

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST



IS NICARAGUA SOCIALIST?

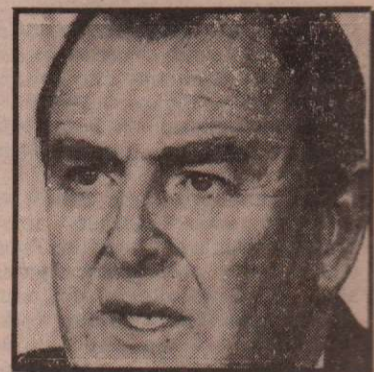
See centre pages

After the summit

see page 3

# Britain's death

# squad exposed!



RUC chief Hermon

## Ulster cops did shoot to kill

THERE WAS a police death squad which acted as judge, jury and executioner roaming around Northern Ireland operating a shoot-to-kill policy in 1982.

It did shoot dead at least six unarmed men, one of them 17 years old. The death squad was accountable directly to RUC chief Sir John Hermon. And Northern Ireland's top cops did systematically cover up for the death squad, threatening junior policemen under the Official Secrets Act to silence them.

They falsified forensic evidence, spirited witnesses away, and lied in court. The informer who tried to frame up John Stalker, the Manchester deputy chief constable sent to investigate the murders carried out by the RUC, was working for the RUC.

Turn to page 3



The bullet-riddled car in which Gervase McKer, Eugene Toman, and Sean Burns were murdered by the RUC in November 1982

"IF the story that appears in the Observer is correct — and the evidence as to its truth is pretty strong — then the government itself is engaged in acts of terrorism in Northern Ireland, and the Anglo-Irish Accord is sustained by direct policies of assassination authorised in London.

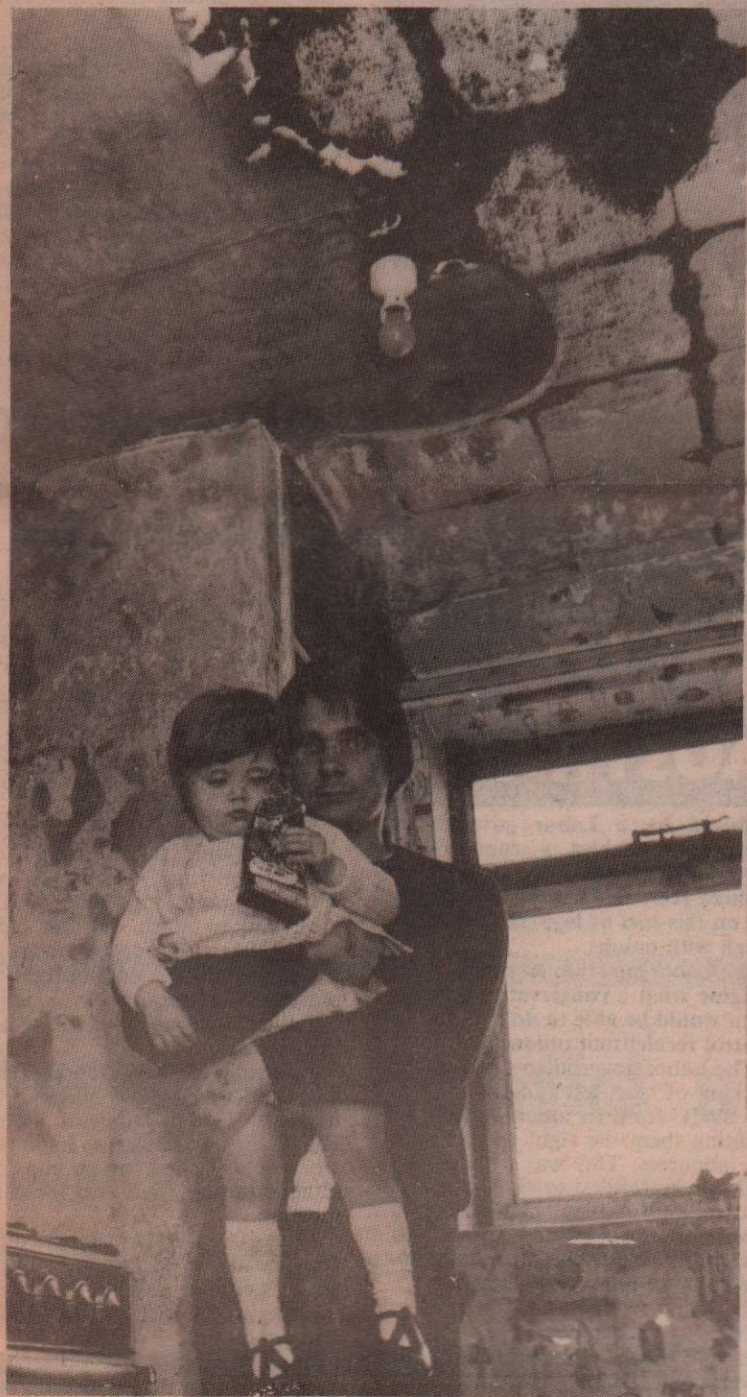
It also looks as if army people are attached to the police, which is what was suspected during the

miners' strike, although not in the same role.

The interaction of the armed forces and the police force is an aspect of policing which needs to be much more fully explored when a Labour government comes to power. One of the things we must find out when we form a government is what exactly has been going on between the two forces."

Tony Benn

Photo: Nigel Clapp



## The Tories' new homeless

THIS IS the kind of 'home' on offer at Beale House, Ladywood, Birmingham.

This particular resident and his wife live in such cramped and bad conditions that they on-

ly get to see their daughter, who lives with relatives, at weekends.

Recent official figures show

Turn to page 2

# NORTHERN IRELAND: A STEP TO CLASS UNITY?

By John O'Mahony

**AN IMPORTANT conference has been called by the Northern Committee of the Irish TUC for 25 October in Belfast.**

It is a conference on how to fight sectarianism and intimidation in the workplaces of Northern Ireland. For once the Northern Ireland trade unions show some signs of being willing to tackle the problem that cripples the Northern Ireland working class — the fact that it is riddled with communal hostilities.

The trade unions have not fought sectarianism. They have preserved a facade of unity by trying to ignore its existence.

But the signing of the Anglo-Irish deal has thrown the Northern Ireland Protestant community into a turmoil comparable to that of the early '70s. In the last year there has been a horrifying growth of sectarian intimidation.

The most publicised events took place at Short Brothers aircraft works in Belfast, where the Protestant 95% of the workforce organised an intimidating display of Unionist regalia against the Catholic workers in their midst — backing it up with threats of violence — and then forced management to back down when it tried to ban the regalia.

But there have been many other cases, all across Northern Ireland.

The IRA's threat to kill any workers servicing the army or police in any way — whether it's dustmen, or builders repairing blasted RUC barracks — massively stoked up the hostilities and gave the excuse to



Belfast, 1986. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.

various Protestant groups to threaten or carry out sectarian murder.

The IRA threats are estimated to have put 2000 builders out of work so far, many of them Catholics. Hundreds of Catholic families have been driven out of previously mixed

Catholic/Protestant areas.

Now the Northern Ireland trade unions have decided to take a hand and try to rally workers against sectarianism and intimidation.

But we should have no illusions that any quick solution to the

murderous communal antagonisms can come out of the conference. The trade unions inevitably reflect Northern Ireland society and its workforce, where there has long been heavy job discrimination in favour of Protestants. Catholic unemployment

rates are still 2½ times higher than Protestant.

For decades the trade union movement has tacitly accepted such discrimination.

It is quite likely that the dignitaries who attend this conference — employers and ruling-class politicians have been invited, as well as trade unionists — will spend most of their time fulminating against the Republicans. The Republicans should in fact be condemned for their threat to kill workers whose work brings them into any contact with the police or army, and for killing an electrician in Derry in line with this threat.

## Labour

But the Republicans are not the cause of the horrors in Northern Ireland. They are the victims. The Catholic community out of which they have sprung have always been the victims.

If the conference does not confront and tackle that root problem — and it won't — the condemnations of the IRA will just be so much scapegoating.

Nevertheless the conference is a rare attempt to forge working-class unity across the sectarian divide. It may be a beginning. It may encourage rank and file workers to do what the top officials are never likely to do.

**It is an initiative that should have the support of the British labour movement.**

## Tories' homeless

From page 1

25,000 households homeless in the first quarter of 1986 — a third more than in 1983. The Tories have cut public spending on housing by about half. Council house sales have further reduced the stock of homes available.

Inner-city areas, especially in London, are particularly hard hit by homelessness. Camden's total has more than doubled since 1981-2. 58% of new council tenancies there now go to the homeless rather than to transfers or people on the waiting list.

The Labour Party should commit itself now to a crash house-building programme as soon as the next Labour government is elected.

# Union-bashing by Labour

By Richard Lane

**BUILDERS' labourers are refusing to accept the destruction of their union by the Federal, Victorian and New South Wales Labor governments. Major battles are being fought that will decide their future.**

The Australian Building and Construction Employees and Builders' Labourers' Federation (BLF) was selected for attack because it refused to buckle under to wage restraint via the Accord agreed between the ruling Australian Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (the Australian TUC). Legislation to outlaw the union was passed for the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, and New South Wales.

To quote Victorian Labor premier John Cain in April 1986:

**"As from this week every labourer on a building site will have to resign from the BLF and join another union to obtain work. We will take whatever action is necessary and appropriate to ensure a fair and proper division of the assets and cash of the union between the members"**

## Blueprint

This was to be ensured by cancelling contracts, cutting off the electricity, etc. to bosses who employed BLF members.

The actions of the Hawke Federal government and the Cain Victorian state government go far beyond just 'deregistering' the BLF. Both the BLF and the rival Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) have previously been deregistered and have carried on servicing their members' needs on building sites for years.

Deregistration would only deprive the union of the capacity to seek or to service awards of the government Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

But the Hawke and Cain anti-BLF legislation is a blueprint for future governments. It is setting a precedent that will be used and built upon by these governments against other unions, or by future non-Labor governments.

## Conservative

The Bills have the full support of the opposition and conservative forces. W.R. Baxter of the right-wing National Party supported the Cain government's legislation, saying:

**"I am pleased that the Victorian Premier, John Cain, has taken the lead from the Queensland legislation [by a right-wing state government, to sack 1000 electricity lines workers] and that a similar move has been made in Victoria. I am pleased that it has been in-**

## LETTER from AUSTRALIA

**roduced by a Labor government because it enables a conservative government, when it comes to office in three years in Victoria, to hang its hat on this sort of legislation and get tough with unions...**

**If a Labor government can do that, imagine what a conservative government would be able to do if it had to control recalcitrant unions"**

The Labor governments gained the backing of 'soft left' unions such as the BWIU for their union-bashing by granting them the right to represent the labourers. This was enforced by police, who refused to allow workers on site until they had filled in government-supplied forms of resignation from the BLF and applications to join other unions.

Initially the BLF officials tried to fight this with pickets, but finally they told their members to fill in the government forms. They also told them to fill in BLF forms withdrawing their resignations.

The BWIU and other unions handed out free membership tickets. These were up for renewal in September, so labourers are now deciding whether to pay up to the outlawed BLF or to the tamecat BWIU.

## Police

All indications are that more than half will renew with the BLF. On many big sites, labourers have voted to *all* renew BLF, and some bosses have decided to pay their BWIU memberships for them in order to avoid trouble with the governments.

Many bosses have also stopped calling the police to evict BLF organisers — as all workers would stop work for 24 or 48 hours whenever cops appeared on site. However, at least two BLF officials are still in jail as I write because they refuse to accept bail conditions that would stop them from going to certain sites.

Historically, the BLF have tended to 'go it alone', and have done deals with right-wing unions in votes within the union movement, but they have had to reach out for support now. 'Defend Trade Unions — Defend the BLF' committees have played an important role in publicising their struggles and in reducing their isolation.

Rank and file BWIU carpenters are disgusted with the scabbery of their officials. Two meetings of Victorian BWIU shop stewards have overwhelmingly called for an end to the attacks on the BLF and for a mass meeting.

Over 1000 BWIU members on central city sites in Melbourne have signed a petition calling for a mass meeting on the BLF, superannuation, and conditions. BWIU officials have refused to hold a mass meeting, as they know they would lose any votes.

The Plumbers' Union has launched a 20% pay claim, and has already been branded a rogue union. Deregistration, supposedly a one-only measure, is even more clearly a threat to be used against any union.

Yet the 'totally irresponsible' aim of the Plumbers is no more than to quit the Accord, allegedly a voluntary agreement.

