



GET READY
FOR
A GENERAL
ELECTION
see page 3

Thatcher's biggest banana skin

the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party weekly • 31 January 1986 • No 5

DAVE ROURKE

ELECTIONS WON'T END THE IRISH WAR

The major political parties may have been at each other's throats over the Westland letters last week. But the mere mention of three other letters — IRA — was enough to unite them again. As the Northern Ireland by-election results came through, showing a fall in Sinn Féin's vote, the Labour and Alliance parties took a break from calling for the government to go and joined Northern Ireland secretary Tom King in welcoming a 'victory for democracy'. However deep its divisions, the establishment cannot afford to argue about Ireland. The republican struggle for Irish freedom is still a far bigger threat to the British authorities than anything that happens to Leon Brittan.

In the short term, the British establishment has reason to be pleased with the results of the Northern Ireland poll. Loyalist opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement was more subdued than the Unionist party leaders had hoped, with their total vote falling well short of the 500 000 they had predicted. The Tories now seem well placed to cope with Unionist opposition to their deal with Dublin. A minority of frustrated Loyalists in the paramilitary murder gangs may well shoot or bomb some Catholic targets. But most Loyalists show little enthusiasm for violent opposition. As it becomes clearer in the months ahead that the accord is about stabilising British rule in Northern Ireland, and not about bringing closer a united Ireland, many Loyalists will be even less likely to back Ian Paisley's ranting with action.

PROPAGANDA BOOST

On the nationalist side, the pro-agreement Social Democratic and Labour Party took votes from Sinn Féin. The election of SDLP deputy leader Seamus Mallon in Newry/Armagh was a significant boost to the moderate nationalists, who had claimed the agreement offers concessions to ordinary nationalists. The increased SDLP vote is an even bigger boost for British propagandists. Isolating the republican movement was the primary aim of the Anglo-Irish agreement, and the police and Army have spent recent weeks disrupting Sinn Féin's election campaign.

The swing to the SDLP reflects the nationalist people's yearning for peace. After 16 years of war, many people are willing to try anything that is presented as a step towards ending the troubles. Many nationalists are still not clear that the new deal only means more of the same old British repression. For now it gives the British government plenty of scope to crow about the success of 'constitutional nationalism' and the 'rejection of IRA terrorism'. But as the repression behind the deal comes to the fore, 'for now' may not be for long.

Behind the by-elections and all the ballyhoo about the SDLP's success, little has changed in Northern Ireland. The war continues as before. The core of republican supporters were not swayed by the SDLP's promise of peace through the Anglo-Irish agreement. They have suffered too much at the hands of the British government and its armed agents to believe that any British initiative could be to their benefit. They still put their faith in the republican struggle for Irish freedom as the only way to end their oppression. In the area of Newry/Armagh where Mallon won his Westminster seat, the IRA still has sufficient support to have killed

16 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the last 12 months without losing one volunteer.

The British authorities know they are as far as ever from winning the Irish War. According to Fleet Street, the government's priority now is to secure a 'dramatic security success' that can drive home the offensive against the republican movement. The reality of a 'dramatic security success' in Northern Ireland is well illustrated by the interviews on the centre pages of this week's *tns*: British assassins hiding behind bushes and blowing two young Irish republicans off a motorbike with 68 bullets in their backs. Westminster's real Irish policy still comes out of the barrel of a British gun. And just as British political parties are united in endorsing the Anglo-Irish agreement and applauding the SDLP's success, so they will be as one in backing increased armed terror against republicans. A week after the two IRA men mentioned above were executed in Derry, Labour leader Neil Kinnock visited the city and said he backed the use of 'every force' against Irish freedom fighters.

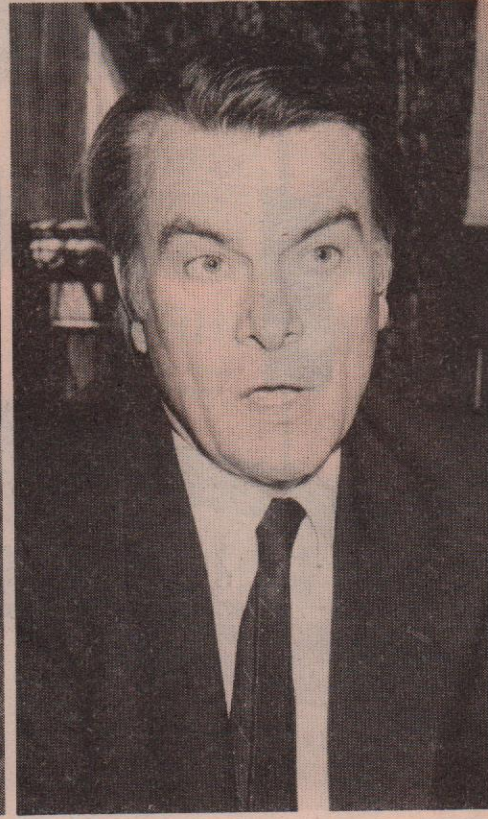
A POWERFUL ALLY

Since the war in Ireland began British politicians have laid aside all their differences to form a common front in support of the occupation of Northern Ireland and the brutal measures needed to maintain it. The Labour Party now claims that Tory lies about letters and leaks make Thatcher unfit to govern. But 14 years ago this week, when British troops murdered 14 unarmed Irish marchers on Bloody Sunday, Labour listened in silence as the Tory regime lied through its teeth about how invisible IRA men had caused the massacre. Kinnock will put up equally little resistance when Thatcher and King start lying about the next British atrocity.

The way the establishment unites against the republican movement indicates the importance it attaches to the battle over Ireland. The Revolutionary Communist Party takes the same approach. The struggle for Irish freedom poses the most forceful challenge to the oppressive power of the British capitalist state. In fighting for their right to run their own country, and a British withdrawal from the 'province' of Northern Ireland, Irish republicans are demanding that a part of the British state machine be dismantled. This would mean undermining the authority of the government institutions through which the capitalist class controls the whole 'United Kingdom'. It would raise crucial questions about the establishment's right to rule not just in Belfast and Derry, but also in Birmingham or Dundee. And it could inspire and ignite the fighting instincts of British workers, women or blacks for their own battles against the British state.

When it lines up with the Irish liberation movement, the British working class will not only support people fighting for their democratic rights. It will win a powerful ally in the struggle to get the British establishment off all of our backs. If you want to strike a blow for real freedom on both sides of the Irish Sea, join us at our rally and the Bloody Sunday march this weekend (see back page). Campaigning for the immediate withdrawal of British troops is the only way to end the Irish War — and the best way to begin taking on the Tories and their loyal opponents in the Labour leadership.

LABOUR AND THE ALLIANCE HAVE FAILED



EVEN IF KINNOCK OR OWEN WINS, WORKERS WILL LOSE

CHRIS BLACK

NOW FOR A REAL OPPOSITION

The Revolutionary Communist Party is out to change the face of British politics

The events of the last few weeks show that the Tories have lost their grip on the government. They also show the established opposition parties cannot put forward a real alternative to the Tories.

After the 1983 election defeat Michael Foot was regarded as the most ineffectual leader the Labour Party had ever had. Yet in Monday's debate in the house of commons he was much more forceful than the party's current leader Neil Kinnock. Labour was bad enough in the past — now it is even worse. It has nothing to offer today but witch-hunts of the left, to reassure the British establishment how respectable the leadership has become, and pop concerts for young people.

The Revolutionary Communist Party stands for the creation of a new society through the struggle against the rotten system that currently exists. We stand for:

- A decent job at a decent wage

In this society every worker needs a job which provides a living wage in reasonable working conditions. If individual employers cannot provide us with a livelihood it is up to the capitalist class as a whole through their state to ensure decent living standards for all.

- Women's liberation

We stand for the freedom of women to participate equally in the life of society. We oppose the way women are forced to carry the burden of work in the home and to play a second class role in the world of work. We fight for free abortion and contraception and for all-day nurseries to guarantee women's rights in society.

- An end to racial discrimination

We oppose all forms of racial oppression and campaign against all immigration controls. We are actively engaged in organising workers' defence of black people from racial attacks.

- Freedom for Ireland

We oppose British rule over Ireland and demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops. We reject all British solutions to the Irish conflict and give full support to the Irish national liberation struggle. We particularly oppose the operation of the

Prevention of Terrorism Act which criminalises all Irish people in Britain.

The Revolutionary Communist Party has the programme to build a real alternative working class party. But we need two more things.

- We need more supporters.

The RCP has a national network of supporters' groups which have a vital role to play in extending the activity and influence of the party over the next few months. Supporters meet regularly to talk about current events, to discuss *tns*, and to organise local activities around the important issues in British politics.

If you want to join the real opposition come along to the RCP supporters' group in your area. Ring 01-729 0414 for details.

- We need money.

The RCP is making plans for putting forward a full slate of candidates in the forthcoming general election. Since the Tories saw us coming they have shifted the goal posts. Deposits in parliamentary elections have been increased to £500, and while we are not counting on losing any, we will need to raise a substantial sum of cash to give us a fighting chance at the polls against the big money party machines.

We are also embarking on an ambitious publishing programme in 1986. We are shortly publishing a major book on the Soviet Union, as well as launching a theoretical journal. We also hope to extend and improve *tns* in the next few months. All of this will take more money.

If you can spare any cash to help build the party of the future please send it off to RCP fighting fund, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association.

RCP

If you like what you read in *tns* become an RCP supporter. We meet weekly around the country to discuss the issues in the paper and to plan action in the local area. Phone Fenna on 01-729 0414 or fill in the form below.

Name _____

Address _____

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Tory Party

WHY THATCHER ATTRACTS BANANA SKINS

GET READY FOR A GENERAL ELECTION!

Thatcher may have survived this week's vote of confidence in parliament, but however long the Tory government survives the next election campaign is now well and truly open

The Westland affair, as all the politicians and pundits keep reminding us, is a matter of only minor importance. Yet the controversy over rival American and European rescue bids for the helicopter company has already led to the resignations of defence secretary Michael Heseltine and industry minister Leon Brittan, and has created a major crisis of confidence in the prime minister herself.

