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to back cover



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THE RIGHT TO BE OFFENSIVE

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'Where will the West strike next? Iraq? Iran? North Korea? Cuba?' (*Living Marxism*, May 1993)

Since we wrote those words last spring, the Americans have launched a Cruise missile strike on the centre of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad; threatened to blow North Korea off the face of the Earth in the row over nuclear non-proliferation (see centre pages); and sent flying gunships to mow down civilians in Mogadishu, Somalia—all with the support of the Western allies. The Iranians, Cubans and others are nervously awaiting their turn in the sunsights.

The trend towards overt Western intervention in the third world has been a defining characteristic of international affairs in the 1990s. It is a trend that is set to gather pace in 1994. Which is why taking a stand against Western militarism will be a bigger priority than ever for *Living Marxism* this year.

The question of whether the future holds war or peace for the world is up for grabs today. In March, the Campaign Against Militarism will be staging a major international initiative with its War Drums and Peace Talks conference at Wembley. *Living Marxism* is fully behind the campaign's bid to break the consensus supporting the West's right to dictate to the rest of the world at gunpoint. For full details of the conference, see page 29.

We wish an unhappy New Year to warmongers everywhere.

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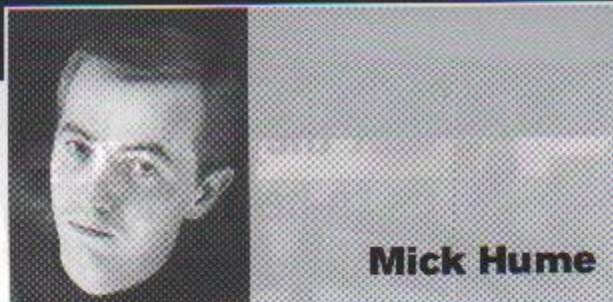
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Mick Hume

Let's get serious

This month we publish the *Living Marxism* declaration on the right to be offensive (see opposite), an initiative that came out of our successful November conference, the Perils of Political Correctness.

The declaration is, above all, a call to take a stand. It is designed to aid the creation of a new opposition current in society. Today the government is getting away with murder. But nobody is calling it to account. There is silence from the prosecution. It is time to get serious about challenging the culture of conformity.

The Conservative Party in Britain, like the Republicans in the USA and Christian Democracy in Europe, is in a state of turmoil. Despite all of the Tory government's promises of upturn and its statistical gimmicks, the reality of economic slump refuses to disappear. When it comes to policy, meanwhile, Conservative cabinet ministers do not have a decent idea between them. John Major's 'Back to basics' initiative is the political equivalent of a man wanting to get back to the womb because he cannot cope with the harsh real world outside.

Whatever its problems might be, however, the government is having little trouble getting away with attacking our living standards and our liberties.

The government is now attempting to make working people pay for the problems of the capitalist economy. Its austerity policies are affecting the lives of every one of us. But to judge by the state of political debate, you would think that nobody had noticed.

The huge cuts in public spending on jobs and services proposed in the

November budget were nodded through the House of Commons almost without a murmur. The chancellor's plan to impose an effective pay cut on five million workers in the public sector was greeted by the parliamentary opposition in silence, as if it was no more important than putting tuppence on a bottle of wine. And the campaign to defend the miners has finally evaporated just as the government prepares to complete its pit closure programme.

Alongside the imposition of cuts and closures, the state is proceeding to tighten its control over society through a spreading web of authoritarian measures. Yet nobody in public life seems to think it important to point this out, never mind oppose it.

The charade of parliamentary democracy becomes increasingly transparent. More and more areas of life are run by government-appointed quangos. Typically, the enabling act through which the government wants to pursue its war on 'red tape' will give ministers more power to abolish workers' rights and tear up health and safety regulations without reference to parliament.

The Queen's Speech confirmed that such few new policies as the Conservatives have focus on the repressive politics of law and order. A national police force is in the process of being created, armed with bigger clubs, more guns and increased powers of arrest.

The long arm of the law gets longer all the time; police now have a hand in everything from deciding whether football matches go ahead in bad weather to running anti-racist campaigns and rape crisis centres. And the system of state or

semi-state surveillance of working class life now extends from video cameras in city centre pubs to social workers prying into the most private of family affairs.

The rise of this new authoritarianism in our society is remarkable enough. What is even more remarkable is that the increase in state interference appears to be invisible to most commentators. It has passed more or less without critical comment, as if it were perfectly natural for the police to take over public affairs and professional do-gooders to dictate our living arrangements.

It's not as if people are indifferent to all of this, either. There is a great deal of bitterness about mass unemployment and the government's cuts and pay restraints, and considerable misgivings about the intrusions of officialdom into people's personal lives. But there is no focus for these concerns, no obvious outlet through which to express the outrage. In short, there is no opposition.

The opposition movements of yesterday, the Labour Party and the trade unions, are dead. Labour can still pick up anti-Tory points in the opinion polls, but it is a hollow shell of a party that stands for nothing, with no real existence in society. Union officials still boast about having millions of members on their books. But their corpse-like status is better revealed by statistics which show that last year, while union members' jobs continued to disappear and real wages shrank, the level of industrial action fell to a record low. The labour movement is strong on paper, but pathetic on a picket line.

The lack of an opposition movement that can pool their experiences leaves

THE RIGHT TO BE OFFENSIVE

A challenge to these uncritical times

We are living in a culture of conformity.

The media is becoming tamer than ever, faced with high-level demands for more 'happy news' and less critical coverage of the government.

The traditional puritans of the back-to-basics right and the new puritans of the politically correct left are both calling for more censorship.

And everywhere from the universities to the workplace, it seems that criticism and strong arguments are now condemned as unacceptably 'offensive' to one group or another.

These are dangerous trends. In the circumstances of today, we need to defend the right to be offensive at all costs.

Society is at an impasse, with the market economy in a state of slump and mainstream politics in a state of exhaustion. There is a pressing need for a critical examination of what exists and an open debate about the alternatives. Instead we are confronted with a censorious climate that narrows the terms of every discussion and stifles dissent.

In response, there are two principles that we should insist upon.

No censorship

Any demand for bans or restrictions will always make matters worse. Calling for censorship strengthens the ability of the authorities to dictate what we are allowed to see, hear or read. Bans can only add to the repressive atmosphere and strangle more life out of our conformist culture.

There is no acceptable pretext for censorship. Whether it is justified as a measure to combat racism, to protect children or to safeguard our privacy, censorship is an authoritarian infringement of our rights. It should always be opposed. Bans are for bigots and Big Brother.

No taboos

From questions about race to matters of sexual morality, many issues are now considered unsuitable for critical discussion. Instead we are expected to avoid offending anybody, and stick to the moral line laid down by the self-appointed guardians of the public good, be they government ministers, priests or PC professionals.

The idea that we should not be offensive may sound like a call for sensitivity. In fact it is another demand for censorship. It is a not-in-front-of-the-children attitude towards public debate, which insists that we either say nothing controversial or nothing at all.

Such uncritical regard for convention and public sensibilities is having a stultifying effect. It is a guarantee that society remains stuck in its current rut. If we are to change things for the better, we must have the right to challenge conventions, to outrage existing public opinion and to argue for new ideas regardless of who might be offended. Taboos are for the superstitious and the stupid.

If you have had enough of 'happy news' and the culture of conformity, join us in defending the right to be offensive. It is time to take a stand, to shake things up, and to tell it like it is.

Question everything—ban nothing

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people to react to society's problems as isolated and insecure individuals. They have no collective voice of their own to speak out against pay restraint or state repression. Instead, most people are left relying on the voices of 'important' intermediaries to speak up on their behalf.

Sometimes this means that we hear the whispering tones of politically correct professionals pleading for more support for society's victims, while counselling those on the receiving end to come to terms with their lot. Sometimes it means the patronising voice of a Tory back bencher, or the sermonising drone of an archbishop, asking the government to show a little compassion to the miners or the pensioners. Either way, the result is always disastrous for the voiceless majority.

There is a high price to pay for getting VIP voices to speak on our behalf. It means we have to be inoffensive. We have to limit our demands and campaign methods to whatever middle class public opinion will accept. We have to bow our heads and look pathetic. We have to behave as passive victims rather than fighters for justice. All of which might just about be acceptable if it paid off. But it doesn't.

Look at what has happened to the miners. The big campaign against pit closures that took off in October 1992 forewent any notion of militant protests or industrial action, relying instead on public relations exercises, mass walks in the park and the sympathetic voices of newspaper editors and rebel Tory right wingers to thwart the government's plans. As a consequence, the campaign won lots of sympathy from the middle classes.

We need a new voice that speaks a language of self-respect and fighting back

It has also lost the battle to save miners' jobs. As we examine elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*, the miners' campaign has been a hard lesson in the iron law that cap-in-hand gets kick-in-teeth.

It is time to forget about getting influential people to speak for us, and set about organising a collective voice of our own. We need a voice that speaks a language of self-respect and fighting back, rather than of respect for the authorities and their rules and conventions.

Creating an opposition movement that can give working people a collective voice will involve cracking the present culture of conformity. That is why it is important that we insist upon the right to be offensive. Without upholding that right, we will have little chance of winning any others.

If we bow to today's censorious climate, in which challenging conventional wisdom is considered offensive and bans and taboos are on the increase, we will be stuck with society the way it is. Any new idea worth having will never please everybody. But the fact that an argument is offensive does not mean it is wrong.

What chance do we have of changing the world for the better, if we are afraid of offending the public opinion-makers in the media, parliament or the PC establishment?

If we want to resist the government's austerity policies and the new authoritarianism of the state, we must insist upon our right to offend the powers that be. If we want to get serious about furthering the cause of human liberation, we must uphold our right to trample on the sensibilities of those who stand in the way. In this kind of fight, inoffensive means ineffective.

Supporting the declaration on the right to be offensive, and spreading the message to as many others as possible, is a step in the right direction. Of course, a piece of paper alone cannot achieve anything. But if it can become a focus around which to raise a new voice, and help to bring together a core of people who want to shake things up, it will be a start.

First offenders, one step forward.

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Bringing up babies

As a secondary school teacher, Claire Foster's article ('Sunday school teachers', December) left me somewhat disappointed. Your analysis of PC as a liberal veneer for conservative values is persuasive, but does this mean that state education is as much a tool of state repression as, say, the police?

Ms Foster asserts that through Personal and Social Education and other 'PC ideas' such as Schools Council, 'young people are being enlisted to police their peers—and even to police themselves'. I am involved with both PSE and Schools Council in my school. I am well aware that both these fall well short of their objectives as laid down in statutory guidance. But there is a valuable educational objective here.

Through organising themselves to deal with their problems pupils are introduced to the possibility of action independent of the establishment. They can and do break down the isolation and loneliness on which bullies thrive. They may confront the consequences of racism and sexism collectively and thrash out collective solutions. Not so long ago the prevailing opinion was that discussion of these issues made the problem worse and in any case children did not have the experience to deal with them 'properly' (unlike a white middle class teacher). While sharing her scepticism for government motives, would Ms Foster admit that by admitting these issues onto the agenda the establishment has created a loophole in which progress can be made?

Mass state education provides an opportunity to foster the critical frame of mind required for social change. It broadens perspectives beyond the narrow horizons demanded by society. It is the lack of a radical alternative that has led many progressive teachers to accept the Department for Education's rhetoric. Ms Foster's article suggested no alternative and consequently sounded like a call to complacency.

Paul Morris Rusholme, Manchester

Contrary to Gail Bradbrook's opinion that 'young people start life as loving, cooperative, dynamic' (letters, November), in reality they are necessarily greedy, selfish, dynamic 'little gits', who see themselves as the centre of the universe. It is only through the process of socialisation that children come to appreciate the needs and expectations of others.

The liberal middle class may be 'confused about how to behave towards young people' but, as we have seen, their involvement in our lives can have horrendous consequences. Bradbrook's use of words like 'adultist' and the statement that 'young people wouldn't play up if they hadn't been mistreated' could be passed off as phrases from Peter Pan, if the authoritarian undertones weren't so serious.

In the real world, children play up because they can't always have what they want. Like the

right to eat sweets 24 hours a day, go to bed when they please, or play with matches till the house burns down. Therefore, most parents recognise that there comes a time when the best solution is to give the buggers a good clattering and get them up them dancers—to bed!

Bob Pounder Ashton-under-Lyne

Support groups aren't sinister

Frank Füredi's article ('PC—the philosophy of low expectations', December) appeared to be nothing more than a rant against therapy, counselling or any other form of emotional support. He worked from the assumption that most people don't need help to get through life's traumas. Support groups and counsellors seemed to acquire a sinister image as oppressive agents of the state.

This is absolute nonsense. Among the largest 'support' organisations in this country are Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Overeaters Anonymous. These '12-step' organisations are completely self-supporting, and have as part of their 'traditions' no affiliations with government or political agencies. The point was also made that seeking help from groups or 'professionals' led to a climate of 'passivity'. Again I feel this is nonsense. Trying to seek help and overcome the problems one is facing, strikes me as a very 'active' thing to do.

I would also disagree with the notion that people do not need counselling or advice. Voluntary counselling organisations such as Relate have up to 12-month waiting lists in some areas. Many people are desperate for the help Frank Füredi so despises. If people can 'cope' so well as the article suggests, how do we account for the massive amounts of alcoholism and drug abuse in our society, not to mention the vast numbers of people addicted to prescription drugs?

I realise the point of the article was to underline the problem of state interference in private life, but I hardly think this takes the form of something as innocuous as grief counselling.

Heather McEvoy Bath

Mind your language

To my great disappointment John Fitzpatrick's article ('Spelling fascism', December) was a stereotypical display of what an 'expert' has called language shamanism: the mystification of language posing as clarification.

Throughout John confuses speech, writing and language, as illustrated by his *met/hat* example, a fault he shares with establishment commentators. People who can't spell at all are well aware of the difference between hats and mats. This is not to say that intelligibility might not be affected by a general disregard of standard spelling, but there is no evidence either way. There may be good reasons to encourage

some standards in spelling but defending Standard English is hardly one of them.

To confuse Standard English *disinterested* with *uninterested* is not a spelling mistake and what is more would never confuse even the most woolly-minded *Guardian* reader. Nor have I ever found myself in a right mess because a student omitted *d* in *advert*: only shamans suffer from these complaints.

There is some sense to John's concern about language proficiency, literacy and access to society, but having made a good start he boldly plunges into more and more serious confusion. Black people, for example, benefit if they are able to speak Standard English in a variety of situations. No one doubts that. What is objectionable is the suggestion that use of 'dialect or patois...could undermine the user's competence in Standard English'. This is the kind of nonsense up with which I cannot put.

To suggest that black people may be less competent in Standard English because of their use of other varieties or languages lays the responsibility for educational failure (among other things) on black people rather than on the British state. Moreover, while taking a side-swipe at parochialism, John is inadvertently suggesting that the solution to disadvantage lies in the hands of black people alone: black self-help through not speaking patwa. The evidence, which the establishment is keen to dismiss, is that a recognition of the existence of other varieties of English and of other languages in an educational context can result in improved mastery of the Standard. But I guess this is more liberal nonsense in John's world view.

The article provided firm evidence that ability to write grammatically is no substitute for a clear idea or two.

Jim Tyson Deptford, London

John Fitzpatrick conceded 'we do...have to accept that the established language of our culture was established...by those who have had the power to do so'. If the value-laden nature of language is conceded, why does *Living Marxism* find it necessary to ridicule and condemn efforts made to highlight this relationship? The answer seems to revolve around the belief that those who do express such an interest are solely concerned with this issue. Hence we arrive at the argument that those who wish to change the word 'chairman' to 'chairperson' assume that this alone will effectively end women's subordination. I have never met anyone, including women from American universities, who have seriously put forward such an argument.

It could be argued that those interested in such issues are merely a diverse group of people genuinely attempting to organise some form of counter-hegemony; an embryonic resistance to dominant linguistic connotations. This is not an end in itself and should not be thought

of as such, but must be incorporated in a wider process of organised resistance. What is the alternative here?

Living Marxism appears to operate a sort of 'guilt by association' policy with respect to ideas and movements outside its particular sphere of reference. It is undoubtedly true that the state has adopted the trappings of 'political correctness'. *Living Marxism* has correctly identified the hegemonising process at work. The ruling bloc has always absorbed ideas and concepts which are potentially challenging and re-presented those concepts in terms favourable to its continued existence as the ruling bloc. Yet a recognition of this process does not mean that any of these movements can be simply reduced to that relationship.

I find *Living Marxism* a very stimulating and polemical read but only in a negative sense. I have read your critiques concerning current methods of dealing with and conceptualising crime, education, racism, sexism, environmental issues, etc, but that's usually what they remain, critiques. What are the alternatives?

David R Clarke Brighton

Handicapped or oppressed?

I must write to you over Michael Fitzpatrick's outrageous article ('Handicapped or oppressed?', December). He argues that it is unreasonable for people in wheelchairs to expect society to organise itself to overcome the 'constraint' of being wheelchair-bound. We must accept that 'some residual handicap' is 'inescapable'. Fitzpatrick's use of the word 'handicap' gives his game away. It is clear that he believes that people in wheelchairs are not complete human beings. He ridicules the discussion of the 'social oppression' of handicapped people, then he comes out with the sort of prejudice which is the root of our 'social oppression'. I am disappointed that *Living Marxism* could carry such backward sentiments in its pages. Whatever happened to 'for each according to his needs, from each according to his ability'?

M Hamilton Birmingham

Anti-fascism v anti-racism

The left's knee-jerk reaction to the BNP election calls for 'something to be done', without

considering why they won and what responses to take. This narrow focus on fascism ends up calling for state action because state institutions can claim to be anti-fascist and hence allies (of sorts); the same state which institutionalises and enforces anti-foreign feeling through immigration controls.

The opportunism of Militant and the Socialist Workers Party is dangerous because it means trying to deceive your audience, hyping up the threat whilst avoiding the real problem of institutionalised racism. The Revolutionary Communist Party's problem is that its stance has no real effect, as if nothing can be done to combat racism. Hence it's a cop out for doing nothing except holding jamborees occasionally. And surely some alliance against fascism is better than none, as a start?

Nurjahan Mali Wolverhampton

Ben Bruges writes 'I am sure you agree' with anti-fascism (letters December). Have I got news for him.

I do not agree that 'fascism is a...growing threat'. The far right in Britain is marginal and entirely inconsequential. The electoral success of Derek Beackon in the Isle of Dogs was no signal of fascist menace; it was a measure of popular disenchantment with mainstream parties expressed in conjunction with traditional British racism.

Nor do I agree that 'it [fascism] forms a focus around which racism in all its forms can be actively challenged'. Anti-fascist activists seek to rekindle the Blitz spirit by denouncing the British National Party as descendants of Hitler. Depicting the BNP as German-flavoured Nazis strengthens the idea that the British way of life must be protected from alien influences. It is a left-wing version of Margaret Thatcher's infamous 'swamp' speech of 1979, and its implications ('we shall fight them on the beaches') are no less reactionary.

Anti-fascism cannot be the start of an effective anti-racist movement; it is a step in the wrong direction.

David Yates London

Idiocy over Lockerbie

My disgust at the US military's high-tech blunder in slaughtering the innocent occupants of a passenger airliner was matched only by my repulsion at subsequent attempts to cover-up

and justify this terrible act. James Heartfield ('Framing Libya', November) surpasses this idiocy in describing the Lockerbie murders as a 'desperate retaliatory blow' as opposed to a 'fanatical act of ideologically motivated terrorists'.

Would Mr Heartfield like to define his criteria for a 'fanatical act'? Was it not ideologically motivated? Were the perpetrators not terrorists? Mr Heartfield's faith in retaliation, his euphemisms, hypocrisy and inhuman analysis would not be misplaced either in the corridors of Western powers or in the cells of ideological terrorists. In the same foul breath, Mr Heartfield names 'the people of the Middle East' as party to this barbarism. Please attempt to find contributors with a degree of maturity and comprehension equal to the severity of the subjects about which they write.

Simon Collin Bristol

Misplaced foreskin

No one would deny children should be loved, cared for and protected from abuse. But Kevin Reid (letters, December) makes some seriously flawed points to press his case.

Firstly a small misleading aside linking male and female circumcision needs clarifying. The male equivalent of female 'circumcision' would be the removal of the sensitive area—the last half to one inch of the penis. That would be truly maiming.

Second and more serious is Mr Reid's cavalier attitude to oppression. I assume Mr Reid feels he is oppressed because he lacks his foreskin. I make this assumption because the tone of his letter is one of personal outrage. Oppression is not a generic term but a political one used to define sections of society who are treated as second class citizens. Women, blacks and Irish people, for example. Not red-heads. Not children. And certainly not men without foreskins. In the face of the horrific atrocities carried out against oppressed people the world over, Kevin Reid's outrage at circumcision is not only misplaced but disgusting.

A Corrigan Newcastle

Tokyo calling

The *Living Marxism* readers' group in Tokyo has a new telephone number: 03 5814 1042.

We welcome readers' views and criticisms.

Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or fax them on (071) 278 9844

The 'happy news' bandwagon is picking up speed and power all the time. When top BBC newsreader Martyn Lewis first launched his campaign for broadcasters to put more emphasis on 'happy/good/positive news', he was derided by many other journalists. Since then, however, Lewis has won the support of various establishment worthies. First BBC governors backed his message, and now prime minister John Major and Prince Charles have leant support to the happy news cause.

The drive to get more emphasis on happy news is not as innocent an exercise as it might sound. It is the subtle face of censorship today; censorship that is exercised not with crude bans and blue pencils, but through the control and packaging of that information which we *are* allowed to read or hear.

Sugar coated

Too much of the criticism of Lewis and his campaign has tended to focus on the more trivial aspects of 'happy news', the banal *That's Life*-style human interest (and animal interest) stories which are already becoming more prominent in news broadcasts. But there is a far more sinister side to happy news than stories about dogs which sing and dance.

The fashionable emphasis on 'happy news' involves wrapping the bitter truth about Britain in the nineties in a sugary coating. It means slanting the coverage of so-called hard news issues, in a way that will show the problems of capitalist society in as soft a focus as possible.

When Martyn Lewis launched his 'happy news' crusade last year, he listed some positive stories which, he claimed, had not been given the prominence they deserved by other gloom-mongering newsmen. These included stories about the record profits of a motor corporation, and a statement by EC finance ministers talking up the prospects for economic recovery.

As *Living Marxism* pointed out at the time, such stories read like public relations press releases. By playing up the 'good news' for corporate directors and government ministers, they play down the bad news for ordinary people. Bad news like the mass redundancies, wage cuts and shopfloor speed-ups that created those record profits for motor manufacturers, or the little matter of 17m officially unemployed in the EC that the finance ministers forgot in their excitement about the impending economic recovery.

In his recent attempts to keep the bandwagon rolling, Lewis has sought to highlight an issue which even more clearly reveals the true meaning of 'happy news': social

As the campaign for more 'happy news' gathers support, Eddie Veale argues that it is the subtle face of modern censorship

Read sod all about it!

and political conditions in the continent of Africa.

The dispute about news coverage of African affairs began when John Simpson, the BBC's foreign affairs editor and a frequent reporter from Africa, went into print criticising Lewis' concept of 'happy news'. Lewis counter-attacked in a speech in November. Simpson, noted Lewis, had been unable to mention one example of a positive BBC news report from Africa, 'perhaps because no such example from the past few decades of TV news coverage of Africa came easily to mind. I wonder why not?'. The clear implication of Lewis'

question was that the BBC foreign affairs team had downplayed the good news from Africa in favour of the dramatic disaster stories. Yet anybody with a passing knowledge of Africa's terrible history over 'the past few decades' would not have to 'wonder why' there had been no happy news from that downtrodden continent.

Africa has been torn apart by wars and conflicts which are either directly sponsored by the great powers, or are the indirect products of colonial divide-and-rule policies. Its economy has been left in ruins by the trade, investment and banking stranglehold exerted by Western capitalism.

HAPPY MARXISM

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All the news that's
fit for you to read

Switzerland
isn't at war
with anybody

Major edges
'PM of the Year'
award

Walsall woman
puts deposit on
new car

21m people
in UK still
have jobs

Freezing
pensioners 'at
low risk of Aids'

20 000 NHS
hospital beds
remain open
in England

Clinton pledges
not to bomb
South Korea
or Kuwait

Photos: Scottish
chicken has
octuplets



23m blacks
have not been
killed in South
Africa

Royal exclusive:
Charles & Di still
not divorced

Sport: British
footballers
save air fare
to USA

Martyn Lewis'
driving ban only
lasts 6 months

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD!

For more 'Dog-doesn't-bite-man' stories, turn to page 8

Just about the only good news to come out of Africa in recent decades was the temporary victory of national liberation movements against imperialism. But that is not the kind of thing that the BBC likes to celebrate.

Today, the message from the happy news men is that the horrors inflicted on the peoples of Africa should be given less prominence than the good news. Like what? Well, like the fact that the African National Congress has signed a deal with the apartheid regime in South Africa. So the recent happy news coverage from South Africa has focused on the smiling faces at the negotiating table, and kept silent

about some unhappy realities in the real South Africa outside the conference room; like the fact that black people in South Africa have paid for this 'peace' with up to 15 000 deaths since the release of Nelson Mandela alone, or the fact that the compromise settlement ensures that an elite white minority will retain effective power into the next century.

Whatever its proponents might say, happy news is not about cheering us all up. It means pleasing the powers that be, by putting a smiling mask over the blood and dirt stains on the face of modern capitalism. Little wonder, then, that it has won support from

people like John Major and the Prince of Wales. The most unpopular prime minister in living memory and the discredited heir to the throne have good cause to want news coverage controlled even more strictly than it is already. The interests of such establishment figures are being well served by the advance of happy news.

And make no mistake, happy news is advancing. Martyn Lewis takes over the *Six O'Clock News* in January, and as his approach to news coverage gains increasingly high-level support, many of the journalists who initially scoffed at it are having second thoughts and withdrawing from the fray. Those news broadcasters who remain publicly critical of happy news are trying to play down the importance of the debate. But they are wrong.

Polite questions

Peter Sissons, who is moving to the *Nine O'Clock News*, has taken a pretty rational line on the happy news issue. 'What is news is an editorial judgement', he told the *Sunday Times* in November. 'What is good news or bad news is essentially a political judgement.' Fair enough. But Sissons also insists that he does not want to argue with his friend Martyn Lewis, especially since the happy news debate 'really is a trivial sideshow compared with the big issues that affect television'.

In fact the campaign for happy news is playing an important part in the creation of a sanitised, uncritical media that reinforces rather than questions the conformist climate of our times. This is a trend evident in the decline of investigative reporting, in the instructions from BBC chiefs that interviewers should be more polite to government ministers, and in the steps to impose more restrictions on the media under the pretext of protecting privacy.

The consequences of allowing such a censorious trend to go unchallenged will be far from trivial. Public and political discussion in this country is already being reduced to the status of 'a trivial sideshow'. Meanwhile the truly big issues in society—like unemployment, poverty, militarism—are allowed to pass without serious criticism. The kind of front cover pictured here is alright if you know it's a joke. But it's another matter when such distortion and banality is offered up as serious news coverage.

Readers can rest assured that this magazine has no plans to convert to *Happy Marxism* permanently. The unhappy news for the Majors and De Klerks and Windsors is that *Living Marxism* intends to keep telling it like it is.

A morality play for our times



Perhaps we will never know exactly why young Robert Thompson and Jon Venables killed little James Bulger, but there is no mystery about why the case dominated the headlines throughout November.

Many commentators tried to depict the murder of James Bulger as a gruesome act which was somehow characteristic of modern British society. In fact, as a cursory glance at the figures shows, such killings are extremely rare. In the 10 years between 1982 and 1991, just 10 children under five were killed by strangers. The Bulger murder was not a symbol of nineties Britain; but the media reaction to it was.

The Bulger case was turned into the ideal morality play for our time. This rarest of murders has been transformed into a symbol of everything that is wrong with Britain today. As the media pursued each new sub-plot of the courtroom saga, it issued another little moral message for the nation to take on board.

Moral message: 'It's an evil world and we need strict rules!'

Why did it happen? That was the question on everybody's lips for three long weeks. How could two

Why was the death of James Bulger and the trial of his killers turned into the biggest news story of last year? Ann Bradley looks into the message of the media circus

10-year old boys attack a toddler with such brutality?

The search for a rational explanation for murderous behaviour was abandoned very early on. It was enough that the authorities had found something that everyone could agree was absolutely and unequivocally wrong. Indeed, those who persisted on the trail for a reason were soon condemned. The *Times* declared it 'facile' to 'pretend' that there are rational explanations for child crime. This case, we were told, is a perfect example of the fact that some things are beyond human comprehension.

For the *Times*, which does not usually give its editorials over to murder stories, the Bulger case was 'a reminder of humanity's most ancient and bestial instincts', and an example of the three evils. 'In the lexicon of crime', said the *Times*, 'there is metaphysical evil, the imperfection of all mankind; there is physical evil, suffering that humans cause each other; and there is moral evil, the choice of vice over virtue'.

These days, when the church talks about 'original sin' and the devil lurking to find a way into our hearts, most people are inclined to laugh. But, by using the language of



This boy and his pal murdered James Bulger, 2 and will be hanged

NAMED BOYS

Anthony Burgess dies of cancer



Boys who battered James Bulger to death locked up for 'very many years'

criminology, the media were able to use the Bulger murder to restore the notions of pure innocence (little James) and born evil (his killers) in a way that few were prepared to question.

Psychologists were wheeled out to probe into the minds of the child-killers—and, while they were at it, to dissect the minds of the rest of us too. After all, the assumption seemed to be, if those two boys could do it, so could others. Are we all not tainted by the 'three evils'? Project back into your own childhood, the experts invited us. Could we not remember acts of bestial cruelty, moments of being torn between

right and wrong? So perhaps there's a little of the murderer in all of us. And if it really is the case that the veneer of civilisation is so thin, how important it is to have strict laws and rules and regulations to govern our behaviour. How can we trust ourselves?

Moral message: 'We are all guilty, and we must make sure it never happens again.'

The rediscovery of 'original sin' in the two boys did not let society off the hook altogether. Even if the two young killers were gripped by evil, the media coverage made clear, they could not

have carried out the killing if the citizens of British society had been more vigilant.

At least 38 people on Merseyside saw James Bulger being dragged along by the boys who were to kill him, yet none intervened. During the trial several were paraded before the court, to weep in the witness box and explain their lack of action. 'What happened to the active citizen?', asked the *Guardian*, despairing at the low level of social responsibility demonstrated by Liverpoolians. 'Does no one "have a go" any more?' But, of course, all those who ignored the palaver had perfectly reasonable explanations for doing so. They thought 'it was just kids being kids', or 'the older boys said James was their brother', or 'the older boys said the little one was lost and they were taking him to the police station'. One man even raised his concern that he might have been suspected of wanting to molest the toddler had he interfered.

With the possible exception of the child abuse excuse, everybody can relate to all of these reasons. People know that in similar circumstances, they would have been just as likely to turn away. And so the guilt is spread among all of us. Because we are an uncaring, heartless public—only concerned ▶



about our own lives—a little boy was killed. As Bryan Appleyard put it in the *Independent*, 'people like us saw him and failed to save him....This was our own special slice of evil, we owned it, it belonged to us'. And, it soon became clear, we were going to have to pay for it.

The collective howl of *mea culpa* became the trigger for a discussion on modern social values and the need for community vigilance. The champions of 'Back to basics', who were not making much headway elsewhere, must have been delighted at the way in which the Bulger trial gave rise to demands for a return to the good old days of nosy neighbours, when everyone knew what everyone else was doing and why, and people cared for each other rather than relying on the welfare state. No doubt the

underclass. Social security minister Peter Lilley didn't actually say, 'You've heard me talk about social security-scrounging, inadequate single-parents, well here's some I found earlier'. He didn't need to; an army of reporters did it for him.

We were told how Ann Marie Thompson, mother of seven children (three in care) was a troublemaker, a smoker with dyed hair (!) and a heavy drinker. Jon Venables' mother not only had boyfriends, but regularly visited a local public house where she drank lager, and vodka and tonic. His absent father was said to watch (and to allow his son to watch) horror movies.

The *Daily Mail* described Jon as 'the classic product of a broken home' instantly implying that tens of thousands of other children from 'broken homes' were at that moment

and breeds violent children. Even the Tory government has come under attack from the *Daily Mail* for failing to go far enough in pressing home the need for the traditional family unit and the traditional roles of men and women within it.

The Bulger case prompted pundit Piers Paul Read to explain to *Mail* readers that, 'despite the rhetoric about Victorian values, and the current slogan "Back to basics", the general drift of government policy is to relegate the traditional family as an optional lifestyle and continue the progressive emasculation of the married man'. His critical swipes at government support for equal opportunity programmes and anti-racist and anti-sexist education, and their tolerance of 'morally indifferent' TV programmes, is the kind of criticism the government would like more of. Read concluded that 'for years false freedoms have been foisted on the unsophisticated. James paid for them with his life'. That notion of dangerous 'false freedoms' being 'foisted' on people is one that the establishment would like us to take to heart.

The parents of Jon Venables and Robert Thompson were paraded as pop-up book examples of the underclass

Conservatives will be quick to remind us of this sentiment when explaining why they are not to blame for old people dying of cold: 'It's not our fault, the neighbours should have been active citizens.'

Moral message: 'Single working class women are unfit mothers.'

Perhaps the clearest moral message of all to come out of the coverage of the Bulger case was that some families stand outside civilised society. They fail to educate their children about the accepted moral parameters, they fail to regulate their behaviour to conform to society's values and expectations. And, in failing to teach their children the difference between right and wrong, they undermine the very fabric which holds society together. If there are just a few who fail to teach their children that it is wrong to pull the heads off pigeons and beat toddlers to death, then none of us is safe in our beds.

The parents of Jon Venables and Robert Thompson were paraded as pop-up book examples of the

roaming the streets in search of toddlers to slaughter. Keying in to the high-profile discussion on absent fathers, the *Mail* remarked that, 'friends noticed what they called an atmosphere of neglect in the absence of a father figure'. Strange isn't it how these 'friends' adopt the language of academics and social workers when taking to the *Mail*. Strange, but convenient for the moral crusaders against the sins of single parenthood.

Moral message: 'It's all the fault of the sixties liberals!'

When it comes to looking at why there are broken homes and 'atmospheres of neglect', the blame is usually placed at the feet of liberals. The people to blame are those who, in earlier decades, sought to distribute contraception on the NHS, to make divorce easier, to decriminalise homosexuality, to introduce benefits which might allow people to live outside 'proper' families. These liberals, we have been told, are responsible for the social breakdown which results in dissolute communities

All of the various moral messages which the media drew so obligingly from the Bulger case point in one direction: towards the need for more authoritarian controls and censorship.

Who, ask the authorities, can object to the installation of even more surveillance cameras to pry into our comings and goings, when they proved so vital in finding the killers of James Bulger? Who would dare suggest that the rights of the boy's father were infringed when the police obtained a list of videos he had hired from the local shop?

Who can argue against the banning of violent films now that it has been proved that Venables' father hired *Child's Play III* (even if the boy never saw it)? Who would oppose an increase in the presence of police officers in Bootle when an alert policeman might have stopped the abduction, or the introduction of truancy officers to check the behaviour of children walking the streets?

And who will object to increased interference by the social services in working class family life, and stricter regulation of those who live in 'broken homes'?

Object to any of these things, the message is, and you may be responsible for the death of a toddler. Of course,

this is all nonsense. There is no connection between increases in state power and improvement in public safety; indeed, the opposite is more often the case.

Yet by exploiting the tragedy of James Bulger as an emotive weapon, the authorities have been able to create a consensus behind the need for firmer controls. Which makes it all the more important that we resist such emotional blackmail, and continue to challenge every advance of authoritarian state power, whatever the pretext offered.

There should be immediate cause for suspicion when a case like the Bulger killing receives such high-profile treatment in the media. The profile never flows from the facts of the case. When, back in 1968, 11-year old Mary Bell was convicted of killing a three-year old and a four-year old, there was no equivalent media circus. Quite the opposite. The BBC banned the story from the early evening news, and there were no queues to get into the court, never mind baying mobs outside it. In her book on the case, Gitta Sereny remarks that, 'the press and the public not only resisted but rejected the case of Mary Bell'.

But then the past is another country, and they do things differently there. In 1968, Mary Bell's behaviour was seen for what it was—a rare act of child violence. In the more optimistic society of her times, the killings were not turned into a reminder of humanity's most ancient instincts, nor of the darkness within all of us. Quite the contrary; she was described as an 'abnormal child'. Mary Bell too came from a 'broken home' reliant on social security. But her alcoholic father and mentally unstable mother were not caricatured as symbols of an inadequate generation. And when Mary Bell claimed that an episode of the detective series, *The Saint*, had prompted her to strangle those young children, people ignored it; nobody demanded that the Roger Moore vehicle be banned from the nation's television screens.

The Bulger case has been turned into a modern parable because it chimes with the current political climate, and suits the authorities' moral agenda. The themes which commentators associated with the killing have keyed into fears about family breakdown, reinforced the contemporary mood of irrationality, and provided further justification for more state interference and repression in society.



Violence, lies and videotape

Why, asked trial judge Mr Justice Moreland after the boys had been convicted of murdering James Bulger, had 'two mentally normal boys aged 10...committed this terrible crime'. 'It isn't for me to pass judgement on their upbringing', he said, before proceeding to do just that: 'but I suspect that their exposure to violent video films may in part be an explanation.' This throwaway remark, of the kind that you might hear from *Daily Mail* readers in the saloon bar of any suburban pub on a Sunday lunchtime, quickly became the basis for a national panic.

The police announced that their investigation into the video viewing habits of Neil Venables, father of one of the convicted boys, revealed that he had rented *Child's Play III*, in which an evil doll is beaten to death by children. The liberal *Guardian* announced that 'one could draw parallels between the film's plot and James Bulger's plot'. The illiberal *Sun* drew the parallels directly in a banner frontpage headline: 'For the sake of all our kids...burn your video nasty', and launched a campaign to destroy all copies of *Child's Play III*. Video stores around the country pulled the film from their shelves, and the marketing director of Scotland's biggest video chain, Azad, reportedly burned more than 300 copies. Within days of the trial, right-wing MPs were handing the home

secretary proposals for a blanket ban on horror films being released on video.

Yet there is no evidence that the boys ever saw *Child's Play III*. Even if they had watched it a dozen times, there is nothing to suggest that it would have caused them to kill a doll, let alone a toddler.

Despite all of the expensive research done, nobody has ever produced any real evidence of a causal link between film violence and real violence. And every survey into children's attitudes towards what they watch on television confirms that they can distinguish fact from fiction. But none of this prevents politicians and journalists who support the real violence of the police and the military from blaming the fictional violence of a video for brutality in our society.

The scare about the role of 'video nasties' in the killing of James Bulger reveals how irrational panics can take off in the fearful and insecure atmosphere of today. And it shows that these days, what begins as a moral panic always ends up as a call for more censorship. When it comes to provoking people into lashing out, Chucky the doll from *Child's Play* has got nothing on a truly scary character like Mr Justice Moreland.
Alec Campbell

In their plans to reform welfare services and the benefits system, the only welfare the Tories are defending is their own, says William Deighton

Targeting practice

I'm old fashioned about pledges—you stick to them', promised social security minister Peter Lilley in a TV interview with Brian Walden. But Lilley's pledge to keep the retirement pension a universal benefit isn't worth the manifesto it is written on.

Lilley's pledge was widely reported as a retreat from his previous stance on pensions. Before the autumn budget, Lilley, along with fellow cabinet right-winger Michael Portillo, had canvassed the idea that pensions should be privatised—that people should provide for their own support in later years rather than expecting the state to pay.

Two-faced

But look closely at Lilley's pledge to keep the state retirement pension, and you see that no retreat was intended. 'Everybody can use it as a platform on which to build additional provision', he added. Once a pension was a pension. Now it's to be a 'platform'. That means that your state pension won't be enough to get by on, and if you don't want to live in penury, you will have to buy in to some additional schemes. In effect there is no pledge to keep the retirement pension—because the accepted meaning of the word has been abandoned.

Lilley's two-faced little pledge is characteristic of the way that, in their current campaign to slash public spending, the Tories have been able to get away with rewriting the meaning of welfare. They come out all hurt at the suggestion that they do not have everybody's welfare at heart, and

promise to protect the welfare state. But in the fine print there is a catch. In spelling out what they mean by defending welfare, they redefine it to mean something else entirely.

Welfare is no longer defined as the provision of basic services like education, health (see box opposite), pensions and social security to everyone. It now means a two-tier system where the 'basic' services are so depleted that anybody who can tops them up out of their own pockets.

Giro millionaires

The Tories have a new word for dismantling the system of universal welfare benefits. It is called targeting.

Targeting benefits makes it sound like they are giving something away, getting extra help to those who need it most. All it really means is taking basic welfare services away from anybody who is not living on the edge of poverty—and cutting welfare services to the bone for those who remain in the system. When the government says it is targeting benefits, it is not getting more help to the most needy; it is turning the services that the rest of us had taken for granted into targets for cuts. It is the universal benefits that are in its line of fire.

When Bill Byrne won £2m on the pools he was still entitled to his invalidity benefit because it is not—as yet—a means-tested benefit. Tory backbencher David Faber took the opportunity to slate the 'barmy' social security rules in the *Sun*. 'It shows the absurdity of giving the rich the same entitlements as the poorest', Faber fulminated, 'invalidity and child

benefit should be targeted on those who need it most' (3 December 1993).

Who could disagree that millionaire pools-winners do not need state handouts? Bill Byrne didn't. He handed in his benefit book, foregoing the advantage of a weekly trip to the post office for £100. But targeting does not mean that pools-winners will be ineligible for invalidity benefit. It means that anyone with any other means of support, like a partner in work, will lose out. Where once invalidity benefit meant help for anyone who could not work through ill-health, targeting would mean that it became another name for means-tested income support. As far as Tory backbenchers are concerned, anyone that is not living in misery is too rich to deserve support if they fall ill.

