of nurses watching foetuses struggling for life should never occur. To accept that the foetus has rights, that abortion is only permissible until the development of the foetus reaches a certain stage, is to concede restrictions on women's rights to do as they will with their bodies.

'abortion is a class issue and a women's issue'

To reduce women's choice on abortion to an issue of the stage of development of the foetus, is to open the door to *future* restrictions as technology advances and even younger babies can be kept alive by the creation of even better artificial wombs.

Furthermore, Alton's bill puts the onus on doctors to prove that any particular abortion had been carried out within the time limits. Because doctors would allow themselves a four week safety margin — as is common at the moment — effectively the limit would be 20 weeks. Thus, the thirty women a year the 24 week option is deemed to affect would in reality be many more. A 24 week time limit would affect 2-3000 women who currently have legal abortions each year.

There are many reasons for women seeking abortions after 20 weeks. There are very young women who, owing to inadequate sex education, have not realised they were pregnant. Many women seek late abortions because their circumstances change during their pregnancy; their companion may leave, they may be made homeless; or they may simply change their minds. Any restriction of women's choice reinforces the idea that women are not capable of making correct choices, and instead need doctors or the state to decide for them.

At its second reading, 36 Labour MPs voted for the bill, and 19 did not vote. More may vote for the bill if it is amended to 24 weeks thus breaking Labour Party policy and voting against women's rights.

The best way to end late abortions is to campaign against the conditions which cause them: poor sex education, poor facilities, restrictions on choice, NHS delays.

MPs who really want to reduce the numbers of late abortions could do this in ways other than punishing women by voting for a 24 week amendment. They could work to improve NHS facilities by campaigning against the cuts and by campaigning with the National Abortion Campaign for an expansion in abortion facilities and free pregnancy testing in doctors' surgeries, hospitals and clinics.

Twenty per cent of late abortions are currently carried out on women who have applied for an abortion *before* twelve weeks.

MPs could campaign with us for a bill which would establish free abortion on demand, and so allow women to get safe, early abortions on their own say so. In countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands where abortion is available on demand up to twelve weeks, the rate of late abortions is much less than here.

No matter what changes were made to decrease the need for late abortions however, abortion must always be available to women as a last resort, and it must be available as and when women require it.

The importance of developing an understanding of the programmatic importance of abortion for women's liberation and socialism is shown by the Labour vote on Alton's bill and the fact that even some members of the Campaign group voted for the bill.

The Labour Party has consistently refused to apply a three line whip on the issue and even the Campaign group has refused to hold to account its members who voted the wrong way.

Indeed, the Campaign group has refused to support the call for a three line whip. Even 'left wing' MPs are incapable of understanding that women's right to control their bodies is as much a class issue as membership of NATO, attacks on the NHS, or privatisation. This is an indication of the groundwork still to be done in showing the connections between abortion, women's liberation and socialism ●

● *Gill Lee is co-author, with Leonora Lloyd and Valerie Coultas, of a* Socialist Outlook *pamphlet,* Fight Alton's Bill — Abortion and Women's Liberation, *available at 50p (plus 20p p&p) from* Socialist Outlook, *PO Box 705, London, SW19 1HA.*

Lutte Ouvrière

Any abstentions? Pierre Juquin diverges from the majority line at the Communist Party's 25th congress

France's communist dissidents

May sees the presidential elections in France. One of the seven candidates is a dissident communist, Pierre Juquin. Juquin is the best known figure of a current called the 'renovateurs' (renewers), whose leaders have been expelled from the French Communist Party (PCF). His candidacy has created a great deal of interest on the left because he stands for a kind of politics quite different from the PCF — against French nuclear weapons, for women's rights, against racism and for socialist democracy. But in what direction are the 'renovateurs' — most of whom are now outside the PCF — going? Are they a real *revolutionary* force? **DAVID CAMERON** looks at their prospects.

OVER THE weekend of 9/10 January more than 300 delegates attended the conference of the 'movement of communist renewers' — the 'renovateurs' — in the French city of Lyons. They represented a movement of between 3000 and 4000 members. The very holding of such a public conference was significant. It represented their more or less definitive break with the PCF.

The split of the 'renovateurs' is the most significant from the PCF since before the second world war. The PCF was the most powerful party of the French working class for several decades. Its present crisis is dominating the process of political renewal in the French workers' movement.

Of course the crisis facing the PCF is far from new; but what *is* new is that there is an opposition which has crystallised into an organised force, without either disintegrating or being swallowed up by the Socialist Party.

So who are the 'renovateurs', and what do they represent? It is interesting to begin by looking at a typical 'profile' of the 'renovateurs', as revealed by surveys of their supporters.

A typical supporter is between 35 and 50 years old and joined the Communist Party in the 1960s or early 1970s. Many of them, probably a majority, were

members of either the national or local leaderships of the PCF, some at the level of the central committee or its commissions. Many had leadership positions in the trade union federation which the CP supports, the CGT. There are some older members, veterans of the resistance to the nazis during the war, and some youth. But mainly they are militants with between 15 and 25 years political experience in the French workers' movement.

Their experience therefore generally covers May '68 and its aftermath; the formation of the union of the left between the communists and socialists in the early 1970s; the break up of the union of the left, with the CP's sectarian turn in 1977; the electoral defeat of the left in 1978; the CP's sectarian course until 1981, and the electoral victory of the left in that year; and the participation of the PCF ministers in the Mitterrand government from 1981-84.

These have been years of turmoil and growing crisis for the PCF. The 'renovateur' militants have in general lived through the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proleteriat by the communists in 1976, not to mention the strong approval given by Georges Marchais, the PCF leader, to Soviet action in Afghanistan and the Jaruzelski coup in Poland. Each and every one of these political turns has lost members.

The PCF, for many years the most fiercely pro-Moscow of the west European CPs, has suffered harshly from the international crisis of stalinism.

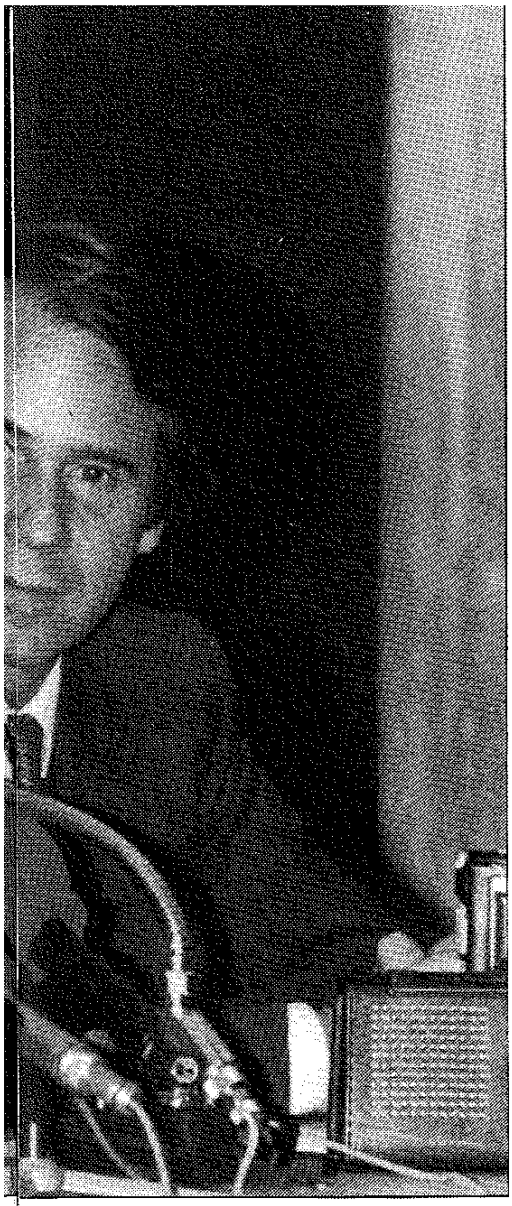
The key to the strength of the French communists has been the 30,000 or so 'cadres' who make up the apparatus of the party itself, the apparatus of the CGT union federation and the full-time workers in the communist-controlled local councils. The communists traditionally have a great deal of strength in local government. These militants have remained loyal through all the twists and turns, until comparatively recently. But now the 'renovateurs' have started to shake their certainties.

It is possible to date the origin of the 'renovateurs' quite precisely. In the June 1984 European elections, when the PCF had been in the government for three years, the party's share of the vote fell to 11.5 per cent. This was a drastic decline from 15 per cent in 1981 and more than 20 per cent in 1978. Voters in traditional communist bastions, even the 'red belt' suburbs around Paris, had begun to turn away from the PCF.

It was at the central committee following the disastrous 1984 electoral showing that the critics of the leadership opened up. The most vocal of them was Pierre Juquin.

In the months that followed, some of the critics got back into line. But others continued to express their criticism up to the party's 25th congress in February 1985. They started out by criticising the lack of democracy of the party and the party's increasingly incoherent political line. They began to search for an alternative to the PCF's violent swings between uncritical alliance with the Socialist Party, and sudden and violent sectarian denunciation of it.

Pierre Juquin, longtime public spo-



Lutte Ouvrière

André Lajoinie, today's official CP candidate (left), and Pierre Juquin, leader of the 'renovateurs', pictured together in October 1982

kesperson of the PCF, had a reputation as one of the most sincere and dedicated of the party's 'Eurocommunists'. Because of this, and because the previous small split associated with Henri Fizbin ended up in the Socialist Party, many suspected Juqin's opposition of being essentially right wing. But the reality was more complex and more positive.

At the 25th congress the 'renovateurs' did not manage to present a unified and coherent alternative to the leadership. But they did make history in a small way. Three of them were elected to the central committee, despite their public opposition to the majority line.

When the PCF's vote fell to 9.5 per cent at the March 1986 elections the 'renovateurs' went onto the offensive, circulating a petition calling for an emergency conference, signed by thousands of party members. The first groups acting independently of the leadership appeared, leading to the setting up of a co-ordinating committee which began to make public statements.

They supported the student movement and the rail strike in late 1986 and early 1987, and refused to accept the official party line that French society was 'drifting to the right'. In February 1987 they published a resolution entitled *The revolution, comrades!*

By June 1987 'renovateur' groups existed in scores of cities, and there was already talk of Juquin standing for president. The announcement of his candidacy in October 1987 brought a trail of expulsions and resignations from the PCF.

How can we characterise the 'renovateurs' politically? They proclaim that they are communist and revolutionary, that they want to create a movement which is neither social democratic nor stalinist. They have a correct position of support for working class struggles, anti-racism and the rights of immigrants, the women's movement, and anti-imperialism — notably the right of independence for New Caledonia and other French colonies.

They have a line for working class unity, which is very important in a country like France, where division inside the unions and between contending mass political parties of the working class have wreaked such havoc. They support the self-organisation of the workers in struggles today and they support the idea of a socialist society with workers' self-managment.

In general terms, therefore, we can characterise the 'renovateurs' as *anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-stalinist.* This in itself represents a great step forward; but it does not add up to a *revolutionary* line. The fact is that the 'renovateurs' are still an extremely heterogeneous and politically undefined movement.

Among them are some quite right wing 'realist' political positions, particularly on economic and social questions. Although there is a strong anti-capitalist and 'class struggle' consciousness, there is also still considerable confusion about revolutionary strategy — what might constitute a viable revolutionary strategy for the conquest of workers power and socialist democracy.

More precisely, the 'renovateurs' are very weak on anything to do with the state. Indeed, one of their leaders, Jean Villanova, talked in the French trotskyist weekly *Rouge* of their 'lack of competence to make a serious analysis of the state, which is only equalled by their incoherence over the crisis of state institutions'.

Another big weakness is confusion over workers' self-management: many of them in fact have co-management, workers' participation, positions.

On international questions, the 'renovateurs' tend to be uncritical of Gorbachev, a position which flows from an incomprehension of stalinism and the concept of bureaucracy, rather than any hesitations over socialist democracy, workers' rights or political pluralism.

Today the 'renovateur' current is engaged in a debate over the question of organisation. Should they form a new party, a federation or just a 'movement'? And how should they relate to other political forces on the left who do not come out of the PCF?

Certain 'anti-party' prejudices which exist in the Juquin campaign don't help the situation. But Jean Villanova has expressed his 'impatience' with the 'fashionable campaign against parties' and speaks of creating a 'great revolutionary party' which will have 'a privileged relationship with the working class, in the widest sense of the term, be progressive and democratic, and have respect for theory'.

Another leader, Patrick Tort, even referred to the positive example of the French trotskyist organisation, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), to defend the idea of democratic centralist parties.

On all the major questions facing the 'renovateurs' a debate continues and the positions are certainly not frozen.

In a certain sense the 'renovateurs' are the tip of the iceberg of the PCF's crisis. There are many who share all or some of their political positions still in the PCF. Some probably think it is just better to remain in the party from a tactical point of view. A lot will depend on the relative electoral performances of the official CP candidate Andre Lajoinie and Pierre Juquin for the 'renovateurs'.