Why has the rescue of a small helicopter firm caused such ructions within the British establishment? The furore over Westland has exposed the wider instability of the Tory government. While Thatcher has never faced any serious difficulty in dealing with the opposition parties, her government has acquired a reputation for being accident prone. Over a series of issues — the cover-up of the sinking of the *Belgrano*, the Ponting/Tisdall prosecutions, the Cecil Parkinson scandal, the inept banning of the *Real Lives* documentary about Northern Ireland — the Tories have been guilty of extraordinary cock-ups.

BANANA SKINS

In themselves all these issues were relatively trivial, but they became banana skins on which Thatcher and her ministers slipped and caused considerable bruising to the authority of the government.

The Westland affair is a banana skin with



1983:
THATCHER RE-ELECTED ON THE STRENGTH OF THE 'FALKLANDS FACTOR'

a difference. Behind the board room wrangles over rival investment packages to stave off the company's collapse lies an issue which goes to the heart of the problems facing the Tories — the question of state intervention in the economy.

For six years the Thatcher government has promoted the virtues of private enterprise and denounced the evils of government intervention in industry. But Westland is Britain's last remaining helicopter firm and, like much of British industry, it simply cannot survive without state subsidy in some form.

The very fact that there was a cabinet row

over Westland exposes the charade of 'non-intervention'. While the Thatcher team has proclaimed from every platform that industry must take its own course, two top cabinet ministers were at loggerheads over different strategies of government interference in one small company.

The way the Westland row has rocked the government reveals that the sort of problems facing the beleaguered company are not confined to the helicopter industry in Somerset. The Westland issue has come to the fore at a time when it is becoming increasingly apparent that the Tory government has failed to halt the decay of British capitalism. Despite repeated forecasts of recovery British manufacturing is in terminal decline. The government which was elected to curb government expenditure now tries to present its lack of control over public spending as a demonstration of its compassionate commitment to the welfare state.

The Tories have sold off some state assets to keep up the cash flow, but as interest rates creep up and the pound begins to slide, there is not going to be much to give away in tax concessions. They have easily seen off Labour's pathetic rate-capping campaign, but have yet to get local government spending under control against the powerful vested interests in the town halls and shire counties. Defeating the unions and abolishing the GLC is one thing, but sorting out the budget and the rates is quite another.

No matter who knew what and when in the flurry of letters, phone calls and furtive meetings over Westland, the disintegration of the economy is now unstoppable. The sudden collapse of the authority of the Thatcher government reveals the resulting volatility of British politics.

CALL THIS OPPOSITION?

It was significant that the politician who really put Thatcher on the spot during both her first statement to parliament over Westland and in Monday's debate was SDP leader David Owen. While Neil Kinnock waffled on with his rhetorical devices and contrived metaphors, it was left to others to put the pointed questions to the prime minister. The Alliance leaders are making a determined pitch for Tory voters disillusioned with the performance of their party leaders.

However the leaders of the opposition parties are all evading the fundamental problems raised by the Westland issue. This is because they have no better solutions than Thatcher and her colleagues to the collapse of British capitalism. Neither Labour nor the Alliance have any difference with Heseltine's preferred European option for Westland, so the whole parliamentary discussion is effectively a debate within the Conservative Party.

When it comes to the wider problems of the British economy the opposition parties have no significant policy differences with the Tory wets. This is why Labour and the Alliance cannot widen the debate over Westland beyond the detailed investigation of Tory intrigues. On this terrain they may discredit Thatcher and her colleagues, but they will not give the electorate a convincing alternative.

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE

For the Revolutionary Communist Party the crisis of the British establishment provides new openings for building a real movement for change. The crumbling of the government's authority opens up the contest for a successor and puts a general election on the agenda. An election campaign will create a

major public discussion on the crisis of British politics.

The Revolutionary Communist Party will be taking advantage of the election by putting forward a full slate of candidates for parliament. We intend to participate in the elections, not because we have any faith in parliament, but to win a wider hearing for our alternative approach to the current crisis.

Our position on Westland and the recession is straightforward. Any capitalist solution to the crisis of British capitalism, whether imposed by Americans, Europeans, or true Brits, by Tory, Labour or the Alliance, can only be at the expense of the working class.

Workers can only defend their interests through resisting all attempts to make them pay the price for the decay of the system, and fighting to replace it with a system which can guarantee everybody a decent life.

As the Tories fall apart many will turn to Labour as the party that offers workers a way out. But Kinnock has made clear that a Labour government will be committed to running the system, not to changing it. In office Kinnock's current Tory wet policies would soon dry out, and in the run-up to the election he will sacrifice all working class struggles to the quest to return Labour to power.

Exposing Labour's claim to be a lesser evil than the Tories will be a central theme of the RCP's election campaign. Our aim is to use the election campaign to build a party that can lead resistance to the next government, whether it is Tory or Labour or Alliance or any combination. We would prefer a long campaign so that the issues get the widest public exposure. But these days a week is a long time in British politics, so we're starting to prepare for power now.

Mike Freeman

1986:
INDUSTRY IS COLLAPSING, THE FALKLANDS IS HISTORY AND THATCHER FEARS DEFEAT



Labour movement

MURDOCH TAKES ON PRINT UNIONS

BARBED-WIRE TANGLE



MURDOCH'S FORTRESS WAPPING

Rupert Murdoch says the print unions are committed to obsolete technology, but the real weakness exposed in the latest showdown is their commitment to old-fashioned trade union methods

As we go to press the TUC faces mounting pressure to suspend the electricians' union, after the EETPU defied the TUC and the print unions by pursuing a single-union deal with Rupert Murdoch at News International's hi-tech Wapping plant. Whether or not the EETPU is suspended the authority and coherence of the official labour movement has suffered another body blow. The problem exposed by the scab union tactics of the EETPU is that the traditional approach of the print unions is no match for the modern class war methods of the Fleet Street press barons.

SPOILING FOR A FIGHT

'We are not interested in arbitration by the TUC or that sort of stuff,' said Rupert Murdoch last week. 'Time will tell how we will take them on.' By 'them' he meant the 6000 workers currently employed on the *Sun*, *The Times*, *News of the World*, and the *Sunday Times*. He told the unions he required only 'a few hundred' workers at his new plant and that anybody who went on strike against his plans would be automatically sacked. When workers in the print unions Sogat and the NGA came out last Friday, Murdoch responded by dismissing all strikers.

Murdoch has carefully prepared for his showdown with the print unions. 'Fortress Wapping' is equipped with hi-tech surveillance equipment, barbed wire and a steep bank to deter picketing. And by forming a separate company to run the plant Murdoch is set to use Tory anti-union laws against 'secondary' picketing.

Murdoch is not the only newspaper owner spoiling for a fight. Express Newspapers have announced plans for 2000 redundancies. Late last year Mirror Group proprietor Robert Maxwell once again threatened to close down entirely unless the unions accepted job cuts and flexibility. The concentration of newspaper ownership in

fewer hands and the determination of all the bosses to smash the print unions has shifted the balance of power in Fleet Street. The rise of Eddie Shah's hi-tech publishing empire with plans to produce an all-colour daily paper from March has provided a pretext for the national newspaper owners to take on the print unions.

FIGHTING TALK

The print unions are facing an unprecedented onslaught from employers prepared to abandon all the old ways of negotiation and compromise in favour of a directly provocative approach. The unions' response has been to declare their willingness to negotiate and compromise with the employers.

While the employers have torn up past procedures and declared war, the unions still cling on to the old ways and hope to talk themselves out of trouble. But the only result of all the talking is that the union officials are dragged into deals with disastrous consequences for their members and into bitter rivalry with one another.

The print unions are united in their condemnation of the role of the EETPU at Wapping. But this is really just sour grapes. All the unions have made deals which surrender jobs and rights and conditions in return for retaining token union membership and now simply resent the way the

EETPU has outflanked them with Murdoch.

● Wolverhampton and Maidstone

Last year the journalists' union made deals with the proprietors of the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* and the *Kent Messenger* to extend NUJ membership over areas of printing. Nearly 300 NGA members lost their jobs. When Sogat accepted these agreements the NGA launched a bitter attack on its fellow print union and appealed to the TUC to expel the journalists.

● Portsmouth, Sunderland and Birmingham

Here the NGA made deals with the employers at the expense of the NUJ and Sogat, arguing that its members were only 'following the job' from the old presses to the computer terminals. The result was more redundancies for the other unions and further inter-union strife.

● Mirror Group

Four weeks ago the NGA and Sogat made a deal with Maxwell accepting more than 2000 job losses and new working conditions. A week after he signed the deal Maxwell sacked 31 Sogat members who refused to work a new rota system. Sogat officials effectively endorsed the sackings by undermining unofficial action by the machine minders' chapel.

● News International

Last week Sogat and the NGA delegated TUC general secretary Norman Willis, to submit an appeal to Murdoch setting out the

terms on which the unions were prepared to serve at Wapping:

'The unions would recognise the company's right to manage; a common commitment to profitability, efficiency, harmonious relations, productivity and flexibility and job security; binding arbitration on any difference to be triggered unilaterally; a common commitment to flexibility.'

The print unions were prepared to sacrifice everything but they could not, without dissolving their separate organisations, offer Murdoch a single union deal. By staying outside the TUC package, the EETPU could snatch a deal with Murdoch.

After crawling to Murdoch for weeks and being humiliated, the print unions are now forced to call strike action. But their action is more in sorrow than in anger, more a last token gesture than a display of serious determination to fight.

When the leaders of the transport workers' union declared 'total solidarity' with the print unions at Wapping last weekend the print workers might have known what to expect. Within hours the Murdoch papers were being distributed around the country by drivers in the TGWU employed by the haulage firm TNT. True to form the NUJ chapels in Murdoch's Fleet Street titles decided to break the strike and dribbled across the printers' picket lines at Wapping. While a handful of printers shivered on the picket line Murdoch cracked open the champagne for the scabs.

