

Blair shocked into renationalisation 'promise'

LABOUR'S EMPTY PLEDGE ON RAIL

LABOUR leader Tony Blair's hurried pledge last weekend to renationalise the railways if Labour comes to office shows how rattled he is by the campaign to defend Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution.

Only days before he refused point blank to give any guarantee of rail renationalisation. But in any case the 'pledge' is an empty one.

Blair and his acolytes have been shocked by the deep feeling among Labour Party members and supporters for Clause Four, which supposedly commits it to the common owner-

ship of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

This feeling was reflected in the recent Euro-MPs' advert in the 'Guardian' in defence of the clause, and the recent outburst by Ken Coates MEP in the 'Daily Telegraph' in which he

said Blair 'does not begin to understand the mentality of the party which he has been elected to lead'.

Blair immediately hit out at the MEPs and accused them of 'infantile' incompetence.

Diluted

Then Blair gave his 'pledge'. But Labour deputy John Prescott almost immediately diluted its meaning by saying on Monday that the franchise contracts that are part of privatisation will be allowed to continue for their full term. The railways

would not be renationalised by a Labour government until 2002.

This is plenty of time for a Tory government to be re-elected and to cancel the renationalisation — and for the 'pledge' to be completely meaningless. Blair's vacuous 'promise' is seen by many as part of a deal being cooked up with the trade union bureaucracy to push through the change in Labour's constitution.

Blair and the other Labour Party and trade union leaders, such as GMB general union leader John Edmonds who insisted there was no deal he knew

of, deny this — but it makes you think.

Clearly a Blair government would not renationalise without compensation. Proposals being considered by a working party on rail ownership, headed by Prescott, include buying a majority stake in the privatised network — not nationalisation at all!

Besides, as 'The Times' pointed out (16 January), nationalisation with compensation to investors is only possible because rail is small potatoes compared with British Gas, BT, electricity and water. The railways carry only a small proportion of passengers and freight.

With respect to these other industries, Blair and company are wheeling out all the old arguments about 'can the country afford it?' and 'aren't there greater priorities?', etc.

Even with Blair taking the rail renationalisation pledge, can he be trusted? No! Like the Labour governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan in the 1970s, the ruling class in the City will determine policy when it comes to the crunch, which in the 1990s will be sooner rather than later.

Attack

Despite Prime Minister John Major's pathetic comparison in his attack on Blair's so-called renationalisation 'pledge' to the supposed 'successes' of British Airways following privatisation (largely based on its ability to be a commercial bully), rail is unlikely to improve its service without a plan to attract traffic away from the roads and hence reduce pollution. It won't be

done for profit. And this raises the question of what sort of nationalisation?

Between the world wars workers, particularly the miners, fought for the nationalisation of their industries as a way, among other things, of giving them some control over their appallingly dangerous working conditions and pay.

The reality of the 1945 Labour government nationalisations was that huge amounts of compensation were given to the owners of these industries and, in some cases, these same people remained in control. Under no condition were the workers to have any say in how their industries were run.

Despite some improvements in safety, etc., workers continued to toil in dirty, disgusting conditions.

Blair's 'retreat', which is a mere shadow, must not be taken as a victory by those who want to defend the working-class principle of 'common ownership'; some false friends will try to claim it is. It is only the first indication of the possibility of driving these rotten leaders out of the working-class movement.

The fight to defend Clause Four, and to renationalise the mines, the railways, gas, electricity, water and telecommunications, *without compensation*, must continue.

■ A series of articles will appear soon in Workers Press on the fight for Clause Four. The topics are: Why socialism; The origins of Clause Four; Labour and the nationalisation programme after 1945; and, The significance of the fight to defend Clause Four today.

Defend Chechnya

BEFORE the world's television cameras, Boris Yeltsin and his generals are trying to bomb and blast the people of Chechnya into submission. It has taken them six weeks, and hundreds of Russian conscripts' lives, but they don't care how much destruction they cause, nor how many people they slaughter.

In the name of law and order, what they are bringing is barbarism. The British, US and other imperialist governments, each with their own bloody records to defend, and their eyes on the Caucasian oilfields, have been reluctant to criticise Yeltsin. They just hoped he could get it all over quickly.

The war was launched after the European Conference on Security and Co-operation in December had agreed common aims. An International Monetary Fund delegation was in Moscow last week, concerned only lest the cost of the war disrupts Russia's economy, and debt repayments.

Whether as militia fighters, or civilians stopping Russian tank columns, or citizens of Grozny enduring the bombing, ordinary people in Chechnya have shown tremendous heroism. Chechen and ethnic Russian neighbours, suffering alike under the bombs, are being driven to unity as surely as to hatred of the Russian regime.

In Moscow, big demonstrations have opposed the war, and elected deputies demanded the war was stopped. The Mothers of Soldiers Committee has condemned Yeltsin for sending raw untrained conscripts to die in a war they do not want. One woman said her teenage son had never handled a gun before,



his military service having consisted of building dachas for officers. The corpses of young Russians are rotting on the streets of Grozny.

Our comrades in the Socialist Workers Union, Russian section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, has taken part in the Moscow demonstrations, and distributed a manifesto against the war. In London, too, Workers International members joined

Chechens and other Caucasians picketing opposite the Russian embassy (picture above) on 12 January.

But where are the 'big battalions' of the labour movement, and where are the thousands we marched with in demonstrations against the Gulf war, and before that, over Vietnam and Lebanon? Most people will instinctively side with the Chechens in their struggle, and with Russians opposed to this war. Most working people

equally side with the Bosnian people against aggression and ethnic cleansing.

If Labour and trade union leaders prefer to dither behind the Tory government, peace campaigners want to trust war-mongering politicians (and the United Nations), and so-called 'lefts' who usually know everything say they don't know what 'line' to take, it's time for the rank and file to tell them — or relieve them of their responsibilities.

■ See page 6.

**Defend Clause 4!
Defend socialism!
Campaign's open steering
committee meeting
Manchester town hall
Sat. 28 January 1995, 11 am**

Open to all who want to fight for socialism and the retention of Clause Four of the the Labour Party's constitution. Make sure you are delegated by a workers' organisation so that you can vote.
For further details of the campaign and this meeting contact: the NUM, Miners' Offices, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley, Yorkshire S70 2IS.

Workers Press

Defend the state pension!

MILLIONS of elderly people are struggling to survive, depending on state benefits for more than 75 per cent of their income. Half of all pensioners' households are in this position, according to the charity Age Concern in a report, 'Short Change — the effects of low incomes on older people', published this week.

The government says that pensioners' average income has risen by more than half in real terms since it came to office in 1979. But a study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows how this figure has been inflated by about 25 per cent through using what is called the arithmetic mean.

A few people with very large pensions can weight the arithmetic mean upwards — and away from the true experiences of the majority of pensioners. In these circumstances statisticians prefer to use the 'median' — the income level which half the pensioners exceed.

The Joseph Rowntree study says that during 1979-91 the mean rose by 31 per cent and the median by only 21 per cent.

The government, using the arithmetic mean, says pensioners receive on average £129.50 a week. Those dependent on state benefits receive a lot less than that!

The state pension for a single person will go up in April to a measly £58.85, and for a couple it will be £94.10. With income support, which is means tested, these figures become £71.65 and £108.95. And this is only for people who have paid all their National Insurance stamps. The low-paid and unemployed don't pay for these stamps so their pension with income support is reduced.

The Joseph Rowntree study says that those without a pension from their work had an income that fell by 6 per cent during 1979-91.

It's well known that the government is driving towards abolishing state pensions that are not means tested. The aim is to force people to 'provide for themselves', through company and personal pension schemes that profit the vultures of the financial services 'industry'.

With income support and other state benefits set to be slashed in April, this means that the millions of elderly people without a personal pension are to be driven into abject poverty.