If Lajoinie does better than expected, the PCF leadership will gain a breathing space — but not much more. But if he does badly, there could be a further exodus to strengthen the 'renovateur' current. Paradoxically that could lead to the emergence of a force which is stronger, more rooted inside the working class — but also perhaps less advanced on the road to a break with stalinism and reformism ●

The new immigration bill

Detainees imprisoned by immigration officials protest outside Harmondsworth deter
black people in this country have no automatic right to be with their families

The labour movement's response to the new immigration bill has been conspicuous by its absence. Although this may not seem altogether surprising, given the movement's long history of inaction and even collaboration in the establishment of present-day immigration controls, there are several reasons why one would have expected a greater outcry than has been forthcoming. **AI MEUN LIM** writes.

THIS BILL manifests the hypocrisy and cynicism of the Tories as so-called 'defenders' of the family. Previously the government has expounded the view that many black family relationships are falsified in the attempt to gain entry into Britain. But this has been invalidated by the embarrassingly high numbers of black families who have proved the veracity of their claims through genetic testing and other means.

The bill, therefore, dispenses with excuses. The message is unmistakable: black people in this country have no automatic right to be with their families. Men resident here will have to prove their ability to accommodate and support their families without 'recourse to public funds'.

This requirement will affect mainly wives and children from the Indian subcontinent, some of whom have been waiting for over five years. These number altogether no more than 8500.

For the Tories, despite their propaganda, the numbers game is totally irrelevant. This bill, like its predecessors, is much more to do with the question of black people already settled here.

'black people in this country have no automatic right to be with their families'

In particular, the bill attempts to further erode state provision for black people, as part of the overall assault on the welfare state. Spending cuts in the inner cities, reform of the education system, privatisation of public services; all have shown that black people are consistently in the front line of the Tories' attempt to construct a 'free market' economy, based on the fullest possible exploitation of the working class. The new bill is yet another facet of this onslaught.

The bill highlights the state's acute understanding of the way that racism can be used to cloud undertakings designed to further its capitalist objectives.

The government's play on the need for increased and ever more stringent controls on immigration disguises the fact that black immigration into the country has virtually ceased.

The rules to be introduced by this bill are, in effect, the thin end of a most dangerous wedge which will enable the creation of a transient, easily removable pool of workers, similar to the situation which exists in Germany and other European countries.

The new rules will make 'overstaying' a criminal offence. This will increase the onus on many institutions to 'monitor' black people. It will officially sanction another major avenue by which the police can maintain the harassment of the black community.

When you consider that the bill also seeks to further restrict the right to appeal against deportation, it is clear that the bill will greatly increase the capacity of the state to control black people.

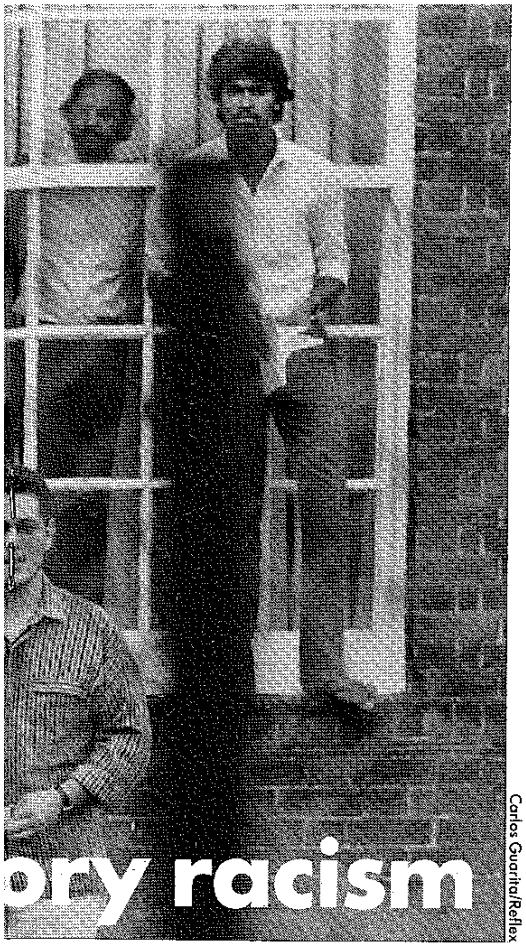
All this points to an implicit strategy of fostering greater numbers of 'illegal' migrant workers, whether they be workers who have already been resident in Britain for many years or wishing to enter.

These workers will find it very difficult to bring their families over and even if they do, the state will bear no costs for either the worker or the family's health, housing, education or social security needs. Instead this pool of labour will be easily disposed of, either when demand falls, or when the workers are no longer able or willing to produce at the economic levels required by their employers.

The widespread use of repressive monitoring procedures and 'presence tests' will therefore enable a black person's social status to be linked to her/his immigration status; and the likelihood of deportation will rest solely on these material circumstances.

'the government's play on the need for controls disguises the fact that black immigration has virtually ceased'

If the bill is passed, it will only be a short step to a situation whereby large sections of the black population will be treated as guest-workers, deprived of democratic, civil or social rights, and forced to sell their labour at minimal rates. The consequences of such a situation would be to severely undermine the



Carlos Guarita/Reflex

tention centre, October 1987:

strength of the entire working class and to weaken significantly the organised labour movement.

In the short term, trade unions will be thrust into the ring as the implementation of immigration controls is extended by the bill to include many public sector workers.

It is surely no coincidence that the new social security act, which comes into force in April, will be redefining the welfare state in its relationship to black people. This means eligibility tests in the form of passport checks, interrogations, cross-referencing with the home office and other methods of investigation into a person's immigration status.

Although this should only apply to claimants who have been resident for less than five years, it is not difficult to see that no black person would be exempt from such investigations.

The new social security act will require DHSS officers to officially 'police' the black community, a role which they and their unions must surely resist.

Nor is it a problem solely for the civil service unions. It is only a matter of time before immigration legislation roots this role in the functioning of other institutions, including the health service, law courts, schools and possibly even banks and employment agencies unless unions refuse to comply.

All this points to the fact that, so well placed are the trade unions, and so serious are the effects of the bill, the entire labour movement *cannot but* put up a fight, certainly if it is to secure and expand its bargaining power.

Within this context of high stakes, the fight will not, of course, be an easy one. However, reformist solutions to these attacks, such as those proposed by the recent article 'Race to exclusion (*Marxism Today*, January 1988) must not be left unchallenged.

In the article, Dave Cook *et al* write, 'that so little headway has been made in the arguments over immigration owes a great deal to the strength of British racism, but it also stems from the left's anachronistic frame of reference on the issue. The task now is not to try and reverse history, but to outline principles for a non-racist, non-sexist policy that starts from the reality today'.

It is clear that the authors have failed to grasp the class basis for immigration controls and for their implementation on black people.

These controls, today and always, function to propogate racism, and in so doing, to expropriate maxiumum profits from black labour, to the detriment of the working class as a whole. Deflection of the present struggle towards attempts to define a (non-racist?) immigration and nationality policy simply plays into the hands of the enemy. It perpetuates the myth that Britain continues to be plagued by large numbers of 'foreigners' wishing to enter the country.

In fact, over two million people living outside Britain have British citizenship and most EEC nationals have easy access to live and work in Britain.

'it is impossible to treat immigration controls in isolation from the overall issues of state racism'

No matter what the terms of reference, immigration controls can only be seen to regard black people as the problem. Concentrating on the formulation of policies for restricting the growth of the population quite simply sells out on the real issues. In particular, the repression of black people already resident in the country, as a direct result of this and past immigration laws is ignored or down-played. In their pursuit of 'firm but fair' immigration legislation, would the authors care to suggest a policy of 'non-racist' internal controls?

Contrary to the article's accusation of utopianism, the demands which the black left have been making are those which relate directly to the repression experienced by black people at its most basic point of implementation. These demands include:

- No more deportations.
- Opposition to this bill and previous immigration acts.
- An end to all presence tests.
- Full and equal civil and democratic rights for all.
- Asylum for all refugees.
- No collaboration by trade unions in the implementation of internal controls.

The proposal that we drop these demands to campaign instead for a return to the 1948 nationality act does not challenge racism. It is impossible to treat immigration controls in isolation from the overall issues of state racism, with which immigration controls are in fact interlocked.

The article goes on to say, 'some trade unions, notably NALGO, have organised demonstrations to resist the deportation of their members. What is particularly important about these is the support they have won from white people. This has been done by focussing on the impact of racist laws on individual human beings ... By sticking to their own terms, by keeping the issue prominent, these campaigners have sometimes gathered broad support and won some remarkable victories'.

These statements appear to suggest that the agenda of resistance to this and other (racist) immigration rules, be set by the white community in order to attract the support of the political right and centre. We cannot go along with this.

There is no doubt that some trade unions have clearly demonstrated an ability to campaign against cases of threatened deportation. But it is important to recognise that this has much to do with the level of organisation of, and pressure exerted by, their black membership.

The success or failure of any trade union campaign to defeat this bill will rest on its ability to overcome divisions caused by racism. Above all, this means responding effectively to the demands of black members.

The support of white members and the wider white community is of course crucial, and this bill should also be of concern to civil and human rights groups, welfare rights pressure groups, anti-racist campaigns, police monitoring groups and so forth.

However, the principled basis of all support must be a desire to confront the racism and imperialism entrenched within all immigration legislation. The united front against the bill can then be assured of a good start ●

Spot the famous faces: an arts lobby demonstration against clause 29, (front row, left to right) Melvyn Bragg, Jane Asher, Ian McKellen, Lenny Henry

Behind clause 29:

Thatcher's new model family

Clause 29 of the local government bill now proceeding through parliament is the most severe attack on lesbian and gay rights in Britain since the outlawing of male homosexuality in 1885. The clause will have serious effects on the lives of millions of lesbian and gay people. But, argues **JAMIE GOUGH**, in explicitly branding lesbian and gay sexuality as inferior to heterosexuality, this law also poses to the socialist and labour movements more sharply than ever before the need to understand the nature of lesbian and gay oppression.

THE CLAUSE would prohibit local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality' in any of their activities, including the giving of grants to other bodies. In particular it prohibits teaching in schools that 'homosexuality is acceptable as a pretended family relationship'. In order to understand how the courts will interpret the clause, we have to look at the *existing* status of homosexuality in British law.

It is widely thought that the 1967 sexual offences act 'legalised homosexuality'. Nothing could be further from the truth. The 1967 act, like the abortion act of the same year, did not make the previously-forbidden activities legal, but merely de-criminalised them under certain restricted conditions.

Homosexuality thus remains contrary to the 'public policy of the law' and against 'public morality'. In other words, the law considers homosexuality undesirable and judges consider it their duty to prevent it wherever possible. Thus judges in custody cases nearly always consider it against 'public policy' to allow lesbians and their children to live together; and it is perfectly legal for an employer to sack a lesbian or gay worker purely for their sexuality.

Similarly, a whole number of laws concerning sexual 'morality' ('indecency', 'obscenity' and so forth) and public order have been interpreted to include homosexuality, effectively outlawing most public representations of lesbian and gay sexuality and, potentially, most lesbian and gay organisations.

Andrew Moore/Reflex

The courts therefore *already* consider it their duty to suppress homosexuality as anything but a secret, private activity between 'adults'. They can therefore interpret the word 'promote' in the clause to include any local authority activity which could give a positive, or even a neutral impression of homosexuality. It could include any presentation of lesbian and gay sexuality in schools that does not explicitly brand these as diseases or social maladjustment; policies to give lesbian and gay people equal access to the benefits of social services and housing; policies to end the victimisation of lesbians and gays in young people's homes; grants to any lesbian and gay organisations; use of council facilities by lesbian and gay organisations; and, famously, lesbian and gay books in public libraries or plays in public theatres.

'homosexuality remains contrary to the "public policy of the law"'

In forbidding it to be taught that homosexuality is a normal part of human sexuality, the clause introduces, for the first time since the start of universal education in 1870, a prohibition on the teaching of particular scientific theories in schools: an extremely dangerous thin end of the wedge. Not only could equal opportunities policies for lesbian and gay workers be outlawed, but it could become illegal for local authorities to employ openly lesbian or gay workers. Existing employment case law holds that for a worker merely to be openly lesbian or gay can have a corrupting influence on youth.

The clause will also reinforce homophobia in other branches of the law. The phrase about 'pretended family relationships', for example, will make the legal position of lesbian and gay parents even weaker. And the clause will undoubtedly reinforce popular prejudice, as shown by the fire-bombing of the *Capital Gay* offices in the week of the clause's introduction.

For the government, the 'lesbian and gay card' has proved politically useful. It used it to attack Labour in the general election (the first time that lesbian and gay issues had featured in this way). In attacking the local authority-controlled education system, the government has portrayed it as the kind of system that leads to the 'promotion' of homosexuality to children, especially in the inner city areas where the government is aiming to break Labour's hold. And now, with the crash and imminent world recession, a moral panic can provide a useful smokescreen for economic failure.