END OF THE ROAD

The plight of the print unions reveals the end of the road for traditional trade unionism. The methods of negotiation backed by the occasional limited display of militancy were fairly effective in protecting jobs and wages for 30 years after the Second World War. In the print they were particularly effective — for the narrow section of workers protected by the strong Fleet Street unions. These methods never provided much protection for unskilled workers, or for women or blacks. Now in a climate of recession and mass unemployment they provide little protection for anybody.

The only way to resist the class war being waged by Murdoch, Maxwell and the rest is by fighting the class war in response. That means rejecting the commitment to 'profitability, efficiency and harmonious relations' that unites the bosses and the unions, the EETPU and the NGA, and divides workers in all the unions from one another and undermines their collective resistance. When unions start putting workers' jobs and conditions first then we can start to meet the coercive methods of the press barons with an effective response. Murdoch will need more than barbed wire and the Tories will need more than anti-union laws to stop workers liberated from the restrictions of collaborative and sectional trade unionism.

Andrew Calcutt

UNION CLIMBDOWN AT FORD

THEY CALL THIS A VICTORY!

Workers are voting yet again on Ford's pay and productivity offer — this time with the endorsement of the union officials. A fortnight ago Ford workers voted by a 2:1 majority to reject the company's offer of a staged two-year pay rise linked to restrictions on the right to strike and harsher working conditions. Many were ready to strike immediately, but union officials held them back. Instead they returned to the negotiating table, using the vote as a bargaining counter.

After a brief meeting Ford bosses offered an extra 2.5 per cent wage rise, and the union leaders are now recommending this proposal to their members. They are also recommending acceptance of the company's productivity conditions, despite the fact that thousands of workers have voted for action not capitulation.

Mick Murphy, chair of the unions' joint negotiating committee, claims that Ford's new offer is 'a major climbdown' by management. Jimmy Airlie, secretary of the negotiating committee, says that the new

'Last week management were forcing a productivity deal on us. This week the union is forcing the productivity deal on us' — Ford worker, Dagenham

offer was made because of 'the willingness of the workers to back the trade unions'. In fact there has been no 'climbdown' by the company. Ford bosses have gained the backing of the officials for their stringent productivity conditions, in return for a £2 a week rise. The officials are declaring this a 'victory'.

Ford workers know management has got the upper hand, and they want to do something about it. Meanwhile the bureaucrats want to carry on talking. They will sacrifice workers' rights and working conditions to protect their stake in the negotiation process.

There is mounting frustration among the rank and file, but there will be no victories for Ford workers until they direct their anger at the union machine as well as at Ford management.

Keith Jackson

THE SHAPE OF LABOUR'S FUTURE

With most Labour election candidates now selected, it's clear that the soft left and Kinnock supporters will dominate the next Parliamentary Labour Party, reports *John Pearson*

As Labour's national leadership presses on with its offensive against Militant, the *Sun* claims that the 'loony left' is set for 'a huge boost' in parliament after the next general election. The idea that the round of selections and reselections of Labour candidates currently nearing conclusion is strengthening the left is widely shared by the left itself.

The right of constituency Labour Parties to select and reselect their parliamentary candidates was one of the great causes of the Labour left in the late seventies and early eighties. The left attributed the betrayals of the Labour governments of the past to the fact that Labour MPs were not accountable to the party rank and file. For several years the left did little else but campaign for reselection, as well as for a new system for electing the party leader and for conference control over the manifesto. It never won control over the manifesto and the electoral college it won in 1981 finally produced Neil Kinnock, a dubious asset to the left. The left won too on reselection — but has it really won in the reselection stakes?

DESELECTION

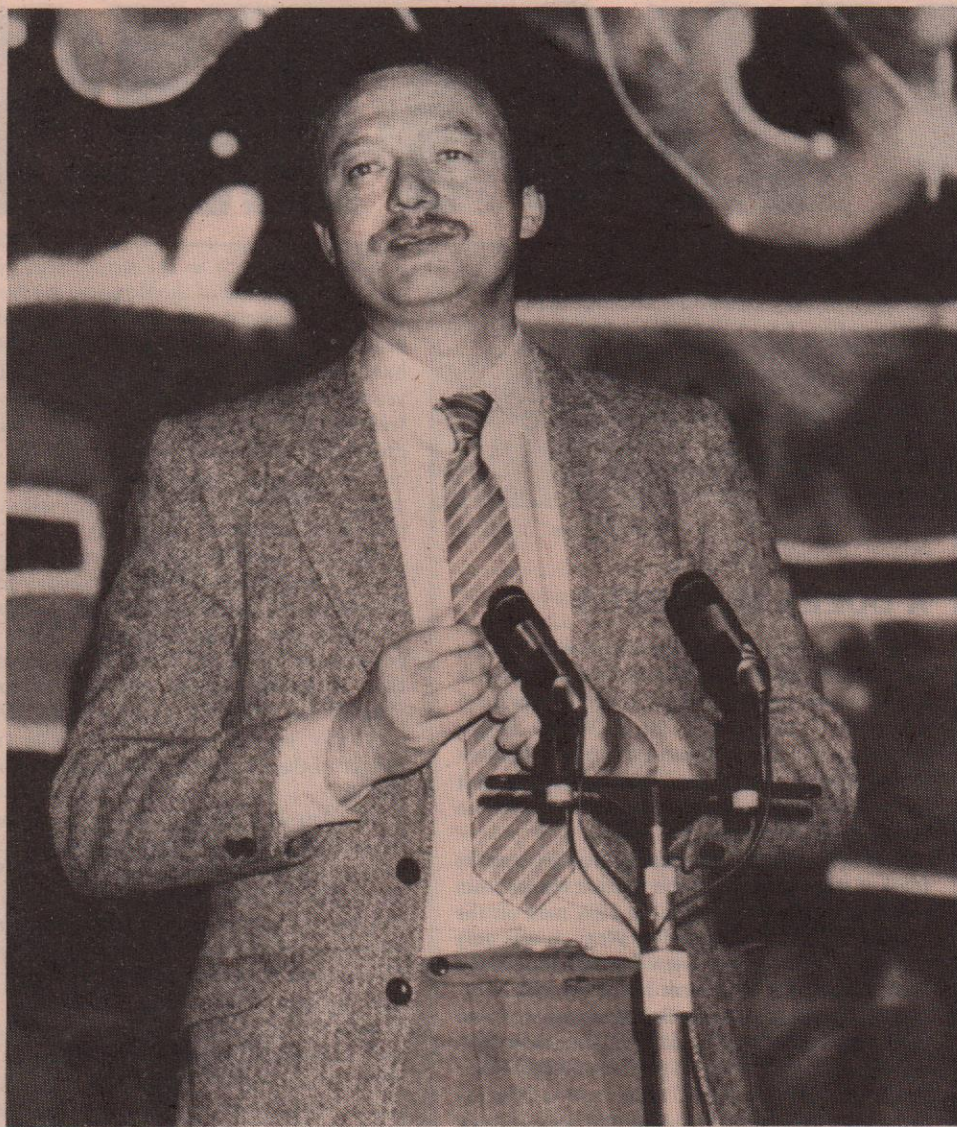
There are 209 Labour MPs but as the reselection procedure draws to a close only five have so far been deselected. The left has claimed victories for Bernie Grant in Tottenham, Diane Abbott in Hackney and Dawn Primarolo in Bristol. But while Primarolo replaced right winger Michael Cocks, Grant replaced another left winger Norman Atkinson, and Diane Abbott displaced Ernie Roberts — consistently the hardest of the hard left MPs in parliament. In the other deselections right wingers were replaced by safe Kinnock supporters such as Ken Livingstone in Brent East and Ian McCartney in Makerfield.

RETIREMENTS

Around 30 current Labour MPs have decided not to stand again. Who has taken their places in these safe Labour seats? Two retiring hard left MPs, Joan Maynard and Ian Mikardo, have been replaced by soft left wingers. Maynard's Sheffield seat has gone to local council leader David Blunkett, Kinnock's key fixer in Labour's capitulation to the Tory attack on local government spending. And Mikardo's seat will be kept lukewarm by Mildred Gordon, a moderate left winger who does not share her late husband Sam's Trotskyist credentials.

The next election could also see the return to parliament of former hard left MPs now selected in place of retiring members. But their years away from the commons have considerably softened their approach. Bob Cryer, who replaces Tom Torney, falls into this category. So does Audrey Wise who takes over from Stan Thorne. Wise was once regarded as a leading radical. Now she sits on the Labour committee conducting the witch-hunt against Militant-run Liverpool council.

The overall trend is for retiring Labour MPs to be replaced by moderate figures. Most of these are safe local councillors who



KEN LIVINGSTONE — SOFT FACE OF A FUTURE KINNOCK'S BRITAIN

have been chosen for their 'long record of service' — in other words, their long records of behaving themselves and toeing the leadership line.

MILITANT

The hard times suffered by hard left candidates are best illustrated by the mauling Militant has received in its efforts to increase its number of MPs. The two sitting Militant MPs, Terry Fields and Dave Nellist, were both reselected. But they have both proved themselves tame parliamentarians who Kinnock can trust to do as they are told. In Bradford North Militant supporter Pat Wall was reselected as Labour candidate, but he has distanced himself from Militant and emphasised his record as a respectable figure in the local labour movement.

In 11 other constituencies where Militant has put forward candidates they have been routed. Rod Fitch, who stood in 1983 as candidate for Brighton Kemp Town, was deselected and replaced by the centre left. Militant supporter and NUM-sponsored candidate Jack Dunn was defeated in Derbyshire North, a constituency where the NUM candidate has been selected for every election since the First World War. In other constituencies like Glasgow Provan and Glasgow Pollock strong Militant candidates thought to be in with a good chance were defeated. In Motherwell South and Birkenhead Militant candidates were thrashed by right-wing sitting MPs. With Labour's executive likely to take further steps against Militant this week, the writing is on the wall for Fields and Nellist: keep your heads down and your noses clean, or your days are numbered. Militant's breakthrough this week in Bermondsey, a safe Liberal seat since the Peter Tatchell debacle in 1983, still has to be ratified by the national executive.