Middle class perks

In today's climate, any universally available benefit can be denounced as a 'perk'. Higher education can no longer be taken for granted as a way to better yourself. With the Tories threatening to introduce student fees and cutting grants by 10 per cent, higher education will not be something people can expect to be provided, but a luxury that they will have to pay for themselves, through loans and part-time work. The Tory case for undermining support for students is that higher education is a privilege paid for by hard-working bus drivers and other wage-earners—as if it were students, not the deregulated bus companies that were holding down drivers wages.

Peter Lilley claims to be the best defender of the welfare system, because (continued on page 16)

Do you deserve to live?

Debra Warner explains the ethics of rationing healthcare

Harry Elphick died last July, just five days before his appointment for a heart-bypass operation, having suffered a cardiac arrest in February. At the time, Elphick had been refused an operation on the grounds that he had a 25-a-day smoking habit, and had only managed to get the later appointment by giving up for four weeks.

Is it ethical for the medical profession to deny treatment to people because they smoke? After Harry Elphick's death, the pages of the national press were sharply divided between the yeas and the nays. 'What is the point of expensive preventative medicine if the puffing, hacking patient immediately nullifies it?', asked a *Guardian* editorial.

Once it was a matter of common sense that everyone was entitled to treatment on the NHS. Today, we cannot be so sure. Last year the government published the *Health of the Nation* white paper which places the onus for healthcare onto each of us individually. We are to be responsible for our own health, rather than expecting the NHS to pick up the pieces. It is surely just a matter of time before the denial of medical treatment to smokers is extended to people who drink, are sexually active or eat too many chips.

Doctors are increasingly expected to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving sick; a recent television documentary even suggested that the treatment of attempted suicides should take a low priority.

Rationing in the NHS has already become a fact of life. Last April, *Pulse* magazine reported that unofficial lists of treatments which are no longer available have been drawn up by many health authorities. Those treatments most widely rationed include sterilisation, vasectomy reversals, *in vitro* fertilisation and cosmetic procedures such as the removal of varicose veins. Many drugs are also being restricted because they cost too much. The NHS has already blacklisted seven categories of drugs, meaning many brands are not available on prescription. It is now planned to extend the list to cover a further 10 categories, including contraceptives, vaginal treatments, anti-allergy and eczema preparations and anti-rheumatics.

Rationing is a big talking point in the medical profession. At the British Medical Association's conference last year, doctors agreed that rationing in the health service is inevitable, and suggested that patients should be involved in deciding which treatments to axe. Many now argue that ►

◀ the Department of Health should issue explicit guidelines to ensure that rationing is done fairly. Meanwhile, the real decisions about which treatments are available are already being taken through the cost-cutting operation of the internal market in the health service. Arguing for a fairer system of rationing only legitimises what is already taking place.

These days, even getting on to a waiting list in the NHS is not guaranteed. Before the NHS reorganisation, money was allocated to hospitals according to their usual case load. Today, hospital treatment is bought by health authorities or fundholding GPs. Before accepting a referral, a hospital must ensure that the patient has been paid for. If the hospital's contract has already been fulfilled, it will be reluctant to add more patients to its list. Where fundholding GPs have used up their budgets, they are reluctant even to refer patients for an initial consultation at a hospital. At the moment, many hospitals around the country are only accepting emergency admissions because their funding for the year has already been used up.

The government has won general agreement that the NHS has limited resources that should be restricted to the worthiest treatments. When five-year old Laura Davies' proposed multiple organ transplant hit the headlines, people asked whether the NHS should spend so much money on what is basically a medical experiment, when the cost of her high-risk treatment could pay for several routine operations with a better chance of success.

A recent report from the royal medical colleges proposes that operations should not be carried out without a realistic hope of success, and the denial of treatment to smokers and the elderly has been justified on the grounds that the 'risk to benefit ratio' is higher in these cases. This argument has an inexorable logic; the sicker a person is the worse the 'risk to benefit ratio' becomes, and so the range of illnesses which are no longer worth treating can be constantly extended.

The argument that the NHS should prioritise the most effective treatments is a red herring. Many effective treatments are withheld because they are not judged essential. For example, an age cut-off operates in many coronary care units despite the fact that there is a high success rate for treatment of heart disease in the elderly, while without treatment the chances of fatality are high. Infertility treatments and plastic surgery are quite effective and in great demand but they are nonetheless being rationed as a result of value judgements by health service managers.

Many health professionals who are repelled at the idea of market forces determining access to treatment propose that rationing through waiting lists is fairer than rationing by cost. They argue that the old-fashioned waiting list, for all its faults, is at least an egalitarian institution. Rationing might not be very pleasant but, like the Blitz or British Rail catering, it does at least ensure that everyone suffers alike.

In fact the waiting list has never been an egalitarian institution for everyone, but a last resort for people who cannot afford to go elsewhere. It is estimated that 10 per cent of heart cases die while on the waiting list each year. One health authority which contacted all 400 patients on its waiting list found that 150 had either died, moved away or gone private.

The NHS is moving ever further away from providing the services people need. By dressing up the issue of rationing as a moral dilemma in which we all share, the government can justify the elimination of more and more services. At the same time, the market realities of the health service are dictating what care is available, rather than providing the care that people need. If we accept their right to make cuts on the basis that some of us don't deserve treatment, we can kiss our healthcare goodbye. ●

Spending on social security is hardly rising in real terms at all

if it is not restricted to those on the breadline it will 'collapse under its own weight'. Lilley's argument is that there is an inexorable rise in demand for welfare as people live longer, while at the same time there are relatively fewer people working to support them. People who oppose 'targeting' in the welfare state are therefore 'actually its worst enemies because it will fall apart'.

Blame the Aged

Unfortunately Lilley's demographic argument does not stand up. According to a major study recently commissioned by the Rowntree Foundation, three quarters of the British population will still be under 65 in the year 2041. Furthermore *The Future of Welfare: A Guide to the Debate* shows that spending on social security is barely rising in real terms at all, having grown by only 0.3 per cent of Gross National Product between 1980 and 1989. In the fifties and sixties there was some increase in welfare spending, but this has been held down since the 1970s. It is not the weight of welfare spending that threatens the economy, but the relative weakness of British capitalism that drives the government to restrict any claims on the budget. The motives for targeting are entirely political, not demographic.

Newspeak

None of the Tories arguments for doing away with universal benefits holds water. But that does not stop the government getting away with them. It says: 'targeting benefits', 'cutting perks', and 'defending the integrity of the welfare state', when it means cutting benefits, introducing privilege and undermining the welfare state. But however much Newspeak the government uses, it goes all but unopposed in parliament and the media. Instead of challenging the Tories' attack on welfare, the official opposition is itself seeking to force the pace of redefining universal welfare out of existence.

Labour's Commission on Social Justice was formed to rethink the party's commitment to the welfare state, after three election defeats

signalled that Labour could not win on a platform of traditional welfare policies. The commission's deliberations amount to little more than translating the Tory welfare cuts into acceptably concerned language. In the lexicon of today's Labour Party, undermining universal welfare is deemed to be a legitimate exercise in recognising people's 'diverse needs'.

Where the Tory arguments for targeting services could be exposed for the attack on ordinary people that they are, Labour's shadow cabinet warns instead of 'tough choices on social security in advance of the election' (*Tribune*, 3 December 1993). Labour's willingness to adopt the Tory agenda means that the Lilley version of defending welfare—by cutting it—goes unchallenged and on its way to becoming accepted common sense.

Nodding along

But are we really at the point where everybody assumes that they should be paying for the things that once they expected as of right? After all, you could be forgiven for thinking that you had already paid extra for healthcare and pensions, as national insurance contributions and taxes rise while real wages fall. Yet, when the government says you are going to have to pay for them all over again, the pundits and opposition parties nod along.

By getting everybody to think like an individual taxpayer, shouldering the burden of a massive budget deficit, the Tories are getting everyone else to make the sacrifices British capitalism needs to keep going.

Instead of worrying about the chancellor of the exchequer's problems, we could ask why they can't afford the pensions, education, invalidity benefit and other things that make life, not luxurious, but bearable. After all, if Lilley & Co are right, and the existing social system really cannot provide a basic pension for everybody who needs one, there could be no better argument for changing the system.

The Future of Welfare: A Guide to the Debate, John Hills, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, £8.50



Of voles and men

At last scientists have discovered what makes a man an 'absent father'. If you don't like kids, if you are promiscuous, and you have problems displaying affection, then the answer could lie in a hormone deficiency.

The latest revelation from American sociobiologists is that fatherly behaviour, nurturing impulses, monogamous inclinations and a desire to snuggle up with your partner is quite literally in the blood. If your levels of the hormone vasopressin are on the low side, then you are probably a Jack-the-Lad, beer-swilling philanderer, with roll-on-roll-off technique. If, on the other hand, your levels are high, you are likely to be a contender for a father-of-the-year award.

The experts have reached this conclusion by studying prairie voles. They can, we are supposed to believe, extrapolate from voles to humans because this kind of vole has a monogamous, egalitarian child-rearing pattern of behaviour that is supposed to be pretty close to our own. (Suspend your disbelief for a moment, and put on hold your queries about what egalitarianism means to voles, because it gets worse.) This admirable vole behaviour only starts when they reach maturity. Young voles, we are told, are irresponsible. (How, exactly? Are they out partying all night, perhaps?) But as soon as they have intercourse, a release of vasopressin triggers a mid-life crisis.

According to a report in the *Times*, the hormone 'goes into action, causing the male to prefer his female partner to all others, and making him aggressive towards strange voles who invade his territory. He also tends to cuddle the female vole (I ask you, how can voles cuddle when they don't have arms?) and usually becomes her partner for life, sharing the rearing of the litter of pups'.

Dr Thomas Insel, a neuroscientist responsible for some of the experimentation in the study, also discovered that when vasopressin release was blocked the male vole was still willing to mate with females, but afterwards showed no interest in pairing up and looking after the young. He also showed no signs of attachment to the female through aggression towards other voles, and he stopped grooming the pups. When the male voles without partners were given vasopressin, they apparently behaved like a husband to the nearest female, although the relationship was never consummated, and tried to protect her.

Dr Insel isn't suggesting that vasopressin supplements could create sensitive men—but he does think it could be used to improve social bonding in autistic children, who apparently produce lower levels of vasopressin than the normal population.

I have reported this in length, borrowing from Kate Muir's report in the *Times*, because I was so gobsmacked when I read it. I accept that Kate Muir is a little tongue-in-cheek in her reporting, but the principle that you can study the behaviour of voles and learn something about our own behaviour is unchallenged by Kate Muir,

by *Nature* magazine (which published the study) or by Dr Insel.

No doubt the pituitary glands in voles and in humans produce a common substance, in this case vasopressin. Nor am I disputing that this hormone may have a similar physiological effect. My medical dictionary says it 'stimulates intestinal activity, constricts blood vessels and inhibits the secretion of urine'. The dictionary doesn't say whether it does this in voles as well as people, but I'm perfectly prepared to believe that it does. There are aspects in the physiology of mammals which are similar and comparable. If this was not the case then it would not make sense to test drugs on animals, but there is, so it does. There is, on the other hand, absolutely no similarity between the social habits and emotional behaviour of humans and voles.

The factors that make a female vole attractive to a male probably are based on hormones. There is more to it with us—although a lot of perfume manufacturers (especially those who specialise in the new pheromone products) would prefer you to think otherwise.

The relationships we have with our partners, and with our children for that matter, are dominated by the way we live. You only have to consider the decisions you make when it comes to starting or ending relationships to see the difference. Maybe there is a chemical element to sexual attraction, but there's a lot of conscious consideration too. Are you intellectually compatible? Can't imagine voles debating politics. Are you sexually in tune? There is no evidence that voles have recreational sex. Do you share a lifestyle? Voles only have one way of living. Are you financially viable? Will

your family approve? All kinds of things come into consideration, none of which have to do with hormones.

There is an irritating tendency among scientists (who, since they put a lot of stock in objectivity should know better), to observe animals and read human characteristics into their behaviour. Just because a rodent carries out a physical action similar to that of a human doesn't mean it's done for the same reason. You wrap your body round your loved one to show affection—that's cuddling. My gerbils (now deceased) used to sleep wrapped round each other for warmth. Same action (approximately), different motivation.

Then there is the other side of the tendency to equate human and animal actions. Having imposed human motives on animal actions, the experts say that, since animals behave like humans, we can learn something about human society from them. So family breakdown ends up as a consequence, not of a lack of money or decent housing, but of a lack of vasopressin.

Vasopressin levels in voles will tell us about vasopressin levels in voles. On a good day we might gain an insight into their physiological effect—such as whether they stop you from peeing. We certainly won't learn anything about family values. ●

There is no evidence that voles have recreational sex

John Major wants us to return to the basic values we have in common. But it is better to unite against the Tories' moral agenda than for it, argues James Heartfield

John Major's Guildhall speech in November called for a return to basics, to the common values we all share. According to the prime minister, those common values are first, economic—the free market, low inflation and sound finances—and second, moral—respect for the law, neighbourliness and self-discipline.

Instinctively, many reacted against the Tories' moral agenda. Cynical newspaper editors had a point when they asked whether government should be in the business of telling people how to live their lives. They had a point, too, when they suggested that the Tories must be short on new ideas. After all, who had been running the country while the moral standards supposedly slipped if it wasn't the Tories?

The Labour Party attacked the government's apparent hostility to the most hapless members of society, like single mothers, and then its poor record on reducing the crime statistics. Some, like the comedian Stephen Fry, challenged the government's right to lecture us about morality given the marital indiscretions of its ministers.

But while the Tories' concern with morality was greeted with suspicion, it was also thought by some to have its

positive side. From a government better known for letting the weak go to the wall, a new-found emphasis upon the values of community and care looked like a welcome change of heart. For some on the left the government's recent concern with civic responsibility is seen as a timely corrective to the narrow individualism of the eighties.

In his introduction to a Gallup poll on juvenile crime, the Labour Party academic AC Halsey attacks modern social policy's 'glorification of the individual', adding that 'the equally important demands of community or "society" as distinct from the individual have been increasingly disregarded in recent years'.

Halsey is not alone on the left in thinking that a return to moral values can put the brakes upon eighties-style selfishness. Anna Coote, of the radical Institute for Public Policy Research, argues that men who 'spend their time stealing cars and videos or selling drugs' could be encouraged 'to be caring and attentive parents' through government action.

Despite the widespread criticism of 'Back to basics', then, many of the government's critics share its support for what are seen as society's core values. Their only real difference is the belief that they, not the Tories,

know best how people should behave. According to Halsey and Coote, or Labour's shadow home secretary, Tony Blair, the left is the true guardian of the community.

But are there really any such things as core values? If Major had stuck to talking about his core economic values—like the free market and sound finances—the problem would become clear. After all, the free market may be considered a valuable concept in the boardroom, but for many people the experience of the free market today is about redundancies and pay cuts. And while the sound finances which the chancellor promised in the budget were cheered by the City financiers, most people were far less enthusiastic about the prospect of big cuts in public expenditure on the services they need.

If the government's appeal to the country was based on 'economic values' alone, it would only succeed in emphasising the things that divide us, setting the majority who are on the receiving end of market economics apart from the minority with a real stake in the system. By shifting attention to 'basic moral values' instead, Major has sought to smooth over those social divisions.

The problem with buying in to the government's moral enterprise is that the very idea that there are common values that serve the whole of society is wrong. For most people, submitting to the values of the government and the dignitaries assembled at the Lord Mayor's dinner at the Guildhall means losing sight of what is in their own best interests.

Back to whose basics?

John Major's basic moral values are an affectation of community in the face of conflict

Revisionist ideas for 1994
22-28 July 1994

John Major's appeal to community is a way of covering up the real divisions in society by appealing to everybody to pull together. In fact there is no such community of interests. There is only the appearance of a common set of values that hides the real inequality between the ruling elite and the rest of us.

But the appeal to community does more than cover up inequality. The emphasis upon personal responsibility shifts the blame for what goes wrong away from the market system and on to the mass of powerless individuals.

Have you shirked responsibility for your dependents, or failed to bring your children up to respect the law? Or perhaps you have not been neighbourly enough, or have been too unwilling to provide for yourself. These, according to John Major are the reasons for the hardship and conflict that threaten the social fabric.

The way this argument works can be seen in the government's assault on single mothers. Where once it was seen as society's responsibility to provide a safety net for those unable to support themselves, the attack on single mothers puts the blame on individuals for their predicament. Not unemployment and poverty, but family breakdown is presented as the reason for personal hardship.

In November, leaks of a 50-page government report on the problem of single motherhood indicated that the cabinet was looking at a variety of measures to penalise single mothers on social security. These included: benefit cuts for couples that separated and ►



PHOTO: PRESS ASSOCIATION



for single mothers who had more children, counselling for single mothers who applied for benefits, reform of the divorce laws to make separation more difficult, and making young single mothers dependent upon their parents for support. Of this last measure, the health minister, Virginia Bottomley, said that it was designed to free

Peter Lilley argues that we need a welfare society—he means that people should provide for their own welfare

single mothers from dependence upon the state.

In the budget, chancellor Kenneth Clarke seemed to offer single mothers a hand-up into work with the announcement of a childcare allowance in addition to family credit—except, of course, that family credit is offset against income, so that you would have to earn less than your benefit to be entitled to the new allowance. The principle of encouraging single mothers to fend for themselves is still the background to the budget changes.

Dressed up in the language of moral concern, the government's case against single parenthood seems to be a selfless attempt to repair the social fabric. According to this argument we all stand to lose if the family breaks down, as lawlessness and deprivation are the likely results. Broken down into bare economics, however, it looks rather different. Behind the concern for morality is a more basic desire to cut the budget deficit. Defending the family turns out to be a way of shifting responsibility for welfare away from the state and on to individuals, and keeping capitalist society going at the expense of hard-up people like single mothers.

According to John Major there should be no differences about basic values. That is what he means by calling them basic. In his argument everybody is a citizen with the same interests and part of the same community, so they should share basic moral values.

On the face of it, Major's argument might seem fair enough. Everybody should be playing by the same rules. Consequently, he argues, everybody should be free from state bureaucracy: business should be free from government red tape in just the same way that single mothers should be free from the interference of the

Department of Social Security.

But, in reality, freeing business from government means something very different to freeing claimants from government. Freeing business means taking away the rules that curb employers' exploitation of their employees. The 'red tape' ministers complain of is not a collection of outdated rules, but the few remaining workplace regulations that safeguard workers' health, safety and other conditions. Already unwilling to meet the minimal standards contained in the European social chapter, British business is to be set free to balance its books at the expense of its workforce.

Welfare society

In contrast, freeing claimants from dependence on welfare means robbing them of the bare safety net provided by the state. Peter Lilley argues that we need a welfare society instead of a welfare state. He means that people should provide for their own welfare. Not government, but savings and insurance should meet the cost of unemployment, sickness and retirement.

Same rules, different result. The reason that the same rules—freedom from the state—can have such different results is because it is not the rules that make inequality, but the power of money over the majority of people. If you have enough capital to meet a wage bill, you are free to make people work for you. If all you have is a wage slip, you are free to work for someone else—at least for as long as they can use you. All that the rules do is hide the systematic inequality that is written in to the market system.

Business and Treasury

There is no basis for a common morality. In an ideal world everyone could agree with John Major that neighbourliness is a good thing. But in this world few have the time or the means to take on responsibility for elderly neighbours, or the mentally ill left to the care of the community. While the government has shirked those responsibilities, there is no real community in place to care for those who cannot look after themselves.

The real community appealed to in Major's so-called core values is the community of those few who have a genuine stake in maintaining the status quo. Business can agree with the Treasury that people should take more responsibility for their own upkeep. Police chiefs can agree with education officers that criminality begins in the home. The powers that be are happy to agree that the source of all difficulties is ordinary people. But for ordinary people, the only community

on offer in the current climate of discussion is a community of blame for everything that goes wrong. Take the question of single mothers.

The example of single parenthood shows how self-serving the Tories' basic moral values are. Most single mothers would leap at the chance to earn themselves a decent living, but are held back because few jobs earn enough to cover their childcare and their bills. Everybody knows what they need to help them to help themselves—nurseries.

The socialist family

So why aren't there enough nurseries? In a report on Britain's education, former civil servant Claus Moser put that question to the minister responsible, John Patten. His answer was that there isn't enough money in the kitty. Now you know why the government says that sound finances are a basic moral value too.

Those left-wing critics of the government that have rallied to the cause of community hope that they can hijack the moralistic rhetoric for better ends. As they see it, John Major's new-found concern with the community is a concession to their own criticisms of the excessive individualism of the eighties. Professor Halsey goes so far as to embrace the fears over the spread of single motherhood. 'The family', he says, 'is a socialist institution'.

But instead of hijacking the government's moralism, its critics on the left have allowed themselves to become part of the consensus that puts the blame for society's problems on to ordinary people. It is no great surprise that the Tories are less willing to argue the case for the unalloyed free market at a time of slump when most people are suffering under it. But Major's emphasis upon common values is not an alternative to the market, it is an excuse for it. It says that the problems caused by the market are everybody's responsibility. Professor Halsey's affection for the family only serves to reinforce the Tories' case that the real damage to society comes from those who are unwilling to conform to basic moral values.

