

socialist
REVIEW

Weekly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party
12 December-18 January 1980-11-60p

Bob Wright:
What went wrong
in engineering ?

Ireland:
a bitter climax



**A new deal
from
Labour ?**



Bother with the bosses

When we wrote in our last issue but one that the Confederation of British Industry was 'in a completely schizophrenic state of mind' on the eve of its annual conference we did not expect to be proved right so soon!

The sound and the fury since then has been quite extreme. There were the now notorious remarks at the conference itself by Sir Terence Beckett, former head of Ford Britain, who described the government as a 'narrow alliance' with which industry had to have a 'bare knuckles fight'. Serious papers like the *Financial Times* suggest the remarks were not meant to be taken at face value: Beckett was trying to wake up dozing delegates. But there was a much more serious side to what went on, exemplified in the CBI's criticisms of the government's measures of 22 November for not going far enough, despite their attacks on the living standards of pensioners and wage earners.

First, a point made rather cleverly by the *Investors' Chronicle* in its analysis of the conference. It did a survey on the companies represented there to find out how solvent they were—and discovered roughly a third were 'zero-rated', ie bankrupt, or on their way there. Second, the fact that several prominent employer figures—Lowry of BL, Jarratt of Reed International, Edwardes and others—made references to what happens is when the economy begins to turn upwards.

The conference took place just as union leaders were desperately moving to avert a strike against BL's pay offer. The way which Longbridge in particular responded to all the ballyhoo about the Metro—by demanding more money—has really given the employers something to worry about. As indeed has the riot at the plant when the workers were laid off.

This is not the cowed and loyal bunch of robots which the Edwardes plan was designed to achieve. It is, however, very much what a number of the major industrialists are thinking about, namely a situation where the economy moves out of recession, where individual firms are still very weak, where inflation is still running in double figures and where workers raise their demands in line with expectations.

The theme underlying the business 'revolt' against the government is not that capitalists are so concerned about the 'destruction of the British economy', as the *Morning Star*, *New Statesman* and sundry others keep harping on about. It is that the shake-out, recession, depression will leave British industry much weaker competitively than before, and with the fundamental problems unchanged of workers' resistance to management's right to manage.

The CBI's attack on the government has been a most important barometer for another reason. It showed both the way in which the party of big business has now become

effectively the party of a section of big business, for the time being at least. And it showed how the Tories have in essence been trying to organise a faction within the CBI to fight what might be called revisionism.

The carefully staged public resignations from the CBI after the attacks on the government have not, however, resulted in the large-scale revolt which occurred the last time an employers' leader attacked the Tories. This was during the spring 1974 general election when CBI director-general, Campbell Adamson, denounced the Industrial Relations Act for the trouble it had caused.

The big firms which led the revolt against CBI 'corporatism' on that occasion were GKN, ICI, Tube Investments, Hawker-Siddeley, Fisons, Unilever ... without exception firms now lined up behind the moves to make the government ease the pressure on manufacturing industry.

Quite what these firms are going to do in the coming year is very unclear. The government is now committed to easing some of the pressure on firms' profit margins, prices etc, by reducing interest rates and energy costs, by launching an offensive against wages in the public sector and by such measures as extending the short-time working subsidy. But all this is unlikely to mean that one of the biggest obstacles to these firms' profitability—the high exchange rate—will be brought down. In fact it may stay about its current level, approximately 50% too high in terms of the inflation rate, during the coming year.

The big firms will still be squeezed internationally, will still face incredible competi-



Sir Terence 'bare knuckles' Beckett

tive pressures, without the benefit of any domestic boom to tide them over.

The ingredients for further and sharper conflict between the employers and the government—and the attractive prospect of an increasingly divided ruling class—will thus still be there. And because the CBI lacks both the clout and the political experience to organise factions inside the Tory party as well as the Tories can organise factions within the CBI, it looks as though the employers' worst fears—prolonged recession without any major benefits—could be realised.

David Beecham

Public sector lies

One government measure which has received enthusiastic support from the CBI—together with the City and the Press—has been the attempt to hold the wages of 2.5 million people employed by local authorities to a six per cent norm. A deafening chorus has been insisting that over the last year public sector pay has vastly outstripped the private sector.

But an examination of the facts produced by the Department of Employment itself shows this idea to be entirely wrong. Some statistical distortion has occurred in the past year as a consequence of the awards by the Clegg Commission on pay comparability. But these awards were meant to be based on a catching up exercise; the problem is that many public sector groups never did catch up.

Information published by the government on November 13th in *Hansard* compares percentage increases in average weekly earnings for a range of public sector and

private sector occupations over the last four years. It shows that pay in the public sector has fallen further behind, and not rushed ahead as the Tories are trying to make out.

Percentage increase in average weekly earnings of adult men in full-time employment (April '76-April '80)	
Public sector	
Manual	68
Non-manual	63
Private sector	
Manual	72
Non-manual	79
Whole economy	
Manual	72
Non-manual	73
Parliamentary salary	94

Liverpool: the Labour Party under Foot is already showing enthusiasm undreamt of under Callaghan

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Photo: Neil Martinson

The lessons of Liverpool

We got it wrong last month. Our predictions as to the Labour Party leadership battle were outdated even as we were going on sale. We had seen the choice as between the horrific Healey, the appalling Shore and the mediocre Silkin. We had not expected Foot to run — though if we had thought of the matter we would have said he could gazump that lot and Benn's prospects as well.

We're not among those who see in his victory a fundamental shift in the Labour Party.

Foot was fixer-in-chief for the last government, and we cannot expect policies from him radically different to it. Already he is making his compro-

mises with the right — and drawing almost the whole of the Labour left into backing them. Not one left wing MP had the courage or principle to stand against Healey in the deputy leadership election. The shadow cabinet will be still stacked to the right: if Benn gets into it, it will be as a prisoner, willing or otherwise.

Foot's talk is of a *national* effort, not a class effort, to deal with unemployment, and he has even gone so far as to call for Edward Heath to 'join the opposition to the government' — whatever that might mean. He is openly preaching the virtues of a new version of the social contract, angling for support of those elements in the CBI who are disaffected with Thatcherism. Even on

the question of nuclear weapons he has been backing away from any sort of principled position: he says he will get rid of Cruise, but makes no mention of the rest of the US nuclear effort that is dependent on British bases.

In politics, beliefs can be important as well as facts. A mistaken idea can grip the minds of people and stimulate them to action. This seems to be happening with the Foot victory. All sorts of people who should know better are hailing it as an epochal change. And this in turn is affecting the way people with little political experience see it.

The tone with which Foot projects Labour's policies encourage such beliefs: the style is different to that of Callaghan and Healey, even if the message is the same. His pronouncements about Cruise, his endorsement of parliamentary direct action to stop the Tories slipping through rent increases, above all his enthusiastic propaganda for the Liverpool unemployment demonstration — all are a marked change from the half-hearted opposition to Thatcher of his predecessor.

And so there is the sort of response to Foot's reformism which the reformism of Callaghan could not arouse. In the next few months we can expect a stirring of political discussion among people who have never been active before and among people who long ago dropped out of activity through disillusion and demoralisation.

The Labour Party will not easily be able to draw those enthused by Foot's rhetoric into a structured organisational framework. It may be able to issue more membership cards. But its own cadres at the grass roots are too sparse, too middle class, too dependent on the trade union bureaucracy for their contact with workers and too tightly bound to local councils who are implementing cuts, to be able to pull potential recruits into active membership. In the short term the new reformist enthusiasm is not going to crystallise out as an organised, monolithic block, standing between the working class and the revolutionary left.

However, such a block can develop over time if revolutionary socialists do not respond in the right way to events. If new people are being brought to political life, we have to go out of our way to involve them in political activity alongside us.

This does not mean joining in the mad rush of some sections of the left towards Footism. Those would-be revolutionaries who are joining the Labour Party and helping to build it, are creating precisely the illusions in reformism they claim to want to dispel.

It does mean seizing every opportunity for united front activity with Labour Party supporters. On such a basis we can maintain our own principles and organisation while pushing for the needed

united responses to the offensives of the government and employers.

Foot's rhetoric addresses itself to problems — especially unemployment — which demand an urgent solution through action in the here and now. Yet the Labour Party is built from top to bottom on a basis which precludes people taking action themselves and directs them instead to rely on others — MPs, councillors, trade union officials. It is this which has meant that revolutionaries have always had the cutting edge when it has come to united, active struggle: our politics, based on the centrality of self-activity, fit such situations as the Labour Party's don't.

Ireland: Bitter Climax

By the time you read this article the hunger strikers in Long Kesh will be in a critical condition and the four women prisoners in Armagh will have begun their own hunger strike. The extent to which their struggle will be successful depends on the response to their tremendous sacrifice, both in the North of Ireland and the rest of the world.

An important part of this response will be the impact of the propaganda war. The British government are taking it seriously enough to have circulated all their embassies abroad with a specially prepared booklet purporting to give the 'facts' about the H Blocks. They have also taken the gamble of letting the television cameras into Long Kesh, something they have baulked at previously, and they even allowed *World in Action* to film the hunger strikers and conduct an interview with one of their number, Ray McCartney. Their recognition of the importance of winning 'hearts and minds' has led them to solicit statements from prominent figures on both sides of the border and the Irish sea that will help their cause.

The government's efforts have been slavishly supported by the media in Britain. The best example of this was the treatment of Cardinal Hume's statement on the hunger strike which was read out at Sunday mass on 16th November. Considerable publicity was given to his plea to the hunger strikers to give up their fast, but no mention at all was made of the rest of his statement which included the following comment: 'We remember how Pope John urged all political leaders... to find a just and peaceful solution to what, in our history, has always been a shameful episode. No doubt the Cardinal was looking over his shoulder at the preponderance of Irish men and women in his diocese of Westminster, but he did make some concession to the fact that there is still a lack of basic human rights in the North. Cardinal Hume's value to the British government is that he acts as a counterweight to the Irish Cardinal O'Fiaich whom they regard as being a propagandist for the republican movement, hence the distortion in reports of his statement.'

But to get such united front activity, we have to seek it out. Where there are movements, however limited and confused, against the cuts or against Cruise, against unemployment or against racists, revolutionaries have to be in there, enthusiastically playing their part. Where they do not yet exist, we have to do what we can to initiate them. We have to break the habits we naturally fell into during the period of Labour government, of assuming that only ourselves and those close to us were prepared to fight back. And we have to learn again to be a small, consistent, active minority within larger movements, demonstrations and struggles.

It was left to two Irishmen to give the government its biggest boost in the campaign. Both Gerry Fitt, MP for West Belfast and Dr Garrett Fitzgerald, the leader of the main opposition party in the Irish Republic, seemed to be vying among themselves for the title of 'Tame Irishman'. Fitzgerald called on the British government not to give in to the demands of the prisoners and his plea was echoed in the House of Commons by Fitt whose remarks were almost drowned by Tory and Unionist MPs applause.

It becomes increasingly clear that one way or another the next few months will be crucial for the Irish struggle. *The World in Action* programme (November 24th) highlighted the way in which all the protagonists see it. John McMichael, the UDA press officer, spoke chillingly of 'the final confrontation' and boasted that the loyalist paramilitaries may have to go into republican areas and eliminate the leadership of the Provisionals. This scenario would be the result of 'a breakdown in law and order' caused by the outrage at the deaths of the hunger strikers.

One of the reasons for the government and the loyalists publicly acknowledging the seriousness of the situation is the amount of support that has been shown for the hunger strikers by the Catholic community in the North and, albeit belatedly, by sections of the community in the Republic. *The World in Action* programme talked of this support being reminiscent of the days of the civil rights movement twelve years ago.

The response on the streets has certainly been impressive. There are weekly marches in Belfast, the largest of which brought 25,000 on to the streets—the equivalent of half a million marching in London. On Sunday 23rd November 20,000 marched in Dublin and the *Guardian* wrote that the march 'has again demonstrated the Republican movement's success in winning support for the hunger strikers...'. In every significant town on both sides of the border there have been big demonstrations of support and there is a real sense of a nationwide campaign deeply rooted in the community.

The official response of the Haughey government has been no more than lukewarm. The prime minister himself has refused to say whether or not he feels that the prisoners should be given special category status and his 'solution' to the problem is remarkably similar to the suggestions made by the British government that there could possibly be some general and unspecified prison 'reform'. Despite pressure from his more overtly Republican TDs (MPs) like Site DeValera, Haughey is anxious to maintain his reputedly excellent relationship with Thatcher. It remains to be seen how far the strength of the protests in the Republic force him to take a less equivocal position—he certainly won't do so voluntarily.

The response in Britain has been more difficult to evoke. The distorted propaganda from the government and the media over the past ten years has not been easy to counteract. There was a modest turn-out for the Withdrawal demonstration on the 15th November; hopefully the national demonstration on December 7th manages to make a bigger impact. On the positive side, the Charter 80 initiative has enabled socialists to raise the issue in workplaces and the trade union movement, in some cases success-

fully. The job we face now is to persuade the prominent signatories to the Charter to move beyond passive support. They are, for example rather coy about speaking out in

the House of Commons. Whatever success we have in this country it will take a lot to make the Tories shift on the issue.
Shaun Doherty.

Guinea Bissau:

The end of a dream

On 14 November the PAIGC government of Guinea-Bissau was overthrown by a Major Vieira. Just another army coup in some artificial little ex-colonial statelet? Not quite.

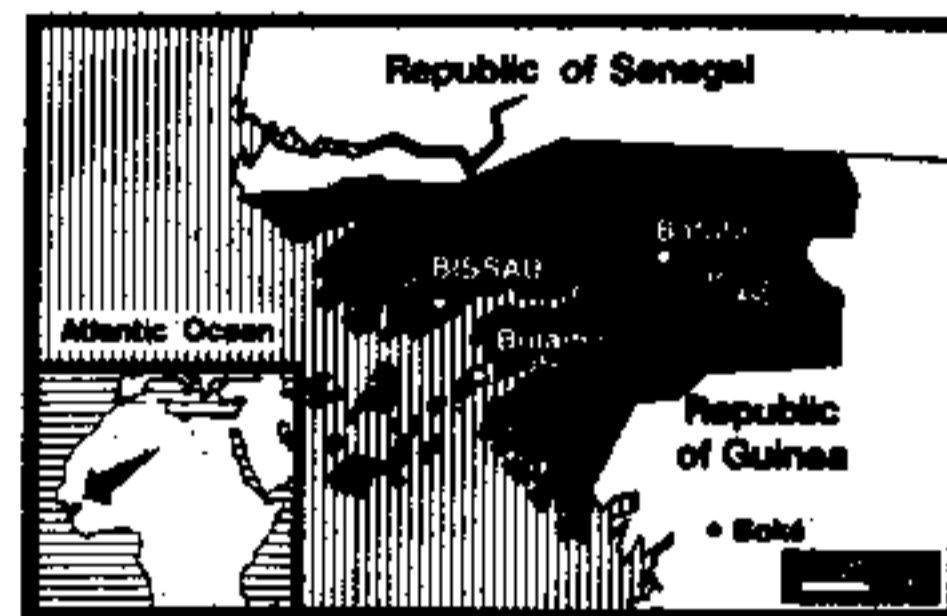
Although only about one million peasants and a handful of urban workers inhabit the former Portuguese administered territory of Guinea-Bissau, the story of their thirteen year armed struggle against their colonial oppressors forms part of the history of the jointly momentous resistance in Angola and Mozambique. During the 1960s and early 1970s the leaderships of Guinea's PAIGC movement, Angola's MPLA and Mozambique's FRELIMO developed an intimate ideological alliance against their common coloniser under the guidance of the ideas of Amilcar Cabral, the Guinean leader.

The fruition of the resistance movements' alliance came in 1974 when the Armed Forces Movement within the Portuguese conscript army rebelled against their role as colonisers and overthrew the fascist regime of Caetano in Portugal. In the case of Guinea 10,000 PAIGC guerrillas had paralysed 35,000 Portuguese soldiers.

In the ensuing five years the liberation movements of old have transformed themselves into the ruling parties of three independent African states. They have worn the radical mantle of being the first African nationalist movements militarily to defeat colonialism. To Africa they symbolise what Algeria symbolised to the Arabs in the 1950s, what Cuba symbolised to Latin America in the 1960s and what Vietnam symbolised to Asia in the 1970s.

A coup in one of these three 'radical' states, Guinea, could be said to mark the beginning of the end to yet another attempt in the underdeveloped world to create economic self-sufficiency through the moral mobilising force of national unity against imperialism. There seems little doubt that the new Vieira group who have taken power in Guinea have abandoned Cabral's ideal of the educated urban elite encouraging workers' and peasants' self-government.

Ironically the mobilising power of Cabral's ideas stemmed from his realistic prediction of exactly this possibility. He predicted that, because the party cadre were necessarily drawn from the urban elite petty bourgeoisie, it always faced the danger in power of failing to maintain the necessary rigour of its pre-independence orientation towards the workers as the eventual agents of socialism. Cabral had often had to remind the PAIGC



guerrillas that the party's first involvement in mass activity prior to its turn to a rural-based struggle had been the stevedores strike of 3 August 1959 in the capital, Bissau. This had been led by Cabral's brother, Luis, the recently deposed president. It was only because the ensuing suppression led to 50 black workers being killed and 80 injured that the urban cadre had sought refuge in armed mobilisation of the peasantry to besiege the urban areas.

Cabral's clearest statement on this problem is worth quoting at length. He made it to a gathering of European leftists in the Franz Fanon (the legendary theorist of the Algerian resistance against French colonialism) Centre in Milan in 1964:

"Our problem is to see who is capable of taking control of the state apparatus when the colonial power is destroyed. In Guinea the peasants cannot read or write, they have had almost no relations with the colonial forces during the colonial period except for paying taxes, which is done indirectly. The working class hardly exists as a defined class, it is just an embryo. There is no economically viable bourgeoisie because imperialism prevented it being created. What there is is a stratum of people in the service of imperialism who have learned how to manipulate the apparatus of the state—the African petty bourgeoisie: this is the only stratum capable of controlling or even utilising the instruments which the colonial state used against our people.

"So we come to the conclusion that in colonial conditions it is the petty bourgeoisie which is the inheritor of state power (though I wish we could be wrong). The moment national liberation comes and the petty bourgeoisie takes power we enter, or rather return to history, and thus the internal contradictions break out again. The petty bourgeoisie can either ally itself with imperialism and the reactionary strata in its own country to try and preserve itself as a petty bourgeoisie or ally itself with the workers and



Troops Out demonstration, 15 November 1980.

peasants, who must themselves take power or control to make the revolution."

In the event Cabral as an individual was not allowed to tackle this dilemma of his class. The Portuguese fascists so feared his influence on their conscript officers and soldiers (many Armed Forces Movement members have claimed to be inspired by Cabral) that they had their secret police, PIDE, assassinate him in 1973. They could not suppress his predictions. The following statement made ten years before the end of Portuguese fascism predicted the way in which American, German, British and French interests would woo the new Guinean regime directly or via their social democrat clients in Portugal:

"We think there is something wrong with the simple interpretation of the national liberation movement as a revolutionary trend. The objective of the imperialist countries is to liberate the reactionary forces in our countries which were being stifled by colonialism and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie. Neocolonialism's current framework in the underdeveloped countries is the policy of aid, and one of the essential aims of this policy is to create a false bourgeoisie to put a brake on the revolution and to enlarge the possibilities of the petty bourgeoisie as a neutraliser of the revolution."

What exactly in the last five years has brought about the souring of Cabral's dream that the revolutionary will of his cadres would overcome imperialism?

Firstly, the enormity of the dislocation wrought by the long war.

At independence the PAIGC regime faced the prospect of rehabilitating one sixth of the population that had fled to neighbouring countries during the war. Once a net exporter, the war had forced Guinea to import its basic agricultural commodity of rice. By 1974 there was no mining and practically no manufacturing—only 1,833 were employed. Although PAIGC had built 170 elementary schools attended by 16,000 students and operated nine local hospitals in the 'liberated' areas, there was still at independence 97% illiteracy (only 14 graduates) and 45% of children dying before the age of five (only two doctors among the graduates). Life expectancy was 35 and there were only 265 miles of paved road.

In the first few years after independence the mobilising enthusiasm that spilled over from the success of the armed struggle led to some spectacular improvements in these statistics. For instance, 20% can now read and one in 10 children are now in school. For a brief period there was success in attempts to revive the staple rice production to 80,000 but this was halved by the Sahelian drought only three years after independence just when imports had been cut and the regime was managing to cover 35% (instead of the 8% at independence) of its overall imports with exports. Basically, after four years of

hard graft the agricultural production of post-independence Guinea was back at Square One and the ruling regime's morale never really recovered.

Far from reducing its dependence on foreign aid to meet its balance of payments deficit the regime found itself caught in just as vicious a catch-22 as any other underdeveloped country.

This was particularly true in relation to Russia. Cabral had been relatively uncritical about the motivations of his 'socialist' allies, so that the PAIGC was ill-prepared for when the USSR started behaving with state capitalist rapacity towards the set of commodities fish, shellfish, which could have been a valuable source of economic diversification if properly nurtured. In the honeymoon period with Russia just after independence when the West appeared to shun the new regime, the PAIGC was grateful to increase to 19% from virtually nil its fish and shellfish exports as a result of the Estrela do Mar contract with the USSR. As time passed however, the Guineans became alarmed at the destruction of this valuable natural resource by Russian 'vacuum' fishing. Because of their early success the Russians had secured the right to offer only 15% of the catch produced by their 20 trawlers to the Guineans. Yet the total value of the Russian catch was around £15 million a year in 1978. What is more the Russians were actually selling the fish back to the Guineans in cans marked 'caught in Russian waters'. No wonder the Guineans saw little difference in this situation from the Portuguese era when the only factory of substance made beer for the Portuguese troops.

After this salutary experience in its relations with the East the regime turned to the West. By 1977 35% of the total value of imports was made up of aid in kind (mostly rice-aid) from the US, Sweden, Denmark, West Germany and Holland. The French were prospecting for phosphates and a French oil consortium, Agip, was prospecting off-shore. Saudi Arabia had invested in a groundnut-oil plant and Kuwait was loaning money to rebuild the airport. By 1978 however debt servicing on non-aid finance was already 15% and by now must be much higher, so that relations with the West had just as predictable a sting as with the East. The final downfall of Cabral's proud urban cadres came this year when they vacillated over their relations with the rulers of the former French territory, Guinea Conakry, on their southern border. Sekou Toure, the leader of Conakry, was offering the PAIGC leadership a disadvantageous three way agreement to exploit known oil resources in the territorial waters straddling the two countries' joint border in partnership with Texas Petroleum. Twice burnt by the USSR fish deal and by the USA's sharp financial terms, the PAIGC regime was holding out for a greater cut out of the exploration of its oil resources than was on offer. One group within the PAIGC leadership led by Vieira obviously felt that Guinea-Bissau was in no

position to argue. They have now plumped for a break with any future ultra-nationalism in their dealings with the West. Cabral's optimism of the will has been crushed by the force of material circumstances. Socialists in Guinea have to return to where Amilcar and Luis Cabral began their revolutionary career, the struggles of the stevedores and other Bissauan workers, however small a proportion of the population they may be.

John Rogers

United States:

Home on Reagan's range

It seems as if everyone's worst nightmare came true. Ronald Reagan is the next president of the United States. Reactionaries and conservatives are elated. Moderates are apprehensive, and liberals and radicals scared. The press stated that Reagan's election signalled the American people had moved drastically to the right; that there would be a dramatic and drastic shift in both domestic and foreign policy; for some it seemed as if the new cabinet would be made up of people in the ultra right "moral majority".

In the two weeks since the election, a lot of the earlier views have softened a bit. There doesn't seem to be quite the panic and hysteria that once existed. Even the darling of the liberals, Ted Kennedy, paid a cordial visit to the president-elect and promised "full cooperation". What then does Reagan's election mean?

First it should be clear that Reagan's victory, was not a mandate. 25% of the electorate voted, the lowest turnout since 1948. Of that 25% who voted for Reagan, 38% said they weren't voting for Reagan as much as they voting *against* Carter. The majority of unionists, women, young people, people with incomes less than \$6000 voted for Carter. The overwhelming majority of blacks and Hispanics voted for Carter. But the electorate was in general anti-Carter, and there was a well organised and financed right wing for Reagan. Carter was so despised that he dragged down a host of Democratic Congress people with him.

In spite of Reagan's victory however, the majority of the population is not conservative. According to all polls taken, over 62% of the population favor the Equal Rights Amendment, a woman's right to abortion, and no prayers in the schools, (as opposed to roughly 22% for the main issues of the organised right). While there has been a definite shift to the right politically, as the election proved, it is no where as drastic as the press claims or the reactionaries boast.

Reagan and his ultra right supporters have found that he will have to 'moderate'

his views. Even before his election victory, the old Eastern establishment moderate Rockefeller-Ford wing of the party, began to assert itself and now is very much in control. Reagan's chief campaign aide is William Casey who served under Ford as the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Moderate Howard Baker (detested by the right because he supported Carter on the Panama Canal Treaty) is the senate majority leader. Reagan, came to office vowing a massive tax cut and a freeze on all federal hiring. Even before he takes office, he has started to back pedal both issues. He promises to get rid of the departments of energy and education; again, when that will take place, he can't say.