BLACKS

An unprecedented seven black candidates have been selected, but they are a mixed

blessing for the left. Bernie Grant and Diane Abbott will line up with the harder left-wing MPs. But lawyer Paul Boateng, legal adviser Keith Vaz, and headmaster Russell Profitt are professional moderates whose centre left outlook will make them lean towards the Kinnock camp.

WOMEN

The selection of 50 women candidates is an increase on Labour's past performance, and an accurate reflection of the importance the party gives to more than 50 per cent of the population. From a political point of view the women candidates are even less inspiring. They range from right-wing hard cases like Betty Boothroyd and Gwyneth Dunwoody to soft left figures such as Margaret Beckett, Harriet Harman and Clare Short. Lecturer Kate Hoey, deputy council leader Val Venness, and council peace officer Jenny Edwards are typical of the incoming soft left representatives. Like their male counterparts, most new women Labour MPs will endorse Kinnock's position.

The next Parliamentary Labour Party looks likely to be even more securely under Kinnock's thumb than the present one. The new MPs will make no challenge to the leadership's drive to convert Labour into a respectable middleclass party of government. This is hardly surprising when you consider that Peter Hain is among the most prominent soft left candidates. Hain is the man who boosted his career by switching from the Young Liberals to the Labour Coordinating Committee without changing his politics.

Even if the house of commons was packed to the ceiling with hard left MPs, it would not change anything. The real power in British society would still be exercised by the capitalist class and its agents in the state machine. But Labour's line-up for the next election confirms that Kinnock has no intention of even making a gesture towards defending the working class.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

SHEER FILTH

In a successful attempt to squeeze the latest Bill to restrict embryo experimentation off the parliamentary agenda last week, MPs spent some five hours discussing Winston Churchill's Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, etc) Amendment Bill. It was a lively debate.

Churchill's Bill, which received its second reading and should become law shortly, removes the immunity given to television under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act. It also defines precisely what should be regarded as obscene and therefore hidden from those under 18. This would include any material which 'depicts visually, and in actual or simulated form, acts of masturbation, sodomy, oral/genital connection, the lewd exhibition of genital organs or excretory functions, cannibalism, bestiality, mutilation or vicious cruelty towards persons or animals'.

Churchill expressed his disgust with the recent Channel 4 screening of the film *Jubilee*, taking particular exception to a scene of 'alleged police brutality' which leads to a finale 'in which a policeman is jumped by a couple of girl punks who chop him up with razor blades'. Fellow Tory Ian Percival explained that he had chosen the phrase 'sheer filth' because it was the mildest description he could give for the perversion flooding into 'our homes' through television.

While the Tory ranks were united in defence of 'that fragile and mystical aspect of our lives', the Labour Party was wracked with divisions. Bristol MP Michael Cocks gave full backing to Churchill, explaining that he was a Methodist and that his first viewing of television at the age of 20 in 1948 had been deeply traumatic: he had to watch England being thrashed by Australia at cricket.

Norman Buchan opposed the Bill on the grounds that it would be ineffective. He gave the example of 'the filthiest film' he had ever seen, which featured 'nothing but a pair of hands writhing in total silence for seven minutes'. Buchan assured a dubious house that this reduced the audience at a Scottish film festival to 'an acute state of erotically aroused embarrassment'. But Churchill's Bill will do nothing to relieve this peculiar state of ecstasy. Buchan was worried meanwhile that the Bill would outlaw *King Lear* (vicious cruelty), *Titus Andronicus* (cannibalism), *Hamlet* (adultery, suggested incest, multiple murder) and the Bible (all known perversions).

Clare Short reluctantly opposed the Bill, because, she said, she had originally been approached with a view to sponsoring a bill to curb 'violence and violent pornography'. Like a number of other left-wing Labour MPs she objected to Churchill's Bill because it did not go far enough. She wanted more specific regulations to deal with violence and Page 3 of the *Sun*. 'Indeed', she concluded, 'I may bring forward a 10-minute bill to outlaw showing pictures of partially naked or naked women in mass circulation papers.'

Churchill gracefully accepted Labour proposals for stronger powers of state repression and censorship and urged MPs to bring forward amendments and further Bills. The best reply to the Labour moralists came from Tory backbencher Victoria Bottomley. 'I am bemused', she said, 'by the suggestion that because the Bill does not cover everything it should be rejected. It is only a first step.' It is a first step towards the suppression of other publications the establishment finds offensive — and we all know where that will end up.

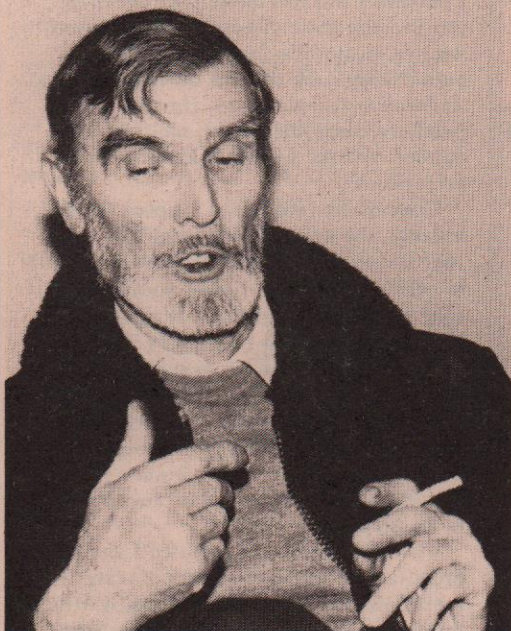
Fourteen years since IRISH VICTIMS OF B

Fourteen years ago this week British troops shot dead 14 men on a peaceful demonstration in the Irish city of Derry. *Mick Hume* talked to one man who lost a loved one on that Bloody Sunday, and two women whose relatives have since been shot by the British forces of occupation

They say that everybody in America knows where they were on 22 November 1963, when president Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. The Irish equivalent is Bloody Sunday. Everybody knows where they were on 30 January 1972, the day 14 men were assassinated by British paratroopers who fired on a massive civil rights march in Derry, Northern Ireland. Everybody you ask in Derry knows they could have died that day: one tells you he slipped running from the firing just as the boy next to him got hit, another says he would have been walking beside his best friend who died, but stayed home to look after his children instead. In Britain, Bloody Sunday may be at best a blurred memory. But the people of Derry have not forgotten. And few will ever forgive.

Cities like Derry in occupied Ireland are a dark mystery to most British people, shrouded in clouds of government propaganda. It's an atmosphere added to by the smog that hangs over the city on a winter evening. Derry has no natural gas and no smokeless fuel. As a colonial outpost, it is denied the comforts its British overlords enjoy at home. So the chimneys of the nationalist areas pump pollution into the Irish sky. By dusk the air in the backstreets of the Bogside district is as black as Jack the Ripper's London. But on Bloody Sunday, the London government reached out to the edge of the Bogside and committed a crime that killed twice as many people in the space of 10 minutes as Jack did in his whole career.

'The British government planned, at cabinet level, to put our people off the streets, to shoot them if necessary,' remembers Jim Wray. 'They were prepared to take that chance, they took that chance, and they gave us Bloody Sunday.'



JIM WRAY

Jim Wray lives in the Bogside. He was on the march on 30 January 1972. So was his oldest son, also named Jim. But when Jim junior came home he was in a coffin with five British bullets in his body. Now his father sits in front of the fire, waiting to start his night shift at work. He lights another Woodbine and begins his version of the events of Bloody Sunday. You can tell it's

a story that has run through his mind a thousand times before.

A DOZEN BUTCHERS

'The civil rights movement was people on the streets, looking for justice which we're denied in the North of Ireland. We were not "terrorists", we weren't even armed, 20 or 30 000 people marching at a time. We were an embarrassment to the British government, who had no answer to it. So the British government planned to scare us off the streets for good.'

The British media say Bloody Sunday was the fault of 'IRA terrorists' who fired at troops from the march. But there were no IRA men on the march. And, according to Jim Wray, it was only when the paratroopers knew for sure they had a 'soft' target that they went in for the kill.

'During the parade the British Army shot two members of the public, to find out if the IRA were part of the parade. If the IRA had returned that fire you wouldn't have had a Bloody Sunday. The British Army would have known that the IRA were there and make no mistake, they hadn't the guts to face the IRA. They say they were shot at first. I've photographs of the British Army entering the area on Bloody Sunday in bunches of a dozen. Well if the IRA had been firing at them they would soon have sorted themselves out, they wouldn't bunch.'

When the British Army opened fire, Jim Wray's son was one of seven Bloody Sunday victims shot in the back. 'My son had been brought down, he was hit in the back, and he lay wounded on the ground. One man saw Jim move and knew my lad was only injured. So he made an attempt to get out to Jim, and as he approached the Army opened fire. Jim's body was lying there as a trap and anybody that went to save him was going to be shot.'

'Well later the British Army came into the area, they passed over his body, walked into an alleyway. One of the paratroopers took up position about nine foot behind Jim, the other two went through the alleyway. They shot — murdered — three young people, and as they came back again one of them kicked Jim's body into the gutter. Jim lay there, he waited for a minute, then he raised his head to look in the direction of the soldiers.'

'He didn't know there was one still behind him. As he looked up they shot him, from a distance of nine foot, in his back, as he lay in the gutter. He was a wounded man already. My son was shot five times on Bloody Sunday, three times in the back. He was 22 years old.'

NO OLIVE BRANCHES

Jim Wray scoffs at the idea that the Army was out of control that day. He knows the British government deliberately murdered his son. But he doesn't only blame the Heath regime that ordered the executions. He blames Labour premier Harold Wilson — 'the raincoat gangster' — who sent in the troops in 1969 as 'peacekeepers'. 'They didn't come in here waving olive branches, they came in here with high velocity rifles trained on the nationalist areas.' And he blames every British government that has continued the occupation of Ireland since his son's death.

The bitterness and contempt the Irish feel for the British authorities is a monument to Bloody

Sunday as obvious as the stone memorial that stands on the edge of the Bogside. As Jim Wray spoke a young girl came in delivering milk. The bottles reminded him of the battles the Bogside has seen since the troubles began. 'For 16 years', he laughed, 'the cheapest weapon the Irish people have had to fight back with is a milk bottle and a spot of petrol. Yet Britain has not thought to tell the dairies to put their milk in cartons. The brutality of the British Army is only matched by its stupidity.'

