

tms
the next step

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Legionnaires' disease kills



So do Tory cuts

Is there an alternative?

'It's time she calmed down and stopped taking on so many people at once,' declared a 'right wing Conservative loyalist from one of the safest seats in one of the safest shires' in one of the most right-wing newspapers last weekend. His list of Thatcher's victims included doctors (over the limited drugs list), teachers (over pay and standards), Tory councillors (over rate-capping) and the middle classes in general (over pensions and student grants).

The Tories' friends in the media are warning the government of 'a tide of unease and trepidation' sweeping the country, reflected in the party's heavy losses in recent council elections. This unease runs deepest over rising unemployment and cuts in welfare services. The launch this week of Francis Pym's new wet faction 'Conservative Centre Forward' is a sign of rank and file Tory dissatisfaction with the prime minister's abrasive performance.

Thatcher's reply is to reassert that 'there is no alternative'. She told the Scottish Tories at Perth last week that now is 'a time for keeping calm on our chosen course'. In local government the Tories are tightening the spending squeeze and considering new ways to finance councils. In the health service the government is increasing the pressure to shake out hospital jobs and planning to extend the private sector in general practice. Social security minister Norman Fowler is expected shortly to announce a package of drastic cuts in welfare benefits.

The heaviest impact of the Tories' austerity policies will not be on the government's middle class supporters. The real victims will be council workers, already among the worst paid in the country, and people who live in council housing and rely on home helps, meals on wheels and the rest of the already inadequate council services. In the health service it will not be doctors who will be hardest hit. Hospital cleaners, kitchen workers, laundry workers and porters are already facing job losses and cuts in hours and pay.

Epidemics of fatal food poisoning and now Legionnaires' disease are the result of deteriorating standards of hygiene and hospital care. Unemployed young people who are forced to live on miserable dole money and work on slave labour schemes are now threatened with homelessness by the withdrawal of housing benefits.

For the Tory government the survival of British capitalism depends on raising unemployment and impoverishing and demoralising the working class. What is the Labour Party's alternative?

'If the Labour Party dared to adopt such a mildly reformist strategy' as to increase welfare benefits by reducing tax allowances, 'it could make the welfare state less of a sham than it is,' wrote poverty expert and Labour Party adviser professor Peter Townsend last week. Townsend's modest proposals were headlined 'How Labour could make the poor just a teeny bit richer'. Townsend approves the measures promoted by Labour's social security spokesman Michael Meacher.

Meacher proposes the withdrawal of the married man's tax allowance in favour of tax benefits for women, children and the disabled. He favours cutting tax relief on mortgage interest and giving more support

to young home-buyers and their families. Townsend approves this approach 'because it makes more efficient use of existing resources without adding to tax rates'. He describes it as 'efficient redistribution'.

Townsend's key word is 'efficient'. For him the criterion by which Labour's welfare policies must be judged is whether they are an economical expenditure of state funds. But this is the same criterion that guides Thatcher's cuts policies. Falling profitability in the economy dictates the need for greater 'efficiency' in public spending. This means cutting spending on pensions and dole money and child benefits. It means reducing the money spent on educating people for the dole, and on maintaining the health of people the system doesn't need — especially the old and the mentally ill and handicapped.

The principle of the welfare state has always been to provide essential services as 'efficiently' as possible. In this context 'efficiency' means at the lowest possible cost to the employers' profits which finance government budgets. The recession means that the definition of what is essential is tightened up and that even worse services have to be provided by even fewer people working even harder. Labour's commitment to the Tory principles of capitalist efficiency renders it powerless to resist the cuts.

Townsend's comment that if the Labour Party adopted these minor reforms 'it could make the welfare state less of a sham than it is' is revealing. Townsend admits that the network of welfare institutions paraded as Labour's proudest achievement is nothing but a sham. And he reveals that the object of Labour policy is not to provide decent services for all those who need them and decent pay and conditions for those who provide them, but to make the sham slightly less obvious.

The significant thing about Meacher's plan to make the poor 'just a teeny bit richer' is that they have already been rejected by the Labour leadership. When he prematurely announced his scheme for efficiently redistributing tax relief on mortgage interest Neil Kinnock reacted with horror. Ever since Labour's 1983 election defeat the party leaders have been trying to appeal to upwardly mobile home buyers. Kinnock rejected any plans for removing tax relief on mortgages and last week housing spokesman Jeff Rooker announced that Labour no longer opposed council house sales. Even Meacher's 'mildly reformist' tinkering with tax allowances is too radical for today's Labour Party to dare to adopt.

As long as Labour's response to the Tories is posed in terms of redistributing government revenues there can be no solution to the problems of impoverishment, poor services and poverty-line wages in the public services. Redistribution provides no solution because in crisis ridden capitalist Britain there is nothing to redistribute. Down this road there is indeed no alternative.

The disintegration of the capitalist welfare system reveals that the survival of the working class now depends on taking control over society. Anything less will condemn millions to a life of hardship and misery and the occasional choice between parties offering poverty or 'a teeny bit' less poverty.



Sacked Polkemmet miners want solidarity, not sympathy

Miners' platform 'Where's the fight?'

'This platform is what we want,' says one Yorkshire miner under threat of victimisation. The issues raised by the Revolutionary Communist Party's platform for the forthcoming NUM elections have been hotly debated in the coalfields.

• Amnesty for the prisoners

'We want them out of there, and we want them out now,' said one angry relative of an imprisoned miner last week. There are still more than 60 men in jail for fighting for their jobs in the 12-month strike. As the trials of those arrested at Orgreave get underway, they are likely to be joined by many more of their comrades in the weeks to come. The NUM leadership seems to have forgotten them and the suffering endured by their families. We need a national campaign to free all prisoners of the strike, and to win labour movement support for the families of the men inside.

• Reinstatement for victimised miners

'There are 15 victimised men from Polkemmet and more than 200 in Scotland altogether,' sacked Polkemmet miner Alan Ramsay told us last week. Hundreds of militants have been sacked in the coal board's post-strike disciplinary drive. The existing NUM leadership has not come up with an effective strategy for getting their jobs back. 'Our officials have given us no clear direction on what they expect us to do,' says Alan. 'They won't say "sign on the dole" and they won't say "don't sign on the dole"'. They say they'll pay off the debts men got during the strike, but they're not paying off their own debts to men like us who remained loyal to the union.'

The NUM leadership can only offer sacked miners a prolonged legal appeal with little hope of success and no hope of a wage while the process runs its course. 'We went to a recent conference of the victimised men in Scotland. The advice of two NUM lawyers was that we should have our cases heard individually in about a year's time. They think we should wait a year then go to industrial tribunals that working class people have no say in! The courts are bad enough already — what are they going to be like in a year's time? Besides, we've already put up with poverty for nearly 14 months.'

When miners at South Kirkby pit in Yorkshire walked out over recent victimisations, the area leadership refused to give a determined lead to win wider backing and then told the South Kirkby men to go back because they didn't have enough support. But sacked men throughout the mining areas are not prepared to give up the jobs they fought so long and hard to save. 'The union told us the strike was about "Coal not dole", and we're not going to change and accept the dole now.' They demand and deserve the support of their union and the whole labour movement, for a reinstatement campaign and a push to provide practical support for the sacked men and their families.

• No pit closures, no redundancies

'The Tories just seem to be doing what they want now,' says Alan from Yorkshire. Coal board spokesman Michael Eaton claims that management has already achieved the 20 000 redundancies it wanted. That hasn't stopped the board going further,

announcing the closure of Bates and Horden collieries in the Durham area with the loss of another 3000 jobs. The board has stopped pretending that every miner will get another job after closures. Management at Yorkshire's Wheldale pit recently warned miners that 'there can be no jobs guaranteed'.

The NUM leaders' only response to the closure and redundancy drive has been to complain that the board is not going through the established procedures. 'Arthur Scargill and the executive tell us "The fight goes on" but I can't see where,' complains Yorkshire miner Alan. 'Where's the fight coming from? Not from the officials, that's for sure. It's rank and file miners like the lads at South Kirkby who are trying to have a go. Now it's got to be brought back to a national issue again.'

Many miners who are disillusioned with the union's failure to stand up to the board have opted for voluntary redundancy to escape management's new dictatorial regime. If the union gave a national lead in fighting job cuts then local resistance could be made effective. We need to boycott the colliery review procedures which pave the way to closures, insist on the redeployment of all jobs at exhausted pits, and make sure every miner who retires early is replaced by another.

• Women's rights

Arthur Scargill's proposal to grant associate NUM membership to women from outside the industry who supported the strike has sparked off controversy. Some union officials are opposed to it on the grounds that they 'don't want middle class lesbians in the union'. Left-wing miners are defending the proposal in recognition of women's crucial role in the 12-month strike. Supporters of the RCP are arguing that Scargill's proposals are narrow and bureaucratic. Miners' wives need full membership of the NUM if they are to be fully involved in the continuing resistance to the coal board. They cannot be allowed to suffer the fate of women pit canteen workers who are already in the NUM, but treated as second class members.

The women in the canteens earn less money for longer hours with shorter holidays and fewer benefits than the men. 'We pay the same union dues as the men, but when it comes to fighting for equal pay and so on the officials don't want to know us,' says Jessy Gardner from Kellingley colliery canteen in Yorkshire. 'It's always been like that in this union. I've only been to one union meeting. There were two of us women stuck at the back, we couldn't hear a thing and they didn't let us talk. We were an embarrassment to the union men — all they want is our union money. I tell them that to their faces.'

Rather than making gestures to women, the NUM leadership must fight to make union membership mean something to its women members by leading a campaign for equal pay and rights. And miners' wives should be welcomed into union meetings along with the canteen women, to make the NUM as representative as it will need to be if it is to lead the mining communities into battle with the coal board.

ACTION

How to fight health cuts

Our livelihoods come first

The Tories are ravaging the health service. But what are the health workers' unions doing to defend jobs and conditions in the NHS? *Joe Hall* looks at the issues facing this week's conference of the National Union of Public Employees in Scarborough.

● Privatisation and cuts

At last year's Nupe conference 90 women cleaners on strike at Barking hospital in East London got a standing ovation. They were promised national action to defend their jobs against private contractor cuts. They have been standing on the picket line ever since. Their numbers have dwindled to 42 and they are still waiting for the union to keep its promise.

The women at Barking, and more recently workers at Chesterfield, Newcastle, Leeds and Cambridge, have shown that they are ready to fight long and hard to save jobs in the health service. But they have been let down by their union — particularly by its policy on privatisation. Nupe's strategy is to compete with private tenders by making in-house tenders competitive. The only way this can be done is by sacrificing jobs and hours, pay and conditions. A secret internal Nupe document reveals how far union officials have been prepared to go in accepting drastic cutbacks as an alternative to going private. It covers a total of 138 tenders awarded in catering, domestic and laundry services up to February of this year, of which 83 went private and 55 in-house.

● **Scunthorpe:** catering contract awarded in-house 'with our members accepting a five per cent cut in a 20 per cent bonus and cuts of up to 25 hours per week in some contracts'.

● **Doncaster:** catering service at the Markfield Ambulance School kept in-house, but 'this did result in substantial cuts in staffing'.

● **North West Hertfordshire:** in-house tender for laundry services accepted, saving £75 000. 'Central to the success of the laundry in-house price', explains the Nupe document, 'was a rationalisation programme negotiated with the union'.

● **West Midlands:** Nupe official claims that everybody was 'excited and glad' at the acceptance of an in-house tender for cleaning at a children's hospital. No comment on the reaction of the 59 cleaners who faced cuts in hours and up to £20 off their £53 wages.

Nupe has tried to cover its losses by negotiating recognition agreements with private contractors such as Hospital Hygiene Services in Leeds. In many cases union officials have negotiated redeployment, voluntary redundancies, higher productivity and harder work even before the services have been put out to private tender. When the services are put up for contract Nupe officials sit on tendering subcommittees with management to make sure that contracts 'avoid incorporating details that would make the in-house tender uncompetitive'. Union officials put 'competitiveness' before their members' livelihoods.

The main emphasis of Nupe propaganda is that privatisation leads to greater inefficiency — to dirtier wards and kitchens and lower standards. This may well be true, but basing the union's case on efficiency and standards opens the door to management measures to raise productivity in-house. As long as the health unions are campaigning to make the health service more efficient they will be unable to protect union members from the employers' schemes to cut costs. The result will be fewer workers working harder for less pay — whether under private contractors or the old hospital management.

Health workers need a new direction after this week's conference. The union leadership must be called to account for the failure of its anti-privatisation campaign to protect workers' livelihoods in the NHS. Our emphasis should be 'public or private — our



Health workers came out against the cuts in Chesterfield last month

jobs come first'. We need to reject *all* cuts, whether by contractors or administrators. We should withdraw our union representatives from all official bodies involved in negotiating tenders and cuts.

● Low pay = low priority

Nupe general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe always has a lot to say about low pay, but he never seems to do anything about it. Last year he pledged a fight to the finish to end the poverty-line wages of his members in the health service and local government. He ended up accepting a flat rate increase of £4 a week for council manual workers. Health workers have yet to hear the result of this year's pay claim, but they can expect a similar outcome.

Most Nupe members take home wages which are well below the state poverty line of £108 a week. In the health service there are 18 grading levels ranging between £60 and £90 a week. The poverty trap means that a pay rise can leave some workers worse off because they have to pay out more on tax and insurance and get less in state benefits.

For example a couple with two children and a weekly wage of £80 would be £4 worse off if the breadwinner got a £20 rise. The couple would be only £2 better off if the breadwinner got a £40 a week rise.

Union leaders like Bickerstaffe say that it is unrealistic for low-paid workers to demand massive wage rises. Yet when many low-paid workers need a rise of at least £50 a week to lift them out of the poverty trap, Nupe's £4 a week achievement is not so much unrealistic as downright insulting. The only way to get decent wage rises is for the rank and file to take control over the preparation of the claim and fight to win it. We need a flat rate increase and we need to separate the claim from other considerations such as grading structures and efficiency. Officials should be forced to withdraw from all working parties and permanent negotiating bodies.

● Good money after bad

This week Nupe is kicking off its campaign to preserve the political levy to the Labour Party. Union leaders argue that 'as a union committed to defending...the rights of

ordinary people, we are affiliated to the party most able to perform that task'. But what has the Labour Party ever done to defend our right to work? The last Labour government began the assault on health workers' jobs and conditions and launched the drive to streamline local government jobs and services. Now it offers to reduce unemployment by one million in five years!

Nupe leaders say we should vote for the Labour Party to keep our voice in parliament. But what is the voice of Labour saying? It tells us that we need another social contract to hold down wages and boost profits. Nupe members should stop throwing good money after bad politics and campaign for a political fund that can turn our union into a fighting force.

● Fight for gay rights!

Right wingers at this week's conference are hoping to reverse the union's token commitment to gay rights. Nupe official Ron Taylor has tabled a motion calling on the union to have nothing to do with gay workers. A few weeks ago he went further and told *The Sun* he wanted gays kicked out of the union. Bickerstaffe has declined to comment on this latest attack on thousands of gay Nupe members or to stand up for gay rights. Yet Taylor's bigoted views and Aids scare stories are fuelling anti-gay hysteria. Taylor is hoping that he will get a hearing among health workers who work with Aids sufferers. We must make sure that Taylor and his supporters are the ones who are isolated in the union, not gays.