As I write, the plumbers' campaign is yet to start. When it does, we can expect them to link up with the BLF and other trades to bring the situation on building sites from a simmer to a boil. The BLF motto, 'If you don't fight, you lose', has never rung truer for rank and file building workers.

**Socialist FORUM**  
Number 2



**Ireland 1969-85**

**A socialist analysis**

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After the summit:

# Cold comfort

The Reagan/Gorbachev talks in Reykjavik have come to nothing, floundering on Reagan's commitment to Star Wars, or the Strategic Defence Initiative, as he calls it.

Now the 'talk war' begins, as both sides try to blame the other for the breakdown, seeking to enlist public sympathy for themselves.

When during the summit the Sandinistas of Nicaragua shot down a US plane illegally supplying materiel to the contras, it was a grim reminder of the realities of world power politics and of the US-fostered war being waged to depose a popular and legitimate government.

Due to the 'news blackout' imposed by both sides in Reykjavik, no-one knows exactly what was going on in Reagan's and Gorbachev's four sessions together. On issues other than Star Wars, they are said to have made impressive progress.

## Sticking

Predictably, the Soviet side has been quick to denounce American's 'mothballed proposals'. "We have made unprecedented proposals", said Gorbachev, "and still there has been no agreement".

And, indeed, the sticking point was Reagan's commitment to Star Wars. But the Kremlin is not as virtuous as it makes out.

Pravda commented last week that "The White House does not intend to abandon its Star Wars programme". Gorbachev's concessions were made in the certain knowledge that the final package would be unacceptable to the US — and so they could be made quite cynically.

The US's long-term goal has been to reassert its authority on the world stage, and restore the commanding lead over the USSR in nuclear arms which narrowed in the 1970s. Star Wars is the next phase, involving new departures in nuclear weapons technology.

The USSR, for its part, needs to compete in weapons development while at the same time not missing any opportunity to foster an image as a force for peace.

The USSR's 'commitment to



If Labour wants peace it must take on NATO

world peace' was demonstrated by its decision to withdraw 6000 troops from Afghanistan. Unfortunately, as Washington was quick to point out, they were simply replacing the troops with new ones.

## EDITORIAL

Summit meetings can never negotiate an end to present or future wars, because they cannot negotiate an end to the social and political systems that cause wars. Gorbachev cannot convince Reagan not to be an aged Rambo

who defends the interests of the American ruling class. Nor can Reagan provide Gorbachev not to be a representative of the tyrannical caste of bureaucrats which rules the peoples of the USSR and Eastern Europe with an iron hand. Only the top-to-bottom transformation of the social and political systems 'West' and 'East' can bring peace. When Reagan and Gorbachev and all they represent are booted off the political stage by the international working class, world peace will be a reality.

And there is a lesson in this for Neil Kinnock.

You cannot unilaterally get rid of nuclear weapons while promising to do your bit for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

The bomb is an integral part of NATO's 'first strike' strategy — a strategy carefully worked out to defend the interests of the various

greater and lesser imperialisms that NATO groups together. Weinberger and others who protest at Labour's anti-nuke but pro-NATO policy are logical, from their point of view.

And even if NATO could survive as a coalition of competing 'defence' strategies, some nuclear and some not, NATO would not thereby become a peace-loving gentle giant. It would continue to be what it has always been — an imperialist alliance.

The Labour Party, if it wants to fight for peace, should commit itself to get Britain out of NATO. Anything we can do to weaken the vultures of capitalism will hasten its destruction; and if we can link up with workers in 'the East' fighting to destroy the bureaucratic systems there, we will hasten working class power — and world peace — all the more.

## PRESS GANG

### Independent?

By Jim Denham

ON TUESDAY 7 October 'The Independent' slid smoothly down the slipway. It was in sharp contrast to the shambles that surrounded the launch of 'Today' earlier this year.

Editor/founder Andreas Whittam Smith and his crew had been churning out dummy runs for weeks beforehand. They also avoided the temptation to 'overdo' the new technology hype in their pre-launch publicity, and instead emphasised the journalistic talent (including a high proportion of Wapping refuseniks) they had assembled.

And the marketing people had done a thorough job researching the potential market: yuppies.

I hate to have to say it, but 'The Independent' is a good paper by the standards of what is still anachronistically referred to as 'Fleet Street'. Will it achieve the 400,000 circulation required to keep it afloat and 'independent' of any proprietor? Time alone will tell, but Smith insisted that he would prefer it went under than be bailed out by a sugar-daddy like Tiny Rowland or Robert Maxwell.

The main failing of 'The Independent' is a lack of character. Expecting that indefinable quality to emerge from day one is perhaps, unfair, but this lack is not an accident.

### Fundamental

It is fundamental to the paper. It springs from the philosophy that lies behind it.

You may like or loathe the Guardian or the Telegraph, but you know where you are with them. The Guardian stands politically somewhere between the Liberal component of the Alliance and the Labour Coordinating Committee. The Telegraph stands somewhere between Conservative Central Office and Attila the Hun.

Guardian readers jog and own Volvos. Telegraph readers shoot (birds, of course) and drive Range Rovers.

I suppose Independent readers ought to do a spot of weight training on the quiet and own BMWs. But what are they politically?

Judging by the first few issues, the Independent stands a little to the right of the Guardian — somewhere between Dr Owen (on the right) and Jim Prior (on the left).

The first issue contained a 'manifesto' from Michael Heseltine, which may or may not signify anything.

The proposition that a newspaper (one that actually contains news, as opposed to soap-opera resume and pouting pin-ups) can be 'independent' is a worthy ideal — especially when you consider the crazy rantings of the Mail and the Express, and the subversion of elementary journalistic ethics that has taken place under Rupert Murdoch and his craven editors. But it is a chimera.

Quite soon the Independent will be faced by a dilemma. There will be a general election. What will it say in its editorial column?

Will it be: "We do not have an opinion. As a responsible citizen, you have a duty to jump in your BMW and hasten to your polling station and cast your vote according to your conscience. We will not attempt to influence your decision one way or the other".

Another possibility might be for Whittam Smith to give his tame lefty, ex-SWP member James Fenton, space to argue for a Labour vote (without illusions, of course), and then balance it with a piece by Michael Heseltine or Jim Prior.

The obvious answer would be to come out openly as a pro-SDP/Alliance publication. But that wouldn't be very independent, would it?

# Ulster cops did shoot to kill

From page 1

The team of investigators working on the case for the Observer published the following details last Sunday in a story they said came from top legal and RUC sources in Northern Ireland who have had access to the evidence of forensic scientists and eyewitnesses.

The RUC death squad had "two dozen" men and was officially named the "Headquarters Mobile Support Unit". Its field teams roamed around in armour-plated cars, three men to a car, each car carrying a sub-machine gun and a high-powered rifle.

Like the Black and Tans of notorious memory who waged a reign of terror against the Irish during Ireland's war for independence in 1919-21, many of the 'HQMSU' thugs were recent ex-soldiers. They were given a thin veneer of police ex-

perience, trained by the Special Air Services, and sent out with a licence to kill and guaranteed immunity to go gunning for Republican suspects.

"They were not", says the Observer, "answerable to ordinary RUC officers and indeed were frequently ordered to lie to them... They resembled infantry men trained to kill in wars", concealing "what they did behind the Official Secrets Act".

When was the squad set up? That is not clear yet. But it was in existence well before the six killings in late 1982 which brought the public spotlight on the existence of an RUC shoot-to-kill policy and led to John Stalker's investigation.

Conceived by its initiators as a cover-up job, the investigation got out of control when John Stalker could not swallow the rampant illegality that flourished under the banner of British law and order in the Six Counties.

Stalker is said to have been particularly outraged at the killing of the

17 year old Michael Teague, who was non-political and, together with a friend, was lured to a barnhouse in Co Armagh and shot in cold blood by the RUC.

The gangster-like attempts to frame up Stalker backfired when Stalker was exonerated.

### Exceptional

One danger in the rush of exposures now overtaking the Stalker affair and the murder gang operating in late 1982 is that the incidents in Armagh will be made to appear exceptional.

If — as seems not unlikely — some senior policemen are prosecuted, the government will say that the affair has been sorted out, and use it as proof of the soundness of their claim to represent law and justice in Northern Ireland.

The Armagh murder gang are the ones who may get caught. How many other such gangs have operated since

1971? How many are operating now?

The rash of murders in late '82 was provoked by the killing of three police by the local IRA. Police passions were inflamed and they got careless. What of the more controlled operations of other police and army murder squads?

What of police infiltration and manipulation of the Ulster Defence Association and other Protestant groups, and (as was revealed in court not so long ago) of the 'Republican' Irish National Liberation Army.

One thing you can be sure about from the story that is now being dragged slowly into the light of day by investigative journalists such as the Observer team is this: that the Establishment won't come clean. They will tell as little as they can get away with.

The labour movement needs to organise a thorough investigation of the operations of the British and British-controlled forces of repression in the Six Counties.

# GRAFFITI

## Marxism made lucrative

THE WALK-OUT by Militant supporters at Labour Party conference was a move imposed on them by maverick Derek Hatton.

Leading Militant people are getting more and more fed up with Hatton, and now want to dissociate from him. Or so claims a report in the Daily Telegraph (6 October).

The Telegraph, a Tory paper, may be doing a bit of calculated disinformation; but the report does

ring true. Hatton's flamboyant ways of acquiring and spending £20,000 a year clash glaringly with Militant's policy of 'workers' MPs on workers' wages'.

### Blame

According to the Telegraph, leading people in Militant also blame Hatton's style for the bloodletting and political isolation which Militant have suffered on Merseyside. They have hesitated to move

against Hatton in case he retaliates by selling his story to the press or publishers, but now think that 'book or no book, they would be better off without him'.

Socialist Organiser has advocated for many months that Militant should either get Hatton to give a straight answer to all the charges against him, or dissociate from him. It looks like Militant may now be going along with our proposal — too late.

## High on dole

DRUG use is linked to unemployment, according to a recent report in the British Medical Journal.

Two doctors in Edinburgh conclude from a survey of drug-users in their area that "high levels

of unemployment serve to foster drug use".

More than half the unemployed young men they surveyed said they used heroin, cocaine, or LSD, as against one third of those in work.

## Oil right!

UNEMPLOYMENT is still high, homelessness is booming, and the Health Service is more and more strapped for cash. But some people are doing well.

Profits have now reached their highest level since 1964. The rate of return on capital for British companies in 1985 was 11.9%.

Profit rates declined steadily but slowly

through the 1960s, and crashed to a low of 4.2% in 1975. They increased sharply in 1976 and '77 under Labour government austerity policies, then crashed again in 1978-81.

Since then profits have been improving thanks to the combined effect of North Sea Oil superprofits and the Tories' assault on the working class.

## TUC

IT'S a pity that Ian MacGregor's memoirs are being serialised in Murdoch's scab Sunday Times, where most trade union activists will miss them.

In one passage of the memoirs he gives an interesting MacGregor's-eye-view of the TUC leaders.

"I found it quite amusing that in the meetings we had I should be sitting there with them and we should all be talking around trying to find a solution, not so much to the strike but to the problem created by Arthur Scargill. They understood the nature of the difficulty just as well as I did".

Now do you wonder that the TUC leaders never delivered on their pious promises of support for the miners?

## Welfare capitalism

ALSO doing well are the moneyed people who took advantage of the Tories' 'welfare state for the rich' in selling off of the Trustee Savings Bank.

As the Guardian reported, "Millions of pounds' worth of instant profits were made by investors who decided to take their gains on the first day, when 60 to 70 million shares were bought and sold in a turnover of more than £30 million.

"One investor in the Stock Exchange's options market — where speculators gamble on

NEW CLAIMS

AND REMEMBER, IN THE EYES OF THE DHSS, YOU'RE SCROUNGING UNTIL PROVEN DESTITUTE.



the value of shares without actually buying them — was showing a

£50,000 gains on a £120,000 stake before the day was out".

## The end of the line

JAPAN'S trade union movement is fighting a life-and-death battle over the privatisation and splitting up of the country's railways.

In most of Japanese industry, militant trade unionism was smashed in the late '40s and early '50s, to be replaced by company unions. But the railways have remained the one big bastion of strong union organisation.

The government's plan will not only sell off and split up the railway network, but reduce its workforce from 310,000 to 83,000.

The leadership of the

biggest rail union, Kokuro, recently abandoned opposition to the government's plans. But at a special union conference last week, the leadership line was rejected.

The old union executive

resigned, and a new one was elected, committed to continuing the fight.

The privatisation is due to go through next April, and debate on the legislation has just begun in the Japanese parliament.

## Male drivers

DID YOU suspect it was a sexist myth about women drivers being worse than men?

