

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

IRELAND: Dialogue with Sinn Fein

Five pages of discussion on Ireland today. Pages 5-9.



As US tells Kinnock to toe NATO line

NO BOMB, NO US BASES!



SMARMY David Steel having private discussions with the Tories about possible Liberal/SDP support for a Tory-dominated government after the next election.

The American Defence Secretary going on British television to wag his finger disapprovingly at the Labour Party over its policy on nuclear weapons. Denis Healey coming out with a veiled attack on Labour's military policy.

What does it all add up to?

It means that all these people think that Labour is going to win the next election and they are out either to stop it or to neuter and tame it.

Conspire

The Tories and the Alliance conspire in private to snatch the fruits of electoral victory out of Labour's hands.

Weinberger adds his considerable weight to the scare tactics of the Tory press, designed to convince the electorate that Labour will leave Britain defenceless, and therefore that they should not vote Labour.

At the same time Weinberger is signalling that the Pentagon takes the prospect of a Labour victory seriously and views with alarm the idea that Labour might implement its declared policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Weinberger is thereby calling on America's friends in Britain to stand up and be counted. So Denis Healey — for long the nearest thing to an official spokesman for US international policy in mainstream British politics — has begun to stand up where he can be counted (after a track-covering speech against Weinberger).

Neil Kinnock's first response to the arrogant US capitalist attempt to interfere in British politics has been to stick his chest out and declare that



NUM members salute their comrades killed in the Kinross disaster.

BLACK MINERS FIGHT BACK

A representative of the South African National Union of Mineworkers told Socialist Organiser:

"The union has called for a day of action to protest at what happened at Kinross (mine), and has received support from COSATU (the giant union federation) and other democratic organisations.

"Most miners are expected to take the day off, and workers in other industries will have stop pages or meetings in support of the NUM's campaign for decent

safety provision in the mines — and to commemorate those killed at Kinross".

182 workers died in a mine disaster at Kinross, and the NUM's day of mourning is due on 1 October.

GENCOR

Gencor, the most right-wing of South Africa's mining houses and owner of Kinross, has agreed to the day of mourning. Other mining houses have agreed to five minutes' silence.

A company-organised memorial service last week was widely boycotted by miners, angry at the low safety standards that led to those and many previous deaths.

NUM's capacity to campaign over safety issues is severely curtailed by company restrictions on their access to information.

Kinross was only opened for inspection after 13 days, by which time it was difficult to do the examination properly. Gen-

Turn to page 12

Turn to page 12

No more grants

Jane Ashworth restarts our regular column from Socialist Students in NOLS with a report on the campaign plans of the National Union of Students (NUS).

Over the last couple of weeks the threat of a loans system replacing the grant has grown. The committee of University Principals are now in favour of loans while the Department of Education under Baker and Waldren is 'reviewing' student financial support, a review which cannot possibly do anything positive for students.

Unfortunately NUS has decided to make a submission to this review, giving it credibility and revealing once again that the Democratic Left leaders of NUS and Labour Students actually believe in negotiating with the Tories rather than organising direct action.

At last Sunday's NUS executive, SSiN supporters proposed that NUS should reorganise its campaigning priorities to make student financial support this term's priority. Otherwise, we argued, the government may gain "an unnecessary and perhaps unassailable advantage in the loans debate".

We proposed that the NUS Day of Action on November 12 centres on students money and the cuts; producing good publicity for further and higher education colleges, linking our demands together into campaign charters. In the list of things to fight for in the charter would be £35 a week minimum for all students, full trade union rates of pay for YTS trainees, no loans, and demanding colleges refuse to implement cuts or participate in loan schemes. To follow this through we proposed a national demonstration.

In their customary democratic manner the Democratic Left voted that the motion be not put. However there will be a day of action on the 12th, with details to be sorted out later!

Other key items of interest from the National Executive meeting were the SSiN motions on South Africa and on democracy.

Every year the National Executive submits a report and plan to NUS conference for voting on. We proposed that other Executive members should have the right to present alternatives to help the debate on perspectives for NUS. This was not only voted down, but laughed out of court!

So much for the idea that Labour Students run organisations in an open and democratic manner, encouraging debate and discussion.

In the South Africa motion, SSiN proposed that Moses Mayekiso was adopted by NUS. Moses spoke at NUS conference and is detained in South Africa for his anti-apartheid activities. We also proposed that NUS should donate £100 and send a letter of support to the EAWTU strikers at Plesseys. This motion was voted down! Adrian Long who is responsible for South African work didn't say what he had against it, but rather he proposed a motion resolving to "continue to highlight the role of the non-racial democratic trade union movement in the campaigning work of NUS". Which would be all very well, but if that doesn't include helping detained trade unionists or supporting strikers, then what does it mean?

For details about Socialist Students in NOLS and its AGM to be held at City Poly on 19 October, write to SSiN, 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.

THE CASE FOR LABOUR

15p plus post from PO Box 823 London SE15



Neil Kinnock at the opening session. Photo: John Harris, IFL

Labour conference: what they say

Tony Benn

The NEC election results are sad, personally, because Eric Heffer is a fine comrade, a good socialist, a man of great integrity and courage, a trade unionist, a Member of Parliament, and a colleague of mine in government.

Funnily enough he got on the National Executive in 1975 when he walked out of the government because he was opposed to the Common Market. He was thrown off because he walked out of the conference in support of the Liverpool councillors. That's Eric Heffer.

It's the product of a long campaign by the Labour Coordinating Committee and others to get rid of him. But he's taken it, as you would expect, as a political and not a personal judgement.

I shall miss him very much. But at the same time, given the fact that in the last 12 months on the NEC about 70% of our work has been spent on discipline, and the rest on policy, I suppose in a sense it's losing less than if he had been defeated a few years ago. Then the NEC really did develop policies and put them before conference.

Those days are over – for the moment, not for ever.

The conference is an eve-of-poll rally, and has to be seen in that context. Everyone wants to win and get rid of Mrs Thatcher, but under the surface you can tell from the reception to some of the arguments put forward – on policing, and so on – that the Labour Party has not changed in any way. But people are putting their argument in a way that is compatible with an eve-of-poll rally.

It is very early to say what impact the Campaign Forum has had. We're lucky, in a sense, that because the spotlight of publicity has been turned off us – they've been trying to kill us by ignoring us, whereas in the past they tried to kill us by misrepresentation. That's given us time to organise, and to organise in a way that will build foundations before they're tested.

I think we should be campaigning directly to the public. We must not be inward looking. We must get the case across on NATO, on unemployment, on rebuilding the social services, on real industrial democracy, freedom for trade unions and so on.

These are the issues we should be campaigning on.

Joan Maynard

The question of trade union ballots being enforceable by law is extremely important. I think it's a matter for trade unionists to decide – whether to have ballots and on what issues.

We've already had examples of workers having ballots under the present law. The print workers and at Keatings in Sheffield, the workers have followed the letter of the law, had their ballots – and still been dismissed.

I think we need to confront the Labour leadership and open a debate on this. When it happens, there's no doubt in my mind that it will be just the same under a Labour government as under the Tories.

Also I'd like to see a commitment to start reopening pits instead of closing them.

The fact that both Eric Heffer and Margaret Beckett have been kicked off the NEC will make it more difficult for us on the NEC next year. But the fact that the conference has already overturned the platform twice so far – once on the Minister for Women having a

cabinet place, and on education – and the reaction to Tony's speech this morning to conference, shows that there is a real uneasiness about the way things are going.

What the Left has to do now is to stay united, and to make demands on the next Labour government.

Bob Clay

The block vote may well be going one way, but there are clearly still a lot of people at the conference who are concerned about what will happen when the presentational image is tested in the harsh reality of trying to govern in a capitalist society.

Ken Livingstone thinks the soft left Labour Coordinating Committee could get involved with the hard left Labour Left Liaison and Campaign Forum. So he told an LCC fringe meeting at Labour conference. There is one condition: that Labour Briefing and Socialist Organiser are excluded.

Nigel Williamson, editor of Tribune, questioned Tony Benn at a Campaign Forum Press Conference on Monday. "Ken Livingstone has called for the soft left to get involved with Campaign Forum," Williamson noted. "Is this a real possibility?"

Benn replied: "Nigel realises that the realignment strategy has not worked. Coalitions between groups cannot work unless there are shared values. The major problem is expulsions. It will be for you to decide."

collected by the union.

Friday 26 September was the date the management had set for closure. The union thinks this is more than an idle threat but as the boss refuses to negotiate they are being kept in the dark. It is claimed that the Feltham plant is losing over £100,000 a year. The workers have no way of knowing how true this is and find it a bit surprising as new machinery was bought quite recently.

The union must step up the campaign by:

*Organising a boycott of Kenure products – certain Raleigh and BMX bikes, Philips Diffuser, Sunbeam Jug, etc.

*Boycott all possible movement of sold-off machinery.

*Demand that the firm's books be opened for inspection.

Send urgent donations to: Kenure Workers' Support Fund, c/o 18 Staines Road, Hounslow TW3 3JS.

INDUSTRIAL

Keetons call for backing

Keetons Deputy Convenor Mark Simpson spoke to Socialist Organiser:

"We've had a little bit of trouble

Vospers

THE AUEW, TASS and GMBATU have given official backing at national level to the 3-week old strike by 2000 workers at Vosper Thornycroft's Woolston shipyard in Southampton.

Two other Confed unions are expected to follow suit.

The dispute started over the sacking of 6 workers, including 3 shop stewards, as the first of 300 compulsory redundancies announced recently.

Earlier this year management put forward a plan based on anticipated new defence contracts, linked to a continuing 'rationalisation' programme. 350 jobs were axed initially.

But orders did not materialise, or were cancelled.

with a transport company going under the name of S&H Transport, Tinsley Park Road. They're crossing our picket lines and shifting our goods.

"To win we must maintain our solidarity.

"A lot of people are supporting us. The main thing they're doing is offering us financial aid but what we are asking them to do is to take the facts back to their workplace and see if they can't do something – there i.e. stopping any work going to Keetons, blacking any Keetons products that may be going to them – any form of support really – preferably something that can stop the dispute and not just finance it.

"For example, we went down to Wolverhampton. While we were there we got in touch with a company that deals directly with Keetons, TI Seamless, and the following day their convenor phoned and told us that there was 300 tonnes of work being prepared ready to go to Keetons. If we wished he'd stop this work coming to us. Obviously we did ask him to do all he

could to stop that work and any future work coming to Keetons until the dispute was settled. Since then Keetons Managing Director spoke to the management down at Wolverhampton and asked them the whys and wherefores and Wolverhampton management themselves told him there will be no work for Keetons till the dispute is over."

Send donations and messages of support to: Keetons Strike Committee, AEU House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield S1 3HE.

Tel: 0742-769041.

Kenure

By Dion D'Souza

Nearly 50 people turned up for the picket on 26 Sep. called in support of the locked out Kenure workers, who are officially backed up by the AEU.

Food parcels were handed out by the Camden Black Workers Group and donations are being

Ireland: time for dialogue

This week, as the Labour Party prepares to debate Ireland (Thursday) we give over a large part of Socialist Organiser to a discussion on Northern Ireland and particularly of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

For Northern Ireland and what we want to do about it is one of the central questions now facing the British labour movement.

The old Northern Ireland Protestant Home Rule state broke down in anti-Catholic pogroms a full 17 years ago and the British army has been shoring it up ever since. The war in Northern Ireland between the IRA on one side and the British Army, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary on the other has now been raging for 15 years of bloody impasse.

It is of the very greatest importance that the labour movement studies Northern Ireland and understands why.