No bans on gay rights!
Come to the RCP fringe meeting to discuss why we need to stick up for gay rights
Monday 20 May 7.30pm
George Hotel
Eastborough
Scarborough

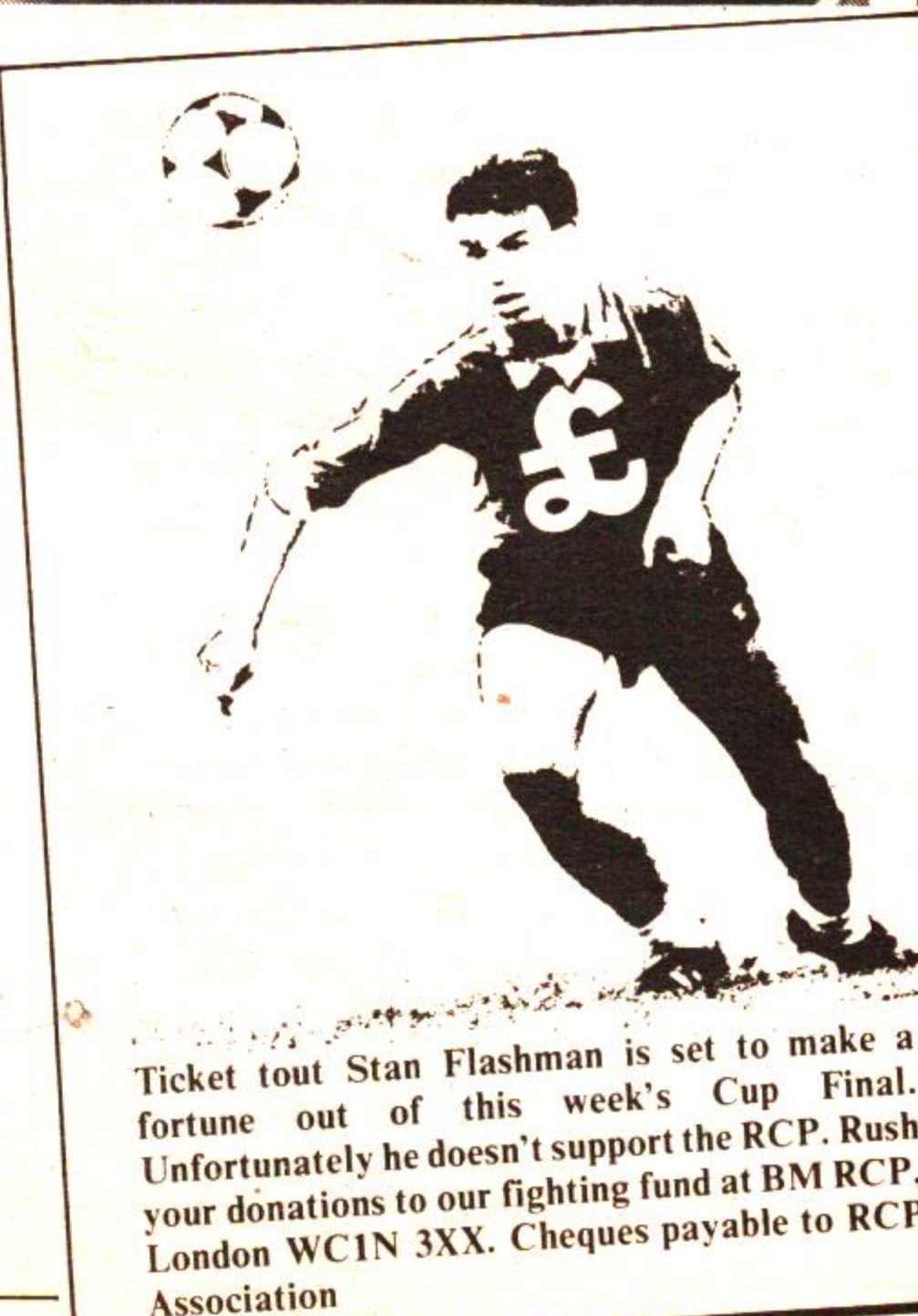
NEWHAM RACE CLASH

'Line up, march, scatter the bastards,' was one police commander's instruction to massed ranks of riot police in Newham's Plashet Park last Saturday. Black youth clashed with police once again at the end of a demonstration against police terror.

Trouble flared when crowds of young blacks began shouting 'Judas' at a black policeman. 'The next thing bricks, sticks and cans were flying through the air,' said Emmanuel from Hackney. The police moved in and arrested more than a dozen people.

Saturday's march was organised to protest at police attacks on a demonstration two weeks previously. On Saturday 27 April more than 20 people were arrested outside Forest Gate police station during a march in solidarity with seven black youths on trial for fighting back against the racists.

Thirteen year old Amjad Khan was arrested on Monday at a picket outside the Old Bailey where the Newham 7 trial was due to begin. The trial was postponed until Wednesday. But black youth in Newham say they will be back in force against the police.



Ticket tout Stan Flashman is set to make a fortune out of this week's Cup Final. Unfortunately he doesn't support the RCP. Rush your donations to our fighting fund at BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association

EVENTS

Northern Ireland elections

Newry - a town at war

Two weeks ago Billy Connolly got a standing ovation at Newry sports centre — for cracking jokes about the IRA mortar attack that cracked open the local Royal Ulster Constabulary fortress in February. Last week *Phil Murphy* and *Fiona Foster* went to County Down to find out why the republican movement is the 'toast of Newry town'.

'A town without tears' was how one British paper described Newry after local people cheered the IRA mortar team's direct hit which killed nine RUC members. The people of Newry have shed plenty of tears since British troops moved into the town on 23 August 1969 — but not for casualties among the Crown forces occupying their streets. Local people have wept over the coffins of neighbours like IRA man Brendan Waters, whose funeral procession was baton-charged and shot at by the RUC and British Army last August. They save their support for the republican men behind the mortars, fighting to liberate their Irish town from the clutches of the 'United Kingdom'. This week the battle for Newry has been brought into sharp focus by the local council elections, and the appearance of Sinn Fein candidates for the first time since 1920.

Three weeks ago Brendan Curran, Sinn Fein candidate and a former prisoner of war who has spent more than seven years in the British concentration camp at Long Kesh, noticed an unfamiliar orange car hanging around his housing estate. He thought it might be the Special Branch men whose full-time job is tailing known republicans through Newry. It turned out to be an SAS shoot-to-kill outfit. Standing as a republican candidate in occupied Newry means standing against the British authorities and putting your life on the line.

In the small hours of a recent Saturday morning the orange car and another vehicle, carrying seven men, hemmed in Brendan's car on the road home. He squeezed between them, dumped his car and ran for his life across gardens to a neighbour's house. At home his girlfriend noticed his deserted car and panicked: 'She thought I had been shot or taken'. Then her phone rang: 'A man with a Scottish accent said he was "Charles" from Belfast Sinn Fein, had a lot of money for our campaign, and the men in the cars were just his bodyguards! He said he had to see me that night.' Brendan stayed away and got his girlfriend out. 'A neighbour says he saw four men coming out of the fields with torches and guns as well. The Brits' intention was to pin me in from both sides. If they had they would have taken me away and shot me. Since the mortar bomb attack the SAS has made it known that they are going to assassinate someone here. That was just their first try.'

Brendan's brush with the British gunmen is part of the British backlash which has followed the mortar bombing. Since February more than 100 Newry men have been dragged off by police and troops. Many of them have been badly beaten in custody. Others have just been kicked through the streets of Newry without the formality of arrest. In a Catholic town a few miles from the Border, the security forces assume that every Irish man or woman is an IRA sympathiser. 'The way they do it in Newry', Brendan explains, 'is to pick up anybody that has a republican family. This time anybody who was of an eligible age to fight, who looks like they might be involved with the republican movement, was picked up.' If you are young and Catholic in Newry, you are automatically on the British wanted list.

Many of the young men who are now 'of an eligible age' to join the fight for Irish freedom were hardly born when 'the troubles' first rocked Newry in the late sixties. The town was a key area for the civil rights movement which marched demanding an end to discrimination against Irish Catholics in jobs, housing and votes.



Three for Irish freedom: republican candidates Brendan Curran, Deborah Morgan, Sean Mathers

Peaceful protests were met with brutal repression by Loyalist supporters of the British status quo.

In January 1969 police were drafted into Newry from all over Northern Ireland to beat the Catholic marchers off the streets. The Catholic community built barricades, hospitalised 10 RUC men, burnt some police vans and shoved a few more into the canal that runs through the town. In the months that followed the conflict engulfed the whole community. Women from the neighbouring area used broomsticks to confront Ian Paisley's Loyalist marchers. In August 1969 youths attacked the RUC station and threw paving stones and petrol bombs to hold off police charges led by armoured cars. British troops moved in to back up the RUC. In January 1971 the Army gunned down three Catholic youths. The people of Newry rioted against the British murderers. The struggle for civil rights had become a war for national liberation against the British authorities, and the town of Newry was in the heartland of the Irish resistance.

Today there are no more running battles between the people and police. Yet with the SAS prowling the streets, armed RUC men on hand and the South Down unit of the IRA renewing its bombing campaign, the conflict between British agents and Irish defenders continues to dominate life in Newry. The barricades which declared Newry an Irish corner of 'Ulster' may have gone from Dominic Street, but its national

identity is still fiercely disputed. Irish language enthusiasts who recently tried to erect a street name in Gaelic there were driven away by the RUC. Alongside the usual local paper stories on fetes and boy scout outings, the *Newry Reporter* carries regular in memoriam notices for victims of the war. And while the locals advertise second-hand goods in the paper, the British authorities take out a weekly front-page ad for information about 'MURDER: if you know anything about terrorist activities — murders, threats or explosives — please speak now to the confidential telephone, Newry 3015'.

The British occupation has condemned thousands of Newry people to a lifetime of repression and unemployment. A hundred years ago Newry was a prosperous linen town with favourable canal and port facilities. But after Britain created Northern Ireland through Partition in 1921, the money was channelled into Protestant towns while Catholic areas were left to rot. Newry's rail and road links have been cut or allowed to collapse. Unemployment in the town now runs at around 40 per cent. The only industry is tourism and fly-by-night firms who move in to take advantage of government grants, employ a few Newry workers on pitiful wages to make a fast buck, then clear out again.

The grim experience of life under the British heel meant that for many Newry people this week's elections were about

voting for victory in the war. The three Sinn Fein candidates in the Newry Town area stood to give nationalists 'the opportunity to express their republicanism and their opposition to British rule'. The single Unionist councillor in Newry declared his intention to 'campaign for a better security system' against the IRA and to 'uphold Unionism and defend Ulster'.

Between these two clear-cut alternatives stand the moderate nationalists of the Social Democratic and Labour Party who have controlled the council for years. In the absence of any alternatives, nationalist electors have voted in the SDLP to keep out the Unionists. But the SDLP has acted as an extension of the Unionist establishment in Newry. 'Behind those council chamber doors', says republican candidate Deborah Morgan, 'they get on extremely well.' In 1981 the SDLP proved her point by appointing a Paisleyite Democratic Unionist to chair the council.

Local people were outraged when SDLP councillors cancelled a meeting as a mark of respect for the RUC members killed in the mortar attack — something they have never done for Irish victims of British terror. 'In 1981', remembers Sinn Fein candidate Sean Mathers, 'they refused to call off council meetings when the H-Block hunger-strikers died. Now they've done it for dead Loyalist police.' When Tory Northern Ireland secretary Douglas Hurd flew to Newry to make the arrangements for the post-mortar bomb repression, the SDLP councillors made sure he was well entertained at Snaubs restaurant in Monaghan Street. The IRA summed up local opinion on the council's action by blowing up the pro-British bistro last month. The impact of the war has turned many Newry people away from the discredited conciliatory approach of the SDLP.

Whatever the results of this week's elections, Newry remains a solid base of support for the fight for Irish freedom. Try ringing the British 'confidential' telephone number for informers. You won't find it engaged. The nationalist people of Newry have only one thing to say to the Brits: get out of our town, our county, our country. There are, of course, exceptions. Billy Connolly can come back anytime he likes.

LAW AND ORDER

Tories tool up

THIS WEEK THE government published its white paper 'to curb the mobs'. The proposed new laws legitimise police violence against the working class and state attacks on our rights to organise and demonstrate.

The *Review of public order* updates the law on 'unlawful assembly', 'riot' and 'affray', creates the new offence of 'conduct intended or likely to cause fear or create violence' and gives the police new powers to control static demonstrations. It follows a hysterical law and order campaign.

- **Football hooligans:** after Millwall fans rioted against the police the media created the new demon of the football hooligan to whip up public sympathy for a law and order crackdown. Last week a 15 year old youth died in a football riot in Birmingham. The press launched another tirade against soccer violence and the Home Office unveiled a new addition — the 'hooly van' — to its arsenal of repression.

- **Picket line violence:** the scenes of violence against the police in the miners' strike were an establishment nightmare. They showed that a small minority of workers had discarded their traditional respect for the

police and the courts. The government set out to criminalise and isolate those who fought back. Showtrials of miners charged with riotous assembly, murder and conspiracy have been given extensive press coverage to cohere a public consensus backing legal repression.

- **Race riots:** recent riots against police brutality in Newham have provoked a backlash against the black community. Black youth have been hauled before the courts to face serious charges and stiff penalties. The Home Office is using the immigration laws to police the black community and isolate it from wider working class support. At last week's Tory conference in Scotland Thatcher blamed blacks for rising unemployment.

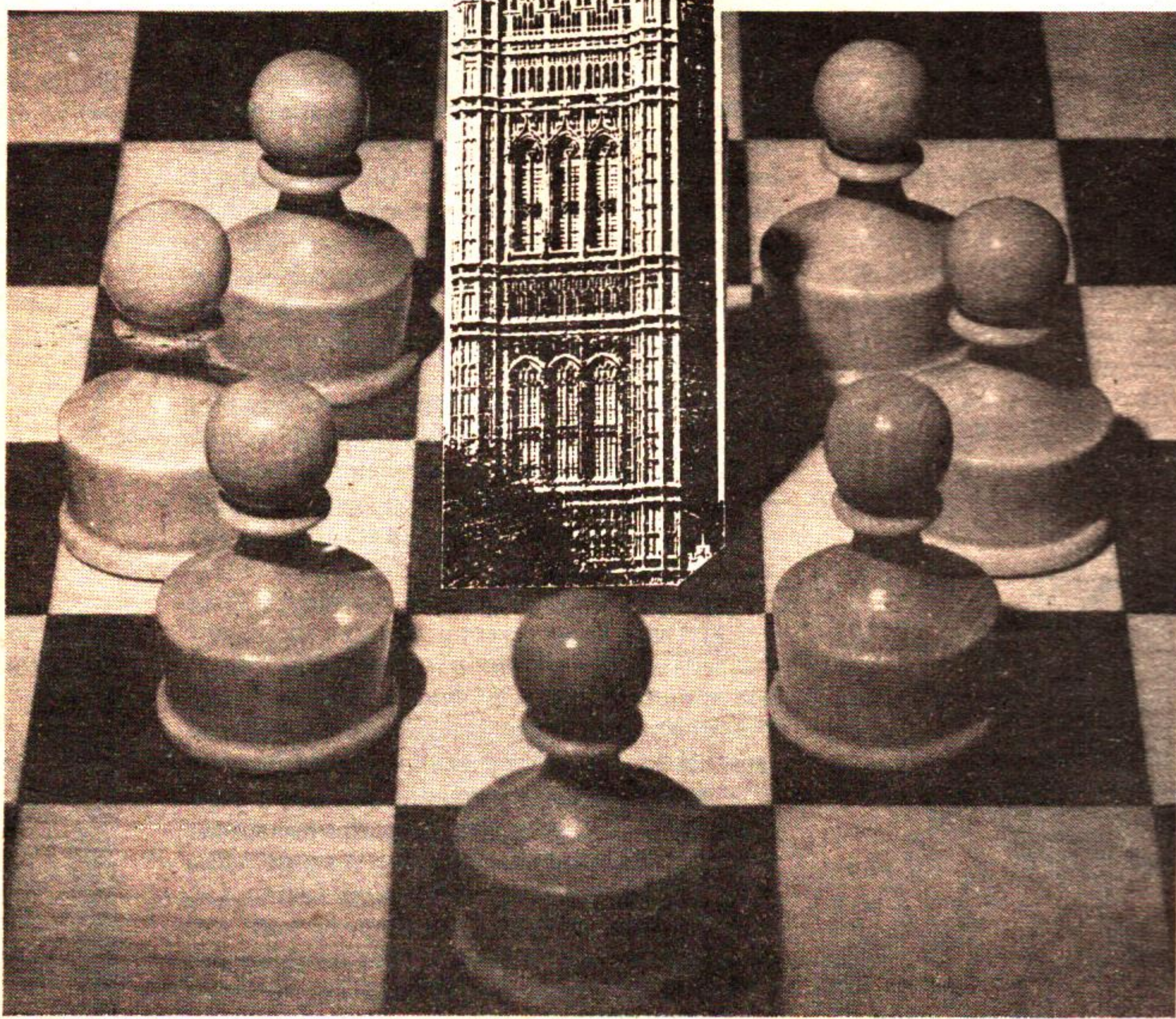
- **Terrorism:** the government began its review of the Public Order Act after the shooting of a police woman outside the Libyan People's Bureau in London last year. The establishment has used every opportunity — from the IRA attack on the cabinet in Brighton last October to revelations of spies in the security forces — to garner support for a new offensive against 'the terrorists' and subversives.



Riot police shield the system

As its system slides deeper into decay the establishment can only promise more unemployment, poverty and repression. The Tories have no choice but to tool up for the battles ahead. The government's law and order proposals show that the state is nothing but a body of armed men ranked together in defence of a system that offers the working class no future. We need to tool up for the battles ahead too. To defend our rights and build a movement that can free us all we need to take sides with the oppressed — Irish, blacks, women — against the system that puts them down.

How to play the rate-capping game



'Mr Jenkin is a worried man,' declared Lambeth council leader Ted Knight last week. In a week when Sheffield council had become the tenth Labour council to surrender to the Tories' drive to cut local government jobs and services Tory minister Patrick Jenkin must wish he was always so worried.

Here is a guide to Labour's rate-capping game.