In fact, women drivers are significantly safer than men. Government research reported recent-ly that male drivers

are more likely to be drunk, to drive too fast, or to take risks.

Women drivers are much less likely to be involved in accidents, to die on the roads, or to be found guilty of serious driving offences.

# Cops grab anti-racists

WHEN THE Yorkshire branch of the 'Freedom' Association invited Ray Honeyford, the racist Bradford headmaster, to address a meeting in Sheffield, the Labour Party Young Socialists organised a picket.

We approached both the labour movement and the black community. The Labour Party supported us, as did the Council for Racial Equality. More importantly, the Asian community and in particular the Asian Youth Movement (AYM) were very eager to mobilise for a mass picket.

300 people gathered an hour before the meeting. Surprised by the size and militancy of the demonstration, for over an hour the police had no control over us. We turned away a number of Honeyford's racist supporters.

As police reinforcements arrived, the arrests began. A 13 year old girl was thrown to the ground and dragged away by the police. As the Tory prospective parliamentary candidate for the constituency, Giles Orton, arrived, he struck out at a demonstrator, but instead of arresting their Tory friend the police jumped on the demonstrator. Of course they were only doing their job!

### Arrests

When one 'Freedom' Association supporter got out of her car, thrusting a Union Jack into a demonstrator's face, the police once again attacked the demonstrator.

The FA supporter was later quoted in the local press as saying, "I carry

the Union Flag with me everywhere. It represents Queen and country, law and order, discipline and clean living".

However, the main targets of 'the law' were Asian youths, three of whom were arrested. In all there were five arrests.

Addressing the picket, a representative of the AYM condemned the police, but stressed that police violence and harassment is an everyday experience for black people.

A Youth Fightback speaker talked of how Honeyford's ideas serve to legitimise the politics of groups like the National Front, and of how important it is to combat such groups on the streets.

Richard Aplin, Sheffield Central LPYS.

## IRELAND

# Lesson in history

WHAT a weak historical analyst is Simon Pirani! In his vision of history the world never changes. Ireland was a British colony 300 years ago; it remains a British colony today. To suggest anything else is an insult to Irish readers.

As an Irish reader, Jim Denham's remarks offend me less than Simon's. Simply watching Ireland as a child in the long summer holidays, I had sufficient intelligence to notice dramatic changes in the 60's and 70's. New industry and housing were just some of the signs that Ireland was a developing capitalist economy.

And we must not analyse the world when considering Ireland. We must put it in a European context only. The fact that it is more advanced than some 'independent nations' in the third world is not relevant to Simon. His point is that partition is a colonial by-product with the same relevance today as it had in 1921, when you were lucky to find a toilet in Ireland, let alone a horse (no, an ass) and cart.

### Threats

This is nonsense. Even in 1921 much of British Capitalism (supported by the Liberal Party) would have been happy to see the back of the Six Counties. Unfortunately the other half and the Protestant majority in Ulster were willing to threaten civil war to stop the setting up of a single Irish state.

The British State, amidst and impeding post-war economic crisis, decided on a short term solution in an effort to restart business as usual.

As for today, even if Ireland is relatively backward in Europe this is not necessarily related to partition. Italy has been united since the 1860's, but Southern Italy is still much more backward than Northern Italy and at least as backward as Southern Ireland. Which big bad wolf is to blame here?

Ah, but national independence is 'one of the most basic requirements of the bourgeois revolution'. Did you know that no bourgeois progress can take place in the 26 counties? — you have to have 32. I suppose South Korea has not had a bourgeois revolution as it only has possession of half of the country, not 5/6.

Simon's history gets worse when it comes to the protestants. Despite the lack of historical evidence to show that Catholics and Protestants could unite on the national question, Simon thinks that 'in a revolutionary situation the militarism of protestant workers could backfire on their capitalist masters'. But how is this revolutionary situation to be developed without the unity of the protestant and catholic workers?



Protestants lined up against a wall

This is virtually impossible while both see the national question — green or orange — as paramount.

Simon's inability to understand the historical process leads inevitably to the conclusion that Irish Nationalism is a seamless robe and self-determination the bottom line to which socialists must give their unquestioning support. John O'Mahoney is thus mistaken to propose federalism — as federalism means conditions on troops-out and self determination.

Simon goes on, 'self-determination is a principle without which the international working class will never go forward'.

I ask Simon, have the Sri Lankan

## RACIST ATTACKS

# No race motive?

WHEN Ahmed Iqbal Ullah, aged 13, was stabbed to death last month, in the playground of Burnage High School, Manchester, 1000 people went to his funeral, and 400 attended a demonstration to show their solidarity.

Many parents kept their children off school so that they could attend the demonstration.

The day before the murder Ahmed went to the defence of another Asian student who was being bullied by a gang of racist white youths. After school Ahmed was attacked by the same gang.

They threatened to kill him. The next morning Ahmed was stabbed by a 14 year old white boy, who immediately started boasting 'I killed a Paki'. Ahmed died in a police car 40 minutes later.

This is not an isolated incident. At the same school four years ago an Asian boy was nearly blinded in an

working class made any more progress than the Irish, for all their national independence? Have the splits caused by British Imperialism disappeared from the minds of the Tamils?

Are the Turks who complain about Bulgarisation in Bulgaria, merely the dupes of the long dead Ottoman empire? Is the nationalist completion of 'the bourgeois revolution in Ireland' going to guarantee the rights of both communities — or present the prospect of civil war?

If you answer these questions honestly you will see that self-determination is not so simple, Simon.

Liam Conway

attack by white students.

The police and the local press have denied that Ahmed's murder had any racial motive. But only the day before the Manchester Evening News carried a centre-page spread by Ray Honeyford, the Bradford headteacher sacked for his racist views.

The Asian community are fighting back against the attacks. The Ahmed Iqbal Memorial Committee is calling for the organisation of black self-defence to prevent any further racist attacks.

Sarah Cotterill, Manchester.

Letters are welcome: send to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 300 words or less, please, or we may have to cut them.

# Pretoria goes to war

By Clive Bradley

**AT THE same time as it half-bans the oppositionist United Democratic Front, the apartheid regime in South Africa is preparing for war against its black African neighbours.**

Already it has ordered the expulsion of the 60,000 workers from Mozambique in South Africa in retaliation for Mozambique's support for the banned African National Congress (ANC).

Claiming that Mozambique is used as a base for ANC guerrillas, the South African regime is preparing an attack intended to topple the government of Samora Machel.

This war drive comes despite an agreement signed in 1982 between South Africa and Mozambique, the Nkomati Accord.

Preparing for war outside its borders, P W Botha's government is intensifying its war against black people within its borders.

The opposition United Democratic Front was barred from receiving money from abroad, a move designed to destroy the organisation. The UDF has over 700 affiliated organisations with, between them, two million members. Recently it formed a National United Action Campaign (NUAC) with the trade union federation COSATU and the National Education Crisis Committee.

A meeting of the NUAC at Witwatersrand University was banned under the Internal Security Act last week. The meeting was organised by UDF-affiliated student organisations — the Azanian Student Organisation

and the National Union of South African Students — and the ban reflects the growing level of state repression of UDF activity.

Speculation is increasing that the UDF itself may be banned.

The formation of the NUAC suggests an increased alignment between the Congress of South African Trade Unions, COSATU, and the United Democratic Front. In the past many unions have insisted on their independence, and would only have agreed to such a joint campaign after grassroots discussion. Both the style and the somewhat vague political platform of the NUAC suggest a revival of traditional populism (a view seeing it as a 'people's' rather than a class struggle), which the UDF most clearly expresses.

Off stage centre, a new union federation has been formed by the Black Consciousness CUSA (Council of Unions of South Africa) and the Azanian Congress of Trade Unions, AZACTU. CUSA-AZACTU claim 420,000 signed-up members, as against the 500,000 or so of COSATU.

## Union

But the new federation's real strength is much less. COSATU's affiliates have been involved in 22 times as much industrial action, excluding political strikes and stayaways.

The main dispute between COSATU and Black Consciousness is over the role of white trade union organisers. CUSA and AZACTU reject any such role in the name of 'black worker leadership'.

Nevertheless, unity between the two federations must be a priority in the period ahead.



South African troops in Angola

# The value of making international links

By Tom Rigby

**"MANAGEMENT would never have conceded if it wasn't for the pressure from British workers and their fear of the action British workers might take"**

That's how one militant from the Electrical and Allied Workers' Trade Union of South Africa explained the backing down by Plessey management in the four month long dispute at the giant electronics and armaments multinational's three Cape Town plants.

Workers have been in dispute since July in support of their demand for a living wage of 3.90 rand an hour (about £40 a week).

Plessey have used every dirty trick imaginable to smash the resistance of the workers.

- Threats of the sack if workers don't resign from their union;
- Threats of 180 days detention for taking part in 'terrorist' — i.e. union — activity.

## Plessey management backs down

Threats of attack by the security police for organising meetings outside the plant while Plessey deny the right to meet on site.

Plessey have used the State of Emergency and workers' fear of mass victimisation to try to break the union.

But in September the Southern Areas leadership of the EAWTU decided to reach out for support and solidarity from Plessey workers in Britain.

## Liverpool

They sent Brian Williams, the Southern Areas secretary of the EAWTU, to visit Britain. He managed to make contact with Plessey

workers in Portsmouth, Nottingham and Liverpool, as well as many other trade union and labour movement activists.

In Liverpool a meeting of convenors and stewards decided to push for a national Plessey shop stewards conference on the issue of South Africa, and to try to develop links between Plessey workers in South Africa and in the UK.

This made management panic.

Though Plessey are still a long way from conceding the union's wage demand, they have restarted serious negotiations, and, in the words of one EAWTU militant, "They have allowed union officials back into the plant, and workers are no longer harassed."

"Plessey have only done this because they needed to".

Forcing management to back down will undoubtedly boost the union's wages fight and help EAWTU in its campaign to organise the strategic Cape Town metal and engineering industry. It also shows that despite the State of Emergency workers can still win.

The course of the dispute has provided a clear and practical proof of the value of direct links between workers on an international scale.

This is how one EAWTU militant summed it up:

"On behalf of workers in Cape Town I would like to thank the workers in Britain for their support which has forced Plessey to change their attitude to the union. This shows that the struggle of workers is and must be an international one".

The union still needs help and solidarity. Send donations and messages of support to EAWTU Southern Areas, PO Box 5382, 232-2 Boston House, Waterkant Street, Cape Town.



Brian Williams

# GUILT OR CLASS POLITICS?

**This week Payman Rezai concludes his review of A. Sivanandan's article in 'Race and Class'.**

**RACISM awareness training in Britain goes back to 1978 and the setting up of the Racism Awareness Programme Unit (RAPU) — modelling itself on its American counterparts. RAPU and others in the next year gave birth to the National Committee on Racism in Children's books.**

This organisation set itself the task of exposing and challenging racist and stereotyped images of blacks in kid's books.

At first RAT made only modest inroads in the public sector, being limited to the odd conference or lecture. By 1980 the Home office's Race Relations Advisor was arguing for the training techniques used in the US to tackle 'the general question of attitudes and the psychology of prejudice'. Group practice had to be developed along the 'consciousness-

raising' or 'awareness training' lines — standard practice in the US.

Only after the 1981 riots and the Scarman report did RAT take off in a big way. Local Authorities, working groups and many reports tried to hammer out a strategy to combat racial disadvantage. Black people's experience of racism was reduced to a 'special handicap'.

## RACE AND CLASS

Local Labour Councils and the GLC, with much funds from the government, set up race-relations sub-committees, ethnic advisors, RAT courses — many of these courses compulsory for all staff.

### Attitudes

The same tendency towards RAT became apparent in education. The Rampton report(1981) into the education of children from ethnic minority groups repeated the same identification of racism with personal attitudes and behavioural problems.

Its main theme was to argue for 'particular educational needs' for Black school kids. Rampton gave a boost to RAT in education. In Birm-

ingham, for example, a 'multicultural outreach worker' was employed to develop the RAT programmes locally.

In the police force, immediately after the riots, lip-service was played to general knowledge of police racism by the setting up of a multicultural studies course at Hendon Police Training College — with a black lecturer John Fernandes.

This was a short, but important episode before the police went all out for experimenting with RAT. John Fernandes had meanwhile come straight up against police racism at recruit and senior officer level and he was suspended.

The Fernandes case was also important in that Fernandes' union was complicit in racism.

RAT's development was especially rapid in the community and voluntary sector, amongst all manner of advice workers, housing groups etc.