Not all the ruling class is happy with the clause. This is partly due to ambivalence or even opposition to Thatcher's plans for the welfare state. It is due to an appreciation that the clause is so sweeping and ambitious that it will jeopardize the core aim, maintaining the promotion of heterosexuality to young people. Thus an *Independent* editorial (11/1/87) condemned the clause as 'repressive', but called for its amendment so as to focus on the real evil: '(teaching) children that homosexual conduct is merely one "valid sexual option", no better and no worse than conventional heterosexuality'. This is where the liberal bourgeoisie draws the line.

Not too surprisingly, that is where the Labour leadership also draw the line. The Labour front bench policy on lesbian and gay rights over the last two years has, in fact, been a major factor allowing the government to sponsor the clause. Kinnock and Cunningham, the shadow minister on local government, have continually dissociated themselves from the attempts of a few Labour authorities, notably Haringey and the inner London education authority (ILEA), to introduce positive images of lesbian and gay sexuality into their school curricula. In attacking Haringey as a 'loony left' council they have played on the fame of its positive images policy. In the 'Hewitt' letter following the Greenwich by-election disaster, they sought to identify the lesbian and gay rights policies of the London Labour boroughs with Labour's unpopularity. They have, of course, professed themselves defenders of Labour conference policy against discrimination against lesbian and gay people; but they have sought to distinguish this policy from the 'excesses' of the positive images policies.

The Tories could therefore calculate that legislation centred on the 'protection of youth' would have to be supported by the Labour leadership. And so it was. Immediately the clause was introduced, Cunningham declared his support for its basic aim, though wishing to amend it to allow local authorities to have 'anti-discrimination' policies and to provide 'information' to school students. Significantly, Cunningham said that there was no evidence that Labour authorities had been spending millions on promoting homosexuality, because such activity had been confined to the ILEA and Haringey. (*Guardian*, 9/12/87.)

'it could become illegal for local authorities to employ openly lesbian or gay workers'

Cunningham's position is completely incoherent. Once you say that lesbian and gay sexuality is undesirable it becomes perfectly logical and rational to discriminate. This is because lesbians and gay men are not a fixed minority of the population. Sexual desire and, even more important, the ability to live a lesbian or gay lifestyle are produced by society, including through the 'promotion' of homosexuality.

You therefore cannot avoid the question of whether it is desirable for lesbian and gay people to be produced. If it is undesirable, then you must continue with the promotion of heterosexuality to young people and you must stop teachers and youth workers from coming out as lesbian or gay at work. In other words, you must discriminate. Thus for the labour movement to oppose discrimination against lesbian and gay people it must also support the idea that lesbian and gay sexuality is equally valid to heterosexuality.

The clause has produced intense anger among lesbian and gay people in Britain. In dozens of cities and towns around the country open, broadly-based committees have been set up to fight the clause. This organisation has been led, politically and organisationally, by lesbians, who, drawing on their understanding of their oppression as women, have tended to be clearer than gay men about the significance of the clause.

As well as innumerable local events and several large lobbies of parliament, there was a demonstration of 12,000 people in London on 9 January, and a festival and demonstration attended by 20,000 people in Manchester on 20 February. The next stage of the campaign is a day of local actions on 8 April, building towards what is planned

to be a huge demonstration and festival in London on 30 April. This is going to be supported by the lesbian and gay movement internationally.

One effect of the mobilisation so far has been to force Kinnock to change tack and come out against the clause. But there is no room for complacency. The 'new realism' on this issue is far from defeated. Even within the lesbian and gay movement, there are forces, both liberal and labourite, who want to draw a line between 'respectable' and 'unrespectable' lesbian and gay rights.

The initial support given by the Labour leadership to the clause has made building labour movement support much more difficult. So far only the NALGO and NATFHE leaderships have come out unequivocally against the clause, and there were very few Labour Party banners on

'Cunningham's position is completely incoherent'

the 20 February demonstration. It is therefore vital that mobilisation for 30 April, and affiliation to the campaign and to the labour campaign for lesbian and gay rights (LCLGR), is taken up in every labour movement body.

The clause will pass its final stages in parliament in April and will come into operation in June. What then? Several Labour council leaders have already said that they will continue to carry out their lesbian and gay rights policies after the passing of the clause. But this is likely to have the same meaning as past 'assurances' not to carry out Tory cuts: you only stick to the policy while it remains legal. The Labour leaderships are claiming that their policies will be legal because they are not really 'promoting' homosexuality. But, as we have seen, the judges will have a different opinion.

The choice will therefore be: scrap all lesbian and gay rights policies, and discriminate against lesbian and gay workers . . . or break the law. The mood within the 'stop the clause' campaign is clear: councils should continue with their lesbian and gay rights policies whatever the law says. This is the position that socialists should be fighting for.

Already there are several motions to NALGO national conference calling for this position to be adopted. But forcing Labour councillors to adopt it, and persuading local authority workers to put their jobs on the line, will need a very powerful and long campaign. Mobilisations around a succession of court cases will be necessary. A positive focus may also be provided by private members' bills to abolish the clause.

But local organisation will also be vital. In this, we must learn from past mistakes. Most Labour councils which have introduced lesbian and gay rights policies, including Haringey, have tried to do so bureaucratically, without *campaigning* for support for the policies among working class people. This leaves prejudice unchallenged — negating half the point of the policy — and leaves the field open for the right to mobilise, as they did in Haringey.

The campaign therefore needs to include locally-based propaganda — speakers at every NUT branch but also at every parent-teacher association. Resolute action by the unions and Labour parties directly involved is essential. But this will be ineffective, and will be difficult to sustain, unless the argument is taken outwards ●

● *Stop the clause campaign, c/o ULU, Malet St, London WC1E 7HY, 01-580 9551 ext 227.*

'we must support the idea that lesbian and gay sexuality is equally valid to heterosexuality'

THE CLAUSE was introduced as an amendment to the local government bill by Tory MPs Jill Knight and David Wilshire. It was modelled on a bill proposed in December 1986 by Lord Halsbury. That bill failed, largely because it was explicitly not supported by the government. Yet the government is now backing clause 29 with three line whips in both houses. Why the change?

The change arises from an important shift in the focus of the Thatcher government's activity since being elected for its third term. In the first two terms the government concentrated almost exclusively on the direct production of surplus value, the 'productive' economy.

In this term of office it is shifting its focus to how the labour force (and the population as a whole) is reproduced. Hence the promised legislative measures on housing, education and local government in general, and ones in the pipeline on the NHS.

A crucial effect of these measures will be to increase the responsibility of families for reproducing themselves, to make individuals more dependent on their families, and to increase the differences in welfare between people according to their family income. The resultant deterioration in the reproduction of a large part of the labour force will certainly create new problems for capital. But all 'monetarist' policies have these kinds of contradiction.

In this context it is not surprising to find the government attempting to strengthen the family structure; and, nowadays, this means strengthening heterosexuality.

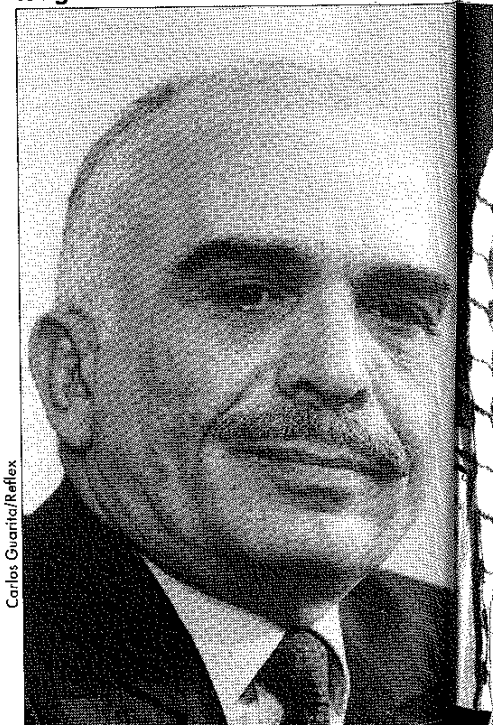
In earlier societies the formation of families within oppressed classes took place essentially under economic pressures: you could not survive and bring up children outside of this social arrangement. Through the development of capitalism, and especially in the imperialist countries in the twentieth century, this economic pressure has been eroded. The welfare state has contributed a large part to this erosion. As a result, sexuality has come to play an increasing role in why people form families and why they remain within them.

The stability of the family system has thus both produced, and come to depend on, heterosexual people, that is, people whose sexuality is fit to form a 'normal' family. Conversely, because the family system is no longer stable, there are many people who are able to varying degrees to live a non-heterosexual life. Reinforcing the family system therefore inevitably involves the promotion of heterosexuality. In other words, attacks on lesbian and gay people are part of the restructuring of the welfare state ●

Bob Gannon/Reflex

Bob Gannon/Reflex

King Hussein of Jordan



Carlos Guarita/Reflex

Ya

Yasser Arafat

Palestine: a regional peace conference is not the answer

As we go to press, the uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories is continuing. The solution being mooted by many shades of political opinion internationally, is a 'regional peace conference'. This is supported, in different guises, by the Soviet Union, the PLO leadership, Neil Kinnock, and Shimon Peres, the leader of the Israeli Labour Party. Here we publish an article by **RALPH SCHOENMAN** explaining the dangers of sacrificing the Palestinian struggle to a US-dominated conference.

Ralph Schoenman is a long-time anti-imperialist militant and campaigner. In the 1960s he was resident in Britain and helped found the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, as well as the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. Here Schoenman defends the position, long officially proclaimed by the PLO leadership, of a 'democratic, secular Palestine'. This is not the position of *Socialist Outlook*, which is organising a discussion among it supporters about the most appropriate slogans to express a revolutionary socialist position on the middle east. The article is taken from the US newspaper *Socialist Action*.

Piers Cavendish/Reflex

Top: a young Palestinian is arrested in the Arab quarter of Jerusalem

Left: Palestinian women at Beach camp, Gaza remonstrate with an Israeli soldier: should the Palestinians settle for a rump statelet on the West Bank and Gaza?

ON 10 JANUARY, *Al-Fajr*, a Jerusalem Palestinian weekly, published an advertisement signed by prominent Jews and Arabs living in the United States which called for an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

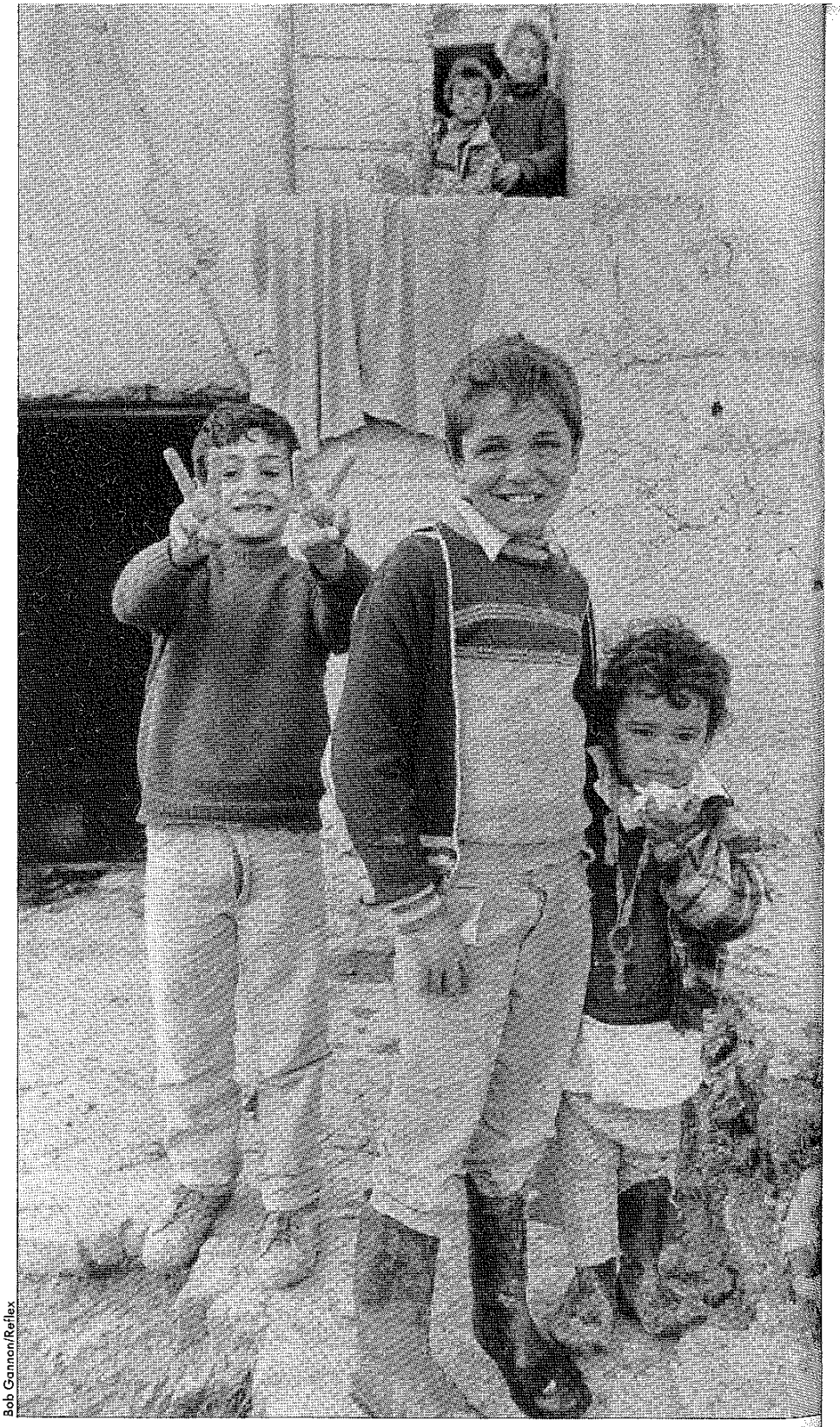
The signatories of the advertisement offer their political perspective for 'resolving the violence' in Palestine. They write:

'We Jews and Arabs believe that continuation of the occupation will only lead to more violence. We support a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to ensure both Israeli and Palestinian national rights. So do a growing number of Israelis, including former defence minister Ezar Weissman.