Move 1 Non-compliance

Launch a big publicity campaign proclaiming that the Labour councils won't comply with Tory cuts (but don't get bogged down working out the details of defying the law).

'If you think we are going to cooperate,' warned Greater London Council chief Ken Livingstone last July, 'you are wrong.' Labour councils threatened by the Tories' rate-capping legislation met in Sheffield to work out how to fight back. Livingstone, Lambeth's Ted Knight and Sheffield's David Blunkett all took a determined stand against the government. Backed by Neil Kinnock they agreed either to refuse to set a rate or to set a deficit budget.

The Labour leaders agreed to defy the law, but they didn't work out the finer tactical details. The house journal of the local government left *Labour Herald* took it as 'a sign of the seriousness of those present that the conference debate did not degenerate into posturing around the issue of whether or not the law should be broken'. The conference never bothered to work out the tactics of how to defy the law because nobody had any intention of going that far.

Move 2 No-rate rapport

Declare your intention to take a united stand on the principle of not setting a rate (but get the experts to work out how to save money and make cuts).

By September the rate-capped councils had gone for the no-rate option. But not setting a rate meant different things to different councils. Upper tier councils — the GLC, Ilea, Merseyside and South Yorkshire — had a legal deadline to set a rate. These four councils would break the law if they simply failed to set a rate by 10 March. But the borough and city councils would have to declare their intention *never* to set a rate to go illegal. It was agreed in the interests of unity that on 7 March *all* rate-capped councils would pass an illegal declaration.

Behind the public show of unity every council was hard at work trying to balance the books and avoid confrontation. By October GLC director general Maurice Stonefrost had worked out that the Tories' demand for £50m worth of cuts was manageable by financial manoeuvres and zero growth next year. Policy adviser Reg Race had come up with another plan to steer

the GLC clear of the law. Other councils followed suit. A subtle combination of underspending and penny-pinching cuts and economies meant that councils had plenty of scope for deficit budgeting.

Move 3 To the brink

Tell the world that you are prepared to defy the law and risk loss of office (but make sure you have a carefully prepared avenue of retreat and a plausible fall-back option).

In November thousands of local government workers turned out on a demonstration in London to hear Livingstone pledge that there would be 'no movement' from the no-rate position.

But the secret minutes of the November local government campaign unit conference revealed that some councils had already broken ranks. Blunkett warned that the no-rate position would not survive and he advised the four upper tier authorities to set the maximum possible legal rate on 10 March.

Merseyside and South Yorkshire made it clear that they were not prepared to put themselves in the front line of defiance. Moderate councils such as Basildon gave an unequivocal commitment to act within the law. Lambeth left winger Knight told them that the important thing was to keep quiet about it so that the Labour councils could keep up the pretence of united defiance. 'Jenkin has got to believe we are prepared to go to the brink,' Knight reminded them of the rules of the game.

Move 4 Defer defiance

Adopt an appropriate form of words to disguise the fact that you have already given in (but continue an outward posture of defiance).

The January London Labour Party special conference committed every Labour authority to continue the no-rate policy. But when the leaders of the rate-capped authorities met in February they did an about-turn. A document agreed by all present chose its words carefully. 'One thing an authority must not do', the councillors agreed, 'is resolve in terms that it will not make a rate for 1985/6.' In case there was any confusion, the document explained that 'the form of wording suggested above is to the effect that as at 7 March the authority considers that it will be impossible for it to make a rate'. Labour councillors speak a strange language, but their conclusion was clear. The new position was 'not a declaration of a fixed intention not to make a rate, which would be unlawful'.

The new policy meant that borough councils could officially duck the issue of illegality. It left the GLC and Ilea out on their own. But GLC deputy leader John McDonnell and Lambeth leader Ted Knight continued to make speeches claiming that all councils would be going illegal together.

Move 5 Ken carries can

This is a tricky move: capitulate to the Tories (but make sure somebody else takes the rap).

At the GLC Labour group meeting on 4 March Livingstone proposed that the Labour group should refuse to set a rate but if that failed fall back on the maximum legal budget. Livingstone's fall-back position had been widely agreed from the start. On the day a group of 10 left wingers, led by McDonnell, scuppered Livingstone's plan and the GLC ended up with a cuts budget.

Livingstone became the left's fall guy. McDonnell accused him of reneging on the no-rate strategy by championing the fall-back option. But McDonnell himself had helped to prepare the fall-back budget. In the March issue of *London Labour Briefing* he argued that 'if the no rate option is defeated in the GLC council chamber as a result of a betrayal by the right, the left will fall back upon a deficit budget and refuse to allow a budget to go through which entails any cuts'. Everybody else on the left denounced Livingstone's 'betrayal', but they were all up to the same tricks. *Socialist Organiser* sneered contemptuously at 'the future Lord Redken'. But Sue Carlyle, its representative on Tower Hamlets council, played the Livingstone game, refused to stick by the no-rate position and put her name to a cuts amendment.

Move 6 Blame the right

Add up the number of right-wing Labour councillors who can be trusted not to break the law (but don't encourage them to change their minds).

The majority of Labour councils which lacked a left-wing fall guy had to rely on the right to do their dirty work. Through 10 months of posturing Sheffield leader Blunkett was sustained by the knowledge that he could rely on at least 20 right wingers to vote the right way on the day and rescue his radical reputation. The discovery a week before the final budget meeting that the council had already printed tens of thousands of rate demands set at the maximum legal rate showed just how confident he was.

Move 7 'We knew it'

When the game is up write a long article in *Tribune*, *Labour Herald*, *New Statesman* or *London Labour Briefing* explaining that defeat is really victory, the left's divided ranks are really a triumph of unity and that the campaign was a model of popular democratic campaigning.

One line was that there was no defeat because the left never expected to win in the first place. Keith Veness in *London Labour Briefing* candidly admitted that 'it had long been obvious to comrades centrally involved in the rate-capping struggle that there was no way that the GLC would go illegal on March 7'. Knight and his deputy Matthew Warburton announced in *Labour Herald* that 'it was always likely that a policy not to make a rate would fail to carry at the GLC' but 'there need have been no shame in this for the GLC leadership'. Their only grudge against Livingstone was that he blew the gaffe too early. Livingstone claimed in hindsight that 'it was a tactical disaster...to proceed on the basis of achieving maximum unity by not debating what we would actually do when the crunch came'. It is indeed true that if you don't fight to win you shouldn't be surprised if you lose.

Others argued that the left was a glorious loser. Blunkett blustered about 'the gains so far achieved in credibility, campaigning successes and the maintenance of morale and sense of purpose'. As Blunkett and Livingstone and McDonnell and others go off in pursuit of parliamentary seats, council workers and people who rely on council services face a grim future. 'Raising people's consciousness' Blunkett reckons has been the major achievement of Labour's local government campaign. If Labour's cynical rate-capping game has raised workers' consciousness of the bankruptcy of Labour Party politics, then it will have achieved something.

Joan Phillips

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

SAFE PERTH

Before she arrived in Perth Thatcher's prospects at last week's conference of the Scottish Tories looked grim. 'In effect Scotland has been blown up by the Scottish office,' declared prominent local backwoodsman Nicholas Fairbairn. His main complaint seemed to be that the recent rates revaluation had resulted in dramatic rises not only for home owners and businessmen but for the Perth Tories' own HQ. Fairbairn slightly exaggerated the explosive effect of the rate rises on Scotland, but only slightly. Opinion polls suggested that the Tories' already slim complement of 21 MPs north of the border could easily dwindle to four as a result.

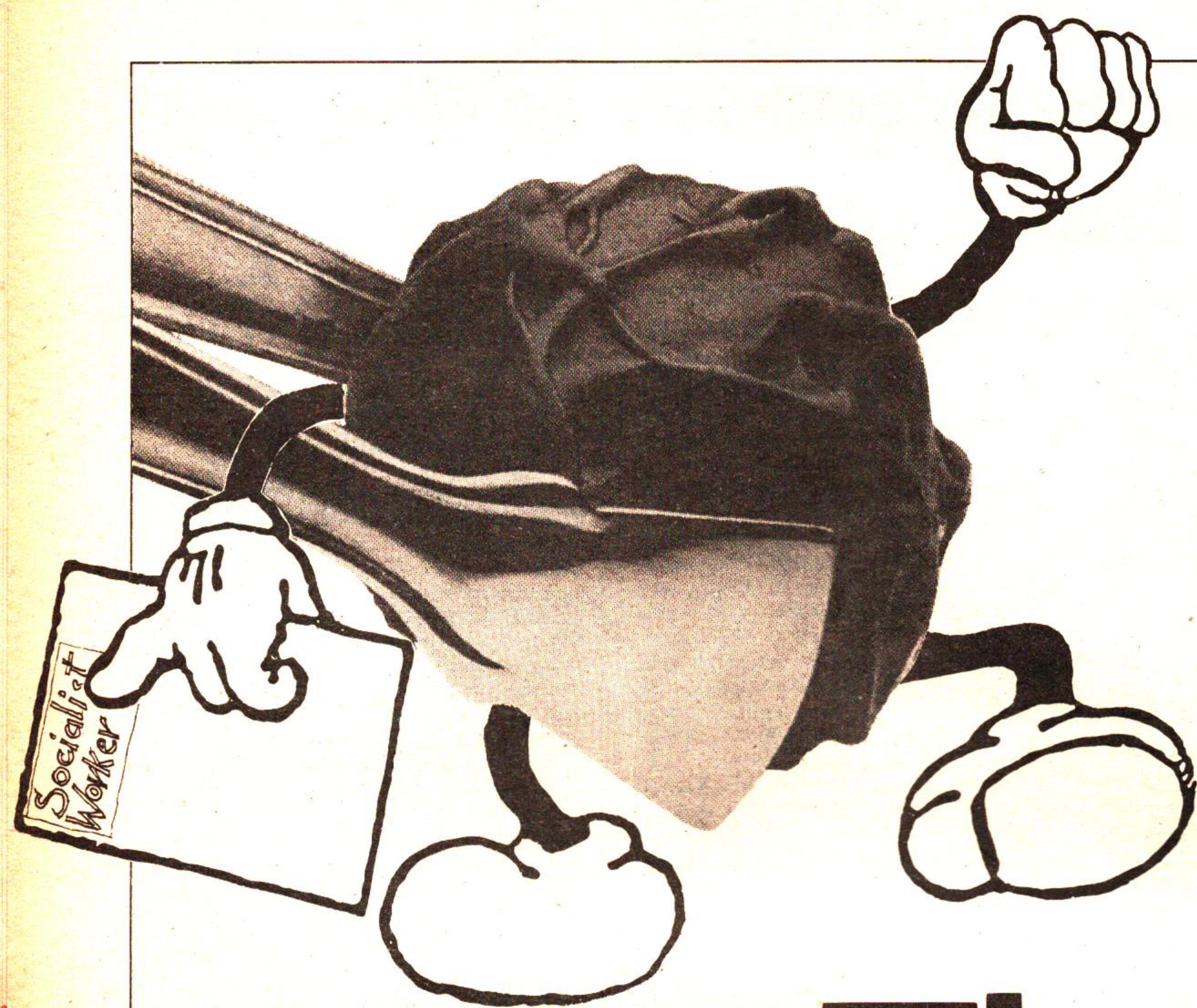
But it all turned out alright in the end and the conference concluded with the usual standing ovations and everybody singing *Land of Hope and Glory* and *God Save the Queen*. Thatcher succeeded in quelling the revolt of the Scottish Tories by appealing to the sort of instincts that have made the Conservative Party what it is today. Before the conference began the Scottish secretary George Younger, a man under suspicion by his countrymen for being a bit wet, announced a £40m slush fund to keep Scottish businessmen quiet about the rates.

At the conference itself senior ministers showed that they also knew how to touch the heart-strings of the Scottish Tories. The social security system was 'an encouragement to idleness and irresponsibility' Nigel Lawson told the massed ranks of Harris tweed and cavalry twill. 'We must ensure that all this is money well spent,' he continued to well-bred roars of approval. The chancellor insisted that welfare benefits must be spent in ways which encouraged 'initiative and enterprise'. Child benefits to encourage child labour initiatives? Old age pensions to promote geriatric entrepreneurs? Lawson had the finest products of the Scottish petit-bourgeoisie in the palm of his hand.

There was little more for Thatcher to do. There was no need to unleash Fairbairn to expound his well known Neanderthal views on sexual politics. Former prime minister Lord Home, the doyen of the grouse moors, remained in dignified silence. In her closing speech the prime minister tickled the delegates' racist prejudices in passing, blaming immigration for unemployment. And she staunchly defended the government's resolute reaction.

Thatcher concluded with a flourish, proclaiming that now was 'a time to go forward, confidently blending the new with the old'. It was not clear whether this was a reference to her relationship with Denis whose seventieth birthday had been celebrated on the platform in the course of the conference. Or perhaps it was a reference to the new Tory fashion for dignifying current factional positions by invoking the authority of Disraeli, Lord Stockton or even, in Peter Walker's case, Iain Macleod. (Who? Didn't he play for Rangers — or was he one of those Scottish yobbos who upset John Selwyn Gummer by their student union antics?)

Thatcher survived Perth, but the Tory ranks remain troubled. In past years Thatcher went on directly from Perth to win the Falklands war in 1982, to beat the Labour Party in 1983 and the miners last year. This year she returns to face Francis Pym's new backbench line-up — Conservative Centre Forward. Now that she has forced the England-Scotland game from Wembley to Hampden to keep the Scottish hooligans out of London, she probably wishes she could send Pym's team up to face the Hampden roar instead.



The hard left's soft centre

The hard left is trying to regroup its forces against Kinnock's rightward-shifting Labour Party leadership. But what alternative does it have to offer?

Everybody agrees that the left is in a mess. Neil Kinnock has swung the Labour Party steadily to the right in his quest for media recognition of his status as an alternative prime minister. The defeat of the miners, the local councils fiasco, and the leadership's success in consolidating control over the executive, the shadow cabinet and the re-selection process have all put the left on the defensive. *Tribune* and Ken Livingstone have been welcomed alongside David Blunkett and earlier recruits to the Kinnock camp. The disintegration of the old Communist Party into hard and soft fragments is due to be finally ratified at its congress this weekend. Militant is on the run and Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill and their followers in the factions of the far left are out on a limb.

The left's solution is 'regroupment'. 'The socialist left must regroup to fight the right,' declared *Labour Herald* in its front page appeal last month to all who wanted to 'challenge Kinnock's road'. 'No surrender to Kinnock — regroup the left' echoed *London Labour Briefing* in a major editorial statement. In a full page open letter to the *Militant* editorial board last week, *Socialist Worker* appealed for unity. 'We have had all manner of differences in the past, and will, no doubt, continue to do so', comments *Socialist Worker*, 'but all this pales before the tasks and opportunities we now face.' *Socialist Worker* does not expand on the 'opportunities' of the moment, but this term turns out to be a euphemism for the far left's fear of being dragged down with the wreckage of the official labour movement.

Why is it that the left's line often seems to be simply a mirror image of the right? *The Sun* criticises Arthur Scargill's proposed rule changes in the miners' union. Hence for the hard left it is a matter of principle to defend these bureaucratic measures. The gutter press exposes ballot-rigging in the TGWU to discredit Ron Todd and raise George Wright's chances of winning the new poll. The left therefore takes its stand in support of Todd's campaign. In the engineering union Fleet Street is backing Bill Jordan, Terry Duffy's favoured candidate to succeed him as union president, so the left is backing John Tocher. Inside the Labour Party Tony Benn and Militant are on the defensive, so the left supports them against the leadership.

Where the Tories and the media put a cross, the left puts a tick. Where the Labour leadership puts a negative sign, the left puts a positive, and vice versa. This approach certainly has the merit of simplicity and it is has a long tradition on the British left. But does it provide any real alternative for workers to the leadership and policies of the existing labour movement? Let's look closer at some of the left's choices.

Backing the bureaucrats

The proposed rule changes in the NUM strengthen the power of the union leadership over the rank and file. Scargill aims to avoid facing re-election as president and to make it virtually impossible to remove area officials. He proposes that no strike is made official unless it is sanctioned by the national executive. All these measures are designed to stifle rank and file initiative and to remove the bureaucracy even further from grassroots pressure. They are the panic reactions of a leadership that has failed its members and now fears their wrath. Yet the left goes along with Scargill.

The proposals 'will protect the union from Tory anti-union laws', comments *Socialist Worker*. The rule changes may help to protect official funds, but they will make militants who take unofficial action more vulnerable to the police and the courts. 'The new rules would make it easier for Scargill to go to the rank and file over the heads of the area leaderships, if necessary,' observes another apology for the rule changes in *Socialist Worker*. This echoes the SWP's absurd theory that the area officials restricted Scargill's militant leadership during the strike. It was obvious to anybody not guided by blind loyalty to Scargill that if he had wanted to he could have mobilised the rank and file, but this did not fit into his strategy of winning a

negotiated solution.