Many liberals were terrified of Reagan because he will have the opportunity to appoint five or perhaps seven justices to the Supreme Court. The liberals fear that a conservative court will wipe out any gains made in the 50s and 60s. However, the nature of the Supreme Court is not what is going to bring about changes. A reactionary, anti-labour Court was forced to recognise the existence of labour unions because of the massive showing of the CIO in the 30s and 40s. The gains made for civil rights, and civil liberties and women came about because of movements in the streets. The court responds to movements, not political arguments made in isolated chambers.

Reagan's election will mean a shift in emphasis. The erosion of the gains won by women and blacks in the past 20 years will be accelerated. The Republican landslide has given all sorts of reactionaries great confidence. Already bills are pending in state legislatures to ban the teaching of evolution, or to demand that the biblical version of creation be included. (Reagan agrees with the fundamentalists on that point). School prayers, outlawed by the Supreme Court in the 1960's are being introduced. There are bills pending in 11 states to rescind their ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Reagan and Strom Thurmond, head of the senate judiciary committee have promised to reintroduce the death penalty, a constitutional amendment banning abortions altogether, and the outlawing of busing for school integration. Other leading Republicans who have Reagan's blessing are talking about repealing the youth minimum wage, modifying social security, enacting 'right-to-work' (anti union shop laws, repealing federal wage guidelines in the construction industry and repealing affirmative action guidelines for federal employees. There will be increased surveillance and harassment of groups by the FBI and CIA and provisions in the civil rights and voter registration acts will be gutted.

However, it must be remembered that under Carter's presidency and a Democratic controlled congress, much of this was already underway. The ERA was not ratified even though the Democrats controlled the Congress which voted to cut off federal

funds for abortion. Labour and blacks won few victories, legislative or judicial in the past four years; in fact, they were under attack. It was Carter, the Democrat, who invoked the anti-strike Taft Hartley law against the miners and it was the Democrats who sat back and watched affirmative action be ruined.

Reagan's victory will give the extreme racist organisations like the Ku Klux Klan renewed confidence. The all-white jury's acquittal of five klansmen and nazi's in Greensboro North Carolina has been seen by all black leaders—moderate to radical—as showing that the 80s will be open season on blacks. But again, under a Democratic administration we had the brutal murder of Archie MacDuffie in Miami, the assassination of the Urban League the wave of racist killings in Atlanta, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Salt Lake City and Youngstown Ohio, along with increased police murders of black youths. Reagan's election will only accelerate the racist offensive which has already begun.

In terms of foreign policy Reagan has been portrayed as the cowboy who likes to shoot from the hip, the arch anti-communist, strong militarist, likely to bring American into another war. During the war in Vietnam Reagan said we should turn North Vietnam into a parking lot, and during his campaign, he argued that Vietnam had been a noble war.

But Reagan is finding out that he will not be in total control of foreign policy. Already it seems as if the Rockefeller-Ford wing i.e. the Trilateral Commission wing of the party, will set foreign policy. George Bush was the Trilateral Commission's choice for president. When they realised that couldn't win, they joined the Reagan campaign and got Bush on as vice president. Bill Brock, the chairman of the Republican party is also on the Trilateral commission. So is Richard Allen, one of Reagan's top foreign policy advisors and at least two probable cabinet members, George Schultze and Casper Weinberger (not to mention Henry Kissinger who will play some sort of advisor role).

Both Carter and Reagan campaigned for

more arms spending. Carter attempted the helicopter raid on Iran in a desperate and dangerous attempt to not only rescue the hostages but more importantly (for him) to get reelected. Both the Democrats and Reagan are committed to Cruise missiles, neutron bombs and MX missiles. Will the world be more dangerous now that Reagan can put his hand on the trigger? I think that's the wrong way to put such a question.

The world is becoming a more dangerous place because the US and the USSR can no longer maintain the balance of power/terror they imposed upon the rest of the world after World War Two. As more and more conflicts break out, with wars like Iraq-Iran and struggles for national liberation, against imperialism, like El Salvador, and as the world economic crisis deepens, all rulers, including cowboys like Reagan reach for their guns.

For socialists, the Reagan election can mean new openings. In one sense, Carter stood for nothing. He was a Republican posing as a Democrat. Under his tenure of office there was little political polarisation, with the exception of the Iran crisis and the reimposition of draft registration.

But Reagan and his supporters have stood for everything reactionary and evil. He is clearly, anti-labor, anti-woman, racist, anti-bill of rights, and for increased use of nuclear power and weapons. This means that we should expect more people, especially young people, to become politicized. Already it seems as if such a process is taking place. At this writing in Philadelphia 1000 blacks are meeting to discuss formation of an anti-capitalist party to fight the racist offensive. Anti-draft and anti-nuke groups, dormant for the past five months are beginning to regear. The women's movement must organise to fight for ERA, abortion and other reproductive rights.

The openings for socialists will only come if we are active in the movements that arise, if we go to the strikes that break out, if we can relate our socialist politics to the impending attacks on working people in Reagan's America.

Barbara Winslow
Cleveland Ohio

Socialist Workers Party

FOR WORKERS
POWER AND
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The new Nationality Act

Imperial adventures in East Africa and elsewhere led to the Nationality Act of 1948 and the creation of 'Citizens of the UK and Colonies' covering all the people of the Empire. Today, with the economic boom and the need for cheap labour which went with it long forgotten, the Tories have announced plans to introduce a new Nationality Act in this session of Parliament.

Why the Act? A British passport no longer gives the right of entry to this country. It hasn't done since 1968. The existing legislation already discriminates in terms of race, colour and sex. But the new Act will make the situation worse in a number of specific ways, and changing it will be very difficult once it has been passed: nationality laws are not made very often.

Previous Acts

With the passing of the Labour Government's measures against Commonwealth immigration in 1965, and its hasty law against British citizens of Asian descent in 1968, mass black immigration came to an end. The overwhelming majority of black people entering Britain since then have been dependents of those already here.

The 1971 Immigration Act gave the government the power to fix quotas as it chose for any nationality. It also denied the previous right of black Commonwealth nationals to citizenship after five years' residence in Britain. Since any black person on the street might be a post-1971 immigrant, the Act gave the police carte blanche to harass them—it gave police the right to stop and search people and to break into private premises without a warrant, if they had 'reasonable grounds' to suspect the presence of illegal immigrants. The virginity tests, x-rays and abusive questioning at airports suffered by black immigrants—all this is perfectly legal under the 1971 Act.

The chief effect of the 1971 Act was to

divide 'patrial' (white) Commonwealth citizens from 'non-patrial' (black) and to make it easier for whites than blacks to enter the UK.

The new Act

The new Nationality Act would consolidate and extend the existing legislation. It would create three kinds of citizenship:

- (1) British citizenship;
- (2) Citizenship of the British Dependent Territories;
- (3) British Overseas citizenship for the remaining citizens of the UK and colonies.

The first category concerns all those born, adopted, registered or naturalised in the UK, or 'patrials' under the 1971 Act. A patrial is a British passport holder who has, or whose parent has UK citizenship, and who has lived in Britain for five years free of immigration restriction. In effect with the new law British citizenship (and the right of entry) will exist for about 55 million whites, and one to two million blacks at most.

Children born abroad of parents who are UK citizens will only get citizenship if their parents were born in the UK, not if they are registered or naturalised—an obviously racist provision.

The other two categories confer no right of entry or any other rights; it is laughable to call them 'citizenship' at all. Needless to say, the vast majority of people who fall into these categories are not white.

Citizens of the dependent territories will include those people in the remaining colonies, plus people in the Associated States (Antigua, St Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla). If these are independent states when the law takes effect, people born in those countries would probably lose their British nationality: this happened recently to people from St Lucia and St Vincent who have lived many years in Britain.

British Overseas Citizenship will be for British Asians in East Africa, and non-patrial British passport holders. It won't give them the unrestricted right to enter or remain in the UK, nor is this type of citizenship transferable to wife or child.

Implications of the Act

After the new Act, birth on UK territory would not make you British if your parents were illegal immigrants, or under 'conditions of stay'. In practice, this would mean a check on the immigration status of parents when a child's birth was registered. It doesn't take much imagination to foresee the horrifying implications of such a provision for many people who are actually citizens, but whose colour might prompt the authorities to check their status.

Married women, at present entitled to register immediately after marriage to a British man, whatever their origin, will lose this right. All in the name of sex equality, as men at present have no entitlement to register on marrying a British woman.

Rights for Commonwealth citizens living here are to be continued for the time being: voting, working in the Civil Service, and so on, but the White Paper makes it clear that the new British 'citizenship' will make available a definition by which these rights could be modified in future.

The current right of Commonwealth citizens who have been settled here since before January 1973 to register as citizens will only continue for two years after the Act comes in force. Those who don't register will lose the right. Naturalisation will in future be the only means of gaining British citizenship for Commonwealth citizens, or other foreign people. They will have to convince the Home Secretary that, amongst other things, they can satisfy a minimum residence requirement; that they are of 'good character', that they have sufficient knowledge of English and that they intend, once naturalised, to remain here or 'linked to British interests abroad.' There is no appeal against refusal of either registration or naturalisation. Also, naturalisation is expensive.

The new Act does not alter anyone's immigration status. But by transferring what are now categories in immigration law to nationality categories, it will bring to an end the obligation of this country towards roughly four million people overseas who are British but not white. At the same time, about two million 'patrials' people living abroad (the 'kith and kin' in South Africa, Australia, USA etc) will be able to get British citizenship.

Building Opposition.

Opposition to the Act is likely to come from various quarters. There are many blacks in Britain, especially of West Indian origin, who have been here many years but who are not British citizens. Two years are allowed for registration, and many immigrant groups have already started publicising the dangers of the Act to their memberships. The Labour Party has begun to make noises, but is compromised by the fact that the Labour government introduced the proposals for change in the Nationality Act in a Green Paper in 1977. The danger here is that the Labour MPs and the Commission for Racial Equality will raise objections on matters of detail—an amendment here or there—rather than opposing the plan as a whole.

Campaign against Racist Laws, which comprises Asian workers' organisations amongst other groups, has called a conference on 10 January in Birmingham to plan for action on a local and national level. The Act will be debated in parliament throughout 1980. CARL has already started to mobilise locally in some areas, and it sees the conference as a starting point for a mass campaign against the Nationality Act, and the immigration laws. *Socialist Review* readers should take this campaign into their workplaces and union branches, and get delegates for the conference. Write to: CARL, c/o Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove London SE5.

Bipin Patel

A Socialist Workers Party pamphlet



Why we say
TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!

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What went wrong in the AUEW?

One of the biggest defeats the left in the unions has suffered for many years. That was the result of the presidential elections in the engineering union, the AUEW, announced at the beginning of last month.

The vote for the left's candidate, Bob Wright—at present assistant general secretary—slumped. And although the vote for the right wing sitting president, Duffy, was not higher than in the past, he was able to walk it on the first ballot—something virtually unheard of. In order to try and find out what went wrong, Chris Harman for *Socialist Review* talked to Bob Wright.

Obviously in the result there was some, how shall I put it, personal as well as political rejection, you've got to face that. But that's not the only explanation. If it was on the merit of individuals, Duffy would lose hands down. If it was personal rejection of me, votes would have gone to the other candidates.

In the first ballot for the last presidential election (in 1977) we were equal almost. We had 90,000 votes and he 90,300. But in the second ballot he picked up most of the floating votes. In my re-election as assistant general secretary last year I got such a large majority that it was regarded as a marker—I could pull 140,000 votes.

This time there was less pressure against us from the press. There's some evidence they said leave it, don't push it. Everybody, including the right wing, assumed the big thing was the second ballot. In fact there was some argument as to whether I wouldn't top the first ballot. Yet we only received 58,000 votes.

I've wracked my brain, sounded people out, to get reactions to this situation.

Bob didn't accept an explanation in term of any general decline in the strength or organisation of the left over the last five years.

'That clearly contradicts a lot of other things. There's been a narrow position reached on the National Committee, for instance. Now I remember when on the National Committee the left could only muster a caucus of 14 in the early 70s, after Scanlon's election to the presidency. But we've reached the point where last year—not this year—we got 26-26.

'In terms of convenors and stewards, we've seen a distinct movement to the left—in the broad sense. It reflects what's happening in the Labour Party, in the movement generally.'

The campaign this year, he said, had been as good as any in the years when the left won, based as it was on unity between the Broad Left, around the Engineering Gazette, and those further to the left.

'We've had more unity, better meetings,



'If it was on the merit of individuals, Duffy would lose hands down.'—Bob Wright

more meetings, we've pushed leaflets out, *Charter* did leaflets, there were other leaflets, we had contacts in factories, the *Militant* group, did well, the *Charter* lads did well.

'We had indications of people who had previously supported Duffy were making a turn and supporting me—I was approached on a series of occasions at meetings, before meetings and after meetings, by prominent lads in the areas. For instance a lad from Huddersfield came to me at a meeting held in the trades club there. He said, "I supported Duffy last time. This time our stewards were unanimous in supporting you. I'll guarantee

you 600 to 800 votes from our factory.'

'At the meeting in Manchester, where they've had all sorts of problems in the last five years, there was 380. It was the biggest meeting they've ever held on an election campaign. There were key lads there, key members. They weren't just lads who'd come along, they were activists. The reception was tremendous, inspiring. And, most unusual in the union, I got a standing ovation after the statement I'd made—it was a tremendous feeling.

'In Glasgow there were over 700. They had coaches from Dundee and Edinburgh.

And that's all 11 o'clock Saturday morning.

'I'm not talking about the narrow left. This was a broad approach. We insisted on it.

'Jack Robertson did his job with the *Charter*. Prior to the election *Charter* was doing a bit of a hatchet job on Duffy anyway. The famous thing was its printing of that speech Duffy made down in the West country. There were people talking about it. 'Have you seen this. He was a buffoon.' They were literally saying it.'

Bob sees a central problem as being the impact of the postal ballot (introduced for major elections in the mid-1970s).

'You've got to analyse the nature of postal voting. Why have the Tories pushed it? Why are the right wing pushing it?

'If you have a secret postal vote, away from the factory, away from the organisation, people lose contact.

'We've not done well since it came in. Our difficulty has been in executive elections.

'In district elections we hold our own and we've gained one or two, because they're nearer to the members, they're localised. We've had one or two setbacks but we can identify the reasons for those setbacks—even on the left we suffer from arrogance and a bit of bloody stupidity from some officials and so they get out of touch with the local situation.

'Then at divisional level it can become a bit stretched and we get some queer backlashes. And when you get to regional level, then you are getting into a position of remoteness.

'Regions in our union are big—the whole of the Midlands and Greater Manchester is one region. And that geographically isn't the biggest. The whole of Scotland is a region. You've got South Wales and mid-Wales and the whole of the South West is one EC division. Then you've got from Sheffield down virtually to the Thames—including Luton but not Enfield.

'An individual can be known in one part of the region and not the other. This is where postal ballots take over in influence terms. And at national level more so—to the advantage of the right wing. We are faced with the influence of the mass press. And we are also faced with a powerful right wing machine.

'They've got a highly disciplined machine and any one who breaches it is discarded. That's reflected in an election that's just been declared, a national organiser election. The man that defeated Laurie Smith (of the left) has just himself been defeated on the first ballot. They opposed him. I believe their machine is far more powerful than we give it credit for. In addition to the press they've got Trumid financing a leaflet campaign—not openly, through agents. They run a series of local newsheets—the *Midland Worker*, the *Welsh Worker*, *News and Views*.

'The left has internal differences and challenges, is much more individualist in many senses. But not them. If people vote the wrong way at the National Committee, they

really set out to destroy them. They brief Woodrow Wyatt, they brief Levin, they brief the editors of this Fleet Street group. They're too accurate not to be briefed. Levin and Woodrow Wyatt don't know their arse from their elbow when it comes to the union.

'Their newsheets and leaflets are produced anonymously or with an address, sometimes fictitious. All this shows they have got a disciplined machine and they have got a dedicated group of active right wingers.

'In the field in our union, the majority of provincial officials are right wingers. The district committees might be different. But not the officials. And they are supposed to be disciplined—if they aren't they are opposed. The right always had an organisation. What Boyd has done has been to build a disciplined organisation. And they don't forgive and forget.

Bob pointed out that the right wing 'have always controlled the union in majority terms' on the executive. But in the past they were not always a solid block.

'In the Scanlon period the executive was split 4-3 to the right wing. But the left influence was there. There was Scanlon, whatever you might say about how he turned out eventually. There was Reg Birch—always a little bit of an individualist in some senses, but on basic issues with the left. So there was myself, Dixon, Reg Birch, and Hugh Scanlon. And then we had characters like Edmundson—very right wing, very anti-communist, anti-Marxist. Then you had Hearsey, basically right wing but occasionally would swing on internal issues.

'Edmundson, for instance, came out as one of the most powerful resistors to the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. He was adamant that under no circumstances would we compromise ourselves by even recognising Donaldson or the court. And he was one of the hardest liners, much harder than Scanlon, but right wing when it came to other issues. He was an old, traditionalist, union man who saw the union above all, although politically right wing.

'Then you had Boyd and Bill John. Bill John was probably not even a supporter of the Labour Party in real terms. And Boyd opposed every move we made when we resisted the Industrial Relations Act. And now he's the king. Whether we got that across in the campaigns or not, I don't know.'

But how did the left come to win influence at the national level in the first place? Bob described the development of the Broad Left in Manchester in the 1950s and nationally in the 1960s.

'In Manchester we built the left movement from the early fifties on what we called the broad left. That was the original broad left movement. And it was the unit we wanted to defeat reaction in the area. Scanlon was very much a signal to that, because he was elected defeating the right wing divisional organiser, in 1947. And from there we began to build. It was in 1951 that we persuaded the Communist Party that they had

to broaden—I've always been in the Labour Party—and they agreed we had to have unity in the union.

'It was based on left individuals—they weren't all Labour Party even when they weren't CP, and we broadened it as much as we possibly could. We invited people who were progressive, not necessarily aligned. And that to some extent set the pattern for our national movement. We recognised it was the issue you united on, we had to act upon, while we still had our divisions as regard to politics.

'The attitude to some of the ultra leftists was keep them out, and some of the ultraleftists acted to put up candidates independently and so on and so forth. That could only be, in my opinion, to the advantage of the right wing. But I don't think that accounts for the defeats at the national level.

'We transformed the whole of that region with left victories. And so all the officials in No. 11 were left of centre—I won't say they were all what you would call, or I would describe, as left wing. And they worked together on a unity basis. So we had a mass movement in the area. Regular meetings, an organisation. And it was only after there were one or two retirements and Brett, myself, Scanlon, the team that built that machine moved away, down here, that we began to get problems in Manchester—I'm putting it crudely—of overconfidence, and they narrowed the left down until it was only a core of people, of sort of trustees.

How did Bob Wright regard Scanlon—moving from being a militant organiser in Manchester through the national president identified with defiance of the Industrial Relations Act to support for wage controls and membership of the House of Lords?

'I knew him very well, and I knew him when he was a very vigorous member of the Communist Party with a very outspoken personality. He was a ginger element in the period I'm talking about, the 1950s and there is no doubt at all built a tremendous reputation through support for militant courses and activity. But I don't believe Scanlon was motivated by politics, and ambition took over as he emerged and became recognised.

'There was a period in which Scanlon was viciously attacked in the press even after he became president. And the Industrial Relations Act struggle was perhaps the culmination of his reaction. He began to personalise matters and to say, "I am the one that carried out the task, I am the one that carried the burden. I'm the one who was attacked." And he began to personalise the issue, to see himself as the one who carried the banner.

'Then after the Labour government was elected in 1974 and he'd been a member of the general council of the TUC for a number of years, he began looking for more and more prominence—that is my assessment. He was drawn into the higher echelons of the TUC, became a member of the inner committee, Finance and General Purposes, became involved in discussion with Harold Wilson and the government, committed

himself to the social contract, and became a dedicated defender of it.

'He began to have differences with the left and with myself. He could become extremely aggressive towards the left. That was the signal that he had gradually been moving away, and ultimately, after declarations that he would never accept honours from either Labour or Tory government, that was what he did. He said,

"We've had the Tories, we've had this tremendous, traumatic period of conflict, the union lost millions of pounds, the result of the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act" (a lie which Boyd has picked up and exploited: the true cost to the union was about £300,000—when I argued with Scanlon about this he said £2m a year was spent on strikes for those three and half years, though those were struggles over wages that had nothing to do with the Industrial Relations Act).

'He then said, "I will do anything to keep Labour in power". Now that was the blank cheque.

'In one way or another he used his leftist position to quell the members in resistance to the social contract. And right up to the eleventh hour. If you take the TUC of that period, there was the twelve month rule issue, in which he distorted the union's position, there was the ultimate challenge on Healey's imposition of the five per cent. And then he took the accolade of recognition.

'My assessment is that this did damage the left movement in the union. My experience when I ran initially for president was that there was a backlash, that members associated the left with Scanlon, obviously, saying "He's taken us down this bloody road what guarantee will there be that you're not committed to the same politics?"'

During Bob Wright's period on the AUEW executive there were a number of important industrial disputes. Many contributors to Socialist Review would see in the outcome of these the secret of the left's erosion of strength. I asked Bob his view of two of these disputes.

First there was the struggle in Manchester in 1972 when more than 30 factories were occupied after the breakdown of negotiations for the national engineering claim over wages, hours and conditions.

'There was support given in the sense that all those disputes were recognised. I was the executive member who went up and met them. I did a tour round the occupations. In that sense we did back them. The mistake was that the union broke off negotiations nationally and referred it back to the factories.

'The intention of the executive, including Scanlon—which I opposed—was to break off and say "Do what you can in the isolated factory to defeat this particular challenge". In most areas what really happened was that

the stewards went in and said, "Give us more money and we'll settle it". And they did.

'But in Manchester they stuck on the hours. And they had one or two victories.

'Sheffield attempted to go down the same path, and so did one or two other areas.

'The outcome of Manchester was to create division among the employers. They'd been taken on and the employers' federation was under tremendous pressure. So they met the confed (under Scanlon's chairmanship, on the engineering side) and they reached a settlement which excluded hours and other demands. And the next agreement (the follow up agreement, not the one that came out of the struggle) absorbed the advances that had already been made on holidays in other factories. This was where the criticism came.

'It was a bad struggle, because it was in effect determining a policy of a non-national challenge putting the responsibility on the factory. But in the end they brought it back nationally.

'I wouldn't want to be misunderstood. Scanlon was not essentially the master of all that happened. There was tremendous pressure from other unions in the confed. They were applying enormous pressure to get back round the table and settle—the boiler-makers, the electricians, the municipal workers, and the T&G as well (they were against the notion of 'let the lads in the plants have a



Chrysler 1973... 'I don't accept that when a group of workers launch themselves on a sectarian course there's an automatic responsibility that we've got to involve ourselves.'—Wright

go, despite the alleged policies of the T&G).

'So there was all that, plus a majority on our executive. We had a hell of a job. And in the end Scanlon said, "Well, we haven't got the response. If they'd all done what Manchester done it would be a different ball game. But we're compelled either to destroy the national agreement and say that's the end, go for contracts on a company-by-company basis, or get back round the table and resolve the minimum rate and other factors on the best basis we can.'

'The origin of that position, the responsibility, lies in the original the bad policy. It was passing the buck to the shop stewards in the areas. There was the presumption that the stewards could look after it. But they see their own power in a very different way to national responsibilities.'

A second very contentious dispute was at Chrysler in 1973, when electricians broke away from the plant negotiations during the middle of phase two of the then Tory government's wage controls and struck for special payments. The TGWU and AUEW it is alleged, told their members to do work normally done by the electricians:

'I never told people to cross picket lines. The electricians broke away from the negotiations in Chrysler, and declaring themselves apart from the joint shop stewards committee. The works committee refused to support them, and the workers in the factory never came out. Now I've heard of an allegation that I told them not to support the electricians. But we had two conflicts in mind. One was that the maintenance people with whom the electricians' were largely associated had made it quite clear that if there was a concession to the electricians they would strike—not against the company, but against the settlement to the electricians. And the tool room said if the electricians got their level—that was the electricians claim—then they would take action to reinstate the differential. So the factory was split right open.

'Scanlon reported all this to the executive, and the decision was that our members should not involve themselves, but support the district committee and the members.

'Now I had the responsibility as the EC

man of conveying that, that's true. But as for instructing the members to cross picket lines, when the stewards raised it I said, "You've got to act collectively. Either you agree to back the electricians, but I'll have more sympathy with the ETU when they get back round the table with the shop stewards." But these breakaway situations—I don't accept that when a group of workers launch themselves on a sectarian course that there's an automatic responsibility that we've got to involve ourselves.

'And the T&G were more adamant than I was that in no bleeding sense do we support them'. The T&G convenors in Chrysler went to the employer and said, "You give them a penny and we're in next day".

'I never instructed workers to cross a picket line.'

Finally, Bob Wright talked about what the left can do now.

'Duffy is elected till he's 65. The members have got to live with that situation.

'But assuming that the constitution isn't radically eroded, in the AUEW there is a balance of power. Even in the Carron period, prior to Scanlon, there was never an ascendancy of complete authority. It's different to other unions. Deakin was the king of the T&G. Carron never had that complete authority.