'We call for an end to the occupation through the convening of an international peace conference on the middle east with the participation of all parties to the Arab-Israli conflict, including Israel and the PLO.'

In an interview with the Reuters press service on 18 January, Hanna Siniora, editor of *Al Fajr*, specified how Israeli and Palestinian 'national rights' might be ensured at such an international peace conference.

Siniora called for 'an association among Israel, Jordan, and a Palestinian state like that of the Benelux countries —



Bob Gannon/Reflex

Young Arab inhabitants of the Israeli-occupied West Bank

with a demilitarized West Bank as the Luxemburg'.

'Palestinians, including Arafat, would accept autonomy as an interim step toward independence', Siniora said. 'Autonomy is a step that would lead eventually to negotiations between the state of Israel and the PLO, ending in a Palestinian state emerging as a result of these negotiations.'

Siniora met with Secretary of State George Shultz in Washington on 28 January to discuss this proposal.

The call for a middle east peace conference has likewise been endorsed by a number of presidential candidates, including the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

'the US objective is to eradicate the Palestinian resistance'

'Overtures from Arafat for talks with Israel ought to be welcomed,' Jackson said. 'When the United States gives up the right to talk to the Palestinians, it gives up its right to protect Israel.'

Jackson said that ever since his meeting with Arafat eight years ago, he has realised that it would be possible 'to move the PLO from its position of destruction and frustration to one of mutual recognition'. (*San Francisco Examiner*, 20 January 1988.)

THE STRATEGY of the United States and Israel has always had one core objective: the eradication of the Palestinian resistance.

In the aftermath of the recent Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza, a growing wing of the US ruling

'not one zionist grouping supports even a "separate but equal" Palestinian state'

class has joined the call for the establishment of a Palestinian 'mini-state' in the West Bank as a means towards accomplishing this objective and preventing the 'destabilization' of the entire Arab region.

George Ball, who served as under secretary of state under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, recently spelled out how the United States and Israel should approach an international peace conference. Ball's article, 'peace for Israel hinges on a state for Palestinians', states:

'Israel's security worries could be largely met by writing stringent, enforceable safeguards into a formal treaty, denying the new (Palestinian) state any armed force of its own and limiting the number and kinds of weapons available to its police.

'As a safeguard, the settlement could require installation of surveillance posts larger, more numerous and more effective than those now functioning in the Sinai under Israel's peace agreement with Egypt.'(*Los Angeles Times*, 17 January 1988.)

Ball explains that the establishment of what he openly admits would be a 'rump Palestinian state in the West Bank' is a matter of urgency. 'If the United States does not seriously seek to bring the parties together', Ball warns, 'the ... warfare in the holyland will spread and intensify; sooner or later, the neighbouring Arab States — even Egypt — will be dragged into the maelstrom'.

The 'maelstrom' that this imperialist spokesperson so strongly fears is the emancipation of the Arab masses of the region from the Israeli colonial-settler state; from the feudal sheiks of the Gulf and Arabian peninsula; and from the Egyptian regime, which has reduced the workers and peasants of Egypt to a level of poverty unknown even under King Farouk.

THE APPEAL for mutual recognition and for a peace conference to set up a Palestinian 'rump state' will do no service to the Palestinian people.

Those who call for mutual recognition argue that there are two peoples and that each should be entitled to national rights — that is, a state. The Palestinians, it is implied, should close the book on pre-1967 Israel and settle for a statelet on the West Bank and Gaza.

Others who hold this position have argued on the basis of 'realism' that only by accepting the fact of the Israeli state can the Jews be induced to support the idea of Palestinian statehood.

These views are based upon a profound misunderstanding of the nature of the conflict and of the dangerous consequences of such advocacy.

Peace is inconceivable between a racist Israeli enclave — where even the 'socialist' Mapam Party excludes Palestinians from full membership in its kibbutzim — and the Arab peoples of the region.

No Palestinian could recognize Israel in good faith. Some 90 per cent of the land in Israel is administered by the Jewish national fund under rules which require that those who lease or settle land prove that they descend from a Jewish mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother.

Not one zionist grouping supports even a 'separate but equal' Palestinian state. Even the best of them insist that Israel maintain its full military might while the Palestinians are disarmed.

The Labour Alignment and Likud reject even this. To advance the view that a Palestinian state would be permitted by any zionist government is to succumb to 'crackpot realism'.

As to the illusion that the recognition of the state of Israel would remove a weapon from zionism, quite the opposite would occur. The zionist politicians would then be able to say that even the 'terrorists' have been forced to accept Israel.

They would say that 40 years of 'irrational intransigence' were responsible for the conflict and that at last it is clear that the only Palestinians with whom Israel can deal are the ones who all along accepted the Israeli state.

Jesse Jackson's denunciations of the PLO's past positions of 'destruction and frustration' and his appeal for 'mutual recognition' play right into the hands of the zionists. Jackson's strong implication is that the Palestinians have got what they deserved over the years.

Were South Africans to advocate an international conference predicated upon the preservation of the South African regime, the guarantee of its security, and the policing of a black entity by the apartheid regime itself, no one would fail to see the social and political meaning of such a proposition.

An international conference designed to legitimize the security interests of apartheid Israel in exchange for a Palestinian 'bantustan' can never be viable except if a Palestinian leadership were to provide this plan with protective colouration.

Such an outcome will merely hand to the PLO the unenviable task of policing the Palestinian people and of converting self-determination into another sad replica of the reactionary regimes which plague the Arab masses — from Jordan to Syria and from Egypt to the Gulf.

It was but a few years ago that no Palestinian nationalist would dare associate him or herself with so blatant an effort to betray the long years of struggle for Palestinian self-determination and emancipation, let alone translate the Palestinian cause into a plea for a role in preserving the status quo in the region — with its grinding poverty and relentless exploitation and subordination to US imperialist control.

The rights of the Palestinian people can never be advanced in this way. The alternative is before us in the upsurge of the Palestinian masses. The struggle awaits a political strategy which poses the need to dismantle the zionist state of Israel and to establish a democratic and secular Palestine.

Such a programme was first advanced by Arafat's Fatah organization in 1968 — though it has since been shunted aside in favour of the 'mini-state' proposal. The democratic Palestine of Fatah's vision was one 'in which Jews and Palestinians would live as equals and without discrimination'.

Arafat described his proposal as follows: 'We were saying "no" to the zionist state, but we were saying "yes" to the Jewish people of Palestine. To them we were saying, "You are welcome to live in our land — but on one condition — you must be prepared to live among us as equals, not as dominators" '.

Socialists should not advocate a peace based on acquiescence, a peace based on a 'bantustan' policed by Israel and its agents.

We must link our demands for the release of all the political prisoners in the West Bank and Gaza and for an end to the deportations of Palestinian activists to demands which address the root of the conflict in the middle east — that is, the very existence of the state of Israel ●

Gorbachev's rapprochement with Israel

ON 13 MAY 1987, A. Vasilyev, the assistant director of the institute of africa of the USSR academy of sciences, wrote an article in the Moscow daily *Izvestia* in support of the idea of an international conference on the middle east. Vasilyev's article is revealing:

'To put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Soviet Union favours an international peace conference... A close examination of our proposals will show that they do not encroach on the rights and security of Israel... The existence of the state of Israel cannot be debated at an international conference'.

Vasilyev's support to Israel and his concern for its security — the rationale the zionist state has always used to crush the Palestinian people — should come as no surprise. The Soviet Union, along with the United States, was one of the first to recognize the zionist state in 1948.

It is nonetheless somewhat surprising that on 19 January 1988, at the very moment the Israeli government was imposing a policy of collective punishment upon the insurgent people of the West Bank and Gaza, the Soviet Union announced that an Israeli delegation would be welcomed in Moscow to discuss the resumption of diplomatic relations.

The Soviet bureaucracy broke off ties with Israel following the 1967 middle east war. But within the last year the Soviet Union has established a consulate in Israel.

Moreover, according to the *Washington Post* (20 January 1988), 'Moscow has said that ties (with Israel) could be resumed in the course of a middle east settlement process, dropping its insistence that Israel first retreat from territories occupied in 1967'.

This is just one more example of what Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev meant when he promised Ronald Reagan that he would help promote 'regional stability' in key areas of the world ●

Somewhere over the rainbow

As the US presidential campaign gathers momentum, many on the US left are putting their energies into Jesse Jackson's bid for the Democratic nomination. **DAVID GRANT** examines the 'rainbow coalition' and 'lesser evil' politics and finds them wanting.

Jesse Jackson: ambivalent radicalism

PERHAPS THE most noticeable feature of the US presidential election process is the almost complete absence of any meaningful discussion about political issues. Both Republican and Democratic hopefuls, currently seeking their respective party nominations through the primaries and caucuses, are running campaigns that are totally image oriented and therefore media dominated.

As the potential presidential candidates of the two parties slug it out over the airwaves, restrained only by the amount of money in campaign bank accounts, a mass party of American workers and oppressed is acutely noticeable through its absence.

Safe in the knowledge that 'their' candidate and party will always win, US capital relaxes to watch the spectacle. The election to the 'highest office' in the 'greatest democracy in the world' is turned into a telethon of trends and trivia as media form overwhelms and finally buries any substantive political content.

Small wonder, then, that the only relief from the grotesque carnival should galvanise the American left. As the only black candidate (all the candidates are men), Jesse Jackson's campaign to win the Demcratic nomination seems to offer a vibrant, dynamic, hopeful alternative, based in the real-life experience of the down-trodden and oppressed.

Since announcing his candidacy in October 1987, Jackson has figured strongly in the polls. His proven ability to mobilise the votes of the 'dispossessed' of American society — around the themes of social justice, peace, jobs, an end to racism and help for the farmers — demands that he should be taken seriously. Even more so, the radical campaigns and single-issue movements that have emerged as the 'rainbow coalition' to support the Jackson campaign have forced the American left and wider labour movement to address the Jackson phenomenon. Unfortunately, most have got it wrong.

Faced with the prospect of either Bush or Dole (under a strong rightist pressure from the evangelist Robertson) in the White House, the American left has trapped itself into supporting one capitalist party against the other.

This process, justified by the dubious theory of supporting the 'lesser evil', is not new. The Communist Party (USA) has been inside the Democratic Party since the 1930s, supporting the 'lesser evil'. The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) were supporting the 'lesser evil' when their party started wars in Korea, Vietnam and, under Carter, attempted to break the mineworkers' union.

Advocates of activity in the 'rainbow coalition' argue that Jackson is different. Superficially, this is so. The 'rainbow' brings together some of the most exploited and oppressed as well as the most radical and active of American society into an ongoing, relatively autonomous political structure. Jackson's rhetoric addresses real issues with a direct, if sometimes ambivalent, radicalism.

But the new-voter registration drives, Jackson's deft intra-party manouvering to incorporate the suspicious black machine and his more polished, less 'emotional' media performance will not result in Jackson winning the Democratic party nomination to run for president. Entrenched racism excludes this possibility.

Jackson will, however, be in a better bargaining position than he was in 1984. He will be able to extract concessions from the 'lesser evil' to whom he transfers his support and delegates at the Democratic convention in Atlanta.

It is at this point that the contradictions inherent in the Jackson campaign and 'rainbow' coalition are likely to explode. Radical activists will then be expected to believe that Michael Dukakis or Mario Cuomo will inspire the 50 per cent of the American working class who have not voted for decades, or a substantial part of the 83 million electors who stayed at home in 1984 to jump up and vote Democrat. More than believe this, activists will be expected to go out and make it happen.

Perhaps those in the coalition whose particular cause is not horse-traded away will swallow this. Those whose interests are dumped to make a deal with the 'lesser evil' will be less inclined to do so.