These personal pensions have been exposed in many cases to be an expensive fraud, providing less money and benefits than company pensions.

Capitalism is driving society to a condition where there won't be any job security, and long service in a job will be a 'thing of the past' (in most cases you can't take a company pension with you). So people who move jobs — if they can find them — will have to resort to personal pensions.

And, as Robert Maxwell's plundering of the Mirror pension schemes shows, there are a fair few businessmen who aren't averse to dipping their filthy fingers into the pension fund.

* * * * *

DOES a Labour government offer any hope to the elderly?

Labour leader Tony Blair and his supporters have made it clear that they are also in favour of personal pensions and what they call 'targeting' of state benefits to the very needy. By 'targeting' they cover up what they are really calling for: the means-testing of state benefits — including pensions.

Labour policy in government will not be determined by the needs of people — young or old — but by the needs of big business in the City. And in Britain one of the biggest businesses is pension funds.

The blunt fact is that capitalism has no use for retired people. They are no longer a source of the only thing that matters: profit.

For capitalism the best solution would be for people to die on the day they retired. By their attitude to pensioners Blair and company again reveal how they are completely tied to the capitalist system.

Letters

Ashamed of the Labour Party

I AM committed to the fight to retain Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution. I have been a Labour Party member for 24 years and am ashamed and disgusted by the way it has moved further and further away from socialist policies which my parents and grandparents fought so hard to achieve.

As a member of the mining community I am particularly saddened by the right-wing policies of the party and the attitude they have on not renationalising our industries. I certainly didn't join the Labour Party to be told what to do by 'smiling men in Savile Row suits with a red rose in their lapel'.

I want the Labour Party to win the general election, but I also want political change and I want to see the introduction of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Brenda Proctor
Stoke on Trent

Don't waste time on Clause 4

THE WRP is, by taking part in the campaign to defend Clause Four, in danger of putting itself alongside groups like the Militant tendency, the Socialist Workers Party and all the other rag-bag of so-called socialist parties.

Clause Four has not been used by the Labour Party for 50 years and then it was not used properly. Massive compensation was paid to the owners and in some cases they kept control.

You are misleading the working class by having it believe that the Labour Party is a socialist party and that it poses an alternative to the Tories when, of course, we know full well that it is tied to capitalism.

Trotsky said: 'The further the Tory party moves to the right the further Labour will move to the right.' As usual, he is proved correct. They are dropping all pretence of socialism — this is what we must point out to the workers.

In your lead of 7 January you said: 'For [Blair] the Labour Party will have nothing to do with socialism, even in words. He wants to make the Labour Party an openly capitalist party, along the lines of the US Democratic Party. . . .

'But by raising the question of Clause Four Blair has opened up the question: What sort of party does the working class need to defend itself against the

capitalist class and its state? 'The widest campaign in the unions, in the Labour Party, in the working class as a whole, must be launched on two basic points:

■ Defend Clause Four!
■ Force the next Labour government to renationalise . . .'

This is absolute nonsense. The days of using the tactic of involving workers in struggles to change the Labour Party in order to bring them to revolutionary politics are over. The younger generations have already been broken away from the Labour Party.

Tony Blair and his ilk are only interested in getting elected. To do this they have to become openly capitalist and this they are doing.

For Labour to drop Clause Four is the best thing that has happened to Marxist revolutionaries in years. All illusions and pretence of socialism have gone. There is no place for the pretended socialists to hide.

Your editor asks the question: 'What kind of party does the working class need to defend itself against the state?'

Well it doesn't need the Labour Party. It needs a revolutionary Marxist party that will smash the state and lead the workers to power.

Stop misleading the workers into believing Labour can be transformed — it cannot. So stop wasting time calling for the defence of Clause Four and concentrate on showing how bankrupt and traitorous Labour really are.

D. Smith
Sheffield

Speculators and national economies

GEOFF PILLING's article 'Globalisation of capitalism and the crisis of Labourism' (17 December) correctly underlines how much the parasitic, reactionary character of today's capitalism, imperialism, has developed since Lenin's work: 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism'.

Geoff shows in this context the increased role of speculation and parasitism compared with Lenin's epoch. He gives the example of George Soros's powerful betting against sterling in 1992.

He writes, quoting the Labour Party's 'commission on social justice', that 'speculators are so powerful that they have: "effectively created an international market in government policies"'. And he goes on: 'In other words, we are witnessing a rapid return to the 1930s, when the "bankers' ramp" forced governments out of office, including the British Labour government in 1931.'

The introduction to Geoff's

article says that his piece is part of a longer work. Perhaps in other parts of the work Geoff deals with the problem I am raising, but the article as published seems one-sided to me.

It could be understood to mean that because of the unprecedented development of parasitism, of the socialisation of production, multinationals, fast communications by communication networks, new 'financial instruments', etc., world capitalism is able to emancipate itself from national boundaries, from the national bourgeoisie of each imperialist country.

In Lenin's definition of imperialism he also mentioned the fact that in the epoch of imperialism the partition of the world between capitalist powers is completed.

In his polemics against Kautsky, Lenin emphasises that imperialism is characterised by its tendency to annex markets and territories to try to organise a new partition.

From this fundamental tendency flows its nature of violence, reaction and war. This explains the failure of the bourgeois unification of Europe, that the European Union is regularly shaken by internal fights between the main European imperialist countries: Germany, Britain and France.

We can see today that the fight for markets remains a fundamental tendency of imperialism. The speculators are 'only' the rotten expression of its reactionary nature.

Let's see how US imperialism plays its game against the French in Algeria, or against France, Britain and Germany in Bosnia.

Or the trade war between Japan and the US, or the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations.

In these situations it is not the speculators or the multinationals which predominate but the fight of the national bourgeoisie of each imperialist country for a new division of the markets.

The Mexican peso, the Italian lira and the Spanish peseta are currently under attack, but lack of confidence in these currencies is not because of speculation.

It is because of the internal political and economic crisis (governmental crises in Italy and Spain, the fight of the Zapatistas in Mexico); a specific national expression of the world crisis of imperialism; and the resistance of the exploited to the effects of the crisis.

It seems to me that George Soros's speculation against sterling was successful in 1992 because the big banks linked to national interest supported it. It was part of the trade war between European powers, the US, etc., linked to lack of confidence in the Tory government, etc.

Geoff quotes a report from the Labour Party which suggests that today there is a super-

iority of 'the market' over 'individual economies'. Lenin fought against Kautsky's theory of 'super imperialism', which meant a future 'progressive' development of imperialism.

I believe that when reformists and ex-Stalinist leaderships formally 'argue' against international speculators, against the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, when they denounce in words the parasitic character of the world financial market and so forth, they are not innocent.

Their idea is to reintroduce the old Kautskyist theory. They suggest that there are forces which are 'above' their own nationalist imperialist bourgeoisie.

By doing so they prepare a 'new' form of defence of 'their' national bourgeoisie, whom they present as 'victims' of the international speculators.

János Borovi
Paris

Scottish history society

THE Scottish Labour History Society has been functioning for more than 30 years and can truthfully claim to be increasing its influence.

The latest issue of its journal contains a mine of information both historical and contemporary.

A most interesting article is one by International Brigader John Dunlop. He takes to task the well-known writer Laurie Lee, who also went to Spain at that time. Dunlop is critical that it took Lee 54 years to write 'this disappointing record'.

Apparently Lee used his imagination a bit too freely and 'the damaging thing is that his publication will be taken as a true record'.

That grieves me as I enjoyed Laurie Lee's first incursion into writing.

The Scottish Labour History Society, along with the British Universities Industrial Relations Association, are to hold a one-day conference on 'Workers at War: The Labour Movement in World War Two', in the Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow, on Saturday 18 March.