'The structure of the union is such that there is a balance. The central core of that structure is the district committee. My view is that if ever our members allow the erosion of the district committees, then we could end up with what the right wing in the ETU did—they wiped out their area committees and that was the origin of their centralising power.

'Secondly the national committee itself is a balancing factor.

'And thirdly, individual officials. One of the advantages of having an electoral system is that you're not an employee, you're an officer in your own right. That's why I'm able to survive in the atmosphere of the office. I still have my rights as an official. And I can challenge them and I do.

'This applied when Scanlon was president.

'One of the complaints from the left was

that Scanlon should have done this and should have done that, or I should have done this or that. I could go through a range of issues on which I disagreed completely with district committees and the executive council. On issues in Leyland and Chrysler. I was over-ruled, and being an officer of the union you've got to carry out decisions which are taken. You're not a free agent. As much as one would want to influence those decisions, that's the fact.

'Sometimes on the left we get confused. We elect someone to office and then expect he can deliver 100 per cent. He can't. I know many districts with a left wing district committee and a right wing district secretary. And they control this district secretary very well.

'Influence and power in the district committees is the root. There are far too many of the left who see their role as a steward or convenor in a factory but don't extend that role out into the union organisation of the district, the branch, the national committee and so on. Until we find the solution to that then we are going to go on having some of the mediocre elements emerging who are prepared to fulfill those roles.

'I know lots of left wing convenors who say, "We don't want the district committee boys allowed in the factory". They build a barrier. But then when they want the support of the district committee they don't get it. Managements are being rearmed by Thatcher and company, and some of these edifices are being destroyed. Management are now challenging these power structures, saying "We've had your official in and he's agreed". Factories are saying, "What right has he to come in?" And the executive will defend him. There's only one body that can control that, the district committee.

'The executive will be worse than in the Carron period. They've closed ranks to the extent that they've become authoritarian to the extreme. A number of them are in liaison with Chapple and people like that.

'I think the left has got to learn the lesson. We can't afford to be divided. We are the opposition, we are seeds of change in society and in the union and in the echelons of power of the labour movement. Unless we unite under common policies to achieve change and defeat the right wing collaborationists we will not see success. And it starts from the rank and file.

'That for me is the challenge of immediate future. And the executive elections, of course, that will continue—and we've got to have a breakthrough to win back seats on that executive.

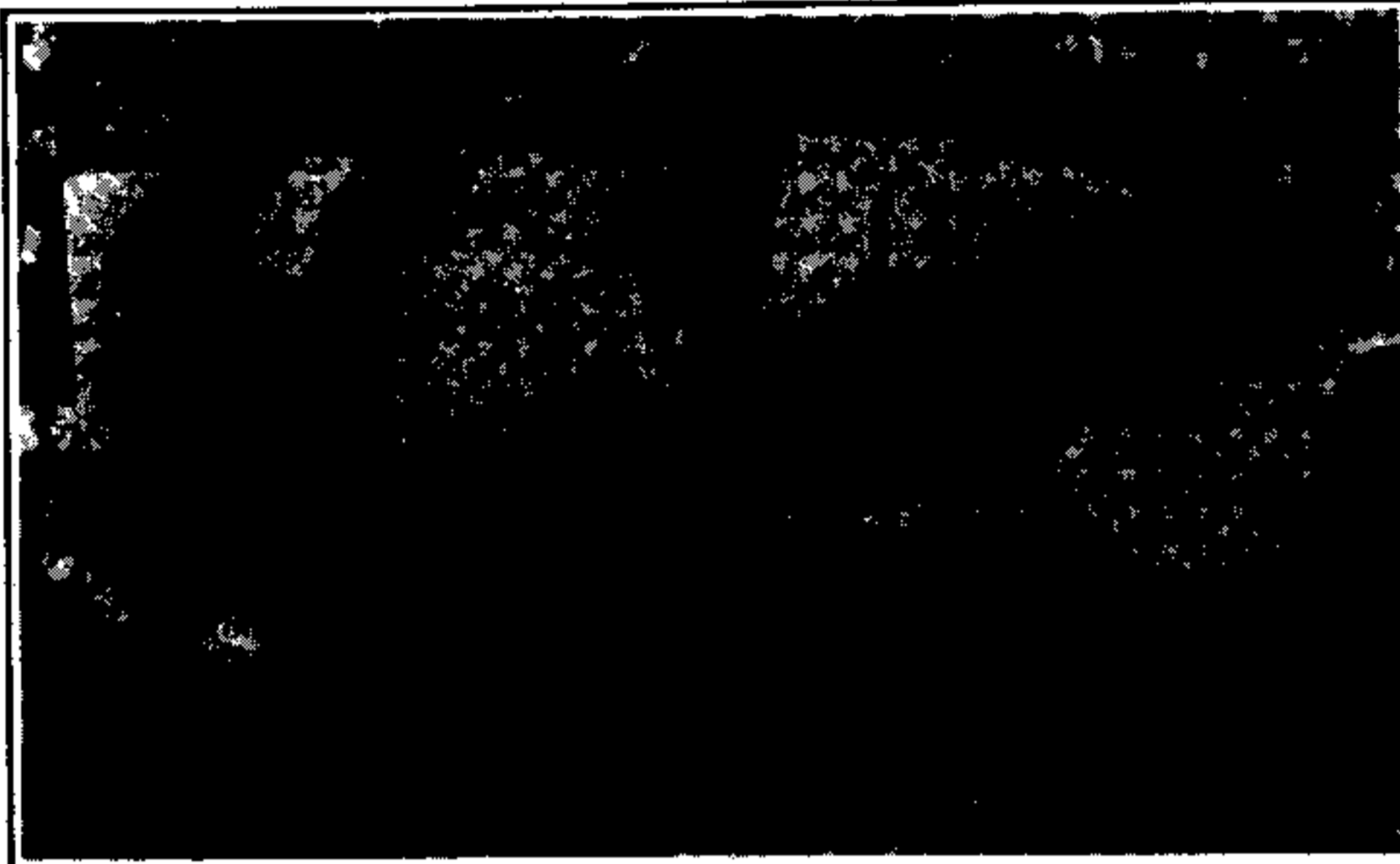
'Our boys have got to move in from the factories to branches and the districts—shop stewards reps on the districts, branch reps—that's where we begin to re-establish control. That's where the left is weak. I believe that is the root of the fight back. It won't be on the basis of the Bob Wrights as individuals, it will be on the basis of that sort of struggle at the root. We can be a real opposition if we control the National Committee, the rules revision body, the final appeals body and then the executive.'

WHAT'S GONE WRONG IN ENGINEERING?
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INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION



John Sturrock: Report

Mass meeting at Longbridge, 17 November 1980

BL—the robots rebel

Twelve months after the sacking of convenor Derek Robinson, Leyland Longbridge in Birmingham has been shaken—first by a powerful, if abortive, revolt by the workers against the six per cent wage deal, and then by what the press described as a 'near riot' inside the plant by laid-off workers.

Three shop stewards explained to Sheila McGregor the background to these unexpected flare ups.

'After Robinson was sacked, everyone expected the Longbridge workforce to die a quiet death. To a large degree it did—but it was more like a catatonic state, neither dead or alive.

'When Jack Adams took over as convenor, he kept an extremely low profile for months. He himself was on his final warning. There was a certain element everywhere of 'keep your head down'. There was a high turn over of militant shop stewards, although now there are probably more hardy young stewards. The right, the gaffers' men, hung onto their stewards, and the militants kept their stewards. It was the stewards in the middle, neither gaffers' men nor real fighters who were kicked out.

In the next six months, management imposed a whole number of things. The five per cent wage offer, the 92 page document or 'Slaves' Charter', a new grading system and fantastic job mobility. Resistance was very patchy.

The events of the last few weeks indicate a clear shift in the attitude of the shop floor. The first vote for strike action over the wage claim was overwhelming and even the second vote, after the intervention of the officials, showed a substantial minority for strike action. This was immediately followed by an eruption over the Metro.

The explanations for the change vary because the three stewards work in different parts of Longbridge under different condi-

tions, but together are complementary.

'In the first six months of Tory government, there was euphoria amongst people who voted Tory. Now people are beginning to notice what is happening with the Tories in power. Among other things, people notice how bad their wages are. People are seeing the close relationship between Edwardes, Joseph and Thatcher and that they are being used as an example for low wages and poor conditions. The Metro has given us a chance to break out of that. What sharpened people on the wages this year was the launch of the Metro. There was all the bullshit in the press, big knobs touring the plant. The impression was that the Metro is built by management and robots, not workers.

'Our working conditions are appalling. We've been promised and promised that the Metro is going to be the saviour, but it hasn't saved much so far. "They got what they want, now it's our turn"—that was the attitude over the wage claim.

'Another important factor is job security. People feel they've got a job to go to. The

Metro is Michael Edwardes' beautiful baby and closing it down for him would be like strangling the baby. So people feel secure and the more job security you have, the more confidence you have.

'There are also other things like the cost of the Metro launch and the feeling of resentment that they can't even find the few million for our wage claim. They spend more on closures than on our wages! On top of that is the feeling that Leyland workers are being singled out for the third year running on wages as yet another political test case.'

Another major factor in the shift in mood was described by a steward who actually works on the Metro in the New West plant.

'It's only now they're really trying to impose the 92 pages in a big way. Before they were doing it in bits and bats. But now it's coming thick and fast. Where I work you can't argue with supervision. It's a question of "You do what I say".

'They are taking a very hard line in our shop. Last week, we were only in for about an hour, and I was pulled up twice, once for going to the toilet and leaving my job and the second time I took off my jumper and walked 15 yards to put it on a table. If you go for a piss you stop everyone else from working because there is no slip man at the moment, so you're not supposed to go.

'The Metro hasn't just meant the men feel they have a weapon to use, the management are a great deal tougher. The foremen are hand picked and the superintendants are all high calibre. Until the launch of the Metro they hadn't aimed at high targets. They hadn't got the machines sorted out. Now they're going through the whole process with industrial engineers establishing a very tight set up, tight manning and high speeds. At the moment, they're only running at half the programme, so it's going to get a great deal tougher. There's no consultation over manning and track speeds with the unions. We're just told.

'As the interview went on, it became increasingly clear that central to the shift on the shop floor is the way in which the 92 page document on working procedures is now being applied to ensure the 'success' of the Metro. As one steward put it: "Now that the Metro is on the road, the only way it can be successful as they see it is if they can do three things: hold down wages, push up

socialist REVIEW

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INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

work standards and get rid of demarcation lines on the maintenance side."

Edwardes has succeeded once again on the wages question. But winning on the issues of shop floor control is not going to prove as easy. A battle over the 92 pages erupted a week before these interviews.

'Management are trying to establish precedents in certain areas for the whole plant. They have introduced a three shift system in the engine hot test area and there are rumours of three shifts in the New West.'

In Trentham, the seat build area, management are determined to impose their work standards and break the resistance of the workers. Ironically many of those workers appeared on the park last year waving placards saying 'Sack Robinson'. There is no history of walks outs in that area and this last week has been the first time in 20 years there has been any trouble.

'An example of how tough management are being was on November 12th, when they sacked two men. One of them had 23 years service with the company. Although he was suffering from a serious nervous complaint and taking a course of pills, management put him on the Metro carousel—a circular track for building seats. He was only on the job for four weeks and although he showed signs of getting the hang of the job, the treatment he got was guaranteed to break him. They kept him under constant surveillance and monitored his performance on an hourly basis. Every time he failed to reach his target, the 'management' standard, he was taken into the office for a reprimand. Then on November 12th they sacked him, ignoring their own disciplinary procedure. By this time, he was reduced to a nervous wreck. To the credit of the other seat builders they came out on strike for his reinstatement and to get all the disciplinary actions against him dropped. They won that.

'Management are quite prepared to run short of seats for the Metro in order to crack Trentham. It is an excuse for them to introduce dual sourcing on the Metro. As soon as there is a shortage of seats and thousands of uncompleted cars pile up, they lay off the

body and assembly workers. They hope that this will put pressure on the seat build area to give way, but this all backfired last week. The assembly workers were so fed up on Friday of being laid off again that we decided to hold meetings and demand 40 hours work or 40 hours pay. Although management and press might have seen Friday's events as anarchy, it was in fact as well organised shop floor revolt. We marched down to the Works Committee, and told them what we thought of the situation, then went back up through the offices, calling meetings on the different sections and putting on internal pickets to get solidarity action. We got a meeting of 500 of us with Mullet, the operations director. When it was clear, management weren't going to budge, we just turned over the tables, left the hall and went back to the sections to spread the support.

'When the shop stewards met on Monday 24th, we were in a position of some strength with the Metro and Allegro stopped and with the Mini as good as stopped. This was an ideal opportunity to force any number of major concessions out of management. But the Works Committee played a disgraceful role.

'We were treated with a whole load of

militant talk about spreading the dispute and at the very end, the convenor moved a disgraceful compromise deal, literally in the last few minutes. This limited the issue simply to the question of work standards in Trentham, leaving out the question of layoffs, and outsourcing and giving management the 6,000 seats from outside they asked for in the first place.'

'The main problem we face is harnessing the shop floor strength shown last week on wages and shop floor organisation. This will involve a radical change in union structures up and down Leyland, taking back control from the officials, getting the Works Committee under control, building rank and file links between the factories, rebuilding the combine committee.' The tragedy of Longbridge is that there is undoubtedly a willingness to fight, both on wages and shop floor control. There is also some very sound localised shop stewards organisation. But the shop floor face an increasingly tough management with the bit between their teeth over the Metro, backed up by officials and Works Committee alike who themselves believe that the Metro can save Leyland and if that means building it at the expense of the shop floor, then so be it.

TUC

Talking in the wind

It may turn out to have been a major turning point in organising a large-scale fight back on unemployment. And pigs might fly. All the speakers were united on one key issue to which they addressed themselves with varying degrees of dramatic eloquence, 'This conference must not be a talking shop'. All failed to follow this excellent advice.

What was this conference that you didn't hear about? It was a national consultative conference called by the TUC on November 4th which met in Congress House. Some three hundred senior trade union officials were there and Alan Fisher was in the chair. It was called to consider, but not make deci-

sions on, what could be done for the unemployed.

All those who spoke were appalled that unemployment had gone past two million. No doubt they had been appalled when unemployment went past 1½ million and they were probably appalled when unemployment went past 1 million. But they did nothing about it when it was Labour in government, so what will they do now with the Tories in power?

Some were genuinely concerned that official trade union inactivity on unemployment was allowing fascists to organise in certain parts of the country. But their biggest concern is not from the right, but the growth of the Right to Work Campaign, particularly because it shows up their pathetic inactivity. They were worried that officialdom has lost the initiative. George Wright, secretary of the Wales TUC, summed it up when he talked of the coming explosion of struggle in Wales. He said, 'If there is going to be social disorder then we're not going to let other groups lead it over our heads.'

What positive steps were put forward? There is considerable pressure on individual unions to keep in membership those who lose their jobs. What is new is that union leaders are now arguing for the centralisation of organising and financing for work among the unemployed. This would allow for unemployed individuals to join a single TUC organisation, with membership open to school leavers who have never been in a

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trade union before. There are proposals for the TUC to keep a tight rein on the organisation with full time officials appointed in each region, under direct supervision from the regional TUCs. All this would be financed centrally from a fund provided for by the individual unions.

At the local level initiatives may be taken in conjunction with trades councils and union district offices to set up centres for the

unemployed, and local authorities may be approached to help fund such centres and some of their activities.

No clear policy has yet emerged from the general council of the TUC—the conference on November 4th was only consultative—but something is likely to emerge soon. Whatever is decided will only offer a bureaucratic solution and the fight for the right to work will not be its aim. But if

unions do help finance local centres and an organisation for the unemployed then socialists will be able to argue for and work within such organisations for a fight on jobs and not simply better ping-pong tables. If the TUC tries to impose its rules and policies on a union of the unemployed it will have a fight on its hands.

Stuart Axe

Steel

Nothing stirs Sirs

The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation last month, the main steel union, held a one day conference. Over 500 steel workers attended a four hour meeting to which the members had been excluded from submitting resolutions. And for more than two hours delegates had to tolerate the right wing drivel of Bill Sirs. No wonder more than half walked out and went to get cups of tea.

This one day conference was called by the executive as a sop to the members who had rightly condemned it for cancelling the annual conference due last summer. It could have been used as the launch pad for fighting the inevitable closures which the new BSC chairman, Macgregor, is due to announce in December, but the opportunity was thrown away.

After years of misleading the union into accepting consultation with the employers and of constantly talking about profitability instead of organising a fightback for jobs in steel, one might have finally expected Sirs to move a little left. After all the Tories paid £2 million for the new BSC chairman and only one month ago closed the profitable Consett works. No such luck.

In an appalling report to the conference Macgregor is painted as the steel workers' friend. Delegates were told that Macgregor wouldn't have closed Consett, and that Macgregor was fighting the 'hawks' on the BSC board.

Sirs went on to defend BSC's right to confidentiality, and called for tripartite agreements between employers, unions and government to defend the industry and fight against imports. Even worse he argued how the union were also helping the private sector employers by agreeing to suspend guaranteed week agreements which previously meant five days work or five days pay.

Despite this there was an undercurrent of anger in the conference. The strike has left many steelworkers with the knowledge that they do have power. Many spoke about the need for an all-out fight to stop any further job losses. But without a real left focus much

of the anger was dissipated by the manipulation of the platform.

Real Steel News lobbied the delegates, giving out a bulletin. George Arthur, Secretary of the Aurora Shop Stewards' Committee and a *Real Steel News* supporter argued in the conference that unity between the public and private sector steelworkers could be forged in a real fight for jobs. He talked about the need for national strike action and a democratic fighting union.

Unfortunately some of the more militant delegates and left officials believe it is possible to defeat the right wing by horse-

trading in the complex process which elects the Executive. Consequently they provided no opposition on the floor of the conference.

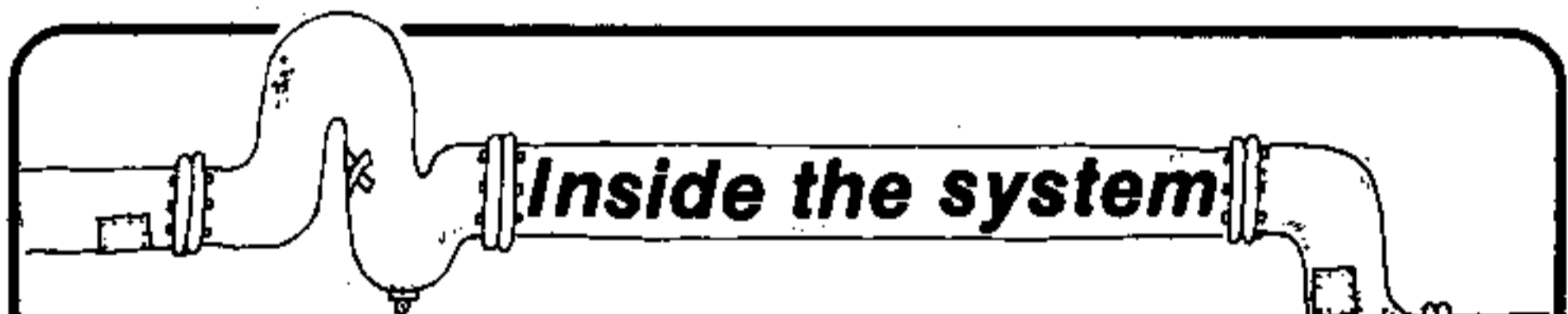
But there is a wind of change in the union. It is doubtful whether Sirs can get through another conference without having to concede on some of the most undemocratic procedures in the union. *Real Steel News* supporters by continuing to produce bulletins and working round the factories can begin to build up support for a more militant fight back and the need to replace the right wing in the union.

Simon Turner.



Steelworkers lobby parliament, 9 July 1980

Photo: John Sturrock (Report)



It is an old Marxist argument that dead labour tends to replace living labour. Ford UK are one of the healthier motor companies and have embarked on an expansion programme at their Halewood plant, tied to the new model Escort. In the last twelve months they have invested £207 million and plan to spend another £135 in the next four years.

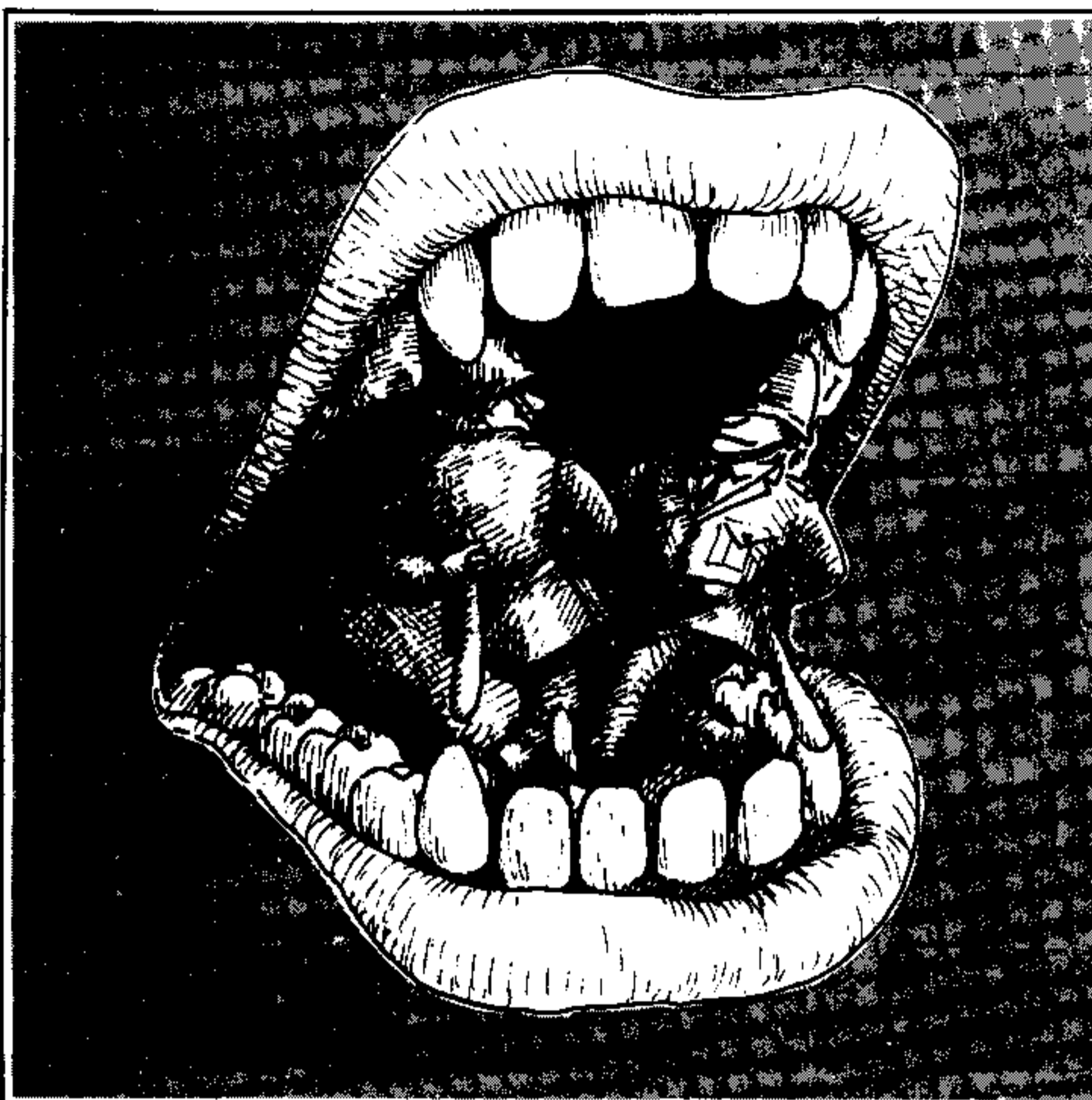
In a rational society, this development of new technology would mean a shorter working week and a less strenuous work environment for the 14,000 people employed there. But because capitalism is a system which depends upon squeezing the last gram of effort out the smallest possible work force in order to compete on the world market, this massive investment is actually going to mean massive redun-

dancies and harder work for those who are lucky enough to keep their jobs.

Ford put it this way: 'We aim to keep the plant one of the most up-to-date in Europe. We are over-manned and we would have to lose a lot of labour to match Japanese levels.'

Incidentally, they hope to be able to do this with the full co-operation of the workforce.

Now the good news. Thames Valley police are under pressure to reduce the realism of their riot training exercises. It seems that too many poor little coppers are getting injured by their mates as they learn how to smash up picket lines and terrorise black youth.



Framed by a fair cop

'Verbals' are the self-incriminating verbal statements fabricated by the police and alleged to have been made by defendants.

The practice of 'verballing' defendants is preferred by many policemen as a quick means of tying up a case rather than going through the long tedious process of investigation and detection. Verbals are often the sole basis for a conviction, although the case may have been initiated on the basis of some other evidence which is not subsequently used at the trial, but which has been used to present a *prima facie* case. The police are advised by DPP lawyers about what evidence they need to tighten up the case and make it appear substantial.

Verbals can also be used to convert a lesser offence into a more serious one. A conviction on a serious charge has a much greater value to a policeman's promotional prospects in the conviction league than a trivial one. Thus a common assault on a policeman becomes an attempted murder charge when the policeman alleges that the accused said: 'I'm going to kill you, you bastard.'