### Confusion

Sivanandan argues that some of the outright confusion in RAT thinking can be overcome by clarifying the terms we use. 'Racism' strictly speaking should only be used to refer to structures and institutions with power to discriminate.

Individuals on the other hand display in their attitudes *racialism*. For Sivanandan the power of racism

comes from racist laws, institutional practices and judicial precedents which have the backing of the state. The power is associated with that of the capitalist class; racial oppression can not be kept aside from class exploitation.

From this the fight against racism is centred around state racism. RAT, by defining relationships between individuals as 'power relations', (an image borrowed from the women's movement), claims to change attitudes and behaviour. In fact it only plays on the guilt-tripping of middle class whites. Racism for RAT is 'a combination of original sin and biological determination'.

The timeless anti-racism of RAT unaffected by material conditions has another side too; it denies the connection between racism and fascism. Fascism is explained away as not necessarily the common experience of most blacks.

Sivanandan notes that the NF-er Martin Webster was more astute when he said 'the social base of the NF is the desperate and dispossessed among the white working class'.

**Race and Class is available from the Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville road, London N1.**

# Nicaragua: the Sandinistas and socialism

THE 'NEW Nicaragua' has been declared by many inside and outside the country to have opened up a new road to socialism.

After visiting the country in June and July of 1985, I concluded that these claims were erroneous, and in this study I will attempt to put them to the test.

The matter must be not posed as a moral question (the heroism and dedication of the Sandinistas is unquestionable), nor is it fair to measure contemporary social reality against the grander flights of FSLN rhetoric (Tomas Borge's talk of creating a 'new man' in the here and now appears extremely overoptimistic once you have experienced the physical struggle for seats on a Nicaraguan bus). It is a matter of determining whether there are significant elements in the country's economic life which are moving it beyond the limits of the capitalist mode of production, and above all whether the structures of political power place the working class and oppressed people in control of shaping the country's destiny.

My contention will be that neither is true...

As is well known, Nicaragua maintains a mixed economy, of which some 60 per cent is privately owned. While part of this private sector is made up of small entrepreneurs, the bourgeoisie also remains as an entrenched force, represented by the Supreme Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) and various political parties.

What is less well known is the extent to which the FSLN actively promotes the development of this private sector, providing a variety of forms of assistance and incentives. A study by the Central American Historical Institute notes:

## Profits

"During 1980 and 1981, the state financial system... helped with 100 per cent of the requirements of the private sector in terms of working capital and investment, in contrast with the policies of the (Somoza) dictatorship which never financed more than 70 per cent of these requirements... The distribution of foreign exchange was also favourable to the private sector. Between January 1980 and August 1981, 52.9 per cent of the foreign exchange was distributed to the private sector".

Consequently, as another Sandinista source remarks: "objectively profits have recovered much more rapidly than wages".

Such encouragement for private enterprise will remain government policy for the foreseeable future. The economic plan for 1983-88 indicates that the rate of profit is to be artificially maintained for industry through the course of the recession currently afflicting Central America. To stimulate production, cattle ranchers and cotton producers are being paid for some of their output in hard currency.

The state sector does assume a considerable importance, despite representing a minority of the economy. It allows the regime to determine the pace of national development to a degree, both in the sphere of production and in that of finance (the entire banking system is state-owned). Yet an enterprise does not become socialist simply because it is placed in the hands of the state.

Last week a US aircraft was shot down over Nicaragua. Piloted by Max Gomez, a Cuban-American whose involvement in US 'counter-insurgency' activities goes back to the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, it was a supply plane for the anti-Sandinista 'contras'.

A scandal has linked Vice-President Bush to this illegal operation.

Why is the US so determined to destroy the Nicaraguan government? Why does it spend so much money on subverting the Sandinistas?

In this article (an abridgement of a pamphlet published by the Australian group *Socialist Action*), Tom O'Lincoln explains why.

The Nicaraguan state sector is situated within a market economy, and the Sandinistas themselves recognise the significance of this fact, though they often attempt to blur the issue. Consider for example Agriculture Minister Wheelock's comments in a speech to managers early this year:

"Private production has its laws, and capitalism knew and developed them perfectly. We are clear that our enterprises are not capitalist, nor are they socialist enterprises because they are inserted in a market economy, an open economy which makes the law of value operate. That is to say, they are neither capitalist nor socialist. Simply, they are new forms of property and production..."

Wheelock remained studiously vague on the precise nature of these 'new forms', but at another point in his speech gave the game away:

"The state enterprises have to be models of economic rationality. They have to be profitable. They are not... enterprises to provide social services for the community. They have costs and they have to make a profit, and the costs are rising and so the prices have to go up. They have to be profitable to be able to meet depreciation costs for future investment..."

So Wheelock's 'new forms' of production look remarkably like the old capitalist forms. The state enterprises are subordinated to the demands of profitability: pricing policy is dictated by market forces rather than by human needs, and tomorrow's investment depends on today's rate of return.

The Nicaraguan state sector is thus best described as state capitalist.

The rural sector merits some consideration on its own in view of the extensive land reform programmes which have been carried out. The landholdings of the Somoza family have either been taken over by the state or parcelled out to the peasants, as have some of the lands of other rich latifundistas (landlords), particularly where they were not being efficiently used.

Between 1981 and 1984 some 2.4 million acres (nearly a fifth of the country's farmland) have been deed-

ed to peasant families, and the process is continuing.

In 1985 Enrique Bolanos, head of COSEP, had his land south of Managua seized in a move which aroused considerable hostility among the bourgeoisie. Bolanos was offered other land, and the regime is clearly going to stop well short of liquidating the rich landowners as a class, but still the process of agrarian reform is fairly radical.

Nevertheless, the growth of a small-holding peasantry, even where it is organised into collectives, cannot promote a socialist dynamic in agriculture or a socialist consciousness among the peasants...

The land reform is aimed at modernising agriculture, by unleashing the initiative of the new private property owners, and by forcing the big landowners to become more efficient. This is undoubtedly a progressive step, and one of historic importance. But its capitalist character is undeniable.

## Power

The structures of political power in Nicaragua are [also] essentially capitalist, and they quite clearly deny to the workers and more generally to the oppressed classes any real control over decision-making...

The National Assembly was elected under universal suffrage. Its delegates serve for set terms and are not subject to immediate recall.

In the electoral process the bourgeoisie with its great resources had a considerably greater weight than the proletariat as a class (though of course the FSLN claims to speak in the proletariat's name). Unlike the Soviet regime established [in Russia] at the end of 1917, there are no workers' councils through which the proletariat exercises class political power.

This parliamentary system undoubtedly represents a huge step forward for a people previously oppressed by an autocratic regime. However it has no specifically socialist character apart from sporadic flights of rhetoric from the leadership.

Most sympathetic observers have



Defending the revolution

conceded as much. They point, however, to other features of Nicaraguan political life which allegedly add a dimension of mass democracy. George Black, for example, speaks of the "seeds of genuine democracy" being "sown in the factories and farms, in the schools and barrios".

There is no doubt that the mass organisations, such as the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS), the women's organisation AMNLAE, and the Sandinista Youth are an important arm of FSLN political power. So, in a somewhat different way, are the Sandinista-controlled trade unions.

The willingness of the leadership to regularly meet with the masses in 'Face the People' (De Cara al Pueblo) sessions at which complaints can be aired is laudable...

A closer examination of all the forms reveals, however, that the essential power relations are ones of control from above.

## Decisions

The leadership genuinely wishes to ascertain the views and desires of its popular base, and to this end President Daniel Ortega holds a 'Face the People' session about once a week. Thus far these have been a real opportunity for people to express their views. However the decision as to whether to act on these views rests with the government, and with it alone.

In recent months, critical comments at these sessions have increased in number, prompting the FSLN to complain about the making of 'counter-revolutionary speeches' dur-

ing the discussions and even to suggest that participants be got together to discuss the issues before the sessions get underway. This is a first hint that if dissent reaches unacceptable levels, the 'Face the People' sessions will take on a more stage-managed character.

In separate interviews with the Sandinista Youth and with AMNLAE, I was told by representatives of both organisations that their main role was to support the decisions of the FSLN leadership. They spoke of a variety of ways in which people were mobilised to boost production and also to solve their own local problems, but it is clear that neither women nor youth as distinct groups have any decisive leverage in the political process.

In fact the AMNLAE representative expressed considerable frustration with her organisation's inability to make headway in securing equality in the armed forces (women are not conscripted 'even though we have proved we can fight' and are largely consigned to traditional female jobs in the army).

The CDS are a very extensive movement, comprising some 50,000 block committees. They organise distribution of basic necessities at controlled prices and engage in 'revolutionary vigilance' (the latter is sometimes alleged to take on the dimensions of a 'spy network' directed against ordinary people, but I regard that contention as unproved).

But whatever their virtues, they do not make decisions about the main direction of their own work, let alone about the direction of government in general. This is quite clear from

# Sandinistas, Socialism



Tomas Borge's remarks to a mass meeting of CDS activists:

*"What has the National Directorate determined to be the principal task of the Sandinista Defence Committees? You have said it: revolutionary vigilance!"*

*"Why did the National Directorate determine that the principal and fundamental task of the Sandinista Defence Committees would be revolutionary vigilance? To a great extent... because reality has shown that the main responsibility of Nicaraguans at this ominous hour is defence of the nation!"*

## Workers

Let us assume for the sake of the argument that this decision is a wise one. It is still openly stated that the decision was made, not by the committees themselves, but by the National Directorate, in whose selection the CDS have no voice whatsoever.

We can now appreciate the full significance of the slogan, 'National Directorate give the order!' which is commonly shouted at rallies.

There is much talk of 'workers' participation' and, occasionally, of 'workers' control' in Nicaraguan industry. The impression is created that workers are gaining an increasing say in industrial decision-making.

This is far from true. At one time there was real workers' control in many enterprises. This occurred for the simple reason that during and shortly after the revolution, numerous employers left the country or began to de-capitalise their firms.

Workers were compelled to seize factories in order to keep them running, and often did so with the blessing

of the FSLN. That, however, is now ancient history. All enterprises now have managers who are firmly in control.

Workers do continue to 'participate', but that participation is strictly limited and its aim is primarily to incorporate the workforce into the never-ending drive for increased production. The 'enterprise committees' which have recently received renewed attention by the FSLN consist of representatives of management, the workers, and the FSLN branch within the enterprise.

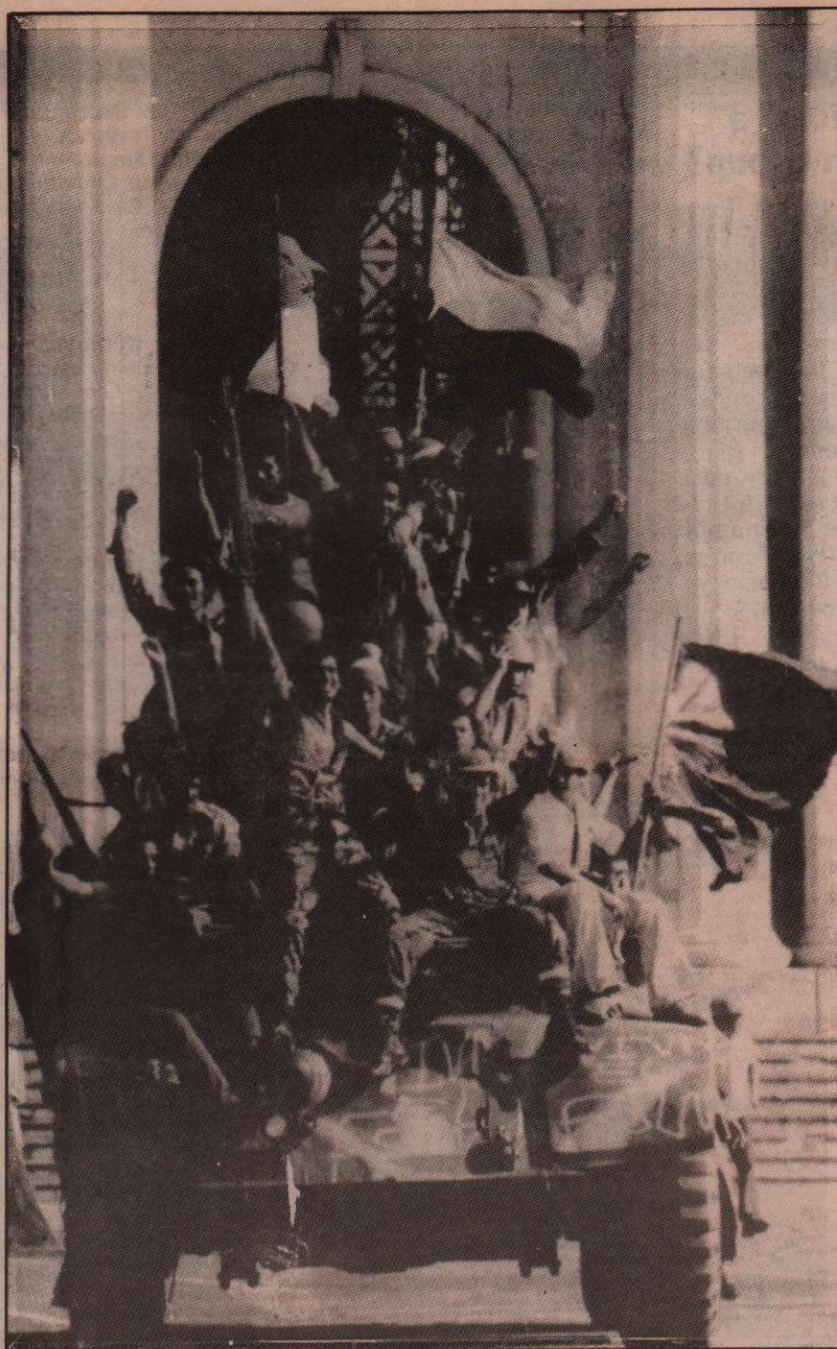
In such a 'troika' structure, the workers themselves have only a minority voice. And in some other structures they do not have even that.