One of the afternoon sessions is to be a 'Veterans Panel', where workers, etc., will recall their wartime experiences. As I was a committed Communist before the war broke out I will make myself available. This should be quite an interesting hour.

A place at the conference can be ensured by sending £2 to: Ms Irene Mavor, Scottish Labour History Society, Department of Scottish History, University of Glasgow, University Gardens, Glasgow G12 8QH.

John P. Mathieson
Glenrothes, Fife

Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

WE URGENTLY need more people to send us some of their hard-earned cash? Workers Press' printing costs are hundreds of pounds — and then there's postage, telephone bills, rent, heating and staff. Figure it out — our £3,000 monthly fund target hardly reflects the real needs of a weekly paper like ours. On top of this there are the costs of producing leaflets both for the WRP and Workers Press and for organising our work. We also financially support comrades under exceedingly difficult conditions, such as in South Africa and Hungary. I think we do a good job but that we need to do better.

One of the barriers to doing better is lack of finance. We are fighting to understand the needs of the working class internationally. Our movement — the Trotskyists — has fought for decades to represent the true interests of our class, but have been to great extent isolated by the lies of the Labour Party and trade union leaders, on top of those of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, which physically tried to wipe out criticism against it by violence and murder.

The Stalinist bureaucracy is shattered but the lies live on. Some calling themselves 'Trotskyist' use the same methods and disrupt the ability of the working class to even defend itself against the attacks of the capitalist rulers let alone to take up a fight for its own interests, which, we believe, ultimately can only be achieved by it 'taking the power'.

We in the WRP are struggling to understand what sort of movement it is that is necessary to take forward the interests of the working class. This is the issue posed to the whole of the class in sharp form when Labour leader Tony Blair attacks Clause Four at the behest of the ruling class. Help us be part of tackling that issue. Send us money or criticism! Mike Cooke

Send money to 'Workers Press', PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

AN APOLOGY!

THERE were some problems with our distribution of Workers Press last week, which in some cases will have arrived three or four days late! This was because in error Red Star parcels delivered the 'artwork', that is the original material from which the printing plates are made, to Newport, Gwent, and not to our printers in Newcastle upon Tyne!

This disrupted our schedules and created a whole series of further difficulties — hence the late arrival of the papers. We know that many readers eagerly await the dropping of our paper on their doormat and apologise that on this occasion we did not meet this expectation. Hopefully it will be some time before this happens again.

COMING SOON

SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY: Hounslow trades council anti-racist march and rally. Assemble 12.45pm, Thornbury Playing Fields, London Road, Isleworth, London. Details: J.R. Patrick, 081-891 4482.



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Huge pay hikes for Camden chiefs

London union councils vote for Clause 4

BY MARY IDE

CHIEF officers at cash-strapped Camden council, north London, are due for unprecedented pay rises from April.

As part of a very generous New Year's present, the Labour-controlled council plans to give rises of between 9 and 15 per cent to about ten of its highest-paid officers.

The chief executive will be getting a 22 per cent rise, taking his salary up to £90,000 a year! The finance director will have his pay boosted by 18 per cent, or £11,300.

Others will be getting rises of between £4,000 and £7,500.

The rises follow advice to Labour councillors by a firm of consultants that the directors and assistant directors are 'falling behind' in their pay.

A letter from the secretary and chair of the two local branches of the UNISON union, Steve West (chair, Camden UNISON general branch) and David Egmore (secretary, Camden UNISON), describes this as a 'local version' of the British Gas scandal.

Unfair

'Like British Gas, the council pursues grotesquely unfair practices towards its employees,' says the letter.

'Since 1992, it has made over 2,000 redundant — some 20 per cent of the workforce — and has sought, with some success, to reduce the pay and working conditions of those who remain.'

Most outrageously of all, council cleaners were persuaded last summer to take a £2-an-hour pay cut, when bidding for their own jobs under compulsory com-

BY LIZ LEICESTER

petitive tendering legislation.

This took their pay down to under £4 an hour and 'saved' the council £210,000 a year — almost exactly the amount of money Camden now plans to spend on funding pay rises for the highest paid.

Disquiet

There is some disquiet among Camden's Labour councillors and some claim that the proposed pay rises were not endorsed by the whole Labour group.

They are demanding a thorough discussion at the next meeting of the Labour group on 23 January.

Four Labour Party branches have passed motions calling on the council leadership to back down on the huge pay increases.

One, from St John's branch, applauded the national party's attack on pay hikes for privatised utility bosses while 'deploring' the council's decision to do the same thing in Camden.

Camden UNISON is calling a demonstration and lobby of the Labour group meeting on 23 January:

Assemble 4.30pm at Kentish Town tube. Lobby of Camden town hall at 6pm.



Demonstration in 1992 against Camden's planned cuts in jobs and services

Public shows its support for Chelmsford bus strikers

BUS CREWS at Chelmsford, Essex, on strike since 18 November 1994 against management plans to cut the number of drivers and increase the length of the working day, are getting more and more support from local people.

The 104 strikers at the Eastern National depot — part of the Badgerline group — are getting support from the company's other bus crews around the country. Campaign committees are being organised to co-ordinate activity.

Eastern National bus com-

pany managers had offered a 4 per cent wage rise in return for an 11 per cent increase in productivity across the whole Eastern National company — but the Chelmsford crews discovered that they had to provide 90 per cent of the productivity increase.

Management toured all the Eastern National garages, telling them that unless they agreed to the package their garage would be closed. In the face of this all the garages except Chelmsford reluctantly accepted the offer. Chelmsford crews,

who had lost 22 jobs since 1992 in productivity deals, refused.

The Transport and General Workers' Union is now running six minibuses in the town, giving free rides to local bus users and explaining the issues in the strike. The response has been thousands of pounds in donations from local people.

The TGWU has launched an appeal fund for the sacked drivers. Send all donations to: Chelmsford Bus Drivers Support Fund, TGWU, 218 Green Lane, London N4 2HB.

Police pay out over Trafalgar Square demo

BY JENNY JONES

A MAN arrested and assaulted by the police during the poll-tax demonstration in Trafalgar Square, London, in 1990 was awarded £30,000 in damages by the High Court last week.

Mr Hanney had been rugby tackled by two police officers, beaten, and then charged with affray. Luckily there had been an independent witness to the events.

Hanney was left with an injury to his arm and a complaint was made to the so-called Police Complaints Authority, which, having looked at the case, said that the police involved should be 'strictly admonished for applying a painful armlock'!

Hanney then sued the police for false imprisonment, assault and battery and malicious prosecution.

In the High Court the police commissioner denied liability but was forced to pay the damages plus Hanney's legal costs.

Tory backers back out

YET another transnational funder of the Tories has deserted the party. United Biscuits, once the Tory party's biggest financial donor, has decided to cut its contributions.

This follows other companies which have said that because of the international nature of their operations they can no longer justify funding a domestic political party.

The Tories are currently in debt to the tune of £17 million.

George Angus

Stop NUT leaders selling out!

JILL OXLEY comments on the recent U-turn by the National Union of Teachers' leadership on testing in schools

MEMBERS of the largest teachers' union, the National Union of Teachers (NUT), are again being balloted on their two-year boycott of the government-imposed Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) for all seven-, 11- and 14-year-olds. Now, however, the union's executive is calling for a vote to end the boycott.

In December Doug McAvoy, NUT general secretary, said: 'Our members have always put their pupils first — particularly when boycotting unsound tests!' Following the visit of a group of right-wing members of the NUT's executive to the education secretary, Gillian Shephard, McAvoy then said: 'I hope that members will now see the benefits of co-operating with the testing arrangements.'

The NUT leadership claims that Shephard has made substantial concessions by promising there will be no 1995 league tables of 11-year-olds' test results, and that the impact of the

tests on the curriculum and teachers' workloads will be reviewed. Shephard however told the press that she made no concessions and there is nothing in writing!