The Tory press and South Wales and Scotland petty reasons for changes. The press, strengthening his own uses the same technique unions like the engine

NAUGHTY-
BUT
NICE



The Notts leaders resent manipulate the rule book from their scab role. other area leaders are autonomy to which the attachments.

The fact that right wing rule changes is no reason should support them. Where these rule changes help spirit of the mining community 1984-85 strike such a the government. Do the the campaign for an am and victimised miners of closures and at conditions? The answer resounding no! We should rule changes and m resistance to bureaucratic policies at area a

In election campaign AUEW the left is supporting John Tocher. Both are union officials, with involvement in negotiating deteriorating conditions years senior union motor company. He management — who co election as general secretary as a troubleshooter for resistance to the closure foundry last year with Tocher has been a Manchester area for the recent betrayal was at engineering factory in negotiated 50 redundant week work-sharing scheme claimed this was a victory left joined in the celebration

Both Todd and Tocher endorsement. But an alternative to the traditional offer rank and file work platforms are full of promises for strong leadership. Neither puts forward decisive changes in redundancies, wages. Indeed this would be bureaucrats who have

area leaders in Notts, and all have their own posing Scargill's rule hate to see Scargill position — even if he es the media approve in rs and the electricians.



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er now receive the left's e have to ask what onal leadership do they ers? Both their election atitudes about the need and a modern union. any programme for n union policy on r working conditions. be inappropriate for played a leading role in

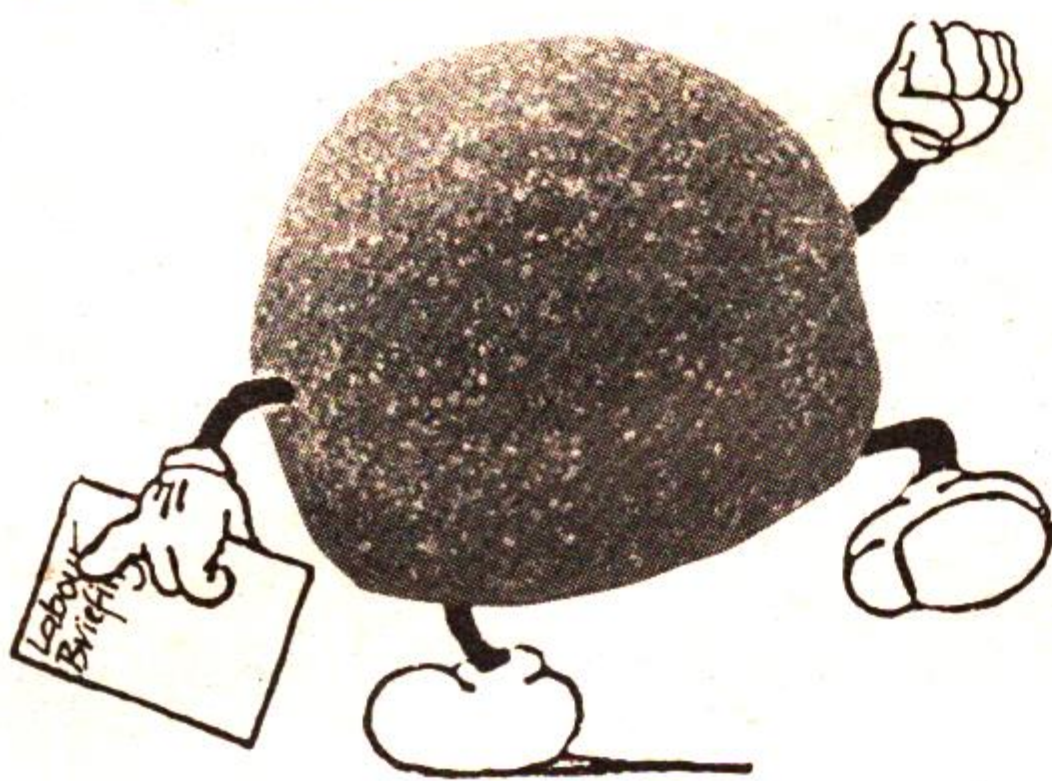
operating the existing policies with disastrous consequences for workers. While Todd welcomes the left canvassing on the quiet, in public he has declared that he is 'the candidate of all the union and not just one faction'.

Yet *Socialist Worker* argues that 'a victory for Wright would be a defeat for militants inside the TGWU'. It concludes that 'every socialist must work hard to stop Wright winning — this means mobilising to get Ron Todd elected'. Militants at Ford and socialists everywhere would be interested to know the advantages of having Todd as union leader. Active workers need a fighting union leadership. They do not need the tired old men of the past with their clapped out policies. The fact that Todd and Tocher are labelled as left wingers should not prevent militants from making their own judgements and acting upon them.

A crutch for Labour's old men

The only time Tony Benn has been in the news recently is when the Labour leadership has dragged him out for a beating to demonstrate how confident the Kinnock regime has become. He has been regularly trounced on the national executive and savaged in the media. The current *Labour Briefing* national supplement complains that 'they have sought to portray Tony Benn — the only obvious potential candidate for the leadership of the party — as a discredited figure rapidly being deserted by his most significant former allies and no longer representing a force to be feared'. Ignoring the fact that the press portrayal is more or less accurate, the hard left is obliged to go to the rescue of its long-standing mentor. The left's papers have been padded out with lengthy interviews with the old man of the Labour left.

But what alternative does Benn offer to the Kinnock leadership? In a major feature in a national paper last week he took a wide look at the current state of British politics. 'After nearly 35 years as an MP and 11 years as a minister', begins Benn with statesmanlike authority, 'my abiding impression is of the growing powerlessness of the House of Commons over



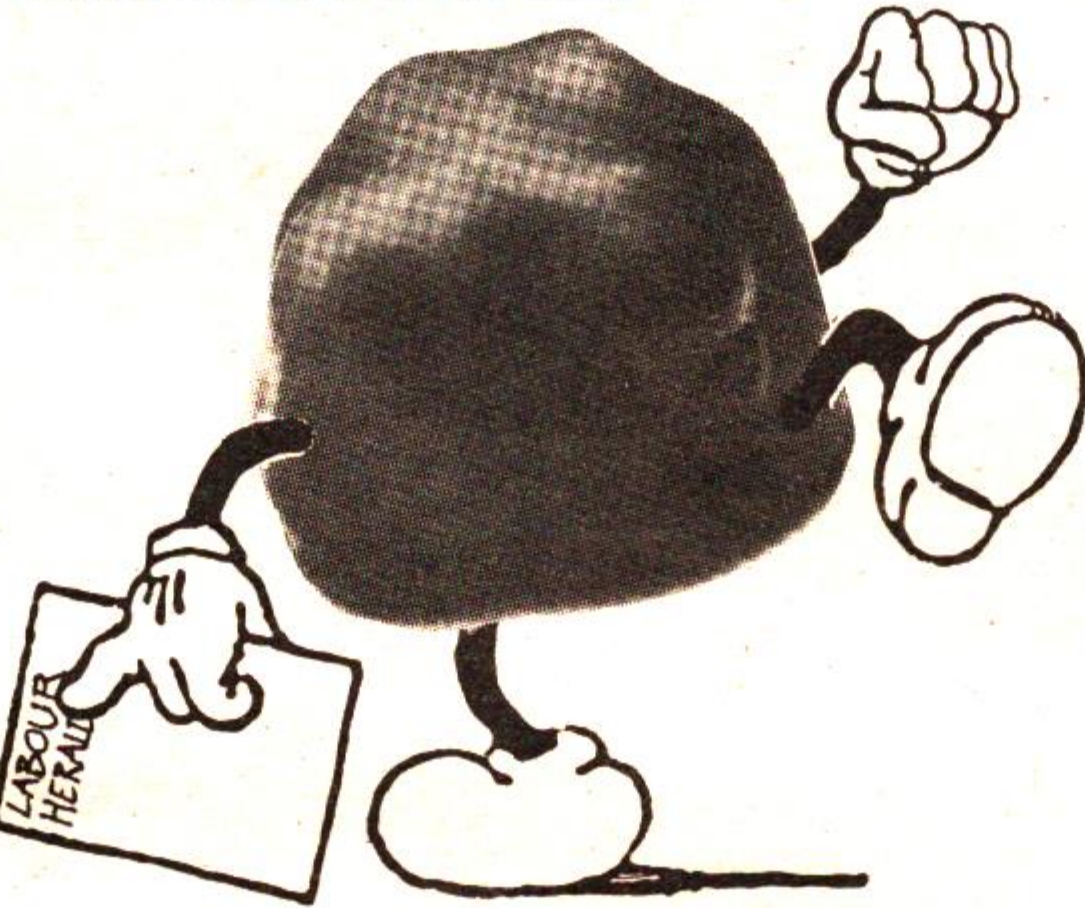
key decisions.' In these times of 'great domestic upheaval and international tension', he concludes that we need 'a new Reform Bill' to strengthen the authority of parliament. Is he serious? To most people living under threat of mass unemployment and star wars the House of Commons is an anachronism of ever increasing irrelevance.

Most people are fed up with the childish parliamentary antics of Labour left MPs who seem to be incapable of doing anything effective about important issues such as the miners' strike, unemployment, dole cuts, etc. They want some action from the party that they support to defend jobs and living standards and political rights — not a new secrets act and a longer question time. Yet as long as Kinnock and the *Daily Star* attack Benn, his Reform Bill will no doubt get the backing of the left.

The consequences of the left's approach become clear when we look at the current controversy around trade union political funds. Here again the left follows the familiar line. The press and the Tories are urging workers to vote against the political levy and cut the ties between the unions and the Labour Party. The left position is therefore straightforward — to campaign to maintain trade union funds for the Labour Party. All the papers of the left backed the Labour Party in the first major ballot — held in the print union Sogat last week. They endorsed the approach followed by the union

leaders, pretending that the issue was not support for the Labour Party in particular, but of the right to maintain a political fund in general. The left backed the bureaucrats' cynical scheme to con workers into supporting the Labour Party on false pretences.

The result was a majority for Labour. But what was the benefit to the working class? The left helped the Labour Party to survive by an infusion of workers' subscriptions. But what use is the Labour Party to workers in Sogat or any other union? The Labour Party that was boosted was the party led by Kinnock which offers to do its duty in resolving the problems of British capitalism. It is also the same party in which the left is on its knees.



The hard left's method of supporting anybody to the left of the right ensures the survival of the existing Labour leadership and the left's own humiliation. The left has been caught in the same trap at every general election since the twenties. It has its criticisms of the Labour Party and its leadership. But when the elections come around, and the establishment rallies around the Tories, the left swallows its limited amount of pride and goes out and campaigns for the Labour Party under its existing leadership and policies.

Regrouping for relegation

Regroupment is the logical conclusion of the left's organisational approach to political problems. 'We understand the arguments advanced by Militant supporters about the need to work inside the Labour Party — although we have disagreed with them,' comments *Socialist Worker* sympathetically. These past disagreements are suspended, because 'Now, with the Tories on the offensive and the Labour Party galloping to the right, there is a new situation'. The 'new situation' calls for the SWP and Militant to work together.

The SWP's open letter to Militant may come as a shock to party members who have long emphasised its independence from the Labour Party as its distinctive feature. Yet it is fully consistent with the wider approach of the SWP and the rest of the far left. The SWP's independence from the Labour Party has the same basic character as Militant's dependence on the Labour Party machine. Both are tactical adjustments to the dominant force in the British labour movement. In practice both groupings follow the same approach to the main issues of British politics. Both take broadly the same line on Scargill's rule changes, the current union

election contests and the political levy. At election times both campaign for the Labour Party. Behind both tactical differences and convergences lies the historic weakness of the British left — its lack of a real political alternative to mainstream Labourism.

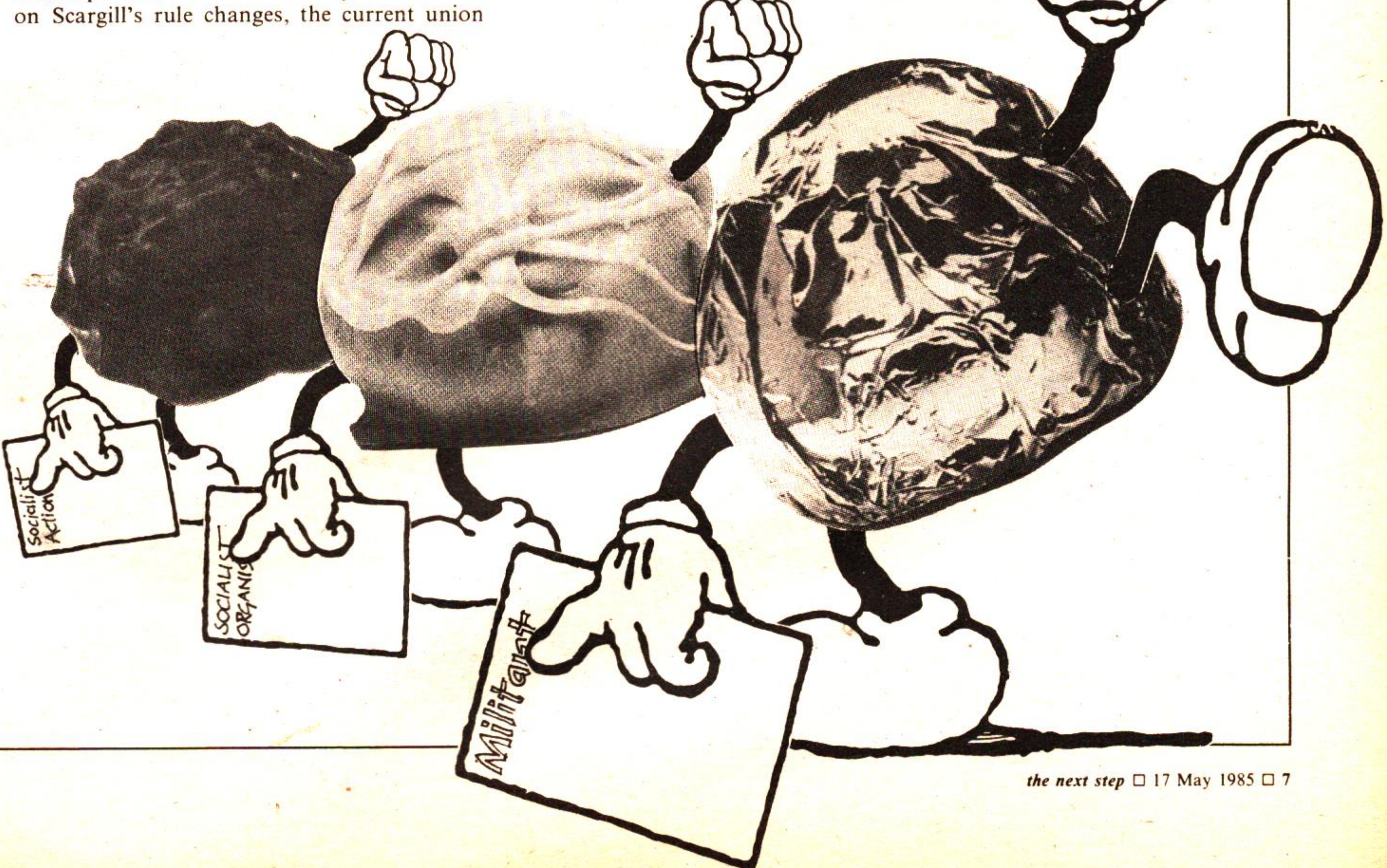
The central weakness of the left is its failure to work out a set of policies and a way of mobilising around them that can guide working class resistance against the capitalist system. In all the discussion of realignment and unity and working together there is virtually no discussion on policy issues. When policy is raised the left offers a radical version of the programme and the methods of the Labour leadership. In its platform for regroupment *London Labour Briefing* includes a familiar Labour Party conference shopping list of demands for 'the nationalisation of the banks, major finance houses, and the top industrial monopolies', etc, etc. Every measure proposed in the *Briefing* platform is for legislation to be introduced by a Labour government of the distant future (or for more constitutional changes in the structure of the Labour Party).

Just like every labour bureaucrat for decades, the hard left looks to the existing machine of government to solve the problems facing the working class movement. And what should the working class do in the indefinite period of time before a Labour government comes to the rescue? The left's answer is clear in its approach to current controversies — make tactical responses to the issues as they are presented by the establishment and the official labour movement. On this ground the victory of the right is guaranteed. Its positions are backed by the authority of the existing system and by the ingrained commonsense of tradition. Against this the left can only field its moral outrage and its wishful thinking. The left's lack of a coherent political alternative to the right explains why it always loses in the end and why its leaders always tend to sell out under pressure.