Typical

There are two typical ways, both of them wrong and harmful, in which the British labour movement relates to Ireland – what might be called the Right's defend-the-status-quo approach and the Left's romantic incomprehension of the complex reality of the Six Counties.

The Right and the Kinnock 'left' have used the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed last November, as an excuse to restore Labour-Tory bi-partisanship on Northern Ireland.

Labour is still officially committed to a united Ireland, but Neil Kinnock and his team have gone all down the line for Thatcher's Anglo-Irish Agreement – an agreement which does no more than tinker with the problem and has so far only succeeded in stoking up an immense Protestant backlash.

For Kinnock and company, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was, of course, only an excuse. They are preparing for government and have taken up the posture of responsible statesmen willing to use as much repression as necessary and to play the role of jailors and policemen in Northern Ireland just as the last Labour government did.

That's one reason why they are making such an outcry against Labour councillors meeting a delegation of elected Sinn Fein councillors on a visit to Britain. But they caused no fuss when Michael Foot did private dirty deals with Orange bigots like Ian Paisley and Harold MacCusker to keep Callaghan in power.



Essentially the right don't care about Ireland. The left cares. But the left's inability to make sense of Northern Ireland – except by pretending it's just one more uncomplicated colonial revolt – is well exemplified in the open letter from the Labour Committee on Ireland to Neil Kinnock which is published in last week's Socialist Action.

EDITORIAL

Under the guise of talking to Neil Kinnock, the open letter is addressed to the 'average' Labour Party member. Preposterously it says – it doesn't argue – that an immediate British withdrawal is the road to "peace" in Northern Ireland. Who is this aimed at? No member of the Labour Party who can even watch a television is stupid enough to believe this. It will only

convince people who don't know where Northern Ireland is on the map – or who don't care what happens in Ireland. Britain should withdraw from Northern Ireland – but if Britain withdraws without a political settlement the result will be neither a peaceful Northern Ireland nor a united Ireland but a sectarian civil war and the repartition of Ireland into Catholic and Protestant states.

The truth is that the Labour leadership and the day-dreaming romantic left complement each other. It is politics like those of the LCI's open letter which have rendered the left impotent and irrelevant and incapable of affecting events throughout the long years of the protracted Catholic revolt.

One of the most striking things in the last dozen or more years is just how little real discussion there has been about Ireland in the press of the Marxist left. In fact there has

been almost no discussion – outside the pages of Socialist Organiser.

There has been much talk on the left of a "dialogue with Sinn Fein". But most of the hard left now just mimic and parrot Sinn Fein – and nobody has ever yet succeeded in having a worthwhile dialogue with a parrot.

There has been contact with Sinn Fein – and cynical careerists like Ken Livingstone have tried to use much-publicised contact with Sinn Fein to gather votes from the Irish community in Britain – but of dialogue there has been little or none. That is why we think this week's SO is an important – and we hope timely – contribution.

The feature on pages 5 to 9 constitutes one of the few dialogues Sinn Fein has had with any part of the British left. We hope it can help create a new and more productive approach, breaking from the two old blind alleys.

A sick system in need of replacement

Capitalism is sick. British capitalism is riddled with disease. Britain's official unemployment rate is 12%; other big Western economies range from 7% in the US to 20% in Italy. Even the US figure means that many inner-city areas are pauper wastelands, where youth have practically no chance of a job.

11 million people in Britain are on or below the official poverty line (supplementary benefit level); 33 million are officially poor in the US.

The EEC is destroying surplus food and cutting aid while at least 335 million people in the Third World do not have enough to eat.

While millions rot in poverty and despair, a small minority is getting richer and richer. Moneyed people will make about £1

billion instant profit from the Trustee Savings Bank sell-out. In 1985 stock exchange investors notched up total gains of £32 billion.

About £50 billion of currencies is traded each day in the City of London. A cross-current or eddy in this dizzying whirl of money could turn the present slump into a crash.

Inhumanity

The inhumanity of a society based on the drive for profit becomes clearer every day. When profits are too low, factories are shut, and jobs are replaced by machines.

The world economy is more interlinked than ever; yet it remains divided by outdated national frontiers, and dislocated by the competition between capitalist nations.

The answer is:

*Common ownership of all major enterprises, so that production can be organised for need, not profit, under democratic workers' control. Expand public services. Start a big programme of training and retraining at union rates of pay. Cut the working week to share out jobs.

*In place of the competition of capitalist nations, a United Socialist States of Europe.

Labour's leaders are not proposing anything anywhere near such a policy. Instead, they are more concerned to convince City bigwigs that their economic plans are respectable, moderate, and "good for Britain".

Labour needs a coherent left wing fighting not only on issues of nuclear power, internal party democracy, or NATO, but on the central issue of tackling capitalism.

Woman's EYE

The cost of living

By Jean Lane

Driving into a garage the other day to check the air pressure in my tyres I discovered that air is no longer free. Instead of the usual pump, I found a slot machine on the wall with British Heart Foundation written on it; 10p for a minute's air. Feeling a little disgruntled at being forced to give to charity without being asked, I thought of driving to the next garage to get my right to free air.

Then, "cheap-skate" I thought to myself. "Put the money in the box and stop moaning".

That was two weeks ago. Ever since then the surgeon Magdi Yacoub, who gave a ten-week old boy the chance of life by performing a heart-lung transplant on him, has had to justify his actions on TV and in the press. Instead of being celebrated for saving a life he has been pilloried for spending so much money.

Apparently, with the amount spent on the 575 heart-lung transplants so far, almost 2000 patients could have had coronary by-pass surgery or 4000 people could have had hip replacement operations. One baby's life against four with heart disease or eight with arthritic hips. Which slot would you have chosen for your money?

Worth

The woman last week, who was kept on a life-support machine till her baby was born, also had pounds and pence ticking up on the screen by her bed rather than heartbeats. Maybe life-support machines should be on a meter too? 50p for ten minutes. A bit rough if you run out of small change when the ticking stops but at least you'd know how much your life was worth, wouldn't you?

It's a strange kind of accounting that tots up the value of one life against others. Either one baby or four other people. Either one mother and child or several other desperately needed operations, long waited for.

Ah, but, the cry goes up, the money's got to come from somewhere. That's true. Doesn't grow on trees you know. Maybe my 10p worth of air went some way to paying for all the operations needed rather than a choice having to be made. But don't my taxes and rates pay for that?

Yes. But if we spent that money on health, who would pay the interest charges to banks and building societies; institutions well-known for being badly in need of funds? Worse, who would pay for the defence budget, or the arming of our police with plastic bullets and riot shields? A baby's life is surely not more important than protecting our democracy from the commies without or the commies within.

Well, it's nice to know we've got our priorities right. We can lie in our beds safe in the knowledge that any attack from the Russians will be thwarted and that the police are out there maintaining law and order; safe in the knowledge that our bank managers won't go hungry. Who, then, could begrudge a little 10p piece here and there for the luxury of saving a child's life?

Slot machines aren't such a bad idea after all. Let's put one on Maggie's private jet so we tot up the value of her trips to discuss our defence with the saviour of Western democracy. Just make sure you've got enough 50ps to cross the Atlantic, Mag!

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15
4NA.
01-639 7965.
Latest date for reports: first
post Monday or by phone,
Monday evening.
Editor: John O'Mahony.
Typesetting: Ian Swindale.

Published by Socialist
Organiser, PO Box 823,
London SE15 4NA.
Printed by East End Offset
[TU], London E2.
Registered as a newspaper at
the Post Office.
Signed articles do not neces-
sarily reflect the views of
SO.

News and soap

Remember the good old days when the papers were full of silly trivial stories about real people?

Twin sisters who meet for the first time since childhood and find they both married gas engineers... and on the same day; men who eloped with their mothers-in-law; vicars having affairs with church organists... you know the sort of thing.

These days the 'popular' press is full of silly trivial stories about imaginary people.

Or to be more precise, real people better known as imaginary people: soap opera stars.

Elsie Tanner belatedly achieved the status of a real person by dying under the name of Pat Phoenix. Now we have Dirty Den, Angie, Michelle, Lofty et al filling the pages of the tabloids with their various fascinating escapades on and off the screen. The excitement had been almost too much to bear on Thursday evening as the following morning's Mirror reported: "Millions of EastEnders fans were left waiting at the Church last night. They thought they would find out whether unmarried mum Michelle would marry her new boyfriend Lofty - or jilt him.

"But at the end of the programme, Michelle was still waiting at the entrance to the church".

Press GANG

By Jim Denham

The Star went one better on the same day with its front page story "My real fella - Michelle leaves us guessing". They had got hold of an "exclusive picture" of actress Susan Tully, (who plays Michelle, by the way), "hand in hand with a mystery beau". Well at least we're now back in the world of real live people...or are we? The Star (mast-head slogan - The facts, not the fiction) continued: "Michelle wouldn't say who he was. But lunch-time shoppers gazed in amazement as they smooched, kissed and cuddled."

Hold on a second! I thought we were talking about Susan Tully, the actress, the real live person, not Michelle, the fictional character. Michelle wouldn't be smooching with a mystery beau - in Islington, of all places - because she is going to marry Lofty.

Or is she? In Saturday's Mirror, Hilary Kingsley suggested having a flutter on the outcome of the Michelle/Lofty/Dirty Den cliff-hanger. Kingsley even gave us her odds on the "Wedding Stakes".

*5 to 2 Michelle will go through with it, and they will live happily ever after - or at least for several episodes more.

*4 to 1 she will panic, rush from the church and say she will remain a schoolgirl; and so on.

I won't dwell for too long on the obvious question: what the hell are "newspapers" presumably aimed at grown-ups, doing devoting space (even front page leads) to this kind of stuff? After all, we all know that the soaps are a plot by the bourgeois lackeys at the BBC and ITV deliberately intended to lull the working class into a false sense of security and to dull their revolutionary fervour with the opiate of escapism: don't we?

So what could be more natural than to draw the capitalist press into the conspiracy in a fiendishly cunning plot to completely disorientate the masses by pretending that the fictional characters are in fact real people?

I am now monitoring the effects of this conspiracy on a systematic basis. So any readers who meet workers who have been duped by this media conspiracy - or who even experience moments of confusion themselves - please contact me at once. I'll be in the lounge bar of the Vic with Jeff from the Star. He's Den's only true friend, you know.

THE LABOUR PARTY

BLACKPOOL '86



Photo: John Harris, IFL.

Drive out the Tories!

By Dennis Skinner MP

ON THE first day we had a very pleasant surprise, when Neil Kinnock, who had campaigned very hard on the NEC against having a Minister for Women in the cabinet, was defeated by conference. It augured well for a good week.

But sadly, it wasn't so good yesterday, when Khan and Scally did not get the 500,000 votes which would have overturned their expulsion. Notwithstanding that, I don't think that without the campaign that has been waged up and down the country on behalf of Khan and Scally they would have got anywhere near that 2.7 million that was registered.

We shall have to continue that campaign, both on the NEC and outside to ensure their reinstatement.

The right were expecting a few more scalps in the NEC elections today - I think they fully expected to get rid of Joan Maynard. Serious attempts have been made to get rid of me, because I'm seen as something of an embarrassment, because I'm next in line along with Kinnock, for vice-chair. That didn't succeed.

The sad fact is that Eric, who in recent years has played a more major left wing role than in some previous years, has suffered for taking part in the fight against the witch-hunt.

Right-wing

On the trade union section where the UCATT representation is very right wing, the results will assist the leadership in their built-in right wing majority on the NEC.

The size of the vote to expel the Militant supporters must have been influenced by the fact that they didn't speak. No fool in Christendom would accept that five minutes to defend yourself against a year long attack is sufficient. But not withstanding that, they could have devised a system where each one could have put forward a

different point in 35 minutes of concentrated argument against the witch-hunt.