Some in the 'rainbow' would probably agree that a blow-up is inevitable. They argue that, nonetheless, the 'rainbow' could continue without Jackson, going on to form a nucleus of a workers' party or a Green type formation. This, the most 'left' of the arguments used to justify support for the 'rainbow' and Jackson, is also wrong.

The 'rainbow' is held together by the hope of Jackson winning the Democratic nomination to run for president. His campaign and the 'rainbow' coalition exist to win him votes, initially to advance his position without a capitalist party, and then for that party's candidate for president.

When Jackson does not win the nomination, activists will be faced with a choice. Work for the 'lesser evil', who will almost certainly not support the policies they want to see the presidential election fought on, or split the coalition and form a new independent organisation.

The problem here, of course, is that forming an organisation independent of the capitalist class requires that people are trained in the political theory and practice of the workers' movement. The crisis of the 'rainbow' will not simply express itself through whole campaigns and movements leaving Jackson and the Democrats to form a new party. It will, rather, result in the various women's, anti-racist, peace and other groups being torn apart over the question of method and perspective. Unfortunately, most of the left are busy sowing illusions in the 'rainbow' rather than warning activists and preparing them for the inevitable.

Perhaps, worst of all, the activity and energy expended on the Jackson campaign has diverted active opposition to cutbacks, the threat of war in central America, anti-racist struggles and the anti-nuclear movement away from independent mobilisations on the street into the routine of getting out the vote for the Democrats. And you thought the Labour Party was bad? ●

Ford:
Behind the sell-out

The Ford strike was cynically sold out by the national trade union leaders and the Ford national joint negotiating committee (NJNC). In line with the all-union recommendation, the workforce voted by two to one to accept the deal. The only plant with a majority against the deal was the PIA in Dagenham — which voted three to one against. **ALAN THORNETT** examines the sell-out in the light of developments in the car industry Europe-wide.

THE CLIMB-DOWN has very serious implications for both Ford workers and for those in the rest of the industry. The Ford workers needed a victory not just to stop this particular agreement but to reverse the management onslaught which has been going on for several years. This sell-out has robbed them of victory and put management back in an even stronger position.

The implications are the same for the rest of the working class. A major victory would have been a focus to mount a fightback throughout industry. This has been denied them; but the present wave of industrial struggles is likely to continue.

The Ford strike was potentially a major challenge to the Thatcher government. Yet the same union leaders who make long speeches about the evils of Thatcherism were prepared to employ the most cynical manoeuvres to stop that challenge. The sell-out was a betrayal of the interests of the whole working class.

Shop stewards in Dagenham and Halewood who had called for rejection of the deal were furious at the sell-out, which came as the strike reached its strongest point — with Ford's European plants closing down and the strike one hundred per cent solid.

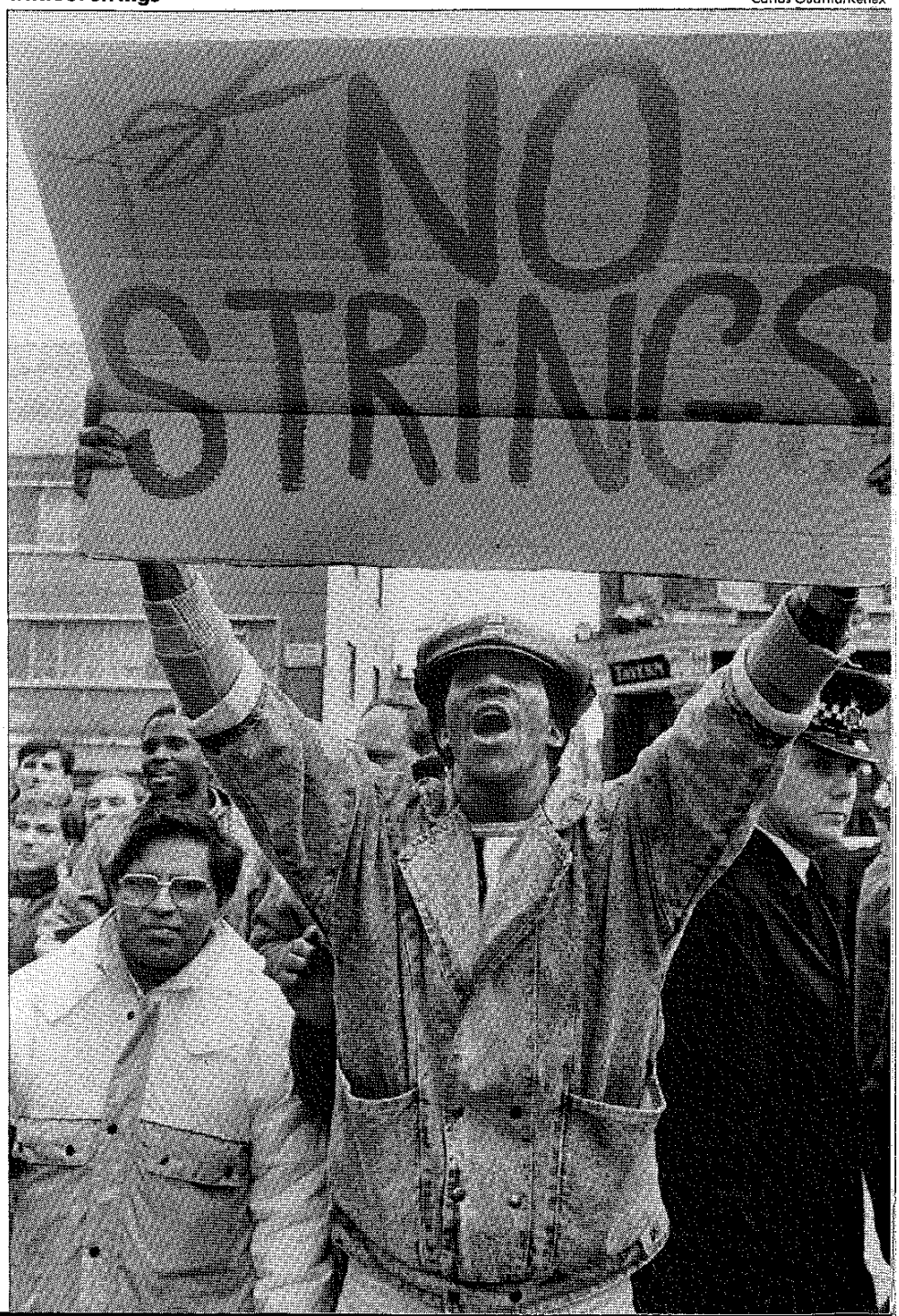
The deal was the same as the original management offer. The only change was from a three year deal to two — which means that the changes in working practices will be forced in over a shorter period of time. Everything else — the money and the strings — remained the same.

The acceptance vote was a direct product of both the recommendation and blatant lies by the NJNC. Some of them even claimed that 'strings' had been removed from the document when they knew that this was untrue. They claimed that a massive victory had been achieved, yet every member of the NJNC knew full well that this was not true. There is even an explicit commitment by the trade unions which provides for the implementation of changes in working practices within the life of the agreement. This could not be clearer in the revised deal which says:

> 'To ensure that there is no misunderstanding . . . constructive discussion at local joint works committees will start within one month of the application of the principles. Implementation will be ongoing as required and as appropriate to each plant, and with the full support of the unions in this process. If, in spite of your agreement to the principles, areas of difference occur in local discussions, the

Ford strikers indicating distrust of their representatives: the national joint negotiating committee falsely attempted to pretend that the final deal was without strings

Carlos Guarita/Reflex



issue will be refered to the NJNC for positive resolution and may, if appropriate, be referred in turn to the relevant unions. With the above agreement from the unions we cannot envisage where these changes would need to be imposed.'

Despite this open commitment to changes in working practices Derek Horn, vice chair of the NJNC told the London *Evening Standard*: 'People are talking about conditions — but the simple fact is that there are no strings at all attached to this agreement. We have an historic deal . . . '

Not just the right wing take this line. The *Morning Star* said the same. It quoted Jimmy Airlie, a member of the Communist Party and secretary of the NJNC, saying that Ford workers have won a 'terrific victory'. Airlie said during the negotiations that the strings were necessary for Ford to compete in the world market!

The reality is that the key issue behind the Ford deal, as with every deal in the car industry at the present time (and the last Ford settlement) is the strings attached to it. What lies behind each of these deals is a *new generalised offensive by the major car companies designed to increase efficiency and productivity*. The successful Japanese companies are the primary (although not the only) model used by much of the industry internationally.

This is not a new thing. The Ford 'AJ' (or 'after Japan') plan was drawn up in the early 1980s after their UK executives visited plants in Japan. The plan was designed to achieve Japanese productivity levels in Ford's British plants. This remains central to Ford management strategy.

What is *new* in the car industry is the *scale of technological development* and the *level of investment* in new models. This introduces new pressures which every manufacturer has to respond to.

In Europe the lead is being taken by Fiat, Europe's second largest manufacturer. They are in the process of launching the *Tipo* — a new family car in which Fiat has invested over £1 billion. It makes their plant in Cassino the most advanced in the world. Fiat claims a 100 per cent automated paint facility and 55 per cent automation on assembly — a record previously held by Europe's biggest car manufacturer, VW/Audi, at their Hallë assembly facility in West Germany with 40 per cent.

But productivity levels produced by investment and automation are only one side of the equation. High investment needs to be linked to high productivity of labour which means brutally hard work, continuously carried out, and subject to repeated speed-up — a factor which has become dominant for car workers worldwide. Japanese car makers have developed techniques which have led the world in harnessing the workers mentally and physically to continuous hard work at very high speed. But many other manufacturers are now catching them up.

The Ford package contains many of the principles involved in Japanese management techniques. Ford want the introduction of *short term contracts*; the ending of all demarcation and the introduction of *complete labour flexibility*, including making skilled men a part of the same groups as unskilled; the introduction of *group leaders*, creating a higher-paid force of 'company spies' on the shop floor; and the so-called 'quality circles' as developed in Japan.

Quality circles have far more to do with productivity than quality. In principle they are the same as the 'worker participation' scheme which the last Labour government introduced into British Leyland (now Austin Rover), in 1975 in the Ryder report. It had disastrous results for the shop stewards' movement and the workforce.

The objective of these ideas it to change the thinking of the workers from starting from their own wages and conditions, to starting from the problems of production and profitability. This inevitably undermines trade union structures — particularly the shop stewards' movement which is more responsive to the demands of the workforce.

In Japanese car plants everyone is involved in a quality circle. They are required to meet regularly, generally weekly, in their own time, to discuss ways of improving their production performance. In some plants failure to produce positive proposals from such meetings is regarded as 'uncooperative' or 'anti-management' and can lead to dismissal.

'the only break the workers get is when the track breaks down'

Clearly, quality circles cannot be introduced as effectively in Britain as in Japan. In Japan these techniques were introduced following the smashing of the independent unions and the creation of company controlled 'yellow' unions. Their most extensive use in Britain is still in the Sunderland Nissan plant. But that plant is still in a 'honeymoon' period. They are not yet pressing the workforce as hard as they intend to. And it is not a highly capitalised plant.

Ford workers lobby negotiations in February package at Austin Rover

Quality circles have also been established in some other parts of the car industry in Britain. In Austin Rover, quality circles (under the name of zone circles) have been introduced by a deal done at national level between the national officials and the unions — the same individuals negotiated the current package with Ford. Mick Murphy, the TGWU national officer, became well known for saying that he was 'over the moon' with the deal — a deal to which the workforce has become increasingly hostile.

These 'zone circles' include the shop stewards and meet in working hours with one hour per week facility time. Involving the shop stewards tends to make the situation worse — making it easier for management to use 'zone circles' as an alternative to the trade union structures.

In some Austin Rover plants, including the Cowley assembly plant at Oxford, 'zone circles' are already in operation, but in most places they still lack authority. In the Cowley assembly plant they have been backed by right wing senior stewards and convenors. They operate with only those workers who are prepared to become involved. In the

ry: TGWU national officer Mick Murphy (placard) has negotiated a similar

body plant there has been more resistance, because of the existence of a stronger left wing in the plant.

In Austin Rover the introduction of quality circles has gone alongside the abolition of many categories of workers — particularly grades such as inspection and rectification — resulting in many hundreds of job losses.

Besides quality circles, labour flexibility is the other key tool of the new management technique. The ability of management to move workers from one job to another — across grades and skill demarcations — is crucial if work is to be continuous. If non-production workers can be switched to production, when production workers are absent, or there are abnormal production problems, management can cut down the number of relief workers needed, or even abolish them completely.

'the sell-out was a betrayal of the interests of the whole working class'

The only break the track workers get, apart from brief official relief times, is when the track breaks down. With flexibility production workers are required to do running maintenance themselves, or help the fitters in the repair of bigger breakdowns. They are also expected to do general cleaning to cut out the need for janitors. This is all designed to ensure that there is never a break in the work-load, from one end of the shift to the other.