The classic, all-time record holder in the verbals 'top of the pops' chart must have been 'All right, Guv, it's a fair cop'. The reason the police held on to this verbal for so long was that it was a means of implying to the jury that the defendant had a criminal record. The verbal conjured up the image of a man in a black mask, wearing a striped sweater and carrying a sack marked 'look' on his back with a jemmy sticking out of it. Only a criminal would use such language.

It is for this purpose that the police couch their verbals in either criminal vernacular or in ungrammatical terms often accompanied by foul and aggressive language, that are associated with the less well educated classes. This both indicates the social background of the accused and makes the jurors less likely to identify with the defendant. The police represent themselves as being models of civility and reasonableness.

Verbals are often unconvincing in their language and sometimes in the circumstances. A defendant who had been beaten by the police was lying on a stretcher in Poplar hospital; his front teeth had been kicked in, his lips were badly gashed and swollen, he was suffering from concussion with multiple head injuries, he was vomiting blood and fighting for breath. It was at this time and in this condition that the police said that he made a whole string of self-incriminating statements.

Juries are unaware that they are being deceived—but the judiciary know only too well that most verbals are a fit-up. Day after day, they witness in their courts the same policemen using the same verbals against different defendants in different cases. Yet they still support the practice. Defence counsel in one case asked to see the policeman's notebook from which the policeman had just read out his verbals against the defendants. Going back through the notebook counsel found the same verbals being alleged against other defendants in a previous case. The judge ruled that this was irrelevant.

Judges have before them as the beginning at each trial a 'confidential calendar,' which includes a defendant's criminal record (if there is one), anything the police suspect he has done, political leanings, membership of unions, CND, etc. It cannot be challenged as the defendant never sees it. This information determines the way the judge sums up the evidence and guides the jury. When a defendant with a past record comes before him the judge knows full well that he will be last one to incriminate himself. Yet the more experienced the defendant, the more likely it is he will be verballled up.

This collusion between the police and the judiciary has an inhibiting effect on defence lawyers, who are reluctant to challenge even the most blatant verbals because to call policemen liars and perjurers is not well regarded by the legal hierarchy. A defence lawyer will also argue, and quite rightly, that a judge, angered by accusations against the police, will deal much more severely with the defendant if subsequently found guilty.

From time to time evidence emerges to show that police officers have forced defendants to confess to crimes they did not commit. The Confait case involved three backward youth who were 'persuaded' to sign confessions. Many of the notorious Drug Squads victims were verballled up, as were the Luton case defendants, released after serving nine years. The Esther Rantzen show recently put on a whole program about people who had been forced to sign confessions and who were subsequently cleared.

The Challenor case is usually remembered for the fact that Sgt Challenor planted pieces of the same brick on two demonstrators who had been arrested in different locations. What should not be overlooked is the mass of verbals that Challenor and his colleagues alleged against the accused, the bits of brick being offensive weapons. This in itself would have been sufficient to insure a conviction, had not irrefutable evidence of the fit-up been discovered by the defence solitons, who have, incidentally, been put on Scotland Yard's black list.

The police and the judiciary oppose the use of tape recorders for interrogations, and the intensity of their opposition is not just because they would be prevented from verballing people up, but because the drop in the number of people who verbally incriminate themselves would demonstrate the massive scale of perjury and corruption in the police force.

It would also discredit the judiciary. Only very rarely are policemen prosecuted for fabricating false verbal evidence against defendants because the DPP and the judiciary do not want to discourage the practice of verballing, which would drastically reduce the number of convictions.

The judiciary recently showed great concern that the conviction rate at Snaresbrook Crown Court was below the national average. The fact is that the majority of the defendants and juries there come from areas where police behaviour is at its worst, and where most of the fit-ups take place. The

judiciary has not realised that jurors might be more cynical about the police than the residents of Chelsea.

'Every unchallenged police malpractice is a step nearer a police state.'

In recent years the judiciary have given the green light to an extension of the corrupt practice of verballing by allowing the police to coerce others to verbal defendants up. This involves doing a deal with someone remanded in custody (a 'judas'). The charge is dropped, or reduced, or presented in such a way as to make it fail, or further, more serious charges are threatened if the person refuses to cooperate.

The police then arrange with the Home Office and the prison authorities for the judas to be transferred to the same cell block or even the same cell as the defendants where he can then fabricate his verbals. The deal is clinched when the police get the agreement of the DPP to drop or reduce the charges against the judas. If the deal is for a lighter sentence, the judiciary have to be approached.

In the case of the Moseley and Cornwall murders, the defendants were at one time in different prisons. Ronald Fright was at Pentonville, and the other defendants, including Reginald Dudley, at Brixton. A known police informer from Hoxton, then at Pentonville, acted as judas and gave evidence against Fright. He claimed that he had not known Fright before their brief casual meeting and never spoke to him afterwards, but that in the course of the few words they spoke Fright said 'we cut a body up and threw it in the Thames.'

Reginald Dudley, who was known to me from my past prison experience, was at Brixton. He was 53 years old at the time and much too experienced to blab his mouth off, even to someone he knew well, much less to a stranger. Everyone at Brixton was a bit paranoid about the new police practice of doing deals with remanded prisoners to verbal people up. In fact anyone asking too many questions about what people were in for was putting himself in dire peril.

In June 1976 I was sent to Brixton on remand. Because I had previously been a category 'A' prisoner, I was immediately located to 'A' wing where Reg Dudley was. I walked round with him on exercise and he told me they had him there on a 'right fit-up'. I knew Reg in 1961 at Dartmoor and we met again in 1971 at Gartree. If Reg told me it was a fit-up, having known me all those years, it seems very unlikely that he would verbally incriminate himself to a total stranger within five minutes of meeting him, as

Wild, the second judas in the case, alleged. Anthony Wild had been transferred from 'C' to 'A' wing ('A' category prisoners are kept isolated from the others) almost as if just to be able to talk to Dudley.

Although Reginald Dudley subsequently underwent interrogation under the influence of a truth drug as the only way a defendant could challenge verbals, the court would not admit the evidence.

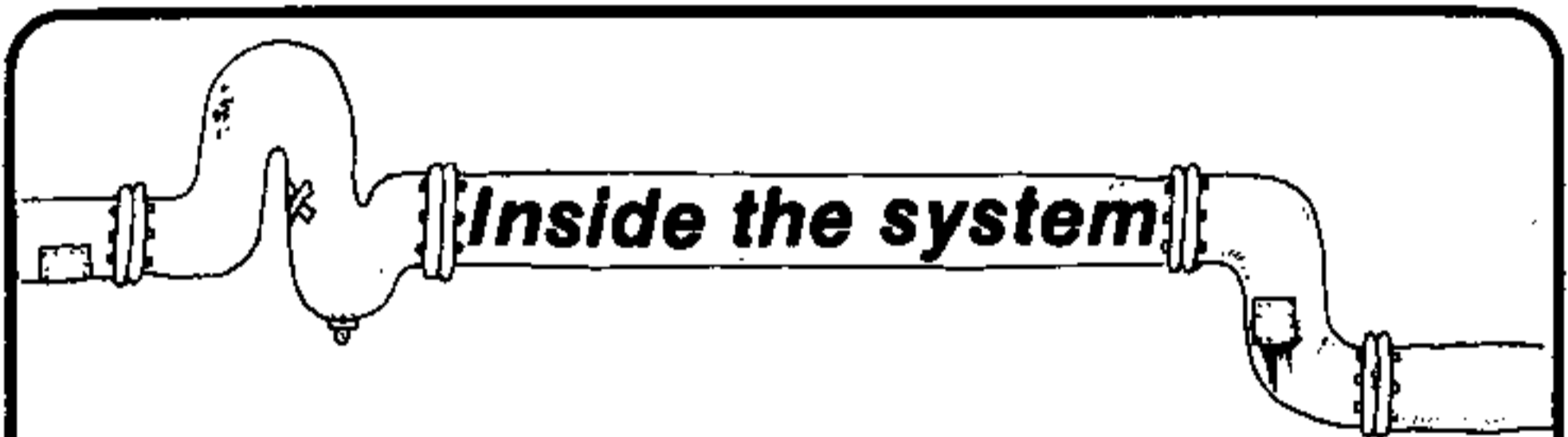
The verbal violates the most fundamental principles of justice. The defendant has the right to challenge all evidence brought against him. Yet this right is subverted by the police because verbals are taken under circumstances which deny the defendant the opportunity to have independent witnesses present during the verballing up. The prosecution are allowed in effect to rig conditions, such that there are only prosecution witnesses. This practice not only violates the laws of the country, it also violates Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

There is also the fact of the conspiracy between the police, the DPP, the judiciary, the Home Office and the prison authorities, to verbal defendants up.

A former detective chief inspector of Scotland Yard's porn squad serving a ten year sentence said that training in the techniques of verballing is unofficially given at the police colleges. But like many other malpractices the authorities are not going to admit that this is an approved practice or that it exists at all.

Yet if the practice was stopped a significant drop in the number of convictions would result in a drop in the prison population. This in turn would mean that no good reason for spending millions of pounds of tax payers' money to expand the prison system would exist. Every unchallenged police malpractice is a step nearer a police state. Given the continuing rise in unemployment and the social discontent that goes with it, the threat is one we cannot ignore.

Wally Probyn.



The growth of sponsorship for sport has been very substantial in recent years. Art, however, is another matter since this is supposed to be a bit above the vulgar haggling over money which characterises businesses. Arts Council sponsorship is one thing, but hand-outs from big business are quite another.

However, BAT, makers of du Maurier cigarettes, will give £600,000 to the Philharmonia Orchestra over the next two years. They say this will 'enhance the elegance and style of its cigarettes'. Let's hope they will not be compulsory for the wood-wind section.

Another example is IBM, who recently stumped-up £35,000 to back the Royal Academy's Post Impressionist exhibition. For them, it comes under the heading of 'corporate responsibility', which is defined as, 'Trying to alleviate problems which threaten the stability of society'.

In classical antiquity, the flowering of art and culture was dependent upon the savage exploitation of slaves and women. It seems we are moving to a similar situation, with the misery of those thrown out of work by technical innovation compensated for by pretty pictures in a gallery.

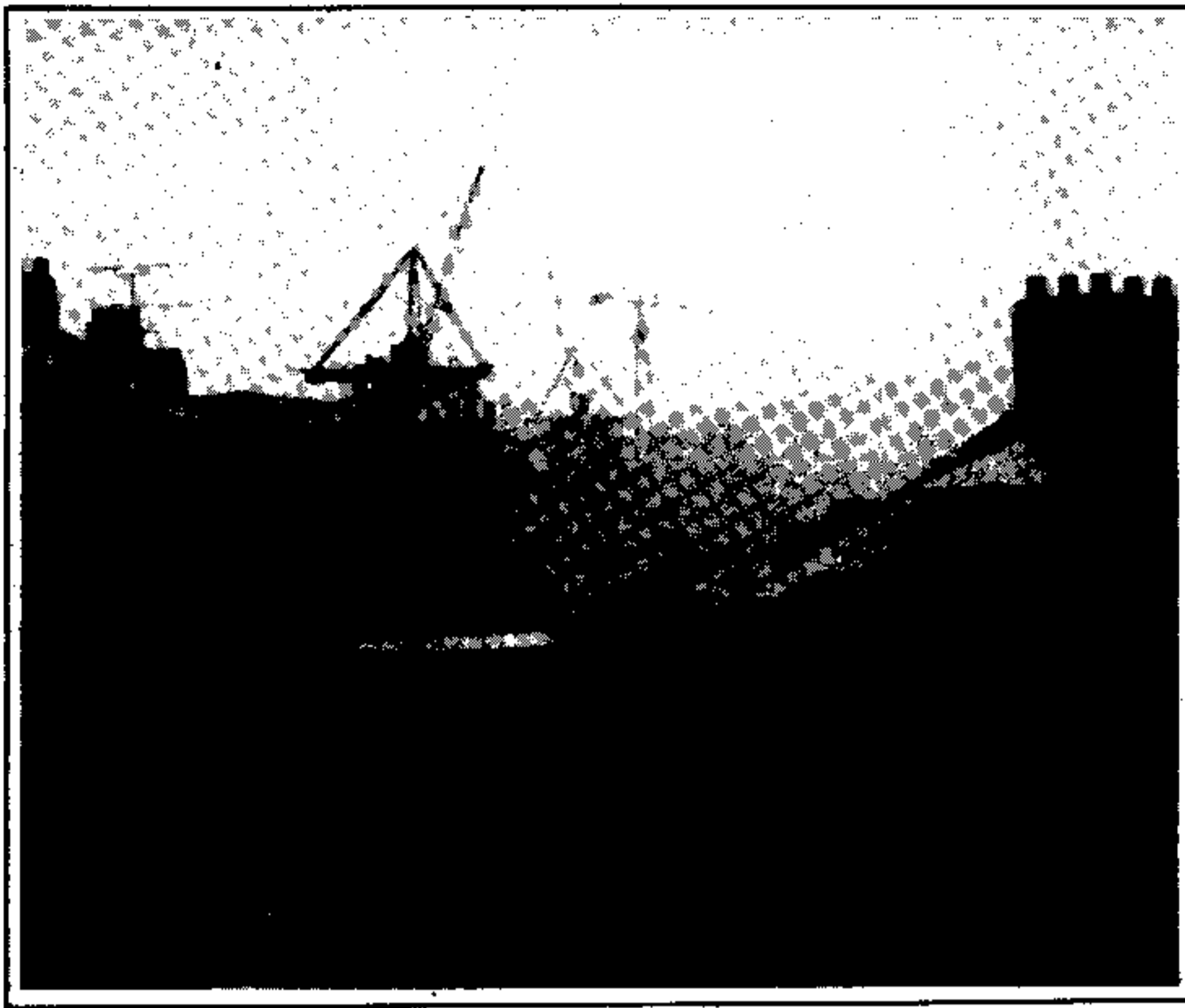
Regular readers of this column will be glad to learn that North Korea has successfully established a degenerate workers' kingdom. Meanwhile, the campaign for the 'Four Modernisations' is gathering pace in China. An interesting sidelight comes from Tibet.

Before the Chinese invasion in 1959, Tibet was ruled by the Dalai Lama. This man, chosen in extreme youth by priests and educated in the role of a ruler, was regarded in more or less the same light as a living god.

But the society over which he ruled was very far from the hippies' dream of prayer wheels and tinkling bells. It was a brutal autocracy run along the lines of feudal serfdom. The Chinese, whatever their other faults, drove out the god-king and carried out important reforms. But just because these reforms were imposed from the outside, were dominated by a Chinese bureaucracy, and were accompanied by attempts to eradicate the local culture, there have been continual mutterings of resistance to national oppression.

Faced with growing opposition, the Chinese have started to make concessions. Some involve the replacement of Chinese bureaucrats with Tibetan ones. Another move has been an attempt to persuade the Dalai Lama to return to the capital, Lhasa, from his exile in northern India. So far, they have not succeeded, since he is holding out to make sure he gets the terms that he wants.

But there is a strong possibility that, in three years time, China will once again have proved the bankrupt nature of other, revisionist, countries by far outstripping them in the field of historical regression. Tibet may become the first country to have a degenerate workers' god.



Newcastle: organising amongst the unemployed

Everyone agrees that the relentless upward toll of redundancies since the early summer has made unemployment into a central political issue. But is it possible to organise the unemployed themselves? Even the TUC held a special consultative conference on the matter last month. To try and get some realistic answers to the question *Socialist Review* talked to Andy Stroughous, of the Newcastle Right to Work Campaign. He told us of some of the lessons from trying to organise in one of the areas of heaviest unemployment. We hope that activists from other areas with other experiences, will let us know their views for future issues.

In Newcastle, I don't see how anyone who goes on the dole queue now is ever going to get off it. Vacancies are rare, every factory has got short time working or layoffs in the pipeline, and the situation hasn't even hit rock bottom yet.

There's lots of people in Newcastle now who have been unemployed two or three years. But by now they're completely acquiescent. It doesn't occur to them any more to worry about it.

I've seen all these arguments about 'nobody is long term unemployed, even now'. I think we've even seen it in *Socialist Review*. But we are now looking at people who are going to be long term unemployed. They are not going to get off the dole queue, because there's probably half a million kids waiting to go back on the dole queue once they've finished their six month or one year Manpower Services Commission courses.

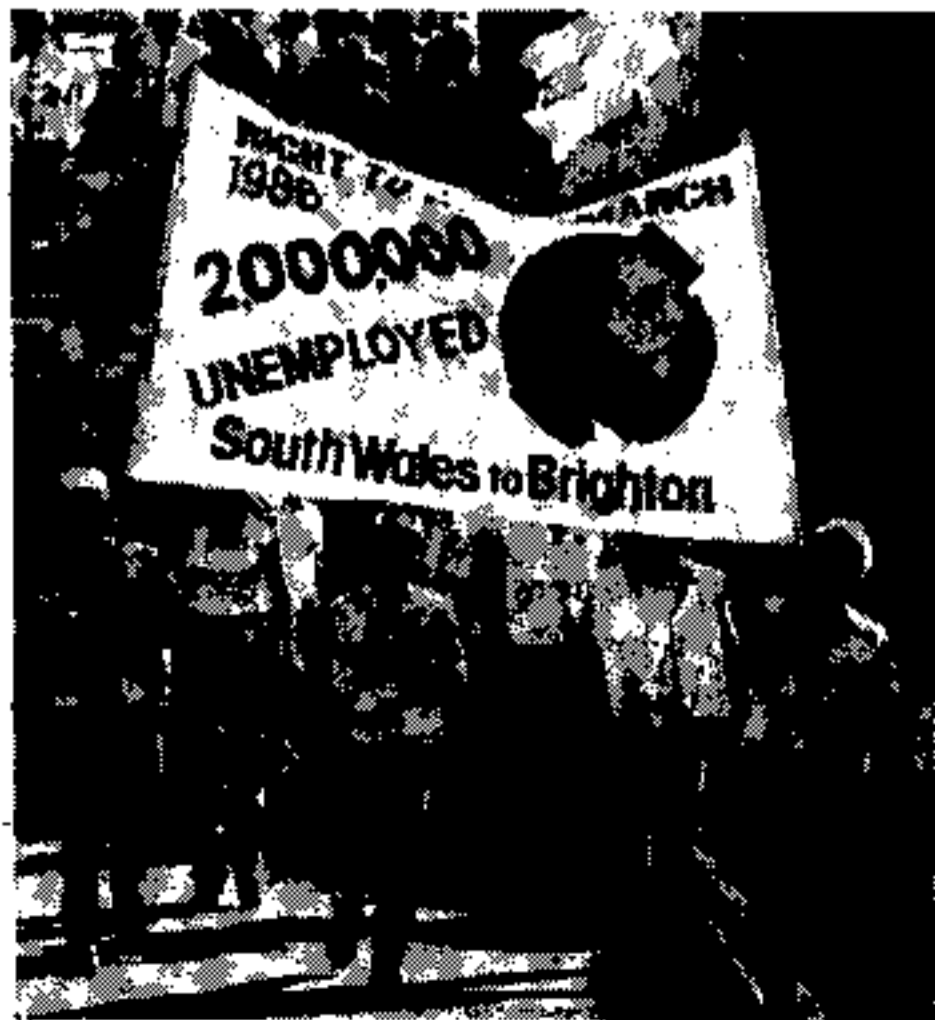
The organisations trying to organise the unemployed here are the Tyneside Right to

Work Campaign and the Unemployed Workers Union—set up by the trades council, with a centre and one or two full time workers.

The local Right to Work Campaign has organised since 1975 over every major initiative taken by the Campaign nationally, and sometimes has campaigned even after the major initiatives are over. We've always managed, at least once a year, to involve a good number of the unemployed kids around major focusses—sometimes as many as 50 or so.

Newcastle and Sunderland together put 16 people on the long march to the Tory Party conference, and we took another 35 kids down to Brighton, along with 25 trade unionists.

The Unemployed Workers Union has a more bureaucratic approach than us. Although it does some dole queue work it's



got an obsession with trade union full timers and the local council. Because it receives a lot of its funding through the official network with inner city funds and that kind of thing, it's very nervous with doing direct action or anything outrageous that might upset anyone.

On Monday of this week there was a local demonstration for free fares for the unemployed. This was thought up by the Unemployed Workers Union and supported by the Right to Work Campaign. In the space of about three weeks we gave out thousands of leaflets on several doles in Newcastle. But in spite of that we only got about 43 people on the demonstration.

One in four haven't got a job

The bulk of the 43 were either hard core Right to Work supporters or hard core supporters of the Unemployed Workers Union. We didn't really mobilise much besides those who normally keep up unemployed work all the time. I don't know the total unemployed figure for Newcastle, but the dole office we left from has got a live load of 9000 people signing on. In the inner city areas you're talking about unemployment of 15 per cent, maybe even higher. Probably one in five or one in four haven't got a job.

The organisation of the fares demo wasn't very good. But it wasn't terrible either. Word did get out and about. We had a petition outside. We'd say to people 'Would you like to sign a petition for free fares?' Not because we thought the petition would achieve anything—even the Unemployed Workers Union didn't think it would achieve anything—but it meant talking to people and you might win them to a demonstration.

What amazed me was the number of people who turned round and said they didn't want free fares. They thought it was completely unrealistic—although for a time a section of the Labour council was seriously playing with the idea as a way of indirectly subsidising public transport. And the issue had been widely discussed. But the effect of the demoralisation and passivity of a lot of the unemployed is that they say, 'It's not on mate', 'You're being bloody stupid', or 'I don't want free fares, I want to pay my way even though I am unemployed.' Attitudes like that.

So the sad thing is, even if we had organised it brilliantly, I don't think we would have got more people on the demonstration. I think a lot of people passively sympathised with us, but didn't see any point in marching from the dole office to the Civic Centre—only about a mile.

The other amazing thing is a few actually told us, 'Get yourself a job'. It just shows you how people's minds work. The atomisation on the dole queue is such that a lot of people, even now, think they're only there temporarily, that they're between jobs, and that people like us are professional unemployed.

The lesson of the Unemployed Workers Union demonstration on Monday is that leaflets in themselves, even if they're beautifully written, don't mobilise the unemployed. It's a lot harder than that.

'At least one thousand people sign on every morning from Monday to Thursday at Newcastle dole.'

Newcastle dole is an amazing place for anybody to stand. Obviously a lot of people who pontificate about unemployed work have never done any. They don't know what the atmosphere is like. At least one thousand people sign on every morning from Monday to Thursday at Newcastle dole. It's got three floors with about six cubicles on each floor. I've never seen a dole office like it.

And people charge in and out of there. They hate the place. People rush in past you and rush out past you. People are so demoralised through being unemployed and realising they haven't got much chance of a job, that to some extent they even identify us as a further obstruction on their way in.

What you do manage to do sometimes is to get a contact, somebody who is interested, who does want a fight back. We've found that if you follow that person back into their locality you then find they might have other unemployed people around them. We made contact with a gang that stretched over an area of four or five miles. They all knew each other. Once you got into a network like that, rather than trying to relate to a thousand people who didn't know one another, you were relating to a community of unemployed kids who did know each other and were prepared to talk in the comfort of their own homes, in the coffee bar or in the pub later on. You could get a far better conversation with them and win them to some of the ideas.

A lot of them were confused about politics. We even had one tell me he had been

thinking of joining the National Front because he was so fed up with unemployment but that he hadn't been able to find anyone to organise him into it and so he had decided to join the Right to Work Campaign instead. It was very important that we were there to pick up a kid like that and get him involved.

In Sunderland we organised a Right to Work Campaign Committee—I'm not saying whether it was a good idea or not—that included quite a few youth leaders. And these youth leaders were quite keen on the idea of taking a political stance against unemployment. They themselves organised drop-in centres—coffee bars or a room with ping pong tables and whatever. The centres are there basically just to keep people off the street. They haven't got any illusions in that, but they realise that they can get the kids together.

Kids do go to them in number. In some of them you get 30 or 40 kids sitting around all day, who're grateful for the opportunity to sit and drink coffee. You have to realise that for unemployed kids to sit in a pub is something expensive, very embarrassing for them. As I say, they're not at a high political level. I don't think people should have illusions in what drop-in centres can achieve.

But if you take a political intervention into these drop-in centres, you can get a lot of kids around you. We've found that by orientating on three or four of the drop-in centres in Sunderland we were able to get 25 kids down to Brighton. What surprised me about it was the hatred those kids had for

Thatcher. They all wanted placards. They all wanted to be on the march. They were all very excited about the Right to Work march coming in. They realised what effort the marchers had put in. At one level they were very, very political and very anti-Tory.

I'm not arguing for a diversion from work around the dole queue—that would be dangerous, you could end up doing community work which can be just a waste of time completely. You've got to do your dole queue work because that's the way you can contact the biggest number of people and let them know what you're doing. But it's not just enough to give out those leaflets. You've got to get talking to the one or two who are interested and then follow them back into their locality.

You've got to look at ways in which you can find the unemployed collectively. It's not easy finding them collectively, because there's not many places they can collect except for on estates, where kids hang round coffee bars or pubs or clubs. We've found you do get good results out of it.

We've thought about trying to organise the kids while they're on the six month and one year courses.