The brutality of the British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary on Bloody Sunday and since showed people like Jim Wray that the Irish have to fight for their freedom. 'The British government takes no notice of elections. They say, "Vote, but vote the way I tell you to vote." Where's the democracy in that? The IRA is the only way we'll win democracy. The freedom fighter of the IRA is fighting to give us back our dignity.'

As I left Jim Wray to get ready for work, I passed his graffiti-covered gable wall. Scrawled at the centre is the legend 'JOHN WRAY YOU'RE DEAD MEAT'. It's a threat to another of Jim's sons, written by a member or members unknown of the British security forces. And it's a reminder, if any were needed, that Bloody Sunday was no one-off act of British terror. A lot of people in Britain who were outraged by Bloody Sunday don't even blink when British Army and RUC gunmen shoot republicans in cold blood today. It's different, they say, these men are terrorists. In fact it's just the same.

'IT'S NOT ROMANTIC'

Before Bloody Sunday, many nationalist men and women in Northern Ireland still hoped they could achieve justice by demonstrating peacefully. After that act of slaughter, many more were convinced that the British authorities would only bend before armed resistance. Those who support the republican movement today are the same as those who marched for civil rights: ordinary people trying to cope with the extraordinary situation of life in a British



JULIE DOHERTY AT HER HUSBAND'S FUNERAL



colony. People like Julie Doherty and Lynne Brown, whose husband and brother were the last two IRA volunteers shot dead in Derry, in December 1984.

Julie Doherty works for a photography outfit in the Bogside (but she doesn't like having her picture taken). She is a war widow with a young son. Her husband Danny was on active service when undercover troops and police shot him 30 times in the back, as he rode a motorbike into the grounds of Derry's Gransha hospital. She is suspicious of foreign journalists. 'I had an American interview me once. When I saw his article it was like a storybook, I was waiting for a romantic IRA man to start running across the hills to the sound of romantic music. Don't write it like that, it's not like that. It's too painful to be romantic.'

I don't suppose there's anything romantic about meeting your husband in prison. 'Danny had been in jail since he was 17 when I got to know him,' says Julie Doherty. 'He was in Portlaoise in the South, and republicans get it even worse there than they do in the British jails. I visited him for three years. Five months after he got out we were married. We'd been married a year when he was shot.'

Julie Doherty doesn't think any specific incidents made her husband join the IRA. It 'just seemed natural' for a young nationalist who wanted to build a better Ireland. As a youngster

ce Bloody Sunday BRITISH WAR CRIMES



**'THE BRITISH
ARMY SHOT MY
SON IN THE
BACK AS HE LAY
WOUNDED IN
THE GUTTER'**

WAR BABIES

'Coping with it' is what a lot of Derry families have had to do in the years since Bloody Sunday. And the Fleming family from Gobnascale have had to cope with more than most. Sitting in the front of her family home with her sick mother coughing upstairs, Lynne Brown (nee Fleming) told us about her brothers. Their pictures cover the walls. Three of them have been jailed by the British authorities for their belief in Irish freedom. And her youngest brother, William, died for the same cause, with 38 British bullets in his back, on the back of Danny Doherty's motorbike. In the same week her cousin, Kieran, drowned escaping from another British assassination squad.

'William was 19 when they shot him. All he'd known through his life was the war, the troubles started when he was only a child.' His face smiles down from the mantelpiece, a sharp young man dressed for a wedding. 'With my brothers being involved and being in jail, the family was always getting harassed, you know the house getting raided. It wasn't really harassment to us after a while, that was just life. Sometimes we were raided four times in one week, twice in one day.'

British propagandists like to portray young men like Willie Fleming as the victims of 'tribal loyalty', who fought for an outdated cause just because their family expected them to. Lynne Brown's not having any of that: 'William was very politically aware, always reading. It wasn't just that he went out because his brothers were in prison or because of family ties. He had his own reasons, he wasn't pushed into anything, he did it because he wanted to do it, believed in it.'

'MY HUSBAND WAS MURDERED'

Julie Doherty and Lynne Brown don't pretend their men were 'innocent bystanders'. But they were war casualties, and the British government is to blame for the war. 'The way I look at it', says Lynne, 'William was a soldier and he was in an army, the IRA. If they hadn't got William he would have got some of them, that's war. The IRA aren't murderers, they're just fighting the enemy.' Julie takes it further. 'I would say my husband was murdered by the RUC and the British Army, because I believe there are war



LYNNE BROWN

crimes. There was no warning or nothing, he hadn't even a chance to draw his weapon.'

Both women still grieve for their loved ones, but neither wishes they had kept out of the conflict. Lynne: 'If William had been killed in a road crash you'd think it was a wild sorry way to die. But because he believed in what he was doing, it eased the burden on us.' Julie: 'Danny died fighting and when they fired the volley of shots over his grave I near burst with pride. I'd have been more content if he'd got a shot back at them.'

THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Jim Wray junior, Danny Doherty and William Fleming are just three of the many Derry people who would still be alive if Ireland was free and united. Bloody Sunday may have been 14 years ago, but the nationalist community in Northern Ireland still live with the fear of foreign assassins every day.

And, like Julie Doherty, thousands of them are 'more content' that their young men and women are getting a shot back at the British forces of occupation. Those in Britain who would call themselves socialists but condemn the IRA as 'terrorists' should mark Jim Wray's parting words, as we left him with his Woodbines and his memories: 'If you haven't the courage to walk with the freedom fighter, at least have the shame not to criticise him.'

THE ROAD TO BLOODY SUNDAY...

BEGAN in the late sixties when Catholics in Northern Ireland started a peaceful civil rights movement to protest against Britain's sectarian system that gave Protestants privileged access to jobs, houses and political power in the 'province'. Their marches were met with ferocious repression from Loyalists and the sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary.

CONTINUED in 1969 when Loyalists launched an anti-Catholic pogrom, with the RUC leading mobs in attacks on the Bogside district of Derry, and the British government sending in troops to keep its Northern Ireland colony under control.

REACHED the last mile in August 1971 when the Unionist regime and Edward Heath's Tory government imposed internment without trial,

rounding up hundreds of nationalists in concentration camps, and the nationalists launched a series of anti-internment marches in defiance of government bans.

ENDED on 30 January 1972 when, after top level consultations between the government and Army chiefs, the paratroop regiment attacked a huge civil rights march in Derry. Troops shot dead 13 Irishmen on the spot and maimed many more, one of whom died within weeks. Bloody Sunday led to the virtual collapse of the Northern Ireland state and the imposition of Direct Rule from Westminster. On the nationalist side it caused strikes across Ireland, a riot in Downing Street, and had people queuing to join the IRA to fight for Irish freedom.

Danny Doherty was a Catholic altar boy, in a town where being a Catholic means being at the bottom of the pile.

'Danny was the same as a lot of young people in this town, he grew up with British soldiers everywhere, that's the thing that hits you. And you want to know why there are Brits walking your streets, you want to know why the RUC beat up your people, because when you're a wee'un you don't realise you're a second class citizen. And when you know why you want to change it.'

She is angry at the British media idea that IRA men are cowards who kill for kicks. 'I think for him to join the IRA it took a big kind of person,' says Julie. 'You have to sit down and think "What if I killed a man?" People say the IRA are cold-blooded murderers, but with our Catholic upbringing and all it's hard enough for the IRA to go out and shoot soldiers or policemen. It's hard being an IRA man, you have all these things to consider. I think you would have to be a special kind of person, really dedicated. Danny was really committed. He put the IRA in front of me. I minded coming second, I was his wife, but I supported them 100 per cent and I would never have said, "I don't allow you."'

Talking to Julie Doherty as she fiddles nervously with the wedding ring on a chain around her neck, you start to see what being 'an

ordinary person in an extraordinary situation' means. 'We have the pressure of the war', she says, 'and we still have the pressures of growing up, being married, you know the normal pressures you would have in England, on top of the war. I remember saying to him once when I was mad, "You think more of the 'RA than you do of me. I'm stuck in this house on my own. Why do you have to go out?" And he said, "Julie, I don't want my kid to have to go out and fight when he's 16. Do you want to sit here in 16 years time telling me you think our son's involved? I don't want that for him so I'm doing it now."'

'He knew he wasn't going to win the war on his own, but he wanted to do something about it. And the way he knew to do something about it was to go out with a gun. And I really admired and respected him for it. It wasn't like "Oh, my hero" or anything. But he was really brave.'

Julie Doherty knew the dangers of being married to an IRA man in a war-zone. She wasn't surprised when he was shot, 'but that didn't ease the pain. I think if it had been my son it would hurt but I could always have another wee'un. But not another Danny. I used to wake him up at night and say, "If you die on me I'm gonna kill you." We're surrounded by death but you never get used to it. Every death's different to cope with. And his death was the thing I feared most of all.'

PALESTINIANS BEWARE!

The object of the current 'peace process' in the Middle East is to persuade moderate Palestinian politicians to recognise the Israeli state and renounce the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. The Thatcher government, desperate to score an international success to compensate for its troubles at home, is making a major effort to bring these schemes to a successful conclusion.

Thatcher and Peres can draw encouragement from the response of Palestinian politicians to the peace talks over the past year. Last February Yassir Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, approved the shabby compromise of a Jordanian-controlled Palestinian homeland on the West Bank which the West

Last week's talks between Israeli premier Shimon Peres and Margaret Thatcher, and Palestinian leaders' involvement in Western manoeuvres in the Middle East, threaten the Palestinian liberation struggle argues Sabena Norton

offered as a carrot to induce the Palestinians into peace talks. During the summer Arafat vowed to cease PLO military action outside the Israeli-occupied territories. After the spate of Palestinian attacks culminating in the shootings at Vienna and Rome airports in December the PLO leader promised to 'punish' terrorists and echoed Western denunciations of Syria and Libya as 'terrorist states'.