Or perhaps they could have devised a system to explain that they would have preferred to use a 35 minute speech; say to conference 'we're sorry you haven't had a chance to hear us, but we think you ought to hear us properly before you make this move.'

That's two options. It's almost certain that some conference delegates were influenced by their non-appearance.

Witch-hunt

There are two ways of looking at what's going to happen with the witch-hunt - as to whether the leadership want to see the party torn by internal dissension. One thing is certain - there are enough people around in the party and I'm included, who are not going to sit back and see good socialists driven out of the party.

I'm going to spend this next year, like the last one, speaking to party activists up and down the country explaining that our job is to drive the Tories out of office, and not to drive socialists out of the Labour Party.

Where there are ideological differences, it is a question of internal debate and discussion. I've no intention of reshaping my views as a result of the debate yesterday.

I believe that the National Constitutional Committee is a step backwards, but it introduces this catch-all phrase "conduct prejudicial to the party" which could bring all kinds of people into the net.

Set against that it must seem feasible, even to a right wing leadership, that it would be better to see a greater deal of unity than to be diverted by witch-hunts.

I think they must be taking that into account - if not, and if there is a concerted drive against people on the left, it will create further

dissension.

If they do that, the Tory press will give them full support until they get to the election. At that point, the Tory papers who have called on the leadership to drive the socialists out of the Party will then say "Thank you very much Mr Kinnock. You've cleared out the Augean stables, but we still think our readers should vote for Mrs Thatcher, or the rest of the Tories and the SDP.

On this morning's debate on the new labour legislation, 'New Rights, New Responsibilities at Work', my opinion was that Composite 37, opposing state interference should not have been remitted. A strong body of opinion wanted to support it and I would have liked to see it tested and not withdrawn.

Only a few years ago, a motion to Labour Party conference - a firm stand on trade union rights, no state interference, the right to picket - would have gone through



almost unanimously. Only the EETPU leadership would have voted against it.

This shows the extent to which people have been influenced by the media, and are thinking in right wing terms. People think that all they have to do is to try to defeat Thatcher at the next general election. I just think it's sad that people have moved in that direction. I've no doubt, however, that when the crunch comes, when people have to face up to the question of state interference, and it's being used by a Labour government, there's bound to be an almighty reaction.

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Another British attempt to keep its hold on Ireland

Daisy Mules speaks for Sinn Fein

It is very useful for us to get a feedback of what the British left are thinking about Ireland and about the issues that concern us in Ireland — and obviously also concern you in Britain.

First I'll deal with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Judging by the actions it has triggered, this agreement signed by Thatcher and Fitzgerald on November 15, 1985, could be deemed a momentous step forward. However, our attitude is that it is nothing of the sort.

Acclaimed internationally, approved by Irish establishment parties, and opposed with growing vehemence by the Northern Unionists — surely the Agreement cannot be that bad? But it is.

The Agreement is a setback for all socialist forces in Ireland, and their supporters in Britain who have been working for Britain's disengagement from Ireland, and for Ireland's right to self-determination as a whole.

The Agreement does not offer anything new. In it Dublin recognises that the Northern Unionists have a right to veto Irish unification. And the two governments announced the setting up of an inter-government conference in which Dublin's role will be consultative, and which will look at ways of improving Dublin's cooperation on the security front, as well as reforming the Northern state, prior to devolving some sort of power back to an acceptable administration there.

So what exactly are the objectives of the Agreement? One of its prime aims has been widely and accurately described as the defeat of the IRA.

It proposes to achieve this by a mixture of reforms in the North, supposed to erode the support of the IRA and Sinn Fein, and increased collaboration by armed forces both sides of the border.

This was seen specifically when Dublin ratified the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. Until then, only four other EEC countries, including Britain, had done so.

This will further reduce the already frayed right to political asylum in the 26 Counties. At the moment, as some of you are probably aware, there are great moves going on to renegotiate the extradition treaty between the United States and Britain.

The Ulster Defence Regiment remains — whose members have time and time again been found guilty of assassinating innocent Catholics. Only recently, four UDR men were convicted although they were not given a

Daisy Mules is the trade union organiser for Sinn Fein. She also moved the successful motion on a woman's right to choose over abortion at Sinn Fein's conference last year, on behalf of her cumann (branch) in Derry. At the SO summer school in July, she and others, including Niall Power, secretary of the Labour Committee on Ireland, discussed the Anglo-Irish deal and ways forward in Ireland.

specific sentence.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary, whose members have been involved in 'shoot-to-kill' tactics against nationalists, beating in detention centres and recruiting of paid perjurers for mass trials, will not be disbanded.

Non-jury courts are here to stay despite mentioning that they might do away with them in the future.

The so-called reforms which we were told to expect have not happened — except one.

I am not sure if you are aware of this, but in the North, if you were born in the 26 Counties, you have no right to vote in any election apart from a Westminster election. The one concession that has now been given to us is that those who were born in the 26 Counties can now vote in any election in the Six Counties.

It is intended that these reforms be presented as a result of the agreement, and a victory for the SDLP, in the hope of wooing nationalist voters away from Sinn Fein.

However, the thinking that underlines this part of the agreement is that the IRA and Sinn Fein thrive on the misery of Northern nationalists — as is often said by the SDLP, the Catholic hierarchy and the Dublin politicians.

Unemployment breeds violence, they say. Hence the recently agreed US financial input, and the possible financial back-up from the EEC which will presumably be used to create jobs.

Sinn Fein says that unemployment breeds demoralisation, apathy, ill-health, alcoholism, domestic violence against women and children, drug taking. But it does not breed political activism.

Far from thriving on misery and deprivation, Sinn Fein works hard through its advice centres, trades unions and local campaigns to help bring about change.

In the meantime, while Dublin waits for an auspicious moment to pass some reforms, the Dublin government will be expected to carry out its duties, as spelt out by the agreement.

Consulted about the North, it will share responsibility, but not power, with Britain. And it will be expected to shoulder a greater burden of the massive military and judicial operations aimed at containing republican resistance.



Signing the Anglo-Irish deal, 15 November 1985. Photo; Derek Spiers, Report.

Already the cost to the tax-payer in the 26 Counties of maintaining partition is £53 per person per year, while the equivalent tax to the British tax-payer is a mere £9.

Thatcher has the Dublin government over a barrel. She has got the Fitzgerald government to accept responsibility for part of Ireland over which it has no power. She will make them pay for every crumb of reform that may be brought about by increasing their collaboration with the British Army, the RUC and the Northern judiciary.

Furthermore, the Unionist veto has been recognised in a legally-binding agreement.

Nationalist

Why then has this Dublin government, which calls itself a nationalist government, signed such an agreement? Indeed, why is it supported by Northern middle-class nationalists, like the SDLP leader John Hume?

The first reason is that they feel threatened by the emergence of Sinn Fein as a credible political force since the 1981 H-Block hunger strike.

The second is that the constitutional parties in the 26 counties have no urgent desire to achieve Ireland's reunification, and self-determination, as this would radically change the balance of power and the conservative nature of Irish politics.

As for the SDLP, being the 'respectable' middle class nationalist alterna-

tive to the IRA, it will always be assured of a little place in a devolved administration at Stormont. In fact our belief is that if it had not been that the Assembly was dissolved there recently, the SDLP were actually preparing to re-enter Stormont.

Why are the Unionists opposed to the Agreement? After all, the aim is defeating the IRA, and it plans to enroll Dublin's help for that purpose.

At the turn of the century Unionism represented economic power and industrial wealth. But since the Second World War, especially, things have changed.

The linen mills are no more. Most of the heavy engineering industry has been nationalised and needs large subsidies to survive. Unionists with their naked bigotry and their decaying economic muscle are no longer an important partner for Britain's policy in Ireland.

They are however a sizeable minority in Ireland as a whole, and heavily armed.

Unionists presently feel jilted by Britain, deliberately kept away from the London-Dublin talks. They were told on November 15 that Dublin's opinion would be listened to before London decides how to administer the Six Counties. That was enough.

Assurances that Britain's sovereignty over the North was intact were not listened to. Reaffirmation of their constitutional guarantee was ignored.

Any move in the direction of Dublin

was seen by Unionists, not so much as a slippery slope to a united Ireland, but rather as yet another sign that the bargaining power was on the wane.

But the days of unchallenged Unionist rule of the Six Counties are no more.

In 1986 the interests of Unionism are narrower than the interests of Britain. Unionism today is not so much about the Union as about partition.

It is partition that has secured permanent Unionist majority in the Northern State for 64 years. It is partition which has kept the benefits of industrial development away from nationalist areas, with the result that many Unionist areas of the North enjoy a lower unemployment rate than in Britain, while in nationalist areas 40-80% unemployed are not uncommon.

It is those marginal privileges that working class Unionists want to preserve, more than the Union Jack or the link with Britain.

The idea of an independent Ulster comes from working class loyalist groups, like the paramilitary UDA.

Even repartition has been mentioned — anything rather than lose their corner of Ireland where they rule supreme.

Furthermore, unemployment and other figures show that 14 years of British direct rule have failed to erode Unionist domination significantly. Only Irish independence could hope

To page 6

Socialist FORUM

Number 2



IRELAND

1969-85

A SOCIALIST ANALYSIS

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A socialist, or a nationalist case against the agreement

**J. O'Mahony
speaks for
Socialist
Organiser**

Now I have a somewhat different viewpoint from that of Sinn Fein. I do not start out with the idea that Irish nationalism is a fixed star. I have a different standpoint in judging this agreement and everything else about Northern Ireland: what best serves the interests of the Irish working class? What will help create the possibility of working class unity and therefore of a socialist solution in Ireland, North and South?

So I start with that different perspective and I also have a somewhat different analysis.

What I want to do today is deal with four different things: why the Anglo-Irish Agreement has come into being; what it is; what its prospects are and finally what is wrong with the Anglo-Irish Agreement from a socialist — as distinct from a nationalist — point of view.

For like Sinn Fein I also conclude that we should reject the Anglo-Irish Agreement and oppose it, but for reasons different from those of Sinn Fein.

Why the Deal? Because the Six County State broke down in 1969. It had existed for 50 years as a Protestant-ruled state, a state dominated by a Protestant community making up about two-thirds of the Six County population. For fifty years they had one party rule.

The Protestant community lorded it tyrannically over the Catholic one-third of the Six County population, reducing them to second class citizenship, keeping them down because they felt threatened by them. That system broke down in 1969.

It broke down initially when the Catholics began to demand an end to the various forms of oppression and discrimination against them and that in turn created a big Protestant backlash. In turn the Protestant backlash quickly escalated to the point where, in mid-1969 there were serious attempts at pogroms in Belfast and Derry.

There were pogroms in Belfast where some 500 houses were burned down in August 1969.

That led to the British Army having to go into the streets — 'having to' from the point of view of the ruling class, to stop the situation becoming uncontrollable.

Now that meant that the Six County state had broken down. But Britain did not admit that the state had broken down. The troops were put out to control the streets and they formed a sort of tight scaffolding to keep the state from collapsing.

Britain allowed the Protestant Home Rule government to continue in Belfast until March 1972. But in fact from the point where the troops took over control of the streets in 1969, Northern Ministers had senior British civil servants assigned to understudy them and act as commissars over them.

So to an important extent Britain took a very big share of direct rulership as early as the middle of 1969.

But that did not solve anything. True, Britain began to push through serious reforms. Again it is important to understand what happened.

If you look at how Northern Ireland was destabilised after 50 years it was in the beginning the result of the British government giving insistent signals to the Northern Protestant regime that it wanted reforms.