Short-term contracts are another major innovation. They are widely used in Japanese plants and allow management to maintain a core experienced labour force which can work flat-out all the time, whilst employing casual labour to cover peak periods — and then sacking them with no rights at the end of it. This creates a labour force outside of trade union control and vulnerable to management moves. Such contracts have already been introduced in some British plants. In the newly privatised Unipart (the Austin Rover service division), short contract labour is regularly used to meet peak demand periods.

There have been disputes in Austin Rover over the introduction of these conditions. But management has succeeded in introducing into some of their plants some of the conditions Fords are now seeking. In the Swindon body plant, for example, short term contract workers already exist. But the idea would be strongly opposed in the main Austin Rover plants.

In addition to these innovations discipline has been stepped up. New disciplinary procedures have been introduced and the rate of dismissals has gone up sharply. In the main Austin Rover plants workers are sacked every day for 'offences' such as failure to keep pace with the track, failing to work to standard or for breaking the very strict management codes on lateness or absenteeism. In some Austin Rover plants workers are disciplined as a matter of course (although not necessarily sacked) for one error on the track.

It is these conditions — the strings attached to the deal — that have been central to the Ford strike. The chances of success in the next stage of this process in Britain will be greatly increased by the sell-out of the Ford strike. Car workers in Britain have to seek ways of challenging this.

The employers' offensive has some lessons which need to be taken up by car workers both in Britain and internationally. A generalised offensive needs a generalised response. In Britain, where the multi-union set-up in the industry fragments the workforce and prevents the workers speaking with a single voice, there is an urgent need for contact at rank and file level, particularly through the shop stewards' movement. Some shop stewards in Ford and other car manufacturers are calling for an urgent national conference of car industry shop stewards to discuss and assess these developments and develop a strategy for opposition.

This would be a very popular initiative and could be the starting point for a fightback in the car plants in Britain. It could also lay the basis for greater links with car workers across Europe, in the USA and beyond.

The high level of militancy in the car plants in Britain is likely to continue and increase despite the Ford sell-out. At the time of writing the Land Rover plant in Birmingham is on strike over wages. The General Motors plants in Liverpool and Luton have voted for strike action over the decision by management to plunder tens of thousands of pounds from the pension fund, using new Tory legislation.

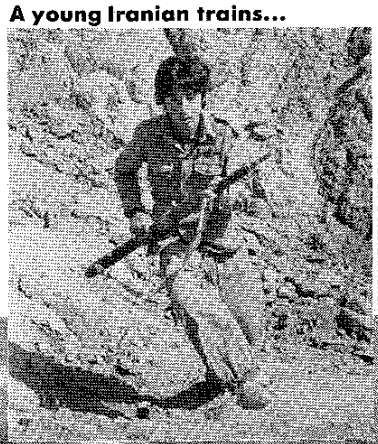
There needs to be an international response to this as well. The employers are organising their offensive across national frontiers. It is an international offensive with internationally developed techniques of attack. There needs to be a forum in which car workers from, at least across Europe, can pool their experience and develop a response beyond national limitations ●

The SWP and Iran:

Should socialists take sides in the Gulf war?

The Socialist Workers Party has made a turn in its attitude to the Iran-Iraq war: from revolutionary opposition to the war to critical support for Iran. The turn has been announced in a series of articles the most detailed of which is Phil Marshall's 'A test of strength' in the December 1987 issue of *Socialist Worker Review*. **PHIL HEARSE** argues that this turn is ill-conceived and will profoundly mis-educate supporters of the SWP.

A young Iranian trains...



Kaveh Golestan/Reflex

The dead body of a young Iranian volunteer lies motionless, a picture of Khomeini in his pocket (for good luck): a victim of senseless slaughter or an 'anti-imperialist' casualty?

Kaveh Golestan/Reflex

PHIL MARSHALL says there has been a *change in the character of the war* signalled by the clashes between the US fleet and Iranian gunboats in the Gulf. He says: 'The war is no longer just a conflict between two ruling classes fighting for domination of the region. Washington has decided it is to be a test of strength between the west and the Arab rulers on the one hand, and the upstart Iranians on the other'. This is quite wrong.

The US and other western fleets are not in the Gulf to intervene directly in the Iran-Iraq war. They are there, as they have openly said, to guarantee the west's oil supplies — even if they have shown more concern to defend boats going to Iraq than those going to Iran. The SWP are making a mistake if they think that the clashes in the Gulf are part and parcel of the Iran-Iraq war.

But it is far from clear that the US and the west simply back Iraq against Iran. Imperialism is keeping its options open. The Irangate affair blew up because the US was preparing, in the medium and long term, to 'do business' with at least a wing of the Iranian regime. The calculations of the US are much more complicated than just defending the oil sheiks against the 'upstart Iranians'.

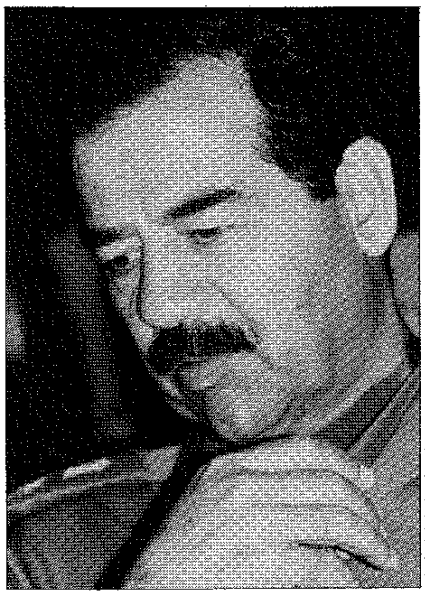
The main US ally in the middle east — Israel — is opposed to an Iraqi victory, because Israel sees a victorious Iraq as a threatening Arab regional power. Israel has been Iran's main supplier of arms, but arms have come from many western countries, including (by secret routes) from the US itself. The Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq has just as strong links with the USSR on the diplomatic plane as it has with the US. The Soviet Union has been the main supplier of Iraqi weapons. So the US preference for Iraq is far from obvious.

In any case, the preferences of US imperialism can change. Although the US wants to defend the oil sheikdoms in the region against any Iranian expansionism, that doesn't mean that it can't swivel its alliances to meet changing circumstances. The US recognises that if anyone has the upper hand it is the *Iranians*. And, if necessary, the US will be quite capable of making new diplomatic overtures to the Khomeini regime.

Many leading US politicians and military people have said the best option for the US will be if 'neither side wins and they go on killing one another'. This is probably nearer the consensus imperialist view than the one given by Phil Marshall.

What is incontestable is that the war remains one of conflict between two utterly reactionary capitalist regimes for domination of the region. Having repulsed the original Iraqi attack, the Iranian regime took the war onto Iraqi territory with the express intention of bringing down the Saddam Hussein regime. It is the Iranians who have refused peace negotiations; Saddam Hussein realises he now can't win and desperately wants peace.

Phil Marshall has some extraordinary things to say about the character of the regime and the war. He says: 'During the Iranian revolution of 1979 Khomeini championed the mass movements of the workers, peasants, women and national minorities. But with the Shah gone, he soon revealed his intention to consolidate Iranian capitalism, while giving his most important supporters among the petty bourgeoisie a bigger share in the system'.



Piers Cavendish/Reflex

Iraqi president Saddam Hussein: it is far from obvious that the US supports Iraq

This is wrong on two counts. Khomeini never, ever, 'championed' the workers, women, peasants or national minorities and it is quite misleading to say so. Khomeini promoted the mass movement under the leadership of his supporters in the mosque and the bazaar, the demonstrations of Khomeini supporters in the streets, but he always opposed the direct expressions of the movements of workers and other oppressed groupings — *especially* of national minorities and women. The Iranian regime is not 'petty bourgeois' in any fundamental sense. It is a bourgeois regime, and the ruling class in Tehran is the capitalist ruling class.

Phil Marshall says his new line 'will stick in the throats of socialists' (quite). But he argues that socialists have to make unpleasant choices, and he quotes the example of the Spanish civil war as comparison since 'the Spanish situation has much in common with that in Iran' (sic). Now it could just possibly be that the Spanish civil war had something in common with the Iran-Iraq war, but Phil Marshall fails to mention anything, and I can't think of anything either.

Marshall says Trotsky argued that 'we are not neutral' between the 'decaying bourgeois democracy' of the Negrin republican government and the Franco fascists. Quite right too. But there is no 'decaying bourgeois democracy' in Iran or Iraq. Both are utterly vile reactionary dictatorships. Both have the blood of thousands of workers, peasants, women and people from national minorities on their hands. Both want to dominate the region, and neither are in the slightest bit genuinely 'anti-imperialist' — although they both use 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric.

Socialists should, says Phil Marshall, 'encourage working class discontent' with the Iranian regime, but should *not disrupt the war effort*. This is a hopeless and reactionary line. What should socialists say about the sending of hundreds of thousands of young people to their deaths by Khomeini in his quest to bring down the Saddam Hussein regime? That they should go and fight in an 'anti-imperialist' cause?(!) The Khomeini regime is, if anything, the worst criminal at the present stage of the fighting in prolonging the senseless slaughter.

A final point, Marshall says that 'islamic fundamentalism is a complex and contradictory phenomenon'. Of course, any amateur dialectician will tell you that all phenomena are complex and contradictory. But if Marshall means that fundamentalism is politically contradictory he is wrong. It is a reactionary creed through and through and can never lead the peoples of the middle and near east in an anti-imperialist direction. Socialists have to fight it every step of the way.

The new SWP line is misleading for socialists in Iran and in the west. While it is absolutely correct to oppose the intervention of US imperialism in the region, and right for socialists to defend Iran against attack by the US it is another thing again to side with the Iranians against Iraq. In taking sides in this bloody and pointless conflict, the SWP have concluded that the Iranians are basically anti-imperialist and the Iraqis are pro-imperialist. Such a position involves an error of fact, as well as of judgement ●

Socialist Organiser and Ireland:

More loyalist than the loyalists

A couple of years ago *Socialist Organiser* broke from the traditional marxist view of Ireland on the issue of the protestants, a view which, in the words of James Connolly, defined the 'orange working class' as 'slaves in spirit because they have been reared up among a people whose conditions of servitude are more slavish than their own'. This, and the consequential analysis of the protestant working class as a labour aristocracy was increasingly questioned by *Socialist Organiser* and its ideological leader, Sean Matgamna. **GEOFFREY BELL** writes.

THERE IS nothing wrong in reassessing marxist interpretations, but where this has lead *Socialist Organiser* as far as this particular exercise is concerned is to the other side of the class divide. This is illustrated in the January edition of the magazine *Workers' Liberty* and an article therein by Sean Matgamna.

This is entitled 'Ireland: lies the left tells itself'. A more fitting headline would have been 'Ireland: examples of the lies the right tells itself'. For what has now emerged from what at first was a sloppy and impressionistic analysis is one which stands four square with the opinions of the British ruling class.

We are told that there would be a bloody sectarian civil war if British troops left the north of Ireland, that those troops have every right to be there anyway because 'Northern Ireland has been part of the British state since the 12th century', and that Britain has no political, economic or military interest in staying in the north of Ireland.

The reason they do so apparently is because of the 'power of the orangeists on the ground', and it is this power which, if British troops did leave, would result in all sorts of nasty things happening to catholics.

Not only do we have a series of views which suggests the role of the British army is to keep two sets of mad paddies apart, we have an additional reactionary bonus. This is that protestants in the north of Ireland are quite right to resist any attempt to submit them to the rule of the Irish majority because they are British, have always considered themselves so and because they are faced with 'Sinn Fein's catholic Irish nationalism' which is alien to them and their 'traditions'. These politics of Sinn Fein are also something which break from the traditional republicanism of Wolfe Tone which, contrary to Sinn Fein's version, was non-sectarian.

There is, in all this, so much disinformation it is difficult to know where to gasp most. But, for example:

- 'Northern Ireland' was only part of the British state *in name* since the 12th century. Ulster was so resistant to British occupation that it did not happen in reality until the 17th century when the native Irish were driven from their land and were replaced by English and Scottish settlers.
- The protestant community of the northeast of Ireland have rarely considered themselves as 'British' in the sense that term is understood in Britain. From the home rule bills of the 19th and early 20th centuries to the Anglo-Irish accord of today they have continually resisted the 'right' of the British parliament to rule them. Moreover, historically speaking, the protestants in Ireland as a whole have generally defined themselves as 'Irish' or some variant of that — 'Anglo-Irish', 'Scots-Irish', 'Northern Irish' or 'Ulstermen' (sic). Even today the majority of northern Irish protestants reject the view that the British parliament has the right to tell them what to do. They also toy with advocating an independent Ulster (the UDA) or Ulster as a British dominion in the way Canada is (Ulster Clubs).
- The notion that contemporary Sinn Fein republicanism is different from that of Wolfe Tone is an historical illiteracy. Sad to say, but in fact the examples of anti-protestant sectarianism in Wolfe Tone's 1798 rising were much more commonplace than in the present IRA's campaign, although in both cases such sectarianism was no part of the politics of the vast majority of those involved.
- To define Sinn Fein as 'Irish catholic nationalism' is a slander. Irish nationalism has often had a rather right wing and catholic side to it, but Sinn Fein in word and deed has resolutely opposed it. If there are present day catholic Irish nationalists they are most likely to be found in the SDLP in the north or Fianna Fail in the south.
- The attempt to justify the presence of British troops in the north of Ireland by raising the spectre of the protestant backlash is rather old hat these days. Let us remember that the troops went onto the streets in 1969 because the loyalist security forces had been defeated. And today the political unity which would be necessary for the loyalists to be a real threat to catholics in the event of British withdrawal is completely missing. The failure of the loyalists to defeat the Anglo-Irish agreement is just one example of the limited capability of the 'protestant backlash'.

