

tms
the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party • 27 February 1987 • 30p

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Police strangle black youth - Wolverhampton erupts

'They twisted his head off'

► Police strangled 23-year old Clinton McCurbin in Wolverhampton last Friday in broad daylight on a busy shopping street. They were supposed to be arresting the black youth on suspicion of using a stolen cheque card. They handed out a summary death sentence instead.

Eye-witness account — Turn to page 3 ◀

Tory tricksters

The Tories are the most brazen bunch of confidence tricksters in Britain. Last week they sold off the doomed Leyland Trucks to the Dutch, while Westland helicopters returned to haunt them and demand another hand-out. Yet the Conservatives had the nerve to claim that the government's current cash surplus, which gives chancellor Nigel Lawson scope for tax cuts, proves that British capitalism is full of beans. The government income figures prove only that Tory boasts of economic recovery are flatulent.

The cash which the Treasury wants to spend on tax cuts is a one-off windfall. It comes from sources that show the crippling sickness of the British economy, rather like the lump sum compensation you might get for an injury that puts you out of work for good.

The Tories have made money from selling off assets like British Airways. They have taken extra customs duty brought in by a flood of foreign imports. They have pocketed surplus stamp duty paid by the speculators now frantically buying and selling shares in the City. They have received record amounts of income tax because they have failed to cut our wages as the system requires. They have made millions from VAT as the credit-card economy produces a consumer spending boom. In sum, the true secret of the Tories' public finance 'success' is that British capitalism is approaching bankruptcy, and that the ruling class is trying to unload its stock on the cheap and steal anything that is not nailed down before the creditors and bailiffs arrive.

Far more significant than any two or three per cent tax cut is the fact that new investment in British industry has fallen by 10 per cent in the last year. The Leyland Trucks and Westland sagas show what is happening at the business end of British capitalism. Both caused heated political debates last year. Their return to the news indicates that the Tories' past attempts to paper over the problems of the British economy are now falling apart.

Last year the Tories tried to sell Leyland Trucks to the American giant General Motors. They cancelled the deal in face of all-party opposition. Yet the crisis of the British motor industry has now forced the government to unload its truck outfit on to the DAF corporation. The chauvinists of the British establishment are fond of depicting Holland as a cross between a haven of rural idyllic where people wear clogs and grow tulips, and a den of iniquity full of international drug smugglers. Now they have been forced to concede that even the Dutch are better equipped than British

businessmen to run a modern motor industry.

In January 1986 the row over whether Westland should be sold to its American or European competitors caused bitter divisions in Tory ranks. It was finally resolved, after two cabinet ministers had resigned and Thatcher had threatened to follow them, in favour of the American helicopter manufacturer Sikorsky. Now the Tories have had to place another pricey order for Westland machines which they neither want nor need, to keep the West Country firm hovering just above the abyss.

Today, behind its boasts of an economic boom, the Conservative Party stands revealed in its true colours. It is the political machine of a corrupt ruling class, presiding over an outdated and exploitative system, whose aim is to concentrate the wealth of society in the hands of the privileged and propertied few. It lies to us about 'popular capitalism', while pursuing policies which are popular with money-grabbing capitalists but which cost thousands of carworkers and others their jobs. The remarkable thing is that the Tories get away with it. For that, we must thank the official opposition.

The Labour Party debates economic matters in terms which any Tory could understand. It argues about which strategy is best suited to keeping Leyland or Westland going as a capitalist concern, and it quibbles over whether the City financiers have the best interests of their fellow exploiters in industry at heart. Labour provides no challenge to the fundamentals of Tory philosophy. This has allowed Thatcher to tough out every economic crisis. During the Westland row and the current debate over government policy, she has had more to fear from her Tory critic Michael Heseltine than from Neil Kinnock, who is supposed to represent the political interests of the labour movement.

Kinnock's commitment to salvaging the capitalist economy amounts to an oath of loyalty to those who live off our labour. Our loyalty lies elsewhere, with working class people. They have been forced to build the system for the benefit of the employers, and are now expected to endure mass unemployment, growing poverty and intensifying exploitation while the management absconds with the takings. They need an alternative to the capitalist order and its political supporters. A first step towards providing it must be to organise those who are willing to fight for our class today. That is the aim of our campaign for *The Red Front* (see page nine). If you have had enough of the tricksters, join us.

Reagan's crisis

This week the Tower Commission report is set to explode inside Ronald Reagan's White House. The investigation into the US arms deal with Iran is expected to expose a catalogue of lies and cover-ups reaching to the top of the Reagan administration. Whatever the final outcome of the furore, Reagan's authority has been shot to pieces.

The crisis now coming to a head is about much more than Reagan's attempt to swap guns, cakes and bibles for hostages and influence in the Middle East. It is about the fact that American imperialism is losing its way in the world as its economic power declines. Before Reagan, America had slipped from its unchallenged post-war supremacy to the depths of defeat in Vietnam. He has sought to reaffirm

America's status as leader of the Western world and policeman of the third world, through displays of gunboat diplomacy in Grenada, Libya and Central America and outbursts of gung-ho jingoism against those who would challenge the USA. But the mounting problems of the US economy and of American foreign policy from Nicaragua to Iran have caught up with him, and reduced 'the great communicator' to silence in the days before the Tower report's publication.

Reagan may have slipped, but his instinctive understanding of America's need to lash out if it is to stay on top remains a sound one. The victims of American imperialism can expect little respite from the lash of Washington's whip, whoever shuffles in and out of the White House in the weeks to come.