Britain wanted reforms because in the 1960s Britain had long ceased to look to partition for any benefits.

On the contrary, Britain was moving closer to the 26 Counties which had been growing in importance as an economic partner of Britain.

Backyard

Britain and the 26 Counties signed a Free Trade agreement in 1965. Both Britain and the 26 Counties were preparing to enter the EEC, which they finally did in 1972. Britain wanted to get rid of the embarrassing backyard police state that Northern Ireland had been for most of the previous 50 years.

That led to the pressures on the Northern liberal Unionists — such as they were, and there were not too many of them and they were not very good as political leaders. And it encouraged the development of the Catholic Civil Rights movement. The unprecedentedly vigorous campaigning of that movement led to the sequence of events which I have already described, culminating in the British Army taking over in 1969, with the job of creating a scaffolding within which Britain could remodel the Six Counties.

But Britain taking control in 1969 did not stop anything. Lots of Catholics remained fundamentally unsatisfied, especially the youth in Derry and Belfast.

The Catholics may have marched in



Belfast, May 1986. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.

1968-9 for one man, one vote; one man, one house; one man, one job, and basic civil rights. But in reality the root civil right they lacked was self-determination. Their troubles grew out of the fact that they were an artificially carved-out minority in an artificial state.

It is important to keep in mind that the Six Counties and its majority and minority are artificial. But it is also important to be aware that even if the existing untenable Six County entity had not been carved out, there was still a powerful and compact Protestant-Unionist minority — it is a natural

minority — in an area of north-east Ulster, in the north-east of the Six Counties. The point is that the Six County entity made the problem of how the Irish majority and minority relate to each other more intractable and in no sense was it a democratic resolution of the conflict.

From the Catholics' lack of self-determination came the Catholic revolt — and that revolt has to this day remained unquellable.

The IRA had been virtually non-existent in 1969, during the pogroms, and what did exist calling itself the IRA had disgraced itself. But with an astonishing speed a new IRA was created. Initially it was very right wing, an avowed right wing split off from the old IRA.

The Provisional movement was to be quickly radicalised in the early 1970s.

The new IRA initiated and developed a military campaign within a matter of 18 months after the British Army took to the streets in mid-1969. The Catholic revolt became unquellable — it took the form of a series of bombings in the centre of towns and killings of soldiers and personnel of the Six County state.

Intention

This in turn led to an intensification of the Protestant-Catholic polarisation. The result of the Provo campaign was that in March 1972 Britain abolished the Stormont regime.

Now it is important to keep in mind that Britain — through all the zig-zags of policy since 1969 — has always had the intention of politically restructuring Northern Ireland. If you see it simply as brutal, old-fashioned, bone-headed immovable British imperial-



West Belfast 'Apartheid-Free Zone', Feb 1986.



Protestant workers dominate heavy industry in Belfast. I think you miss the point of what has been going on, you misunderstand the dynamics of what's been going on.

Since 1972 Britain has always had the objective of reforming Northern Ireland from above, to stop things getting completely out of hand below. This, of course, is a central pattern in Irish history, things being done from above to stop the revolt from below. That has been Britain's goal.

When they abolished the Protestant Home Rule parliament in March 1972 there was an enormous Protestant backlash against that. The UDA, a mass Protestant militia, was formed and at its peak in 1972 it had between 30,000 and 40,000 members. There are about a million Protestants, so to get a British equivalent you would have to multiply that figure by about 60!

It was an immensely powerful Protestant-Unionist mobilisation.

Britain tried to replace the home rule of the Protestants by power-sharing, in which the Catholic middle class, through the SDLP, was co-opted into the system.

And Britain succeeded for a period in doing that. In 1973 and the beginning

DAISY MULES

From page 5.

to end Unionist power.

All this talk of reconciling the two traditions — Unionist and Nationalist — within the Six Counties, is therefore a smokescreen. Unionism and nationalism are two diametrically opposed political viewpoints. And the people who hold this can only be reconciled within partition if one side, or both, abandons its ground.

It is obvious that both London and the Dublin government will be expecting Northern nationalists once again to knuckle under. Crumbs of reforms will be thrown at them. Republican 'trouble makers' will be interned, proscribed, censored or otherwise disposed of.

And British interests in keeping Ireland under control will have suffered not one bit.

This is why the present British government is trying to stabilise the Six

Counties, and normalise North/South relations, while establishing closer links with Dublin.

Like its predecessors in 1971 and 1973 it would prefer a 32 county Statelet rather than the present powderkeg. For this it must seduce the Irish nationalist middle class, appease the Unionist monster, and eliminate Republican resistance.

The first objective has been reached. To achieve the second, it hopes to deliver the third: the defeat of the IRA and Sinn Fein.

But Unionist opposition is not just caused by IRA actions and Sinn Fein's presence in the councils. It is mostly about losing their supremacy. This could be Thatcher's first miscalculation.

The second is about defeating republican resistance.

Whatever its future holds, it remains that this Agreement is a step backwards for Irish nationalists — and

for all those that want to see the development of a free, independent, united and socialist Ireland.

Socialists and progressive people everywhere must oppose the Agreement as another attempt by Britain to consolidate its hold on Ireland under cover of peace and reconciliation.

They should not be confused by the support given by the Irish nationalist middle class to the Unionist veto.

In the final analysis Britain's colonial stranglehold on Ireland can only be broken by a process of decolonisation. Peace and stability can only be established within a framework of Irish national self-determination.

The inherent weakness of the Hillsborough process is that it is not geared to these objectives. On the contrary it is geared towards thwarting the attainment of these objectives.

And for this reason, as for many of the other imponderables, it is doomed in the long-term to failure.

ationalist, greement?



Falls Road. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.



Industry. Photo: John Lloyd.

ing of 1974 they set up the power-sharing executive.

The real strength of that executive lay in the SDLP, the Catholic, constitutional nationalist party. They were the bedrock, the real power in that administration through which, in partnership with minority Protestant politicians led by Brian Faulkner they ruled for the first five months of 1974.

Their power-sharing executive was destroyed by a Protestant general strike in May 1974. The general strike was not going to some extent by coercion at the beginning but it became a genuine expression of the Protestant dissatisfaction and bitter anger at the whole situation.

That general strike was an immensely powerful demonstration of the latent power of the Protestant working class. Unfortunately it was the use of revolutionary methods for a reactionary goal, because their fundamental demand was that they be put back in control of the Catholics by way of "majority rule" in the artificial state.

Nevertheless it was one of the most powerful and successful examples of a general strike in European history. They smashed the power sharing executive.

utive.

After that, Britain tried a number of experiments to get a new power-sharing executive and then gave up.

The form their giving up took was that the British Labour government thereafter swung round to a policy of defeating the IRA, and this quickly became an intense repression of the entire Catholic community.

It was the Labour government which withdrew political status from convicted republican prisoners conceded by the Tories in 1972. That led to the protests round the prisons which culminated in the hunger strikes of 1981.

By the end of this whole process in the early 1980s you had the powerful Catholic build-up behind the republican organisation, Sinn Fein.

In 1983 Sinn Fein got 12% of the whole vote, about 42% of the Northern Irish Catholic vote. That meant that Britain had failed — and failed dangerously. Britain's policy after 1976 of beating down the Catholics had quietened the Protestants for a long time: since the British state was doing it, the Protestants felt that they didn't have to do much themselves, and they were relatively quiet.

An attempt by Ian Paisley and the UDA to get an Orange General Strike in 1977 failed resoundingly.

The political rise of Sinn Fein threatened to eliminate the constitutional nationalists who had been the mainstay of the power sharing attempt of the mid-1970s.

But of course Britain hadn't abandoned the idea of recreating a new set of political structures in the North of Ireland, it had merely believed in the mid-1970s that it had to let the thing sweat itself out for a period of time.

Now the political rise of Sinn Fein threatened to close the door on all sorts of deals for the foreseeable period ahead.

As a result of that threat, various people began to act — not only were the British very alarmed, the Southern bourgeoisie were alarmed too and they organised a get together of all Irish constitutional nationalist parties North and South of the border.

For a year they deliberated in the so-called "New Ireland Forum", and finally they produced a series of proposals for a settlement with Britain. They presented their ideas as a series of options, listed in declining order of preference. Their 1st preference was for an immediate move towards a unitary Irish 32 county state. Their second option was an Irish federation, or a confederation, which is even looser than a federation. Their third preference was some form of joint Irish-British rule in the Six Counties.

Out, out, out

The immediate response of Mrs Thatcher was made during a notorious press conference where she banged the table, ticked off the various proposals and dismissed them. "That's out, that's out, that's out".

But not long after Thatcher's "out, out, out" speech serious negotiations began between Britain and the Southern government which after a year produced the Anglo-Irish deal.

So the fundamental reason for the Anglo-Irish Agreement was that the breakdown of the Northern Irish state threatened the stability of the whole island and of parts of Britain too. From that stemmed the vigorous activities of the constitutional nationalists around the New Ireland Forum. The immediate goal was to save the SDLP from political oblivion or at least from being marginalised; fundamentally the goal was to find a basic solution that would allow the IRA to be quelled and to have its base of support gradually undermined and removed.



Falls Road, Belfast. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.

So that's the why. What is the agreement? I think it is rather more substantial than comrade Mules says. I think it is a sort of political power-sharing agreement between Dublin and London. And it is enshrined in an international treaty which is binding, solemnly binding.

International treaties of course have limited force. If you have a dispute in Britain under the British law, you have recourse to the courts and ultimately to the power of the state to enforce your legal rights. In international treaties there is no such state power to appeal to and such international treaties as the Anglo-Irish Agreement break down.

But nevertheless, as it stands, what it is is an international treaty whereby Britain has agreed with Dublin that they will jointly set up an inter-government conference to oversee the running of the Six Counties and Britain has bound itself, wherever there is disagreement with the Southern government on how to run Northern Ireland, to earnestly seek agreement before acting. In other words it amounts to an international power-sharing agreement with the 26 Counties sharing with Britain a serious degree of political control of the Six Counties. It seems to me that's a very important development.

Power-sharing

It's not exactly full power-sharing, it's not what the New Ireland Forum asked for, because the Executive is entirely in the hands of Britain. Nevertheless, in real terms it is a high degree of power-sharing.

There are a number of parallels to this sort of development. I think that what the British and Irish bourgeoisie are doing is trying to set up a framework that can evolve and allow the creation of new structures.

Both governments claim sovereignty in Northern Ireland. If you look at what they have done in the Anglo-Irish deal, they have agreed to leave the question of sovereignty alone. They haven't formally left it alone, there are various forms of words floating about, but in practice they've decided to leave the whole business alone.

The procedure reminds me of two things and I am going to make two parallels. Firstly with the way the English natural scientists of the 17th century dealt with the religious dogma that was still formally very much part of the English state and to which they were nominally obliged to conform. The way they dealt with the fact that England was still a state where you had to believe in the established church and all its doctrines, the way they freed themselves to really explore nature was by declaring that of everything in nature God is the first cause, but there were then many second causes. By paying lip service to God as "the" first cause, they managed to leave God alone on the sidelines and get on with the empirical exploration of reality.

I think that the British and Irish bourgeoisies have done something like this in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. They have pushed the question of sovereignty aside and they are trying to get on with groping their way towards new structures.

The second parallel is with the EEC. Twice this century Europe has been convulsed by wars, world wars which were fundamentally rooted in the fact that the nation states of the advanced European countries were a fetter on the needs of production, the need to unify the European economy. On two occasions Germany tried to unify the European economy by simply conquering Europe, but that failed. Germany was defeated and at the end

of World War 2 Russia was able to threaten to dominate Europe.