Many teachers and parents see testing 11-year-olds as the reintroduction of selection or the 'eleven plus'. League tables, seen by the Parents' Anti-SATs Campaign as 'the lynchpin of Tory education policy', are supposed to help parents judge local schools' performance and choose accordingly. These tables, based on the crude SATs results, will divert resources to 'successful' schools and away from 'failing' schools rather than vice versa.

The Labour Party's plan to introduce a 'value-added' index alongside the league tables, supposedly to show how much schools have added to their pupils' improvement, is a cover for their support for tables in principle.

Many parents and teachers

feel the tests, if they are to have any value, must be diagnostic and part of a wider assessment of each child. SATs are expensive, pressure pupils and teachers, divert attention from curricula, create unnecessary work for teachers, and are clearly not intended for diagnosing children's educational needs.

The right-wing NUT leadership had to be forced into supporting a boycott at their 1993 conference. They have been looking to drop the boycott ever since.

Only now, following the reelection of McAvoy over the left-winger Mary Hufford, alongside the election of right-winger Steve Sinnott as deputy general secretary, does the executive feel safe in disregarding the views of the majority of members. In a questionnaire circulated in November an overwhelming majority voted to continue the boycott.

How can the leadership claim concessions which Shephard says she did not make?

First, they are faced with the possibility of prosecution if the boycott continues. Legally

teachers are not allowed to boycott the tests on 'political grounds' (i.e. because they are educationally unsound rather than create too much work). The apparent workload concessions enabled the other main teachers' union, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, to drop the boycott.

Secondly, this leadership has, since the abolition of teachers' negotiating rights, been unable to 'negotiate' and thus justify its existence.

Thirdly, and most importantly, it does not want to confront the Labour Party, as a newly-elected government, with an ongoing boycott.

Most NUT members are primary school teachers. These have led the boycott but they are also the most isolated. They may respond to the leadership's call despite seeing the need to continue the boycott.

The ballot deadline is 19 January. The executive meets on 25 January to discuss the result. A London-wide lobby of the meeting is being organised by the STA (Socialist Teachers' Alliance) and the CDFU (Campaign for a Democratic Fight-

ing Union), the two main left caucuses in the NUT.

The Parents' Anti-SATs Campaign is organising for parents to disapply their children from the tests should the boycott continue.

The most important question is how to establish unity between parents and teachers to defeat the government's attempts to impose these tests on schools nationwide.

For more information about the Parents' Anti-SATs Campaign contact Lorna Davies on 081-318 6215.

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Inside left

Opportunity knocks

WHAT'S the great idea that Labour's 'modernisers' want to put in place of socialism and Clause Four of the party's constitution? 'Opportunity' and 'fairness' are recurring buzz-words in sound-bites and articles by party leaders. This they call 'modern'?

'Fair', 'free' competition and the 'freer open to talents' were aims of the bourgeoisie in their struggle against feudalism. But bourgeois individual freedom spelled wage-slavery for the mass of dispossessed workers created by capitalism. This reality modern socialists have born.

Those who deride Marx's '19th-century socialism' want to return us to 18th-century *laissez-faire* capitalism, dragging Labour back to Clause Four days when respectable trade union leaders doffed their caps to the Liberals.

Big capitalist monopolies and banks move capital freely around the globe, deciding whether millions of people live or die. Giving 'opportunity' to a few individuals and 'room at the top' would only nationalise capitalism, leaving millions at the bottom increasingly unable to find even a room.

Labour's leaders are opportunists who promise that a few of us, or our children, might rise out of our class. In doing this they seek to maintain the rotten capitalist system. We socialists aim to rise with our class, to create a better society.

Save them again!

THE bid to remove Clause Four is backed from the 'Independent's' deputy editor, Martin Jacques. 'Privatisation is not only reversible, for the most part it's a thing', he told Radio 4's 'Today' programme (14 January). Jacques did to edit the Communist Party journal, 'Marxism Today'.

Noting 'another ex-Communist', David Aaronovitch, was joining the 'independent' as chief leader-writer, 'Private Eye' (16 December) said Jacques's 'sidekick' there is Charlie Leadbeater. I once heard Labour Party members discussing a talk by Leadbeater. 'He's a Communist'?' asked one old hand incredulously. 'He describes changes under Thatcher the way Thatcher herself would,' commented another Labourite.

Jacques and co. were never Communists, but Stalinists. We always said they'd go far. Before they screw Labour as they did the Communist Party, they should be allowed to go farther still, and take their Tory-sniffing snouts out of the Labour movement's affairs.

Lead the words!

THE good thing that should come of the Clause Four issue is simple: people discussing basic ideas. But though the disputed Clause Four, Clause Four (to be precise), has been a Labour Party membership card for so long, some of the de-claratory sounds as though people have never read it.

In the November-December issue of 'Chartist', Pete Smith complains the clause made 'public ownership' and 'nationalisation' the main aims of the Labour Party and excluded unions to the exclusion of other ideas. Talking about 'industrial relations' problems in the post-1945 nationalised industries, he accuses their subordination to capitalism.

The word 'nationalisation' does not occur in Clause Four. Common ownership, which it does speak of, can take various forms. It contains a higher concept than mere state ownership. But 'popular administration and control' is hardly a description of the bureaucratic boards that were set up after the war.

Charlie Pottins

The Labour Party and the crisis of British capitalism

IT IS clear, despite shrill cries to the contrary, that the 'Thatcher experiment' — for all its 'monetarism' and 'supply-side economics', its battery of anti-union laws and its attempts to savagely cut back state spending — has singularly failed to arrest the decline of British capitalism.

Far from having found their way to an economic nirvana, the Tories have superintended the continuing decline of British capital throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In some respects it has proceeded at an accelerated rate.

Emerging from World War II in a greatly-weakened state, having been forced to liquidate a great slice of its foreign assets to finance the war against Germany, Britain has declined uninterruptedly over the last half-century or so.

Whole industries — steel, shipbuilding, marine engineering, coal mining, and others — have collapsed or are in a parlous state. This has led to a sharply increased struggle to extract surplus value from the workers in the industries that remain. This, in turn, has meant the greater disciplining of workers, such as attacks on their trade union rights.

A point has been reached where the relative decline of British capitalism — which can be traced back

Why have the Labour Party leaders swung so sharply to the right? Why do they want to dump Clause Four of the party's constitution, which calls for common ownership of the means of production? In this article, part of a longer study of the developments in post-war capitalism, GEOFF PILLING looks at the background to these questions

to the last quarter of the 19th century — now threatens to become an absolute one.

What stuttering 'revival' that did occur in 1994 in Britain was almost entirely the result of the sharp sterling devaluation following the forced exit from the European Monetary System in 1992.

That humiliating ejection from the exchange-rate mechanism (ERM) was itself an indication of the parlous state of British capital; long ago unable to 'look the dollar in the face', sterling was no longer able to maintain parity with the Deutschmark or the French franc.

Divisions in the British ruling class had made entry into the ERM impossible in 1985. But from 1987 the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, began the policy of shadowing the German currency as the best available means of controlling inflation.

The policy collapsed when, because of the crisis in the German

economy brought about by the attempt to assimilate east Germany, German interest rates began to rise sharply. Britain, having joined the ERM, was forced out and a general crisis in the European currency system rapidly ensued.

The lira soon followed sterling and was devalued heavily, to be quickly followed by the Portuguese and Irish currencies. Norway and Sweden were obliged to abandon their policy of pegging their currencies to the D-Mark.

But even the respite provided by that sterling devaluation seems likely to be of the shortest duration. Inflationary pressures are already starting to build up again, indicating that the problem of 'stagflation' — the combination of heavy unemployment with inflation — remains.