The book 'Participatory Democracy in Nicaragua' lists among the 'instances of participation' a National Council of Agrarian Reform whose participants include the responsible Minister, a representative of the union, the president of the farmers' and ranchers' organisation UNAG, two directors of bureaucratic bodies and a delegate from the Ministry of Planning. No rank and file worker delegates participate in this structure at all!

## Assemblies

Perhaps the closest thing to real grassroots democracy on the job is the periodic workplace assemblies which involve all the workers in a given enterprise. Yet the following report from the FSLN trade union paper *Trabajadores* indicates that here too, the democracy is largely nominal.

*"In recent days there took place a production assembly at CECALSA,*



The fall of Somoza, July 1979

*where the director of the enterprise, Denis Lopez, made known the production plans of the firm for this year as well as individual and collective production goals. For its part the union made known the commitments of the workers to ending labour indiscipline, augmenting production, strengthening defence, and taking forward the innovators' movement with the standardisation of work."*

The boss does not ask but tells the workers what is to be done; the union pledges to keep the workers' noses to the grindstone. Similarly the book 'Participatory Democracy in Nicaragua' lists various uses of these assemblies, which all boil down to keeping the workers informed. There is no mention of decision-making by the workforce.

One final institution which deserves a mention is the 'red-and-black' labour days (*rojinegros*), which constitute a programme of unpaid, voluntary labour. One hesitates to estimate just how much of workers' participation in the *rojinegros* is genuinely voluntary and based on enthusiasm for defending the revolution, and how much of it is a product of various kinds of pressure.

But even if we assume it is largely the former, it is still very clear how the decisions are taken. Consider the following government memorandum, announcing the initiation of a round of *rojinegros* for the Managua region.

*"As a form of practical support for the pronouncement of the FSLN National Directorate, two Saturdays per month will be worked voluntarily in the Third Region of the country"* (emphasis added).

The memorandum goes on to say that assemblies will be called to explain this measure to the workers; but it is not they who decide.

Austerity has been a watchword of the revolution since very early on, and necessarily so. Attacked on all sides by the hostile forces of imperialism, invaded by mercenaries and blockaded economically, the revolution inevitably finds itself calling on the workers and peasants to sacrifice, as so many revolutions have done before.

But the legitimacy of such an austerity programme ultimately relies on the legitimacy of the regime. It is one thing for a government which

represents the power of the working class to demand sacrifices from the workers. It is another entirely for such demands to be made by a regime beyond their control, a regime moreover which uses a significant portion of the surplus thus accumulated to boost the profits of the bourgeoisie and make payments to foreign banks.

Real wages have clearly fallen since 1979, as the Sandinistas themselves concede. The FSLN's own press estimates that real individual income fell by 50 per cent between 1982 and 1984. This was a result of the destruction caused by the process of insurrection, natural disasters, blockade and contra war, rather than being the fault (at least in any immediate sense) of the FSLN's policies.

Nevertheless, it is a hard fact, and must be the starting point for considering the regime's most recent austerity measures.

In August 1984 the government partially removed subsidies on the prices of basic necessities, and in February 1985 they were abolished entirely. The consequence has been a wave of inflation.

Wages are being indexed to keep up, but whilst a Sandinista official assured me in June that workers' buying power was thus being maintained, the regime was admitting by November that this was not so:

*"During the first six months of the year, prices for basic goods rose 300*

*per cent while the minimum wage increased only 165 per cent"*.

This is because the indexing of wages is based on official, controlled prices while in practice workers are often forced by shortages to resort to the free market, where inflation is worse. (The reader will note that the figures quoted above are taken together, a rather horrific picture of falling living standards emerges. I suspect that the real picture is somewhat better. What matters, however, is that real wages have fallen significantly and are likely to keep falling).

## Speed-up

At the same time, the government has begun to whittle away at fringe benefits...

At Fanatex, industrial action forced management to review the matter, though in the end the abolition of [a traditional fringe benefit] went ahead. In the aftermath of the strike an indeterminate number of militants were victimised<sup>2</sup>, and Daniel Ortega visited the factory along with an array of other top officials.

When the workers challenged him on the issue, Ortega responded by attacking 'ultra-left parties' calling themselves 'Marxists or Trotskyists' who he said were allied to the right and were 'strengthening the forces of imperialism'.

In the aftermath of the dispute so many workers left their jobs at the plant that management attempted a speed-up drive to maintain production levels.

At the E. Chamorro factory in Granada, workers occupied the plant at the start of June, only to be attacked by police backed by the local CDS, and physically ejected.

While fringe benefits are under attack in the urban industrial sector, agricultural labourers are facing a speed-up drive. The problem arises from the fact that in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution, the labourers and their unions demanded and got substantial reductions in their workload...

Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock [said] in a speech to factory managers [in early 1985]:

*"The (sugar workers) can't sow 600 shoots of cane as they are doing today, they have to sow the 1200 they sowed previously, and if possible they have to sow 1400 for the revolution. Because the Somoza regime got 1200 out of the workers"...*

*All the criticisms one can make of the Nicaraguan leadership do not of course diminish in the slightest our responsibility to display principled solidarity with the Sandinistas against imperialist aggression. They do however impose an additional responsibility.*

Serious socialists will display the same principled solidarity with the Nicaraguan workers when and where they come into conflict with a regime bent on imposing the logic of capitalist development on them. Not to do so would be to abandon the only force that is capable, potentially at least, of introducing a genuine socialist dynamic into the greatest revolution of recent times.

<sup>1</sup> In the course of 1986 the Sandinista regime has shifted its emphasis from cooperatives backed towards individual peasant farming. (SO note).

<sup>2</sup> I confirmed this personally in a discussion at the factory gate. (TO'L note).

Phil O'Brien's series on Latin America continues next week.

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# ACTIVISTS' DIARY

## Youth Fightback conference

Sheffield University student union, Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th November.

Major discussions on: Defending the YS; South Africa; Women's Liberation; Fighting racism and fascism.

## Why not form a Campaign Group?

A number of Labour Party members up and down the country have formed themselves into local Campaign groups.

These groups are organised on non-sectarian lines. The aim is to provide a unified left campaigning force in the constituencies.

If you have already done this and have not yet informed the Campaign Group, or if you wish to do so, please contact the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, c/o Alan Meale, secretary, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY, 1-2 NOVEMBER.** National Abortion Campaign Annual Conference. London Women's Centre, Wild Court, Holborn, London WC2. For details contact NAC at the London Women's Centre.

**Saturday 25 October.** Demonstrate for Fair Deal for Lesbians and Gays in Notts. To protest at the Labour County Council's refusal to include lesbians and gays in their equal opportunities policy. 12.15pm, Old Market Square, Nottingham.

All TGWU and ACTSS members who support SO please contact Jim Denham at 021-471 1964, home, or 021-771 0871 (daytime).

**Saturday 13 December.** Conference for Trade Union Sanctions against South Africa. 11 to 6, Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham. Contact: Bronwen Handyside, 17 Porden Road, Brixton, London SW2 5SA. Tel 01-274 7722 x 2010.

**Friday 17 October.** 'Eritrea' fight for freedom', meeting with speakers from Eritrean People's Liberation Front and National Union of Eritrean Women. Organised by Eritrea Support Committee. 7.30, Sheffield Town Hall Reception Rooms.

**Steve Perry and Pete Abel last week set off on a sponsored cycle-ride... around the world. Their trip, which will take them 18 months, is to raise money for War on Want's Eritrean Public Health Programme.**

They will journey across Africa, India, China, and parts of South, Central and North America.

For more information about sponsorship and donations contact: War on Want, 2-4 Oxford Road, Manchester M1 5QA. Tel 061-228 2494.

**Saturday 18 October.** Islington and Hornsey Health Emergency Campaign conference: 10am to 2pm at the Red Rose Labour Centre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 (Finsbury Park tube).

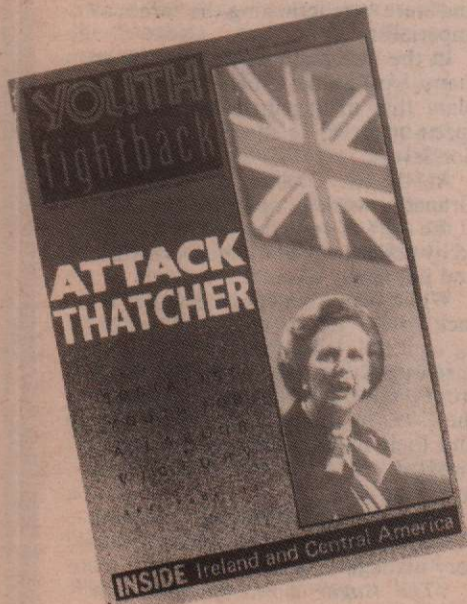


With our new typesetting equipment bought and installed, we have now completed all the major parts of our programme of new offices and equipment.

Some renovation and decoration remains to be done on our offices, and for several months we'll have a heavy burden of loan repayments. So we'll soon be launching a regular monthly fund-raising target. But for now we're closing our £15,000 fund drive, at 86% of target.

Thanks to all who have contributed, and, this week, to Cardiff supporters, £60; North London supporters £5.70; Tunbridge Wells readers, £2.40.

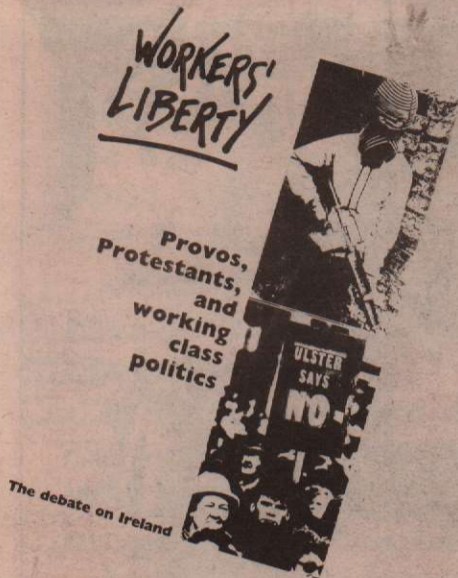
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We want public ownership

of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and management's privileges.

Socialist can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers

in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of

housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

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# Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

## Socialism in one cell!

**THE LIVES of the higher organisms, the plants and animals (including humans), are intimately bound up with those of bacteria, whether it be the bacteria that digest grass in cows' stomachs, that turn milk into yoghurt or methane into protein, that cause some illnesses or produce antibiotics.**

There seems little similarity between these two forms of life, however one major difference is size. Even the single celled *Amoeba* is thousands of times bigger than the average bacterium. Another difference is that the higher organisms have a nucleus in each cell — they are *eukaryotes* — while bacteria don't — they are *prokaryotes*.

We all carry our genetic information in the form of DNA but in eukaryotes the DNA is in chromosomes, long coiled chains wrapped in a protective protein, all in the nucleus. In prokaryotes, the DNA is a naked circular strand. Eukaryote DNA contains lengths of apparently useless 'nonsense' while prokaryote DNA all has a use.

### Special parts

In both, genes (sections of DNA) are 'translated' into proteins on special chemical machines called *ribosomes* but prokaryote ribosomes are smaller.

Eukaryotes contain special parts called *organelles* ('little organs') which carry out special functions.