The inability of the left to put forward a practical alternative to Labourism in the day-to-day struggles of the working class means that it is destined to walk in the shadow of the Labour leadership. While Kinnock and his team make clear that Tory anti-union legislation will be preserved by a future Labour government, that they have no intention of fighting for an amnesty for victimised miners and that restoring the bosses' profits is a key priority for Labour's jobs campaign, the left does its bit to keep Labour's show on the road. The left's subservience to the right means that it will remain irrelevant to the urgent needs of the working class.

A favourite metaphor of SWP leader Tony Cliff that sums up the playground politics of the hard left is the observation that if West Ham are playing Arsenal it is stupid to stand on the terraces shouting slogans in support of Spurs. As long as the game of British politics is played between the rival teams of Tory and Labour the working class will always be the loser. The hard left has a season ticket for a team of no-hopers now staring relegation in the face. Our view is that the only way to win the championship is to build a new team.

Mike Freeman



INTERNATIONAL

Western Alliance

The thieves fall out

Reagan has returned home after meeting the USA's European allies and celebrating VE Day, but his anti-Soviet rhetoric, his star wars initiative and his lack of sympathy for Europe's economic problems have exposed the most serious conflicts in the Western alliance since the Second World War.

Reagan's speech to the European parliament at Strasbourg revealed the extent of the realignment that has taken place since 1945. The president used the occasion, which was meant to be a celebration of peace and European unity, to launch a blistering attack on the Soviet Union. Even supporters of US foreign policy were shocked by the speech and wondered why, on the anniversary of VE Day, Reagan could not 'let bygones be bygones' and acknowledge Soviet Russia's contribution to the Allies' war effort. But today anti-Sovietism is more important than ever to the coherence of American foreign policy. Forty years ago the Soviet Union was celebrated as an ally in the war against Hitler. Today it is a pariah among nations, the focus of US militarism and the target of Reagan's star wars programme.

European reluctance to get involved in the star wars project has led Reagan to adopt an increasingly aggressive anti-Soviet posture. In the early stages of the star wars debate the White House presented the strategic defence initiative as an alternative to nuclear deterrence which opened up new possibilities for reducing world tension. Since the absurdity of this claim has sunk in among Europe's leaders Reagan has changed tack. During his European tour the president justified star wars simply in terms of the need to counter the Soviet 'threat'. A mysterious new Soviet super-missile — SSX24 — was conveniently discovered just before Reagan mounted the platform at Strasbourg which helped get the message across.

America's anti-Sovietism has little to do with the reality of the Soviet Union. It is widely acknowledged among Western experts that Moscow presents no economic or military challenge to the vastly superior Western powers. Yet the USA has been artificially heightening East-West tensions over the last few years to help to maintain the cohesion of the Western alliance and preserve US hegemony over Europe. The aggressive assertion of US military might, backed up by strident anti-communism, is America's answer to the problem of its decline as a world power.

The aggressive thrust of US foreign policy is part of a drive to force military matters into diplomatic and economic discussions among the Western powers. The star wars controversy exposes how military rivalry is coming to play an increasingly prominent role in international relations. At Strasbourg — and even more markedly at the earlier economic summit at Bonn — traditional disputes over economic strategy and trade were overshadowed by fierce controversies over rearmament between the USA and its European rivals.

The US president's strident anti-Sovietism has found a ready response in the more right-wing sections of the European establishment. German chancellor Kohl projected his Christian Democratic Party as the force to protect Germany against 'Soviet totalitarianism'. In Britain *The Times* called for a battle against 'Soviet imperial power' to fulfil 'the true promise of VE Day'. *The Economist* drew a direct parallel between Nazism and Leninism, which it labelled 'the unfinished business' of 1945. Reagan's tour has helped to stir up a climate of anti-Soviet hysteria.

Yet European hostility to American supremacy and to Reagan's crass anti-Sovietism came to the fore at every stage of Reagan's trip across the continent. At Strasbourg the socialist deputies heckled the US president and staged a walk-out during his speech, led by the respectable figure of former Labour cabinet minister Barbara



Reagan liked Thatcher's jokes, but nobody laughed at his budget deficit

Castle. It was the same story in Spain where 500 000 people demonstrated against the Reagan visit. The left's growing confidence in expressing anti-Americanism reflects the extent to which this outlook has become influential within sections of the European establishment. The growing strength of anti-American sentiment was fully revealed at the economic summit at Bonn. French president Mitterrand launched a broadside against the USA, declaring his refusal to participate in the star wars programme and rejecting US proposals for a new round of trade talks.

Although Mitterrand was the only European leader who openly challenged US policy at Bonn the summit was characterised by unprecedented tension and acrimony among the 'big five'. A high-ranking German official was overheard remarking that Reagan and his entourage behaved 'like pigs'. A blazing row broke out between the French and American delegations when Reagan's bodyguard refused to shift the president's car and thus blocked Mitterrand's exit. Meanwhile French representatives charged summit host Helmut Kohl with being soft on Reagan while the Germans condemned Mitterrand for torpedoing 'their' summit with his stubborn anti-Reagan stance.

Such breaches of diplomatic etiquette were just a minor symptom of the growing mood of bullishness in relations among the allies. Tensions have been heightened by forecasts of a renewed plunge into world recession after the feeble recovery of 1983-

84. The collapse of the US recovery has deprived European and Japanese businessmen of the main market which sustained their export growth during the past two years. The recent trade war over Japanese imports into the USA has fuelled widespread fears of an uncontrollable slide into protectionism.

The summit was supposed to produce an agreement on trade negotiations to counter the trend towards more bitter rivalries. But after four days of talks the summiteers could not even agree on when to meet again — never mind how to tackle the problems of trade. Reagan's arrogant message that his partners should now look after their own economies and stop expecting the USA to bail them out did little to improve the conference climate.

The debate over star wars became the focus for open conflict in the alliance. There are a number of economic, political and military reasons why Reagan's allies are very wary of his plans for extending America's military power into space. The Europeans are concerned that the strategic defence initiative will give a major boost to US industry. It is, according to *Time* magazine, the 'biggest procurement pork barrel in world history'. For the initial research stage more than \$26 billion have already been allocated to the programme. It is to be financed by a huge state deficit which is maintained by vast inflows of European and Japanese capital, attracted by high American interest rates. In effect America's

rivals are being asked to pay for its rearmament and to finance its arms industry.

The European leaders deeply resent the fact that Reagan has invited them to participate in star wars only on terms which guarantee US control. Thatcher and Kohl want to accept the invitation because they do not want to miss out on the technological and commercial benefits of this revolutionary rearmament programme. But opposition to star wars is growing within both the British and the German establishments.

The military and political implications of star wars are the most alarming aspect of the programme for the European powers. The US scheme threatens to devalue the French and British nuclear deterrents. It has already led to a significant increase in East-West friction which is a threat to European stability and, particularly for Germany, to political and economic relations with the East. The net effect of the whole project would be to reinforce the military inferiority of America's rivals and to limit the pursuit of their independent interests.

Britain, France, Germany and Japan have not been slow to make their independent war preparations. Joint European initiatives in the development of electronic warfare systems and the beginnings of space technology have mushroomed in the past few years. At this stage only Mitterrand has chosen to rely exclusively on Eurodefence. His European partners are trying to keep their options open. The years immediately before the first two world wars were characterised by sharp twists and turns in the alliances and conflicts among the world powers and by a general arms build-up.

It is impossible to predict the precise line-up for World War Three. But it is obvious that the preparations are well under way. For the last 40 years 'peace' has been maintained among the Western allies by keeping their missiles pointed at the Soviet Union. But the Soviet Union will be a side issue in the coming battle for world power as the Western allies redirect their missiles at one another.

Sabena Norton

ELECTIONS ON THE RHINE

The German sickness

LAST SUNDAY'S LAND elections in North Rhine Westphalia, the Federal Republic's biggest province incorporating the industrial Ruhrland and the urban centres along the Rhine, confirmed the new volatility of West German politics.

The vote for the ruling Christian Democrats, the party headed by chancellor Helmut Kohl, slumped to below 40 per cent. Kohl and his party are widely blamed for austerity and rearmament. Many Germans are uneasy about Kohl's attacks on the welfare state and his pro-American foreign policy. The Christian Democrats' claim to be the guarantors of German security and stability rings hollow. Kohl's belief that the display of German-US solidarity at Bonn and Bitburg in the week before the elections would be a vote-catcher was a characteristic misjudgement. Reagan's aggressive militarism is widely regarded as a threat by German people. Many see Kohl's closeness to Reagan as a sign, not of statesmanship, but of spinelessness. The election results were a major setback for the Kohl government.

The poll result was a dramatic success for the Social Democrats, Germany's major opposition party. The SPD won an absolute majority of 52 per cent, its best ever result in an area it has controlled for nearly 20 years. The result shows that the SPD has begun to rally since the collapse of the Schmidt

government in October 1982 plunged the party into a deep crisis. Schmidt's anti-working class policies alienated the party's traditional working class voters and the rise of the Greens drew radical middle class voters away from the party. The SPD's response was to turn to ecology, feminism and pacifism to liven up its image. This provoked ructions in the traditionally staid establishment party. But the 'greening' of the SPD has begun to pay off. By promoting itself as 'the party that cares' the SPD has been able to connect with a growing mood of uncertainty in German society.

The new look SPD is no more left-wing, but it has tried to shed the cold technocratic image it acquired in the sixties and early seventies. Today's SPD has similar policies, but it now tries to relate to the conservative trends that have grown in the harsh climate of recession. Johannes Rau, the triumphant SPD candidate in North Rhine Westphalia, was presented as a father figure who reads the bible every morning, spends all his free time with his wife and children and collects stamps. Two months ago Oskar Lafontaine won another significant election victory for the SPD in Saarland by cultivating a similar style.

The SPD's compassionate approach has created problems for the Greens who used to have a monopoly on 'feeling' in West German politics. The Green Party's poor

showing in Sunday's polls — it fell below the minimum required for any seats in the state parliament — follows recent setbacks in the Saarland and in local elections. Two years of involvement in parliamentary and provincial politics have fragmented the party as its representatives squabble over how far to go in the quest for respectability.

The most striking feature of the Land elections was the absence of working class politics. In Germany the collapse of the left has gone even further than in Britain or France. Hence German elections increasingly resemble the apolitical personality contests of the USA. The sickness of German politics will only end with the creation of a new working class party.



SPD father figure Johannes Rau

REVIEWS

19 AT NUMBER ONE

I dance on your grave

Paul Hardcastle, 19, Chrysalis

Paul Hardcastle is well on his way to becoming this year's Frankie. Boosted by his record company's refusal to release the disc in the USA for fear of causing offence, 19 has shot to the top of the UK charts.

This is an audio nasty, the megadeath disco remix of the protest movement against America's war in Vietnam in the sixties and seventies.

Hardcastle's 19 may be better to dance to than the strumming of earlier protest singers like Bob Dylan. But 10 years after the fall of Saigon to the Viet Cong 19 simply repeats the themes of the folk club anti-war singers.

The songs of the anti-Vietnam campaign of a decade ago betrayed the concerns of a movement whose members had set out to save their own skins. When the US army was composed of young workers, many of them black, hardly an anti-war hit appeared in the 'hot 100'. When the protest hits started they reflected the fears of the great American middle class.

The anti-Vietnam movement and the music really took off from 1968 when the USA began to lose the war and to conscript middle class youngsters into the army. 'Hell no, we won't go' was the defining slogan of a generation of college students whose basic objection to the Vietnam war was that they were expected to be personally involved in it. The 'out now' industry that bloomed in the seventies in films, books and protest songs concerned itself with the trauma of America's youthful soldiers and their parents. The horror of Vietnamese children burnt alive by American napalm, or the millions of Cambodians blown away in Nixon and Kissinger's 'secret' bombing campaign, was never the central issue for a movement which denied all accusations of being anti-American and carried the Stars and Stripes on its protest marches.

Hardcastle simply updates these ideas and adds a boystown beat. *Nineteen* focuses on the horrors of Vietnam for the American soldiers. Clever use of taped interviews makes this more graphic. Adding a bit of studio polish to the schoolkid method of imitating machine-gun fire (you repeat



The real victims of the Vietnam war

-n-n-n-n-n- and -n- is the first sound of 'nineteen') lets you enjoy the idea of being exposed to hostile fire while you shake your booty. But the guns in 19 are all pointed at the American soldiers who we are meant to identify with on the dance floor.

Hardcastle points out that around 800 000 Vietnam veterans still suffer psychological disorders as a result of their experience overseas. He finds it hard to take the fact that the US government never recognised the sacrifice that the 'boys' made in 'Nam'. 'None of them received a hero's welcome,' intones the newsreel commentator on 19. But last week the US administration made good past neglect of the vets by herding them through New York in the city's biggest ticker-tape parade since the end of the Second World War. This rehabilitation of the left-overs from America's last major foreign invasion is part of Reagan's preparations for the next time Washington has to send in the marines.

Hardcastle's preoccupation with the reputation and welfare of American soldiers is compatible with this patriotic revival. For the people of the Third World, the problem with US troops is not that they are 19. They are 19 with a bullet.

John Johnson

JAPAN

How Tokyo rose

Shibusawa Masahide, *Japan and the Asian Pacific region*, Croom Helm 1984, hbk £17.95

The next Second World War anniversary on the calendar is VJ Day, when the Japanese emperor surrendered after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Forty years on, Japan's recovery is even more remarkable than that of its defeated German ally.

Shibusawa's valuable book shows how Japan climbed back from the disaster of its defeat in the Second World War. In 1945 the Japanese economy lay in ruins, more than 80 per cent of its manufacturing base had been destroyed. The expulsion of its troops from the areas it had occupied during the thirties and early forties reduced Japan's influence in Asia to a shadow of its former power. The USA was able to impose its will on the region unhindered, even rewriting Japan's constitution to suit Washington's plans.

Things have changed. America's economic decline, its defeat in Vietnam, and its growing commitments in the Middle East and Central America mean that the USA cannot afford to police the Pacific region on its own. Britain, the USA's former junior partner in Asia, was supposed to be on hand to help America out until the mid seventies. But Britain withdrew its main military forces well ahead of schedule. America's only option for a new Asian sidekick was the resurgent Japan.

During the boom years of the sixties Japan achieved average annual growth rates of 17 per cent, laying the basis for its economic strength today. It also sought to repair its relations with the countries it had occupied before and during the war. At the end of the fifties Japan concluded a series of war reparations deals. In 1965 it even signed a treaty with South Korea, an area Japanese forces had ravaged from before the First World War to the end of the second.

Tokyo's slate is not entirely wiped clean in South East Asia. Japan still has problems with its image, and many Asian countries evoke memories of Japanese occupation to mobilise consumer resistance to Japanese imports. But the USA has

been prepared to live with the poor reputation of its new partner because America has even greater problems in the region. In the Philippines, the country in the Asian Pacific where it retains most influence, the US-backed dictator Marcos faces a militant popular opposition movement.

America has had no choice but to rearm Japan to keep the peace in a major area of economic growth and potential conflict. Washington has emphasised the mythical communist threat to justify boosting Japan's military role in the region. Shibusawa's anti-communist stance presents American propaganda as a true reflection of politics in the Asian Pacific. He fails to see that the real potential for future conflict lies not between the 'free world' alliance of Japan and America and the Red East, but between the USA and its ambitious Asian ally. As the balance of economic power continues to shift in its favour, Japan will not be content to play the part of America's assistant for ever.

Andrew Matthews



ANTI-FASCIST FILM

Guilty generation

A Love in Germany, Andrzej Wajda (director), France/Germany 1983, Camden Plaza and Chelsea cinema

Andrzej Wajda's film about German fascism has been released just in time for the '40 years after' commemorations. It is based on the novel of the same title by German writer Rolf Hochhuth which traces the authentic story of a German woman and her Polish lover in a small German town in 1941.

It starts in the present as the woman's son travels to Brombach to question surviving local residents about the events leading up to his mother's incarceration in a concentration camp and the hanging of the Polish prisoner of war whom she loved. The paranoid reactions of the Brombachers to this unsolicited enquiry into their past are meant to convey a sense of the collective amnesia and guilt which still dominate German attitudes to the fascist past.

Wajda's portrait of fascism in a small provincial town is subtle and convincing. The film captures the deep-rooted racism, the bigotry and the mindless bureaucracy which made ordinary people willing agents or passive accomplices of the fascist state machine. Paulina Kropp and her lover Stanislaw Zasada become the victims of a campaign of retribution as Paulina's envious and bigoted neighbours tip off the Gestapo. Stanislaw's fate in the hands of the Gestapo until his eventual execution shows terror being administered by a well-oiled bureaucratic machine in accordance with pedantic rules and regulations.