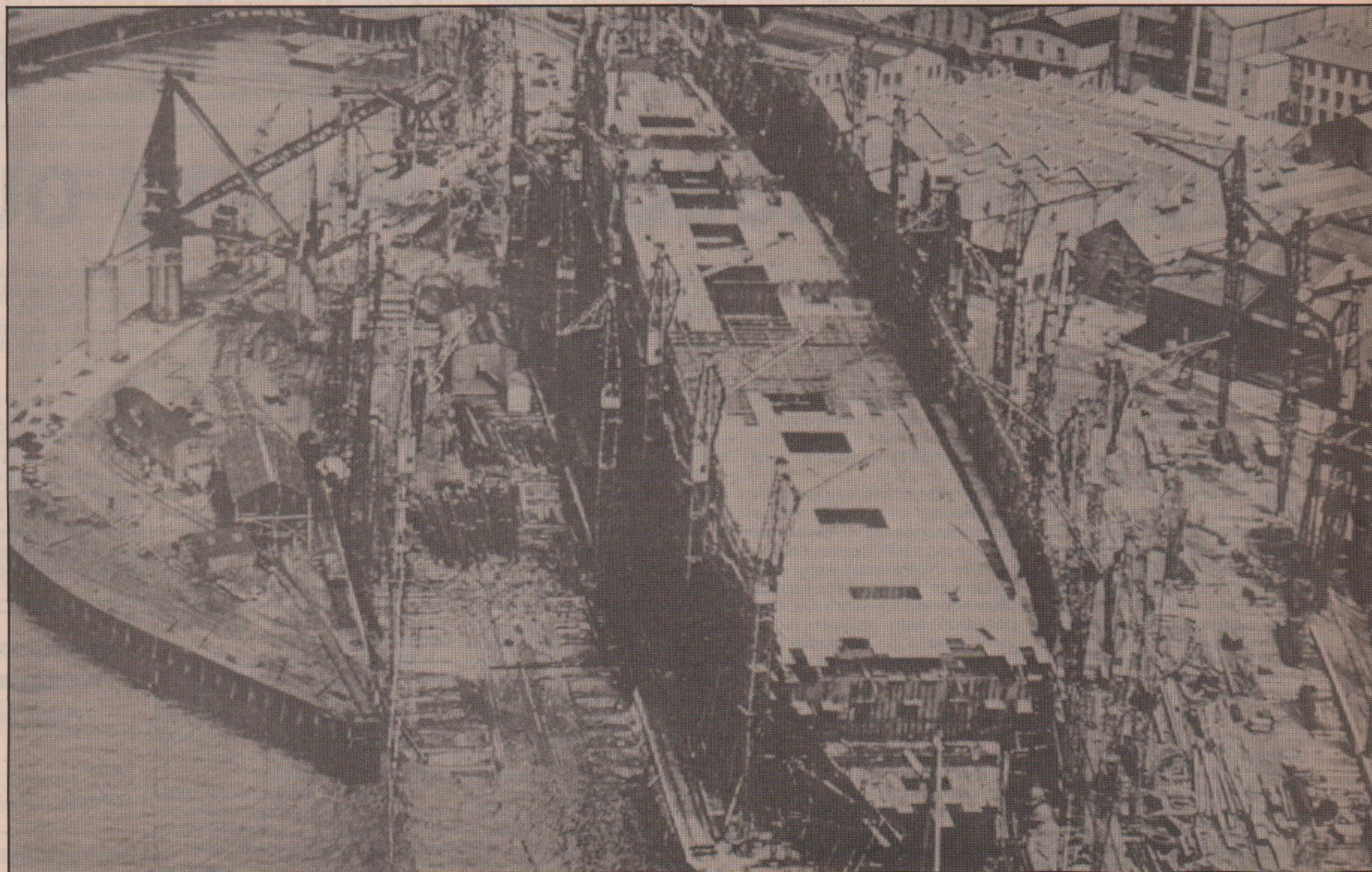
In any case, sterling's devaluation always invites retaliatory actions from the rest of Europe. It raises the spectre of the sort of

'devaluation cycle' that in the 1930s expressed the desperate struggle amongst the major capitalist powers for a larger slice of a stagnant or shrinking world market following the 1929 Wall Street crash.

Not unexpectedly, the leaders of the Labour Party blame Britain's continued economic decline and crisis on the 'wrong' policies used by the Tories during their long period of office. They complain in particular about the privileged role afforded the City of London, to which they attribute the collapse of large swathes of manufacturing industry.

But there is no evidence that the crisis of British capitalism over the post-war period could have been tackled on the basis of different 'policies'. Indeed, one of the features that has emerged with ever-greater clarity during the period since 1945 is the growing inability of the British ruling class to pursue an 'independent' economic policy on the world arena, under conditions of the ever-increasing globalisation of capitalism.¹

The very opposite of the position advanced by the Labour leaders is in fact the case: the sickness of British capital — the country that was the world's first industrial capitalist power — is a reflection of the malaise of capitalism as a



Clydebank shipyards in the 1930s — during the 1980s and 1990s the decline of British capitalism has accelerated and most shipyards have closed

Party isis italism



The 1992-93 fight against pit closures — nationalised after 1945, the Labour Party leaders want to ditch Clause Four

whole as it nears the end of the 20th century.

The increasingly parasitic nature of the British ruling class, the fact that it is more and more dominated by speculation and dubious money-dealing if not straight fraud, is a graphic expression of the character of capitalism as a whole in the epoch of imperialism.

It is not, as the Labour reformists pretend, something 'exceptional' to be put right by sagacious policies. Just as it did in the last century, so today British capital holds up a mirror to the rest of the world.

The search for a policy that would allow the British ruling class to pursue its 'own' interests was one of the economist John Maynard Keynes's chief preoccupations in the 1920s and 1930s. This was the source of his opposition to sterling's return to the gold standard in 1925. (Under this sterling exchanged for a fixed quantity of gold — effectively fixing the exchange rate.) He believed it would severely restrict the ability of British capitalism to pursue an economic and financial policy independent of US capital, now dominant in world economy.

Likewise, as World War II drew to a close it was Keynes who fought for a set of post-war monetary arrangements which would, he fondly hoped, free a severely debilitated British capitalism from the pressures of the world market.

Needless to say in the ensuing struggle with the representatives of US imperialism it was Keynes's plan that lost out. The US imposed its own monetary system on the rest of the world, just as an economically dominant British imperialism had done in the previous century via the mechanisms of the gold standard.²

'Welfare capitalism'

IT WAS Keynes who provided the ideological basis for reformism in post-war Britain. Throughout the 1960s, the claim that 'Keynes had put paid to Marxism' was a commonplace amongst Labour's 'theoreticians', such as C.A.R. Crosland.³

They claimed that: thanks to the techniques of Keynesian 'demand management' the scourge of mass unemployment could be eliminated; given sufficient spending on welfare services the chronic poverty suffered by millions in the 1930s would be a thing of the past; with a policy of income redistribution the worst inequalities of income could be eradicated.

In short, the class struggle could be overcome in this new 'welfare capitalism' to which the Labour and trade union leaders were wedded.

These fond ideas can be put into some perspective when we consider that, as the century draws to a

close, the leaders of the Labour Party are busily severing their last links with Keynesianism.

Labour is no longer the party of high taxation and high spending, pleads Tony Blair. These leaders now pledge their support for that strange animal, 'the social market economy'.

The 'Financial Times' (28 September 1994) commented approvingly on 'the new model Labour Party': 'It has jettisoned much cumbersome baggage. Gone is the commitment to demand expansion as a remedy for unemployment. Gone is the simplistic commitment to taxing and spending.

In their place come recognition of the constraints imposed by the global economy and a willingness to build on the improvements in the macro-economic policy framework of the past two years.'

The roots of this somewhat undignified abandonment of Keynesianism are not hard to seek. In the first place, Keynesian-style spending on welfare benefits was possible only to the extent that world capitalism continued to expand at a sufficient rate.