The mitochondria make it possible for us to use oxygen to burn up our food. Chloroplasts contain chlorophyll and allow plants to use sunlight to make food. Some prokaryotes can use oxygen or contain chlorophyll but they do not have these organelles.

Lastly, while both types of cell can reproduce by duplicating their DNA and then splitting, eukaryotes can also reproduce sexually. The cells divide in a special way to make cells with only half the normal amount of DNA, the sperm and eggs. Then a sperm and an egg join, making a new cell with the right amount of DNA — half from each parent. This allows the offspring to inherit from two parents, instead of just one. This is known as Mendelian inheritance.

But scientists were puzzled by the existence of a non-Mendelian type of inheritance in the eukaryotes, whereby some characters were passed only from mother to children. And eventually they discovered the explanation.

While the sperm contributes only DNA to the new organism, the egg is a complete cell, containing all the organelles. Thus, we get

mitochondria from our mothers only. Plants get chloroplasts only from their 'mothers'. And close examination of these organelles reveals...DNA!

This DNA is naked, circular, with no 'nonsense' and not in a nucleus. Its genes are translated on ribosomes the same size as prokaryote ones. What's more, mitochondria and chloroplasts are the size of typical bacteria and are affected by some of the same antibiotics. Inside our eukaryotic cells, we seem to have bacteria in *symbiosis*, benefitting from our protection and helping us to live.

Similar DNA is found next to other organelles — the cilia or little hairs that wave around, propelling some cells, and the centriole that pulls apart the chromosomes during reproduction.

### Margulis

Seen as merely a curious coincidence by some biologists, it has taken twenty years of work by Lynn Margulis, Professor of Biology at Boston University, to amass sufficient evidence to prove that these organelles were once free bacteria that were somehow swallowed by our ancestors but were not digested. Instead, a most productive symbiosis was established whose results included the conquest of the land and the development of 'intelligent' life.

The evidence is strongest for chloroplasts coming from bacteria. Free-living cyanobacteria exist now and one type recently discovered in a polluted pond near Amsterdam actually contains chlorophyll similar to modern plants, producing oxygen as a waste. Many examples have been found of cyano-bacteria being captured and living in eukaryotic cells. In one case, a type of sea-slug 'steals' chloroplasts by eating plants. The chloroplasts survive for quite a time, making food for their new host.

Margulis thinks cilia are the remnants of free-living spirochaetes, bacteria which swim by waving cilia. Modern symbioses have been found between spirochaetes and eukaryote cells.

In other symbioses, bacteria that live on natural gas have been found in the gills of deep-sea shellfish and nitrogen-fixing bacteria are found in the roots of clover and pea-plants, producing fertilizer for their hosts.

Some origins of the eukaryote cells are obscure but recently bacteria were discovered which had ribosomes of the eukaryote type.

Further research will undoubtedly throw more light on the theory that life as we know it rests on a basis of 'socialist' cooperation inside the cell.



# Horror at its best!

Edward Ellis reviews the film 'Aliens'

WE LAST saw spacewoman Ripley settle down for a long voyage in cosmic hibernation, having at last jettisoned the gruesome Alien into the outer darkness. Her sole surviving companion was her ginger cat, Jones.

Fifty-seven years have passed, and Ripley — unaged, due to the wonders of suspended animation — wakes up in hospital. No-one believes her tale of the terrifying monsters with acid for blood — until all radio contact is lost with a small colony that has been set up on the planet where the Aliens' pulsating eggs still lie in wait.

Ripley still dreams of what will happen if you get too close to one of those eggs: a disgusting Thing, like a huge slippery spider, leaps out and fastens itself to your face, from where it impregnates your stomach with a pupa that will shortly burst out, fatally, in the form of a revolting and enormous slug with teeth.

Ripley agrees to join the team of marines sent to deal with whatever may be the problem out there in space. Her stipulation is that the Aliens are destroyed, not captured for tests. Multiplanetary company executive Burke, as we soon discover, has other ideas...

From the moment that the marines land on the galactic windswept planet surface, 'Aliens' is nail-biting trauma. Needless to say, the colonists are all dead — or worse — except for a little girl called Newt; and grisly fates await the cocky gun-slinging marines.

## Women

But 'Aliens' is a class above the average horror film. It is not to belittle its special effects to say that most of the horror is created by almost unbearable tension, rather than gore.

And, unlike most adventure films, never mind horror stories, its dominant characters are women. As the macho marines go to pieces, and their lieutenant cracks up, Ripley takes command.

The most forceful of the marines, indeed, is a muscle-bound, Spanish-speaking woman called Vasquez.



Last time, Ripley only got to take home a cat

(Fellow marine to Vasquez: 'Have you ever been mistaken for a man?' Vasquez: 'No. Have you?')

The film winds its agonising way towards its climax, with Ripley becoming more and more like an intelligent female Rambo, blasting hideous slimy Aliens left right and centre. It is like a war of humanity against vast, swarming cockroaches;

and anyone who has ever come face to face with a cockroach will be on the edge of their seat sweating it out with her.

'Aliens' is a tremendous film. My pulse was still alarmingly fast half an hour after it finished. But its horror is exhilarating rather than — as is so often the case — simply nauseating.

Is it politically harmful to portray

aliens as implacably hostile and physically repulsive? If they are intelligent, yes; but there is no evidence that these aliens are intellectually much more than insects. And cockroaches are implacably hostile and physically repulsive.

If only cockroaches could be sucked out of an airlock into the vacuum of infinity...

## Crushing workers to sustain the American dream

Martin Thomas reviews 'Prisoners of the American Dream', by Mike Davis (Verso, £7.95).

Mike Davis paints a frightening picture of what capitalism is doing to the US working class.

Businesses have shut down unionised operations in the North and East, and shifted to non-union working in the South and West. Unionisation in the private sector has dropped from 35% in 1960 to 15% in 1985.

Increasingly, bosses are able to divide the workforce into two segments: a minority of well-paid, highly-qualified workers, kept loyal by relatively high pay and good career prospects; and a majority whose real wages have been steadily falling since the early 1970s.

We have "the masses of the working poor huddled around their K-Marts and Taiwanese imports", while the top 20% or so provide a growing consumer demand for "travel and designer clothes, posh restaurants, home computers, and fancy sports cars".

The trade union leaders have collaborated in their own downfall, with shortsighted policies. Talk about unionising the South was always just talk, and there is not even talk any more.

The union leaders are concerned above all to keep their dues-paying base in their traditional areas of strength. To try to keep that base — or at least to halt its erosion — there is almost no concession that they will not offer. Politically, they are tied to Cold War conservatism.

The union leaders' policy does not work in its own terms. Some of the businesses offered 'give backs' have simply used the cash to set up new non-union operations! And the mass of the working class has been abandoned by the union leaders.

The self-eclipse of the labour movement leaves the political arena open for domination by the well-off middle classes — the 'yuppie' right wing. These are the people behind Reagan (participation in voting by workers in the US is, as Davis points out, extremely low) — and increasingly they pull the Democratic Party their way, too.

Davis prefaces his analysis of the US today with a historical overview. Why is there no labour or socialist party in the US, even a reformist one?

The traditional answer to this question points to three factors: the westward movement of the US's frontier in the 19th century, which meant that every worker could reasonably hope to become a small independent farmer or business person; the relative wealth of the US, as the world's greatest industrial power after World War I; and, at the point where the first two factors were breaking down, and the emergence of a labour party was possible, in the 1930s, the criminal role of the Communist Party in channelling the best militants behind Roosevelt and the Democratic Party.

Davis claims to offer a new answer, but it seems to me that what he really does is develop a strand in the old answer. He stresses the role of ethnic divisions in the US working class, and the consequences of repeated failures by the labour movement to overcome those divisions. Today is another example of such failure: for the

better-off minority of the working class are mostly Anglo and white, while there is a big proportion of Hispanics and blacks among the worse-off.

Davis rips apart the arguments of those socialists who want to work in the Democratic Party, but ends up, oddly, semi-endorsing Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.

He sees the future in cataclysmic terms: terrible economic crisis in Latin America, the Far East, and the US, caused by the inability of the increasingly pauperised working class to provide enough consumer demand while production expands; and some sort of vast common rebellion of the peoples of Latin America and the Hispanic and black people in the US.

About that I'm not so sure: capitalism can in fact expand for long periods on the basis of very limited mass working class consumption, and economic crises do not usually produce political responses in so tidy a fashion. But for a caustic indictment of the swinishness of Reagan's America, and of the pigheadedness of US labour's current leaders, this book is hard to beat.

## ON THE BOX

### Cost or cure?

By Geoff Ward

LAST Monday night's Panorama was the first of a two-part report on the state of the National Health Service.

The Tories take every opportunity to boast how never before has so much been spent on health care by any government, but as ever they don't give the full picture.

The programme looked at Blackburn, Lancashire, where something like £½ million has been cut this year. 'New breeds' of administrators, accountants, and managers are being paid £27,000 a year to make the service more 'efficient'.

The effects of this are felt by the staff — straining to work longer, unpaid hours — and the patients, who are needlessly dying for lack of treatment.

When the National Health Service was set up in 1948, the planners expected that the demands placed on it would diminish as general health standards rose. In fact, people now live longer, and in old age they need a lot of health care.

Around one third of all treatment is for the old, the mentally ill and the handicapped. Half the hospital beds are for the over 65s.

By the end of this century another million old people will need caring for. For most of their lives they have provided the profits for capitalism. Now they are just 'a burden'.

### Priorities

Many of those people will have voted for the Labour government that initiated the National Health Service in 1948 — and now the Tories are seeing to it that they don't reap the full benefits.

The administrator who was interviewed claimed it was simply a matter of 'infinite demand and finite resources', care versus cost. This is strange, for it implies that absolutely everyone needs treating for illness all the time.

Finite resources? Yes, but for the Tories it's really a question of priorities. They can find vast sums of money for nuclear weapons.

The increasing proportion of old people in the population, together with some other factors, means that the Tories can spend more money on the Health Service, yet still run it down. And that is exactly what is happening.

The administrators are soon to be paid bonuses on the basis of their 'performance' — in other words, on the level at which they can cut.

A doctor described this as chipping away at the bone, and a patient said he would find money out of his own pocket for treatment if necessary.

He didn't realise that he has paid for that treatment many times over.

## THE CASE FOR LABOUR

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and for a socialist alternative to Tory Britain

A B C O F  
MARXISM

## Good and bad sides

IN THE last column I examined Karl Marx's analysis of free-trade, free-enterprise, individualist ideology — the intellectual bedrock of Toryism.

What this ideology does is to take the concepts of 'freedom', 'equality', and so on generated by relations in the capitalist market-place, elevate them into eternal moral absolutes, and then proclaim capitalism to be the ideal system as judged by those moral values.

It ignores the fact that those moral values are not eternal at all, but products of capitalism ('freedom' means very different things in different societies); and it takes the formal, legal equality of worker and capitalist in the market as representing the essence of the situation, rather than the oppression and exploitation of the worker in the workplace.

By Martin Thomas

In fact — so Marx argues — the 'freedom' and 'equality' in the market place and the oppression and exploitation in the workplace are two sides of the same coin. They both arise from *labour power* — people's capacity to work, to produce, to create — becoming a commodity, something bought and sold.

On the one side there is a class, the working class, with no way to live except by selling its labour power; on the other hand there is a class, the capitalist class, which in return for whatever modest wage is just sufficient to maintain the working class at its customary living standard gets the entire productive power of society.

## Piecemeal

What distinguishes Marx's approach from many less radical socialists is that he analyses capitalism as a whole. In contrast, the essence of what Marx called 'bourgeois socialism' is to split up capitalist society into its various aspects, and to propose piecemeal reforms for each particular evil.

They consider production — in abstraction from the fact it is production for exchange, not for need — and find that the different 'factors of production', capital and labour, are 'natural necessities'. They further find it natural that part of the resulting revenue goes to the workers, part to investment, and part to reward the capitalists.

So what do they complain about? That the capitalists' income seems too high, the workers' too low; that the capitalists are too authoritarian. And so they propose wealth taxes, higher wages, worker-director schemes...

Again and again, their idea is to cut away the 'bad sides' of capitalism, its 'unacceptable face', while leaving the body intact.