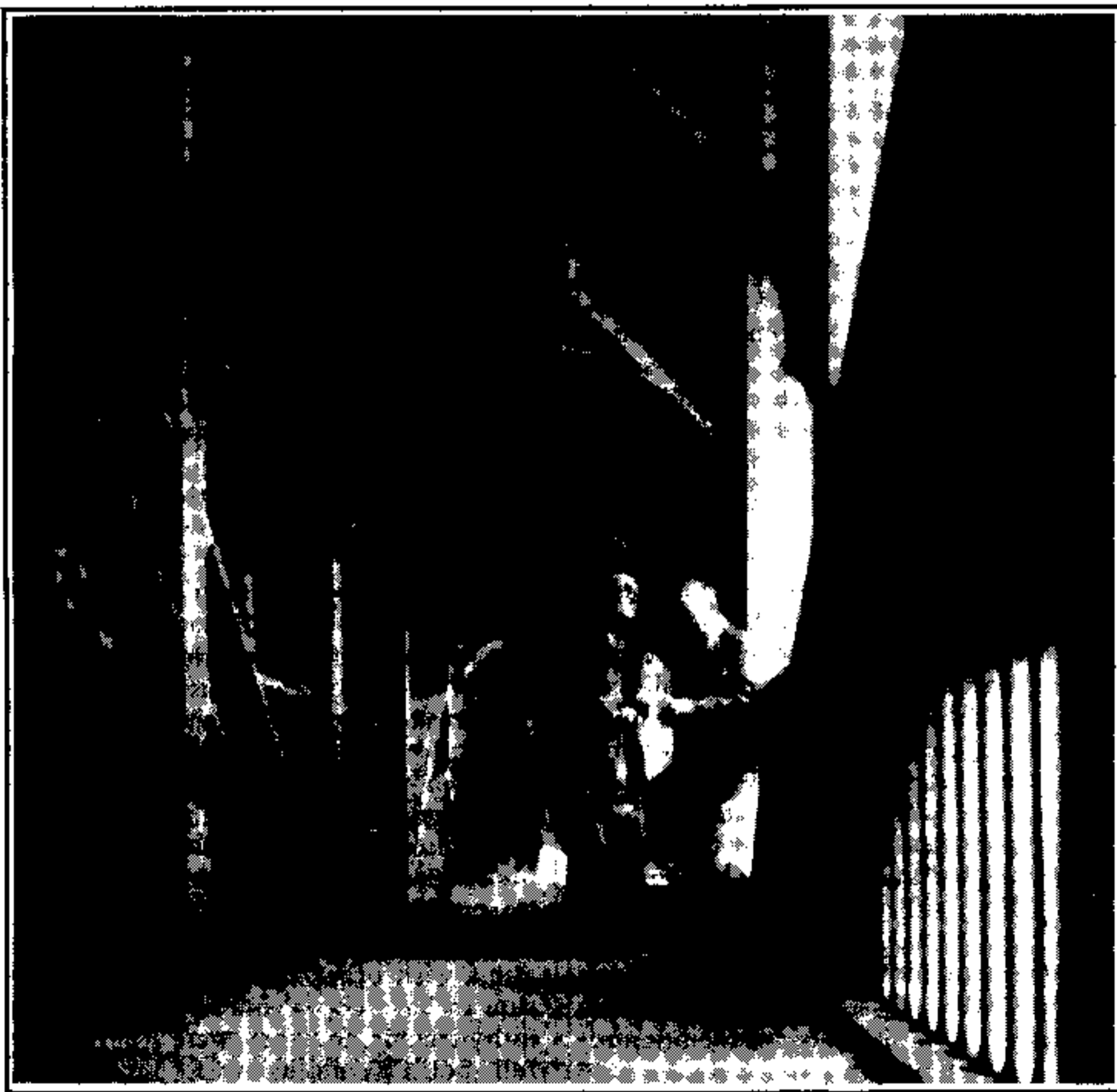
But the nature of the work makes it very difficult. Most of these kids are in situations of ones or twos in a community centre, an arts centre, out gardening, painting old age pensioners houses. At best a hundred kids will meet together once a week on a Monday morning to be told where to go in their ones or twos, in a hundred different directions.

These courses are not yet like the centres—thought of as slave camps—the unemployed were forced into in the thirties. Most of the kids like doing it. They get five or six pounds a week more than if they were on the dole. It gives them the dignity of appearing to have a job. They meet other kids. It's a lot less boring. And in reality I've not really come across many kids who are screwed to death on it, even though they are being exploited, doing jobs that should be done by fully employed workers and undercutting trade union rates.

What you need are focuses...

It's been argued in a letter to *Socialist Review* that with whole factories shut down you will find on the dole people who are used to organising—stewards, convenors, etc. In Newcastle, the shop stewards movement has been very backward. No broad left exists in Newcastle. The shop stewards organisations are controlled by right wing Labour. I don't see how it is that shop stewards who were bums when they were at work should suddenly become marvellous organisers. Probably in Newcastle we've got more whole shop stewards committees on the dole than anywhere, barring Liverpool. But with the exception of one single individual, I've seen no activity from stewards from shut-down factories.

You've got to understand the nature of dole queue work. These people, unfortunately, were reformists. They had no concept of fighting unemployment when they were at



work. They did not have aggressiveness, militancy or confidence. To do dole queue work you've got to be prepared for a certain amount of militancy, direct action and that sort of thing. You've got to have the politics.

With the unemployed workers movement in this country between the wars it was the Communist Party that organised unemployed work, whether anyone likes it or not. They were the hard core who went to the dole queues and got people out.

In Newcastle the trades' council Unemployed Workers Union has not drawn trade union members who've got a job into active work around unemployment. And apart from the one case I mentioned before, it hasn't managed to draw in anybody on the unemployed side either. There was not one ex-shop steward or convenor on the unemployed demo on Monday morning.

The TUC is talking about setting up unemployed unions etc. We should support that. If the TUC can give facilities to unemployed and we can get those facilities, we should take them. Even drop-in centres are useful, because at the lowest level they overcome the atomisation of unemployed people. The problem with the Newcastle unemployed centre is that you don't get unemployed people in there.

We are members of the Unemployed Workers Union and we have tried to use those resources to support Right to Work initiatives, not in a sectarian way, but saying, there's this going on, why don't we get involved? They wouldn't even allow us to have a meeting on their premises. They hate the Right to Work Campaign. They fear that if they allowed their premises to be used by us, they would get the hoof from the city council that basically funds them and the Manpower Services Commission that pays for their full timers.

I suspect any TUC-run centres would be the same—just social work extensions.

It is important politically that we insist the TUC do do it. It is disgusting that the TUC are not organising the unemployed. But our job is not to organise people into comfy clubs where they can sit around and play ping pong, although I'm in favour of them existing. Our most important thing is to get people politically fighting unemployment.

What I find interesting this year is for the first time—I've been working on dole queues for about five years—is a small change, but I think it is a real qualitative change. We've now got in Newcastle a small core of unemployed who want to carry on with unemployed work, who see themselves as long term unemployed, as people who genuinely want a job but the possibility isn't there.

The doles are a very wearing place to be, a very demoralising place to work. You can't keep unemployed workers going just on a diet of working round the doles—or drop-in centres for that matter, because you can become a coffee addict and a ping pong addict like the rest. What we do with our unemployed group on Newcastle is get them involved in other things as well, like factory visiting, organising meetings for the employed, making sure they're involved in a

whole range of work.

It would be ideal if it was like the thirties, where you had specific demands, where you could get everyone together and demand higher benefits or refuse a cut in benefits. But unemployed benefit is now determined

HUNGER STRIKES

Part of our history

The thought of the young volunteers in the H. Blocks dying to obtain basic human rights horrifies me and led me to look for examples from our own revolutionary socialist tradition.

In the minutes of the Bolshevik Party central committee we find reference to a proposed hunger strike by Bolshevik prisoners in the Kresty prison in September 1917. The attitude of the central committee was opposition to the strike, but they also declared that if it had already started it should receive maximum support and be publicised as widely as possible. In the event it appears not to have been necessary: the prisoners were freed by the force of events outside of the prison walls. With socialist revolution on the immediate agenda such desperate tactics were not needed.

For the next set of Bolshevik prisoners such assurances were not available.

In 1931, in the GPU isolator of Verkhene-Urals, there were imprisoned several hundred members of the left opposition. One spring morning a guard shot a prisoner, Gabo Yessayan, who had been looking from the window of his cell block. The shooting brought an immediate response from the other prisoners. A strike committee composed of members of the main tendencies in the opposition was elected and a hunger strike proclaimed from that night.

To start with 150 prisoners took part, including some who were on the sick list and had been exempted by the committee, but the number rose to 176 as the striking communists were joined by some anarchists. A woman comrade, Vera Berger, went mad and was removed, while several others collapsed from cardiac trouble and dysentery. On the eighth day a commission of enquiry was offered and the hunger strike was lifted.

After two months, however, there was no sign of the commission and the strike resumed. The commission soon appeared, but this time the strike continued until after 21 days the political police, GPU, agreed to a compromise formula with partial gains for the strikers.

In this first strike there was evidence of a degree of hesitancy on the part of the authorities. The opposition had been defeated in Russia as a whole, but they were still not totally without moral and other influence within the international movement. Therefore, the GPU were forced to make some concessions, even if only as temporary measure.

from Westminster. The only thing you can do is to get 500,000 people and put it to siege, which is impossible at the moment. What you need are focuses, that will attract people—like the march on the Labour Party demonstration in Liverpool.

When the next strike took place in 1936 it continued for 132 days and was much more desperate and deadly affair. The difference indicates the change in the political atmosphere. One hundred and thirty two days with forced feeding and deaths from starvation!

At the end of this period a telegram arrived from Moscow conceding all their demands:

However, upon the ending of the hunger strike the authorities took immediate administrative action against all of those involved.

The political participants were executed, in some cases after first being savaged by dogs.

During the period from 1938 until 1947 the crisis and war in Europe made any criticism or expose of conditions in the Russian camps practically impossible. During that period the last of the old Bolsheviks were murdered in the camps.

The lessons for us on the Irish strikers is obvious. We do not live in such a hermetically sealed society. The situation is in some ways analogous to the first strike at Verkhene-Urals. The lives of those involved are tied up intimately with the amount of pressure we can put on the government nationally and internationally. We owe this not just to the Irish prisoners but to the memory of our comrades who were murdered in Vorkuta.

Jim Scott

No cheap blackmail

Between 1905 and 1913, hundreds of women in Britain went to prison in a political cause: Votes for Women. Arrested on demonstrations at first, later for breaking windows, arson and serious damage to property, they fought to draw attention to their cause and to show that they were prepared to endure any ordeal to fight for their rights. As one of them told a magistrate, 'I am a law breaker because I want to be a law maker.'

From 1906 on, these suffragette prisoners demanded political prisoner status. For a time in 1906-08, and again in 1910-12, some women were given 'First Division' status, with better food and clothing, a fortnightly letter, association with other prisoners and permission to have books and newspapers sent in by friends. But they were still refused full political status with unrestricted

visiting and the right to outside medical attention.

From June 1909, suffragettes in prison began to go on hunger strike in support of the demand. They refused to remove their own clothes, and were forcibly stripped by wardresses; they smashed their cell windows to get air in the summer heat, and they ostentatiously broke the rule of silence.

The first hunger striker, Marion Wallace Dunlop, who had been arrested for printing a passage from the 1689 Bill of Rights on a wall in the Houses of Parliament, was released after 91 hours, and for a few months each hunger striker in turn was released when she became too weak to survive in prison. The longest term without food was endured by Olive Wharry (31 days) and the longest without food or water by Freda Graham (15 days).

From September 1909 to January 1910, and again for most of 1913, hunger strikers were subjected to the brutal treatment of forcible feeding by tube. They all resisted, and though none died on the spot, a number were maimed for life.

Sylvia Pankhurst described the horror of having her jaws forced open and feeling the tube being forced down: 'a sickening, terrifying sensation, especially when it reached the breast. My shoulders were bruised, my back ached... Infinitely worse than the pain was the sense of degradation...' Yet dozens of women, young and old, rich and poor, carried out this resistance until they had to be released from sheer weakness. So, incidentally, did three men - Hugh Franklin, William Ball and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, arrested fighting for women's rights.

In 1913, with the notorious 'Cat and Mouse Act', the Liberal government tried to avoid the accusations of torture and murder by freeing hunger strikers each time they grew weak, for just as long as it took them to recover, then re-arresting them.

Like the H. Block prisoners today, the suffragettes broke the law, went to prison and went on hunger strike for political status because they saw no other way to win their rights and because they wanted to show that they were ready even to die for those rights if necessary.

Nurse Ellen Pitfield, a low-paid midwife who had been force-fed in 1909, and was imprisoned for the fifth time in 1913 despite the fact that she was dying of cancer, said:

'There are only two things that matter to me in the world: principle and liberty. For these I will fight as long as there is life in my veins. I am no longer an individual, I am an instrument.'

Martyrdom may not be the most correct or even the most effective method of struggle, and the tactics of the suffragettes by 1913 may have become elitist and isolated from any possible mass movement. But it is certainly no cheap blackmail.

Norah Carlin



John Sturrock (Report)

Portrait of the leader

The election of Michael Foot to the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party has been greeted with growls in the capitalist press and enthusiasm amongst left-wingers in the Labour Party. He is not quite, perhaps, a second Daniel come to judgement, since the constituency activists would undoubtedly have preferred Tony Benn, but he is seen as good enough. Next time, they are saying, things will be different. Next time we will have a socialist prime minister and a socialist government.

There are two little objections to all of this euphoria. First, Foot was elected by the very same MPs who gave unflinching support to Callaghan. He has considerable support amongst the middle ground of the PLP. And the trade union bureaucracy worked hard for his election. Moss Evans, David Basnett, Alan Fisher, Ray Buckton, even old Jack Jones himself, came out hard in his support.

Second, there is the historical record which suggests that Labour Party usually came from the 'left'. In the 1930s there was George Lansbury and his successor Clement Attlee. And in the 1960s there was that 'left-wing', ex-President of the Board of Trade, Harold Wilson. They were all established on the left of the party and they were all popular with the constituency parties. Yet the record of Attlee and Wilson in office hardly gives any room for optimism as to the prospects of their lineal descendant ushering in the socialist millennium.

But still, the enthusiasm persists. Not even his spell as broker for Callaghan in the last Labour government has tarnished his reputation as a leftist. The fact is that those credentials he relies on today go back a long way and it is, at least at first sight, the miracle of the century that this man should lead the Labour Party.

Foot was a Labour leftist way back in the 1930s. He worked for *Tribune* and was twice its editor. He was a key member of the 'Keep Left' group in the 1940s. He is the most faithful follower and copious biographer of Aneurin Bevan. He was the champion of the left in the 1950s and a hero of CND, Mark I. He was, throughout the 1960s, the effective leader of the *Tribune* group of MPs and star speaker at their rallies.

Foot was a professional journalist when, in 1937, he joined the newly-founded *Tribune*. It was then a tough socialist paper, organised by the then leader of the left, Stafford Cripps, and campaigned hard for his pet project of a United Front of all socialists. Foot, in those days, was capable of fine journalism:

'Who has gained the benefit of the increased production? Look at the figures of industrial profits and you will see the answer. Industrial profits since 1932 have increased by 52 per cent. Speed-up, rationalisation, new machinery have meant increased production. The ability of the profiteers to keep wages down to subsistence level has enabled them to reap all the benefits of increased output.'

There was much more of that sort of thing. He exposed the corruption and indicted the opulence of the ruling class. He covered tragic stories of working class communities smashed and laid waste. There was no problem in seeing what was to blame:

'Poverty in Britain is not merely the result of some queer unaccountable accident, it is not even the result of unemployment or the economic blizzard which has swept across the depressed areas. It is due to the inability of capitalism to pay a living wage even to those for whom it can provide a job.'

The style and the passion remain with him. In his support for CND, in his vote against nuclear weapons in the full knowledge that it meant expulsion from the PLP, in his open opposition to the Vietnam war, in his all-out opposition to Wilson's attempt to shackle the unions through Barbara Castle's *In Place*

of *Strife*, his oratorical skills were lined up in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s on the side of the grand causes of the left.

Consider, for example, his attack upon the Wilson government in 1968, on the occasion of unemployment reaching 600,000:

'Some people are content to accept this high figure. Among them are the creditors... The IMF will be used to persuade us to continue with this high level of unemployment and, if necessary, to clamp down even more heavily. That is why some of us are opposed to the letters being sent to the IMF... The IMF and the Bank of England put out this doctrine of a heavy rate of unemployment; and we believe that many people in the Treasury accept this doctrine.'

He singled out one of those people in the Treasury for special consideration: the Chancellor, James Callaghan:

'Of course, there are some people who are against full employment; against planning for full production, some who say they want a large margin of unused resources. These are the words of the Governor of the Bank of England, never repudiated by Jim Callaghan, never repudiated by members of the government. The banks do not believe in full employment, and the people who have lent us money do not believe in full employment as their policy. The remarkable fact is that these people who do not believe in the policy still give approval to the financial policy that the government is operating.'

If that was all there ever was to Foot, then it would be a miracle that such a man could ever come to lead a parliamentary Party still stuffed with right-wingers. And how did such a man ever come to hold a senior post in a Labour Government that gleefully signed an even more savage Letter of Intent to that very same IMF back in 1977, and saw unemployment rise as a direct consequence to 1,600,000?

Of course Foot has bent and swayed with pressure, as every Labour MP does, but if we look at his record in another

light we can see another facet. And it is a consistent one which leads from his youth to where he is now.

Foot was born into a wealthy liberal family way back in July 1913. There is nothing inherently incapacitating in being born rich but, in Foot's case, the politics of his family were to mark him deeply. He read John Stuart Mill before Marx and could recite Cromwell before William Morris. His heroes were the Levellers rather than the Bolsheviks. His focus of attention was parliament and not the working masses. And this has stayed with him; Barbara Castle, an old *Tribune* colleague, in her recently published *Diaries*, insists that he is just an 'old-fashioned liberal' at heart.

This heritage of radical liberalism is not unique to Foot. It has been a formative influence on other leaders of the Labour left. Benn, for example, in his book *Arguments for Socialism*, cites it as an influence on his own career. And Peter Shore claims that John Stuart Mill's book *On Liberty* had a more profound impact on his political thinking than anything else. It is worth saying just exactly where Mill's famous book draws the line between his paen for liberty and his desire for order. He wrote:

'...Even opinions lose their immunity when the circumstances in which they are expressed are such as to constitute their expression a positive instigation to some mischievous act. An opinion that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor, or that private property is robbery, ought to be unmolested when simply circulated through the press, but may justly incur punishment when delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn-dealer, or when handed about among the same mob in the form of a placard.'

The faithful followers of Mill are of the same view: that mass action is not the way that history is made. Socialist ideas, even radical socialist ideas, are best put forward through the proper channels of press and parliament. It is dangerous to link them to the struggles of the masses.

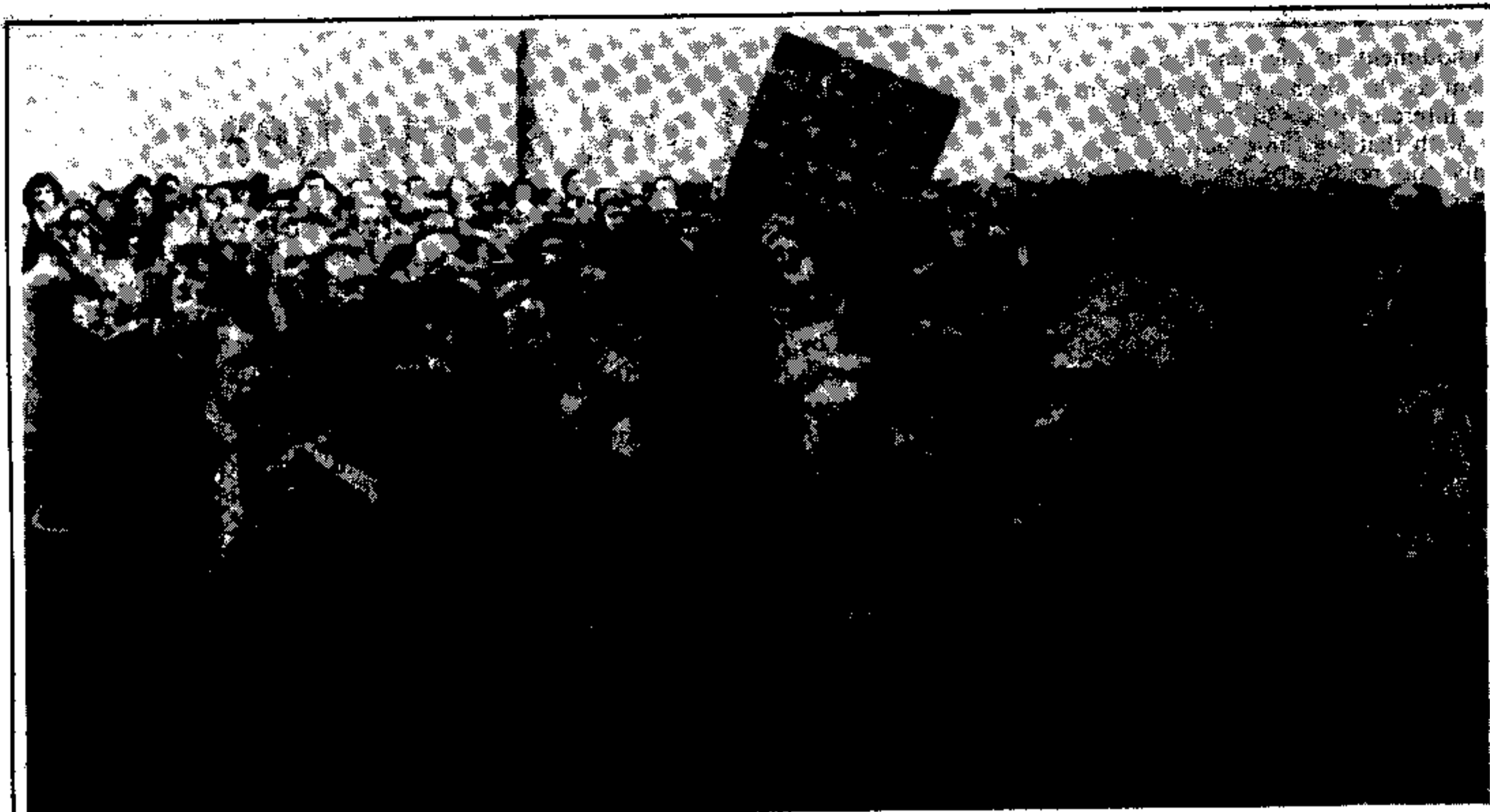
Foot's bridge from a dying liberalism to the Labour left was that training ground for future MPs, the Oxford Union. This is, and was, a debating society rather than a student union organised for struggle, and Foot became president on the basis of his oratorical skills rather than through leading any mass struggle. From there he went into the left-wing ginger group, the Socialist League, and thus to *Tribune*.

It was there that he was to meet Nye Bevan, one of the great heroes of his life. And the point at which he met Bevan is important: it was just when Bevan's last illusions in syndicalism and industrial militancy had finally faded and he was looking more and more towards parliament as the only mechanism for achieving change.

Jennie Lee, Bevan's wife and another



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Michael Foot faces his Ebbw Vale constituency as steel jobs vanish, 1975

Tribune writer, put it thus in her recent book *My Life with Nye*:

'We had been defeated on the industrial front in 1919, 1921 and 1926. We were both now pinning our hopes on political action. We were eager to test to the full the possibility of bringing about basic socialist changes by peaceful, constitutional means.'

There was little in Foot's early formation in the labour movement to shift him from his liberal heritage. He was attracted to the Labour Party partly by justified indignation at real social evils and partly by the fact that it existed to represent labour in parliament. Even when reporting on mass struggles, such as that of the Harworth miners against a scab union, he ended with a characteristic appeal not to organisation and self-activity but to the reasonableness of the mine owners:

'Unless the Nottinghamshire mine-owners see wisdom, aided by their bretheren in other countries, a national strike is certain.'

'Wisdom' would solve problems which otherwise might lead to mass action.

Foot was soon to meet another powerful influence who lived up to his expectations as a wise capitalist. This was the reactionary Tory imperialist and Fleet Street press baron Lord Beaverbrook, owner of, among other filthy sheets, the *Daily Express*.

Foot wrote recently of Beaverbrook that: 'I loved him, not merely as a friend but as a second father.' Foot started writing for Beaverbrook's *Evening Standard* in the late 30s and, by 1942, was editor. A central aspect of Beaverbrook's politics, which a glance at any of his papers show, was an intense nationalism, not to say an hysterical patriotic chauvinism.

And nationalism was part of the cement of the love between this dis-

gusting old Tory and the young fire-brand of the left. In a wartime pamphlet titled *Guilty Men*, Foot attacked the Tory 'Men of Munich' for 'treachery' and lack of 'patriotism'. His subsequent speeches in parliament are full of invocations of that dangerous nationalist myth, the 'Dunkirk Spirit'. His maiden speech in the House of Commons, after election for Plymouth Devonport in 1945, was devoted to complaining about the flood of US films into Britain. In Foot's view: 'We are not prepared to take this. We intend to build up a British film industry which shall represent the ideals of the British people.'