Made and remade

Far from there being any core moral values that are good for all time, values are made and remade in accordance with the exigencies of the day. For this government that means covering up the real cause of the problems in society by getting the weakest to bear the burden of the failures of the market. Values worth fighting for are unlikely to be inherited from the past. There is little point in going back to the basics that got us where we are today.

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'It gives me a buzz'

Andrew Calcutt asked some young people what they hate about nineties Britain—and what they think they can do about it. All of them were angry about something; but while some were just cynical, others had joined the Campaign Against Militarism to have a go

Erik, student at sixth form college

My mother's German and I got called 'Nazi' at school. So I had a youthful distaste for what was going on in Britain—racism, sexism and the rest of it.

It is satisfying being able to explain things to other people, and to get them moving. There is a proposal for my college to be merged, and this will mean cuts. Because I opposed it the other students got activated. I am sure that I can make an impact on events—so why can't we all?

Xanthe, student

I don't believe what the media tells me and I wouldn't trust any politician to represent me. I'm more interested in the state of mind which people carry around with them. If an individual's mindset is not in synch, he/she could be in the most beautiful landscape in the world and they'll still make an ugly atmosphere. Reality is inside the mind of every one of us. The old rap about changing the world outside...it's an outdated idea.

Sean, unemployed

Being a teenager is crap. I'll be staying in tonight because I've no money to go out. I hope my parents go out so I can get some peace. What can I do? As Blur said, Modern Life Is Rubbish.

Peter, school student

I enjoy challenging the Tories. I get a buzz from challenging all the people who tell me how to live my life. Why believe things are inevitable? If you want to bring about change you have to look to see what is the real cause of the problem.

Lee, student at technical college

Doing Economics and Politics at college you are consistently told that one of them will work—Labour will make a go of it or Keynesian economics needs a second chance. And you just can't believe it. I was thinking that economic recovery was a joke and what was on offer was a joke.

I like getting out there and convincing people of the need for an opposition. I like the challenge. I was always a bit of an idealist—there shouldn't be war, we should be equal, there ought to be decent wages. Now I realise I'm fighting in my own interest as much as anything.

Janel, care assistant

It was the miners' campaign last year that got to me: I knew that the government was taking the piss, and I didn't want to let it happen without a fight.

There's nothing different about me, I just don't want to be docile. I hate what Britain is about—the complacency, the lack of ambition, privileges for the minority. I joined the Campaign Against Militarism because it's a movement that's three steps ahead.



Uzra, student at technical college

I started reading *Living Marxism* and it was saying things I'd been thinking which no one else had said. I was looking for something different because I thought my ideas were better than the mainstream.

Like me, a lot of people are looking for something. All right, they are also cynical. I was convinced by a logical argument, why shouldn't they be? When the Schools Campaign Against Militarism went into schools and colleges, 30-40 people were coming to meetings in a lunchtime. It's exciting to be part of something that is new and different and especially important because no one else is doing it.

Graeme, hot dog salesman and student

Respect to your views but you can't expect to achieve your aims. Let's all go to a higher level.

Anita, office temp

Legalise it! Cannabis is as natural as tea or coffee. Allow the home cultivation of cannabis. These are my slogans. And free tap water in the clubs!

Eddie, student

They tried it in the Soviet Union and look what happened. Equality, justice—of course that's how it should be. But people are not ready for it.

Geraldine, student

Where is the economic recovery? Nobody knows what they're talking about. Everything is out of control. Personally I'm concerned about the spiral of violence against women, and I want to see women protected against violence at home and harassment in social life. But generally speaking the world's problems are too big for anyone to sort out. The politicians can't do it. Neither can I and neither can you.

Tony, trainee printer

People don't want change. Most people are scraping by. Not flush, but getting along. They won't get off their arse. I'm not fooled by the people in power, I don't like what's going on any more than you do. But you're speaking to such a small minority. British people will never do anything different.

Emma, GCSE student

The issue of militarism really angered me, especially what the British state does in the name of Queen and country. The whole idea of Rule Britannia—that we have the right to dictate good and evil—it's moral hypocrisy.

A lot of people who say 'no politics' still hold strong opinions. My best friend got really wound up about the bombing of Iraq but she didn't think of it in 'political' terms. There is a general feeling that something isn't quite right. People are not stupid, they think about things. But they divorce their anger from thinking they can do anything about it.

Through the Schools Campaign Against Militarism we've been connecting with pissed-off young people and showing how to turn it into a real fight. The whole thing gives me a buzz.

Therese, local government worker

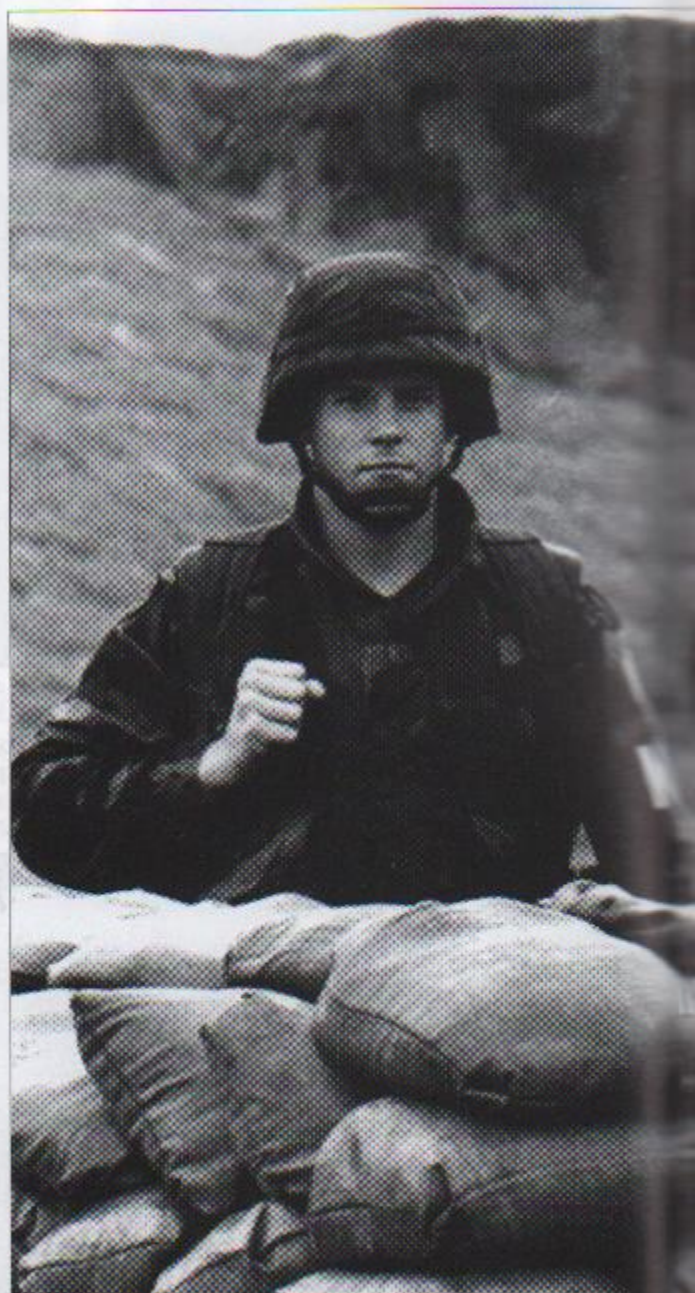
For centuries my history has been ignored or censored or distorted. My concern right now is to establish the truth about my history. This will help me to be a stronger person. That is as far as I am prepared to go at the moment.

PHOTO: MICHAEL SHARPLEY

Nuclear

'Nuke the Gooks' has long been the racist cry of the American right eyeing North Korea. Now president Bill Clinton has threatened to destroy that state for allegedly developing its own Bomb.

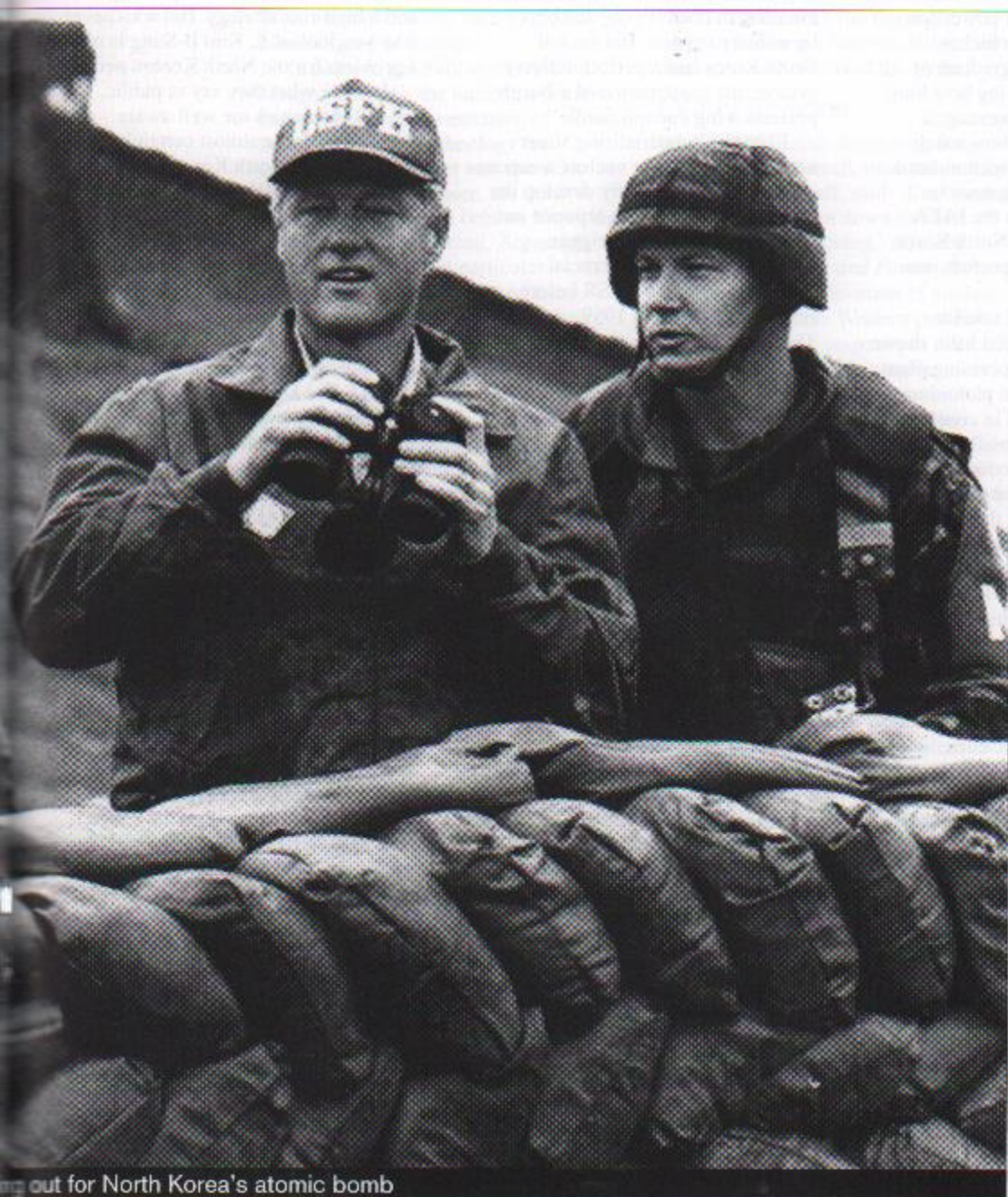
But is Kim Il-Sung really holding the world to ransom? Or is the USA using the non-proliferation row as an excuse to hold a gun to the third world's head? John Gibson investigates



In the eye of the beholder? Bill Clinton on the border looking

PHOTO: AP/PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE LOWE ASSOCIATION

Gooks?



Waiting out for North Korea's atomic bomb

Since the middle of 1993, the possibility of North Korea having a nuclear bomb has been presented as something which, in *Newsweek's* words, 'may well be the greatest threat to world peace' (29 November 1993). Speaking to American troops at the Demilitarised Zone between North and South Korea last July, US president Bill Clinton cited the North Korean threat as the reason why US troop numbers could not be cut in South Korea and Japan. Don't even think about using a nuclear device, he warned the North Koreans, or America will 'annihilate' you.

The issue of nuclear proliferation in the third world has risen high up the list of Western concerns in recent years. In January 1992, the first-ever summit of the United Nations Security Council was convened to discuss this issue. First, the possibility of Iraq getting the Bomb dominated the news. Then attention shifted to North Korea. The imagery was the same: the world was being held to ransom by an unstable dictator with his hands on the Bomb. It was common to link the two countries. 'The UN Security Council cannot avoid thinking about North Korea in terms of the Iraqi experience', argued Ronald F Lehman, former US Assistant Secretary of Defence (*Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1993). 'History may not repeat itself, but watch the Korean peninsula for a disturbing sequel', warned the *Economist* in an article entitled 'Apocalypse Asia' (26 March 1993).

There is indeed a link between Iraq and North Korea: they are both impoverished third world nations that have been set up by America, under cover of concern over nuclear proliferation. ►



Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) spent a good part of 1992 crawling all over Iraq without finding much. And yet Iraq continued to be demonised and occasionally bombed by the USA,

If Yongbyon is inspected, and found to be empty, another dangerous site will be pinpointed

as a potential nuclear threat. In 1993, again without any hard evidence of a Bomb, North Korea became the new demon. The reality is not that Kim Il-Sung is holding the world to ransom, but that America is threatening to destroy North Korea in the same way as it has Iraq.

What evidence is there of a North Korean nuclear threat? The American argument goes as follows. North Korea has had civilian nuclear power for years, a by-product of which is plutonium, the basic ingredient of an atomic bomb. Knowing how long the plants have been operating, it is possible to calculate how much plutonium would have accumulated. If it isn't at the plants, it must be somewhere else. Hence the IAEA wants access to check. North Korea refuses to let IAEA inspectors into its nuclear plants.

The CIA insists that satellite photographs of Yongbyon have shown that there is/was a reprocessing plant designed to separate out plutonium from the fuel rods used in civilian nuclear reactors, and possibly a separate reactor to produce plutonium. It claims that the plant may have been moved, they know not where, last year. North Korea has refused the IAEA access to Yongbyon. North Korea is also said to possess rockets capable of reaching Japan and China. And, the icing on the cake as far as the CIA is concerned, North Korea has said that it is developing a nuclear bomb, and tried to withdraw last March from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Despite this apparent evidence, the CIA's case does not hold together. The basic science needed to make an atomic Bomb is widely known. This does not, however, mean that it is easy to make one. Besides the USA, Britain, France, the USSR, and China, the other states that are thought to have developed nuclear weapons since the Second World War are Brazil, Argentina, Israel, South Africa, Pakistan and India. None of this latter group managed without acquiring, openly and clandestinely, crucial technologies from the existing nuclear powers, or from other advanced capitalist countries. The controls

on North Korean access to such technologies have been much tighter, making it highly unlikely that they have made a Bomb, or are anywhere near making one.

There are four basic things needed to make a Bomb: 1) highly trained physicists; 2) reprocessing technology to separate out plutonium; 3) a sophisticated trigger mechanism to create a critical mass of plutonium in a concentrated space in a fraction of a second; 4) a rocket to deliver the bomb. Even were North Korea to make a Bomb, it is highly unlikely that their rockets would be able to deliver it. Israel recently revealed that the US Patriot Missile Defence System used against Iraq's Soviet-built Scud missiles during the Gulf War was useless—there is no evidence of a single intercept. The reason there were so few Israeli casualties was that Iraq's missiles were even more hopeless. North Korea has similar missiles, dubbed 'flying dustbins' by military experts. But even if North Korea had a perfect delivery system, the construction of a Bomb presents a big enough hurdle.

Even the industrialising states now thought to have nuclear weapons could not independently develop the technologies needed to separate out plutonium and make a trigger mechanism. China got crucial assistance from the USSR before links were broken in 1959.

The Latin American countries, India, and Pakistan got technology from France and Germany in the 1970s, when economic recession increased competition between suppliers of nuclear technology. Israel and South Africa were always in a special class: as key allies of the Western powers in sensitive regions of the world, their acquisition of nuclear technology was quietly ignored. (For more details on this see J Newhouse, *The Nuclear Age*).

On its own

After the Soviets helped China to get the Bomb, they became much more cautious with their nuclear technology. China, too, was very careful about whom it assisted. It is well documented that neither gave assistance to North Korea. In fact, the Soviet Union entered into direct cooperation with the IAEA to control North Korean nuclear supplies in 1977. So, if North Korea is trying to develop a Bomb, it is doing so alone. If India was unable to develop a Bomb on its own, North Korea's chances appear very slim.

North Korea is not in a position to threaten anybody. It is a diplomatically and technologically isolated state not far from collapse.

North Korea has a population of 22m people. Its economy is shrinking

at an annual rate of around 20 per cent. The government has launched a campaign for people to eat only two meals a day because of food shortages, and clothing is in short supply. Both Russia and China now have stronger ties with South Korea, and have said that they would not support aggressive action by the North. Indeed South Korea now has a more powerful army than North Korea, and it is backed up by the might of the USA. They conduct annual joint manoeuvres on the Korean border—'Operation Team Spirit'—during which America will not say whether or not its forces carry nuclear weapons.

IAEA inspectors

North Korea's obstruction of the IAEA, and declaration of its nuclear ambitions, look like nothing more than a bid to get some bargaining power with the South and the USA. It is a desperate step by a fragile regime, and a high-risk strategy. But whichever way you look at it, Kim Il-Sung is only a problem for the North Korean people.

Despite what they say in public, the US authorities are well aware that North Korea almost certainly has no Bomb. North Korea bent over backwards in 1991-92 in an attempt to secure assistance from the West. IAEA inspectors made five inspections in 1992, and by the end of that year most commentators agreed that North Korea had no nuclear potential. But then the plant/ex-plant at Yongbyon was 'discovered' (despite the fact that the CIA had known of its existence since 1989 at least), and more inspections were insisted on. No doubt if Yongbyon is inspected, and found to be empty, another dangerous site will be pinpointed. As in the case of Iraq, every empty building will simply be taken as proof that the devilish reprocessing facilities have been moved elsewhere.

Some commentators now talk about underground tunnel systems containing nuclear technology. It looks as if the Americans won't be happy until they have dug up the whole country. This is because they are not really looking for North Korean nukes. The US authorities have their sights on bigger targets in the debate on nuclear non-proliferation: their aim is to assert Western authority over the third world, and to maintain America's position as the leading world power.

The issue of nuclear non-proliferation has always been about Western domination of the third world. Clearly it is not about nuclear weapons as such, since the massive arsenals of the Western powers never come into the debate. Instead, the debate on nuclear proliferation is about drawing a line between the haves and

the have nots. It is all a question of whose finger is on the trigger.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which came into law in 1970, forbids all signatories from possessing the Bomb—unless, of course, they already had it. Furthermore, the American dominated IAEA was given the power to interfere in the internal affairs of non-nuclear states to ensure that they weren't making bombs. As the head of Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission put it in 1990, 'the non-nuclear weapon states are effectively required to surrender part of their national sovereignty in return for vague and as yet unfulfilled promises of nuclear cooperation'.

In the past, however, the exercise of Western domination over the third world was limited by the exigencies of Cold War diplomacy. The existence of the Soviet Union helped provide the space for third world nations to assert some independence from the West, through forums such as the Non-Aligned Movement.

In order to get third world nations to sign the treaty, the nuclear powers had to offer some sweeteners, of which transfer of technology for civilian nuclear power was the most significant. What's more, the third world states that were bent on acquiring nuclear weapons—Brazil, Argentina, India, and Pakistan in particular—refused to sign the treaty. And there were limits to the measures that the Western powers could take to stop them developing a Bomb. India, for example, used its diplomatic links with the Soviet Union to counter US opposition to its Bomb programme in the 1970s, while Pakistan played East-West tensions the other way around.

Post-Cold War, however, the balance of power has shifted much to the advantage of the West. Last November Clinton proposed that the NPT be made tougher. Plutonium

USA is giving orders to North Korea on how to conduct its foreign affairs. Under international law, there is nothing to stop North Korea resigning from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as it tried to do last March. And there is nothing which says that a non-member of the NPT cannot have nuclear weapons. By threatening North Korea, America has forced it to remain within the NPT. Like the mafia, Washington insists that membership is for life.

The tightening of the regime on nuclear proliferation is a symptom of the changed balance of power between the West and the third world. In the post-Cold War world, nuclear proliferation is being used as another stick with which to beat the third world. The USA and the Western allies are not worried about countries like North Korea acquiring an atomic bomb. They are more interested in constructing the image of third world demons with the Bomb, in order to legitimise Western militarism and intervention around the globe.

Out of demons

Back in 1991, after destroying Iraq, General Colin Powell, then head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said: 'I'm running out of demons...I'm down to Fidel Castro and Kim Il-Sung.' (Quoted in W Bello, *People and Power in the Pacific*, p28) The elevation of nuclear proliferation on the Western powers' agenda has been a response to this shortage of credible demons in the third world.