How did the bourgeoisie proceed? After the War they very urgently needed to unify the European economy but they were stopped by all the various nationalisms. So what they did was to begin in 1951 by creating something called the Iron and Steel Community which allowed the steel and coal industry, both German and French, to be unified and to escape from the normal fetters of the nation state. This led to the creation of the EEC in 1958. The EEC has largely eliminated the economic boundaries separating the European states, which are now more thoroughly integrated economically than the 50 states of the USA.

I think that what is being done in the Anglo-Irish deal is to attempt to develop in the same way, to grope towards new structures, leaving insoluble questions of sovereignty alone.

One final thing about this that we should note is they have made provision for a joint Southern Irish and British, and probably eventually Northern Irish, parliamentary committee, which could actually develop into a powerful intra-parliamentary link between Britain and Ireland, by far the closest political links since the 26 Counties seceded from the old UK in 1922.

The prospects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement so far seem to be quite bright from the ruling class's point of view. Thatcher and company show themselves to be pretty firmly committed to the deal. So far they've stood up for it with impressive determination. From the point of view of the two ruling classes the real weakness of the deal if you examine the two pillars on which the deal must stand or fall — the British bourgeoisie and the Southern Irish bourgeoisie — is in the south of Ireland. Fianna Fail will most likely be the new government there in a year or so and it is not at all clear what Fianna Fail will do about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It may try to renegotiate it, it may even scrap it.

Fianna Fail

Fianna Fail is not an honest bourgeois nationalist party. It will not act on principle, it will act opportunistically and it may act in a way that will destroy the new Anglo-Irish Treaty.

What's wrong with the deal? From a socialist as distinct from an Irish nationalist point of view?

Even if you hope (as the ruling class, I think, do) that it can eventually lead to the evolution of new structures which will supersede the old structure and the old relationships, even if you can hope for that it's still a very long term prospect.

Meanwhile the grinding poverty and the built-in sectarianism in the North continues. Meanwhile the various repressions continue. Meanwhile mass unemployment is starting to bleed the South once again, after a 15 year interruption.

Apart from that, it is an undemocratic way of dealing with the problem, particularly with the Catholic-Protestant relations in Northern Ireland. It seems to me therefore, that it is not a solution that socialists can support.

However I think it is very important that we should understand it for what it is — a series of quite subtle moves by the ruling classes which, if it sticks, can perhaps evolve, and create new relations between Ireland as a whole and Britain.

Now that, if it survived in the long, long term, can bring some benefits but I don't think we can support it in the hope of benefits in the distant or medium distant future.

Floor discussion

Civil war?



RUC attack nationalist protest with plastic bullets. Photo: Derek Spiers, Report.



John Bloxam: Recently an editorial in Republican News warned of the danger of sectarian civil war. The result of such a war, the editorial concluded, would not be a united Ireland, but bloody repartition. Daisy in her contribution suggested that the idea of repartition exists in the Loyalist community, but in the cold light of day they would drop it very quickly. If that is her view I think it is underestimating it, and the Republican News editorial was more accurate. Could she explain in more detail Sinn Fein's attitude?

Martin Thomas: It's quite common on the Left in Britain to hear people describe the Northern Ireland Protestants as 'paper tigers'; to say that the Anglo-Irish deal is entirely in their interests, and they just don't understand what's going on. The analysis that Daisy gave is a lot more realistic.

That raises a question. If the Protestant backlash is a response to a serious shift in the policy of the ruling class, that same backlash is going to exist against any movement towards a united Ireland. How should socialists and republicans deal with that?

There are two theoretically possible answers. First is that you look to conquering the Protestants by physical force; the other is that you look towards winning them over, or at least a section of them.

Whether or not conquest is desirable, it seems to us that given the relationship of forces it is not possible. The Protestants could hold at least a part of the north-east of Ireland — through pogroms against Catholics living there, and so on. Therefore you have to look towards winning over a section of the Protestants, particularly the working class, politically. I'd like to ask what Sinn Fein's ideas are about that task?

'Britain won't allow it'

Daisy Mules: When Paisley made his very aggressive statements about civil war, we analysed that as a result of the power struggle going on among the Loyalists. Peter Robinson is being seen by the harder line Loyalists as a potential leader, so somehow Paisley had to regain ground. Also Paisley wanted to scare people.

After the divorce referendum, he immediately backtracked. He said that now there was no need for a civil war because the 26 counties had shown by their denial of divorce as a civil right that Irish unity was not a possibility.

There's been a lot of publicity of Loyalist attacks on the RUC and the UDR — mostly the RUC — houses and homes. But they've also been attacking Catholic homes, esp-

pecially in places like East Belfast. These attacks are very similar to the pogroms of the early seventies.

In new buildings near Derry, Catholic families have had to move out because of Loyalist attacks on their homes.

So that possibility of civil war is always there. But in our analysis it certainly isn't going to happen at the moment. And Britain won't allow it to happen.

Paisley and the other Unionist leaders are very well aware that the Anglo-Irish agreement does not erode their rights. In fact it entrenches their rights in many ways. It actually states that the Loyalist veto will be always upheld.

Repartition isn't a real possibility, in our view.

What are we doing to win over Protestants politically? There's no way that Sinn Fein is going to win over Loyalists by political argument while their supremacy is guaranteed to them by the British government. So long as their supremacy is guaranteed, they won't listen to any discussion or talks. They won't even talk to John Hume.

We think a basic requirement for any talks to develop is that the Unionist guarantee is taken away. Then they will engage in discussion. But until then, why should they talk to us?

Protestant puppets?

Tony Dale: Paisley talking about civil war does highlight the danger of it. Paisley is softening up compared to many others in the Loyalist camp. With people like Robinson taking control of the mobilisations it increases the danger.



It's not a question of crystal ball gazing — will there or won't there be a sectarian civil war? To recognise the possibility, as Sinn Fein do, is more serious than many on the British Left. On the British Left much of the response to the Deal has been to say, 'Well, it's not really affecting the Protestant people, or threatening the link with Britain'. There's a tendency to see the Protestants just as puppets, just as dupes, and not recognise that their reaction to the Deal shows the extent to which they are an independent force.

Daisy said that the Anglo-Irish Deal strengthens the Loyalist veto. Yes, it's got written into it that the Protestants should be consulted and so on, but the Loyalists want themselves alone to decide what happens in the north. The Deal takes that away; it says that what's going to count is what we think in London, and what our counterparts think in Dublin. It's taken away 'Protestant self-determination', and that is an important change.

Peter Keenlyside: It worries me when people describe the relationship between Britain and Ireland as

'the last vestiges of colonialism', 'imperialism', etc. To me that just doesn't make sense.

Britain derives very little benefit from the maintenance of its rule in northern Ireland. I don't know the exact figures, but I suspect that more money goes into Ireland than comes out of it. Most industries are heavily subsidised. In a Marxist sense, it's a strange imperialism.

Britain got out of colonies where it was in a better position to extract profit. I don't know what it gets out of Ireland. The situation can't be explained with the classic analysis of imperialism. If you try to explain it like that, you miss a lot of points.

The Protestants have got every reason to be wary of deals like the Anglo-Irish Agreement. At the end of it the project is for Britain to establish a relationship with Irish capitalism like that it has with any other capitalist country: an inter-capitalist relationship.

The project for both the British and Irish ruling classes is to normalise the situation. That does mean doing away with this 'odd' situation in the North. At the end of the day, it's in the interests of British capitalism to have a united Ireland.

That's not to say that the project will succeed. It will fail because it's a solution imposed from above.

Daisy said — and it struck me as very strange — that there isn't much likelihood of a sectarian civil war. And the reason she gave is that Britain wouldn't allow it. Now, whatever the rights and wrongs of using the slogan 'troops out', on its own, we're all agreed that Britain's involvement in Ireland must end. What if we're successful — tomorrow? Then the thing that will prevent civil war will be removed. It's strange for people fighting British imperialism to look to it to prevent civil war.

Liam Conway: Daisy said there wouldn't be a civil war. I think it's true that the Anglo-Irish Deal won't lead to civil war, because it doesn't threaten the union between Northern Ireland and Britain. But if you look at history, civil war has been most likely when the Union was threatened.

On the question of Protestant supremacy, I think it's wrong to deal with the Protestants as a whole unit in a supremacist sense, or to talk about them as if they were only the Protestant leaders and not ordinary Protestant people as well. Socialists have got to cut through Protestant — and indeed all — leaders and look at the roots of the Protestants' fears.

And of course there are plenty of Protestants suffering unemployment as well as Catholics.

We have to look not just at their social concerns, but other concerns too.

The Protestant minority in the whole of Ireland see themselves as having a separate identity. It's a working class interest, that they feel a separate identity. It's not just a concern of their leaders who are duping the Protestant workers.

Looking across the border at the South reinforces their ideas.

I'd like to ask why Sinn Fein dropped their commitment to federalism, which goes some way towards creating a framework in which the working class of both communities can have their identity satisfied. If would create the possibility of the unity of the working class to create a socialist Ireland.

Double standard

Niall Power: First, on civil war. Nobody would underestimate the very real danger of civil war. But I do detect a certain double standard when some people on the British Left discuss this question.

We call for an end to apartheid and one person, one vote in South Africa. There is the distinct possibility that the granting of those things would lead to civil war — not just between whites and blacks but between blacks and blacks: a distinct possibility. But that doesn't lead us to water down our support for the ending of apartheid, or for one person, one vote.

I fail to see why we should water down our support for one person, one vote in Ireland either.

Second, on the sincere — I presume — call for workers' unity in the North. Comrades, as much as you may wish for that to happen, I can assure you it simply won't happen while Britain remains in Ireland. If you doubt that, I suggest you go to Ireland, get more informed of the mentality and the material privileges of the Protestants — workers included.

You won't break through to any form of working class unity while Britain remains there.

A majority — a majority — of the Irish working class wants to see Britain out of Ireland. Why don't you support that majority clearly and unambiguously, without wanting provisos about particular forms of unity with one significant minority in a particular part of the country?

Third, I would like to ask SO for more information about federalism. Sean mentioned that federalism was one of the proposals coming out of the Irish Forum Report. Is that a form of federalism that you would support?

I think Britain would like to leave Ireland, but it also needs to protect its interests. It does have financial interests, it does have industry, not only in the north but also in the south. The British taxpayer may be losing from it, but the British capitalist isn't.

And the military interests need to be protected, in the sense of American bases in the north of Ireland. A united Ireland — and certainly a militarily independent one — would threaten those quite seriously.

And ideologically, Britain isn't going to be forced out, like America was forced out of Vietnam.

Martin Thomas: I don't think any of us are saying that it's an easy, straightforward task for socialists or republicans to address themselves to Protestant workers.

We're not saying, like Militant, that if you talk about working class unity enough the Protestant workers will flock round and everything will be lovely. We understand that it is difficult almost to the point of impossibility even to get a hearing, let alone to get them to agree with you.

Nevertheless, if you analyse the situation realistically, you come to the conclusion that that difficult task is the key task. To say that it's difficult is to say that progress in Ireland is difficult.

It's not just because we're fantastically concerned with the rights of the Protestants, though I think we should be to a certain extent. It's also a question of realistic calculation. Even if we said that the Protestants don't have any rights at all, they nevertheless have force. As Daisy put it, they're a substantial minority, concentrated and heavily armed. They have the force to prevent Ireland being united.

Even on those grounds, you have to address the problem.

The two vetoes

Daisy's answer is a sort of two-stage theory. At one stage there's nothing you can do, politically, in relation to the Protestants. Your efforts should concentrate on putting pressure on the British government so that it will repeal the acts of the British Parliament that say that the Northern Ireland Protestants can maintain the Northern Ireland unit as long as they wish. Once that has been done it will be possible to talk to the Protestants and create unity.