Yet when the Cold War came, this strain of anti-Americanism did not stop Foot opting for the American side. He supported British entry into NATO (and still supports it). When Truman sent troops to prop up the dictatorship in South Korea against an attack from the North, Foot told readers of *Tribune* that 'American troops are fighting to defend principles which the British labour movement has always supported'.

The bulk of Foot's career on the left has been circumscribed by the two basic ideas of nationalism and parliamentarianism.

While Foot turned *Tribune* into a platform for Bevanism in the early fifties (incidentally with the help of Beaverbrook's money) he was deeply surprised and shocked when Bevan capitulated to the right in the Parliamentary Party, led by that incarnation of Parliamentary Labour evil, Hugh Gaitskell.

It took Foot a long time to recover from that defeat. When he was ready for a new attack, it was launched with an article in the *Observer* called 'Parliament in Danger!' 'The reputation of Parli-

dual Labour MPs were subject to less discipline.

Hope springs eternal in the reformist breast, and by 1963 Foot's hopes were enshrined in the person of the left's victorious candidate for leadership: Harold Wilson. Foot, long acknowledged as a great literary figure, produced one of his most perspicacious works – the *Pictorial Biography of Harold Wilson*. This monument to Foot's political judgement contains the following claim:

'Harold Wilson, by his abilities, training and character has high qualifications for the role of leadership... Today he is by common consent the most proficient debater in the House... He can be witty, ironic, and, above all, devastatingly effective in his use of facts and figures.'

Wilson was soon to prove that he could be equally devastating with the use of police spies and cold-war witch-hunts in his great triumph of smashing the seamen's strike.

The real Wilson proved too much for Foot. His silly dream collapsed as Wilson directed more and more energy to inventing legal shackles to tie up the trade unions. For Foot, this attack on the power of the trade unions was very dangerous: after all, it threatened that essential link between the trade union bureaucrats and the parliamentary Labour Party and thus threw into the melting pot the whole project of achieving Labour's goals through constitutional means.

It was Wilson's turn-around, not Foot's capitulation, which explains his willingness to enter the 1974 Wilson government. By that time events had drummed into even Wilson's skull that a Labour government needed to come to some sort of deal with the trade union leaders. Foot at the Department of Employment was only doing what he had believed in all along. Together with Jack Jones he was cooking up a 'Social Contract' which was the very living

embodiment of the function of parliament as the mechanism of representing the interests of labour.

With that big thing agreed, Foot was only too ready to compromise on the little, unimportant things — like unemployment. Remember his attack on Callaghan as Chancellor back in the palmy days when unemployment stood at 600,000? This is the answer of Foot in 1978, when unemployment was more than twice that and a Labour MP was making the modest demand for a Select Committee to consider the matter:

'I have noted my honourable friend's proposal, but I would suggest that further consideration of the Select Committee system of the House should await recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure.'

Truly, a decisive and inspired solution guaranteed to bring hope to the workless and downtrodden.

The only issue on which he was prepared to distance himself from the leadership was a reincarnation of that other old stalking horse: nationalist opposition to the EEC. For the rest, he was content to be party manager to Jim Callaghan. To keep him afloat Foot would compromise with the Liberals, sign letters to the IMF, make dirty deals with the Ulster Unionists, turn a blind eye to the massive expansion of British nuclear weapons through the Chevaline programme, while trotting out fine old socialist rhetoric on platform after platform to keep the restive troops in line with a government that was Tory in all but name.

His hour of glory is not a miracle. It is the result of shrewd calculation. He has saved the trade union hierarchy from the embarrassment of having to choose between Healey and Benn in an electoral college. His "staggeringly dogmatic obsession with parliament — which finds him lined up with Enoch Powell on procedural matters — will ensure that he will bend over double to keep the party together. There is enough in his politics to keep right and left in parliament inside the fold. And there is also enough in his politics to keep the mugs in the country happy while they slog through the fund-raising and canvassing needed to make him prime minister. Those are the calculations of the centre MPs.

What they see as 'mugs' we see as good and dedicated socialists. There is no doubt that Foot retains enough left-wing credentials to exert a powerful pull in the working class movement. There is no short cut round that obvious fact. We have to do two things. The first is to stand firm against the euphoria and repeat again and again the arguments about the Labour Party in general and Foot in particular. And we have to seek every opportunity to work alongside those influenced by him to test in practice the relative value of waiting for the next general election and fighting the Tories here and now.

Jon Bearman

Shit and string beans

Even if they haven't read it, most people will have seen copies of *The Women's Room* on station bookstalls or in Smith's. 'This novel changes lives' it says on the front cover; of course, novels by themselves don't change lives, but there is more truth in that blurb than in most.

The Women's Room has been much criticised too: mainly for its portrayal of male characters as being one-dimensional and totally unsympathetic. Another criticism is of the book as 'literature'—that it is badly written and unstructured. That is probably true, but at the same time it is so utterly gripping as a narrative that its structure and style seem to matter very little.

I found on nearly every page of the book a sense of recognition: of myself, of both men and women I know, of situations and emotions. That is perhaps surprising, since its story is of a woman—Mira Ward—who reached adulthood in the stifling middle class American suburbia of the nineteen-fifties, whose childhood dreams of great achievements collapse into marriage, babies, increasing affluence, then the shock of divorce and the search for a new life in the surroundings of the Harvard of the late sixties.

The options open to Mira in her middle class, and at one point quite wealthy milieu, are not the reality of life for most women, either in America, or here. Any reader expecting to find in the book any notion of the working class as the force which can change society will be disappointed: the only political activity shown, that of the anti-Vietnam War movement, is seen as confused, fragmented and, at worst, quite futile. But it would be a mistake to think that the book has nothing of relevance for socialists in Britain.

The Women's Room shows a world of isolated individuals, of women trying to make sense out of their situation as women, of their relationships with men, and of society as a whole. The book is not optimistic: a lot of people find it difficult to finish, depressing.

There are, though, many moments of hope and humour, particularly within the group of women—Mira, Val, Isolde—who spend hours talking about their lives, and inventing and discussing the ways in which the world could be better organised.

Mira is faced with a choice between her own independent existence and relationships with men. It is a choice which she agonises over—

In a very powerful episode early in the book she is meeting a college boyfriend in a bar. He leaves her alone with a group of male friends, she gets drunk and is enjoying herself dancing when it becomes obvious to one of her friends that she is in danger of rape from the other men.

"Other girls went to bars, other girls dan-

ced. The difference was she had appeared to be alone ... That a woman could not go out in public and enjoy herself dancing without worrying what every male in the place was thinking or even worse, what they might do, seemed to her an injustice so extreme that she could not swallow it. She was a woman and that alone was enough to deprive her of freedom, no matter how much the history books pretended that women's suffrage had ended inequality, or that women's feet had been bound only in an ancient and outmoded and foreign place like China."

Mira's "solution" to the reality of her position as a woman is to abandon her ambition for an independent life, and to marry Norm, the medical student, who later achieves the kind of material success and lifestyle which is the stuff of the American Dream.

'People may object that it is boring to read about someone cleaning a toilet bowl or picking up dirty clothes.'

It is the part of the book dealing with her marriage which for me sets the novel apart; the sheer detail in which Marilyn French describes the life of a housewife and mother somehow becomes more than the sum of its parts. People may object that it is boring to read about someone cleaning a toilet bowl, or picking up dirty clothes, but it is boring to do, and most novels gloss over what French calls the "shit and string beans" aspect of life. Possibly she elevates it too high, believing that because women have to deal with all the shit and vomit of life that they are more in tune with the "blind true core of things" (occasionally the book reminded me of D H Lawrence at his worst). Nevertheless, it will be a revelation to many people to find that someone has written a novel about doing housework and bringing up children in a way that is totally believable.

"Getting upstairs was a bit of a problem. She did it in shifts, carrying baby, groceries and purse up first, entering the apartment, laying the baby on the floor and putting the groceries in the kitchen, then returning for the carriage. After Clark was born, she would take only babies and purse returning for groceries and carriage. She was always anxious, fearing that either baby or babies would hurt themselves, or that the carriage and groceries would be stolen while she was upstairs."

Mira is not totally isolated as a housewife: she has friends among the other women who live nearby, looking after their children. Their lives—the afternoons talking, the mutual support, and also the jealousies, the affairs between the husbands and wives

within the group which begin at the regular awful parties which occur—all these are very well described.

She describes the typical conversations and also how Mira becomes disillusioned and questioning of the women's attitudes, their adoption of the being "brave and funny" role.

"Husbands were rarely discussed, but were always in the background. They were usually brought up to illustrate some absurdity or constriction, ... 'Norm refuses to eat pork'. 'Paul likes his coffee strong, so I make it strong and add water to mine.' 'Hamp will not touch a baby's diaper. Never has. So when they were little, I couldn't leave them with him at all.'

"No-one ever questioned such statements, asked why Natalie didn't simply insist, or Adele make the coffee the way she liked and let Paul make his own. ... The women would often howl and cackle at them, at their incredible demands and impossible delusions, their inexplicable eating habits and their strange prejudices, but it was as if they were de black folk down to de shanty recounting the absurd pretensions of de white massas up to de big house."

Inevitably, one of the wives cracks and is put in a private mental hospital by her husband: she simply could not stop screaming. Mira goes to see her. Lily has had plenty of time to think, but still to Mira (who is now divorced) she talks and thinks too much of her husband. Lily explains:

"He was most of the life I knew. I lived life through Carl. I was in the house and he was in the world... He never had enough money to take us out; but he has the twelve thousand dollars a year it takes to keep me in here.... In Harlem the government pushes heroin, and doctors prescribe barbiturates and tranquillisers to all the housewives: keep the natives quiet. When the drugs don't work any more they put the blacks in jail and us in here ... In Russia they put you in insane asylums if you disagree with the state: it's not so different here."

Mira's experiences at Harvard are by comparison less powerful, although the process of discovery of her own identity and her recognition, that even if she wanted to, there was no going back to her previous attitudes, will I think strike chords with many women.

The book ends on a very pessimistic note: "I have opened all the doors in my head. I have opened all the pores in my body. But only the tide rolls in."

The book lacks any sense of a collective solution, socialist or feminist. But although as revolutionary socialists, we believe that sexual liberation is possible through socialist revolution and only through that revolution, we also have to as women, come to terms with our own and others experiences of oppression and isolation, and to try to find personal contentment. *The Women's Room* posits no solutions, but it is an extraordinary statement of the problems. **Sue Cockerill**



Iraqi soldiers survey the remains of an Iranian plane, September 1980

Revolution and war

The Iraq-Iran war and the talk of releasing the hostages has once again focused attention upon the Iranian revolution. Much of the comment among the left in this country reflects a feeling that the revolution is over, that things are nearly as bad, if not even worse, than in the Shah's time, and that the revolutionary left has missed its chance. In order to find the answers to these, and many other, questions, we talked to Shiran Rani.

He began by emphasising the continuing problems facing the Iranian ruling class, nearly two years after the overthrow of the Shah.

"From the point of view of the ruling class, there has been no stability. No single group has been able to consolidate power in its hands and get a monopoly of armed force.

"You don't face a highly cohesive state organisation that is mobilising people in its defence. It is well known in Tehran, for instance, that the clergy would like to finish the war as quickly as possible, because the war is another element of instability in a situation that is in any case unstable. They cannot prevent the masses flocking to be armed. But they don't want to arm the masses, only specific sections they know and trust.

"For instance, in Tehran they issued a call for people to volunteer. And they got over a quarter of a million volunteers.

They wouldn't arm more than 20,000 of them. If they want to do a deal with the Americans over the hostages and 200,000 people they don't know have got guns, they have problems.

"The arming is done in a chaotic fashion. The army is not in favour of arming people at all. The arming is done by the revolutionary guards or by the local mosques who set up militia units based on the mosques. There are great piles of light arms in a lot of main mosques in the cities which are dished out very freely on occasions. Even in the main cities the arms dumps themselves are not usually under army control, but under the control of the revolutionary guards.

"Bani Sadr is a person without a serious base. In some ways he represents negatively a whole layer of society who have no other representative at a national level. As an individual his politics are the politics of bourgeois reconstruction. But so are the policies of his opponents. The sordidness of the argument has been because the fight is to be able to undertake essentially the same task.

"The instability of the regime finds one expression in the continual clashes between the government of the clergy based Islamic Republican Party and the president, Bani Sadr.

"By contrast, the Islamic Republican Party does represent a significant force

in the country, with its roots in local organisation. Not so much the bazaar bourgeoisie, because they have become frightened of the apparent radicalism of the Islamic fundamentalists, and now prefer Bani Sadr. Some now even prefer the monarchists abroad. They've become so frightened about the way things have gone.

'The Islamic Republican Party is developing along the lines of the Baath party in Iraq, towards the party itself taking over and establishing a one party state. After Khomeini dies a council of four or five top clergy from the Islamic Republican Party would be formed - something like the Revolutionary Command Council of the Baath party in Iraq - with control of all the subordinate structures. The Islamics have worked methodically to take control of the structures that have come up.

'In the early period they went for all the ministries that had lots of appointments - teaching, the health service, etc., and then got their people in as headmasters of schools, as provincial governors, etc. Bani Sadr has tried to play the Bonaparte, balancing at the top, between the different forces, lacking a force of his own. Bani Sadr controls no physical force, nobody capable of using guns on the street, outside of his personal bodyguard. He would be hard put to deal with a shooting match. And that's important. There's lots of guns around in Iran. He would hardly rate a third rate gangster in South Tehran, let alone president. It is only his balancing act that enables him to stay where he is.

'And so, at the beginning of the war, he tried to resurrect the army as national heroes, to get control of force that way. He made a desperate attempt to use his position as commander in chief of the armed forces to build a political and military position that would be unchallengeable when the war came to an end. And for about two weeks he seemed to be getting away with it.

'But in order for that strategy to succeed, he needed a defeat. He needed to be able to justify imposing full controls over the country, which only a defeat would have made acceptable to the mass of the population. But the defeat didn't happen because of popular resistance in the South.

'The clerics picked up on this very quickly and came back with the idea of a people's war, with the revolutionary guards and the militia playing the main role in the fighting.

'The pattern has been repeated over and over again. The Islamics play up this idea of a people's war, but are desperate to keep control of it. They know that it is their prime weapon against Bani Sadr and the regular army. One of the Islamic leaders said that when the people are at the front, the soldiers know that they can't retreat. Obviously, what they mean is they want their people at the front so that they challenge the orders of the generals and the colonels if necessary.'

A very important development was the way in which at the beginning of the war the struggle against the Iraqis was briefly taken from the hands of both contending elements inside the ruling class:

'Although Iran and Iraq had been abusing and lobbing shells at each other since the revolution, I don't think the Iranian regime in any way expected the war that broke out on 20 September.

'The Iraqis for their part clearly expected to sweep to victory, just as Israel did in the six days war in 1967. They expected to smash the ten main airfields with lightning fighter strikes, seize the oil rich southern province of Khuzestan, and then force upon Iran a government of the stooges like the Shah's former premier Bakhtiar, they've been training in Baghdad.

'We don't believe you can be neutral about the invasion of Iran by Iraqi troops with the intention of restoring a regime like of the Shah.'

'But this scheme collapsed very quickly. In the South, in Khorramshah, local groups of Arabs, leftists and others went to the governor and offered him a deal. They would fight to defend the city providing no questions were asked, now or later, about where they got their guns. And for the first week the defence of the city was more or less in the hands of these people. There were not that many revolutionary guards in the city, only the usual garrison. But during the week they were flooding in from all over the place, and at the end of the week the deal was called off.

'Several members of the fedayeen were killed by being shot in the back by revolutionary guards and the Arabs were disarmed. And they then began leaving the city.

'Further north is Ahwas, a steel town. The first place actually hit by the Iraqis as they moved in from the border was the residential area of the steel factory, which is right outside the city. The steelworkers set up a military committee and organised the defence of the steel factory and the residential area next to it. They went into the city and appealed for arms to the governor, the army, the revolutionary guards, the militia. They were refused arms by all of them.

'Inside the factory there is a small unit of revolutionary guards for security purposes. They had a few spare guns, and handed those over to the workers. With those guns they went back to the governor and said they wanted somewhere for their families to stay, outside the line of fire. He said he couldn't do anything about it. So they took over the largest hotel in the city, threw every-

body out and moved their families in. And then went back to try to organise the defence of the area. They got hold of a few more guns, and they tried to organise barricade building, molotov cocktail making, and so on.

'The steel factory is not an Islamic factory by any means. There are quite a few leftists working there and they have quite a militant tradition. When the army turned up and insisted on stationing their artillery right in front of the steel complex, the workers appealed to them to move their guns somewhere else, because they wanted to try to save the factory. And the army said it was the best position to be in. True enough, the shelling totally destroyed the steel factory, worth several million dollars.

'When the workers saw they could have no influence whatsoever, they dissolved their military committee and then the mass exodus started from Ahwas. Over a hundred thousand people left Ahwas - about a third of the population - within the next two or three days.

'Our position on the war is based on the following argument: Can one in any way be neutral about the outcome of the war? We don't believe you can be neutral about the invasion of Iran by Iraqi troops with the intention of restoring in Iran a regime like that of the Shah. One cannot be neutral on that. We take our starting point there.'

Shirin then spelt out the attitude to the war of what he regards as the best sections of the left.

'If we are not neutral on the outcome of the war, the question then is: how do we relate to that outcome? We are weak in numbers. There are no mass based class organisations that one can immediately readily appeal to and have as the centre of one's activity. The class organisations that there are - the workers' councils - are all fragmented, yet to be drawn together. Therefore we are in favour, wherever possible, of arguing for these people to be organisers of the volunteering, of the arming, so that to the greatest degree possible there is an independent mobilisation in class terms, outside the control of the army, and insofar as it is possible, outside the control of the mosque. But the practical limitations are great.

'Some of the better groups on the left have been trying to get mobilisation for the militia and so on *out of the hands of the mosques*, to try and get it factory based or neighbourhood based, to get committees for security set up in different areas, to get barricade building organised, to get, for example, the women of an area organised to go round working out what people need by way of food and fuel.

'It's all very low level stuff. But at the moment the main thing the left can actually be doing is try and maintain - even if it's only at a local level - activity independent of the clergy and independent of the military. For, if the

revolution survives, it actually survives in that independent activity.

'The left is, of course, subject to repression. But this has not stopped it functioning.

'It is still possible for revolutionary socialists to be active. You can't really compare it to the situation under the Shah in any way. It's not like Britain, where you can stand on a street corner selling your paper openly. But if you get arrested it's a small beating and a few hours in prison before they'll let you out on the street again. There's a lot of difference between that and years inside or execution.

'Everybody knows where you can buy left papers, and leaflets and literature still circulate very widely. Most of the books published these days are still leftist books. And although they crack down from time to time there's no consistent policy that backs up reactionary attitudes at the top. So there is still a considerable degree of freedom.

'Another question, quite separate from that, is what is actually made from these opportunities.

'And the big problem has been that the left constantly splits into two different groups. One which tails the regime; the other which opposes it in an ultra-left manner.

'The major groups in Iran — the Communist (Tudeh) Party, the mujahadin, the fedayeen majority — most of the left, take a "defend the revolution" position on the war. But within that there is a willingness to go along at any price with the regime. It is almost as if they feel they need to prove themselves in one way or another to the regime, perhaps in the hope that at the end of the day they might get a little spot in the sun and that for some reason or another the natural anti-communism of the clergy will be dropped.

'The mujahadin are of such a size that they can send their people in to volun-

teer for the militia and organise that effectively, and they will have influence over a whole number of militia units. The regime will do everything it can to weed them out. But there is a limit to what it can do. If they decide to take in more than a handful of people in any area, they are going to have to take in some mujahadin, there's nothing they can do about it.

'The ultra-left groups, the largest of which is Paykar, are also in favour of defending the revolution. But only on the basis of what they call independent armed action — by which they mean action by their own armed sections. The problem is that such groups do not have the roots that can make that into a real possibility in more than a very limited number of places. Paykar have done a lot of work around the factories and in the poorer districts of the cities. But these activities have always been marked by a degree of ultra-leftism.

'Their work in the factories is an example of this. In many factories there were no workers' councils or strike committees immediately after the revolution. The workers' council movement took off quite a lot later and developed at first very slowly, in a rather unexciting fashion. In its early days it was very much controlled by the Islamic fundamentalist wing. But nonetheless, these workers' councils also attempted to carry out tasks not so different from a shop stewards' committee. They did take on straight forward trade union functions — taking on individual cases, protesting against dismissal, work organisation and so on.

'The ultra-left adopted the position that the Islamicisation of the workers' councils was total defeat. In factories where they had workers, they tried to set up their own councils, against the Islamic workers' councils, getting the mood of the workers completely wrong. Instead of accepting temporary defeat

in terms of Islamicisation and trying to work round it and through it, they set up their own shadowy workers' councils. They got involved in punch ups with the workforce in general; in one factory after another they were victimised; they'd go to the factory gates and try to get back in; there'd be fights at the factory gates. This even happened in industries where there were quite good, militant, workers' councils.

'The ultra-left were easily isolated and driven out of these places. Ever since then, with the loss of the roots they had developed since the revolution in the factories, they have become more and more unstable, with their political positions going all over the place.

'They've lost a lot of members of their organisation. A very peculiar transfer has been taking place. As the fedayeen move to the right, quite a few of its more militant members, looking for somewhere else to go, have gone to Paykar, bringing with them their guerillaist heritage (the thing which distinguished Paykar was the fact that it wasn't a guerrillaist organisation and always opposed guerrilla struggle). At the same time, the more serious members of Paykar were leaving Paykar and joining other groups.'

It is not only the revolutionary groups in Tehran who have missed opportunities, according to Shirin.

'Unfortunately, the Kurdish organisations missed a very important opportunity when the war broke out. It is understandable that they missed it. Nevertheless, it was a serious error. The outbreak of the war provided the Kurds with an opportunity effectively to blackmail the regime. The war in Kurdistan is not popular any more. It is quite clear from the progress of the war with Iraq that the Iranian army and the revolutionary guards can fight; it is also clear that the reasons they are not successful in Kurdistan is that they don't want to fight.

'This means the central government would have difficulty in dealing with the situation if the Kurdish organisations declared a unilateral ceasefire, kept their guns, but said they are going to use them to defend the revolution.

'However, the main revolutionary organisation in Kurdistan, the Revolutionary Organisation of the Toliens of Kurdistan, have said, basically, neither Baghdad nor Tehran.

'This position of neutrality on the war I think is a bad position. I don't think you can be neutral over the outcome of this particular war, anymore than you can be neutral about the ruling class in Tehran. The real danger is that when this war finishes, Iran can have thousands of people under arms who may be then willing to crush the 'baathist agents' the Kurds have always been accused of being.

'The Kurdish Democratic Party have taken a "defend the revolution" position. But very pacifically, without



The war—missed opportunities for the Kurds

much intention of doing anything about it. Nobody in Iran knows about this. Yet the Kurdish movement could have made a considerable change to the situation for themselves if they had made their position known elsewhere by mass underground leafletting – which has been done before.'

The prospect for the immediate future seems to be a continuation of instability, with the Islamic Republic Party trying to protect its position by hitting out at left and right.

'The revolutionary *komitehs* have become, over the period since the revolution, very narrow based hangers-on of the local mosque. There never was any great love of the clergy: the majority of ordinary working people would like Khomeini without the clergy. That's more true today than it was, but it's always generally been the case.

'Disenchantment with the government and with the clergy involved in government is very considerable. The real power in the land after Khomeini, the Ayatollah Beheshti, is one of the most hated individuals in the country. Hardly anyone has a good word to say for him or trusts him. And so there are fantastic problems about making any transition away from simple rule by Khomeini. That's why the problem of stability is so great. And that's one of Bani Sadr's strengths – he doesn't inspire that hatred.

'The prime minister and the Islamic Republican Party want rid of the hostages and to end of the war as quickly as possible. Apart from anything else, their own organisation is under threat. The Islamic Republican Party is the party of no compromise. It began by recruiting several million people into it just after the revolution, but it has become simply a bureaucratic party, in no sense a popular organisation.

'It used the hostages to rise to power. Now it want to backtrack. But that presents it with problems. To its right it has Bani Sadr. To its left it has the mujahadin and the socialist left. Both scream the moment it moves. But it has to move because of falling reserves and the military situation. It blew its last attempt to compromise with the US because it couldn't get its own people to accept it. Even in the parliament about a quarter of its deputies refused to go along with the deal. It has to crack down on its opponents, inside the ruling class and outside, if it is to have the freedom to make deals.

'The possible outcome of the war is that it will come to an end fairly quickly, the hostages will be freed, the Islamic Republican Party will have its chance to establish a one party state in Iran, based on their bureaucracy, not on their party as a popular organisation.

'I think a more likely outcome is that the war will drag on, that it will fight itself to a standstill. Very soon, for example, the whole of the province they are fighting in will be just mud from one

end to the other. The rains started two days ago. It will be impossible to engage in large-scale military activity. So without a deal you'll just have an ongoing war which breaks out into serious fighting from time to time.