Arafat has always struck a careful balance between radical rhetoric addressed to the PLO's militant rank and file and cautious diplomacy aimed at reassuring his sponsors among the Arab regimes. His unprecedented repudiation of military action by radical PLO factions reflects the rise of a trend within the PLO which seeks a deal with the West.

A series of setbacks over the past few years has pushed the PLO to adopt a more pragmatic policy towards the West. In 1982 the PLO suffered a heavy blow when the Israeli invasion of Lebanon resulted in the expulsion of the PLO from its Lebanese military bases and the massacre of thousands of Palestinians in refugee camps around Beirut. The PLO lost the key bases for its campaign against Israel and its fighters were scattered in camps across the Middle East.

NO RESPITE

The PLO has been forced to rely more heavily on the goodwill of Arab rulers for refuge and financial support. But Arab hospitality provides the PLO with no respite from attack by the Israeli war machine. More than 150 Palestinians and Tunisians died last October when Israel bombed Arafat's Tunis headquarters. The persistent threat of Israeli attack and the build-up of the US military presence in the Mediterranean in recent months has made many Arab rulers reluctant to provide sanctuary for the PLO. Reagan's threat to invade Libya sent a shudder through Arab regimes.

Defeat has also heightened political tensions within the PLO. The outbreak of fratricidal warfare among rival factions — some backed by Arafat's enemy, Assad of Syria — is a sign of the PLO's fragmentation.



PALESTINIAN LEADERS LIKE ARAFAT TRY TO BALANCE BETWEEN BACKING ARMED ACTION AND POSING AT SUMMITS

Faced with adversity on every front, the moderate section of the PLO leadership around Arafat has stepped up the quest for a diplomatic solution to its crisis. But by playing the West's game at the conference table Arafat can only compound the political failures which have led the PLO into its present impasse.

The fierce resistance offered by Palestinian workers and youth to the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank and Gaza stands in stark contrast to the defeatism of the PLO leadership. More than 600 Palestinian attacks on Israeli military personnel were recorded in the occupied territories last year, most of them carried out by ill-equipped and unorganised Palestinian workers, students and young people. While PLO leaders are

inching towards a sell-out of the Palestinian cause the resistance movement on the ground has grown in strength. The mismatch between Arafat's pessimism and the courage and determination of the Palestinian people is the most telling indictment of the PLO's political failures.

Since the PLO launched its campaign against Israel in the late sixties it has been dogged by two key weaknesses. Its close ties with Arab regimes which rely on Western backing has limited the scope of its anti-imperialist struggle, and it has failed to link the Palestinian struggle with the wider struggle of Arab workers against capitalist oppression.

In 1969 Arafat's Fatah guerrilla group took control of the PLO, replacing the

politicians who had run the PLO on behalf of the Arab rulers. Under its new leadership the PLO embarked on an armed struggle against the Israeli state. The period between 1968 and 1974 was the high point of Palestinian resistance as refugees desperate for action against the Israeli oppressor flocked into the PLO and it became a formidable military force.

As soon as the PLO launched its campaign to free Palestine it came into conflict with the Arab rulers who rightly regarded an armed anti-imperialist movement in the Middle East as a threat to their own interests. In 1969 the Lebanese army attempted to destroy the PLO's bases in Lebanon and a year later King Hussein launched the notorious Black September attack on Palestinian bases in Jordan, massacring more than 3000 Palestinians. The 'radical' rulers of Syria and Iraq refused to come to the Palestinians' defence.

These events showed that the Palestinian struggle could not advance without challenging the power of the Arab establishment. The treachery of the Arab rulers revealed the class conflict disguised by the myth of 'Arab unity' and exposed the hollowness of the Arab regimes' anti-Western rhetoric. But the PLO leadership, tied by political, social and financial links to the Arab establishment, failed to learn the lessons. Instead of appealing to the Arab masses to help the Palestinian people defeat the forces of reaction in the Middle East, the PLO strove to mend fences with Arab leaders.

BALANCING ACT

By 1974 the PLO had rejoined the Arab League and was seeking Western support for the Palestinian cause at the United Nations. At the 1974 Palestinian National Council Arafat took the first step towards recognising Israel. Since then the PLO has wavered between accommodation with and resistance to the West.

By combining the image of a guerrilla leader with the tactics of a diplomat Arafat has been able to manoeuvre between the Palestinian masses and the Western powers. But even a politician as cunning as Arafat finds it difficult to sustain this balancing act in the increasingly unstable conditions of the Middle East today.

Palestinian liberation can only be won through the defeat of the Israeli state. Winning Palestinian independence means dismantling the whole structure of Western domination in the Middle East of which Israel is a central component. Arafat's futile pursuit of a diplomatic way out of this conflict has paralysed the liberation struggle for the past decade.

By appealing to workers in the Middle East to stop their rulers interfering in their struggle, Palestinians can take the movement forward and break the grip of the PLO's dead-end diplomacy.

SOUTH YEMEN

BRITANNIA RETURNS

Britain is the only nation which appears to derive gratification from the bloody civil war raging in South Yemen. Eighteen years after its humiliating defeat by the ill-equipped forces of South Yemen's national liberation movement, the British establishment is in ecstasy at the sight of the Union Jack flying once again off the shores of Aden. Media euphoria about the evacuation of a few patriotic Britons, on an ocean liner that's called a yacht because it belongs to the Queen, sums up the British establishment's need for something to write home about.

The conflict in Aden underlines the increasing fluidity of events in the Middle East. After Britain's expulsion South Yemen became the Soviet Union's only firm Arab ally and was regarded with deep suspicion in the West. But Western attitudes have softened since 1980, when the present ruler Ali Nasser Mohammed replaced the more

radical Abdul Fattah Ismail in a bloodless coup. Mohammed offered big incentives to attract Western investors. When oil was discovered in 1982, British, French and

The arrival of the Queen's boat to evacuate expatriates from Aden symbolises the West's willingness to move back into South Yemen reports Andy Clarkson

Italian companies moved in to snap up lucrative exploration deals.

But the current recession has made South Yemen increasingly unstable, sparking conflict between the moderate and radical wings of the governing party. The return of Abdul Fattah Ismail from exile in Moscow last year has clearly added fuel to the fire, triggering off the chain of events which culminated in the outbreak of civil war two weeks ago.

The rebel forces appear to have come out on top, although the situation remains unstable. But the big loser — apart from the thousands of Yemenis slaughtered in fighting — is likely to be the Soviet Union. Mohammed's moderate approach was welcomed by Moscow, which is keen to avoid conflict with the West in the third world. Under Mohammed South Yemen restored relations with right-wing Arab rulers in the Gulf, which helped the Soviet Union gain more friends in the region. The turmoil in South Yemen has seriously upset the Soviet Union's Middle Eastern diplomacy.

The West is also concerned about the appearance of yet another trouble-spot in the Middle East. But as Britain's antics at Aden show, it is ready to use local instability to its own advantage. Only a revival of the freedom fighting spirit of 1967 can save South Yemen from falling back into the clutches of the West.

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The Irish War

Why did 40 000 people vote for a party that supports the IRA last week? Why did thousands more vote for a Loyalist party led by the biggest bigot in British politics? And who are the masked men threatening to kill Catholics in Ireland because Margaret Thatcher did a deal with Garret FitzGerald? (And who's he anyway?) The answer to every Irish question is in **The Irish War**.

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THE POPULAR FRONT

Fair weather friends

Jim Fyrrh (editor), Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front, Lawrence & Wishart £5.95

This May brings the fiftieth anniversary of the Popular Front government in France, when the Communist Party shared power with the Radicals and Socialists. It was the high point of the policy of seeking alliances with reformist and liberal parties, pursued by European communists in the thirties. This book, written by members of the British Communist Party, is the first of what will no doubt be many celebratory histories of the Popular Front turned out by the official communist movement this year.

The Popular Front was dictated by the official international communist organisation, the Comintern, which was dominated by the Soviet bureaucracy. Stalin and his associates used the Comintern as an instrument of Soviet foreign policy. Eager to make alliances with the Western capitalist powers as a defence against Nazi Germany, Stalin encouraged communists in France, Britain and Spain to unite with their ruling classes 'in defence of democracy'. Yet as Geoff Roberts shows in his contribution here, the main elements of the Popular Front

already existed in the opportunist policies pursued by European communists. Even before the Comintern abandoned its hostility towards other left-wing parties, its activists were adept at compromising with reformists.

The results of the Popular Front were uniformly disastrous. In Spain it bound workers to the liberal republicans and prevented them dealing effectively with Franco's Falange. In Britain and France the policy committed the working class to support the capitalists' war with Germany, on the grounds that both bosses and workers were fighting fascism.

The French communists were swept to power in May 1936 on the crest of a strike wave. As soon as they had taken their government seats the communist leaders tried to calm things down. Party chief Maurice Thorez told French workers that revolution was a diversion and they should return to their jobs. Intoxicated by their new sense of national responsibility, the communist leaders flew the French tricolour instead of the red flag and sang the national anthem, the Marseillaise, instead of the Internationale.

After encouraging French workers to support the Allied war effort, the communists played a



STALIN: UNPOPULAR SPONSOR OF THE POPULAR FRONT

key role in resisting the German occupation. Many of their cadres were the best resistance fighters. But after the war was over the communists returned to government and helped the establishment to restore order and profitability. Thorez boasted that without the communists economic recovery after the First World War had taken five years. With communist support the recovery after the Second World War took only two years. He attributed this success to his

party's ability to convince French workers to accept a 50 per cent cut in real wages.

History ought to teach even the most opportunist left wingers something. As soon as the Communist Party had made its contribution to rescuing French capitalism it was unceremoniously booted out of government. However the communists saw the alliance, the French ruling class never allowed itself to get sentimental. **John Gibson**

EASTERHOUSE

A propaganda group



Easterhouse, Whistling in the Dark, Rough Trade

Some people play in bands because as kids they were too weedy to play football — Elvis Costello for example. Many more see the music business as their way 'To get out of this place', this 'Dead End Street' — like the Animals and the Kinks. But few form a group to express their political commitment, as RCP supporter Andy Perry did when he formed Easterhouse.