It has been easy for the West to create the notion of a nuclear threat from the third world. All it took was a few stories about ex-Soviet scientists hiring themselves out to third world dictators, added to the spectre of DIY bombs made possible by the flow of plutonium around the globe. In this way, even the weakest nation can be converted into a global threat. By depicting Kim Il-Sung as a dangerous villain simply because he might have the Bomb, the Western powers are seeking to solve Powell's problem by inventing a world full of demons.

The US campaign against nuclear proliferation does not stop at talk. Iraq has already been destroyed, partly on the pretext of preventing Saddam's nuclear programme. The January 1992 summit of the UN Security Council on non-proliferation issued a direct threat to all third world states: step out of line, and you'll get the same treatment as Iraq. Now North Korea finds itself in America's gun-sights on the same issue.

There are also regional reasons making North Korea a likely target for the USA. The Pacific region is set to be a key area for world capitalism

into the next century. America is facing the squeeze economically from Japan, while China is emerging as a major player with its own interests. Baring its teeth against North Korea is a way of reminding everyone, especially non-nuclear Japan, that America remains the region's policeman.

Hiroshima

America, with British support, has used the nuclear proliferation issue in a bid to remind the major non-nuclear powers who holds the whip hand in the Western alliance. The January 1992 UN Security Council summit (permanent members: America, Britain, France, Russia, China—the nuclear club) coincided with Japanese lobbying to become a permanent member. Not yet, was the message. In 1993 Clinton cranked up the rhetoric against North Korea whenever America's wider role in the Pacific region was up for discussion: during his Asian tour in July, and during the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum in Seattle in November.

Suppose for a moment the CIA's most florid fantasies were true. What if North Korea has got a Bomb? And what if Kim Il-Sung is certifiable? North Korea still wouldn't be the problem. The threat to peace does not come from the poorest states on Earth, nor from crazy little dictators, but from the power games being played out in the third world by the USA and the other Western powers.

Lest we forget recent history: the only country to have used nuclear weapons is the USA. American president Harry Truman said that the dropping of the Bomb on Japan was 'the greatest thing in history'. Since 1945 the same country has used awesome conventional firepower to destroy Vietnam, Cambodia and Iraq among others, and has threatened the use of atomic weapons no fewer than 45 times.

Whose threat?

North Korea has been on the receiving end of American and Allied firepower itself, during the Korean War: by 1953 all of its major cities had been levelled. President Truman threatened to use the Bomb on North Korea in 1950, and president Eisenhower threatened the same when he was head of the army in 1951. 'Nuke the Gooks' has been a frequent refrain of American politicians ever since. Those concerned about the threat of war today should turn their attention to the military arsenals of the Western world, and let the North Korean people deal with Kim Il-Sung. *Thanks to Vanessa Adams and Daniel Lowe for material and ideas*

'The non-nuclear weapon states are effectively required to surrender part of their national sovereignty'

production, he said, was 'not justified on either economic or national security grounds, and its accumulation creates serious proliferation and security dangers'. Of course, since America has more plutonium than it knows what to do with, it won't be affected by any ban on its production. The real consequence of any ban would be to give the West the power to close down the third world's nuclear industry.

Today, in the row over membership of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the

Green patsies

John Gibson on how leading environmental groups are helping the Western powers police the third world



In the debate about nuclear non-proliferation, it is not just the US and other Western governments that are targeting North Korea and other third world countries as the problem. Western environmental and peace groups have added their condemnations as well. Take Greenpeace.

A recent major Greenpeace publication, *The Plutonium Trade: A Troubling New Era of Proliferation*, focuses almost exclusively on proliferation in north-east Asia. After a casual mention of the fact that America threatened to nuke North Korea in the early 1950s, North Korea itself is quickly isolated as the major problem today.

Adopting the tone of the concerned world citizen, Greenpeace sides with the USA and its allies in pointing the finger at the North Koreans: 'Identified as being of most concern to the international community, in particular to the US, Japanese and South Koreans, is a partially completed reprocessing plant, also near Yongbyon.' Does Greenpeace have any criticisms of the USA, the one military power which definitely has introduced nuclear weapons to north-east Asia? Oh, yes; the Americans should be consistent about non-proliferation and stop selling plutonium to the Japanese. Not a mention of those 5000 warheads under Bill Clinton's finger.

The fact that the Greenpeace pamphlet criticises America for selling plutonium to Japan

is typical of the way Greenpeace tackles the nuclear powers' own vast arsenals: it doesn't mention them. Only the sale of plutonium to other countries is condemned. And the other countries which Greenpeace is most concerned to stop getting plutonium are third world states. In another Greenpeace publication, *The United Kingdom: The World's Worst Proliferator?*, Britain is condemned for producing plutonium, not because it leads to a British Bomb, but because it might fall into the wrong (read: third world) hands. The sale of plutonium to Japan is also condemned...because the development of Japanese nuclear weapons will give North Korea an excuse to build its own.

Greenpeace's attitude is entirely consistent with that adopted by the existing nuclear powers and enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Greenpeace upholds that treaty, but would like to see the regime for the control of nuclear material modified. Greenpeace argues that it is inconsistent of the International Atomic Energy Agency to ban free traffic in nuclear weapons, but allow it in nuclear material for civil programmes. It wants a tighter regime on both. In other words, Greenpeace is demanding that the US world policeman should crack down still harder on the third world.

As shown elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*, US president Clinton is considering tightening the regime on plutonium in just the way Greenpeace suggests. But Clinton will want

something in return from Greenpeace and other radical lobbyists. The American idea is that if third world states disobey the new tighter plutonium regime, then military action can be taken against them. Greenpeace wanted him to toughen up the policy, but will it balk at the consequences?

The way in which Greenpeace's approach to the issue of non-proliferation dovetails with that of the major Western powers seems to clash with its radical image. Greenpeace is famous for its acts of derring-do on the high seas, and is usually thought of as being critical of Western governments. And at a formal level, Greenpeace is challenging the West's agenda on nuclear proliferation. It is against all nuclear weapons. In practice, however, Greenpeace is swimming with the tide of Western opinion, and focusing on the spread of nuclear weapons to the third world as the major problem.

Greenpeace is faithfully following the agenda set by the existing nuclear powers on all the key points. It has appointed itself as an adviser to the nuclear club. Its suggestions for changes would, if implemented, only increase that club's power. The willingness of a group like Greenpeace to go along with the Western governments' line expresses the strength of the anti-third world consensus in the West.

Greenpeace's stand can only lend moral legitimacy to the actions of the Western powers against third world states like North Korea. It is a great boon for the Western powers to have what is seen as a radical campaigning group arguing their line for them. Greenpeace even want a part in the policing set-up itself. In its 1992 submission to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Greenpeace boasts that it and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have acted as 'watch-dogs' and 'whistle-blowers' to prevent nuclear proliferation, so it 'would therefore be appropriate for the Agency to recognise their value'. Like snitches in school, it seems, they want teacher to give them prefects' badges.

The mechanisms exist to involve groups such as Greenpeace as observers at the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) renewal conference. At present the links between governments and NGOs like Greenpeace on the weapons issue are less than on other matters, because of the sensitivity of military questions. Nevertheless, the foreign office in Britain and the Clinton administration do hold regular discussions with Greenpeace and others on the non-proliferation issue, and the degree of NGO participation in the 1995 conference is up for discussion at a preparatory committee meeting in January 1994. The Clinton administration has a special incentive to promote groups like Greenpeace. The NGOs can criticise the Japanese in terms the US government agrees with, but cannot use in public because Japan, unlike North Korea, is too powerful to bully so easily.

Greenpeace is becoming a patsy for the Western military elite. Even if the existing nuclear powers don't formally involve Greenpeace in the NPT renewal conference, they have got the environmental group on side. Greenpeace is playing a valuable role for the nuclear powers by providing a green and peaceful cover for their imperial authority over the third world.

WAR DRUMS ^{AND} PEACOCKS THE NEW AGE OF MILITARISM

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CAMPAIGN AGAINST MILITARISM

Cap in hand gets kick in teeth

Whatever happened to the national campaign in support of the miners? As the government prepares to complete its pit closure programme, Mike Freeman highlights some hard lessons of the failed attempts to stop it

'P'olitics will not be the same again. Twice in one week in October demonstrations bigger and more working class in composition than any since the early 1970s have shown that the working class movement, so long proclaimed dead by commentators on both the left and right, is still a force.'
John Rees, *Socialist Review*, November 1992

'The last parliamentary obstacle to a fresh wave of pit closures disappeared yesterday when a Conservative rebellion melted away at the end of a Labour-led debate condemning

the government's coal policy.'
Guardian, 28 October 1993

The October 1992 announcement by industry secretary Michael Heseltine of plans to close 31 of Britain's 50 remaining pits, shedding 30 000 of the industry's 40 000 jobs, provoked an upsurge of protest. A weekday lobby of parliament was attended by thousands of angry miners and tens of thousands of their supporters. On Sunday 25 October more than 200 000 people turned out in torrential rain for the biggest demonstration against the government for years.

Balance the books

Twelve months later the government announced plans to accelerate the closure of a dozen pits which had been reprieved earlier in the year. It became clear that the government intends to complete the programme outlined in October 1992 by April 1994. It further emerged that as many as five of the 19 'core' pits not included in the October 1992 package may also now face closure. The latest round of closures provoked scarcely a murmur of protest, and miners in pit after pit had little alternative but to opt for meagre redundancy deals.

The contrast between the euphoria of October 1992 and the bathos of October 1993 indicates the failure of a particular style of opposition politics. It confirms the exhaustion, not only of the official labour movement, but of the sort of strategy and tactics that are still favoured by many radical and left-wing opponents of the government.

The strategy of the campaign against pit closures was to demonstrate to the government that its policy was irrational in terms of capitalist economics, and to present it with an alternative that maintained pits and saved jobs. Supporters of the miners did not seek to point out to the government that, whatever the state of British Coal's accounts, miners needed jobs and wages as the only means of guaranteeing their survival. Instead, they attempted to show how saving jobs could be reconciled with the objective of balancing British Coal's books.

The miners' union, Labour MPs and radical academics marshalled a range of arguments to show how British Coal could be made profitable without drastic closures. They insisted that the fall in domestic demand for coal was a result of the government-sponsored 'dash for gas' in the privatised electricity supply industry, as well as the government's

subsidies to nuclear power and encouragement of cheap imports. Further, they pointed out that closing pits caused wider job losses in associated industries and services, and that the government had to pay the cost of these mass redundancies in unemployment benefits and lost tax revenues.

Profit and loss

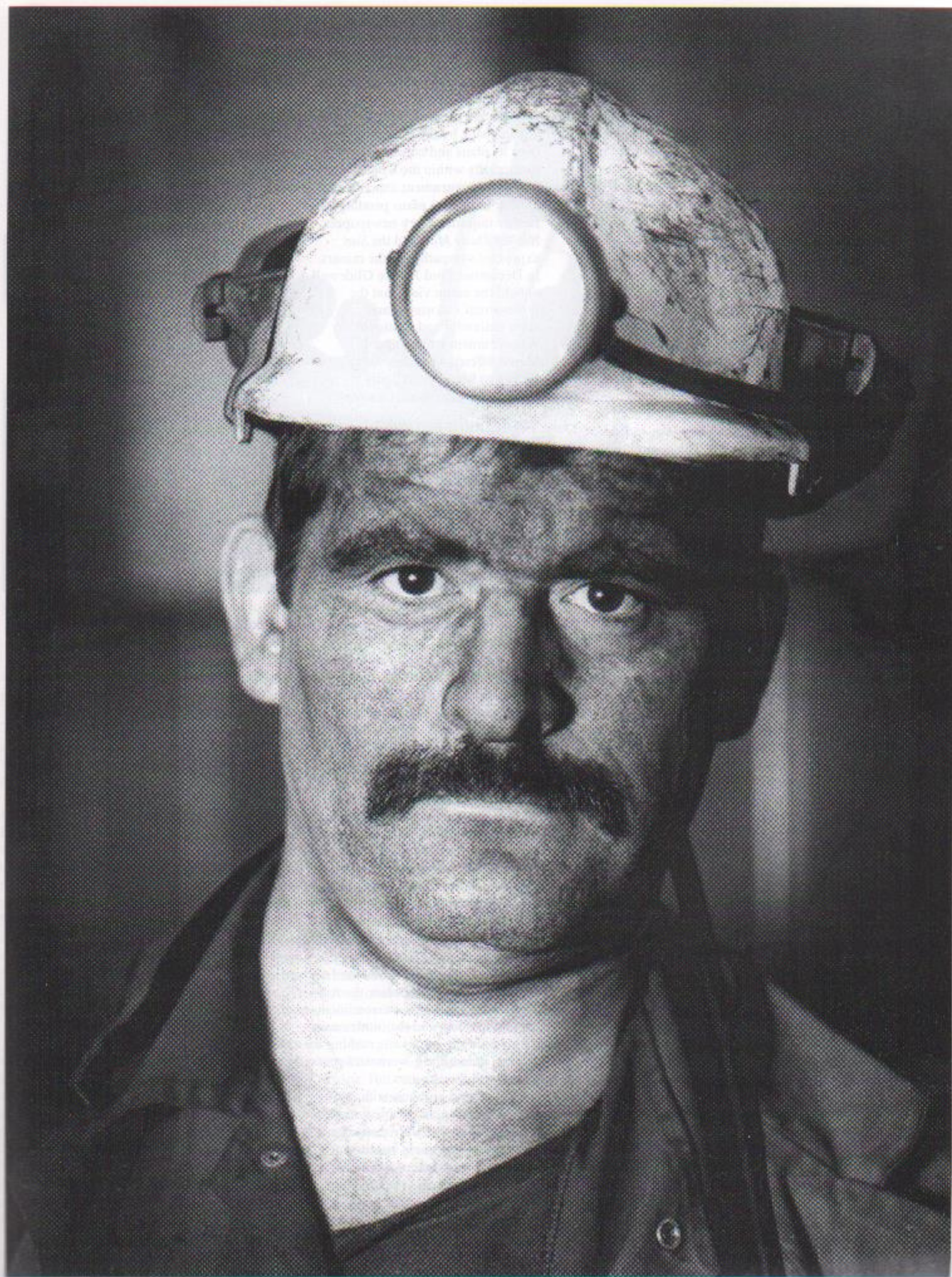
In response to the furore over Heseltine's announcement, the government commissioned four inquiries into the coal industry, to consider the proposed alternatives. Analysing the industry in purely economic terms (capitalist accounting knows no other criteria than profit and loss), their conclusions broadly vindicated the closure plans and indeed suggested that further closures might be necessary (*Guardian*, 23 January 1993). There can be little doubt that elements of political prejudice and irrationality (and probably corruption too) can be found in the government's hostility to coal and its support for energy privatisation. But the bottom line is profit, and there is little to be gained from entering the debate with capitalist entrepreneurs and their accountants about how this can be best maximised.

Indeed there are considerable dangers in alternative accountancy. One of the reports cited above emphasised that British Coal would need 'to make sweeping changes in working practices, management and structure if it was to compete successfully for a shrinking market'. Having accepted the goals of corporate profitability, radical accountants are ill-equipped to resist the consequences: the recent relaxation of safety controls in mines is one example.

Special pleading

Trying to calculate the wider cost of redundancy to the government does not work either. It simply obscures the tension between a capitalist enterprise, which employs workers only if they can make profits, and the capitalist state, which is obliged to maintain those who cannot be profitably employed in the wider interests of the system as a whole. From a capitalist point of view, the only logical response to pointing out the burden of maintaining unemployed miners would be not to save pits, but to cut benefits.

Apart from being unconvincing, attempts to justify British coal as a superior source of energy to foreign coal or gas, oil or nuclear power are simply special pleading on behalf of the coal industry. Such arguments for coal as a special case are inevitably divisive, pitting British coal miners against Australian or South African miners, and miners against workers



MICHAEL HOWE COLONIA



in the gas and other power-generating industries.

The strategy of trying to defend miners jobs by advancing an alternative policy for British Coal echoed the central strategic error of the 1984-85 miners' strike. Then, miners' leader Arthur Scargill tried to persuade the government to return to the

A stage army, cheering on the efforts of their upper class patrons

'Plan for Coal' drawn up between the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Labour government in the 1970s. But what if the profitability of British coal mining demanded closing pits, shedding jobs and squeezing wages? The commitment to the British coal industry proved to be the Achilles heel of the miners' union during the year-long strike, leading to division and defeat.

Though the 1992 campaign followed a similar strategy to that of the 1984-85 strike, the defeat of that historic struggle produced a significant shift in tactics. The methods of industrial militancy—strike, picket, demonstration—now gave way to the techniques of parliamentary lobbying and attempts to manipulate public opinion through the media. While in the 1980s the key figures were union activists, or at least union leaders, in the 1990s the main players were backbench Tory rebels and sympathetic journalists and celebrities.

Right from the announcement of Heseltine's closure plans, a group of Tory dissidents made the running. These included MPs like Elizabeth Peacock and Richard Alexander, from constituencies in mining areas, and other right wingers, such as Winston Churchill and Bill Cash, with wider grievances against the government. Instead of trying to mobilise industrial action against the closures, Scargill and the other union leaders sought to cultivate the Tory rebels and the sympathetic all-party trade and industry select committee, in the hope that these respectable parliamentary forces would sway the government.

The rally in Hyde Park at the end of the mass demonstration against the closures was addressed by Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown, a representative from the Confederation of British Industry and a bishop. The tactics of 'winning friends and influencing people' were supplemented by court actions seeking to demonstrate the illegality of the government's plans.

The miners and their working class supporters were reduced to the role of a stage army, cheering on the efforts of their upper class patrons.

Some early successes for the 'cap-in-hand' approach appeared to vindicate the methods of deference. Taken aback by the scale of the uproar over its plans and concerned about further rifts within the Conservative Party, the government announced a delay in closure plans pending further inquiries. Tory newspapers like the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun* expressed sympathy for the miners. In December Lord Justice Glidewell upheld the union view that the government's closure plans were 'unlawful and irrational'. A government white paper in March offered subsidies worth £500m to keep open 12 pits pending further 'market testing'.

Thatcher's support

It was only when the final outcome of the establishment revolt became apparent in the recent collapse of opposition to the completion—and extension—of the closure programme that the true extent of the grovelling of the campaign became apparent. When it was revealed that closures were to go ahead in Nottinghamshire, local union leader Neil Greatrex revealed how he had earlier had a meeting with 'Lady' Thatcher, 'to try to get her on our side' (*Guardian*, 2 October 1993). As a representative of the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers which was formed with Margaret Thatcher's enthusiastic backing in the course of the 1984-85 miners' strike, Greatrex had reason to expect a sympathetic response from the scourge of the NUM. He got it.

Mrs Thatcher wrote to Heseltine's deputy, Tim Eggar, pleading for mercy for the Notts miners. Her intervention was warmly welcomed by Richard Caborn, the Sheffield Labour MP who chairs the trade and industry committee: 'This is the first time that Lady [sic] Thatcher is prepared to back part of our report', he proclaimed. While the union leaders and the Labour politicians grovelled before the former prime minister, whose current memoirs reveal the relish and the ruthlessness with which she set about crushing the miners' union, the government pressed ahead with the closures.

The central problem with the tactic of relying on establishment critics of the pit closure campaign was that none of them opposed closures in principle. All they wanted was a more sympathetic approach, more consultation and delay, a sympathetic stay of execution. But the result of this approach was that the horizons of the miners' struggle were lowered to what was acceptable

to the leading critics of the government—the Tory back benchers. The union leaders satisfied themselves with aiming for delays and consultations.

Miner's prayer

Nobody set out the goals of no pit closures, no redundancies, goals which are not only part of a long-established union policy, but also clearly necessary to defend miners' jobs. Nobody suggested any form of collective initiative or direct action of the sort that might be expected to alienate the likes of Winston Churchill, Paddy Ashdown or the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In their drive to sustain middle class approval through the media, the union leaders ransacked the traditions of the labour bureaucracy and the left to come up with the most abject forms of protest activity. So we had the grotesque 'Miners' Prayer' ('a spine-tingling anthem' played by the Grimethorpe Colliery Band), the ludicrous 'Switch off at eight' campaign (a TUC-backed plan to bring the government to its senses as a result of everybody simultaneously turning off their lights—for five minutes), and the pathetic tramp by a handful of union officials from Scotland to London.

We even had the re-establishment of women's peace camps (on the Greenham Common model) at threatened Yorkshire pits. The nearest the miners' union came to industrial action was Scargill's call for a 'stayaway' to coincide with a TUC day of action last February. Once the media tired of depicting miners as custodians of the sort of national heritage made familiar in Hovis adverts, or patronising them as worthy recipients of charity, they lost interest in the whole issue.

Symbolic coal

The image of outgoing TUC leader Norman Willis standing alongside a group of Tory, Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs, holding aloft a 'four-foot symbolic lump of coal' and presenting a 300 000-signature petition against the pit closures to parliament sums up the official labour movement campaign. The most profound comment on the campaign came from former Notts union leader Roy Lynk, who received an OBE for his strike-breaking services in 1984-85. Surveying the decimation of the Notts coalfield he observed that it 'just shows' that if you behave like a moderate, 'they treat you like a soft touch'. Or to put it another way, if you go cap in hand to the government and the capitalists, you're likely to get a kick in the teeth.