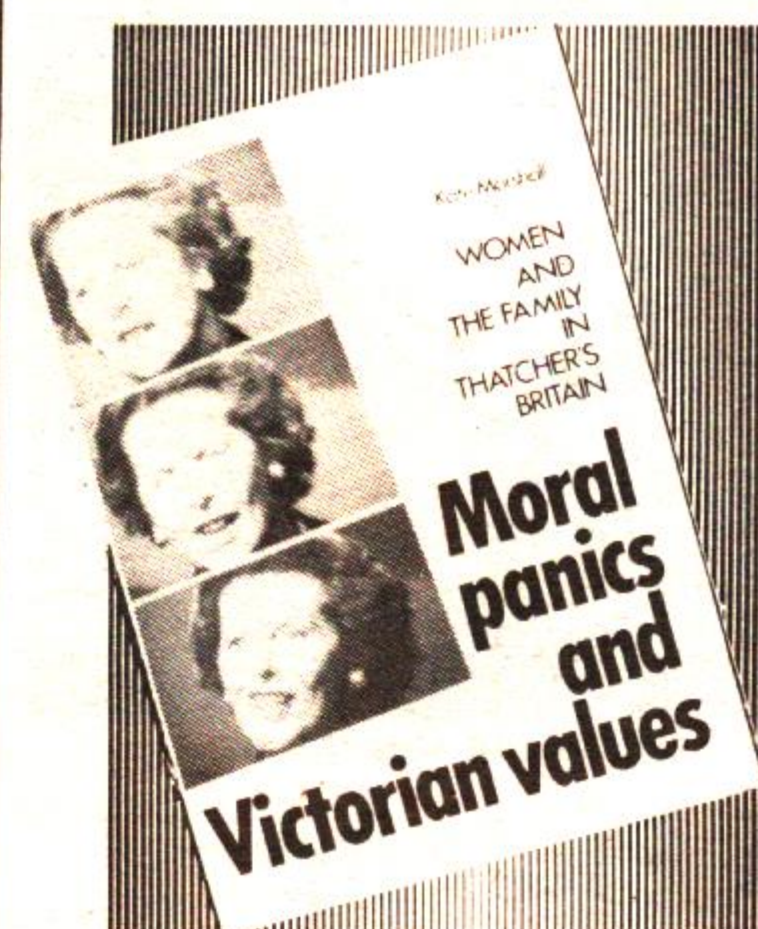
The message of *A love in Germany* is that fascism not only destroyed its victims, but that it corrupted and wrecked a whole generation of Germans — a trauma whose effect lingers on today. This is true.

The moral corruption of individuals however is not peculiar to German fascism. Britain's oppression of the Irish people and its long history of barbarism in the Third World have had a similarly corrupting influence on British society. Racism, bigotry and bureaucratic narrow-mindedness are the abiding features of all advanced capitalist societies. Capitalism breeds warped psyches. The present revival of a pogrom mentality against gays and reactionary views about women and the family throughout the Western world shows that barbarism always lurks beneath the surface of capitalist society. What was distinctive about Germany between 1933 and 1945 was that the survival of German capitalism depended on mobilising barbarism on an extreme scale.

Because *A love in Germany* misses out this point, it comes dangerously close to mystifying fascism by concentrating on its psychological dimension. With this qualification it is nonetheless an excellent film. It avoids cliché and focuses on the tensions created as individuals seek to come to terms with a ruthless society. Its main strength is the depth of its characters. Those who rebel, those who adjust and those who become barbarians are all portrayed with equal realism and subtlety. Wajda's involuntary exile in Europe has exposed him to the influence of modern German film makers like Fassbinder, Wenders and Herzog. *A love in Germany* shows that this has been a productive encounter.

Sabena Norton

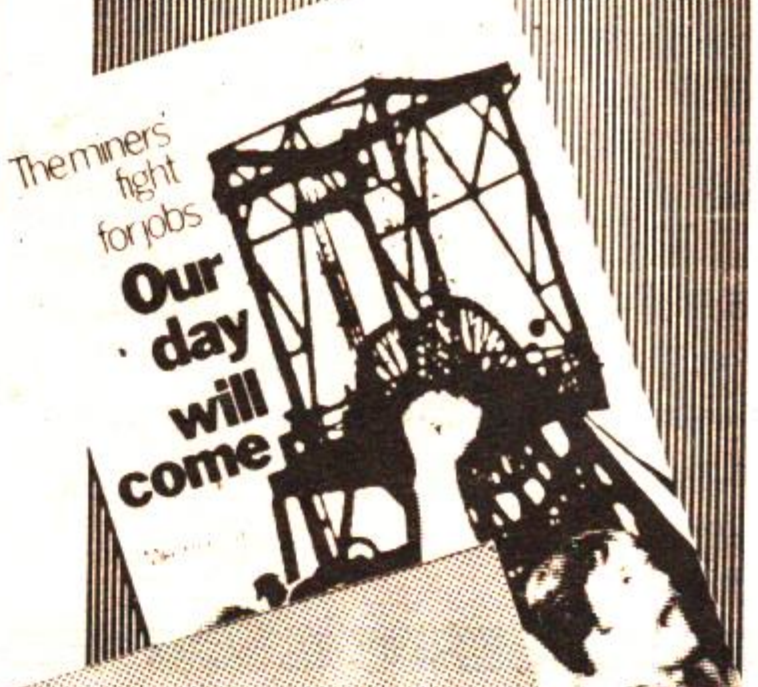
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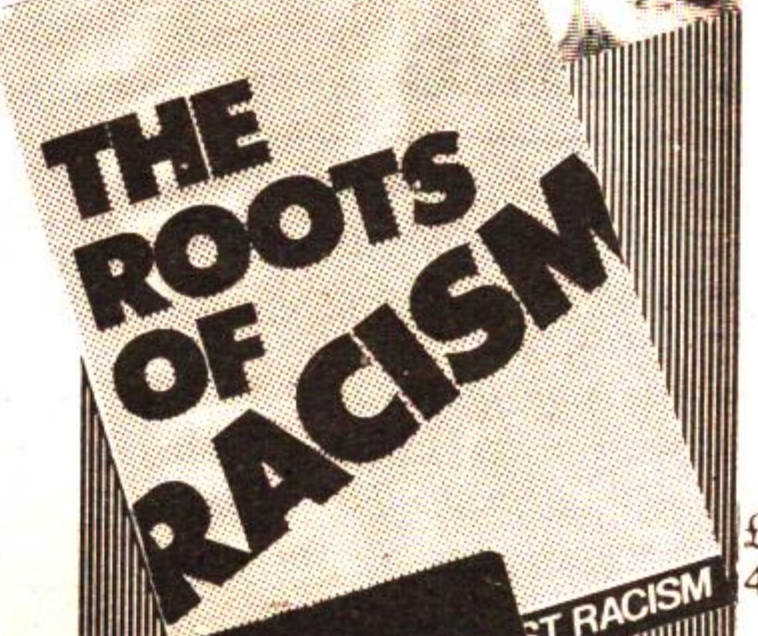
£1.50 plus 30p p&p

An 'epidemic of fornication' is responsible for the increasing number of one parent families, a 'gigantic social evil, probably the biggest and most intractable social evil we face today', according to Paul Johnson writing in *The Daily Telegraph* last Saturday. The circumstances in which 'these children of teenage girls' grow up create a 'strong possibility that they will become criminals or drug addicts or both'. This deadly social disease is 'the consequence of the defiance of moral laws and contempt for the institution of the family'.

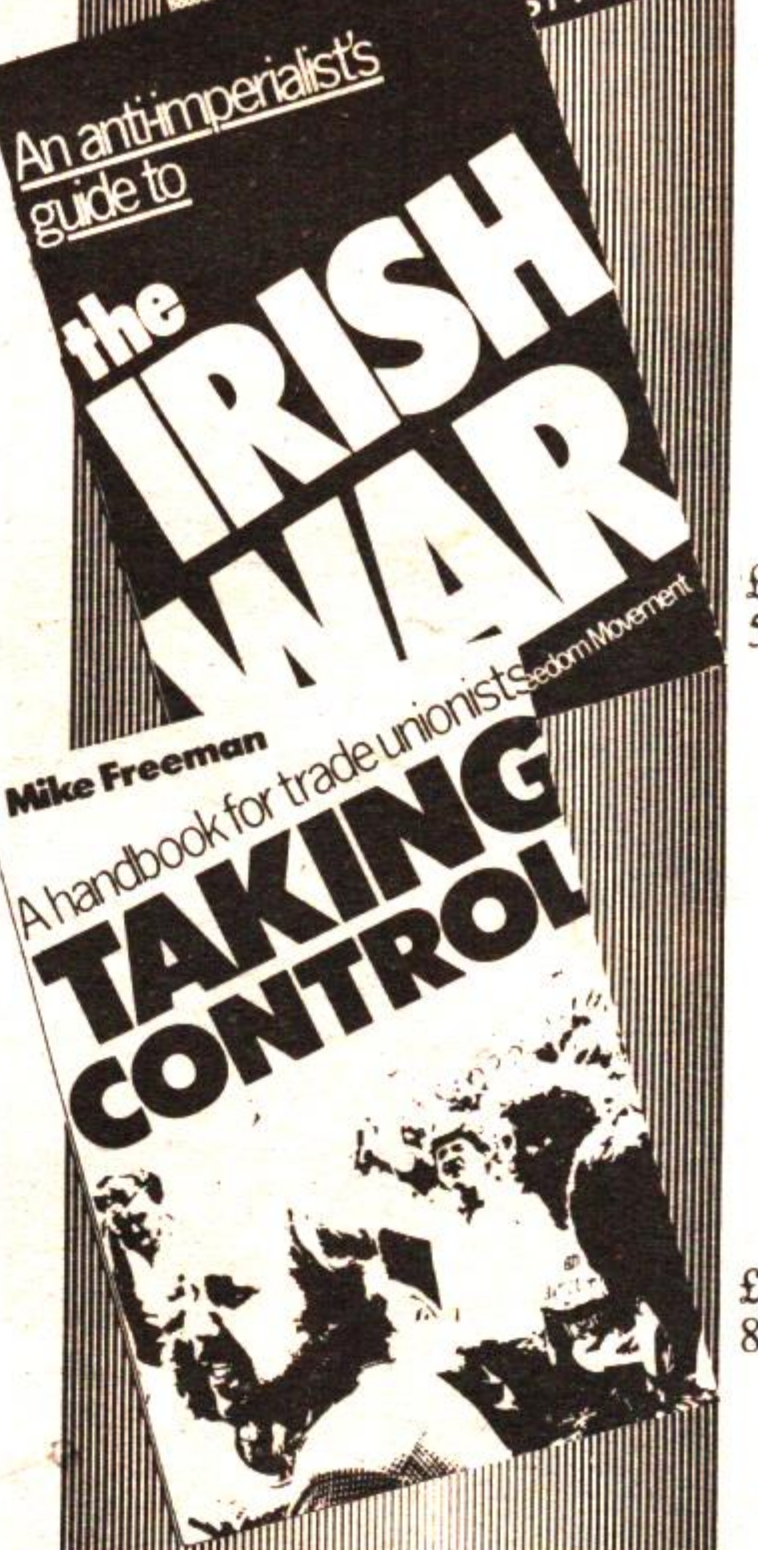
Ten years ago Johnson's views would have been dismissed as a joke. Today they are respectable and widely accepted. *Moral panics and Victorian values* explores the new morality and its role in promoting marriage and motherhood, parental authority and law and order.



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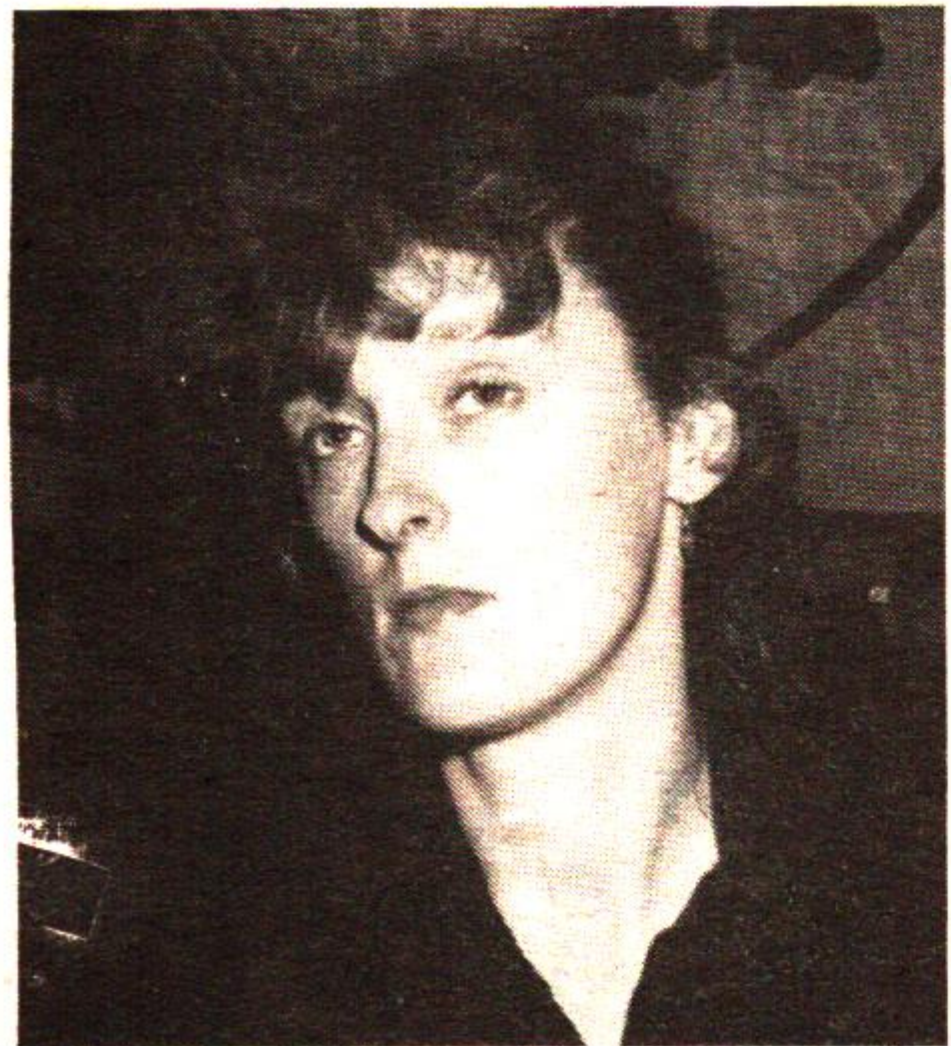


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LETTERS

STEPPING OUT



Chris Black (reflex)

Terror Act victim Joe Boatman

PTA Pick-up

On Sunday 5 May I was arrested under section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Belfast. I was in Belfast to complete a photographic project for my finals. I am a student at the Polytechnic of Central London and a freelance member of the National Union of Journalists.

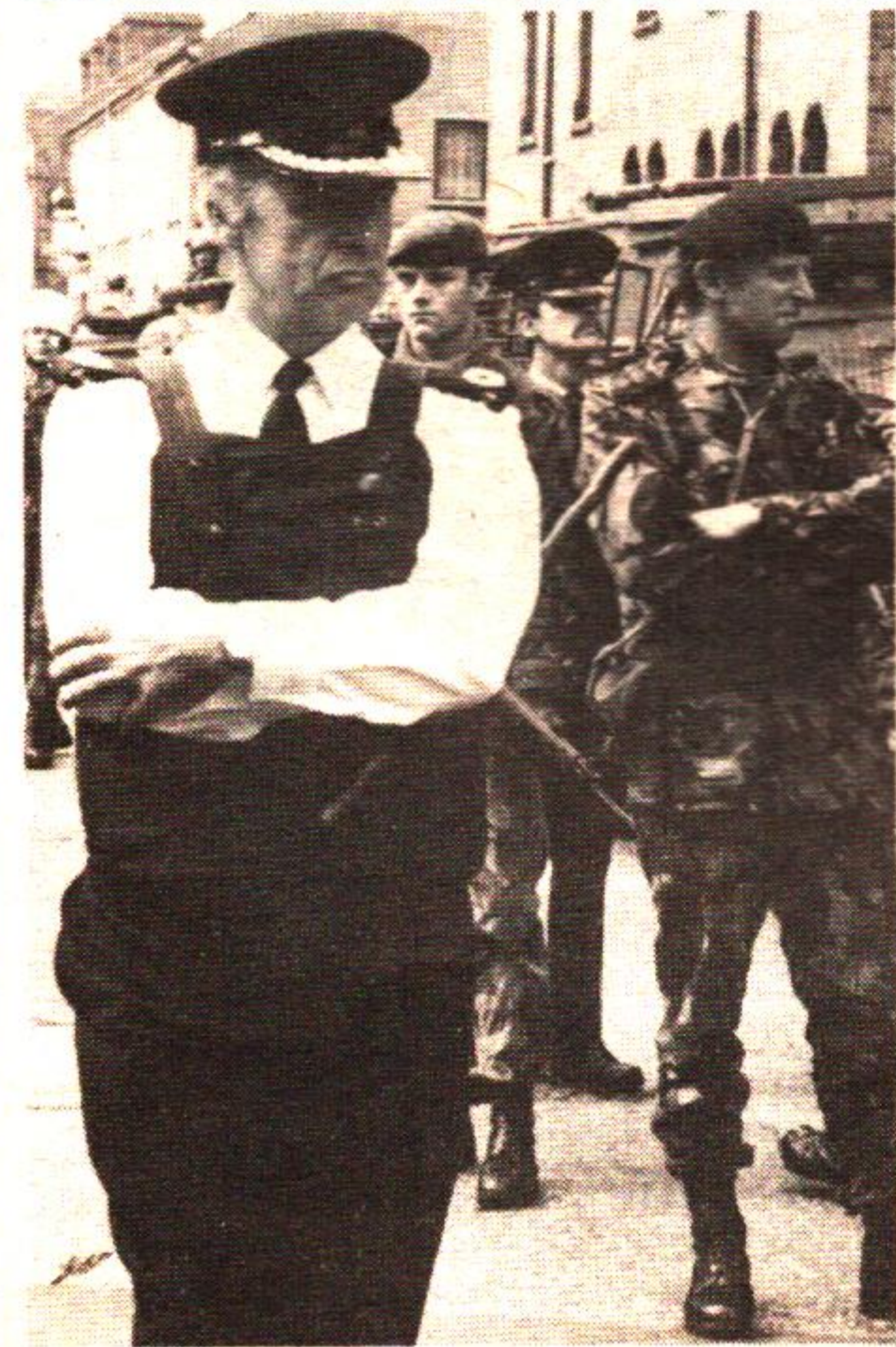
I was eventually taken to Castlereagh barracks where I was questioned about myself, my views on the war in Ireland and my 'involvement' in terrorist organisations. I was refused a solicitor, photographed and fingerprinted. After my release on Monday morning my solicitor told me that I was unlawfully arrested and falsely imprisoned. He advised me to sue the Royal Ulster Constabulary for damages, which I intend to do. I do not know at this stage if I will be charged. My film has been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the negatives may be destroyed.