John Arthur/Reflex

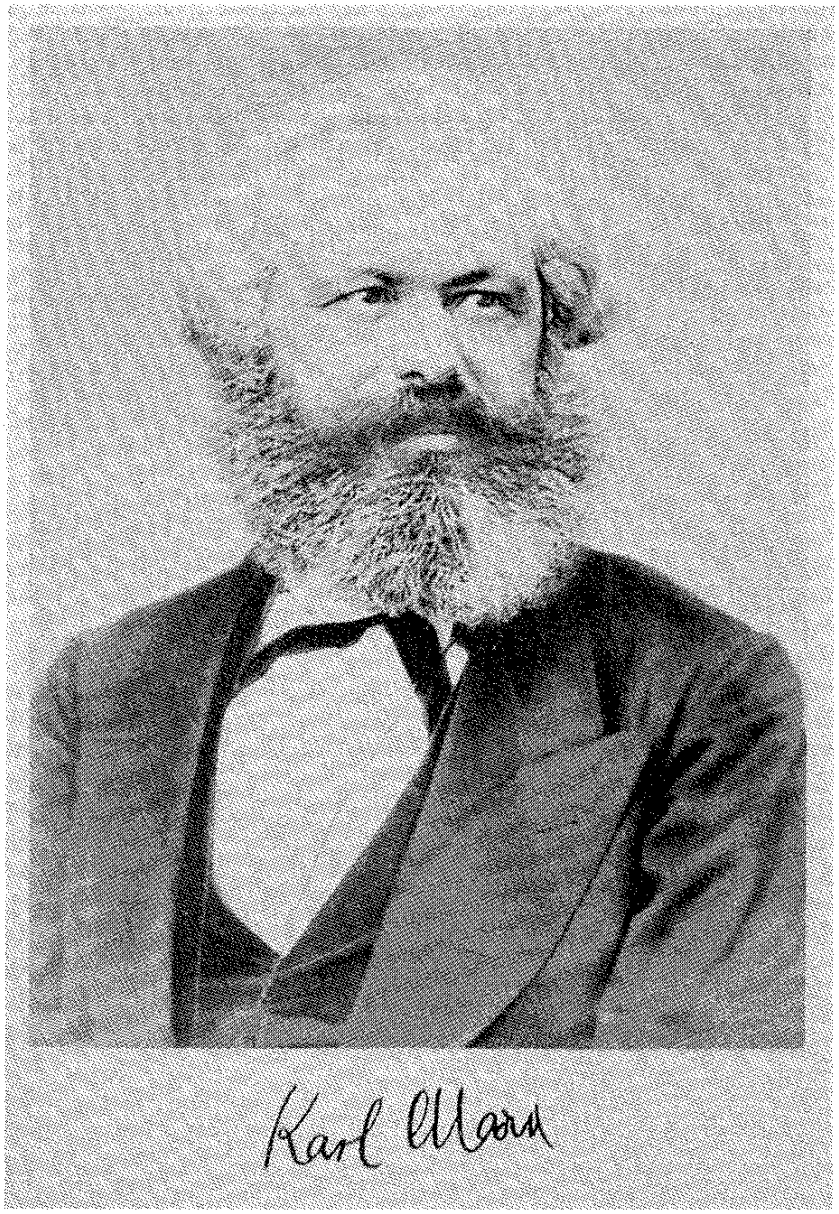
A loyalist band prepares to march in Portadown

In seeking to minimise British responsibility for the situation in Ireland, in suggesting that, for the good of the Irish, British troops must stay, in painting the 'loyalists' more 'British' than they paint themselves, *Socialist Organiser* ends up calling for the extension of both loyalist 'rights' and the British presence.

The advocacy is for protestant self-rule — in other words, a statelet drawn up purely on a sectarian headcount. This statelet would apparently be part of a federal Ireland. But then comes the biggest howler. There have to be 'ties of some confederal sort between that united Ireland and Britain'.

In other words, Brits into the south of Ireland. Wave the union jack and pass the ammunition ●

- *All quotes in the text are from, 'Ireland: the lies the left tells itself' by Sean Matgamna, in* Workers' Liberty *no. 9, January 1988.*
- *Geoffrey Bell is the author of* The Protestants of Ulster *and* Troublesome Business: the Labour Party and the Irish Question, *both published by Pluto Press.*



Karl Marx: he and Frederick Engels never left a systematic account of their 'materialist view of history'

BACK TO BASICS

What is historical materialism?

MARX AND ENGELS never left a systematic account of their 'materialist view of history'. Scattered throughout their writings however, are dozens of partial explanations. Above all, Marx and Engels used historical materialism as the basis of their analysis of society, indeed it is the bedrock of their theory. How does historical materialism differ from other views of history and human society?

For some, non-marxist, historians history is just a random series of events. For others it is the doings of 'great men'. For Marx, however, history can be understood: by analysing the basic structure of society; the contending *forces* in society; and looking at the *dynamics of change*. History is not random or accidental, but has discernable causes and definite laws determining its development.

Which basic concepts did Marx use to analyse historical development and show how society 'works'? The first concept is that of *production*, as the basis of all human society. This is common sense. Unlike animals, humanity has to produce, to *labour*, to ensure its continued survival. Basic needs like clothes and often even food cannot just be found lying about in the open air. They have to be made or farmed. Humanity has to *produce* to stay alive.

Furthermore, in order to produce its livelihood, says Marx, the human race has to labour not as individuals but *collectively*. We have to organise a system of production, and the way society does that determines what type of society it is. In one of the most famous passages in Marx's writing he explains it like this:

'In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations which are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which raises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness'.

Here Marx is saying that the production process, and the social relations of production — those between lord and serf, boss and worker and so on — are the 'real foundation' of society which determine what kind of society it is and how it works.

Apologists for capitalism pretend that 'society' has always been more or less the same, and always will be — it just

gets more complex and wealthier. They argue that the same 'human nature' with its movitations of acquisitiveness, private property and greed always predominates. Marx refuted this by showing that many different types of society had existed, capitalism was just one of them, a distinct, but transitory, phase in human development.

Capitalism is one of a series of human societies divided into social *classes*. But in earlier societies a form of 'primitive communism' existed where society was not divided between ruler and ruled, exploiter and exploited.

The emergence of classes in society coincides with a change in human society about 6,000 years ago — the so-called 'neolithic revolution'. This revolution involved the abandonment of wandering and hunting tribes, and the transition to settled communities based on stable agriculture and the domestication of animals.

Under these conditions, for the first time society created a surplus of what was needed just to survive and reproduce itself. A privileged class developed which consumed the surplus. Exactly how, however, is still a subject of controversy. Since then, however, most societies have been divided into classes, with a wealthy class which consumes or at least controls the economic surplus, and is usually therefore the *ruling* class.

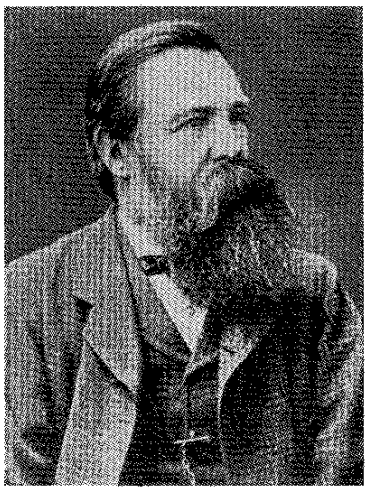
The emergence of class society shows something quite fundamental to Marx's theory: *'social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing their way of earning a living, they change all their social relations. The handmill gives you a society with the feudal lord; the steam mill society with the industrial capitalist'.*

What Marx is saying here (in perhaps an over-simplified way) is that the level of production techniques, and the wealth of society, has an important bearing on the social relations. For example, it is impossible to have capitalism in a society which is so poor that nobody can accumulate personal capital. The transition to a capitalist mode of production from the sixteenth century onwards depended on a certain stage of human wealth and production technique.

In the quotes from Marx, there are two concepts vital to historical materialism. These are the *forces of production*, the materials of labour like tools, raw materials, factories and the workers themselves, and secondly the *relations* of production, that is the relations between producers and between classes.

The two concepts lead to a third: *mode of production*. This is the combination of the forces of production and relations of production, which gives a definite and distinct type of society.

The concept of mode of production enables us to categorise and examine different societies. For example contemporary Britain is quite like contemporary France in its basic technique and production relations. But it is quite unlike ancient Rome or medieval Italy. The mode of production in Britain and France today is the same: capitalism. But ancient Rome and medieval Italy were different.



Engels

Marx analysed three main types of class society, each with their own mode of production: slave society (like ancient Rome and Greece); feudalism, the main type of society in the European middle ages; and capitalism, the society based on private ownership of capital and generalised commodity production.

Each of these societies had a different dynamic, a different 'general social arrangement'. The arrangement in slave society was compulsory labour by slaves owned by their masters. In capitalism, obviously the basic arrangement is wage labour. Because the 'general social arrangement' is different, so is the mode of production.

Marx developed another idea which is central to historical materialism: the distinction between *base* and *superstructure*. Simply summed up, for society to work, the political and legal system, and ideology generally has to 'fit' the economic structure of society. The economic 'base' created a 'superstructure' to fit. For example, a capitalist economic system would produce a capitalist legal system. Who can imagine judges who were *against* private property? It's a ridiculous proposition. Marx also said 'the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class'. You just have to open most newspapers or watch television to realise the *dominant* ideas are those of the bosses — except in times of acute crisis.

According to Marx then, history has to be understood in terms of the underlying forces of historical development. In class-divided society the main social forces are social classes. The conflict between these classes is the motor force of history.

But behind the conflict between classes stands a deeper and more profound contradiction: between the development of the forces of production and the relations of production. As Marx says: *'At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or — what is but a legal expression of the same thing — with the property relations ... From forms of development of the productive forces these forms turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution'.*

As the wealth and productive technique of society develops, the antagonism between the classes intensifies. This struggle ends, according to Marx, in either the victory of one side or 'the mutual ruin of both contending classes'.

Historical materialism is a theory which explains historical development by examining how change occurs through the conflict between the fundamental forces of production and of social classes. Historical materialism is not a magic tool which avoids the necessity to examine the detail of what happens in history, but it shows the actions of individuals are an expression of a wider background.

As Marx said: 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not do it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances ... transmitted from the past'.

Historical materialism shows that capitalism is the product of a specific historical period. It is important to remember that like other modes of production it too is not a timeless reality ●

PHIL HEARSE

Further reading

The Communist Manifesto (available in pamphlet form, Moscow or Beijing edition).

'Preface' to the *Critique of Political Economy* (1858). Available in the Marx and Engels selected works in one volume, Lawrence and Wishart. This collection is really useful for many of the best known works of Marx and Engels and includes the *Communist Manifesto*.

The German Ideology, Part I, Lawrence and Wishart. Get the paperback edited and introduced by Chris Arthur.

REVIEWS

Inside British fascism

KEN BLACK

Ray Hill and Andrew Bell *The other face of terror — inside Europe's neo-nazi network*, a Grafton paperback original, £3.50.

FOUR YEARS AGO I was amazed to see the face of a leading British fascist appear on the tv screen to announce that for five years he had been working with the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* on a campaign of information gathering and disruption of fascist organisations.

The tv programme, based on secretly recorded interviews with a variety of European fascists, was the culmination of that work, of which this new book is a record.

Ray Hill records his conversion to fascism in the 1960s, his emigration to South Africa in 1969, his break with fascism and the five years he spent with some of the most vicious thugs in Europe.

The most substantial part of the book is an account of the development of British fascism, the relationship between the more 'upfront' nazis and those who seek to hide behind 'respectable' racism, the 'votes versus boots' debates, the re-emergence of 'Strasserite' radicalism — and, last but not least, the commitment of the far right to violence and terrorism.

One of Hill's most amazing revelations is the plot by fascists to attack the 1981 Notting Hill carnival, with the intention of provoking a response from the black community and a massive racial conflict. Hill was able to alert *Searchlight* and thwart this plot.

Ray Hill was a leading figure in the British Movement, which he helped destroy through a carefully planned disruption programme. He was later a leading figure in John Tyndall's British National Party. It is a feature of far right groups that membership is fluid and often overlapping. Hill was able to operate in a variety of groupings.