Constitutional climbdown



The announcement of South Africa's new interim constitution, under which the country's first non-racial elections are due to be contested on 27 April 1994, was greeted with relief and joy by the British media. The *Guardian* called it a 'new stage of hope'. The *Financial Times* welcomed it as a 'negotiated revolution' which 'effectively strips the white minority of almost all entrenched powers' (18 November 1993).

The euphoria was based upon what the media regards as a last-minute climbdown by president FW De Klerk on the rules for decision-making in the post-apartheid cabinet. Having insisted for months that a two-thirds majority vote would be required to pass certain decisions in the new multi-party cabinet (which would have given the National Party and its allies blocking powers), De Klerk agreed instead to simple majority decisions, in return for a commitment from Nelson Mandela that the cabinet would operate in a 'consensus-seeking spirit'. This, apparently, heralds a big step towards South Africa's first 'government of national unity'.

De Klerk's concession has been presented as a major compromise by the ruling National Party to the African National Congress. However, set the new constitution in the context of the three-year long negotiations process, and a very different picture emerges. Whatever concession De Klerk may have made in the fine details of the constitution, the ANC's acceptance of the document expresses how far it, rather than the apartheid regime, has compromised every principle it ever stood for.

Take the central component of the constitution—power-sharing. At every level of government, power-sharing is built in. The new

Charles Longford on the true meaning of the deal which the ANC celebrated as a victory

cabinet will be made up of a president, deputy presidents (one from every party with 80 seats in the national assembly) and up to 27 ministers. Any party with 20 seats (five per cent of the vote) in the national assembly will be entitled to a proportional number of cabinet portfolios and deputy ministerial posts. A similar system of proportionality is planned for the national assembly and especially the senate, where 90 senators will be elected on a regional basis by the nine provincial legislatures. Finally, the constitutional assembly, to be made up of a joint sitting of the national assembly and senate, will require a two-thirds majority to pass the final constitution for the new South Africa.

The power-sharing set-up might appear sensible in a multi-racial country like South Africa. But in reality, it represents the entrenchment of minority power against the liberation movement's historic goal of black majority rule.

In South Africa today there is no longer a politically constituted black majority. This reflects the government's success in transforming the black liberation struggle into a black civil war, in which most violence takes place between ANC supporters and the conservative Inkatha movement. Black South Africa has fragmented; and the new constitution's in-built power-sharing stipulations will ensure that these

divisions are institutionalised, while also entrenching the power of the white minority elite. The interim constitution, which president De Klerk was supposed to have conceded to the ANC, in fact represents De Klerk's victory over the ANC and the struggle for black liberation.

The process of negotiations has transformed the ANC into a moderate political party. Today, the ANC are rampant free marketeers who see the need for firmer policing of the black population in order to attract foreign investment to South Africa. As black aspirations assert themselves after 27 April, expect to see the ANC using the 'consensus-seeking spirit' built into cabinet government to demand that its supporters restrain their disaffection with the new South African capitalism. And should there be any tendency not to act in this way, the new ANC-led government will have to contend with the fact that, despite having a new constitution, the institutions of the old apartheid state will still be there, ready to enforce 'consensus' at gunpoint.

As part of the deal on the interim constitution it has been agreed to leave the institutions of the apartheid state—from the civil service to the army and police—almost intact, with the addition of some black faces in top posts. And while the constitution includes a Bill of Rights to be strengthened by a national ombudsman—called the 'public protector' in deference to feminist sentiment—it also allows the suspension of political rights through the imposition of old-fashioned states of emergency and detention without trial.

Add to this the devolution of power to provincial governments in areas like education, health, welfare and policing—devolution which may even be strengthened in order to ensure that the white far right and the Zulu-based Inkatha participate in the April elections—and it becomes clear that the interim constitution has built-in guarantees that there will be no fundamental threat to the powers that be in South Africa.

So what is the point of the interim constitution? It is designed primarily to allow a new political class to emerge in South Africa. From now until 1999, when another round of constitutional change is due to begin, the government intends to integrate moderate black politicians into the state machinery. The plans to institutionalise power-sharing and devolve power away from central government, while keeping the repressive institutions of the state intact, give De Klerk and the South African establishment cause to celebrate. If the government negotiators had the sleepless nights which the media claims, it must have been due to their concern that the ANC might recognise this compromise as a defeat and end the process altogether.

But the ANC did nothing of the sort. Instead it celebrated the new constitution as a victory for black South Africans, a fact which attests to the success of the De Klerk regime in instilling the black liberation movement with the spirit of compromise. Welcome to the new South Africa. ●

In its furious efforts to get congress to back the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) in November, the Clinton administration emphasised the importance of the treaty to the future of the US economy. The USA was at a crossroads, said the White House, between extending free trade or turning inwards and becoming protectionist, and Nafta would be the test.

Most of the administration's claims overstated the importance of the measures in Nafta. In narrow economic terms, the North American treaty alters little. But Bill Clinton's linking of Nafta with wider US trade policy was relevant. Nafta's real significance is as a political weapon in Washington's more aggressive trade stance towards the rival economic powers of Europe and Japan.

Like Ohio

The stated aims of Nafta are to eliminate tariffs on goods and lessen restrictions on foreign investment between Canada, the USA and Mexico over the next 15 years. As the USA and Canada

The North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) does not mean that the USA is withdrawing into a protectionist shell; it means that Bill Clinton is using trade as a political weapon around the world, argues James Malone

Much ado about Nafta

Nancy Morton thinks the confusing debate about Nafta is a sign of the times in Clinton's America

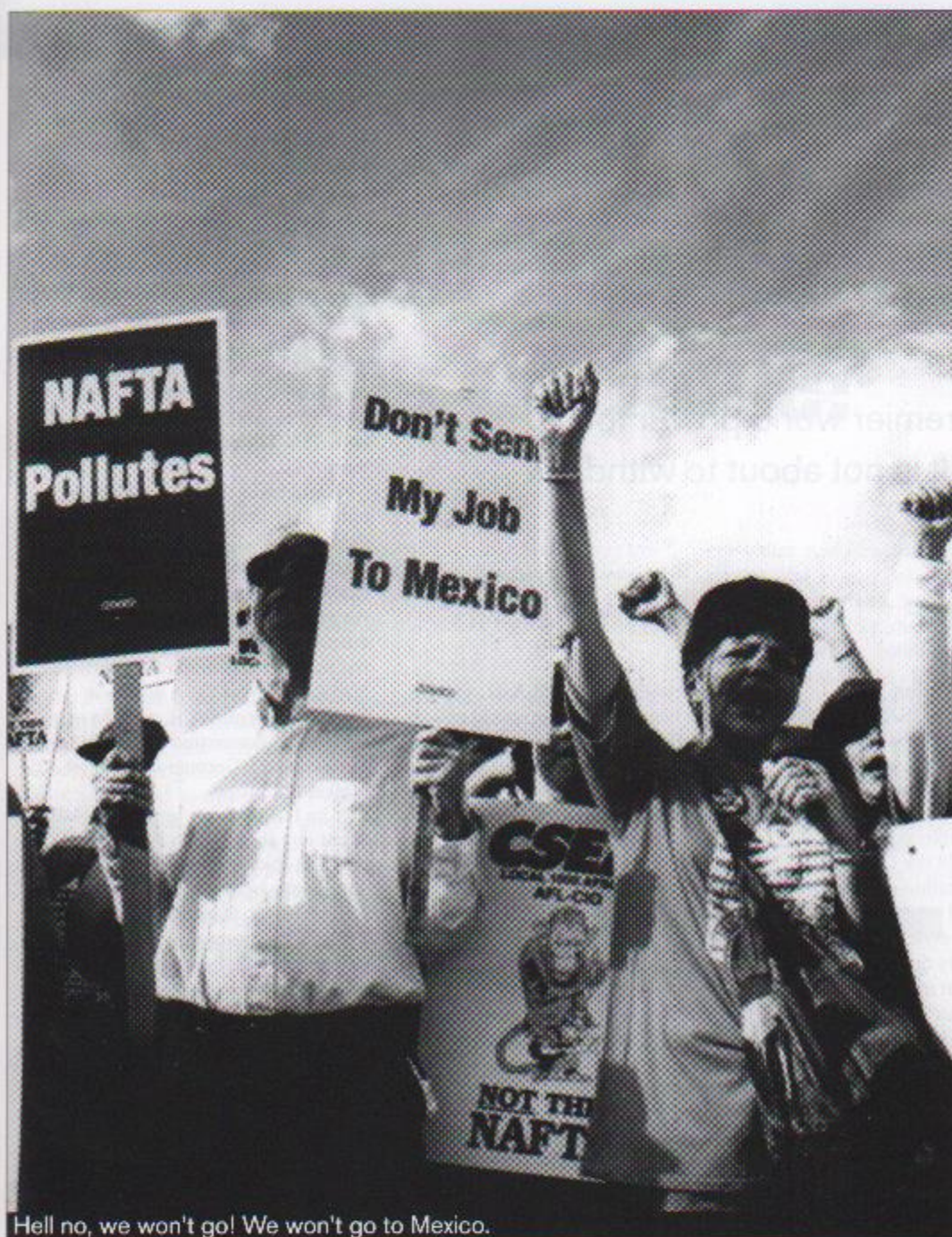
America's Maastricht

After listening to the debate over Nafta in the USA, anyone could be forgiven for being a little confused. Party loyalties no longer seemed relevant. Democrat president Bill Clinton's treaty was backed by most Republicans; yet right-wing Republican Pat Buchanan and radical black Democrat Jesse Jackson were both against it.

Both sides made extravagant claims about Nafta. The Clinton administration proclaimed that the 'world's biggest market' was being created. Ross Perot warned of the 'giant sucking sound' of six million US jobs crossing the Mexican border. The integrity of the Clinton presidency itself was said to be at stake. It was easy to forget that the issue at the heart of Nafta was US trade relations with one third world country.

The significance of Nafta for US foreign and economic policy cannot explain the extraordinary vehemence of the debate. In many ways the congressional furor around Nafta was similar to the recent British parliamentary preoccupation with the Maastricht treaty. Nafta became a symbol of the political crisis at the heart of the American system of government, just as the Maastricht row temporarily symbolised the malaise in the British body politic.

Like Maastricht, Nafta was an issue of limited practical importance that became elevated into an apparent matter of life and death. Members of the ruling party felt little need to toe the party line in the ferocious political row. Meanwhile the public remained on the sidelines in cynical bewilderment, watching the politicians slug it out.



Hell no, we won't go! We won't go to Mexico.

What might have been a debate on trade details became a row about the standing of the USA in the world. This might have been understandable if Nafta involved Japan or Germany—but Mexico? Although more of a lame armadillo than a voracious predator, the Mexican menace became the focus of fears and anxiety in US society.

The Nafta debate showed that the old rules of political etiquette no longer apply. Each of the main parties in the USA has long been a decentralised coalition, encompassing both liberals and conservatives. But of late they have become even more fragmented. The Nafta debate threw the fragile balance of party politics into total disarray. With no party able to articulate a coherent view, there was nothing compelling politicians to follow

their party line. They voted individually, according to what was in it for them, refusing to make even the usual token displays of loyalty to the party hierarchies.

While the political debate roared on in congress, most Americans couldn't care less about Nafta. The polls showed most favoured the agreement but few were enthusiastic. Some people, already insecure because of the slump, feared that Nafta would mean more job losses. That's why strongest opposition to the agreement was in the old industrial 'Rustbelt' of the north-east and mid-west, where factory closures have had a devastating impact. Ironically these sectors are the least at risk from Mexican competition.

As with Maastricht in Europe, most anti-Nafta sentiment expressed cynicism about the powers that be rather than the treaty

itself. This was one reason why the pro-Nafta forces had trouble raising support. As one business lobbyist complained to *Business Week*, 'Too many Americans see us as greedy "suits", and if we're selling something, it must be bad for the average guy'.

The new political crisis revealed by the Nafta debate reflects the impact of the end of the Cold War in the USA. The end of the Cold War politics which defined American attitudes for more than 40 years has thrown everything into disarray. Old political allegiances have little meaning any more, so that debates like the Nafta row are far less regulated. Add to this loss of direction the lack of dynamism in the economy and it's easy to see why the Clinton presidency is suffering a profound sense of drift. ►

had already agreed similar provisions in 1989, the focus of the Nafta debate was on the US-Mexican relationship.

The economic impact of Nafta, which comes into force on 1 January 1994, will be fairly modest. Duties between the USA and Mexico are already relatively low, and trade and investment between the two countries is barely restricted. And the economic significance of Mexico to the USA is pretty limited; the \$30 billion Mexican market is barely equivalent to the US state of Ohio.

Wild predictions

Excluding Ross Perot's wild predictions, forecasts of Nafta's net impact on US employment range from 200 000 jobs created to 550 000 lost over 10 years. Even taking these unreliable figures at face value, they are not that significant. The USA creates and destroys about 500 000 jobs every three months. More than two million jobs were destroyed during the recent recession, and the sluggish recovery has created about six million fewer jobs than a typical postwar upturn in the USA.

In economic terms, Nafta simply codifies existing practice. It is the creation of established economic trends, not the creator of new ones. The USA is already the end market for three quarters of all exports from Canada and Mexico. US-Mexican trade has doubled since 1988, mostly due to a boom in US exports. Between 1986 and 1992, US direct investment in Mexico (excluding the finance sector) grew by over twice as much as US direct investment worldwide.

Confrontational

Nafta's real significance lies elsewhere, as part of the USA's more confrontational approach to global trade policy. It is more important as a bargaining lever in ►



international negotiations on economic and political matters than as a measure affecting trade and investment in North America.

The US economy is becoming increasingly interconnected with the rest of the world. This is due not to technical improvements making national borders less relevant. It is a response to the USA's

The USA cannot survive on North American markets alone. It now relies on non-Nafta markets for 75 per cent of its exports. Nor can America's role in Nafta be compared to the position of Germany and Japan within the respective economic blocs that they dominate. Mexico is a poor third world country, not an industrialised continent like Western Europe or a rising

is to open up other countries' markets, especially Japan's. To get its way, the USA holds out the threat that it will restrict its rivals' access to the huge and lucrative American market. The USA is in effect arguing that it is not good enough for Japan to be open to US merchandise, it must guarantee that American goods are bought.

The threat of limiting access to the US market is an important bargaining chip. The USA is the largest homogeneous market in the world. It is also the country that receives the most overseas investment. At a time when its competitors are suffering from recession or poor growth at home, the US market becomes even more vital.

Nafta gives the USA added political leverage in these kinds of deliberations. Clinton can now argue that it is not just the USA against closed markets, it's all of North America. He can threaten to reduce other countries' access to the whole North American market. In particular, Nafta can be used as a wedge in a bid to undermine the creation of a Japanese-dominated trading bloc in Asia, and a German-dominated market in Europe.

The USA's rivals sense that Nafta is not just about North America. At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference held soon after congress ratified Nafta, fears were raised of the USA using strong-arm tactics to get its way in Asia. European nations, too, voiced worries about becoming isolated. None of the major countries wants a trade war. But the pressure of the worldwide slump is pushing them into antagonistic stances, and making it more difficult to paper over their real differences. Nafta is just one of the opening shots in a dangerous international conflict.

The USA has been the premier world power for more than half a century. It is not about to withdraw into its Mexican backyard

economic crisis and the failure of national solutions. The USA puts greater emphasis and reliance on international markets because of economic stagnation at home.

Some commentators have argued that Nafta represents a retreat into a protectionist block. But the USA's growing overseas orientation ensures that there can be no real retreat into 'beggar thy neighbour'-style protectionism. The treaty does signify a step away from multilateral negotiations in preference to bilateral ties. And it does portend the redivision of the world into three major regions—Europe, North America and Asia. But it is wrong to say that the USA is turning inward: Nafta is a defensive block which Clinton hopes will help the USA get its way in other markets.

economic region like East Asia. The USA has been the premier world power for more than half a century. It is not about to withdraw into its Mexican backyard, or accept a lower international profile.

Instead, Nafta indicates the trend towards more politicised global trade relations. Despite its economic problems, the USA is still big and strong enough to assert its world leadership and wrest concessions from its rivals in the sphere of trade. The USA has already, for example, sidestepped Gatt rules and imposed 'voluntary' export restraint arrangements on competitors like Japan. It has also imposed extensive anti-dumping duties, to the dismay of its major economic rivals.

The main thrust of US trade policy

A sign of how confused things have become was that at times the Nafta debate seemed to divide along most un-American lines, as a battle between the trade unions (anti-) and big business (pro-). Although most opponents of Nafta based their position on the defence of jobs, and Clinton attacked organised labour's 'musclebound' tactics, it wasn't really a class struggle.

For a start, the most vocal opposition to Nafta came from right wingers like Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan, and many of their arguments relied on anti-Mexican racism. Pennsylvania Democrat Ron Klink of the Congressional Anti-Nafta Caucus raised the spectre of mad 18-year old Mexican truck drivers speeding down US highways, and drug lords running free trade in narcotics.

The unions did oppose Nafta. But the idea that the AFL-CIO (the American TLC) could be a threat is a joke. Clinton exaggerated its strength in order to appear the victim of special interests. The AFL-CIO has few remaining links with workers in the USA; only 12 per cent of private sector employees are unionised today. The wealthy bureaucrats who run America's corporate unions have more in common with employers opposed to the treaty than with their own membership. Their concern over Nafta was not primarily with saving jobs, but with safeguarding the markets and profits of their respective industries (which also explains why a few unions did not oppose the treaty). The same union bosses who have cooperated in the massacre of jobs by US capitalists, have suddenly decided they want to fight for jobs against impoverished Mexicans.

In fact no matter how the vote went, ordinary Americans stood to lose out. The Nafta debate was really a discussion within the US business and political elite about a particular survival strategy for American capitalism. Nafta's critics implied that without the treaty, the US economy would be providing jobs. But American capitalism is stuck in a slump, and millions of jobs are on the chopping block with or without Nafta.

The racist consensus that the problem facing Americans is competition from foreign workers is a real barrier to building opposition to job cuts. It ensures that the voice of working people in the USA is drowned out by reactionaries like Perot and Buchanan, and the self-serving bosses of corporate unions.



Would you let your servants wear this perfume?

Unfortunately last month's end-of-year survey went to press too early to announce Mr Peter Norman, Managing Director, Givenchy UK as snob of the year. So I hereby nominate him for 1994, with a fair amount of confidence that he will still be up there at the top come December.

Peter Norman is the sort of man that ordinary people rarely get to see, rather like those characters you glimpse in news flashes, standing around outside the Carlton Club, or dashing past reporters into meetings of the great and the good. But we saw him recently because he was obliged to appear on a consumer programme to defend his company from accusations of short-changing customers.

The background to the case is fairly straightforward. Superdrug, the high street cut-price chemists, decided to undercut the upmarket department stores and sell top-brand perfumes at knockdown prices. This is a long overdue challenge to the notorious racket of the perfume trade, where the perfume companies collude with a few 'approved outlets' to make huge profits. The mark-up of a typical perfume is at least 10 times the cost of producing the stuff, and the packaging usually costs more than the liquid itself.

Perfumes are obviously associated with luxury, and the image is more important than the scent. Hence the companies spend huge amounts on advertising in carefully selected magazines and jealously guard their right to restrict franchises to certain shops. The impression of specialness is maintained at all costs.

Since the fifties, even the makers of luxury goods have adopted a democratic approach to advertising. 'Exclusive' products are within the price range of most people—for special occasions, at least. In the early days of TV advertising, 'luxury' for an ordinary woman was a modest affair: 'sixpence worth of heaven' with a Flake; a taste of the high life with a bottle of Babycham—'enough to fill a champagne glass' (or a teacup if you didn't have a champagne glass handy); or simply a bar of soap that didn't smell like toilet cleaner.

Camay's distinctive pink tablet was accompanied by opulent visions of rich ladies soaking themselves in huge marble bathrooms, but their target was ordinary housewives, many of whom would have only recently moved to a house with a bath. The message was: pamper your body—you work hard for little reward, so spoil yourself for once. The message has remained essentially the same ever since, even if the crude displays of wealth have made way for more sophisticated versions: by 1980, Camay was 'for women who choose to please themselves'.

Like most people, I had always taken the exotic fantasy advertisements to be an invitation to enjoy a little luxury, to let a little colour into a grey world, rather than a realistic representation of the life of a typical

consumer. And I had also assumed that to a good capitalist one person's money was as good as another's. I hadn't counted on Peter Norman.

For Mr Norman, keeping his perfumes out of Superdrug is not merely a marketing strategy, it is a matter of honour. In a strangled voice somewhere between Prince Charles and Brian Sewell on the ridiculousness scale, he spoke of his horror at discovering that enterprising retailers were circumventing Givenchy's well-policed distribution network and importing supplies from abroad, selling at market stall prices. Yet this was not merely the fury of an outwitted businessman, this was the trauma of a man who had just discovered that the working classes smell—of Ysatis, Amarige and all his other bottled babies. 'It's quite despicable, I have heard they were displaying them next to tights', he recalled in a horrified whisper, 'and in places where people draw their *dole money!*'

At this point I was still expecting him to offer a sound business argument about how Givenchy's image was being undermined by the cowboys, and how the thrill of phoney exclusiveness was being denied to thousands of customers who would lose interest if they could buy the stuff in any old shop. This would be the kind of tack taken by Peter York and all the other deconstructors of advertising and marketing. The truth was somewhat blunter. Take a woman whose husband works hard, suggested Norman, and who maybe has a job herself, and spends hard-earned money on perfume: 'She doesn't

wish to come down the stairs in the morning and see her au pair or cleaner walking in wearing the same perfume.'