Limited concessions

WHILE US imperialism was able to regulate an inflationary expansion of world economy after 1945, it was possible, within limits, for the ruling class in countries such as Britain, west Germany, Sweden and France to make certain concessions to the middle class and sections of the working class.

Once the US was unable to sustain this role — the collapse of the Bretton Woods post-war monetary arrangements in the late 1960s and early 1970s indicated when that point was reached — then Keynesianism became untenable.

Secondly, the operation of a traditional Keynesian policy became increasingly untenable given the 'globalisation' of finance which occurred so rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s.

The collapse of Bretton Woods and with it the abandonment of fixed exchange rates after 1971, the growing international ('Eurodollar') markets in bank credit and bonds, and the expanding operations of multinational banks made it impossible for the Thatcher governments to regulate the domestic money supply, as the doctrine of 'monetarism' demanded.

Indeed Thatcher's 'deregulation' of the financial markets stood in opposition to another of her key policies: strict control of the money supply. Any effort to regulate the supply of money and credit within Britain could easily be overcome by the importation of credit from abroad.

And in any case, attempts by the Bank of England to curtail the activities of the banks operating in London would have weakened the

competitiveness of the City against foreign financial centres.⁴

The forces at work had revealed themselves in the aftermath of the demise of Bretton Woods. When Harold Wilson's Labour government assumed office in 1974 it was faced with rising unemployment. It attempted a Keynesian-style reflation of the economy, using its 'new industrial strategy' based on bodies such as the grandiosely named National Enterprise Board to regenerate British industry.⁵

Money was poured into industry and grants for 'regional development' increased sharply. This did nothing to improve the competitiveness of British firms in the world market. But it did contribute to a sharp increase in the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement, which went up from the equivalent of 6.5 per cent of gross domestic product in 1973 to 11.0 per cent of GDP in 1975.

City strike

FACED with a severe depreciation of sterling, the Wilson experiment soon came to a halt: the City of London in effect went on strike, refusing to finance the government's borrowing needs, and the International Monetary Fund made clear to the government that any loans made to Britain were dependent on severe cutbacks in welfare spending.

The Labour leaders duly obliged. In July 1976 a package of cuts was made and the government announced that, as part of the attempt to curb inflationary pressures, targets for the growth in the money supply would be implemented. Thus did the Labour leaders prepare the way for the Tories after 1979 to begin a systematic dismantling of the 'welfare state'.

It was then that the 'counter-revolution' against Keynesianism got under way and the doctrine of monetarism, associated particularly with Milton Friedman, replaced the old, now discredited, orthodoxy.

It is the same forces that now oblige the Labour leaders to explicitly ditch any adherence to Clause

Four. Although this clause had little to do with socialism (it could correctly be called a reflection of state capitalism), in the minds of many workers this measure is associated with socialism.

At least in theory, between the two world wars the social democrats still stood for the social ownership of the means of production, that is to say the abolition of the capitalist system.

The social democrats simply claimed that this could be achieved gradually within the framework of existing institutions. Things have changed dramatically since the war, with the leaders of the Labour Party merely the latest 'reformists' to abandon in words such a goal.⁶

But this opens up a crisis for the working class, marks a turning-point in its development. For the last 90 years or so the majority of workers have seen the Labour Party as the instrument through which they could realise their political aims.

By keeping their unions strong and winning concessions from the employers, the working class could periodically elect a Labour government that would legislate in the interests of the workers.

This period is now over. It is over because a point has been reached in the global crisis of capitalism where no further concessions can be made to the working class. This is true in the advanced countries and even more so in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Notes

1. In this connection it should be stressed that the expansion of British capitalism after the war had nothing to do with the successful application of Keynesian policies by British governments. It was US imperialism with its 'global Keynesianism' of money and debt expansion that provided the conditions for the relative stability of British capitalism. This is now recognised by the more intelligent bourgeois commentators.

2. For a detailed defence of this position see Ellen Meiksins Wood 'The Pristine Culture of Capitalism', Verso, 1991.

3. It is interesting to compare what people such as Crosland were saying in the mid-1960s with the positions of the current Labour leadership. Crosland said the following: 'The two remaining aspirations — the concern with social welfare, and the desire for an equal and classless society — still have a perfectly clear relevance.'

'The first implies an acceptance of collective responsibility and an extremely high priority for the relief of social distress or misfortune, in contrast to the much lower priority it would receive in a "free" economy guided mainly by individualistic philosophy.'

'This is the contemporary version of the traditional welfare and social-service philosophy of the Labour movement, and of the instinct to side automatically with the less fortunate and those in need' (C.A. R. Crosland 'The Future of Socialism', Jonathan Cape, 1964, p.76).

Today, the Borrie Report issued by Labour's 'social justice committee' indicates, through its stress on 'individual responsibility' and its rejection of the old 'collectivism', how far the Labour leaders have shifted to the right, itself an expression of the depth of capitalism's crisis.

4. For a discussion of these matters see Jerry Coakley and Laurence Harris 'Financial Globalisation and Deregulation', in Jonathan Michie (ed.) 'The Economic Legacy 1979-1992', Academic Press, 1992. The authors argue that although Thatcher aimed to strengthen the position of the City, even if this involved the further decline of British industry, this aim was not achieved during her years of office.

5. The rise in unemployment from 2.6 per cent in 1974 to 6.2 per cent in 1977 was far worse than anything experienced since the 1930s; in addition this was combined with unprecedented rates of inflation which reached 26 per cent in 1975.

Again these changes were due not principally to domestic factors but to changes in world economy. Thus from 1951 until 1973 Britain benefited from an expanding international economy and stable world prices, whereas after 1973 it was hit by a world recession and inflationary pressures arising from sharply rising commodity prices, especially the price of oil.

6. For a discussion of the meaning to be attached to the term 'reformist' in the light of these sort of factors see Daniel Singer 'Europe's Crisis', in 'Monthly Review', July-August 1994.

German retail squeeze

BY BOB ARCHER

GOOD NEWS from the German economy: the advertising industry's turnover in 1994 was up 3 per cent on the previous year!

Georg Baum, president of the Association of German Advertising Agencies, said last week he expected growth of between 5 and 8 per cent in 1995, and promised new jobs would be created.

On a less enthusiastic note, some commentators noted firms would need to spend more on advertising. The public is squeezed between higher taxes to finance economic reconstruction in the 'new' eastern German provinces and higher health insurance charges.

Competition to grab shares in a declining retail market has increased spending on publicity. But still the much-trumpeted economic recovery has had no impact on retail sales.

The Federal Statistical Office reports that retail turnover fell by 2 per cent in real terms in 1994, repeating 1993's dismal performance.

Textiles, clothes, leather goods and shoes showed the worst falls — 5 per cent in real terms up to November 1994.

Fitted furniture businesses reported a drop of 1 per cent, food retailers 2 per cent and electrical goods shops 3 per cent.

Car sales were up 1 per cent. Pharmaceutical sales rose by 5 per cent.

The government is determined not to allow its own indebtedness to grow, and claims to have limited its 1994 budget deficit to 50 billion Deutschmarks, 19.1 billion less than anticipated.

Partly this reflects international pressures. More German government borrowing would increase interest rates worldwide.

Another major concern of German government is to avoid domestic inflation.

Instead the Kohl administration seems to have levied the necessary money direct from consumers.

Claims

Claims that the worst of the problems caused by hasty reunification with east Germany are over seem a little sick at the moment.

At the end of 1994 the government made great play of winding up the Treuhand, the state body set up to administer and privatise the old state-owned industries in the former Stalinist-controlled east German state.

Fourteen thousands firms in existence in east Germany in 1990 have been privatised. A quarter have simply been put into liquidation.

Many claim that the Treuhand wrecked viable eastern industries and was simply a gravy train for unemployed western executives and spivs.