There are two problems with that sort of two-stages theory. First, the Protestants have two vetoes. They have one veto written into legal Acts of Parliament; and they have another veto secured by their own force.

Part of the legal veto has been taken away. Direct rule has been taken away. A veto on relations with the South has been taken away.

How have the Protestants reacted? By becoming more willing to talk to their fellow workers? No, on the contrary, you've seen a hardening of Protestant sectarianism over the past 14 years.

Taking away the legal veto won't automatically make the creation of class unity easier. In fact, the immediate result might be to make it more difficult. That doesn't mean we should oppose taking away the veto; it means that we have to couple it with other political demands.

But how do you get that veto taken away? I can't see any reason why the British government should be able to actually take the veto away. It seems to me you need some degree of class unity. I'm not saying we're not interested in a united Ireland unless it is created by a united working class; I'm saying that practically, it won't happen.

Niall said: you won't get a

united working class until you have a united Ireland. You'll get a united working class after a united Ireland. You can see the force in that argument. But if you analyse the situation the opposite also holds: you don't get a united Ireland until you've got a united working class.

Does that mean the whole situation is impossible? It means it's very difficult. It means you can't rely on the two-stage theory. You have to be trying to create a united working class, or at least a partially united working class — you're not going to win over the entire Protestant working class — at the same time as you fight for a united Ireland.

Pat Murphy: What's happening in the Loyalist community? What are the prospects for its opposition? It seems to me that if Ian Paisley is being forced into posturing — like his call for action on the streets and so on — it's an indication of the strength of the Loyalist opposition. Paisley has dominated the Protestants since 1970 and his party has been increasingly dominant since 1979 or so. If he's forced to posture, it shows the strength of the Loyalist opposition.

Civil war isn't just morally bad because people start butchering each other. The point is that the political settlement that would come out of it would be repartition. So there are political reasons as well as moral ones to recoil from the prospect of civil war.

It's not a question, as Niall said, that we don't recognise the right of the Irish people to determine their own future. But there's a difference between recognising that right and realising it. To put it starkly: the political force that can create a united Ireland doesn't exist at the moment; it has yet to be created. That's one of the reasons why a united Ireland seems so distant.

Sinn Fein's struggle, justified as it is, is limited. It's limited geographically, and also physically to 10% of the entire Irish people. It's also politically limited, but that's another discussion. It's continued struggle at best can defend the Catholic community. But all it can do is maintain the stalemate, and



Republican martyrs on a Belfast wall.

Irish unity and workers' unity

push and prod the British government into attempted reforms.

Support amongst constitutional nationalists for the Accord is partly, as Daisy said, due to their fear of Sinn Fein. But it also concedes something to them that's new. It concedes that the Southern Irish government has got a say in the affairs of the North.

But also the Republican movement is vulnerable to that kind of strategy. The idea of reforming the Northern Ireland state continues to have some weight. The alternative — a united Ireland — seems remote and distant. That's a problem we have to confront.

The British and Irish governments are trying to create a framework that will break the stalemate — in their interests. That's exactly what we have to do. We have to

create the force that can achieve a united Ireland.

We have to break from conventional Catholic-Irish nationalism, and return to traditional Republicanism — uniting the Irish people.

Lebanon?

John Bloxam: Niall complained of double standards. But there's a difference between the kind of civil war you might see in South Africa on the one hand and Ireland on the other. It's a difference for example of a situation like the Lebanon — two working class communities slaughtering each other, with no progress coming out of it; and a situation perhaps like Spain.

Civil war in South Africa might

be a necessary stage to unite the country and allow the working class to fight for its own demands. Civil war in Ireland would be different. And that's what the discussion is about. Everyone here supports the struggle for a united Ireland. But if there is a civil war, which would mean repartition, that would certainly not be an advance on the situation, and could well be a step backwards.

That's our concern in talking about civil war and repartition.

Daisy said she doesn't think there would be repartition. I'm not quite sure why she thinks that.

There are two arguments, I think. One is that the Protestants aren't strong enough to organise their own state outside of Britain. I just don't think this is the case. They're strong enough numerically

and armed enough to do it.

The second is that a Protestant state wouldn't be economically viable. But it doesn't depend upon cold economic calculations. I can't assess that. It depends upon a political drive, which would be very strong.

Comrades have pointed quite rightly to the problems of creating working class unity. But they're missing the point — it's a problem, it's been tried before and failed so it'll have to wait for a united Ireland... This just ignores the points that have been made here.

We're not saying that we've got all the answers. We're trying to address the problem. That's important. The comrades haven't explained how a united Ireland is going to happen outside of some kind of unity.

Summing up : John O'Mahony and Daisy Mules

John O'Mahony: You can't measure the threat of sectarian civil war by Paisley. What comrade Mules said about his motivation the infighting in Unionist ranks — is quite right. But then it is an old joke that Ian Paisley is a bit of a 'fake right'. He's a demagogue. You can't measure the threat of civil war by Paisley's manoeuvrings.

The basic thing is that even today, even with the Deal, the Protestants think they can rely on the British state — it's their state, they identify with it. So long as it's there, they don't have the motivation to organise themselves for sectarian civil war, or rather for a war to carve out their own area of Ireland, to create their own state.

But given their heavy concentration, particularly in Antrim and Down, I don't see any reason to doubt that if they feel fundamentally threatened they will resist, and sectarian civil war will be a real part of the situation.

We should beware of logic chopping. It's fine to point out the contradiction in comrade Mules argument — that Britain prevents civil war, etc. But it's also absolutely irrefutably true. It's true that if Britain left without a political settlement the Protestants would try to sort it out in their own way.

In Britain we have to insist all the time that the Six County state is an artificial entity, and shouldn't exist. But that idea also contains a potential lie that Leftists can tell themselves: the lie that no Protestant majority state is viable or conceivable. In reality there is such a conceivable state — smaller than the present one — that could emerge out of a sectarian clash.

It is inconceivable that the Catholics could win. I don't think that subjugating Protestants is

desirable, but in any case it wouldn't happen.

I agree that in the current situation, working class unity is not possible. However the idea that you will only get it after a united Ireland is simply nonsensical. You will not get a united Ireland unless you find some way of uniting the Irish people; you will most likely get a repartitioned Ireland as a result of the Provo war. So it's a vicious circle.

You won't get a united Ireland by Catholic conquest of the Protestants. The Catholic half-million in the north could not conceivably conquer the Protestant million. It's inconceivable that the Catholic population in the South would mobilise to try to do it. It's just not possible.

Out of that we derive the notion of combining our propaganda for a socialist Ireland and for British withdrawal with some sort of democratic solution — a democratic version of federalism. On that basis you could at least talk to some of the Protestants. You could create small groups of united workers on that democratic basis.

In reality that's one of our differences with Sinn Fein. We would accept that the Protestants are a legitimate Irish minority. They are not just a political minority that can be said to be pro-imperialist or 'unionist' — though they are unionists. I'm not too sure of the precise definition though I wouldn't baulk too much at calling them a national minority.

Ireland's problem is that there's a national minority, but instead of that minority relating rationally and democratically to the Irish majority, the whole thing was snarled up by the intervention of the British ruling class in the artificial form of an artificial partition — which created a bigger Catholic

minority than the Protestants would have been in the whole of Ireland.

We've got to look at that rationally, as socialists, and also as Republicans.

One of the problems with Sinn Fein is that to a considerable extent it's come to reflect the northern Catholic minority and to a serious extent to break with fundamental aspects of republicanism, for example in its abandonment of federalism, which it advocated for a decade.

Federalism isn't something SO has just thought up. As long ago as 1921 the political leader of the Republicans who were soon to be in arms against the Free State government, De Valera, adopted some notion of federalism, recognising that there had to be an attempt to accommodate the Protestant minority.

It was very late in the story. History might have gone differently if that proposal had been part of the original Home Rule Bill of the 1880s. It wasn't. 1921 was very late in the affair, and there have never been many Protestant takers for the idea as far as I know.

But the point is to have a basic democratic programme that will allow workers to talk to workers and allow socialists from either community to assure people from the other community that they respect their identity and do not propose any form of sectarian or national oppression.

I don't think that just because we're in Britain we can accept a self-denying ordinance that we have no right to do or say anything but simply reflect straightforward Provo Irish nationalism. I think it's far too complex for that.

Daisy Mules: What hasn't really

been touched on is why Britain wants to stay in Ireland. It is an economic reason. But it's also a strategic reason, which noone has touched upon.

Seamus Mallon and Fitzgerald when the Anglo-Irish Agreement came out actually touched on it. Mallon indicated that he would be willing to negotiate an end to Free State neutrality if he felt that would end the northern-Irish political deadlock. So Britain is there for strategic reasons tied up with NATO.

If they think they can bargain with the 26 Counties for an end to their neutrality, they'll do so. There's already been moves towards that; Fitzgerald is already talking about it.

When I said Britain wouldn't allow a civil war, I meant at present, within the partitionist state. If the troops are removed, some people say there would be a civil war. We would like to believe — and maybe it is an illusory belief, but we'll have to wait and see — that if the troops are withdrawn, Britain declares its intention to withdraw, withdraws its military presence, and hopefully eventually its economic presence, this will force the Protestant working class to open dialogue with Republicans. That is our belief.

The veto gives Protestant supremacy, whether you like it or not, or you think that they're not supreme. They're not in the sense that they are unemployed, as Republicans are, though not to the same extent. You just have to look at Harland and Wolff, and Short Brothers, which employ a total majority of Protestant working class people. Republicans don't have that input into the job scene.

You can see that from the majority of the trade unions, from the NICICTU committee in the North,

which is totally controlled by Protestants. That's because they're in work. Not full employment; but in any case whether they're in employment or not, they still believe they have supremacy. Whether or not reality says otherwise, they still believe that. While they do, and while their veto enshrines that belief, as it does, there's no way they will talk to Sinn Fein or Republicans. They won't even talk with the SDLP.

To suggest that this is what we should be doing is cuckoo land stuff. Come over to Ireland and try it for yourselves. It's not going to happen.

I'm not saying that flippantly. Ideally that's what we would want. Some of us try it through trade union work, where we're meeting Protestant working class people. But most of the unions have clauses in their constitutions disallowing any discussion of political matters — by which they mean things to do with Ireland; they don't mean talking about the war in South Africa or in Nicaragua. They simply mean talking about the war in Northern Ireland.

Until the ICTU removes that constitutional bar on discussing politics, there will be no discussion. But in unions and trades councils where we can discuss, we do raise these issues.

Federalism. When Sinn Fein did have a policy of federalism, it certainly didn't encourage unionists to talk to us, or encourage the Protestant working class to do so. I don't think federalism would create more discussion.

Sinn Fein dropped it because we saw it as a sop to the Loyalists and we felt it was weakening our positions. We also felt strongly that it wouldn't in the long run create a socialist Ireland that that's what we are trying to do.



A cure for AIDS?

By Les Hearn

A drug which offers some hope for AIDS patients has just been licensed for use in the US.

Though the drug, azidothymidine (AZT) is not a cure, it is the first one to have produced a definite improvement.

Borroughs Wellcome who manufacture AZT, began tests on 145 American patients last February. At the same time, 137 patients were given a "placebo", a pill or injection containing no AZT. The purpose of this was to provide a "control" on the test, to ensure that any improvements or side-effects experienced were not just psychological effects of increased hope or fear at the new treatment.

After six months, though, there seemed to be clear evidence of a benefit from AZT.