There were more ruffled feathers at the glossy magazines, where advertising managers enjoy a close relationship with the perfume people. Superdrug mischievously submitted an announcement of its price reductions, and received indignant replies. Fearful of losing valuable clients, the glossies turned them down flat, and *Vogue* remarked that the ad would suggest that the magazine had an 'impoverished middle class readership'. That's right, an impoverished *middle class* readership. Presumably they are the ones who don't even have a cleaner.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has now ruled that the perfume cartel is entitled to refuse to supply shops that offer discounts, on the grounds that it is necessary to preserve brand integrity. This will undoubtedly be a comfort to the Peter Normans of this world. But it doesn't solve the fundamental problem that anyone from cleaners and fishwives to members of the impoverished middle classes can still get their hands on the stuff if they've got the money in their pockets. Clearly, what's needed next is an economic policy that can restore a bit of sanity to a world where Jack's as good as his master, and Jill's as good as her Mastercard.

The thrill of phoney exclusiveness was being denied to thousands of customers

Died and gone to

Here is a typically funny passage in Nick Hornby's award-winning homage to football fanaticism, *Fever Pitch*, in which he describes his unease at the thought of departing this earth mid-season. He would be cast into eternal darkness not knowing where his beloved Arsenal are going to finish in the League. He consoles himself with the thought that he might well be able to lurk around Highbury, Arsenal's ground, as a benevolent spirit. Given Arsenal's reputation as the most boring team in the world, the desire to spend eternity waiting for the Arsenal midfield to do something creative is enough to make the most seasoned observer of human behaviour raise an eyebrow. *Fever Pitch* goes a long way to explain the twisted psyche that would want such a fate.

Fever Pitch traces Hornby's obsession with Arsenal from his childhood through to his later life. Hornby describes vividly the passion, the humour, and the excitement generated within a football stadium, which can make such places a mecca for bored teenagers from the suburbs.

Being obsessive about football, argues Hornby, is different from any other obsession in life. 'It's not as if I'm playing with train sets or messing around with Action Man', he says. 'It is a unique experience being in a match. That sense of being in a unique place is very unusual today. And it's great to have that thread running constantly through your whole life from your childhood onwards. I find the permanence of supporting a football team highly attractive, given all the other things changing in my life.'

But the very success of a book like *Fever Pitch* suggests that football is beginning to attract a new kind of fan—middle-aged, middle class voyeurs, for whom a seat in an executive box is another accoutrement, the kind of people who call football 'soccer'. 'Yes', says Hornby, 'the success of the book is that it tapped into football fans who are middle class and have arty jobs. Then again, if 90 000 Arsenal fans can buy that vile away kit at £32 a go, then there's obviously a market for anything.'

Hornby is contemptuous of this new breed of middle class supporters who look upon traditional football fans as animals. He is scornful too of the middle class condescension of TV commentators, and their trite moralistic comments on issues like violence on the pitch. 'It does piss me off', he says,

'when you have Barry Davies or Jimmy Hill talking about things being a disgrace. And you think, "God it's only two blokes having a swing at each other on a football pitch". And if you've seen something like that, it does get the crowd going. And even if it's nil-nil, you think, "At least they had a punch-up half way through".

'I think in the greater scheme of things events like that are immensely entertaining. Things like professional fouls—even though they make you angry at the time, they make the game memorable and lift the spirits—remember, you're talking to a man whose team has drawn nil-nil every Saturday for a month!'

But while Hornby is dismissive of people like Hill and the executive box men, he seems to have imbibed some of their prejudices, particularly about football hooliganism. 'I'm extremely dubious about England fans', he says. 'I do think they're completely a race apart.' Talking about the England-Holland world cup match in Rotterdam, when the Dutch police rounded up England fans and set about them, Hornby broadly goes along with the press panic about the fans' behaviour.

'I'm sure there were miscarriages of justice. And I'm sure violence was perpetrated against the fans. But what were those people doing travelling to another country *en masse* without a ticket? It's all a bit fishy to me. Most people who follow England abroad are not the people that I watch football with and I can't really identify with them. And the fascist involvement I worry about, because it's not something that I see in big London grounds.'

Hornby does concede that the chauvinism of England supporters reflects the political climate at home. 'It's extraordinary with this government and this cultural climate that the flog 'em and birch 'em brigade really can't see the connection between the way that we're encouraged to behave at home and the way that these people behave abroad. You listen to Peter Liley sounding off at the Tory Party conference about foreign scroungers and the next week you have an international where people misbehave.'

He is critical too about the way that club chairmen and League administrators have forced fans to watch games in squalid, dangerous, crumbling grounds. But he also blames fans like him for tolerating such conditions. 'If it was a cinema or

theatre', he says, 'people would have said years ago, "Fuck you, I'm not going there any more". But we all keep going back. You think, "God, this is a shit hole this place, but I've got to see the game, it's a Cup semi-final". In the end people don't care enough to do anything about it. What they should do is things like boycott games, but boycotts never last. Arsenal fans were going to boycott the bond scheme but nobody wanted to do it. So in the end they said, "We will all sit down on the terraces". What's [Arsenal chairman] David Dein going to think about that?

'There's no way a real football fan is ever going to do anything that will ever prevent him from seeing a game. And that has undermined fans' initiatives. It has created a situation where we are kept in squalor and dangerous situations.'

What did Hornby think of England's debacle in the World Cup? 'Our national team is probably the worst one there's ever been in my lifetime. On the other hand, I don't think there's ever been a golden age of English football. The morning after the Holland game, the back page of the *Guardian* was full of old footballers giving their opinions on what had gone wrong. They were all 1970s footballers. And you think, these are the people who failed to qualify for two world cups, never mind one world cup. Mike bloody Channon! He was in a terrible England team and now he's telling us how to get back to the golden age!

'If you look at the national team, it's not been a long slow decline. It's a straight line at the bottom, with a little blip around '66. England were dire before that and they've been dire since. If you take the five best teams in the world—Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Holland and Italy—we've only won once against any of these teams in a serious match since 1966.'

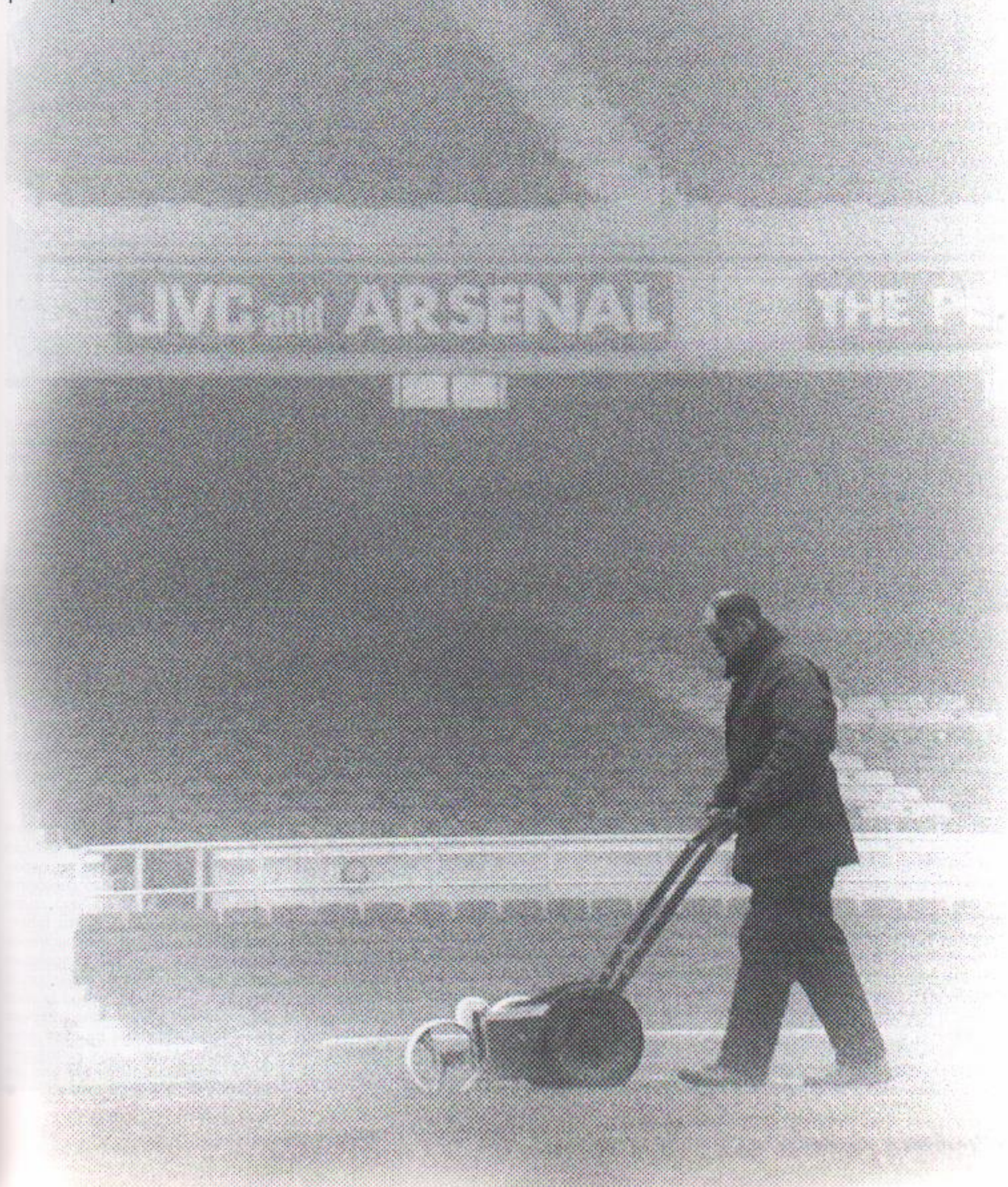
So who does he think should take charge of England now? 'It's got to the stage', says Hornby, 'where you can't see anybody with common sense taking the job'. What about George Graham? 'He'd get the results', he says diplomatically. But then honesty gets the better of him. 'I wouldn't really like to see George Graham as England manager.' Amen to that.

Fever Pitch is published by Gollancz, £4.99 pbk

My Favourite Year, edited by Nick Hornby is published by HF&G Witherby, £9.99 pbk

Highbury?

Writer and Arsenal fanatic Nick Hornby talked to Steve Banks about nil-nil draws, England defeats and why he likes a good punch-up



Kenan Malik on a novel that has become the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* of the nineties

The Lord Horror show

What have James Anderton, Michael Winner, Julie Burchill and Compendium, north London's alternative bookshop, got in common? All have found Mike Butterworth 'offensive'. It's enough to make you warm to the man instantly.

Butterworth is a tall, gaunt, silver-haired Mancunian who looks more like a retired headmaster than a member of the dirty mac brigade. Yet his bookshops have been raided by the vice squad more times than he can remember; his partner, Dave Britton has twice been imprisoned under obscenity laws; and in 1991 a book he published became the first novel to be banned by an English court since *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. 'The trouble is', said Butterworth with a wry smile, 'I've never been politically correct'.

Butterworth and Britton are founders of Savoy Books, a small Manchester imprint that specialises in science fiction, horror and fantasy. In 1989 Savoy published *Lord Horror*, a surreal fantasy written by Britton. The novel tells the tale of Lord Horror (a mythic recreation of Lord Haw Haw) and his search for Adolf Hitler, both men having survived the war and being adrift in a surreal, postmodern world. Written in a heavy, ornate style, *Lord Horror* has been compared to, among others, the works of George Bataille and William Burroughs. 'The aim of the book', says Butterworth, 'was to explore the whole question of the Holocaust and its relevance today. We wanted to explore the dark corners of the twentieth century'.

The book caused an immediate uproar, and was condemned as racist and anti-Semitic. Michael Winner called for it to be banned. Julie Burchill said she was 'up for a riot in Golders Green or Stamford Hill'. Manchester police chief James Anderton ordered all 350 copies of the book to be seized. And magistrate Derick Fairclough banned the book under Section Three of the Obscene Publications Act, together with a comic, *Meck & Ecker*, based on characters from *Lord Horror*.

'It was difficult to see what was obscene about *Lord Horror*', says Butterworth. 'It contains no graphic sex scenes. It has scenes of violence, but not nearly as graphic as other novels, such as *American Psycho*. The characters are bigoted and anti-Semitic—but that's because it's



A bigoted vice squad from *Meng & Ecker*—of course it couldn't happen in real life

a fictionalised exploration of those themes. Those were views held by the characters, not by us. How do you write about anti-Semitism if you can't mention it?

The appeal against the banning order, which took place a year later, was as surreal as the novel. George Robertson, the defence barrister, quoted Kafka to the court. The presiding judge, Gerard Humphries, complained that Robertson was 'blinding us with science fiction'. One character in the novel is Shatterhand, Hitler's gigantic penis which acquires a life of its own. The prosecution claimed this was obscene. Science fiction author Michael Moorcock, appearing for the defence, claimed that it was a symbol of 'the beast within us'. In one passage in the book, the phallic beast ejaculates over precious manuscripts by Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein. 'What is the purpose of this?', asked judge Humphries. 'It is a statement about Hitler's shallow attempt to weave together an ideology', replied Robertson with a straight face.

In the end Humphries found the novel not obscene, but declared that the comic was, because it was 'more luridly bound and is of far less literary nature'. This, as Butterworth points out, is 'rather like the *Lady Chatterley* trial, where the prosecution holds up the book and says, "How would you like this to be read by your wife or your

servant?'. Novels are acceptable because they are read by intelligent people. Because comics are visual and supposed to be read only by people of subnormal mentality, they should be banned'.

Lord Horror was banned under Section Three of the Obscene Publications Act, which requires just a nod from a magistrate. Since then more Savoy publications have been seized. Butterworth and Britton are now trying to force the DPP to prosecute under Section Two of the act which allows for a jury trial. 'We are willing to risk imprisonment', says Butterworth, 'but we want to put our case to a jury. The trouble is, the DPP is reluctant because she realises that a jury is unlikely to be as bigoted as a magistrate'.

What particularly concerns Butterworth is the lack of support Savoy has had from liberals. 'We have had this unholy alliance of the authoritarian censorship of the state on the one side and, on the other, the politically correct lobby. People who we thought were our friends turned out not to be so.' Compendium Books, the 'alternative' bookshop in north London suddenly refused to stock Savoy books or comics. Others followed suit. 'The left tends to be even more moral than the right', says Butterworth, 'and it allows the authorities who are repressive to get a better foothold'. ●



Panto politics

There is a great moment in *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves* in which the Sheriff's men burst into Maid Marian's house and take her prisoner. They do it easily because she is on her own. Now I'm not an expert on medieval living conditions, but I do know that the Lady of the Manor did not stay in on her own. There would be pigs, cattle, serfs, the odd mendicant perhaps. The bourgeoisie, however, have a marvellous capacity to imagine that everyone is just like them (or ought to be, or would like to be). This is at the root of the attacks on the current royal family.

It must be baffling for Charles to find himself being reviled and hated for being exactly the sort of husband his father and his father's father had been all the way back to Odin (the House of Windsor claims descent from the Norse gods). But this is the age of John Major's 'invulnerable suburbs', and being descended from a one-eyed Viking deity with an eight-legged flying horse will not cut any ice with Peter Lilley.

The confrontation between a reactionary government and a blokeish liberal single-parent monarch provides the setting for *To Play The King*, the BBC series which continues the story of Francis Urquhart, the wicked whip who murdered his way to Number 10 in *House of Cards*. Like anyone else, I love an evil genius. The trouble with this one is that compared to our present PM, Urquhart is Pollyanna.

Urquhart topped a Tory journalist—barely a crime at all to right-thinking people—and now he is haunted by the memory. Faced with a vote of confidence in the Commons, Major stitched up a deal with the Unionists that plunged Northern Ireland into an orgy of violence. He didn't do it for England, didn't do it for the Conservative Party. He did it just for himself, a little treat, to save moving his woollies out of Number 10. Somehow, I don't think he wakes up screaming 'Greysteel!'. I don't think he even wakes up screaming 'Shankill!'. I think he probably sleeps rather well. Where Urquhart skilfully covers the traces and hides the evidence, Major did all this in public, on TV. Real evil is shameless and banal.

Part of the fun of *To Play The King* is Urquhart's trick of making asides to the camera. It's cribbed from Olivier's *Richard III* but it plays more like panto, with Ian Richardson as a kind of George Sanders' Uncle Abenazar. Like all pantos it has a good king and a princess (Urquhart is the scheming grand vizier who wants to bring down the dim but decent king by using the selfish princess). It has the naughtiness of panto, too. Part of the pleasure of watching it is the cheeky way

it plays with the fact that we all know who we are talking about. The 'fat princess' is a bit of a goer who happily sells her story to the papers. We all know who it is supposed to be, so when we see her inviting the editor of a national newspaper to soap her down in the bath we titter knowingly. I can't comment further as I might get sued.

The story also has a childish simplicity. Where the previous series showed Urquhart pulling the strings of the Old Boys' club like a virtuoso, here it's just a case of blackmail and counter-blackmail. Urquhart's victim called him 'daddy' and his arch references to 'putting the whip about' smack loudly of the nursery. The blackmail plots themselves have an 'Oooh—Ahh! Pee Po Belly Bum Drawers' quality. And this is the real source of the series' power. It has put its finger precisely on the raging infantilism of British political culture. If Thatcher was a nanny, then Major is a sneaky, ingratiating prefect, the first important political figure you could easily picture in a pair of grey shorts, a man who looks like he has just wet himself. And his great debating weapon? Shouting 'Oh yes, Oh yes, Oh yes' till the heckling stops. Just like panto. In fact panto is probably the only dramatic form in which you could talk

about modern party politics.

Francis Urquhart has glamour and the aura of intelligence. My only complaint about the series is that I cannot imagine anyone so obviously impressive going into politics any more. I can see him as the head of a publishing conglomerate or the World Bank. But it seems like a lot of trouble to go to just to run Great Britain. The character was believable as an *eminence grise* fixing the Westminster Boys' Club, but once he is prime minister what does he do? What are his policies? The series is silent on the subject. It is taken up instead with a personality clash with the Prince.

This is exactly what happened at the last election of course. Given the opportunity to make a political decision, the Great British public lost its bottle. Then as soon as the election was over, it flung all its energy into bad-mouthing the royal family. It was a kind of displaced political discourse, a way of making angry noises without having to take the consequences, of booing the villain, safe in the knowledge that he was just a bloke in a daft costume.

What would it be like to have Urquhart as leader? I don't know. Mainstream politics has atrophied to such a degree that it has become impossible to imagine what a clever politician—even a wicked one—would do. Like John Major, we all know how to get power but do we really know what to do with it? ●

Urquhart topped a Tory journalist—barely a crime at all to right-thinking people

Life is cheap

Emmanuel Oliver welcomes a new film about 'black-on-black' violence in the American ghetto

It is becoming increasingly difficult for film-makers to continue to tell the tale of the ghetto with any degree of originality. Following the success of John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood* and Matty Rich's lesser-known *Straight out of Brooklyn* in 1991, the ghetto/hood has become the terrain for all sorts of films and the subject has become decidedly overcooked.

One film which stands out is the directorial debut of 21-year old twins Albert and Allen Hughes. Set in the Watts district of Los Angeles, *Menace II Society* is a generational story about the decreasing life expectancy of black America.

It tells the story of Caine, the son of a drug-dealing father and drug-addicted mother. The early death of both gives a sense of what's in store for him. Caine and his close friend O'Dog begin the film by shooting a Korean shopkeeper and live the rest of the film close to the line. The violence is honest in the way that Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* was an honest portrayal of Mafia violence. As a result *Menace II Society* manages to avoid the glamour of films like *New Jack City* or *Trespass*, and still hold the attention.

The film's violence has created a backlash in America. Critics were incensed by the scene in which O'Dog's shooting of the Korean shopkeeper is captured on the in-store video and provides entertainment for some of the local youth. But the Hughes brothers use the violence to draw attention to the cheapness of life in the ghetto. All the way through, the directors force you to think of ways of

breaking the cycle of violence.

What is disturbing about *Menace II Society* is not the violence, but the fact that it is committed by ordinary, articulate young people. The film shows that the behaviour of blacks in the ghetto is far from irrational. The poorest areas of the USA are the most brutalised. Black ghettos have been created through a process of systematic discrimination. Because blacks are denied equal access to resources, the only way to gain anything is to take it from someone else in the ghetto. Hermetically sealed off from the rest of America, life in black districts has a logic of its own which is a direct consequence of racism.