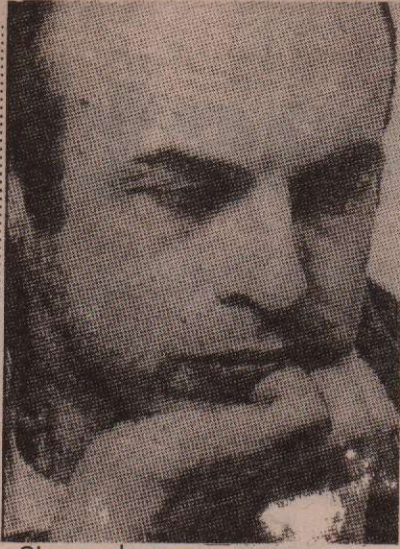
But the fact is that the 'good sides' and the 'bad sides' are inextricably interwoven. They are part of one system.

And indeed, as Marx put it, "It is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle". What socialists need to look towards is not capitalism minus its horrors, but the class struggle generated by those horrors.

Oscar Wilde put the same idea in vivid language: "The virtues of the poor may be readily admitted, and are much to be regretted."

We are often told that the poor are grateful for charity. Some of them are, no doubt, but the best among the poor are never grateful.

They are ungrateful, discontented, disobedient and rebellious. They are quite right to be so."



Sharansky

Anatoly (Nathan) Sharansky spent nine years in a USSR jail because he wanted to go to Israel. Nikolai Baranov spent five years in jail and then seventeen and a half years imprisoned in a USSR psychiatric hospital. Both cases show up the savage repression that all dissidents face from the Stalinist police state. Michele Carlisle reports.

NINE YEARS ago the Soviet Union imprisoned Anatoly Sharansky for treason. Sharansky was a Jewish refusenik — one who campaigns for the right to emigrate.

When the USSR released him earlier this year, they immediately created a symbol and a hero for campaigners for Soviet Jewry world-

## Gorbachev's prisoners

wide. Anatoly (Nathan) Sharansky was met with a hero's welcome when he visited this country. His major engagement was to address a packed Albert Hall, recounting his experiences as a prisoner.

When the projected US USSR summit takes place, Sharansky would like to see demonstrations in this country raising the issue of Soviet Jewry.

An estimated 400,000 Jews wish to emigrate from the Soviet Union, where their cultural and religious rights are continually suppressed. Yiddish and Hebrew teachers are arrested, Jewish students face discrimination in the education system, and refuseniks suffer constant harassment.

I attended a meeting jointly organised by the Union of Jewish Students and the Student and

Academic Campaign for Soviet Jewry, and heard Sharansky tell how he had applied for a visa to emigrate once he had become a Zionist.

Because a large number of the Jews who leave the USSR end up in Israel sections of the British left use opposition to Israel as an excuse to ignore or oppose campaigns on Soviet Jewry. But wherever they want to go, they, and other USSR citizens too, should have the right to leave at will.

Sharansky described how the KGB had been his constant companions in the months leading up to his arrest. Once he had been imprisoned, he kept his mind active by working through mathematical problems and playing chess in his head.

When the authorities would not let him correspond with his wife, he went on hunger strike. He was forced for 150 days until the authorities gave in.

The KGB described his supporters as an 'army of housewives and students' and indeed the campaigns to free him from prison and from forcible retention in the Soviet Union have proved successful.

He compared dates with his wife Avital and discovered that he was treated well when there was extensive campaigning in the West. The times when he was badly treated in prison corresponded to occasions when activity was low.

Sharansky says he will support the struggle of Soviet dissidents such as his friend Andrei Sakharov. He has ensured that the issue of the rights of Jews to live as Jews in the USSR or to emigrate has received great public attention.

As socialists we must support the rights of Soviet Jews, and of the other oppressed national groups who suffer under the Stalinist regime.

## Campaigning against repression

Nikolai Baranov arrived in the United Kingdom on 3 August 1986. Earlier the same day, he had been bundled into a car with two KGB officers at Leningrad Special Psychiatric Hospital, where he had spent the last fifteen months of his seventeen and a half years in psychiatric institutions. They took him direct to the airport and he boarded a plane which already contained his sister and her son, and left for England.

Nikolai's harassment at the hands of the Soviet authorities began in April 1963, when he was 27 years old. He tried to pass copies of an unofficial pamphlet 'The Pathway' to a visiting American Book Trade Delegation. He was imprison-

ed for five years. On his release he found that he was not able to get a job as the authorities refused to register him, and he decided to try and emigrate.

On the steps of the Swedish Embassy, where he had delivered a copy of his emigration application, he was picked up by the KGB. He was considered "mentally ill and socially unstable" and committed to a Special Psychiatric Hospital for an indefinite period.

Amnesty International adopted Baranov as a Prisoner of Conscience in 1979. His case was allocated to three Amnesty International groups, in Keele, UK; Sudbury, Ontario, Canada; and Lippstadt in West Germany. These three groups campaigned continuously for Baranov's release, with the UK group alone sending over 11,000 letters to the Soviet authorities, and almost

15,000 letters and cards to Baranov himself. They kept in touch with his case through his twin sister, Elena, who often put herself at risk to pass on and receive information and parcels.

When Neil Kinnock visited the Soviet Union in November 1984, he raised the case of Nikolai Baranov with the Soviet authorities, who said they would release him if he obtained an exit visa for the UK. This was duly arranged, and Nikolai and his sister and nephew arrived in the UK in August.

During his years of incarceration Nikolai Baranov was subjected to various drugs and treatments which seriously damaged his health. Since his arrival in the UK he has been medically examined by psychiatrists, who have announced that he suffers from no mental illness.

## Media takes the police's side

The press seizes every chance to build up public sympathy for the police. Police injured on duty are treated as heroes. The same press pours scornful comments on social workers and remains silent about social workers killed on duty. Jim Denham comments.

THE DEATH of Police Constable Philip Olds was a human tragedy, and no socialist could take any pleasure from it.

Unlike other well-publicised deaths (the Libyan Embassy affair, Broadwater Farm) Philip Olds did not die on duty, carrying out the state's dirty work. It seems likely that he died by his own hand, unable to face life in a wheelchair.

But once again, the death of a policeman (or in the case of the Libyan Embassy affair, a police-woman) is being used to stoke up public sympathy for the cops as a whole, and to boost the image of an increasingly tarnished force.

Compare the press and T.V. coverage given to PC Olds (or the truly sick 'hero's welcome' stage-managed by the police and the media for PC Brian Chester when he returned to the beat after shooting a five



Police carrying out their fundamental role at Broadwater Farm

year old boy dead in his cot) with the lack of media concern for Frances Bettridge.

Frances Bettridge was a social worker killed, together with a client she was visiting, in Birmingham last month. A man has been charged with murdering both women.

Last year Norma Morris, a social worker in Haringey was literally chopped to death in broad daylight

after being called out to visit a man said to be 'behaving strangely'. Media coverage was minimal, and certainly, nobody called her a 'hero'.

Isabel Schwarz, a psychiatric social worker at Bexley Hospital, was stabbed to death in her office by a former client, now in Broadmoor. A government inquiry is in progress, but media interest was, again, low-key.

A British Association of Social

Workers spokesperson told the 'Guardian', after the killing:

"People assume that the police are in a risk taking business, but they don't make the same assumption for social workers...if a social worker goes to visit a family to take children into care, or to certify that a mentally disturbed person should be taken to hospital...the potential for violence is there."

Statistics on attacks on social workers massively underestimate the real danger of the job, because the workers themselves often feel guilty, and do not report incidents out of protectiveness towards the clients. Almost certainly accurate figures would show the job to be far more dangerous than that of the police. Social workers, like the police, can be called out at all hours of the night to attend potentially violent situations. Unlike the police they do not have radios to call for assistance (Haringey social services have now brought in cordless telephones, following Norma Morris's death) and do not usually work in pairs, as the cops do in dangerous situations.

As a NALGO spokesperson put it, "Social workers are in a unique position to bear the brunt of client's anger at worsening unemployment, poor housing and money worries."

However tragic PC Olds' death may have been, and however much sympathy we may feel at a personal level, that does not change the fundamental role of the force: striking miners and the black communities of Broadwater Farm and St Paul's have all recently learned what that role is, and learned it the hard way.

Increasingly, the general public is coming to distrust the cops and to regard them as the protectors of privilege and profit rather than as friendly bobbies, helping old folks across the road.

That's why the media made such a fuss of Philip Olds, and all but ignored Frances Bettridge.

Photo: Andrew Moore

## Management backs down

SEALINK UK have withdrawn proposals for 203 redundancies at Folkestone. This follows with the withdrawal of the sacking without notice of 492 seafarers and the offer of 13 weeks' notice.

Sealink still wants 35 redundancies at Holyhead. The officers' union NUMAST may be prepared to accept this and hopes to issue a statement on the resolution of the dispute. The National Union of Seamen is unlikely to agree, and the dispute continues.

The National Union of Railwaymen, which has 2000 members employed by Sealink, is also talking to the management. NUR members are to keep their jobs but be sub-contracted to the new Channel Islands service.

WAPPING

# Printers defiant

By a SOGAT Clerical member

**THE STRIKING printworkers sacked by Rupert Murdoch nine months ago have overwhelmingly rejected News International's 'last and final offer', voting by a two-to-one majority to continue the fight for jobs and recognition.**

This result showed exactly what the strikers thought of Murdoch's plans for company unionism and scab rule at Wapping, and of Murdoch's measly pay-off proposals. By an even larger majority than last time — in July — the workers proved their commitment to the fight for trade union rights and recognition, and their demand for jobs before profits. The result came as a shock not only to Murdoch but also to SOGAT general secretary Brenda Dean and to some of the London SOGAT leadership, who thought that their low-profile boycott campaign — instead of mass picketing — would have paid off. Then, with their members well and truly sold out, they could get back to playing their bureaucratic

games in peace.

Indeed, one London branch secretary was so depressed by the result that he had to take an immediate holiday — only a couple of weeks after coming back from another one — to recover from the shock!

The rank and file, by contrast, celebrated with a 3,000 strong march from Tower Hill to Wapping, via Bethnal Green and the City, to prove to Murdoch that we won't disappear quietly but will fight on until we've won.

### Rules

That march was also a warning to Brenda Dean that the rank and file won't play by her rules. They're prepared to challenge the Tory anti-union laws, the oppression of the state, the indifference of the TUC and of their own union's leaders.

In effect they said to Brenda Dean: it's time that you stood beside your members and not beside Murdoch against us!

It looks highly unlikely, however, that Brenda Dean will change her tune or do anything more than before — that is, nothing. But the pressure is now on the London leadership to organise direct action — and in the



On the picket line

first place to pull Fleet Street out.

Dean has promised to put the issue of strike action at Bemrose and Sun Watford back on the agenda at the next executive meeting. But that's not enough.

**Fleet Street shouldn't be working, and the unions should not be signing sell-out no-strike deals like the one at the Telegraph. All 30,000 of us should be on strike and on the picket lines at Wapping, in solidarity with our 6000 comrades defending trade unionism.**

That would be a signal that neither Dean, nor Murdoch, nor any of the other Fleet Street bosses could ignore.

For the sake of our jobs and the future of trade unionism, we must take action now.

LUCAS

## All-out action needed

By Jim Denham

THE PAY dispute at Lucas Electrical looks as though it could be settled as we go to press.

The overtime ban and 'non-cooperation' policy enforced among all manual workers at Lucas's 15 plants led to thousands of lay-offs at Austin Rover, and obviously brought the Lucas management under tremendous pressure.

Then, when a worker was suspended at the Cannock plant for refusing to handle 'blackened' goods, all but one

of the 15 plants pledged support and an all-out strike seemed likely. On Wednesday 8 October, the company told the full-time union officials (AEU, GMBU, and TGWU) that they would reinstate the dismissed worker and resume negotiations on the pay claim if the unions agreed to lift their sanctions.

This happened, and by the end of the week the company had made a marginally improved offer of £6 without any of the 'strings' that had been attached to their previous £5.85 offer — although the deal still

includes wording to the effect that the workforce agrees to cooperate with 'arrangements' to 'improve productivity and reliability'.

The new offer was endorsed by officials and senior stewards on Monday 13th, with only 5 of the 24 senior stewards voting against.

Despite this, many Lucas Electrical workers feel that they could achieve a better offer by reimposing their sanctions and moving quickly to an all-out strike. There will be mass meetings to decide the issue this week.

BENN

## Benn says: Organise!

From page 12

Party, because unless women can see a firm commitment from us they will simply not connect with us.

And the same about black people, of course. Whenever black and women's rights come up, we hear from the right wing that we can't accept them because class is the issue — and then when economics comes up, we're told it's not about class, it's about consensus.

But the fact is that blacks are entitled to organise. We've got to give them a place in the Labour Party.

And, talking about democracy in the Labour Party, what about the right to elect the next Labour Cabinet through the electoral college? If it's

all left to patronage, how are we going to cope with the David Owens and the Shirley Williamses?