'At the moment instability continues. It means they can't repress effectively, they can't stop papers coming out, that they can't really deal with something like the Kurdish situation. The instability explains why, when the mujahadin came out and opposed the release of the

American hostages, the regime suddenly started whipping in their members. The Islamic Republican Party know there is a resonance within their people for that sort of statement. They are in a dangerous transition period, and therefore they feel vulnerable to somebody reminding them of last week's slogan. And so they are bound to step up the repression in the short term in order to silence people saying things that will have some meaning for their own people.

'While this situation prevails, the left continues to have possibilities.'



Some of the thousands who demonstrated in Paris against the Fascist bombings, October 1980

French Left:

On the road to Rome

In 1968 the French left was a beacon for the whole of Europe. In the early seventies France was overtaken by Italy, but by the end of the decade the Italian left had paid a heavy price for missed opportunities. The recent anti-semitic bombings in Paris open up the grim possibility that France now faces the development of a more and more 'Italian' type of political situation.

With inflation at over 13 per cent, and unemployment around one and a half million, France faces the same crisis as other Western countries. But in France the problem is compounded by the evident disarray of the mass parties of the left. Since the collapse of the Union of the Left before the 1978 elections, the divisions between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party have grown ever deeper. Accusations of 'treachery' and worse are common currency in discussion between the two parties, and both devote more energy to attacking each other than they do to fighting the right-wing Giscard government.

Moreover both parties are torn by debilitating internal dissension. In the Socialist Party the struggle between Rocard and Mitterrand for the presidential candidacy has dragged on for over a year. The Communist Party, because of its traditional monolithic structure, has felt the strain even more.

In the period of the Union of the Left, the CP aimed to present a social-democratic, 'Eurocommunist' face to the world, and recruited extensively on that basis. The subsequent left turn, made to prevent itself losing the initiative to the Socialist Party, has had tremendous repercussions inside the party. Hardly a day goes by but some more or less prominent member of the party unburdens their conscience in the bourgeois press.

Five Paris councillors have announced that since the decisions on the party's presidential election campaign were not taken democratically, they do not consider themselves bound to support it publicly. Eleven members of the CP in Marseilles have issued a statement saying that the party 'has failed to carry out its duty in face of racist violence.' And the Communist Party of Martinique, France's West Indian colony, has called on its supporters to abstain in the presidential elections, even though a Communist candidate, Georges Marchais, is standing.

The dispute erupted this autumn in a set of squalid manoeuvres surrounding the senatorial elections. The excitement generated bore little relation to the actual significance of the French senate. The system of indirect election for the senate, based on an

electoral college drawn from municipal councillors, gives the Socialist Party a huge advantage over the CP, which it has no qualms about exploiting. When, however, the CP announced that it would not follow its traditional policy of standing down on the second round to enable the Socialists to be elected, it was accused of breaking with the traditions of left unity.

What was at stake was not, of course, the Senate. The French Constitution devised by de Gaulle, which elects both president and parliament by universal suffrage, has an effect highly conducive to political demoralisation—it means that France is virtually permanently in a pre-electoral period. For over a year France has already been plunged into manoeuvres about the forthcoming presidential elections; already the main parties are looking beyond next Spring to the parliamentary elections scheduled for 1983 (and after that, of course, the 1988 presidential election will be just round the corner!) Hence the repeated hints and threats from the CP that they will not support the Socialist candidate (likely to be the closest challenger to Giscard) on the second ballot.

Inevitably the disarray of the left has spilled over into the trade union struggle. The polemics between Socialists and Communists are echoed by the bureaucrats of the CGT (aligned on the CP) and the CFDT (aligned on the SP). Even in important strikes the two unions have failed to work together. The CGT has adopted a more militant stance, though it has always stopped short of effective action to coordinate the various fragmentary struggles. The result, inevitably, is demoralisation. Union membership, which has been low in France since the 1940s, is on the decline. Initiatives like the campaign for 'Unity in Struggle', sponsored by individual CP and SP militants, and encouraged by the LCR (French section of the Fourth International), obviously respond to a widespread desire for unity, but have not been able to stop the rot.

The disarray of the left has given Giscard's regime the green light to launch an attack on all sections of the working class. In particular immigrant workers have been the victims. France is imposing even stiffer regulations on the right of immigrants to stay in the country, and Stoléru, minister allegedly responsible for the well-being of immigrants, recently announced that there could be no question of any further immigrants being admitted to France. An Egyptian journalist, Simon Malley, is being unceremoniously thrown out of France because of his views on third world politics.

All this means that police attacks on immigrants go virtually unchecked. Indeed the French police seem to be more or less completely out of control. When Marseilles police recently killed a seventeen year old Moroccan during an identity check, it was the fourteenth case of an 'accidental' killing by police since the beginning of this year.

The emergence of small but ruthless groups of neo-Nazis is in no way surprising in such a situation. Not only do these groups have significant support within the police force, but the state authorities and courts

have conspired to take no action. A Communist militant who has received repeated death threats from extreme right-wing organisations had his complaints rejected by the courts on the grounds that there were 'no known neo-Nazi organisations in France.' Yet the killings at the Paris synagogue at the beginning of October have been preceded by a whole series of attacks on synagogues, Jewish shops and similar buildings. In September the government did ban the main Nazi organisation, the FANE; it simply changed its name (by one letter, to FNE) and carried on meeting unmolested in the same premises.

In the short period after the bombings a certain degree of left unity was achieved. But it did not go beyond a few large demonstrations. In the absence of an effective response from the left, the initiative has gone predominantly to the Jewish (and generally Zionist) organisations. These organisations have spoken quite rightly of the need for self-defence and physical retaliation against the fascists. But Zionist politics in isolation from the working class movement has little to offer. Some prominent figures in the Jewish community have gone so far as to allege that it was actually the left which was responsible.

Self-defence has tended towards individual retaliation; in fact the first act of retaliation by a Jewish organisation led to a serious physical attack on an 84-year-old man, who had acid thrown in his face. It transpired that he had no fascist connections, but simply had the same name as a well-known Nazi journalist. The situation could easily degenerate into a futile round of terror and counter-terror.

The general shift to the right in French politics leaves the revolutionary left in an isolated and dangerous position. The revolutionaries participated wholeheartedly in the demonstrations that took place up and down the country after the Paris bombings. Most of the revolutionary groups have put forward formally correct positions on the nature of fascism, the responsibility of the government, the need for self-defence and a working-class response. But in general the left seems to have lost the initiative. Objectively the French situation is absolutely ripe for an initiative like the Anti-Nazi League;

in fact no-one seems willing or able to take the initiative. Yet the milieu seems to be there: at the beginning of October a rock concert called 'Rock Against Peyrefitte' (the minister of justice) attracted three thousand people.

One reason for the lack of initiative seems to be that the electoralism which is tearing the mass parties of the left apart is also infecting the revolutionary left. The LCR in particular is putting all its energies into a campaign for unity between the Communist and Socialist Parties. Their presidential candidate Alain Krivine seems to be running almost exclusively on the programme of demanding that all left candidates should support the best placed left candidate in the second round. In practice this almost certainly means Mitterrand; presumably many workers will follow the logic and vote for Mitterrand on the first round too. The LCR's electoralism has gone so far that it recently commended the Zionist organisation *Renouveau Juif* (Jewish Renewal) for having raised anti-Giscard slogans on the anti-fascist demonstrations. In fact *Renouveau Juif's* criticisms of Giscard are confined to a condemnation of his oil-fired pro-Arab foreign policy.

As for the rest of the revolutionary left, *Lutte Ouvrière* are proposing to run Arlette Laguiller for the Presidency on a purely propagandist basis; while the organisation that has grown fastest over recent years, the OCI seems to be degenerating yet further; a group of its members recently launched an unprovoked physical attack on LCR members with such slogans as 'Nazis' and 'Kill them'.

Unfortunately there seems little evidence of any widening audience for the revolutionary left on an electoral level. There was recently a municipal by-election in Orleans, where in 1977 a joint revolutionary slate obtained the impressive score of 11.8% of the vote. This time three revolutionary groups presented separate lists; the total score was 8.4%.

All in all a bleak outlook for the French left. Yet the French working class is far from defeated. An effective initiative, on jobs or racism, could easily turn the tide. If not, the Italian road is all too likely a prospect.

Ian Birchall

SEXUAL POLITICS

The PIE trial:

Dispelling the myths

On 5 January 1981, five members of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) will appear in court charged with 'Conspiracy to Corrupt Public Morals'. There is no doubt that this show trial will be the occasion for a wave of press-orchestrated hysteria, not just against PIE but against the Gay movement and anyone else who questions the neat little norms of heterosexual marriage.

The crime they are accused of is the notorious one of 'Conspiracy', used in the past against trade unionists and any others who

cannot be accused of a specific deed, so are caught up in this hold-all category. There is no doubt that every reader of *Socialist Review* has 'conspired' at some point or another. The very vagueness of the charge means that any judgement will have enormous implications for Gays and feminists. Any conviction of these five martyrs will be a signal for the police to launch a major assault.

And the vagueness of the charge will allow the police and the press to use it for an eight-week orgy of slander. For instance, the

police have got hold of some American paedophile porn magazines which describe some absolutely horrendous fantasies. These, the police admit, have nothing whatever to do with the defendants but, since this is a conspiracy charge, they will be admitted as evidence. The political impact of front-page headlines screaming about babies and ballpoint pens can easily be imagined.

While socialists will react with outrage at this example of police persecution, there is a great deal of confusion about paedophilia, it does cause intense arguments, and it is important to dispel some of the myths.

There are no detailed statistics published on paedophilia, but the vast majority of instances are heterosexual, spread between men and women, the majority probably take place within the family, and the junior partner is usually aged between eight and fifteen.

The Paedophile Information Exchange is thus atypical in that, of its membership of about 450, the vast majority are men and nearly all are Gay. There is no doubt that the state will try to construct a neat equation: 'These people are homosexual child-molesters. All child-molesters are homosexuals. All homosexuals are child molesters. These disgusting perverts should be wiped out.'

PIE in fact is merely a counselling and campaigning body which aims to open up discussion around this hidden question.

It has been recognised for a long time that children have sexual feelings and very often initiate paedophile relationships. But the recognition of young people's sexuality and support in general for youth liberation does not solve all the problems.

There are, I think, four main positions:

--It is impossible to support youth liberation without supporting paedophilia. Children have the right to break out of the forced parent-child relationship and choose which adults they have relationships with, and further to choose what those relationships should be.

--That however much you might support youth liberation, paedophilia is bound, at least in this society, to be exploitative and manipulative because of the power relationships which exist between adults and children.

--That children simply do not have enough social experience or maturity to know what they are doing and therefore paedophiles need either prison or psychiatric care.

--That adult attitudes towards sexuality are quite different from those of children, who see it merely as an extension of play. Therefore all the fuss is misplaced.

Now, all of those arguments are held quite firmly by people, and the discussion should go on about which is right. It is one of the aims of the trial to stop that discussion.

David Evans

Further reading:

R. Moody Indecent Assault.

Campaign Against Public Morals: Paedophilia and Public Morals.

Tom O'Carroll Paedophilia - the Radical Case.

Building against the bomb

This year's conference of CND was, by common consent, the largest and liveliest for years. Over 300 delegates, many of them new to the struggle against nuclear weapons, spent two days debating the future of the movement.

The reason for this increase of membership and enthusiasm is not difficult to discover. The last twelve months have seen a number of things which make the prospect of nuclear war much more threatening than it has seemed for a number of years. The general rise in international tension accompanying the crisis is the obvious backdrop, and Western politicians like Thatcher, Pym and Reagan make little secret of the fact that they will use the weapons at their disposal, regardless of the cost to working people. The decisions to deploy Cruise missiles and to develop the enormously expensive Trident programme have added concrete new fears to that general background of threat.

The result is that CND has seen a massive influx of frightened and very angry people over the last year. Delegate after delegate at the conference told of local groups running into the hundreds, of imaginative ideas about local activities, of an enormous response to the 26th October demonstration. The mood of delegates was an odd one: there was a combination of real terror at the prospect of a nuclear war being perhaps only a few months or a few years away, together with a fantastic level of optimism that, this time round, the campaign could be big enough and strong enough to win. Nobody believed that the struggle was hopeless, a mere moral protest doomed from the start.

That said, it is important to note that the conference itself did not reflect this growth entirely accurately. For example, a large part of the big demonstration was made up of young people, but the conference itself was dominated by people at least in their late twenties and, in many cases, decades older. Again, a lot of the people there, particularly in leading positions in the CND organisation nationally, were those who had led it through the lean years and who seemed just a bit bewildered at this sudden upsurge of interest and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, some of them seemed not entirely to welcome the new influx.

The problem the campaign now faces, and which was not really resolved at the conference, is how to turn all of this new energy into the sort of movement that can win. On a number of key debates the delegates groped towards ways of building the movement without quite coming up with the goods. On membership, for example, there was considerable confusion. The current cost of individual membership runs at £6 and that is much too high to hope to build a mass campaign involving youth. A proposal to bring it down to around about a quid

was loudly applauded by the delegates, but all that was actually decided was that the national council should review the situation.

On work in the trade unions there was even greater confusion. The bulk of the activists of CND, both new and old, are middle class and most have little ideas about the labour movement. Almost all the delegates were agreed that it was important to approach trade unionists, but many seemed to feel that they were the same sort of organisations as churches. Work in the unions has been the special preserve of the Labour left and the CP for years, and they try to convince others that trade unions are mysterious and touchy things which have to be approached with great caution and ritual phrases. What they mean, of course, is the bureaucracy, which does indeed love this sort of thing.

Now, the fact is that if there is to be any chance of winning the serious commitment to the blacking of nuclear weapons called for by Penzance CND and passed by the conference, then the campaign will have to go a great deal further than cosy chats with full-timers and resolutions at union conferences. Industrial action against bombs will only be won and held if the campaign can win a substantial following amongst rank-and-file trade unionists.

As one delegate pointed out, the decision by UCATT to black construction work on the bases for Cruise missiles was a great start but, in a time of high unemployment, it is likely that the employers will find scabs to do the work. In those circumstances, the only way that the blacking can be enforced will be by mass pickets on Grunwicks lines, and that sort of movement has to be built from the bottom up.

The great unresolved question behind the conference is the final direction of the campaign. There are those in the leadership who believe that the recent Labour Party conference decisions to support unilateral nuclear disarmament, and the election of Michael Foot to the leadership will solve all of the problems. They think that, come 1984, we will have a Labour government which actually will get rid of Cruise missiles and start to remove nuclear bases. The logic of this view is that the campaign should tie itself to the electoral time-table of the Labour Party.

If the strategy is adopted, it will lead to disaster. For one thing, even the Labour lefts like Foot remain committed to NATO and through that to the use of nuclear weapons. Secondly, there is absolutely no guarantee that if Labour is elected, and it still might not be, it will carry out any of its policy of nuclear weapons. Any future Labour prime minister will come under the sorts of pressures from the military, the intelligence services, and the sheer weight of

capitalist opinion which has led to so many even of the smaller election promises of the Labour Party being abandoned in the past.

Much more serious is the fact that the attempt to tie the campaign to the electoral system means that it could well miss the chance of building a mass base. In the words of one CND leader: 'I want to avoid the campaign peaking too soon.'

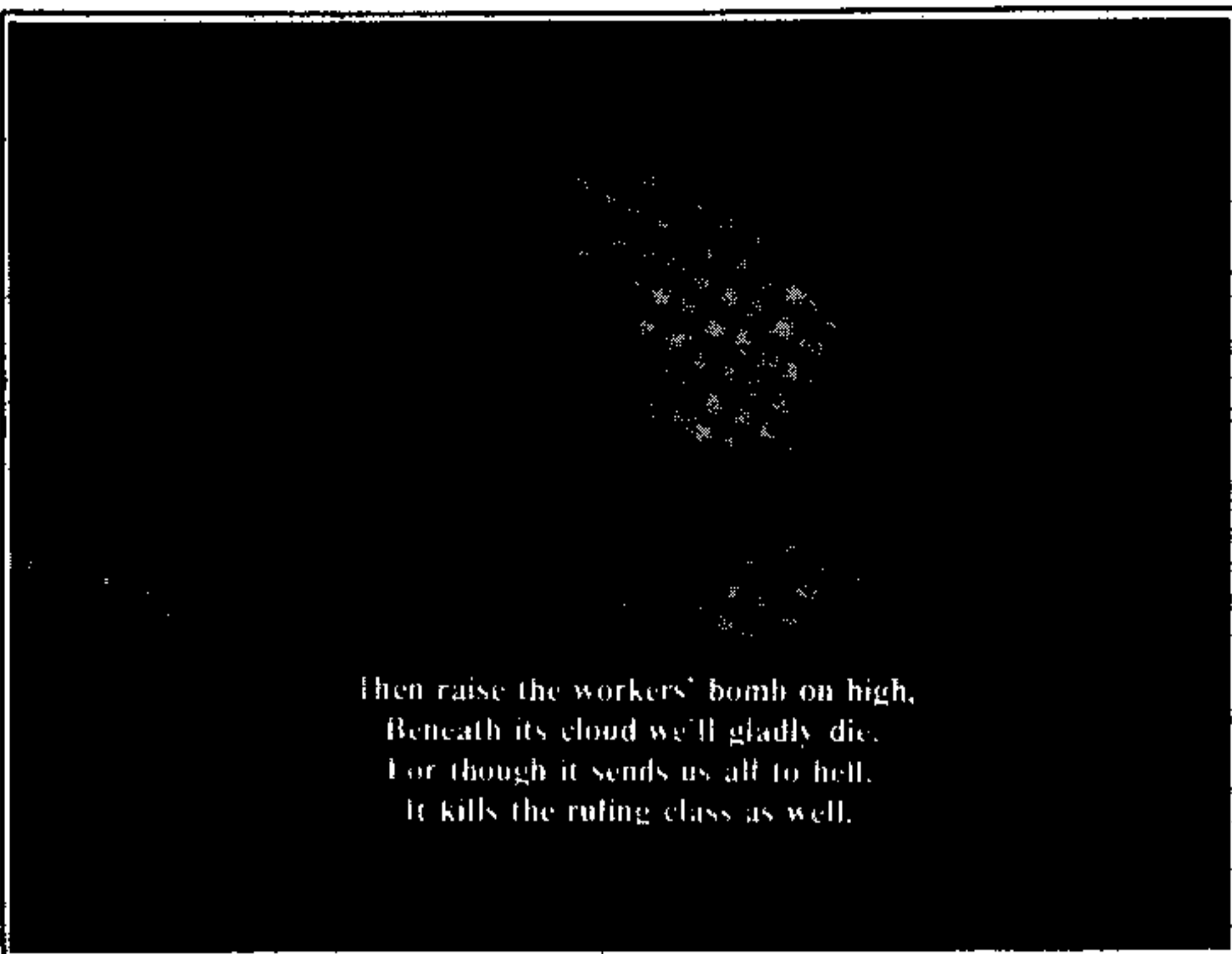
To think that a tiny organisation like CND can determine, rather than influence, the development of a mass movement is sheer megalomania as well as rotten politics. The reality is that CND has to build mass action while the tide is running with it. That will make it stronger when the capitalist counter-offensive gets under way. And the only hope of getting rid of Cruise missiles, either under Tory or Labour, is when the ruling class calculates that the mass movement is so large and so determined that it would be political suicide to stand against it.

That debate surfaced from time to time in the conference. The bulk of the delegates seemed to agree with the idea that the direction of the campaign should be towards mass action — indeed some very unlikely people seemed to think that there was even a lot to be said for armed individual terror. But there were others, including the bulk of the leadership, who did not want to call a mass national demonstration to focus the campaign. In the end, it was decided once again that the national council should consider the question.

Above all, the conference reflected the new life of the movement against nuclear weapons. CND is not the only organisation that has grown in the last few months. The campaign is beginning to develop a mass following. Now, it is true that the bulk of the active following, so far, is middle class. It is also true that the bulk of that following is new to political action and has a very confused set of ideas about the world. But they are people who are keen and energetic, who believe that they are fighting for their very lives, and who are open to all sorts of ideas. And there is no iron logic which says that the composition of the campaign must remain middle class for ever. Opinion polls show 40 per cent of people in favour of unilateralism and there is no reason why the campaign should not develop mass working class support.

The condition for the campaign going forward is very simple. It requires the active commitment of those who do have experience of mass movements, who do have some knowledge of the way the trade union movement works at a rank-and-file level, and who do have some ideas about why the world is the way it is, and clear ideas about how to change it. If the work is done in the next few months, then CND can become very much more than a promising start. It can become a mass movement which really can win.

Colin Sparks



The return of the workers' bomb

When the first phase of the struggle against nuclear weapons began to gather momentum in the late fifties, the Communist Party faced a dilemma.

Although, under the hammer blows of 1956 (Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin, the Hungarian revolution and the near-revolution in Poland), it had begun very slowly the process of destalinisation, it was still unthinkable to the party leaders that they should actually deviate publicly from the Russian line in international affairs.

The USSR had detonated its first atomic bomb in 1949 and its first hydrogen bomb in 1953—a 'breakthrough' which CP spokesman Palme Dutt called 'a powerful advance for the peace movement.'

Now, the newly born CND was calling for an end to *all* atomic weapons and, specifically, for *unilateral* nuclear disarmament for Britain (first hydrogen bomb detonated in 1952).

This the CP could not accept. The Russian line was for multilateral disarmament by international agreement. Such agreement was the only way forward, declared the CP.

'The question is what policy will unite the greatest number of people to get rid of the bomb. Experience has shown that unilateralism only divides the movement and diverts attention from the real issue, namely international agreement to ban nuclear weapons. This is the only way to banish the menace of nuclear war and also the issue on which the greatest number of people agree' (*Marxism Today* May 1959).

It was exactly the argument that James Callaghan put at the Labour Party conference this year—and which Hugh Gaitskell (and Aneurin Bevan) had advanced at the Labour Party conference in 1959.

When 'the unilateralism (which) only divides' became a *mass* movement as CND

grew, in spite of CP opposition, the party leaders began to realise that they would have to swallow their words and change the line. In May 1960 the CP executive reversed the (unanimous) decision of its previous congress, came out for unilateralism and called on all party members to join CND. It beat the Labour Party to it by just five months—for in September 1960 the unilateralists carried the Labour Party conference:

No more paens of praise for the Russian bombs appeared in the CP press. The Russian build up of weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction became an embarrassment to the party, to be brushed under the carpet if possible and faintly defended as 'purely defensive' if the issue could not be avoided.

However, enthusiastic defence of Russian nuclear weapons did not die out. This cause was snatched, so to say, from the faltering hands of the CP by what was in those days the biggest Trotskyist organisation, the SLL (now the WRP).

MISSILE MADNESS
THE NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS & HOW THEY THREATEN YOUR LIFE

MISSILE MADNESS. SWP pamphlet by Peter Binns on the new weapons systems and how they threaten your life. 40p (plus 10p postage). Bulk orders £3.25 for 10 post free from Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

Their argument went like this. The USSR is a workers' state because industry is nationalised and planned. It is a degenerated workers' state because the workers have no power at all but are suppressed by a 'bureaucratic ruling caste'.

This degenerated workers' state must be defended against imperialist powers. The Russian hydrogen bomb is a necessary instrument for this defence. Therefore it must be defended too. It is the workers' bomb.

Nuclear disarmament by the USSR must be actively opposed, as must the 'treachery' of the CP in downplaying 'unconditional defence of the USSR' and the 'renegacy of the revisionists'—the forerunners of the SWP and others—in 'abandoning the conquests of working class', including the workers' bomb.

One of the several versions of the satirical song quoted at the head of this article put the 'case' for the Russian nuclear bomb succinctly, cruelly and entirely accurately:

'Degenerated tho' it be

'It's still the workers' property'.

Other self styled 'orthodox' Trotskyist groups, including those in the tradition now represented by the IMG in Britain adopted the same general view. Indeed, a tendency developed in the Fourth International which took matters further. Led by a certain

Juan Posadas, it called on the rulers of the USSR to use the workers' bomb in a 'preventive' nuclear strike to destroy the imperialist powers and establish a world workers' state (the degenerated version, of course). In fairness, it must be said this was too much for most of the FI people and so Posadas set up shop with an FI of his own.

Twenty years on, one would have supposed that idiocies like the notion of the workers' bomb would have passed into the realm of historical curiosities.

It must be obvious to an intelligent child of ten that nuclear weapons cannot be used to defend working class interests, since their use would involve the destruction of most of the world's cities and the annihilation of most of the working class internationally.

However, the intelligent ten year old has not had his or her brain befuddled by the idealist metaphysics that can recognise 'workers' states in regimes under which the working class is repressed and atomised to a degree beyond the dreams of the right wing of the CBI, and even in regimes (as 'Peoples' Kampuchea under Pol Pot) under which the working class is liquidated as a class and driven back to a peasant existence under conditions worse than serfdom.

Such metaphysics, unfortunately, still finds its adherents and so, I suppose, we should not be too surprised at the reappearance

of 'workers' barbarism' in this new phase of the anti-nuclear movement. An example of it, in its crudest form, appeared in *Socialist Challenge* (9.10.80) under the name of Brian Grogan:

'We don't think socialists in the USSR should oppose the "Russian bomb", says Grogan. 'The call for the renunciation of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union would prepare for a massive victory for imperialism. It would further aid attempts at capitalist restoration.'