I would be grateful if readers of *tns* at college or at work could raise my case in their student unions or trade union branches. I am hoping the the NUJ and the National Union of Students will take up my case. It would be useful if you could write to the RUC condemning my arrest and asking for the immediate return of my film.

Joe Boatman
North London

Occupied

Last weekend, on the anniversary of the hunger-strikers, I got a first hand view of what it is like to live in an occupied country. As I stepped off the boat in Belfast I was greeted by a large presence of Royal Ulster Constabulary police and British Army troops. Travelling up the Falls Road on the way to my destination in the republican part of Belfast I passed a security tower. Walking round West Belfast the next day I took some photos of a British Army barracks which towered over a small nationalist housing estate. I was threatened with arrest. Walking down the Falls Road towards the Divis flats



Joe Boatman (reflex)

I saw three heavily armed vehicles full of troops brandishing their guns at the local people.

The British government has led everybody to believe that force is necessary to keep the peace in Ireland. It was obvious to me that British 'peace' means blood and war for the Irish people. As an English woman I would like to say to readers of *tns* that your fight to get British troops out of Ireland is the only way to bring peace to Belfast streets.

Lynn Griffiths
Bolton

Congratulations

You are right (*tns* 3 May) about the teachers' strike. Deals, wishful thinking and pussy-footing won't get us anywhere. If children (who can usually see through the piffle of pronouncements by any government) are to be supported the teachers have to go on the offensive and support all workers out to smash the state. Put this argument to colleagues. Argue for real accountability which is entirely absent from NUT organisation. And organise to win, not to cobble together a deal that can only benefit the Labour Party. And keep reading the great new *tns* — congratulations!

Mark Sealey
South London

Zionism and racism

As three students from Sunderland polytechnic we would like to set the record straight over the union's decision to ban the Jewish society which promoted Zionism. Wrongly associating Zionism with racism, the union implemented its no-platform policy and repeated a common left-wing cop-out, believing that a piece of paper would do the work of effective organised action.

As an ideology Zionism is not racist. It only becomes such when it is used to persecute the indigenous Palestinian population. This form of ban reflects the hypocrisy of the left who say they are fighting racism by proscribing Zionism, but who never oppose British racism by fighting immigration controls. The idea that you can beat racism by bureaucratic bans is a myth. The only way to defeat racist ideology is by a political challenge to the British state.

Bill, Rob, John
Sunderland



NUM Platform

Elections are coming up in the NUM. Having failed on the industrial front after 12 months of strike action, the bureaucratic machine of the NUM has decided that its best interests lie in the return of another Labour government. The interests of rank and file miners lie elsewhere. What did the Labour Party do for us during the strike?

Young miner, a Militant pamphlet currently circulating round the pits, tells us to keep faith with the Labour Party. It argues that we need to build a Broad Left in the NUM, like the one that's campaigning to get John Tocher elected as AUEW president — the same Tocher of the Laurence Scott

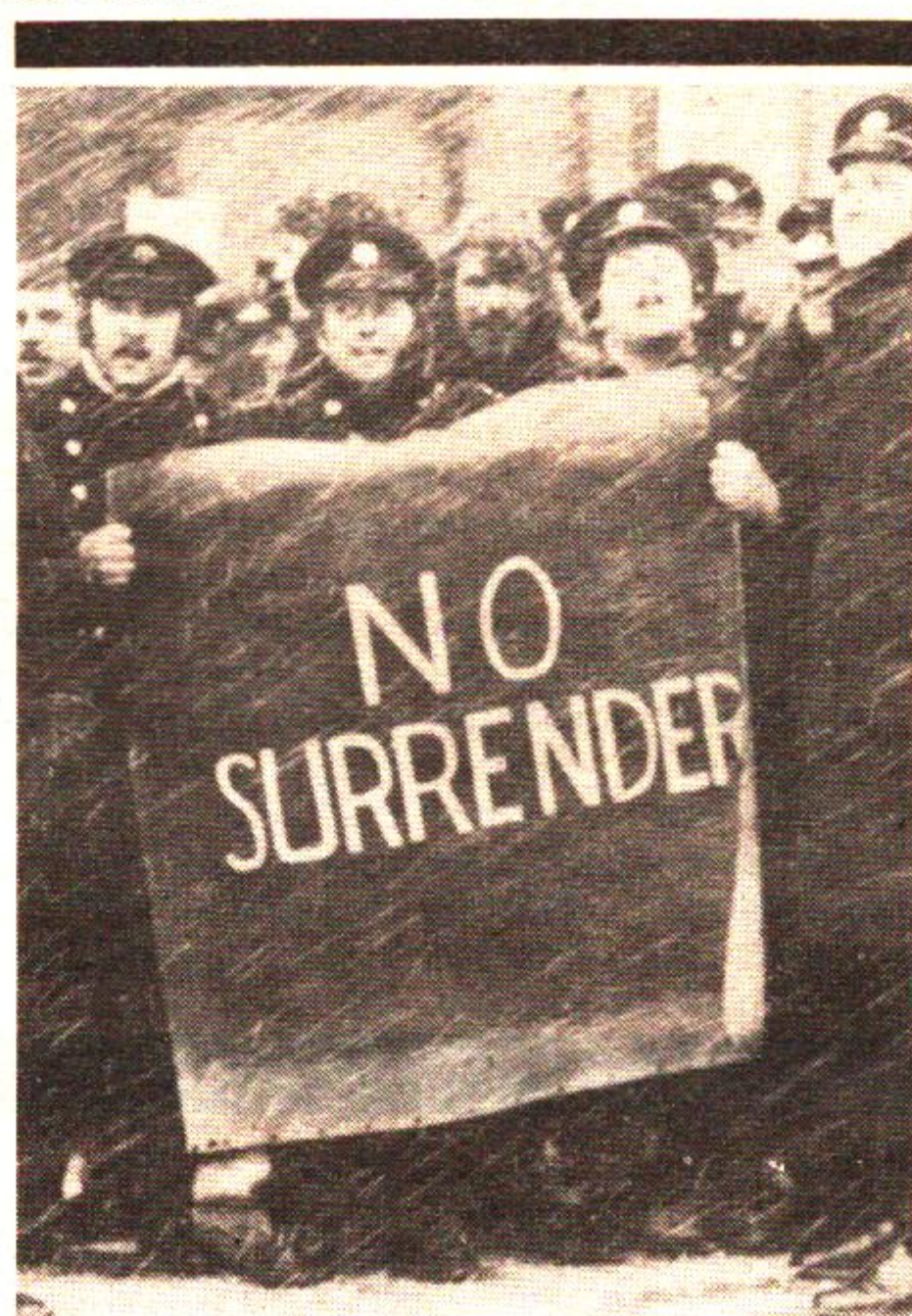
sell-out!

Young miner advises us to 'put pressure on the next Labour government' to reinstate jailed and sacked miners. Militant has a short memory. What about Des Warren and the Shrewsbury pickets who rotted in jail while the last Labour government was in power? We need to put pressure on the NUM leadership now to fight for an amnesty. We need a national campaign to free every miner who ended up behind bars as a result of the strike.

As it is, our leaders don't even allow sacked men a vote in their branch meetings, let alone a chance to stand in the branch elections. Rank and file miners have every interest in demanding that sacked men be allowed to stand in the elections. These men showed the kind of motivation and energy that was needed to win the strike.

Communists standing in the elections have no illusions in Labour governments or NUM rule books. Manipulating the rule book is one thing, direct rank and file action is another. The rule book should be put aside in the coming elections. Mass meetings should be called at every pit head to allow candidates a chance to speak to the men. What are the NUM leaders afraid of?

Terry Anderson
Yorkshire



Firefighters fightback

I have just fought an election in the Firebrigades Union for the position of brigade secretary in Greater Manchester. Greater Manchester has 41 fire stations, each station counts as a branch. I based my election platform on RCP politics, calling for real support for striking miners and hard criticism of the local leadership. I put forward the RCP as an alternative to the Labour Party. The result was J Smith 824, T Lister 314, R Pounder 122. Considering that I was seen as a rank outsider and that my election address was finally issued several weeks late I was more than pleased with the result. It proves that revolutionary communism makes sense to a significant section of workers.

The miners' strike showed that we cannot rely on the Labour Party, the TUC or the union bureaucracy to defend our interests. I used to be a Militant supporter, reduced to pledging allegiance to the Labour Party and making moralistic assertions about the 'madness' of Tory economics. My starting point now is for an uncompromising defence of our class interests.

Workers in the public sector can expect a major assault on their jobs and living standards over the next two years. Defeat is not something we should countenance. With RCP politics firefighters and other public sector workers can deliver a serious counterblow to the Tory offensive and avenge the miners.

Bob Pounder
FBU branch secretary
Stalybridge

We hear tell of some fancy public relations footwork from Hackney's Labour council, desperate to dig up support from anybody for its tiff with the government over rate-capping. On May Day the council hoisted the red flag over the town hall. Highly commendable, comrades. But within a week, on VE Day, the scarlet symbol of revolt was back down among the mothballs as the council ran up the Union Jack. Good show, chaps. Which side are the socialist-cum-patriotic councillors really on? The answer, presumably, is blowing in the wind.

Amidst the VE Day celebrations, fireworks of a different kind were set off by Manchester poly students' VE Day gesture. On the great day itself a general meeting of the students' union passed a motion from the Revolutionary Communist Society, committing it 'to give unconditional support to all genuine national liberation struggles, including that led by the IRA' and 'to purchase 3000 copies of *An Phoblacht/Republican News* (the Irish republican movement's paper) and distribute them throughout the poly, as our contribution to opposing VE Day'. The front page of *An Phoblacht* for the week in question was taken up by a poem called 'Letter to a British soldier on Irish soil'. It passed fair comment on the Tories' celebration of 'peace':

'Soldier

We are tired of the peace you bring
To Irish bones

Tired of the tears and the funerals
Those endless, endless, funerals'

Forty years of British peace = An endless
Irish funeral — an equation any student
would benefit from learning.

For some reason best known to itself, the British left has decided that the city of Coventry is the place to hold meetings on the subject of 'Women and the struggle for socialism'. First up was Coventry MP and Militant supporter Dave Nellist, who stunned his audience with the observation that 'there was no sexism in the miners' strike after 9 June'. Then Socialist Workers' Party guru Duncan Hallas arrived in Coventry to announce that women had made great strides forward during the strike because he had gone to support group soup kitchens and seen 14 year old girls 'telling their dads where to sit and what to eat'. And people have the cheek to complain that this great movement of ours doesn't let women play their part.

Labour home affairs spokesman Alf Dubs was quick to respond to Thatcher's allegation at Perth last week that the Labour Party favoured abolishing immigration controls. 'Absolute codswallop,' said an outraged Dubs, explaining that Labour's policy was 'not a commitment to unrestricted immigration. If you want to annoy a Labour Party official, tell him blacks cause unemployment. But if you really want to get him riled up, remind him that being dubbed too soft on immigrants might cost Labour a few racist votes.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary's *Gazette* carries strange columns written by members of the Divisional Mobile Support Units — the shoot-to-kill squads. For obvious reasons these gunmen are keen to disguise their identities, so their articles refer to their colleagues by nicknames alone. One is called 'Hissing Sid', another is 'The Smiling Assassin'. Most of them prefer to be called 'Big Tom', 'Big Nick', or 'Big Don'. Their personality problem is obvious. But what exactly ails the mysterious RUC murderer they call 'The Fat Hoop'?

REPORTS

Glasgow's secret cuts

Shop stewards at the Western Infirmary in Glasgow have set up an unofficial committee to fight a programme of cuts in hospital services after they discovered that their full-time officials have been engaged in secret talks with management about how to implement the cutbacks.

The official joint trade union negotiating committee is made up of full-time officials and a few lay officers from Nupe, TGWU, GMBATU, Nalgo and Matsa. According to a 'strictly confidential' document discovered by shop stewards the committee has more or less rubber stamped cuts worth £2.2m which extend to just about every hospital in the Greater Glasgow area.

Glasgow Royal Infirmary used to have two administrators. Now it has four as management gears up for its biggest cuts programme yet. The administration is secretly planning to close the night-time staff canteen, amalgamate the daytime dining rooms, do away with table-cleaners and slash the number of hospital cleaners. Management reckons to save more than £60 000 through staff cutbacks and closures.

These proposals have come out of discussions between management, the Greater Glasgow Health Board and the union officials. The unions have done little to resist smaller attacks on jobs, wages and conditions in recent months. They have told their members that they cannot fight against management's efficiency drive for fear of reprisals.

But the union leaders' willingness to go along with management claims about 'waste' and 'shirkers' has only made the workers more vulnerable. All new employees are now hired on 13 week contracts. Many full-time cleaners have been replaced by part-timers. 'Teamwork' has been introduced on the wards where fewer

women cleaners carry heavier workloads. Management has imposed tighter work discipline by installing security cameras in every corridor.

Most of the women ancillary workers are members of the GMBATU. Fifty recently tried to leave the union in disgust at its inaction. An official told them that they could not leave together, only one by one. One woman told us that the union was worse than useless: 'They never let you know anything. They don't have a branch meeting for a year, then they tell you about it an hour before it starts. If you ask me they're well in with the bosses. The convenor spends his whole time talking to management when he should be talking to us.'

The Western Infirmary committee brings together ancillary and maintenance workers independently of the full-time bureaucrats. The committee's constitution states that 'no full-time official of any of the participating unions will be permitted to enter into discussions with management without the sanction of the appropriate shop stewards'. This is an important step forward in challenging the officials' divisive and bureaucratic approach and their collaboration with management.

At present the committee only covers ancillary and maintenance workers. To become really effective it must be extended to cover all grades and sections in the hospital and it must link up with rank and file workers in other hospitals. It must be more than a committee of shop stewards. The whole workforce must have the final veto over the actions of both full-timers and shop stewards. Once workers in the health service establish their control over their union organisation, then the battle against the cuts can really get under way.

Bob Hughes

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL				
North 1				
Hospital	Proposal	Provisional Target Savings	Non-Recurring Costs	
Stobhill	* Withdraw staffed night catering service	£52,000	£15,000	Staff reductions
	* Closure of doctors' refectory and nurses' home staff dining room	£66,000	£450,000	Staff reductions
	* "Self-clear" staff dining room	£8,000		
Ruchhill	X Close staff dining room at weekends	£18,000	£12,000	Staff reductions
	* Amalgamate diet kitchen and main kitchen	£8,000	£18,000	Reduced hours
	* "Self-clear" staff dining room	£2,000		
Lenzie	X Close kitchen and supply from woodilee	£75,000	N/A	Staff reductions
Stobhill	X Reduced cleaning frequencies in residence	£35,000		Staff reductions
	X Review cleaning frequencies and			

Top secret document shows health union leaders have llicked the cuts

Direct action works

It started on May day and ended on May Day. Students at Manchester polytechnic took action in defence of technicians and teaching staff and won.