AZT seems to work by attacking an essential stage in the virus's life cycle. AIDS virus is an RNA virus — its genetic material is in the form of RNA, unlike humans who have DNA. Before it can reproduce, it has to cope (transcribe) the RNA into DNA, using the enzyme, RNA transcriptase (RT), unique to this kind of virus.

Now, AZT is an altered form of thymidine, one of the building blocks for DNA. Its altered shape and properties seem to allow it to block the enzyme, rendering it permanently useless, rather like a broken key in a lock — you can get it in but it won't turn and you can't get it out again.

Since we don't possess RT, AZT is unlikely to cause us any harm through this route. However, it does seem to have some other side-effects, reducing production of blood cells, for example.

In the study, it was given to people whose immune system still retained some function but who were suffering from opportunistic infections, such as Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, Herpes zoster (shingles), thrush (a fungal infection), or weight loss and fever. They still contracted new infections but resisted them better than patients getting the placebo. They also gained weight and felt better.

The most impressive finding was that while 16 'controls' died, only one of the AZT group died.

So who could AZT benefit? AZT's mode of action makes it most useful to those in whom the infection has not gone too far, since these still have some immune functions left. But in the most advanced cases of AIDS, there may be little improvement possible while the side-effects on blood cell production could be dangerous. It could be argued, though, that the chance of treatment should be offered to such patients, provided that they were fully informed of the risks.

Which brings us to Britain! Despite the positive finding for the US study, it is not even intended that tests here should begin before the year's end.



Cathy Tyson as Simone

Goodies V Baddies

'Mona Lisa' has had a lot of advance publicity, generally very favourable. Yet it's disappointing. It's well acted, beautifully photographed and well put together, but it lacks the vital something that would fully bring it to life.

The plot is the problem. It's a very conventional good versus evil story. Neil Jordan, the director, has tried to conceal its banality under layers of symbolism and arty photography, but it can't be hidden. And the arty treatment just distances you further — you have to stand back to admire it, so it doesn't grab you like other thrillers do.

It's a simple enough story. Fall guy George comes out of jail after seven years taking the rap for his boss Mortwell. As compensation, he gets a job chauffeuring a high class whore, Simone, from client to client. George

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Mona Lisa'.

falls in love, but the feeling isn't mutual. Simone wants to use George to find her friend Cathy, another whore, who used to work for Simone's sadistic pimp, Anderson.

George may be a chunky, quick tempered fellow, but he's the knight in shining armour with a heart of gold as well. He's the main character and he's likeable, if a bit short on brains. His pal Thomas, who makes a living selling luminous Madonnas and other plastic works of art, also brings a quirky, likeable eccentricity to the film.

George and Thomas are basically innocents, and the plot shows its antiquity by making innocence their means of protection from evil. Simone has lost her innocence, as have Cathy, Mortwell, and all the lowlife types who work

for him. George may love Simone, but he doesn't understand her, and his not understanding her saves him from destruction.

He's just a bit player in the struggle between Simone who wants her freedom, and Mortwell, who makes a living from flesh peddling and drugs. George doesn't belong in the big league.

Hellish

The film is set in London, and parts of it have been dressed up to make them seem hellish — such as the Kings Cross sleaze area where George and Simone first look for Cathy. The sex clubs where George searches are suitably tawdry, a far cry from the swank hotels and houses where Simone plies her trade. But breaking free of either world is equally difficult, as May, whom George thinks at first is Cathy, and Simone both find out.

Though he's making a pretty basic

good-and-evil story, Jordan has tricked it out with a few symbols which may be comprehensible to fans of his earlier films, but which are otherwise gratuitous — the white rabbit George gives to Mortwell, the white horse George sees as he restores Cathy to Simone, the red hearts on the Brighton pier.

Simone herself is a symbol — 'Mona Lisa' — and as such, doesn't really make connection with the audience. She's as closed to us as she is to George. And George falls into the same trap as some of Simone's clients, by falling in love with what he *thinks* she is, rather than with the reality.

There are no bad performances in the film. Bob Hoskins as George and Michael Caine as the villain Mortwell are both outstanding. But you admire them from a distance — the film doesn't have the kind of shocking immediacy that would really draw you in.

What's in a family?

Last Friday Channel 4 showed a documentary called 'Plenty Chapati, Plenty Chips' about the Barot family who live in Leicester. They came to Britain as refugees 18 years ago from Kenya and the documentary touched on three issues — the family, religion and culture.

When I was growing up I can remember talking about "British culture", that is tea and scones on the lawn, croquet, hunting and fishing, cricket, Charles Dickens, Turner and so on. But as far as I can remember I never participated in or had access to such culture. Yes I did — taty scones!

Backyard

But a backyard hardly constitutes a lawn, and the nearest I got to hunting was chasing the stray dogs up and down the alley ways. Yet many British people, be they working class or upper class, defend this false culture ardently, as if in

on the



By Tracy Williams

some way being British makes it superior, civilised.

Not only do they defend their own culture (and it's not ours it's the capitalists' culture), but they ridicule other cultures either through blind ignorance or downright racist views.

The Barrot family, like many other Asian families living in Britain have as much right to practice and protect their own culture as any other. There is less harm in painting your son's face with tumeric before his wedding day to make his skin more attractive than in a gang of British men getting blind drunk on a stag night.

The documentary showed how

the family have changed from being the "typical" Asian family into a fairly radicalised unit. For example their daughter Sujarta is living with an English man, while one of their sons, Mukesh, a Sikh, has married a Hindu woman.

Raj, the eldest son, is living with a white woman and has integrated himself into the West Indian community of Leicester and Chuksu, the youngest boy is like any British scally.

Despite their breaks with tradition, the children still stressed the importance of the family.

Family

There are some on the left who automatically think that because the family helps to support capitalism it must be destroyed. However for black men and women this is often not the case.

Our black comrades in South Africa have argued that the family sometimes take on a comforting, supportive role. They are often separated from their spouses and

kids for six months at a time, while they have to work away, living in hostels, being isolated and feeling alienated. Similarly, black men and women in Britain will argue that the family i.e. the house, is sometimes the only place where they can escape from racist attacks and abuse — so we must be careful when analysing how the family affects our black comrades.

Religion

Religion of course is divisive. But at the end of the day workers have more in common with each other than they do with some god or allah or whatever.

Does it really matter if somebody has dreadlocks or wears the Star of David.

Religion creates far too many brutal barriers that disunite and weaken our class.

The Barrot family highlighted the problems of integrating into a community, a society that is hostile through its blind prejudice and deeply misguided beliefs.

Workers' rights

Alan Fraser looks at the debate about 'positive rights'.

UNION and Labour Party leaders have recently argued for a 'new approach' to industrial legislation.

They argue for accepting a degree of state control over the unions — through a law imposing ballots before strikes — and for 'positive rights' for workers and unions.

We should, I believe, flatly reject any state control over the right to strike. But what about 'positive rights'?

Can we advocate 'positive rights' without infringing the principle of working-class independence? What should our response be?

I would argue that we need to break new ground and organise to fight for the following demands:

1. Positive rights for individual workers
2. Repeal of the 1980, '82, and '84 anti-union laws
3. Reject a return to the old formula of 'immunities'
4. Support a charter for workers' rights.

Immunities

Previous labour legislation in Britain has been a mixture of positive rights and immunities. Unlike most parliamentary-democratic countries, Britain has never had a legal right to strike. Instead, there have been laws giving trade unions 'immunity' — protecting them from prosecution for causing breach of contract — in strikes. Laws regarding trade unions have nearly always been in the negative.

Positive rights have two major advantages over 'immunities', even when the substance of the legislation is basically the same.

To have the right to strike, for example, proclaimed as a positive legal principle, rather than grudgingly accepted as an exception to the basic law of contract, is better.

And positive legislation would be less vulnerable than 'immunities' to the biased interpretations of Tory judges.

We have to organise for positive legislation to build workers' confidence, and agitate, educate and make propaganda by counterposing a workers' charter to the new TUC/Labour Party document 'New Rights, New Responsibilities'.

The following rights should form the basis of a Workers' Charter:

1. The right to organise. This should include the right to recruit, facilities, workplace meetings, etc.
 2. The right to trade union recognition. This would give workers a better opportunity to organise in areas such as the hotel and catering industry — industries which have a disgraceful record on wages and workers' conditions.
 3. The right to strike. This would mean that workers and unions would not be liable for damages. The right of strikers and their families to social security: this would mean workers not being starved back to work.
 4. The right to picket. No restrictions on numbers, no 'code of practice'.
 5. The right of self-defence. We have to learn the lessons of the police actions over the last few years and have the right to defend ourselves against police brutality.
- While we reject completely any state interference in union affairs, we have to provide a positive alternative. Working-class militancy and legislation are not exclusive of each other.

A Workers' Charter can create rights for the whole of the working class rather than just sections. Yes, a Workers' Charter is breaking ground, but our alternative has to be something more than just going back to the position before 1979.

The last seven years have seen trade unions weakened and workers beaten and battered by a vicious Tory government. Despite this, unions still organise 10 million British workers. Tenacious struggles are still being fought.

Focus

A lot of demoralisation exists, but the working class and its organisations are still intact and far from smashed. Militancy in sections of the working class is high.

The Workers' Charter can act as a focus for the whole of the working class to organise for concrete demands.

There are limitations, but also possibilities. The fight for such a Workers' Charter can help to create and develop consciousness and confidence in the working class.

We must make demands on a Labour government to act in the interests of the working class and to strike at capitalism. We can agi-



Should the miners have had a ballot imposed on them by law?
Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

tate in order to mobilise the working class to enforce these demands.

They are demands, not pleas. We recognise and say honestly that a Labour government will not serve the interests of the working class seriously when that means attacking capitalism. Any pro-working-class measures it implements will have to be forced on it by the pressure and actions of the rank and file.

But without struggling for necessary reforms, the working class cannot learn to struggle for socialism.

We make these demands in order to mobilise, to organise, to educate

and to fight for socialism. We do not deny the use of Parliament to achieve or reinforce necessary reforms.

We should apply the same approach to the question of rights for individual workers.

Part-time and temporary work, for a start, is an area where positive rights should be advocated. Such workers should have a legal right to be paid at the same rate per hour as comparable full-time workers. Their rights regarding unfair dismissal, etc. should be made exactly the same as for full-time workers.

Maternity rights are an area where the Tories have eroded the rights of women workers. Positive

legislation is needed to restore and expand those rights.

Employers should also be legally required to adopt an equal opportunities policy. This would give women and ethnic minorities the legal right to pursue cases of discrimination, and help them to organise collectively.

Health and safety law should include the removal of immunity of Crown employees from prosecution, and the right to a union veto over unsafe working conditions.

On unfair dismissal: where workers win their cases at tribunals they should have the right to full reinstatement. And there are other areas where workers' individual rights in relation to employers should and could be strengthened.

Positive

To support such 'positive rights' in no way means supporting the TUC's line in favour of laws to write secret ballots into union rules.

The TUC version is that we must have secret ballots because the members favour them. The ground has shifted, and we need to respond.

While there can be no doubt that the ground has shifted and that workplace organisation has been weakened, the bureaucrats' argument is a pretence.

They want secret ballots because they fear that under a new Labour government, after eight miserable years of Thatcher, workers' confidence will be lifted.

They fear that many workers will be prepared to go on the offensive to fight for their demands.

Trade unionists can and should decide for themselves, without being dictated to by the capitalist courts.

The Tories and the right wing favour secret ballots because they are designed to isolate individuals away from their workmates, to encourage doubts and fears, and to give maximum weight to the ruling-class media as against workers' own discussions.

To strike requires courage, and the confidence which comes from collective strength. Secret ballots are being used as a political weapon against strikes. They promote individualism as against collectivity. That is not in workers' interests.