He paints vivid pen pictures of many leading fascists — especially their grossly inflated self-esteem, their back biting, their petty rivalries and faction fighting which helped so much the task of disrupting their organisations.

Many anecdotes reveal a world which is both horrifying and amusing — a paranoid world of endless conspiracy and violence.

Hill built up a solid fascist reputation — especially with the young street thugs. He was always ready to make the most rabble rousing speech.

Tyndall's attempt to launch his British National Party as a party of the 'respectable racist right' was sabotaged by Hill making an openly nazi speech at its founding conference — much to Führer Tyndall's discomfort, but to the approval of the British Movement skinheads Hill had brought along.

Ray Hill's book gives a unique insight into the workings of the twilight world of British fascism. If you want to know which nazi leader was known as 'the milkman', which devotes most of his time to looking after his aged mother, what Column 88 is, which nazi martyr was helped through his hunger strikes by Complan — or just why 'an ordinary working man' became a fascist, then this is the book for you.

This book makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge

The 'master race' in action: Hill built up his reputation with the young thugs

Carlos Guarita/Reflex

and understanding of British fascism, and how people are attracted to it. By exposing its intrinsically violent and utterly sordid character it makes an important contribution to fighting it.

However, there is an important omission, especially considering the period it covers, namely an assessment of the Anti-Nazi League. The ANL gets just one line — albeit of approval — despite its great success in fighting the fascists. The ANL deserved support from the left, but there were problems with its strategy which need to be debated.

Despite its limitations in focussing on a strategy for fighting fascism, Hill's book makes compelling, and at times moving, reading ●

Andrew Moore/Reflex

The National Front marches, (right to left) Patrick Harrington, Ian Anderson, Joe Pearce: grossly inflated self-esteem, back-biting, petty rivalries and faction fighting characterise leading fascist circles

Fatal attraction

JANE WELLS

YOU KNOW that Alex Forrest (played by Glenn Close) is getting pretty serious in her now famous pursuit of the fatally attractive Dan Gallagher (Michael Douglas) when she douses his car in acid and in the process nearly gasses the pet rabbit he's just bought. Then, unknown to Gallagher, she follows him to his family's country retreat.

True to horror film form, she then circles the house watching the chocolate box scene unfold inside as daddy, with long-suffering wife Beth by his side, gives the rabbit to darling daughter in front of the home fire (still burning). Alex Forrest then promptly throws up.

I know how she felt. By that point in the film I was getting pretty sick of all the hard sell on the happy family too. Not, of course, to the point of sympathising too much with Forrest — because she is very definitely the baddy in all this.

Fatal Attraction cleverly draws you along the thread of its logic and into the fabric of its own morality, which is the main substance of the film, hung on a flimsy — basic at best — frame of a story line. But there's plenty of drama, action and emotional pitch to compensate for any lack in complexity or subtlety — and the film doesn't leave you in any doubt about who's side you're supposed to be on.

Two New York professionals have a brief designer affair, complete with stylish sex in fully co-ordinated sets. He's married and wants to leave it at that. Fair enough. She's single and doesn't — also fair enough (at first), even though she knew the score when she made her first move. Forrest is treated fairly, and fairly positively up to this point in the film.

Besides doing the pulling, she also gets to make a reasonable case against men's use and abuse of women in sexual relationships, describing with some accuracy some of the immature emotional devices many men employ. So far so good.

But she isn't allowed too much rope before she's very quickly reined in with the character weaknesses usually ascribed to sexually assertive women: loneliness, insecurity, possessiveness, hysteria and neuroses. She's also pregnant, and wants to be.

There then follows pursuit by telephone, car, cassette, a suicide bid, a kidnapping, and other generally unwelcome intrusions.

And there's worse too. When Forrest finally catches up with Gallagher and his wife (by which time he's had to let her in on the reason why bunny, who as far as we know never hurt anybody, had to end up in a pot on the stove), she turns murderous.

The moral of the story — delivered in a crescendo of dramatic tension which apparently had US audiences screaming 'kill the bitch' (and British audiences expressing the same sentiments only perhaps with a bit more reserve) — couldn't be more clear.

Gallagher strayed from the happy home, lived a bit dangerously — certainly didn't use a condom — and got well and truly punished (though interestingly not morally censured). He is saved in the end by his family.

The ultimate punishment, and condemnation is meted out to Forrest. Not only does she have to live in a warehouse in the middle of what looks like a mobile abbattoir (while the perfect couple get a clean house in the country), she is made into the ultimate threat — not just to Gallagher, or his family — but symbolically to the nuclear family.

In the end the threat is seen off by the re-assertion of family values — to the relief, I presume, of those US audiences and of those US women who, it is reported, take their husbands along for a lesson in what happens to men who fool around.

Alex Forrest has been described as 'the AIDS virus with a carving knive'. There is a level at which the symbolism of the film invited such a reading — despite the fact that (or even because) the disease itself is never referred to. But there is a more direct — and even more reactionary message in the film.

Woven into the characterisation of Alex Forrest is what amounts to a final warning on feminism. By mixing a superficially plausible feminism with an irrational, pathological violence, *Fatal Attraction* gives a 'cesspit of their own making' verdict on feminism, on modern women, and even on modest sexual licence.

It has to be said in fairness, that one of the most interesting and annoying things about the film is how enjoyable it is.

Some marxist critics argue that the form — horror, thriller — (in fact almost anything with a story and characters) is itself inherently and inevitably reactionary.

They argue for a more wholesome form of 'cultural production' where the reader is a more 'active' participant, constructing meaning, and even the story and the characters her/himself.

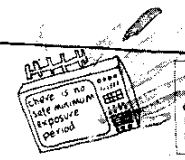
This activity, goes the theory, is supposed to be more 'pleasurable' than passive consumption.

Now that kind of DIY entertainment sounds a bit like hard work to me — and I'd defend the rights of even marxists to access to an armchair and a bit of escapist fiction.

It might be a bit basic and reductionist, but I'd just appreciate the chance to watch a film from time to time when the baddies weren't always mad women/black/low-life/communists ●

control	monitor
censor	bias
erase	filter
hold	mute
race	permaculture
class	rumour control
gender	scan
power	history
shift	skive

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.



ART	BEAUTY
LEISURE	TRUTH
CULTURE	IDEOLOGY
POETRY	PROFIT
ECONOMICS	GENDER

VOL. III NO.95 SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 1985

CHIEFS OF STAFF

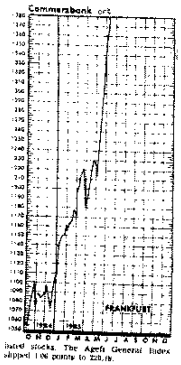
IN DISCUSSIONS WITH ARTEMISIA GENTILLESCHI

NOTIONS OF STEREOTYPING IN QUESTION BY STATUESQUE BRUNETTE FROM ITALY

* * *

NANCY REAGAN AND BERTHE MORISOT DISAGREE ON BASIC PRINCIPLES OF COLOUR AND COMPOSITION

Pentagon turns down strategic defence initiative by Velasquez



Dated stocks. The Agefi General Index slipped 1.00 points to 220.18.

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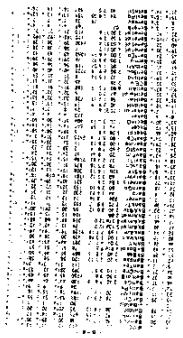
Baselitz and Reagan find substantial areas of agreement on fiscal policy, the meaninglessness of the construction of meaning, all signifiers are wild - both men like McDonald's Cheeseburgers.



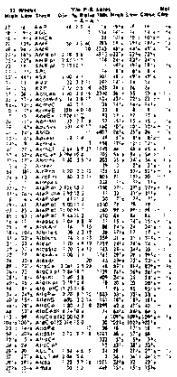
IBM and third world representatives discuss the complexity of meaning in the inverted figures of Baselitz

Superpower Summit declares agreement on cultural accord — art and policies do not any longer in essence unconnected.

MICHELANGELO QUESTIONS U.N. PRIORITIES ON FAMINE RELIEF AND CASH CROPPING IN THIRD WORLD

* * *

PICASSO LASHES THATCHER PROPOSALS FOR EDUCATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT



The Politics of Gender

Nudity

* * *

George Bush condemns 'the politics of culture' as outlined by Titian

* * *

Sistine chapel ceiling project has deficit funding implications in period of cut backs and high unemployment

cruise missiles aesthetically pleasing says head of art school

Reagan tax plan at odds with the Divine Spirit alleges William Blake

* * *

Grotto complains that Pentagon statement conflicts with control data cancellation of commercial create sale — Art Scribe magazine describes Grotto's stance as 'simplistic'

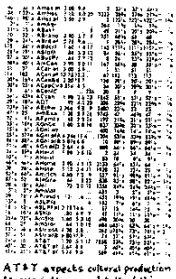
* * *

Fra Angelico utterly opposed to star wars defines the plan as unethical, unworkable, ungodly.

* * *

ART OR CRAFT? — Benin Foundry challenges Western notions of hegemony and individualism — Botha acts.

MATTISSE SAYS THATCHERISM FAILS TO RECOGNISE PLEASURE PRINCIPAL

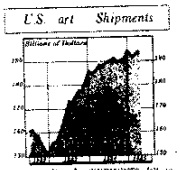


AT&T expects cultural production to rise in the second half of this year from the first six month period

REMBRANDT

in call for trade sanctions against South Africa.

U.S. art Shipments



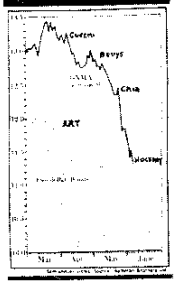
U.S. cultural SHIPMENTS fell to [illegible] billion in April, after seasonal adjustments, from a revised $284.38 billion in March, the Commerce Department reports

RAUSCHENBERG AND REAGAN CLASH OVER TRADE DEFICIT

Kierkegaarde lays down the law on pragmatism and politics to Thatcher Cabinet

DA VINCI HUSTLES N.A.S.A. ON GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES —

ART YIELDS



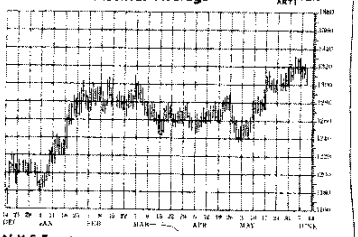
Gorbachev in discussions with Malevitch disagrees with the fundamental concessions made by implication in his work 'white square on a white ground'

VERMEER TO ATTEND SALT TALKS.

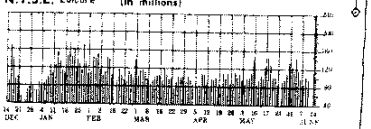
* * *

MARKET STATISTICS

Dow Jones Industrial Average



N.Y.S.E. culture (in millions)



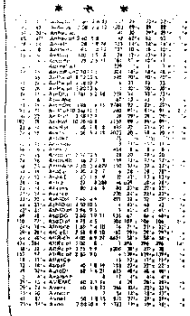
"Call me a sentimental aesthete old formalist if you like but I like to see a nicely painted missile" — tender boneless chicken chief argues national heritage enhanced by beautiful missiles

* * *

PRESERVATION ORDER PLACED ON CLASSICALLY PROPORTIONED POLARIS MISSILE - INTELLECTUALS FAIL TO GIVE LEAD ON BEAUTY SAYS DEFENCE SECRETARY HESELTINE

RAPID EXPANSION WOULD WORRY ME SAYS CEZANNE

* * *



KINNOCK AND RAPHAEL IN BUST-UP ABOUT THE MEANING OF BEAUTY

Veronese argues that Brunelleschi design for new Pentagon is prime example of cultural appropriation

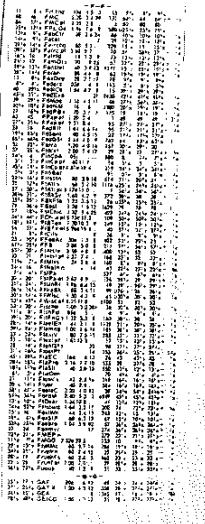
Pentagon Plans To Boost Beauty, Reduce Clearances

* * *

ANDY WARHOL PRICE RISE CAUSES CHAOS AS KOREA LIBERALIZES LAWS

Rodin to sculpt missile silo

* * *



* * *

GOYA to appear before grand jury

Weinberger meets Conrad Atkinson in Vienna Talks. Seeks advice on disarmament

Conrad Atkinson, *Wall Street Journal*, hand-coloured screen print — reproduced from *and*, journal of art and art education, 10 Swanfield Street, London E2 7DS.

Two pamphlets from

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Ernest Mandel

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Ernest Mandel answers some of the main questions that have arisen since the 'crash of '87'. What were the underlying causes of the crash? Will the crash be followed by the same type of recession that characterised the 1930s? What answers do socialists have to the crisis? Answers to these questions and others are explained in this clearly written and concise work.

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