The Prime Minister has enormous powers without any accountability to the Party.

We have a massive job to do. We're not the old left who always protested and hunted for traitors. The problem is, can we create enough confidence for the people of this society to take control of the wealth that they create?

We must organise, mobilise, and convince people that we are no more than 48 hours away from a different form of society.

**Tony Benn was speaking at the Campaign Group fringe meeting at Labour Party conference.**

# Labour and youth: the whole truth

By Mark Osborn

£1.50 for a 19 page A5 pamphlet! Must be from the SWP!

But no, it's from the Fabians. Fresh from these champions of British imperialism now comes 'Labour and Youth', by John Mann and Phil Woolas.

When reading the pamphlet it is useful to remember that these people who wax lyrical about participation were responsible for winding up conferences when they looked like losing the votes, during their days with Labour Students (NOLS). They come from the nasty Clause 4/LCC clique at the top of NOLS, many of whom now have jobs as officials in the labour movement and War on Want.

The objective of the pamphlet is quite simple. It attempts to lay down the witch-hunters' 'line' at the beginning of what will become a major assault on the YS.

Among the hypocrisy etc., are some worthwhile facts. For instance the myth that youth automatically vote Labour is debunked. In the 1983 election, Labour won only 29% of the youth vote. A majority of unemployed youth do not bother to vote at all.

Mann and Woolas are concerned about tying up the youth vote for Labour. This is not unreasonable — and only becomes so when they fail to connect it to the class struggle.

They want the Party (read bureaucracy) to take more of an interest in getting students to put a cross next to Labour, pointing out that Labour is the only party with a real machine in the colleges.

Labour would have a bigger machine in the colleges if Phil and John had not organised the voting down of proposals to open up NOLS to part-time students, making it relatively easy to set up clubs in further education colleges.

More interesting facts: they compare the generous estimates of YS membership made by the Youth Subcommittee (7,223 in 1985) with those of other organisations: the Girl Guides have 325,000 members; Methodist youth clubs 100,000; even the Young Farmers have 51,000.

The YS is genuinely pitiful and unfortunately is wide open to the pamphlet's conclusion 'Labour's youth section has been irrelevant for 30 years. It needs re-examining, re-thinking and reconstructing from its

very roots.

However the reasoning is pretty stupid. They compare the YS's current stagnation and its healthy state 20 years ago with the claim that a "relevant, mass Labour youth section and its domination by a Trotskyist organisation are mutually incompatible". But who ran the LPYS 20 years ago? Trotskyists — in the form of Gerry Healy's SLL!

So what sort of youth section would John and Phil like to see? Apparently one modelled on the Swedish Social Democrats (SSU). Now in the Swedish youth section, youth are youth until the age of 35 or until they die of old age — which ever is the sooner. And yet John and Phil like their mentors, Sawyer and Kinnock, want to reduce the YS age to 21 (lower limit 14), not expand it to 35. There is also the little problem of advocating an expansion of trade union youth sections (maximum age 25) while arguing the YS age limit should be chopped. Hypocrites? We think so.

As John and Phil know very well it has proved impossible to build a stable radical youth movement in Britain with the age limit set at 21. The best example is of Youth CND, which the authors lie about when they give the impression that YCND is thriving.

### CND

The right wing in CND found the 21 age limit much to their liking — they were able to isolate and victimise socialists in YCND.

But back to the SSU, the vision of the future. Because SSU does do one good thing that Phil and John would like to emulate: grab youth young; has the "ability to reflect the lives of young people". The SSU does this with the aid of 100 full time organisers and vast amounts of cash to buy musical instruments, sports gear, etc.

If John and Phil (and Sawyer and Kinnock) really want to emulate all this why did they cut or support cutting the YS budget to £8,000 last September?

If all the YS's national budget was spent on buying decent leather footballs, then every branch could have one each. Terrific.

The authors think it is actually valid to compare our underfunded YS with the youth of the SSU basically because they say the British YS already has 100 full-time workers in the shape of Militant full-timers, absurdly adding that the Militant have a "vested interest for the YS to remain small in size so they can maintain their influence".

## Campaign on housing

By Simon Pottinger

STUDENTS in London now pay more for accommodation as a proportion of their total income than any other section of society.

Students outside London come third in the same list, and together with single pensioners students are well clear of the rest of the field.

This long-standing accommodation crisis is getting worse. Many new students are now sleeping on floors.

Council housing stocks are declining, private landlords are putting up rents, and cuts in social security benefits are making things worse.

Student unions need to do two things: provide housing advice to individuals, and campaign for more and better housing. In the area of individual advice, fair rent registration is particularly important.

Landlords have been trying to evade the Rent Act by giving 'licences' rather than tenancies, but a recent court case established that 'licensees' should have Rent Act protection, including the right to a 'fair rent'.

This gives student unions the opportunity to run campaigns alongside local housing and tenants' groups, and with sympathetic local authorities, to reduce rents in private housing.

## SSiN

But campaigns also need to be political, highlighting the causes for the present housing crisis. We must fight in the labour movement against rate-capping, and for Labour councils to take on the Tories. And we must fight against the selling off of council houses.

**Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) AGM. Discussions on Middle East, NUS campaigns, SSiN strategy, and more.**

**All welcome — £2.50 students with grant, 50p no grant. Sunday 19 October, City Poly, Aldgate East tube, London.**

**Social on Saturday night 18th, at the General Picton, Caledonian Road, near Kings Cross. Entrance £1/50p.**

**Contact SSiN at 54A Peckham Rye, London SE15.**

JIM Denham's article on 'No Strike Deals' (Socialist Organiser 283, 11 September) drew heavily on the work of International Labour Reports, specifically the article 'Don't Sign Here' by Les Picton and ILR's interview with Eric Hammond.

Unfortunately ILR was not given credit for this material. We apologise.

International Labour Reports is a non-profit-making promoting internationalism within the labour movement through the magazine and through its educational activities.

### INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REPORTS

2-4 Oxford Road, Manchester M1 5QA. 061-228 2784.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

## A victory for solidarity

DESPITE the South African government's savage repression, since last July the black workers in Plessey factories in Cape Town have been fighting back against the slave labour wages paid to them by the British multinational company.

The bosses threatened to have the workers arrested and

imprisoned, in an effort to break the militant spirit of the workers and their union, the Electrical and Allied Workers' Trade Union (EAWTU).

But now, Plessey bosses in South Africa have backed down. They have called off their campaign of terror against the workers.

This is in part the result of the pressure generated by the

links established between British and South African Plessey workers after a tour over here by the EAWTU's Brian Williams.

This is a great victory for the South African working class and for workers everywhere. It shows the effectiveness of international working-class solidarity.

For full story turn to page 5.

# BENN SAYS: ORGANISE!

By Tony Benn

MANY PEOPLE say we want a socialist Labour government. I agree. But we sometimes forget that before that, here and now, we want a strong socialist labour movement. We want it now, not just something later.

If we had solidarity now, Murdoch would lose in Wapping now — we wouldn't have to wait for the Labour government.

If people hadn't crossed picket lines during the miners' strike, MacGregor's memoirs would have come earlier and ended with a different story.

## Campaign

We've got to do it now — and that's what the Campaign Forum is all about. It's about refounding the Labour Party at a time when the crisis of capitalism is deeper than at any time in my lifetime, and I was born in 1925.

We need it now, because people are in the front line now, and indeed unless we have it now, the prospect of getting that Labour government later won't really be very great.

It doesn't matter what you call it, but in every constituency, trade



Printers and their supporters return to the streets of Wapping to demonstrate against Murdoch just two days after rejecting his 'final' offer by 2½ to 1.

Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report

union, or workplace branch we need to have strong organisation and we also need to have a strong socialist inspiration. I think that came home very much during the conference

itself.

I've been to conferences for heaven knows how many years, but every one has its own character. This one was an eve-of-poll rally.

There's nothing wrong with an eve-of-poll rally. You've got your leader; he's on the platform; you cheer him because we want to get Thatcher out and he's the man we elected to get her out.

But the task of the left is to think about how to do it, and what to do, because of the problems the party faces.

## Crisis

You don't have much discussion at an eve-of-poll rally. But just consider the situation. When the Labour government comes to power, which we all hope it does, we're going to face a crisis.

We will face the decline of manufacturing industry, the decline of the oil revenue, and the fact that international capital is very strong and very arrogant, and has the mechanisms to strangle us.

At the moment when the incoming Labour government faces that situation, expectations will be rising very high. I know there's an attempt to dampen down by promising nothing, but that won't stop the bonfires in the streets when Thatcher goes in her removal van.

The people will be really excited, and the miners will be coming to have their fellow-miners released from prison. People will be coming to have the Liverpool councillors reimbursed. People will want jobs, people will want shorter waiting lists in the health service.

What we're saying to the nation now is that all those problems can be solved by working inside an unchanged system. We're going to work within an unchanged Establishment.

quite sure that Mick would like to know that we are not going to bow down in front of this sort of attack.



The Guardian last week had a report on the Shadow Cabinet's plans for jobs — 100,000 jobs in the nationalised industries and manufacturing, maybe 300,000 in the Health Service and local authorities, 250,000 in construction — and the bulk of the new jobs, half a million, described as 'training places with the Manpower Services Commission'.

I would be pleased at any attempt to create jobs. I really think it's a bit of a mockery that they are going to continue with the capitalist system that needed to produce a large pool of unemployed in the first place, and then say they are going to tackle the problem of jobs.

That's a contradiction in terms. They can't manage the capitalist system and have a return to full employment. If they want to tackle the question of full employment, they've got to take a completely different approach.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

## Pit victimisation

THE COAL Board reign of terror continues to operate in Notts. And the intimidation has been taken a stage further with the dismissal of the Area NUM Vice-President, Mick McGinty, for allegedly threatening a pit official.

The rank and file will not allow this sort of thing to continue. We warn Wheeler, the Area Director, that Notts miners are not prepared to sit back and accept this sort of picking-off of key individuals.

Wheeler is storing up a powder keg underneath himself, and one day that powder keg will blow up.

Wheeler and the Coal Board may think it is easy to pick off people in the Notts coalfield because of the existence of the UDM. They will see that the Notts miners are just as prepared to take action as people in other coalfields, as shown by the overtime ban in South Wales and in Durham.

With their intransigence on the pay issue, the Coal Board are alienating the entire workforce.

It is a tragedy that all this is happening at the same time that Mick Walker, who for many years was a trade union activist in the Notts coalfield, lost his life.

We've lost one of our major stalwarts, and the Coal Board continues their onslaught against us. I'm

## The truth gets out

By Stan Crooke

LAST WEEK'S frantic moves by the government to serve an injunction on the New Statesman magazine and the Scottish Glasgow Herald newspaper showed up once again the hollowness of British 'freedom of the press'.

On Wednesday 8 October an injunction was served on the New Statesman, banning it from printing a letter written by Sir James Craig to Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe in 1984, when Craig retired as British ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

The letter included a number of less than complimentary remarks about Saudis. Afraid that publication would harm diplomatic and economic relations with Saudi Arabia, the Tories had an injunction slapped on.

But the following day the Glasgow Herald published the letter. The English injunction had no standing under Scottish law.

The Tories immediately obtained an interim interdict (as injunctions are called in Scotland) to block the Herald. This was granted at 4am from the Edinburgh home of Judge Lord Davidson, who, despite the rather early start to his working day, had the normal court dress of black jacket and striped trousers for the occasion.

Printing of the Herald had, however, been completed by then. And since the interdict banned only publication, not distribution, the early-morning legal proceedings proved something of an empty gesture.

## Money

But that is not the end of the story. The right wing organisation 'Aims of Industry' is now campaigning for companies to stop advertising in the New Statesman and Glasgow Herald.

"Even an imbecile, let alone an editor, would know that the publication... would severely damage Britain's interests. Those papers must take the consequences and suffer less business support", explained Aims of Industry boss Michael Ivens.

That Craig said what he said is neither here nor there as far as the Tories and Aims of Industry are concerned. What worries them is that the Saudis could find out what a former British ambassador thought of them.

Normally the Tories would be quite happy to insult foreigners of any kind. What is different on this occasion is that Saudi Arabia has a lot of money — and British capitalists would like to get their hands on it.

The British press is free to print whatever it wants — with the small proviso that it does not harm the interests of British capitalism.

## New Party

And we've also got to build a new Labour Party, because the Party is too narrow. It doesn't represent all the elements in society. Women are doubly — and if they're black, triply — discriminated against.

I say to my comrades in the Party — and some on the Left — don't stand against women's rights in the

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