Technicians at the poly have been showing students in the art and design department how to use welding and woodwork equipment for 15 years. They recently decided that it was about time they got paid for it. Management responded by telling the technicians to stop doing the work and ordering academic staff to start doing it on top of their other duties. The result was that technicians were prevented from doing their normal work and staff devoted less time to students as they tried to learn how to use the equipment.

The first emergency union meeting voted against a Revolutionary Communist Party proposal to occupy the central administration block. Some students thought that decisive action might alienate the more moderate students. Instead the meeting voted to occupy two art and design sites and the film and theatre department. This partial action was never going to be enough to force management to back down. It isolated art students from other sections of

the poly and made no impact on the running of the administration.

On 7 May we won the argument to go all the way and occupied the administrative centre. A union meeting endorsed our proposal to give management until 9am on Thursday 9 May to meet the technicians' demands or risk further action. The next day poly director Ken Green gave in. He offered the technicians six hours' teaching time a week at a rate of £12.70 an hour. The occupation ended that night in victory.

Keith Tompson



COME ALONG!

From Aids to embryos and battered babies to football hooligans, the establishment's moral panics know no bounds. The Tories are trying to rally society behind a drive to restore law and order, parental control and family values.

The moralists appear to have the upper hand only because the opposition is so disorganised. But it is always possible to fight back. Last week RCP supporters in Manchester organised a protest against Enoch Powell, the man behind the latest attack on women's rights, which attracted 200 people. 'The 72 year old Ulster Unionist MP was ushered in another entrance to avoid a confrontation with the opponents of his Protection of Unborn Children Bill,' reported the *Manchester Evening News*. This week RCP supporters in Glasgow, Liverpool and Edinburgh are organising more meetings and protests to take the fight for women's rights one step further.

After scurrying through a back entrance to safety Powell dismissed the 200 Manchester protesters as 'part of the social furniture'. We want to make sure that the RCP becomes part of the social furniture in every situation where the working class is under fire from the bosses. Come to our meetings and get out on the streets to show Powell and his like that their attacks will be fought all the way.



Chris Black (reflex)

Moral panics and Victorian values

A day of discussion and debate on the new morality and what it means for women. Sessions on:

- the holy trinity: the family, the individual and the state
- the politics of medicine
- Tory family policy
- the limitations of liberalism
- communism and the family

Creche available and evening social
Saturday 1 June 10am-5pm
Polytechnic of Central London
New Cavendish Street W1

● **Women's rights — yes, embryo rights — no**
DEBATE: revolutionary communists vs Life plus Women for Life
Thursday 23 May 7.30pm
McLellan Gallery, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow

● **Free abortion on demand!**
PROTEST against the Church of Scotland's attempt to restrict abortion rights even further
Tuesday 21 May 8.30am-10am
Kirk Assembly Rooms
Mound Place, Edinburgh

● **Moral panics and Victorian values**
MEETINGS to discuss women and the family in Thatcher's Britain
Edinburgh
Wednesday 22 May 7.30pm
Trades Council
12 Picardy Place, Edinburgh

Liverpool
Wednesday 22 May 7.30pm
AUEW Hall
Mount Pleasant, Liverpool

Become a supporter of the Revolutionary Communist Party!

SUPPORTERS of the party meet every week to discuss the paper and the events of the week and to plan action in the local area.

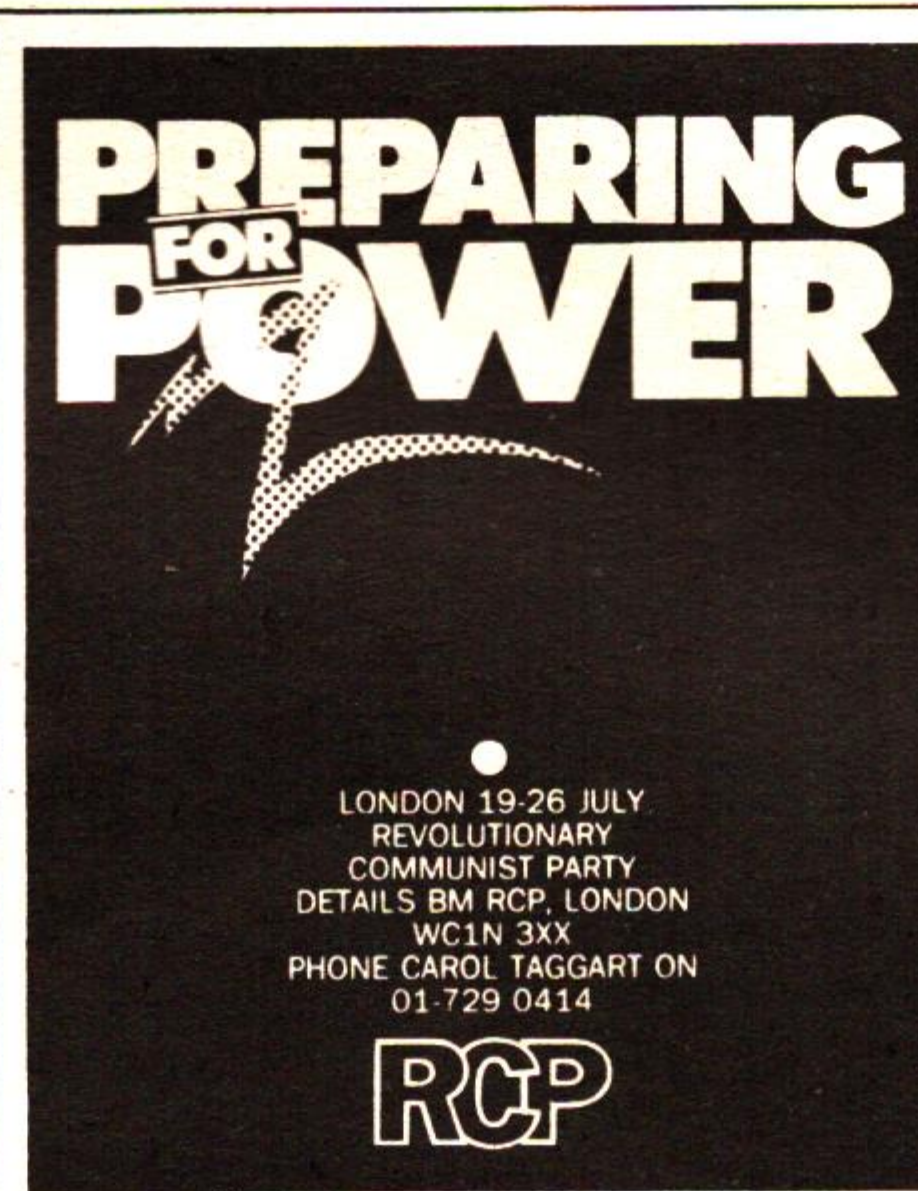
At present we meet in Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, East Kilbride, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hackney, Huddersfield, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, North London, Nottingham,

Pontefract, Sheffield, South London, Sunderland, Wakefield.

For details of times and places of meetings see sellers of *tns* in your area.

Find out more about the Revolutionary Communist Party!

For further information about the RCP or any of the events advertised here
WRITE to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX or
PHONE 01-729 0414



More than 200 people have already registered for the RCP's week-long summer school in July. This year's programme is more ambitious than ever before. It includes courses for beginners to Marxism and courses for experienced theoreticians and political activists. There will be courses about women, Ireland, racism, religion, the Third World and much more.

Preparing for Power will include discussions on everything from Freud to Frankie goes to Hollywood. There will be debates, workshops, films, song and dance, a creche, gym and a swimming pool.

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BRITISH JUSTICE
IN IRELAND**A** week
*in the life of a
marked man*

The policeman cocked his rifle at me and said "Lie down you". I said "No, you shoot me if you want, I've had enough of this, I'm getting up." Pearce Moore from Derry is one of thousands of Irish republicans who refuse to lie down under the tyranny of British gunmen, jailers and terror laws. He told us about his latest week-long detention under British lock and key in Northern Ireland.

A few weeks back the Royal Ulster Constabulary picked up Pearce and shipped him off to Belfast's Castlereagh interrogation centre. Police accused him of killing an Ulster Defence Regiment member and an informer. They had no evidence, so they let him go. But not for long. 'They told me I was going to be shot by the SAS, and if they couldn't shoot me they'd frame me on something.' The British authorities did their best to keep their promise one Friday afternoon recently, when a masked SAS man burst in on Pearce while he was having tea at a relative's house in the Bogside area of Derry.

Masked IRA men are a welcome sight to the republican people of the Bogside. So the arrival of Pearce's would-be executioner did not arouse immediate suspicion. 'At first I thought he was a Provo. I think everybody thought he was a Provo because all the people around were shouting "Hey, watch yourself son, the Brits are nearly here".' But the masked man wore a police armoured vest and a holstered pistol along with his rifle. 'By the time I realised he was the SAS he'd busted his way into the house.'

The SAS assassin couldn't shoot Pearce because his relatives were there. But the security forces weren't leaving empty handed. 'He told us to lie on the floor spreadeagled. About a dozen police came in to back him up. I asked if we were being arrested. They told us to shut up, lie still, keep our hands where they could see them and close our eyes. They were all pointing rifles and machine-guns. One policeman was standing on the back of my neck. I told him I wanted a doctor, a priest and a solicitor. He just said "shut up or you'll get shot".'

'They kept us like that for an hour and a half. A crowd was gathering outside but they couldn't see in because the RUC had drawn the curtains. I shouted out that the SAS had been and that the RUC were kicking me around. A lot of aggro started outside, the crowd was getting hysterical and things really got going. The police panicked and I got up. They were more nervous than I was because the house was surrounded by our people, the police couldn't get out and their reinforcements couldn't get in.'

'Then an RUC man called his chief. He gave all our names and numbered us one, two, three and four. I heard the top man say "Forget about one, three and four, bring in number two. I want Moore." They handcuffed me and said I was being arrested under Section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act — that means seven days in Castlereagh. Then they dragged me out into the landrover and it took off at top speed.'

When Pearce arrived at Castlereagh, unable to move his arm and with his neck twisted, he was back in the routine of a seven-day detention well-known to republicans in Northern Ireland. 'You live for a week in a cell with no windows, just holes bored in the wall for air. Whether or not you get a wash depends on which police are on duty. A lot of them are hard Loyalists

— they won't let you wash and they give you half of the food you're supposed to have. They tried to take some of my blankets away and stopped me getting the pills for my ulcer.'

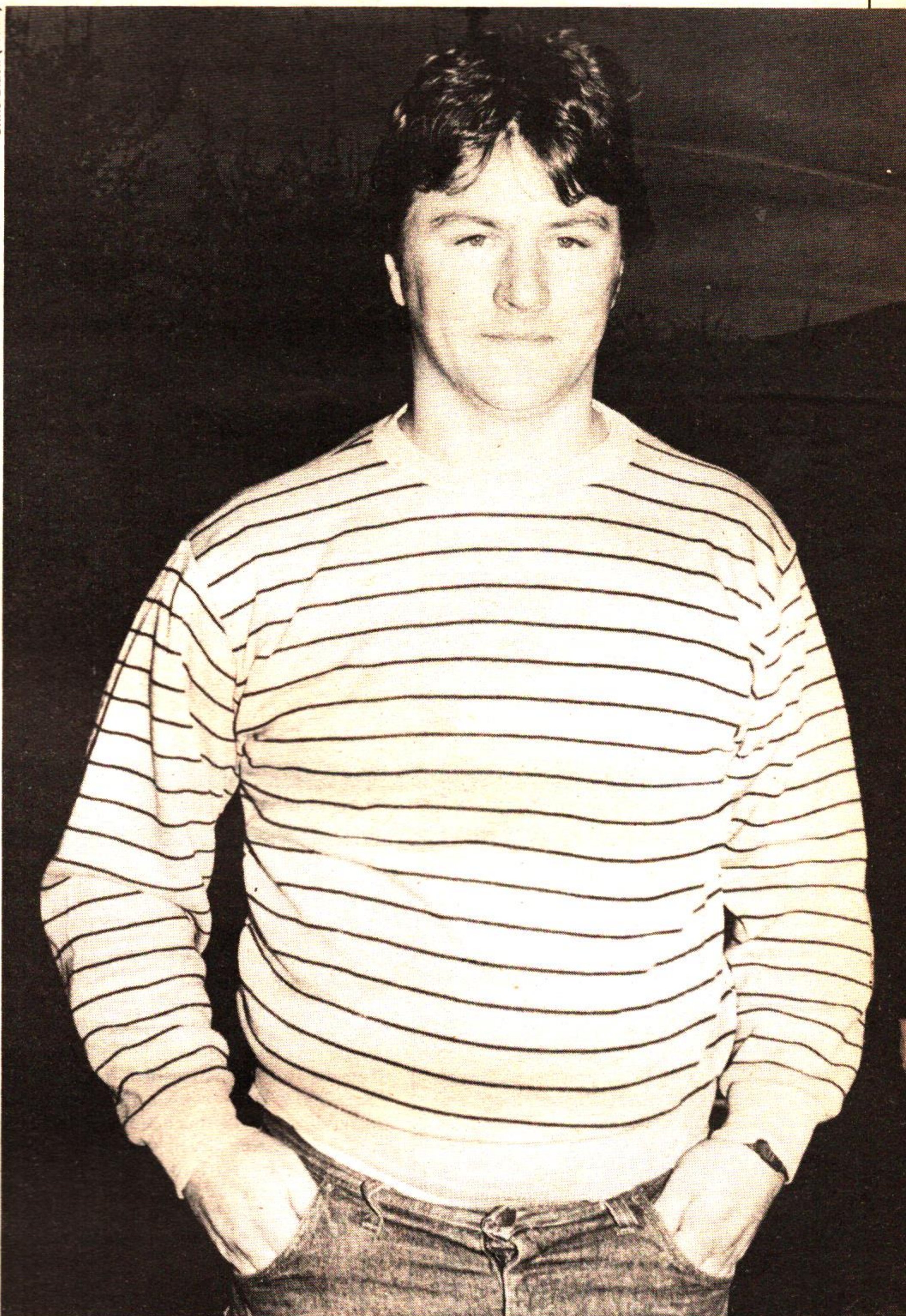
Then the interrogation starts. 'On the first day when I was being questioned I was sitting about a foot from the wall. I pushed the chair back because they have a habit of standing behind you and thumping you. This RUC man pulled the chair out again, I pushed it back in again and so on. He went to grab me in the privates. I got hold of his hand and he says "That's assault". I said "Don't try to fuck me about". Then he backed down and left me alone. I had some more trouble, on the sixth day of questioning. I was sitting bent over because my back was sore, and this detective thumped me because I wasn't listening. He was English. He was calling me a scumbag and giving the wife abuse, giving the wains abuse, "who's your wife sleeping with now", "your da's not your real father", the usual filth.'

Throughout the week the RUC told Pearce they were going to charge him with everything from murder to kidnapping. 'The first two days they were questioning me about the kidnapping of a bank manager. I yawned and they said that proved I must have been up all night holding this man captive! After two days they gave up on that and tried to get me to come over to them and be an agent, to tell them where weapons and explosives were, tell them where and when any jobs were coming. When they saw I wasn't wearing that they said they could do a Raymond Gilmour on me, make me a supergrass, put me in a big hotel in Malta or Spain if I'd give them names.'

Britain's supergrass strategy is in deep trouble in Northern Ireland. Pearce himself was detained on the word of psychiatric patient Jackie Grimley until Grimley's evidence was laughed out of court in November 1983. Since then the British authorities haven't succeeded in recruiting a single new supergrass. The current showtrial, where 26 Irish men and women face jail on the uncorroborated word of Harry Kirkpatrick, is almost the last one left in the pipeline of British justice. The RUC had no more success in persuading Pearce to turn informer. 'I don't even talk to them when I'm in Castlereagh. I just sit quiet for seven days.'

Right up to his release the Loyalist police told Pearce he was being charged. Forty five minutes before he got out they confronted him with a friend who had been arrested four days after Pearce. Both men had been told the other had informed on him. Each knew the other wouldn't give the security forces the time of day. The RUC ploy came to nothing, and Pearce was released at 12 noon on the Friday after his arrest. But he refused to budge for another hour and a half, until

Chris Black (reflex)



the police laid on transport to get him back to Derry.

Pearce may be back on the streets of his home town, but he knows he is still a marked man. Since his release he has suffered the everyday harassment of being stopped and searched which the British forces of occupation reserve for known opponents of Westminster's rule in Northern Ireland. And the threat of another visit from the masked

assassins of the SAS hangs over him. 'A week is a long time when you're locked in Castlereagh,' Pearce told us. Sixty years is much too long for the Irish people to be locked in a corner of their own country by British gunmen. Workers in Britain have the power to help unlock their cell by fighting to free Ireland, and to take the mark off Irish men like Pearce Moore.