The Treuhand handed its tasks over to the Federal Institute for Special Reunification



The government privatisation agency, the Treuhand, closed down many firms in east Germany, sparking workers' protests

Tasks, with the implication that there was just a little tidying up to do.

Now that body, which employs 2,300 people, has a budget of up to 5 billion D-Marks. It has a four-year programme of work and 30,000 privatisation contracts to supervise and process.

It is also responsible for any outstanding legal obligations of the privatised firms.

The kind of market economy that is developing in the former DDR is startlingly illustrated by two news items last week.

Hans-Olaf Henkel, president of the German employers' federation, has called for aid to the east to be concentrated on facilities to produce goods there. He condemned the huge sums spent on office blocks and 'consumer temples', and said that only a healthy industrial base could ensure higher incomes.

Huge

He told industrialists in Berlin that a firm date needed to be set for ending the 'solidarity supplement', the huge tax increase which goes to pay for reconstruction.

He called for the supplement to be halved by 1997 and ended within the life of this government. He added that medium-

sized firms were particularly hit.

Elsewhere savers who had put their money into the bankrupt IMFO investment company were told they would receive only 3 per cent of the sums owed them.

The firm had promised high rates of return to investors, many of whom live in the former DDR. The managing director has been in prison since last June. The receiver suspects little of the money was actually invested.

Even where money was invested last year, it made little profit. German equities fell in value by an average 5.7 per cent, while fixed-interest securities fell by 3.5 per cent. Those who dabbled on the international bond market made losses of

up to 17 per cent. Only open property funds rose in value, by an average of 5.1 per cent.

Fallen

However, office property values have fallen by up to 30 per cent, and the price collapse since 1993 has badly affected closed property funds.

The 700,000 square metres of empty office space in the financial capital, Frankfurt, mock hopes of an upswing when figures for the second half of 1994 are published.

As in Britain, while pundits talk of recovery there is little evidence of it at street level, especially for the 5,500 employees of Deutsche Telekom who are waiting for their redundancy notices.

Aussies oppose US health racket

FROM NICK BAILEY
IN AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIANS concerned about what's happening to their health services are opposing a big profit-making US company taking over hospitals. They point out National Medical Enterprises (NME) has faced serious corruption and fraud charges in the United States, where former patients alleged they were kept in psychiatric hospitals so money could be taken from their insurance.

NME's subsidiary Australian Medical Enterprises owns several Australian hospitals and plans to open a new private hospital in the grounds of St George public hospital, Sydney.

One of NME's psychiatric hospitals in San Antonio, Texas, was fined \$2 million in November after pleading guilty to making false claims. In another case last June, NME had to pay \$379 million penalties for illegal conduct in hospitals in New Jersey and other states.

The company pleaded guilty to making illegal payments to induce doctors to refer Medicare and Medicaid patients to NME hospitals for psychiatric and substance abuse treatment. It was also accused of making illegal payments to induce doctors to unnecessarily prolong the stay of patients.

Payments

The 'Los Angeles Times' (3 June 1994) reported that the FBI was investigating alleged kickbacks to West Coast Spine Institute doctors, such as low rents or payments for office overheads, to persuade them to perform surgeries at an NME hospital. In Dallas, former NME regional vice-president Peter Alexis pleaded guilty to arranging up to \$40 million of payments to gain patient referrals. There have also been in-

dictments of company officials in Kansas and Missouri.

'In addition, NME over the past year has settled dozens of civil lawsuits brought by insurance companies and individuals who said they were defrauded by the company's psychiatric hospitals,' says a report in the 'Friends of Prince Henry Hospital' bulletin, published in Little Bay, New South Wales. 'Some people said they were held against their will so that the company could collect fees from their insurance companies.'

NME bought into Markalinga, a company that owned four hospitals in Western Australia, in 1991. The Australian company, which became Australian Medical Enterprises, had been strapped for cash, the bulletin says, and welcomed US business expertise along with investment, agreeing to let NME appoint directors.

In 1992, AME was granted licences to run seven private hospitals it had bought in New South Wales. Objections referring to NME's record in the United States were dismissed by the New South Wales Health Department because, it said, AME was an Australian company.

Now the company wants to take over Hanley Moir, which operates pathology services, and is believed to be lobbying federal politicians in Canberra for permission to go ahead.

There have already been allegations of 'over-servicing' in Australia relating to pathology services. In the United States, doctors ordered pathology investigations at NME hospitals, while having a financial interest in the services.

In Queensland and Victoria, AME pulled out of deals to take over hospitals after the authorities had been presented with information about NME practices in America. One of these deals, to take over Greenslopes Repatriation hospital in Bris-

bane, previously run by the Veteran Affairs Department, was being assisted by the Australian Industry Development Corporation with taxpayers money.

The New South Wales government has decided to let AME go ahead with building a 214-bed private hospital in the grounds of St George public hospital, and invited private-sector involvement in Port Macquarie, Hawkesbury and Prince Henry hospitals.

Privatisation

The 'Friends of Prince Henry Hospital' bulletin says: 'This is nothing more than the piece-meal privatisation of our public-health system and shows the government's real intentions, which are to establish private hospital/clinics in every major public hospital in NSW as a prelude to privatisation.'

NME's opponents say the inquiry into AME's licence application, under a retired judge appointed by New South Wales health minister Ron Phillips, was not held in public, nor were public submissions called for. But New South Wales health department officials submitted evidence about NME's fraud cases in the United States, and about the death of an Australian citizen in a Singapore hospital run by the company. The director of that hospital is now chief executive officer of Australian Medical Enterprises.

The health department said NME and AME had been dishonest in its dealings concerning the application.

The Friends of Prince Henry Hospital have demanded to know why health minister Phillips ignored the health department officers' advice that AME was 'not fit and proper' to run hospitals in New South Wales. They have called for a full public investigation into the running of health provision in New South Wales.



The celebration of German reunification expressed hopes that have been cruelly dashed

Nigeria: Shell should be in dock!

NIGERIAN author Ken Saro-Wiwa went on trial last week before a military-run tribunal that could sentence him to death if convicted. The writer, who has become a voice for the Ogoni people of south-eastern Nigeria, is accused together with another Ogoni leader, Ledum Mittee, of responsibility for mob murder.

But opponents of the Nigerian military dictatorship blame the army, and the Shell petroleum company which it was protecting, for violence and killings in Ogoniland.

Up to 1,800 people were killed, and Ogoni villages destroyed, in a military crackdown after Ogoni people had protested exploitation and pollution by Shell.

The Ogonis say while oil has provided huge profits for Shell, and 95 per cent of Nigeria's fore-

ign exchange, all they have got is pollution and ruined farmland. Oil waste has poisoned water supplies and fishing, and gas flare-offs have been carried out near people's homes.

After huge demonstrations two years ago, Shell Nigeria suspended production and withdrew staff from Ogoniland, blaming intimidation.

Now a leaked memo from Major P. Okuntimo, who was in charge of internal security in the Rivers State, shows a 'ruthless military operation' was planned, for which provocations including sabotage and murder would pave the way.

The memo also recommended that the oil companies working in the area should pay the military for their protection.

The secret plan was dated 12 May 1993.

Within ten days of this, four Ogoni tribal leaders were burnt to death in a car, political meetings were broken up, and Ogoni villages were being destroyed by the army.

'This memo exposes the unholy alliance between the oil companies in Ogoniland and the military,' says Ken Saro-

Wiwa's son. 'We are calling for . . . the real killers of the Ogoni leaders to be brought to justice.'

On 4 January, at church services and dances commemorating Ogoni Day, and the big demonstrations two years ago, a defiant message from Saro-Wiwa smuggled out of the military camp where he was being held, said his people would 'dance oppression and injustice

to death; dance the end of Shell's ecological war of 30 years'.