This is why recent efforts by Bill Cosby and Jesse Jackson to 'stop the bloodletting among African Americans' miss the point about the source of ghetto violence just as much as the calls to send the National Guard into the ghettos. Cosby and Jackson point the finger at the 'Bad Black Brother' as the threat to the black community. Not only does this give credibility to racist campaigns about blood-crazed blacks, it also ensures that the problem of racism is not addressed. The solution to the ghetto lies not in the ghetto itself, but more broadly within a society unable to exist without large islands of social deprivation.

This is a point that *Menace II Society* understands. The film makes clear that the problem for blacks is America. Invited to flee Watts to the supposed safety of Atlanta, Caine makes clear that there is no escaping oppression. 'I'm still going to be black', he says. ●

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MARXIST

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Manjit Singh explains why top scientists are more interested in the quest for beauty than reality

Beautiful dreamers

Superstrings: A theory of everything, PCW Davies and J Brown (eds), Cambridge University Press, £5.95 pbk
Dreams of a Final Theory, Steven Weinberg, Hutchinson Radius, £16.99 hbk
The Edge of Science, Richard Morris, Fourth Estate, £8.99 pbk
The God Particle, Leon Lederman with Dick Teresi, Bantam Press, £17.99 hbk

Last October, particle physicists everywhere went into mourning when the world's largest and most expensive piece of scientific hardware, the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC), was finally killed off by the United States Congress. The \$11 billion particle accelerator, plagued by arguments over funding since its inception, was abandoned in a bid to reduce the US budget deficit.

American Nobel laureates Leon Lederman and Steven Weinberg were particularly devastated. Both were closely involved in developing the SSC and lobbied congress to secure its funding. Both argue eloquently for the SSC in their new books.

The purpose of the SSC, like the preceding generation of particle accelerators, is to smash subatomic particles, by firing them at each other down ever-longer tunnels. By breaking these particles ever-smaller, physicists learn more about the building blocks that make up matter. It is hoped that the current generation of particle accelerators will provide clues as to the basic structure of the universe.

The construction of the SSC began in 1989 in Ellis County, Texas. It was to have been a precisely engineered oval tunnel with a circumference of 53 miles. Instead, congress has earmarked \$640m to shut it down and fill in the 14 miles of tunnel already completed. This is nearly half the amount that scientists from the European Centre for Particle Physics (CERN) are seeking from their respective governments for CERN's latest particle accelerator, the Large Hadron Collider.

When Leon Lederman began his term as president for the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1991, he wrote a report entitled: *Science: The End of the Frontier?* It summed up the contemporary mood. The title was an ironic reference to the more optimistic

report written in 1945 on the future of US science, *Science: The Endless Frontier*.

Not every scientist will be mourning the death of the SSC. One highly respected British theoretical physicist told me recently, 'personally, it wouldn't worry me if the whole of CERN disappeared tomorrow or the SSC was never built'. This is a fairly remarkable thought, given the extent to which governments, on the advice of scientists, have invested in these projects so far.

He explained: 'I tend to be driven by the need for internal mathematical consistency, there are enough problems in attempting to achieve this when developing a theory.' The idea that physicists can dispense with the kind of empirical data generated by the SSC and CERN, in favour of a more speculative approach is not an isolated view among theoretical physicists.

As Richard Morris correctly points out in *The Edge of Science*: 'In some fields theoretical speculation has advanced so far that...new concepts will not be subjected to experimental scrutiny until sometime in the next century.' As a result, he notes, 'some scientific speculation has recently had a tendency to take a metaphysical character' (pxi). 'When one ventures into previously unexplored regions, it is necessary to retain ties to the known world', argues Morris, a trained physicist: 'At times, however, these ties become tenuous. They are especially tenuous right now.' (pxi)

Nothing is more tenuous than superstrings, the latest candidate for a 'theory of everything'—a theory that would unite all the known forces and particles in nature into a coherent whole. Superstring theory is so far removed from experimental testing, though, that it has been called a theory of the twenty-first century accidentally discovered in the twentieth century.

Paul Davies and Julian Brown in *Superstrings*: ►

A Theory of Everything? present a collection of interviews with the adherents and opponents of the theory. Although these include some of the most distinguished theoretical physicists of the century, several of them would still benefit by reading Morris. He unrelentingly points out the speculative and metaphysical character of much modern physics from superstrings to quantum cosmology.

The interviews in *Superstrings* are entertaining. Especially if you like to get your head around the possibility that everyday reality is the result of hyperfine corrections to a 10-dimensional spacetime.

The theory of superstrings assumes that all observed particles are different manifestations of the same fundamental entity. According to the superstring idea, all particles which were previously thought of as little points are in fact not points at all but basically little oscillating loops of string which move through space. Superstrings are conceived as objects that vibrate in 10 dimensions. The different levels of vibration correspond to the different observed particles.

One of the major attractions of the theory is that it combines the two theories which shape scientific knowledge of the physical universe: general relativity and quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics deals with the atomic and sub-atomic domain, while general relativity is Einstein's theory of gravity and describes the large-scale structure of the universe. The problem is that the two theories are mutually incompatible. Yet the impulse for unity and simplicity is so strong that theorists have pursued a quantum theory of gravity, without success, for decades.

Superstring theory faces immense problems. It is highly abstract and difficult to comprehend. The predictions it has made have been contradicted by the available experimental evidence. The masses of particles predicted by the theory do not correspond to the known masses. However, superstring theorists argue that as the theory is developed it will produce the corrections that are required to give the right masses. Existing particle accelerators cannot produce particles at the high energies suggested by superstrings. The theory has not made contact with the real world of the experimental physicist, but it is still occupying most of the best theorists in the world.

The overriding problem is that much of contemporary theory is untestable. The sensible conclusion to draw from the current state of physics is to recognise that much of what is called theoretical physics is in fact interesting and highly sophisticated mathematics, not really physics at all.

The problems begin to mount when speculation is not even acknowledged as speculation. Morris rightly believes that 'when scientists speculate about ideas that have not been tested, which may not even be testable, they should be willing to admit that the activity in which they are engaging is not quite as "scientific" as some of them would have us think' (p70). In our speculative times, achieving mathematical beauty is widely taken to be the guiding spirit behind physical research. In the twentieth century, the quest for beauty has increasingly become the goal of the leading branches of theoretical physics.

The appeal to aesthetic criteria is part of the physicists' unshakeable belief in the underlying simplicity and beauty of nature. It is one of their most powerful guiding principles. Nature should not be more complicated than it has to be, they tell themselves. It is this belief that motivates the search for a 'theory of everything'.

The proponents of superstrings justify their creation by pointing to its elegance, coherence and beauty, because as Michael Green says, 'at the moment there are no firm predictions that we know about' (*Superstrings*, p134). Nobel laureate Abdus Salam, a supporter of superstrings, nevertheless believes that 'no theory should be believed in beyond what one can test' (*Superstrings*, p170). Despite this, Salam thinks that 'the theory is exciting because of its intrinsic merits' (p171).

Sheldon Glashow, a Nobel laureate remains unconvinced: 'Some of them are convinced in the uniqueness and beauty, and therefore truth, of their theory, and since it is unique and true it obviously includes a description of the entire physical world. It does not seem to them to be necessary to do any experiments to prove such a self-evident truth, so they begin to attack the value of experiments from this end—a highly theoretical, abstract, mathematical end.' (*Superstrings*, p182) Glashow's view was supported by Richard Feynman, who before his death made his feelings known: 'I don't like that they're not calculating anything. I don't like that they don't check their ideas. I don't like that for anything that disagrees with an experiment, they cook up an explanation—a fix-up to say, "Well, it still might be true".' (p194)

The quest for beauty in science has a long history. But back in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment periods, this tendency was kept in check by the prevailing strength of experimental philosophy. It is this check that has been removed today. For example, in the 1600s the astronomer Johannes Kepler developed a model of the solar system as the most beautiful geometric construction he could envisage. But he abandoned his aesthetically delightful model in favour of his famous if rather prosaic laws which accurately reflect the elliptical orbits of the planets around the sun. In the age of the scientific revolution, empirical study and experimentation, not metaphysical speculation, were the key to theoretical advance.

In the twentieth century the quest for beauty is back with us, and threatening to take precedence over empirical and experimental study. Theoretical physics has massively outstripped technology, as the pace of progress has slowed since the turn of the century. The stagnant capitalism of the twentieth century puts physical limits upon scientific development, by slowing the rate of investment in new technologies. The decision not to proceed with the Superconducting Super Collider is an example. Consequently a gap has opened up between scientific theory and practice in the twentieth century which was unimaginable in Kepler's time.

The less confident times in which we live have also given greater force to mystical ideas, as even the idea of experimentation is in abeyance. It was bound to be the case that there would be a growth of speculation as the gap between theoretical physics and technology grew. But it was by no means certain that this gap would be filled by the quest for beauty. It is the wider ideological appeal of metaphysics in modern capitalist society that has

consolidated speculation as a positive virtue. In this context beauty in framing theory becomes more than an heuristic device, and assumes the character of a guiding principle.

The similarity between the religious impulse and the thinking behind much of theoretical physics today has led some to suggest that science and religion do compete—but only as alternative religions. Is this fair comment? One man who thinks not is Steven Weinberg, an avowed atheist who believes that the quest for beauty is a perfectly rational enterprise.

At a meeting of the Royal Society a few years ago, Weinberg focused on the impasse between theory and experiment: 'physics in general is moving into an era where the fundamental questions can no longer be illuminated by conceivable experiments. It's a very disquieting position to be in.'

Never one to shirk a challenge, Weinberg has struck out in two directions: to push for the SSC, and to narrow down the search for the ultimate theory of nature using the quest for beauty as guide. His book, *Dreams of a Final Theory*, seeks to get support for the SSC by explaining the attractions of an ultimate theory of nature.

Weinberg's assumption is that there are a finite number of fundamental laws of nature, and that these must in some sense fit together. In other words, he believes natural law has *simplicity*, and an *inevitability*: a simplicity in that the number of laws is finite; an inevitability in that the nature of one law must relate to the whole, and be constrained by the nature of other laws. These two criteria are then taken to define beauty:

'The kind of beauty that we find in physical theories is of a very limited sort. It is, as far as I have been able to capture it in words, the beauty of simplicity and inevitability—the beauty of perfect structure, the beauty of everything fitting together, of nothing being changeable, of logical rigidity.' (p119)

Both simplicity and inevitability can be captured by principles of symmetry, which is why such a principle is popular with particle physicists. Weinberg's assumption then is that if we find that our theories of nature possess this beauty, we must be on the right track to finding the ultimate theories of nature: 'It seems that we are learning how to anticipate the beauty of nature at its most fundamental level. Nothing could be more encouraging that we are actually moving towards the discovery of nature's final laws.' (p71)

What makes Weinberg a pleasure to read is that at least he expresses some optimism about the possibility of expanding our knowledge. There are some important weaknesses in his argument though, and some dangers for science as a rational exercise.

The rather circular nature of his basic thesis—nature is simple and interconnected, beauty is simplicity and inevitability, therefore beauty is a guide to nature's laws—suggests that Weinberg's approach is not as rational as he might like to claim. It is based on nothing more than a belief that nature is ordered in a particular way. The consequence of this is that while Weinberg may be a materialist, his approach smacks of the idealism of the ancient philosopher Plato, who

took beauty as the guide to understand the world.

Weinberg chases beauty with the best of them: 'Plato and the neo-Platonists taught that the beauty we see in nature is a reflection of the beauty of the ultimate, the *nous*. For us, too, the beauty of present theories is an anticipation, a premonition, of the beauty of the final theory. And in any case, we would not accept any theory as final unless it were beautiful.' (p131) If this is not a substitute religion, what is it?

Weinberg's approach might make sense if there was significant evidence that the mathematical laws he is using capture something fundamental about the nature of physical reality. But there is precious little evidence of this. In fact he admits to fiddling things to get the desired 'beauty': 'Our principles are often invented as we go along, sometimes precisely because they lead to the kind of rigidity we hope for.' (p120)

The elevation of aesthetic criteria over experimental is possible because the theories are so flexible, so far removed from experimental verification, that a wide range of them could fit the data. Which one you choose then becomes a matter of taste, informed by whatever your sense of 'beauty' happens to be. In this context taking any sense of aesthetics as a guide is a hazardous business—if we want to defend the idea that science is a rational process.

In the past, experiments played a vital role in developing theory. Today, experiments in some fields are barely managing to test out theories developed a decade or more ago. Wherever experimental evidence can be coaxed out of nature, it suffices to corroborate or refute a theory and serves as the sole arbiter of validity. But where evidence is sparse or absent, other criteria, including aesthetic ones, have been allowed to come into play—both in formulating a theory and evaluating it.

One area where experiments could have filled in some of the gaps in our knowledge is the notional Higgs particle. The discovery of the Higgs particle would confirm the theory of how particles acquire the masses that they do. The SSC was to have led the hunt for the Higgs particle or as Lederman calls it 'The God Particle'.

Last summer, government minister William Waldegrave issued a challenge to physicists to explain the importance of the Higgs particle on a single sheet of paper. He wanted to understand its significance before deciding whether or not to allocate funds to CERN for its search. Simply, the standard model of particle physics does not work without it. The Higgs particle is needed to make the standard model mathematically consistent. Investment in the new generation of particle accelerators is needed if physicists are even to know if they are heading in the right direction.

In the absence of the investment and technological advances, such as CERN and SSC, that could go some way to giving theoretical physics a material content, speculation abounds. Speculation is a necessary part of any science, as a first step. The danger of the quest for beauty in science is that it makes a virtue of necessity and arrests our thinking at the level of metaphysics. As Morris warns, 'only confusion will result if metaphysics is allowed to masquerade as science' (p70).

Martyr's Day: A Chronicle of a Small War, Michael Kelly, Macmillan, £16.99 hbk

On the Jordanian border at the close of the Gulf War a truck load of Indians, Sudanese, Iranians, Filipinos and Egyptians were trying to get out of Iraq and go home. Four Sudanese had died on the way of exposure. A woman was crying in the van. The Western journalists who came across them wrote up her story—she was crying for joy at leaving Iraq.

Michael Kelly, one journalist who looked closer, explains their mistake: 'She was crying because the baby in her lap was dead.' Kelly's personal record of covering the Gulf War describes how journalists reported what they expected to see rather than what was there.

Most war journalists got their information through the Joint Information Bureau (JIB) which controlled the CENTCOM media pool system from the International Hotel in Dhahran. The pool system on the second floor of the hotel comprised TV sets receiving the US Forces Television Services Network together with binders of reports from journalists on the ground—filed in the presence of US troops. The system was set up by the US Central Command after six months of meetings with American media chiefs.

'Coordinators' chose journalists for assignment to various military units. The pool journalists were accompanied by Public Affairs Escort Officers and subject to Department of Defence Rules and orders. Their reports were sent back to Dhahran by military carrier, censored by the JIB and then became the common material of all members of the pool.

Michael Kelly's *Chronicle of a Small War* is the outcome of his attempts to get round the system of on-the-spot censorship that hamstrung his colleagues. Kelly travelled through Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait before going on to Iraqi Kurdistan to get his story. Acting outside of the official stranglehold on the media, his record of the Gulf War tells the stories that his colleagues were blind to.

Reporting from Iraq, Kelly sees things that do not fit the official Western view of the war as arising out of Iraqi might. He describes how in January 1991 Iraqi troops recalled to their units on the front line were forced to commandeer any transport available. Kelly asks 'what happens in a war in which one side has the power to move half a million troops halfway across the world and the other has to steal buses and taxi-cabs to move a few thousand soldiers a couple of hundred miles?'

On the way to Kuwait City, Kelly sees a group of Iraqi soldiers waving a surrender flag (made of a white t-shirt on a bamboo stick): 'They had no rifles. It occurred to me as I noticed this that I hadn't seen a single Iraqi soldier carrying a rifle since the war began.' Kelly's suspicions about Iraq's readiness to fight were confirmed by Captain Mike Ettore of the US marines. 'You want to know the truth about the Iraqis? They were an inferior enemy. Pathetic.' Ettore's regiment had just killed 'in a modest estimate' 300 pathetic Iraqis.

On the Basra Road, site of the most sustained slaughter of Iraqi troops as they retreated from Kuwait, Kelly comes across Major Bob Nugent investigating the debris. Nugent has found a slide-rule used by Iraqi gunners to

calculate their trajectories. 'Imagine an army using slide-rules up against an army using computers and AWACS. Incredible', says Nugent.

Kelly's record is impressionistic and does not pretend to explain what was behind the Gulf War. But he does prise open the stranglehold the US forces had over reporting of the war. In doing that he illustrates a simple truth. The real menace to the region came from the half a million troops organised in Operation Desert Storm, not from a country that sent its troops into battle by taxi, unarmed and with little more than a slide-rule for information technology.

Jude Edwards

Morality, Bernard Williams, Canto £4.95 pbk

Go to any upmarket bookshop, look at the section on ethics and you can almost see it expand before your eyes. *Morality* is in. Bernard Williams' little book, republished here by Canto, was for many years one of the few works on the subject. Williams indicates why in this well-argued outline of moral theory. Until recently morality was something that was assumed, not argued about. What views there were on the subject were either hostile, such as amorality—Williams' first target—or non-committal, what Williams calls subjectivism, the idea that one set of morals is as valid as any other.

In so far as there has been an agreed morality, Williams says that it has been that of utilitarianism, the idea that whatever leads to the greatest good of the greatest number is moral. *Morality* makes a good case that utilitarianism is too empty to provide a real basis for agreement over right and wrong. Marx ridiculed it as the mental arithmetic of the businessman, balancing right and wrong against profit and loss.

Williams' quest for an alternative, however, is no more substantial than utilitarianism. He cites Martin Luther's rejection of the idea that the quest for happiness should be the basis of what is good. Not happiness, says Luther, the founder of Protestantism, but 'suffering and the cross' is the basis of what is good. Sensing that a modern readership would balk at crucifixion, Williams recommends a formula from the novelist DH Lawrence: 'Find your deepest impulse and follow that.' This Lawrentian argument is a celebration of intuition, that says that it is better not to think about morality, but do what you feel to be right.

In Lawrence's morality we are still to be driven by forces beyond our understanding, and, as with Luther, these forces come from within. An intuitive personal morality can work as long as individuals spontaneously adopt goals that can be reconciled with the status quo. The deepest impulse of the mountaineer is easier to applaud than the deepest impulse of the bank robber.

But the current interest in ethics is precisely that moral intuition no longer appears to be a sufficient guarantor of social order. In simple terms, the bank-robbers outnumber the mountaineers. In these circumstances we can expect to see more attempts to impose moral probity from the outside—from debt-counselling to job-seekers contracts—and less respect for individual conscience.

James Heartfield



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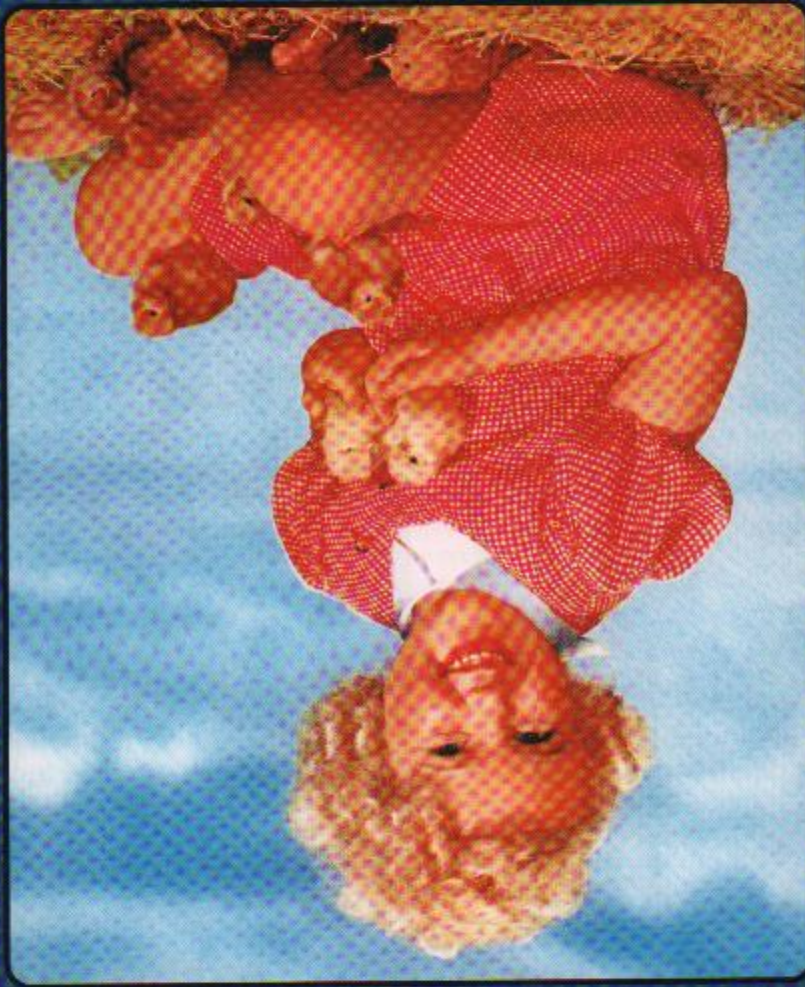
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