Perry is the band's singer/song writer. In the lyrics for 'Whistling in the Dark', the second Easterhouse single, he attacks the NUM leaders for failing to give a lead during the miners' strike. In the other two songs on the record, 'Confrontation' and 'Ain't that always the way?' Perry observes the breakdown of political consensus and the price we're being asked to pay for the bosses' recession.

These are unusual themes for a band to deal with. And Perry's conception of the function of Easterhouse is equally unusual: 'We are a propaganda group. We want to put forward an idea of a politically aware worker who can think about what's going on, who has a definite set of political beliefs rather than a haircut.'

Unlike the Red Wedgies, members of Labour's vote-gathering culture club who have grafted Labour's politics on to their showbiz careers, Perry says revolutionary politics are the root and branch of his Easterhouse career: 'We're just taking the politics into a new sphere and expressing them through a different form.'

Perry wants Easterhouse songs to reflect the real experience of young people, and to attack the glorification of 'rebel culture' which he feels is a

parody of youth. Perry believes his songs will live up to his own expectations so long as he can develop 'music as a purely intellectual thing, created out of intellectual effort'.

Perry's intellectual approach does not detract from the hard-hitting character of his voice. In fact it is just what he needs to use his voice fully. On 'Whistling in the Dark' Perry's vocal line, based on a blues scale, achieves an especially chilling effect. He has successfully combined the intellectual strength of his lyrics with a forceful, controlled delivery.

With Perry's voice, lyrics and ideas Easterhouse could be streets ahead. But they've slowed themselves down by tying their innovations to the familiar musical forms of Manchester modernism. Easterhouse are a guitar band, and their guitar sound derives from two popular models — Joy Division and The 'Give 'em enough rope' Clash. On 'Whistling in the Dark' production supremo Geoff Travis (a Rough Trade original) has tried to get a big sound out of a small-time studio mix, and finished up with an average cut — the rhythm section is there but it's got no edge. And the only rhythm section risk on the disc — a quirky blues-riffing piano — has been mixed almost out of earshot.

Easterhouse are ready to stand against the system, but they run the risk of being conservative when it comes to music. Political bands have got to make sure that their commitment to changing the world does not become a substitute for exploring and developing new ways of reflecting their experience of the world through their chosen musical form. **Jimmy Simpson**

GAY USA DOCUMENTARY

How they used to do it

Before Stonewall, Greta Schiller (director)

On 27 June 1969 New York police raided the Stonewall bar in Greenwich Village for a bit of routine harassment and gay-bashing. There were riots for two days. With a ferocity and confidence which shook the country as well as the police, New York gays announced enough was enough. It was a turning point which had been a long time coming: as somebody says in this film, 'from Stonehenge to Stonewall'.

Greta Schiller's documentary covers the 50 years which led up to that riot. Around the reminiscences and reflections of lesbians and gay men she constructs a montage from photographs, films, newsreels, home-movies and songs which recovers for us a vivid picture of the pain, the pleasure and the sheer poignancy of an era of gay history few will miss. The interviewees, mostly middle aged and elderly, from a multitude of class and racial backgrounds, speak with dignity and much good humour.

We are reminded of the extent to which the very existence of homosexuality was repressed in the first half of this century. The sense of isolation and loneliness are a recurrent theme, which considering the disgrace and ruin (including prison and mental hospital) which attended disclosure is not surprising. The film brings home how difficult it was even to think through the issue in oppositional terms. It was not until 1950 that the first gay organisation was formed in America. Of course a broad and vital underground gay culture had always flourished ('We didn't call it. We did it') in bohemian bars and clubs and parties, and in literature.

The film shows how the great leaps forward for homosexuals accompanied other social upheavals — in particular the Second World War and the civil rights and black power movements. Conversely, in periods of reaction such as the McCarthyite fifties, homosexuals were pilloried alongside other

deviants such as communists. Nothing demonstrates more clearly the way prejudice against a minority is developed and institutionalised when necessary, to scapegoat one section of society and to divide workers.

During the Second World War homosexuals were tolerated because they were needed and because there were so many in the forces. When Eisenhower ordered lesbians to be 'ferreted out' of a certain army unit he was told that would only leave one or two people: 'Forget the order,' he said. The coming together of so many gay people and their greatly increased visibility in these tumultuous years gave them tremendous heart and confidence. It wasn't just in the forces either, but also in the factories where many women for the first time worked alongside each other. As the Cold War set



in women were forced back into the home and gays back into the closet. They were sacked from government jobs and the forces too. Paddywagons lined up outside gay bars and in the morning the newspapers carried lists of names and addresses.

But there was no going back. Protests grew and the stage was set for the explosion of the gay liberation movement at the end of the sixties. If there is a fault with the film it is that it does not fully draw out the lessons that it contains but leaves the emphasis on the celebratory tone of the courageous pioneers whose voices are heard here. This is understandable given what they have been through and given how little support they got from the straight world. But at a time when the oppression of gays is growing again we need to emphasise the common cause of all those struggling against the power of the state. **Pat Ford**

LETTERS

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Terror in Hackney

POLICE motorcyclists on every corner. Transits full of cops on every sidestreet. Police helicopter swooping low. What merited this massive show of police strength on the streets

outside my house in Hackney on Saturday? A handful of anarchists on a march against police repression!
Keith Jackson
East London

Filming foreign bodies

RECENTLY I got a day's work as an Asian extra in a movie due out next year, called *Foreign Body*. We were promised good food, warm conditions to work in and £30 for about half a day's work. But only the food proved to be decent. Worst of all was the racism of the film crew. They herded us around like cattle, while the director and his assistants took full advantage of the language barrier to confuse the older Asians.

The company tried to save the cost of an extra day's shooting by making us work longer for no extra payment. We refused to come off the coaches until they coughed up more money, and

eventually they did. But by making us collect our wages under the watchful eye of the police they made it clear what they thought of us.

No doubt if this film comedy is a success it will be trumpeted in the *Guardian* as a major achievement for British cinema which purports to show black people in a positive light. My experience didn't make me feel more 'positive'. It confirmed my suspicions that if you're black you're still second class, just another 'foreign body' in someone else's country.

Nick Chandra
Bristol



Anti-gay education

I AM a first year law student and I am writing about the blatant anti-gay prejudice which is to be found here at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham. A recent tutorial sheet posed the question of the legal liability of 'Queer' who 'goes to a well-known "meeting place" in London hoping to make someone's "acquaintance"', and ends up stabbing one bloke among a group of abusive skinheads. The question forces students to draw a link between 'Queer' and homosexual men. The use of labels such as 'queer' is offensive, especially to

myself as a young gay.

A gay rights policy was adopted by Trent Poly students union in 1983 but has been consistently ignored. At the time of writing the union executive are supporting us in attempting to force the law department to adopt more progressive attitudes. It will be interesting to see whether the union will take this support as far as is necessary should the law department refuse to change their attitudes.

Jimmy
Trent Polytechnic

For real democracy

FOLLOWING the deregistration of the RCP students society over the protest organised against Victoria Gillick in Sheffield University last term, we got enough support to call an extraordinary general meeting last week.

The Labour club argued that Gillick had a democratic right to speak, but showed their own understanding of democracy by demanding two re-counts after the majority of students voted twice in favour of our reaffiliation.

During the re-counts Labour members went into the bars telling people to come into the meeting and vote to ensure the defeat of the RCPSS. The third and final vote showed a majority of 10 votes against the reaffiliation.

Perhaps the Labour club hope that the deregistering of the RCPSS will disguise their inability to organise an effective fightback against Tory attacks on education, and the democratic rights of women, blacks and those speaking out for Irish freedom. But it isn't possible to disguise education cuts, cuts in abortion and contraception facilities, and police harassment of blacks — and it isn't possible to ban them either.

Barbara
Sheffield

Labour and apartheid

LEWISHAM MP Colin Moynihan recently threatened to take the Nalco executive to court because local members have been refusing to handle Moynihan's mail, in protest at his investments in Tate and Lyle which trades from Durban, South Africa. A worried Labour council (which made a declaration against apartheid in March 1985) joined in and threatened the Nalco workers with disciplinary action.

At our next branch meeting we discussed a motion condemning the council for failing to support workers' action and calling for strike action if any worker was disciplined. But the motion was decisively defeated, the

Race checks are racist

LAST week strikers at Thornton Heath and Toxteth unemployment benefit offices returned to work after a strike over the introduction of compulsory ethnic monitoring of claimants. Under the scheme each claimant clerk was to make a visual assessment of the claimant's racial origin, to be held on the department's computer for the duration of the claim — and more than likely to make easier work for the home office and immigration police.

The staff were willing to take action but the Civil and Public Servants' Association could only express its 'grave doubts that the present government had any real will or aim to overcome racial discrimination in Britain'. The union says that because of the resistance by staff and the anger of claimants, the management should 'drop their current proposals and come forward with others which are more acceptable to all'. Perhaps the union leaders are thinking of a voluntary ethnic monitoring scheme? But one thing is certain, a union that only 'doubts' whether Tories are racists and only opposes race checks because they're compulsory can't fight racism.

Jim
CPSA member
North-east London



WORKERS TAKE ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

STEPPING OUT

'Escape from Aden — How Britannia ruled the waves' would make a great propaganda movie for the British establishment, but they're going to have to get some better script writers. Muriel Burden of the *Sun* will have to go for a start, if her 'Drop 'em! How Aden hero disarmed nine storm troopers' story is anything to go by. The facts are that Peter Lewis, British security guard, met several South Yemenis in the embassy grounds, who left after an exchange of words. Beyond that things get confused. First, Muriel is adamant that Lewis 'disarmed nine BANDITS'. Then she says he 'confronted nine FREEDOM FIGHTERS'. And while the nine had originally 'STORMED' the embassy, Muriel later decided they had 'BEGGED Peter for shelter'. So is Lewis 'the fearless Englishman quelling savage tribesmen with just his stern eye' as the *Sun* editor says? Or is he a bully, pushing frightened people out to possible death, in the best tradition of British agents abroad? Only one man knows for sure. And as he is the sort of banana who gets photographed jiggling about without trousers and wrapped in a Union Jack, we may never know.