'Of course, according to Grogan (and the Kremlin), 'the possession of nuclear weapons by the Kremlin is overwhelmingly defensive' because although 'the capitalist system is expansionist by its nature' this is not true of the USSR—'there is no drive for profit leading to aggression and expansionism'.

'No drive for expansionism'? Doesn't Grogan know that the USSR has expanded, both by extending its own borders and by establishing puppet regimes in Eastern Europe? Of course, he cannot help but know it. Yet his mind is so much frozen in the mould of Trotskyism circa 1940, that the fact becomes a non-fact.

He can write of the US 'propping up of dictatorial regimes in Central America' as an example proving that 'the drive for profits makes the US imperialist' (which it is, of course) without noticing the 'propping up of dictatorial regimes' by the USSR in Czechoslovakia (by armed intervention), Afghanistan (ditto), Poland (by the threat of armed intervention), and so on.

But all this pales into insignificance beside his staggering blindness to the obvious fact that Russian nuclear weapons, like US nuclear weapons and British, French and Chinese ones, are essentially weapons for the mass vapourisation of working people, that their use would destroy the very class in whose name the 'workers' bomb' is justified.

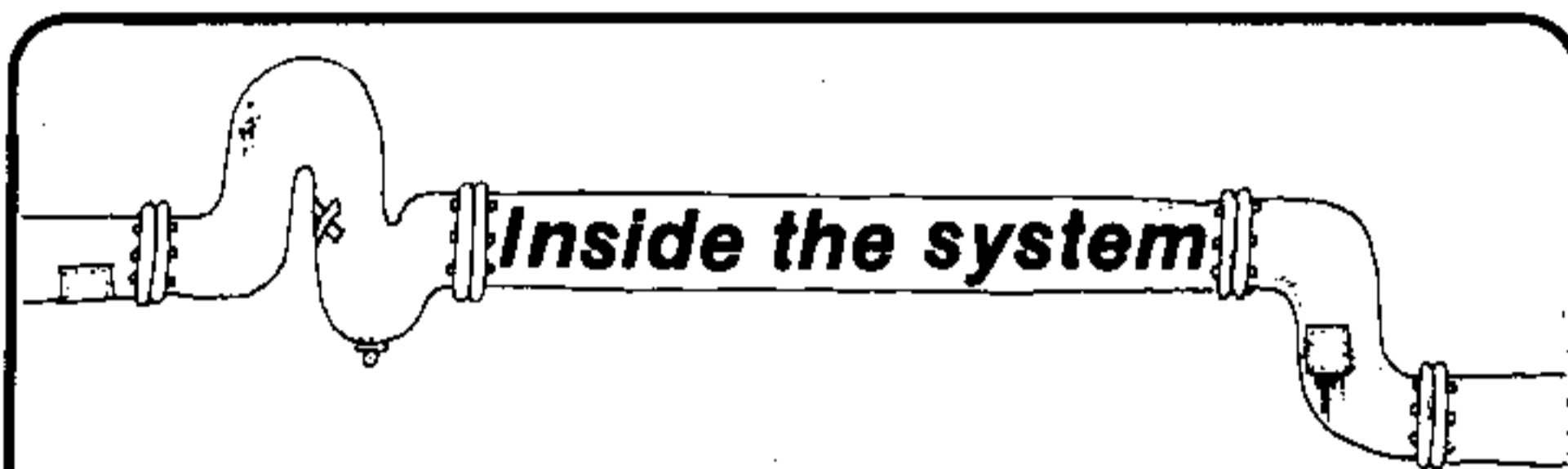
Long ago Trotsky accused the bureaucratic dictatorship of the USSR of subordinating the Communist Parties of the world to its own interests, of turning them into 'border guards' of the USSR.

Now Grogan is willing to sacrifice not only the 'border guards' but the whole proletariat in the (futile) 'defence of the deformed and degenerated workers' states'—which, by the way, include China on Grogan's definition, notwithstanding its position in the US camp!

No real workers' state can be defended by means which involve the liquidation of the whole world working class. Indeed, the international nuclear weaponry of the USSR constitutes yet further proof, if any were needed, that it is not in any sense, a workers' state.

There can be no serious struggle against the danger of nuclear war unless it is directed against the Warsaw pact as well as Nato.

No mass anti-nuclear movement can be built without clear and unequivocal opposition to Moscow as well as Washington.
Duncan Hallas



Inside the system

While the money spent on 'Law and Order' continues to soar, and the numbers of cops chasing us increases from day to day, there is one set of crimes which have had neither great publicity nor increased policing. In 1978, the last year for which figures are available, there were 2,364 convictions under the health and safety at work legislation. The average fine, in these days of increasingly savage sentences, was a staggering £122 pounds. These were for offences like using toxic dusts without adequate protection. If you get done for threatening behaviour these days you are lucky if you get off with a fine that low.

The fact that there were only 2,000-odd convictions, however, does not tell the whole story. While there are well over 100,000 coppers chasing us around, there are a grand total of 900, yes nine hundred, factory inspectors. They are responsible for the working situation of about 18,000,000 people. That means that each inspector has to look after 20,000 different workers.

And even then, there are big limits to what they can do. The Chief Inspector of Factories, one Mr. Hammer, said: 'inspectors live in the real world, where design, manufacture, supply, and fitting take time and where finance has to be programmed.'

What this seems to mean is that while there are fewer factory inspectors than the number of coppers the Metropolitan Police would use to police a small march, any fly employer can get off by pleading poverty.

The human cost of this class-biased allocation of resources was 245,941 industrial accidents in 1978. One small piece of good news is that the number of fatal accidents was down to 320 compared with 357 in 1977. That, no doubt, is due to the slump. Fewer people working, and lower overall production, mean fewer deaths at work. Of course, unemployment and poverty mean a rise in deaths elsewhere

We often talk as though the ruling class were stupid and indiscriminate in their attacks. As a matter of fact, they always try, as far as possible, to secure support from some of us. Money and petty privileges are their main weapons. A recent instance is the survey of pay amongst office staff. In the year to March 1, 1980, most grades of clerical workers got rises of about 16-17 per cent, or 2-3 per cent less than the rate of inflation, with younger staff getting only around 10 per cent, but those in higher grades got up to 21 per cent.

What the guerrillas forgot

Unity is strength: Trade unions in Latin America — A case for solidarity.
Latin America Bureau £2.25
 (PO Box 134 London NW4 4JY)

This is an invaluable handbook, packed with facts and figures about Latin America workers and peasants and their political and labour organisations. Part One concentrates on certain general issues. Part Two gives basic organisational and historical data on labour organisation in 25 Latin American and English speaking Caribbean countries, including addresses of national unions where available.

The book is very readable, containing a library of photographs, cartoons, newspaper cuttings, tables, documents and words of wisdom uttered by Latin American generals as well as trade unionists from both sides of the Atlantic.

Harry Smith, AUEW/TASS national organiser and Alex Kitson and Sid Easton of the TGWU can be satisfied that their words in defence of solidarity with Chile in 1975 are quoted. Harry Smith reminds us all that large British firms "... in which we sweat make profit out of the misery of the Chilean people. But beyond that they gather experience in exploiting a working class, stripped of all legal organisation and expression". What a shame that AUEW/TASS is devoting so much energy today to fueling the pro-import controls lobby which, by encouraging national chauvinism among its membership, can do so much damage to international class solidarity!

Fortunately, the book puts the basic arguments against import controls and in favour of an international class perspective.

The introduction places the study of trade unions in Latin America firmly in perspective: "At least half of the 330 million people that live in the subcontinent are considered by the UN to be destitute"—and the poverty gap increases. "For example, in Mexico, the top 5% of income earners received 22 times as much as the bottom 10% in 1958, and 47 times as much in 1977".

Illiteracy is another aspect of underdevelopment which renders the organisation of independent unions extremely difficult: "In Guatemala there is one teacher for every 400 children of school age but one soldier for every 140 citizens. Out of a recent poll of nearly two million people over 25 years old, 93% had never attended school".

In Brazil, "there are at least 100 British firms (and) half that number in both Argentina and Chile". "In Brazil, ... labour costs in automobile manufacture account for only 10-15% of total costs; in Britain the figure is 30-35%." "Massey Ferguson entered Brazil in 1961 to produce tractors and was followed by Ford in 1974, but only the largest 2% of the country's five million farms pos-

sess both a tractor and a plough".

The mass of figures offered need not daunt the reader. Some basic information and statistics are presented in clearly set-out charts, which have been compiled from respectable sources such as the ILO and certain Latin American research institutes. One particularly useful chart shows you at a glance what kind of regime rules in the Latin American countries, whether independent trade unions are permitted, how many political prisoners there are etc. For a publication of the left, it is refreshingly direct about Cuba: the chart describes independent trade unions in Cuba as "bureaucratically suppressed".

An otherwise clear and useful book is marred by an exceedingly confusing chapter on the international trade union organisations. Presentation is muddled, some

addresses given are incorrect, and, while rightly giving space to the activities of the CIA in Latin America through various international organisations, only passing mention is made of the strong European influence in the continent through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and associated International Trade Secretariats. Moreover, despite a suggestion in other parts of the book that rank and file union links are essential for effective solidarity, this chapter claims: "One of the main ways in which workers in the western industrialised countries can further the struggle of those in the neo-colonial world is to intervene in these international organisations and fight for them to become instruments of a truly independent working class internationalism".

The book, described as a "call for solidarity", is to be followed by a number of detailed studies on unions in specific sectors. These Latin America Bureau publications should make a real difference to the understanding of British trade unionists as to the real meaning of the word "solidarity" and might well give confidence to groups of workers here to attempt to build rank and file links with their comrades in Latin America.
Jill Poole

Break out to nowhere

Dear Comrades—Readers' Letters to Lotta Continua
Pluto Press £1.95

In November 1976 *Lotta Continua* the biggest revolutionary group in Italy and probably in Europe dissolved itself. The national centre was disbanded and most of the local groups followed suit as the militants dispersed. The paper, (also called *Lotta Continua*), carried on and became the mouthpiece of the 'Movement of '77'. This massive wave of unrest amongst students, women, unemployed and some service workers swept through Italian society for nine months and in that heady period provided the only serious opposition from the left to the attempts by the Italian Communist Party to integrate itself into the structures of power.

The demands, strategies and fears of that movement were debated out in the letters page of *Lotta Continua* and it is a selection of those letters which make up *Dear Comrades*.

Any book which records directly the thoughts and emotions of the participants of a mass movement is bound to be fascinating; all such movements have written them: an element of the 'festival of the oppressed', where those without a voice in society suddenly discover their tongues and express for the first time their criticisms of the old order and their demand for a new way of living. And this questioning, this demand for change in all aspects of life runs throughout the selection of letters.

For the 'Movement of '77' exposed and analysed a whole range of questions that the established organisations of the revolutionary left had ignored or run away from. Chief among these was the oppression of women in all its forms; from stereo-typing to family life, from sex to male violence. But other groups also re-examined themselves and their relationship to violence, to suicide to work, to drugs, to language itself.

The Movement of '77 in many ways had

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the same function as the student upsurge of 1968; the throwing open for discussion all the values which the new generation of youth felt constricted and repressed by. But there was a crucial difference between 1968 and 1977. For the student revolt of 1968 had as its target the values of the capitalist post-war boom and its attendant hypocrisy, cold-war attitudes and oppression. It marked the beginning of the breakdown of post-war stability, the re-awakening of the class struggle and the emergence of the revolutionary left.

1977 was a very different movement. For while it took up and developed many similar themes it also marked the rejection of much of the culture of the revolutionary left. Of course, there was much that needed rejection; the almost complete ignoring of the question of women's oppression (none of the revolutionary groups in Italy have ever published a women's journal), the macho attitudes that existed within the organisations towards both women and gays, and the ultra leftism of such groups as *Lotta Continua* who continually saw the revolution as being just around the corner. But far more than this was rejected.

First to go was the concept of a national organisation, of a party, which attempted to unify the various components of the Movement. As a result the idea was lost of attempting to present a political strategy, a direction to the Movement which would enable it to break out of its social and geographical isolation. Instead its various parts concentrated on their own needs, on their own demands. Much of the efforts of the Movement were directed on participants solving their own problems within capitalism, not with trying to unite those forces who wished to overthrow it.

As a result the Movement began to split and disintegrate into its components. Isolated it was a sitting target for government repression. By 1978, 'the Movement of '77' was dead. Unlike 1968, 1977 did not lead to a mass workers' upsurge, nor give continuity to mass social movements. The work of rebuilding the culture of the left, of its organisations, of its movements has to start almost from scratch three years after 1977. Certainly it has to take note of the criticism of it which the Movement raised, but the fact

was that no real alternative for either the theory or practice of revolutionary politics emerged from 1977.

And that, I suppose, is the real criticism of *Dear Comrades*. As a social document it is truthful, moving, sometimes funny, often very sad. But it is a document of a failed movement, based on the failure of the Italian revolutionary left. Reading it after the disappearance of the movement it reads more as a funeral oration than as a valid pointer to how the left in Italy or in Europe can overcome the very real problems it faces.

Jack Fuller

Theory and the kitchen sink

The Politics of Housework

Ellen Malos £3.95

Allison and Busby.

What is housework? The answer that seems to emerge from this book is 'what women do in the home'. It is clear that the content of domestic labour changes radically through history—women today do not have to make soap, butter, even clothes. Wash-day need no longer be a fixed point in the week, when all household resources are concentrated on getting the enormous job done; Heinz, Walls and Findus have altered the terms of keeping the wolf from the kids' door. And yet—rightly—the women's movement continues to see housework as a central area of struggle.

Malos has brought together an interesting collection of articles relating to the debate over housework, particularly the Wages for Housework movement, and the so-called domestic labour debate. Both positions use Marxist terminology, but in ways that are instructively different. The former are more concerned with arguing a straight political issue: whether or not women should be paid a wage for the unpaid work they do in the home. In a fairly simplistic way they assert that domestic labour is productive, and that women should use the strategies employed on the shop floor, such as withdrawal of labour and go-slows.

The domestic labour debate was concerned primarily with theory, that is, what place can be found for domestic labour within the traditional categories of marxist analysis. The aim is theoretical clarification, and political conclusions are fitted rather uneasily on at the end.

Also included in the collection are four critiques of the Wages for Housework position, (all useful, particularly Caroline Freeman's 'When is a wage not a wage?') which show the contradictions underlying that position.

For me in some ways the most interesting articles are the historical ones, especially Margaret Bonfield on the conditions of domestic servants and Marjorie Spring Rice on working-class housewives, both writing after the 1st World War. These especially help to emphasise the fundamental changes that have taken place over the last sixty years, and allow us to take stock of their

effects. It is easy to treat housework as labour, and so to think about it in purely economic terms, and this book is by and large economic in approach. The emphasis is on toil and drudgery, and yet in most of the articles there is a recognition that it is not just the work that is at issue.

Pat Mainardi's piece shows up very cleverly the emotional blackmail involved in trying to share out the domestic tasks more equitably; Federici takes an extreme line and argues that even the aspect of heterosexual relationships should be treated as a work contract ('They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work. They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism'). Charlotte Perkins Gilman writing at the turn of the century sees maternity as the central issue.

The book has the merit of bringing together a lot of useful writing on this issue which is mostly inaccessible in out-of-print back issues of journals and magazines—it will be invaluable both for the interested reader, for political discussion and for teaching purposes.

Olivia Harris

What the doctor ordered

The Book of the Year: September 1979 to September 1980

edited by David Widgery

Ink Links £5.95

The Book of the Year is a marvellous photographic essay, on the last year, celebrating the best and condemning the worst of what has happened. For those with short memories, Dr Widgery can bring you instant recall. Everyone involved in the writing, photo research, production and publishing of the book deserves congratulations. The price reflects the fact that it is a small left wing publisher who has been daring enough to launch the project which, if successful, will become an annual. If a big boy like Penguin had taken in on the price would hardly have been less and editorial intervention from on high could have dulled the spirit in the work.

Having argued with all of us for years about what good written and photo journalism could be, Widgery has set himself the task of showing what can be done. He has had, of course, the advantage of a very different timescale from that of those producing a weekly like *Socialist Worker*. He succeeds in what I imagine he set out to achieve, though I expect Widgery himself is probably quite critical of the final product. Part of the success is drawn from his selection of some of the best articles over the year in *Socialist Worker*—Paul Foot on the steel strike, Joanna Rollo on the sexist press coverage of Wimbledon—and those by John Pilger, Lucy Toothpaste and Jack Robertson.

If you can't afford to buy the book then do at least spend half an hour in a book shop leafing through the pages. It is the sort of book that will be an excellent present for someone else although you might not be able to afford it for yourself.

Stuart Axe

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FILM VIEWS



Burning brightly in Brixton

Babylon

Directed by Franco Rosso

Babylon was thought by the censors to be so violent that it would drive young blacks into a state of utter confusion and cause them to take out their aggression on whites. They thought it wasn't a true depiction of the realities back youths face in this country today. The film was given an X certificate, a futile attempt by those in authority to deny the reality of most working class black youth. They are petrified and disgusted by what confronts them in this celluloid reflection. They refuse to accept that their Babylon alienates black youth even when the dust draws out from under their Axministers in situations like Bristol.

The main character through whom the film tries to portray the social problems of black youth is Blue. To a certain extent it does so successfully. Blue and his mates own their own sound system, Ital Lions. The events of the film build up to a 'grand battle' with another sound system, Shaka.

Blue encounters racism at work and from the neighbours. He has problems at home. The filth do him for 'sus'. After that he leaves home, getting involved in a gay mugging which he really doesn't understand. The trail of events leads to a confrontation with the police when the Front smash up their sound equipment and spray swastikas and racist abuse on the walls. During the 'grand battle' at the end Blue stabs a Fronter while the police arrive with axes to smash their way inside. Blue refuses to run.

The film shows how most blacks, especially youth, when alienated by white society, turn inwards. Thus Rastafarianism, like

reggae, becomes a source of identity, style and culture. Though many black youth claim to be Rasta, having adopted the Ethiopian flag as their symbol, or wear dreadlocks, most as yet have not accepted the more stringent religious rituals and dogmas. Rastafarianism is used as a vehicle against the establishment, against Babylon, but it is completely devoid of politics in favour of a brown rice and cannabis existence. It is unfortunately much like the Muslim movement in America in the sixties, an escape valve. Anger and frustration which could be constructively put to use in political struggle are instead channelled into shaping a self-imposed exile from white society.

All the same the film is the best of its kind so far, in terms of the problems it attempts to deal with. The acting is reasonably good, and the music for the Ital Lions is supplied by Aswad.

Jag Nietzsche

An intimate epic

Kagemusha

Directed by Akira Kurosawa

Akira Kurosawa is probably the best known of Japanese directors amongst filmgoers in the West. His tough samurai films—*Seven Samurai*, *The Hidden Fortress*, *Yojimbo*,—regularly turn up in the programmes of independent cinemas in Britain. His new film, *Kagemusha*, was awarded the Grand Prix at Cannes this year and it seems that it will be given a reasonable showing throughout the country.

Set during the civil wars of 16th century Japan, *Kagemusha* opens with a highly stylised scene in which three men sit together, legs crossed, engaged in conversation. The trio are dressed alike, the bluish purple of their kimonos blending with the background. Movements are subtle, the colours predominate; it is like observing a detail from a finely wrought porcelain vase. The same shot is held way beyond the point where you would expect a cut. Slowly you are forced to look more closely and you realise that the three men are not only dressed alike: they are in fact identical in every way.

The conversation gradually reveals the identity of the three men. They are Shingen, warlord of one of the three rival clans, his younger, look-alike brother and a petty thief reprieved from crucifixion because of his uncanny resemblance to the lord. When Shingen dies from the wounds of a sniper's bullet, the thief Kagemusha, (the name means 'shadow warrior'), is called upon to act as his double so that his death can be 'deferred' for three years. The minutely detailed drama around Kagemusha's gradual adoption of the warlord's identity with its ultimately tragic outcome is really what the film is about.

But the film is also much more than that. The tragedy of this man who has little choice but to give up his proletarian identity is encompassed within a drama on a much grander scale, a drama of epic proportions as thousands confront one another on the field of battle. Kurosawa shifts constantly between scenes of thundering cavalry, banners held aloft in the smokey sunlight, and domestic scenes dealing with Kagemusha's attempts to pass himself off as Shingen to those who were nearest and dearest to the original lord. A near perfect balance is struck between these two kinds of drama.

At both levels the film has immense emotional power. We are moved at one moment by domestic scenes between Kagemusha and Shingen's tiny grandson who initially declared him not to be his grandfather, but who gradually overcomes his doubts as each grows to adore the other. The power of these scenes lies in their amazing subtlety; minute changes of facial expression speak volumes. At another moment we are carried away by the excitement and sensuous vitality of medieval battle. The two kinds of emotion are brought together in the final scene as the pathetic broken figure of Kagemusha threads a jagged path to his death across a teaming, bloodstained battlefield still writhing with the twisted bodies of dying men and horses.

One could criticise certain aspects of the film like the rather forced imposition of a Hollywood-style score. But that would be nit-picking. The magnificent cinematography—the constant interplay of light and colour—the firm narrative control and the film's method of exploring the tensions of medieval society make *Kagemusha* stand head and shoulders above most other films on offer at the moment. See it if you have to crawl on your hands and knees to get there.

Jane Ure Smith

S is for sad Stalinism that gave us all a bad name



Stalinism, as the song says, 'gave us all such a bad name'. Twenty-seven years after the old butcher was committed to a well-deserved grave, his ghost still walks. Right-wingers trying to discredit the whole idea of socialism, left libertarians frightened of the discipline of an organisation – for both the Stalin myth is alive. Organised Stalinist politics today may be no more than a few ageing hacks in the New Communist Party masturbating over pictures of their hero in full military regalia, but the historical experience of Stalinism is still an albatross hanging round our necks. If we fail to understand it and explain it, we shall have to go on paying the price for it.

In 1956, three years after Stalin died, Nikita Khrushchev made his famous 'secret speech', which within weeks was one of the most widely publicised documents in history. Khrushchev denounced crimes that Trotskyists had publicised twenty years earlier (and were called Nazi agents for their pains). But Khrushchev's explanation was worse than useless. 'Stalin was a very distrustful man, morbidly suspicious; we knew this from our work with him.' Now it would be hard to doubt that Stalin was in fact a very nasty man; what remains unexplained is how such a nasty man achieved virtually absolute power in an allegedly socialist society.

Stalinism was the product of defeat. Failure of revolution in Western Europe, disintegration and demoralisation of the working class inside Russia, left the state machine in the hands of a group of managers and bureaucrats whose connection with the working class was only on the level of rhetoric. Once they abandoned world revolution, the only road was industrialisation from above. As Stalin said in a speech of 1931: 'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us.'

Stalin succeeded. As Isaac Deutscher wrote in his obituary: 'Stalin found Russia working with a wooden plough and left her equipped with atomic piles.' But the price of such rapid industrialisation was a terrible one. Every last vestige of working-class power was crushed. And the process was accompanied by a disastrous agricultural policy. At Stalin's death the grain harvest and the cattle stock were both lower than in 1913. The Russia which today, sixty years after the Revolution, still has to import grain from the West, is the Russia built by Stalin.

This forced-pace industrialisation could only be carried out by ruthlessly crushing any form of workers' democracy and destroying the very Bolshevik Party in whose name Stalin ruled. As

Khrushchev reported in the secret speech:

'It was determined that of the 139 members and candidates of the party's central committee who were elected at the Seventeenth Congress (1934), 98 persons, i.e. 70 per cent, were arrested and shot (mostly in 1937-38). What was the composition of the delegates to the Seventeenth Congress? It is known that 80 per cent of the voting participants of the Seventeenth Congress joined the party during the years of conspiracy before the Revolution and during the civil war; this means before 1921. By social origin the basic mass of the delegates to the Congress were workers.'

Lower down the same bureaucratised murder prevailed. Joseph Berger, a pioneer of the Palestinian Communist Party who spent many years in a Stalinist labour camp, reports:

'When there were thousands of deaths every day it was obviously impossible to check the circumstances of each one. But a maximum permitted mortality rate was laid down; so long as mortality remained within these limits it was considered normal.'

Stalinism cannot be equated with an impatient bureaucrat or a bossy cadre; it was counter-revolution on an unprecedented scale.

The personality cult that surrounded Stalin was notorious. Grotesque poems were churned out; one French Communist wrote that 'for a Communist... Stalin is the highest scientific authority in the world.' Stalin personally rewrote his own biography, adding such phrases as: 'Stalin never allowed his work to be marred by the slightest hint of vanity, conceit or self-adulation.'

The Communist International, which Stalin inherited, was transformed from a party of world revolution to a tool of Russian foreign policy. Communist militants the world over jumped through a series of hoops – the grotesque theory that Social Democracy was 'social fascism', the Popular Front, the Hitler-Stalin pact, the wartime adulation of Churchill and Roosevelt, the overnight discovery that Tito was a fascist. A whole generation of revolutionaries were driven into disillusion or turned into mindless hacks.

Stalinism was not inevitable; it was the fruit of defeat. Faced with fascism and mass unemployment, millions of workers looked to Mother Russia for victories they could not win by their own strength. And it has been the self-activity of workers – the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the French General Strike of 1968, the Polish strikes of 1980 – that has driven wedges into the Stalinist monolith. Only the rebirth of a revolutionary international can finally lay the ghost of Stalin.

Ian Birchall