'As the power of our truth finds wings and spreads over Nigeria, the oppressors shall flee . . . and a new, restructured Nigeria emerge, wherein every ethnic group shall be allowed to develop at its own pace, using its intellectual and material resources. Ogoni is the plain of hope.'

Support Sudanese freedom struggle! Trades unionists meet in London

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

SUDANESE trades unionists in exile abroad are meeting in London this weekend to organise support and solidarity with the underground trades unions fighting for democratic rights and freedom in Sudan.

Thousands of trade unionists have been victimised for their views by the reactionary National Islamic Front regime in Sudan. Leaders of doctors and teachers have been murdered, leading trades unionists thrown in jail, and union funds confiscated. The same regime, while posing as a defender of Islam against the West to get Iranian money, enjoys imperialist backing, most recently from France, to wage a war of extermination against African people in the south.

Emerging during the fight against colonial rule, the Sudanese trades unions have always had a proud place in the front ranks of the struggle for democratic rights and independence. In 1964 the professional unions were part of the leadership of the 21 October revolution which overthrew the military regime of General Abboud.

In 1969 General Nemeiri took power, and in 1971, under pretext of crushing a communist coup, executed leading left-wingers. Shafei Ahmed el Sheikh, a former railway worker and founder and secretary-general of a trade union federation, was hanged after a secret trial on undisclosed charges.

In March-April 1985, the Trade Union Alliance took a leading part in organising the overthrow of Nemeiri's regime, and forming a government

which attempted to end the civil war in the south of the country. The unions also expanded their membership and branches, and worked to improve conditions.

The Sudanese Federation of Workers' Trade Unions, the Employees' Trade Union Federation, the Sudanese Professionals and Technicians Trade Unions Federation, the General Union of Teachers and the Federation of Peasant Unions, established a Co-ordination Council.

Then on 30 June 1989, the National Islamic Front overthrew the elected government and began a campaign of repression. Arbitrary dismissals, detention without trial and torture became the order of the day for anyone suspected of opposing them. Thousands of people were forcibly resettled, and war launched against minority peoples and religious communities in the west and south.

Dissolved

All trades unions were dissolved by the junta, which appointed its own steering committees and confiscated union funds. Dr Ali Fadl of the Sudan Doctors' Union, Abdel Moniem Salman of the Teachers' Union, and Abu Baker Rasikh of the Engineers' Union were among trades unionists murdered. Some 30,000 government employees were sacked for their trade union, political or ideological stands.

Despite this savage repression, the organisers of Saturday's conference, the Sudanese Trade Unions Alliance (STUA), say clandestine working-class resistance continues. The STUA is launching a co-ordination office to help trades unionists in Sudan regain democracy and basic trade union rights.

Arab towns turn out against traitors

PALESTINIAN Arabs living in the state of Israel are protesting against an obnoxious new element being dumped in their towns — Palestinian collaborators whom the Israeli government has brought out of the occupied territories.

In Tira, where some 20 collaborators have been placed, local residents marched with banners saying: 'You are a threat to our people' and 'You should be thrown into the dustbin of history' (see picture).

The collaborators, who helped the Israeli army and secret police against their own people, are seen as the dregs of Palestinian society. They are drug traffickers, pimps, gangsters and psychopaths — all that the Israeli state could recruit.

After the Oslo agreement, and setting up of a Palestinian National Authority in Gaza and Jericho, the redundant collaborators fear they won't be protected from reprisals.

The displaced scum has started to wash up in Arab towns like Tira, Nazareth, Acre and Jaffa, with new Israeli identity cards, guns, collaborator cards giving them police immunity, and state benefits for their families. The right-wing mayor of



Demonstration in Tira against the settling of collaborators in the city

the Israeli town of Ramat Gan says Arab local councils that refuse services to the collaborators should be denied funds. So why aren't these friends of Israel found homes in Ramat Gan, or Tel Aviv?

'The collaborators are morally degenerate,' says Nazareth's deputy mayor Suhel Diab. 'Their habits vary from trying to pull women off

the streets to work, to assaulting them, and using their flats for selling sex.'

Some had been giving drugs to teenagers, and attempted to force young girls to work for them.

When local young people clash with the collaborators, Israeli police side with the latter.

People suspect the Israeli

government is not just rewarding the collaborators for past services, but keeping them for further work.

In Nazareth several Communist Party members were arrested after interrogating alleged collaborators suspected of infiltrating their party.

Picture and story from 'Challenge/Sanaye', POB 32107, Jerusalem 91320

FBI out to frame Malcolm X's daughter

THE United States government is trying to frame Qubilah Shabazz, the 34-year-old daughter of murdered black leader Malcolm X, accusing her of plotting the revenge killing of one of her father's political enemies, black Muslim nationalist Louis Farrakhan.

Acting on information from an agent-provocateur working for the Federal Bureau of Inves-

tigation (FBI), Minneapolis US Attorney David Lillehaug has charged Qubilah with attempting to hire a hitman to kill Farrakhan, and moving to Minneapolis to make downpayment.

Malcolm X — or El Haji Malik el Shabazz — was murdered on 21 February 1965 at a rally in New York city. At the time he had broken with the leadership of the Nation of Islam, without losing any of his militancy.

Malcolm X condemned US imperialism's role in Africa and south-east Asia, as well as its racism at home. A month before he was killed he told the US journal 'Young Socialist' that capitalism could not survive, and that bloody struggles were coming in America.

The murder of Malcolm X was a professional job by a five-man team. One man distracted bodyguards while another blasted the black leader's heart with a shotgun. The killers then shot him again with shotgun and pistols. His wife Betty Shabazz had thrown herself across her children to shield them, but her eldest daughter Attallah says she saw the killers. Qubilah, who was four years old, may have done too.

Three men were jailed for the killing, but there are doubts about the guilt of two of them, as well as dissatisfaction that the whole truth has never come out.

The white capitalist establishment, and its protector, the FBI, targeted black organisations and militants, especially those seen as threatening the system. Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Huey Newton, who were drawn to Marxism and class struggle, were killed by police. Martin Luther-King, hounded by FBI boss J. Edgar Hoover, was murdered when he supported a strike by low-paid workers.

'Malcolm X' Shabazz, a declared enemy of capitalism, was bound to be in its guardians' sights.

Enemies

But Malcolm had black enemies, too, especially after he criticised Nation of Islam's bourgeois aspirations and its leaders. Two months before the assassination, Louis Farrakhan had written: 'the die is set and Malcolm shall not escape. Such a man is worthy of death.'

And though Farrakhan has said he was innocent of the crime, in a speech two years ago he declared: 'And if we dealt with him like a nation deals with a traitor, what the hell business is it of yours?'

Betty Shabazz has never doubted that the FBI knew about the plan to murder her husband.

'Nobody kept it a secret,' she told a television

interviewer, and she has stood by this. Farrakhan, world-renowned for his hate-filled demagoguery against Jews, whites, black-white intermarriage, and anyone who stands in the way of the Nation of Islam, was once an FBI informer.

Nation of Islam business offshoots have taken security contracts in some black areas.

Would Qubilah Shabazz have taken her feelings against Farrakhan into a revenge conspiracy?

The government's informant, Michael Fitzpatrick, a white who had known her at school, was arrested in 1977 for the bombing of a Soviet book store, and became an informer betraying his friends.

Known as a 'set-up artist', he was sent to Minneapolis, and given a new identity. Arrested on a drugs charge, his case was postponed the day before Qubilah was charged with conspiracy to murder.

The inference many people are drawing is that Qubilah Shabazz was set up by an agent-provocateur, and is being framed for a crime that hasn't taken place.

If so, the question is whether this is just another FBI move to provoke conflict among black militants, or whether the capitalist state is protecting Farrakhan as one of its own, and hiding its own hand behind the murder of Malcolm X.

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