Another bit of Sun double-speak shows that, whatever is new at Murdoch's Wapping plant, some things never change. The paper welcomed the channel tunnel go-ahead: 'The Sun has confidence that the project will be of great benefit to both the British and French nations.' What? Has the patriotic paper that supported our boys in the Falklands come over all cosmopolitan? No. On the next page there is a piece about the Sun's 'new anti-French hit record, "Hop Off You Frogs"', the paper's reply to the anti-Thatcher disc turned out by a French crooner. 'Hop Off You Frogs' is apparently 'backed by Radio 1 deejays Steve Wright and Simon Bates'. The French must be quaking in their boots.

I've lost track of the goings-on in the wacky Workers' Revolutionary Party. My Yorkshire ears discovered a desolate member of said bunch slumped over a pint last Saturday, and set out to pump him for information. 'Are you with the Mike Banda faction or Gerry Healy's lot?' asked the ears. 'Neither,' he replied. 'Explain yourself,' demanded the ears. 'Simple,' says the downcast communist, 'I'm with the minority of the majority'. A story sad enough to get a drink out of anybody.

After her husband's embarrassing performance in the big debate on Monday, Glenys Kinnock is desperately trying to drum up support. This week she offered to appear on the Radio 4 soap, *The Archers*. She suggested Pat Archer might be a Labour candidate, which would give her an excuse to 'visit' the village of Ambridge. Producer Bill Hebden scuppered her scheme by insisting that his show was 'non-political'. Bill wins this week's Radio 4 tee shirt for thinking Glenys Kinnock has got something to do with politics.

Princess David is back in the news this week after revelations about her love life. But she was also involved in another incident. Di flew into Luton Airport, and was confronted by a punk shouting 'Your dad's got VD and your days are numbered'. Just abuse? Perhaps. But she arrived in a Westland helicopter. A leak from informed sources cannot be ruled out.

In 1984 Labour's David Blunkett banned the Bloody Sunday commemoration march. This year he is supporting it. But then, in 1984 it was to be held on his home ground in Sheffield. This weekend it is in London. Irish solidarity marches, as they say in the Labour Party, should be sponsored but not heard.

EDDIE VEALE

Reports



THE STRUGGLE FOR SCOTTISH JOBS

Last week the steel unions formally admitted they would have to accept the closure of Gartcosh strip rolling mill in Lanarkshire. In fact they had given up any real hope of saving Gartcosh as soon as closure was announced last autumn.

From the beginning the steel unions rejected the idea of workers taking independent action against the closure. Instead Tommy Brennan, union convenor for the Gartcosh and Ravenscraig steel works, left the future of 700 Gartcosh workers in the hands of the all-party Scottish affairs select committee of MPs. He urged Scots only to write to Thatcher and Scottish secretary George Younger asking for a reprieve for Gartcosh.

Stevie O'Riordan reports on the coming closure of Gartcosh steel mill and the fight to reinstate sacked Scottish miners

Labour MPs on the committee repaid Brennan's faith by juggling statistics to prove that Gartcosh was essential to the survival of Ravenscraig. This may be true, but it misses the point. In the middle of a recession the Tories cannot afford to worry about Ravenscraig either. The Labour Party has also tried to stir up Scottish nationalist sentiments, arguing that Gartcosh is being run down in favour of the Shotton plant in Wales. But this 'please leave us alone and sack somebody else' approach is no match for a government that needs to nail steelworkers everywhere.

The official labour movement's ideas on how to save steel jobs were summed up by Brennan's five-point plan for defending Gartcosh. His top two priorities were to seek a meeting with Thatcher and to seek a meeting with Leon Brittan (then industry secretary). His fifth and last idea was for a meeting of the workers at some unspecified date. The fruits of his efforts were a 400-mile march from Gartcosh to London. Workers were discouraged from attending in favour of Labour and Tory MPs, backed by church spokesmen, councillors and businessmen. When the marchers arrived Thatcher refused to meet them. With his first plan wrecked, Brennan came up with another — to hand in a petition to the Queen in the hope that she would intervene and save Gartcosh.

The unions' acceptance that Gartcosh will close was the only possible outcome of their campaign. Bishops, bosses, Conservatives and the Queen are all pillars of the British establishment. Their futures depend on the survival of the system at workers' expense. Expecting such figures to support workers fighting for jobs is like expecting Billy Connolly to support the Mary Whitehouse campaign.

Scottish steelworkers need to recognise

that appealing to the employers' 'better nature' will get us nowhere. The only 'nature' they have is the instinct to maximise profits at the expense of our jobs and living standards. Steelworkers will have to drop their unions' approach and take the defence of jobs into their own hands. That means building links between mills, and dropping illusions in making links with the bosses.

MINERS NEED ACTION

'Confidence and unity is what the NUM is seeking to build.' That was the hopeful new year message sent to Scottish miners by Scottish National Union of Mineworkers vice-president George Bolton. But sacked men in the Scottish coalfield are getting a very different message from their leaders.

Some sacked miners have been told they can't have the NUM lawyers anymore because they are 'time barred' — miners who were sacked during the strike but failed to apply for industrial tribunals within three months. The 'time barred' men are bitter. As Alec, a sacked miner from Polmaise told *tns*, 'When you're sacked at the beginning of the strike, you're going to win that strike and get your job back, not apply to any industrial tribunals!' The NUM officials don't see it that way. They have advised 'time barred' men to apply for legal aid. So much for Bolton's talk of 'confidence and unity'.

Just one of the 12 men sacked at Polmaise has been reinstated. Throughout Scotland only around 70 of the 206 sacked miners have got their jobs back. Sixteen cases have been to industrial tribunals, with eight won and eight lost. The union is telling men who gave their all in the year-long strike to sort out their own legal problems and rely on tribunals where, if they ever get a hearing, they have at best a 50 per cent chance of reinstatement. And as some miners have found, even then the coal board is likely to ignore the industrial tribunal decision and refuse to reinstate them.

The sacked men still have the support of many of their workmates. Last week miners from Bilston Glen and Monktonhall came out on strike in support of four men who won tribunal cases but were refused their jobs back. But sacked miners need a national campaign to stand a real chance of getting back to work. Bolton ended his message to his members with the thought that, 'Together, we can perform miracles'. While NUM officials wait for tribunals staffed by retired lawyers to perform miracles, miners can do what's needed by taking control of the struggle for reinstatement.



Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

Come along!



WAITING FOR KINNOCK — OR FIGHTING BACK NOW?

A day of discussion and debate in Scotland and Yorkshire

After more than six years of sacking workers, jailing strikers, oppressing women, and terrorising black and Irish people, the Thatcher government is in deep trouble. Many people are happy to see the Tories squirm. But because of recent defeats they are also demoralised about the potential for working class action to defend our interests. They see the only hope as getting the Labour Party back into government. But we can't afford to pin our hopes on Kinnock coming to the rescue. Even when the Tories are beating each other up, he has proved incapable of putting the boot into our enemies.

The Revolutionary Communist Party believes that there is an alternative to waiting for Kinnock. That is to build a new party committed to fighting for working class interests now, instead of making concession after concession to the Tories or waiting for Thatcher to

tread on bigger banana skins. But don't take our word for it! Come along to a day of discussion in Scotland or Yorkshire, hear our point of view, and put your own.

SCOTLAND

Saturday 8 February 12-5.30pm
McLellan Galleries
Sauchiehall Street
Glasgow

Sessions:

- One year after the miners' strike
- Fighting the Tories — a new approach
- Can the Labour Party be changed?
- Fighting back RCP-style in '86

Tickets £1 (50p UB40)

Refreshments and childcare available

YORKSHIRE

Saturday 22 February 10-5pm
Central Library
Bradford

Sessions:

- The Kinnock alternative — is Labour worth waiting for?
- The pits: the UDM and company unionism
- Racism — a knife in the back of us all
- Women and the family in Thatcher's Britain
- Fighting back RCP-style in '86

Tickets £2 (£1 UB40)

Refreshments and childcare available

RACISM — WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO FIGHT IT

Workers Against Racism dayschool
Racist attacks, police brutality, deportations and race checks are all on the increase. Black people face a full-scale offensive from the racist authorities. To fight back we need to know who the enemy is — and who our real allies are. Sunday 23 February 10-5pm, City of London Polytechnic, Fairholt House (Aldgate East tube)

FIGHTING OPPRESSION

A course at the London School of Economics on the Marxist approach to winning real freedom, convened by Kate Marshall, author of *Moral Panics and Victorian Values*. In the first two discussions:

Kate Marshall asks
Marxism and Feminism — will they ever marry?
Thursday 30 January 6pm

Don Milligan looks at
Gay oppression
Thursday 6 February 6pm
Both meetings in room A40

SPEAK OUT FOR IRISH FREEDOM

Activists fighting for Irish freedom are coming up against all the harassment Camden police can throw at them. Join our protest this weekend to defend the right to speak out on Ireland and make it clear that we won't let the police push us around.

Saturday 1 February 2pm
Camden High Street
North London



REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY STUDENTS SOCIETY

Revolutionary communist students are starting the new term as we ended the old, by campaigning against all cuts and raising the political issues that matter most. If you thought student politics was all beer and bureaucrats, try a different approach. Ring Kerry Andrews on 01-729 0414

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IRELAND

TROOPS OUT NOW!

Bloody Sunday demonstration

1pm, Sunday 2 February, Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, London

IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Phone 01-729 0414

This is the only British solution

Rally for Irish freedom

NO BRITISH SOLUTION

Saturday 1 February 6.30pm

Manning Hall

University of London

Union, Malet Street

London WC1

Benefit

EASTERHOUSE

University of London Union

Saturday 1 February 9pm

Malet Street WC1

Admission £2.50 + Bar



Troops Out Now—the only path to peace

End British war crimes in Ireland

Fourteen years ago this week British troops shot dead 14 unarmed Irish marchers on Bloody Sunday in Derry. Today, behind the diplomatic facade of the Anglo-Irish agreement, British forces are still terrorising Irish people

See pages 6, 7