The Tories have used the issue of secret ballots to expose weaknesses in union democracy. They have had a large measure of success in popularising the view that secret ballots increase union democracy and give control to ordinary members.

But the answer is not ballots imposed by Tory judges, but self-reform by the unions to create a real, accountable, participatory democracy.

Substitute

Legal rights are never a substitute for working-class action at the point of production. Employers will try to ignore them, and established courts and tribunals will show bias in favour of employers in administering them.

But legal rights are part of the struggle. Every trade unionist knows that bosses will try to break or twist written agreements when it suits them; but we still fight for written agreements. And a law giving rights to workers or unions is only a sort of 'written agreement' between the working class and the capitalist class at the level of the whole country rather than one workplace, company, or industry.

A fight for such legal rights can unite the working class. It means that the stronger sections of the working class are fighting for rights which they can impose by direct action to be extended to the whole class, including the weaker sections. And then those legal rights can be an important lever for those weaker sections to make themselves stronger.

Whose freedom?

The ABC OF MARXISM

By Martin Thomas

Sorry about last week's column; a typesetting mistake omitted the source of the long quotation in it.

The quote was from Karl Marx — Capital volume 1. Marx's point was that values and attitudes usually presented as eternal and natural are in fact shaped and moulded by the economic relations of society.

"The innate rights of man", he says sarcastically, find their most typical expression in the processes of buying and selling. The market place is the realm of "Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham". (We shall see later what he means

by 'Bentham').

Freedom? Buyer and seller both choose freely. In the medieval system of guilds and royal monopolies, only certain people could sell certain goods, but under capitalism, generally, all can sell freely. In feudal society the typical working person could not sell his or her labour freely: he or she was tied to the lord's land. In capitalism workers are free to choose their employers.

The modern capitalist concept of freedom is different from earlier concepts. When feudal lords talked about their 'liberties', they meant their traditional privileges. In early, commercial, capitalism, a 'free' person was by definition an independent property-owner, someone who did not work for wages.

So the modern capitalist concept of freedom is wider. But it is still very limited. It is a negative freedom, an absence of legal restrictions rather than a positive freedom — a liberation of humanity from scarcity and drudgery and insecurity. Indeed, part of it — 'free enterprise' — contains as its unspoken but necessary conclusion the con-

demnation of many people to scarcity, drudgery and insecurity.

Equality? Buyers and sellers are equal before the law. No-one has any preordained right to charge a higher price, or receive a lower price, than others.

But this capitalist equality, like capitalist freedom, is limited. It is formal equality, concealing the fact that some have masses of wealth and others have nothing to sell but their labour power.

Property? According to some modern economists, even the poorest workers have some property, some 'capital'. Their labour-power is 'human capital', which they can rent out at the going rate just as bankers lend out their money capital.

In fact one class has no property other than maybe some clothes, a house, or some furniture: the other class, the capitalist class, monopolises the great masses of wealth which dominate society.

"And Bentham"? Marx puts it like this: "And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage". Jeremy Bentham was a bourgeois philosopher of the early 19th

century. Marx uses his name to refer to the fact that the capitalist market-place assumes that every man and every woman is out for him- or herself — and the devil take the hindmost!

The other point that Marx makes is that the market-place is only one side of capitalism. In the market-place the worker (the seller of labour-power) is equal with the capitalist (the buyer of labour-power), just as any other seller is equal with any other buyer. But there's another side to it — a side which vanishes into the mist from the bourgeois point of view, but which is central from the workers' point of view.

When we go from the market-place to the factory or office, "He who was previously the money-owner now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his worker."

"The one smirks importantly and is intent on his business; the other is timid and holds back, like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing to expect but — a tanning".

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Rally Fleet Street

New realism raises its ugly head again: only hours after capitulating to Murdoch's anti-union, pro-scab proposals for resolving the Wapping dispute, it emerged that the print unions had agreed a no-strike deal

By a SOGAT clerical member

at the Telegraph.

The legally-binding agreement at the Telegraph also includes massive

redundancies (over 50% in the machine room, for example), longer working weeks for less pay; shorter holidays and management's right to lay-off workers in a dispute.

It is identical, in fact, to Murdoch's original proposal to the News International workers in January, which they rejected and struck against on the instructions of SOGAT leader Brenda Dean.

In only eight months Dean has managed to destroy what it took over 40 years to build up: one of the strongest and most militant organised workforces in Britain is being forced to its knees by its own General Secretary.

The News International strikers' fight for trade union rights and recognition has been undermined by its own leaders who see company unionism as the only way forward.

The deal done at the Telegraph is another blow, not only to the strikers, but to the rest of Fleet Street. But the print unions aren't dead yet. We can still win if we all fight together.

What we need is:

*To call Fleet Street out — to link up with the News International strikers, those at the Mirror and the Observer, and organise a rank and file fightback against the leaders' sell-out of our rights to organise.

*Call on the rank and file militants in the rest of the trade union and labour movement to fight with us for jobs, trade union recognition and the right to strike.

*Organise a serious campaign against the 'company unionism' ideology of Hammond and his cronies and fight for the interests of the working class, not the bosses and bureaucrats.

Now it seems that News International is not going to honour its commitment anyway. Claiming that it had 'little or no confidence' in the way London branches of SOGAT are conducting the ballot, NI has asked the TUC to intervene to run a new ballot.

NI's offer — which includes £58 million compensation for the Wapping job losses and the almost complete elimination of trade union organisation — was conditional on SOGAT recommending acceptance.

Spinelessly, the SOGAT leaders found a formula to try to meet Murdoch's demand, while not plainly saying 'accept'.

But, fearing massive rejection of the offer, NI is alleging ballot malpractice.

LABOUR'S 'SOFT' LEFT RETHINKS

Off their knees?

Tribune seems to be having second thoughts about the soft left's rallying behind Neil Kinnock. John O'Mahony reports.

If you wanted to be bitter about it you might say that last week's Tribune contained the most whole-hearted confession of bankruptcy, penned by Tribune's editor Nigel Williamson, since Judas Iscariot threw away the 30 pieces of silver he got for betraying Jesus Christ, tied a noose in a rope, put the rope round his neck and hanged himself.

Williamson's article "Whatever happened to realignment" draws the balance sheet of the so-called "realigned left". Left realignment was the banner raised by those who split the Bennite left during the miners' strike and went over to open support for Neil Kinnock.

Williamson — who was one of them — is remarkably candid about it all. The realigned left, he says, "set out to create a centre-left coalition around Neil Kinnock, in the Shadow Cabinet and on the NEC instead of the centre-right forges which predominated then and still do".

That meant breaking up the old left whose public champion for the previous five years had been Tony Benn. Instead of organising the serious left to fight to change the Labour Party they chose instead to try to influence Neil Kinnock and to win him away from the influence of the right and centre right.

They were magnetised by his power — as some of them had already been magnetised by the



CND demo at Labour conference. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

supposed power of the local government left.

Kinnock was surprised. Says Williamson: "Neil Kinnock suddenly found that he was getting support from sections of the left from which he had, frankly, least supported it".

Kinnock no doubt welcomed their support. But he didn't need it and he wasn't prepared to pay for it as they had hoped he would.

Nigel Williamson: "Neil Kinnock calculated that although it was a useful tool against the hard left, the soft left did not really wield any power within the Party." The only thing they wielded was the dagger they stuck in Tony Benn's back. Its efforts included behind-the-scenes attempts to get Dennis Skinner and Eric Heffer off the

NEC.

But Williamson admits they have failed comprehensively. "The right remains dominant on the NEC and in the shadow cabinet." Williamson asserts that the realigners helped Kinnock and the Party improve their electoral image. But the results for the soft left have been catastrophic.

It has "become probably the least coherent grouping in the Party or Parliament" "... the soft left has failed to make any real impact". "The realigned left feels almost powerless to do anything about the situation. It is heavily locked into a strategy of supporting Kinnock and its criticism of the direction of the Party and its policies are tempered by them." "Drift and inertia has set in".

The practical consequence of the ideas expressed in Williamson's article was put on display in

Blackpool. Williamson, Ken Livingstone and others have been making public overtures to Tony Benn for a new regroupment between the "realigned" — or rather marginalised — "left" and some of the hard left — on condition that Marxists such as Socialist Organiser are excluded. Benn replied publicly: unity presupposes common values and in the first place opposition to expulsions.

Williamson's article has some of the marks of an attempt to draw up an honest balance sheet. It seems to indicate that some of the born-again Kinnockites are sobering up. Many more of them will sober up, especially after the next election. But they have a long way to go before they will have risen from the prostrate position at Neil Kinnock's feet where they voluntarily placed themselves when they split from the Bennite left.

I will fight on!

By Eric Heffer



Published by Verso at £4.95

I have a pen, and I shall continue to fight harder than ever for socialist concepts and socialist policies, because they're needed more than ever.

The fact that I've been removed from the Executive is not the end of the struggle, it's one chapter closed, another one opened.

The point was that the so-called soft left, the cuddly left, together with the right, have been working very hard over the last two years to get me off the national executive, and now they've succeeded. They've succeeded, I think — and I'm not being big-headed about it — because I've probably spear-headed the attack against the drift to the right in the Party. And I've also made it clear that I've been very much opposed to the various witch-hunts that have taken place. On that basis, it's a political decision.

Clearly lots of the delegates here would have liked to have voted personally for me, but they were mandated by their CLPs — perfectly understandable — many of whom have been influenced by the campaign in the party, and also by the press campaign outside the party.

But I'm not discouraged by all this. I have a brain, I have a voice,

No US bases!

From page 1

he will not be budged. We will have to see what his later response will be.

For the truth is that Weinberger is right: if Labour were to implement its defence policy, then that would probably wreck NATO.

Do the present Labour leaders — who are soft-peddalling on almost every aspect of domestic policy — have the conviction or the guts to push through nuclear disarmament regardless?

On Kinnock's record so far there is no reason to feel confident that he will continue to stand firm. It is Healey's voice which expresses the views of the Labour Establishment here.

And even if Kinnock and his team in government are inclined to throw out the US bases, would they go?

Kinnock says that if a Labour government told them to go, they'd go. We can't be sure about that either: Tony Benn has for a long time been warning the labour movement that they might refuse to go.

It is plain that there is scope, and motivation, for immense behind-the-scenes pressure to be exerted on a Labour government by both the Pentagon and the British Establishment.

The rank and file of the Labour Party must be on guard against treachery, and we must exert a strong counter-pressure demanding an end to nuclear bombs and US bases.

Immediately the best answer to the Liberal/SDP and Tory conspirators and to the arrogant Weinberger is to go all out to secure a Labour victory in the general election, which may be no more than a matter of months away.

Due to Labour Party conference and our extended 'Dialogue with Sinn Fein' feature, this issue of Socialist Organiser is different from usual. Regular columns are missing. Next week's SO will be back to normal, and will also include the next article in Phil O'Brien's series on Latin America.

S Africa

From page 1

cor allowed Chief Buthelezi's scab union UWUSA the same facilities and the same status as NUM.

It is clear that the union will not be able to inspect the mine in any detail.

The call for a day of mourning has been supported by COSATU, the United Democratic Front, and other community groups.

It is expected to heat up the long-standing wage dispute between NUM and the Chamber of Mines, and the response on 1 October is widely seen as preparation for a future strike. A strike ballot is in preparation.

An NUM spokesperson said, "Last year the industry made unparalleled profits. They are in a good position to meet our demands". NUM is demanding across-the-board increases of 26%, and 16 June — the anniversary of the Soweto revolt of 1976 — as a paid holiday.

The Chamber's complex offer falls short of these demands, so a national wages strike could happen in the near future.