PALESTINIAN REFUGEES SURVIVE IN BOMB-BLASTED HOVELS

VICTORY TO THE PALESTINIANS! 'Nothing but war and pogroms'

Rima Milhim is the London correspondent of the Palestinian news agency WAFA who was brought up in the Chatila refugee camp in Beirut. Daniel Nassim asked her about the siege and starvation now afflicting the Palestinian camps in Lebanon

Palestinians are starving to death each day in the besieged refugee camps in Lebanon, surrounded by Syrian tanks and by Nabih Berri's Western-backed Amal militia. On the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the army has launched a wave of terror to break Palestinian demonstrations and strikes against the genocide in Lebanon.

For 40 years the Western powers have used their client state of Israel and their local Arab stooges to deny the Palestinian people their right to self-determination and to keep Palestine under the heel. Britain, America and the rest have banished Palestinians to grim refugee camps, where they are forced to fight against poverty, hunger and violence. Peace can only come when they win their freedom.

tns: What is happening in the camps now?

Rima Milhim: 'Last week the media made a big fuss about the three UN trucks which finally went into Bourj al-Barajneh with supplies. In fact they were mini-buses. Every adult got a pound of flour and just under a pound of powdered milk. By now that's definitely all gone. At least 45 people have already starved to death.'

'The siege has lasted for almost four months now. But the process really started in April 1985, when Amal launched its war against the Palestinian camps. For almost two years most Palestinian men have not been able to get out of the camps and look for work, for fear of being picked up, tortured or killed by Amal, who have road-blocks all over the place. The economic situation in the camps has been very bad — even before the siege.'

'The Western media have focused on Bourj al-Barajneh. But the situation in other camps is even worse. Rashadiye in southern Lebanon has been without food for almost six months. In Chatila all adults have gone on a voluntary fast to save the remaining food for pregnant and breast-feeding women and children. Chatila is militarily very exposed. All 7000 inhabitants permanently live in underground dug-outs. Last week a doctor managed to get in. He is now feeding people intravenously to keep them alive.'

tns: How are the people managing to hold out?

RM: 'The Palestinians have no choice. They are fighting for survival. If the camps fall there will be a mass genocide. If we lose, all Palestinian organisations will be wiped out

or come under Syrian control. The people feel there is no way they will become subservient to Syria or Jordan or any other state. Everyone in the camps, old and young, has known nothing but war and pogroms. This is what gives people the strength to resist.'

'The population in the camps is very young — more than half the people are under 19. The PLO fighters who have tried to come back to the camps have not been able to get through. So it is the local boys — and girls — who are doing the fighting. Strategically the camps are impossible to defend, particularly Chatila, which is on low ground. The Syrians and Amal have tanks, long-range missiles and the most up-to-date artillery. All the Palestinians have is light and medium-weight weapons and a few short-range rocket launchers. They are running out of ammunition. Call it heroism or desperation — it is a miracle they've held out for four months in these conditions.'

tns: What about the resistance outside the camps?

RM: 'Last week 3000 women who managed to flee the camps demonstrated outside Bourj al-Barajneh. The resistance has been strongest in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza. There have been demonstrations in every town and village. All universities and schools have been occupied, and workers and shop-owners in the cities have organised general strikes.'

'Israeli repression has been vicious. Fourteen people were shot in a demonstration on the West Bank. The universities at Bir Zeit, Najah, Bethlehem and Gaza have been raided and shut down. Shop-owners have had their permits withdrawn. There have been mass arrests. In the occupied territories people get a minimum 18-month sentence just for raising the Palestinian flag.'

'What is happening in the camps is very tragic. But it is not exceptional. It has been the same since 1948 [when the West robbed the Palestinians of their homeland and created the Israeli state]. 'The camps war cannot be looked at in isolation from the situation in the Middle East as a whole. These things will continue until the Palestinian people are allowed to live freely in their own country.'

'In the Western press the siege has been portrayed as a case of mad Muslims fighting with each other, or of poor people eating cats and dogs. But nobody ever talks about the real problem — which is Israel and its oppression of the Palestinian people.'

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POLICE STRANGLE BLACK YOUTH

BARBARIANS!

The police can't lie their way out of this one. They killed Clinton McCurbin with their bare hands

They got their arms around his neck and turned it round, it looked like they were twisting his head off, and the next thing we knew he was dead.' This was how an eye-witness described the police killing of 23-year old black man Clinton McCurbin in Wolverhampton on Friday. Black anger exploded as news of the strangling spread and more than a dozen people were arrested in fighting with the police.

It was lunchtime last Friday when police put Clinton McCurbin in a stranglehold as they tried to arrest him on suspicion of using a stolen credit card outside the Next clothing shop on Dudley Street. Another witness remembers the scene: 'A police officer who I recognised as the one who gives us hassle in the shopping centre, was pinning down Clinton McCurbin on the pavement. Then they dragged him into the shop and held him down on the floor. We could see what was happening through the window. They didn't treat him like a human being. They got his neck up and back.'

Police claim that Clinton McCurbin put up a violent struggle, but another bystander told *ins* that he didn't have a chance: 'We tried to get into the shop. But they closed the doors against us. We could see they were using undue force to restrain him. He was hardly moving, he didn't have a chance to struggle.' The photograph on our front page shows the police practising their stranglehold on another black youth arrested later in the disturbances outside the shop. This martial arts hold is standard treatment for any black person who falls into police hands.

As an angry crowd gathered outside the shop police barred the doors and called in



FURY ON THE STREETS AS POLICE LOAD CLINTON MCCURBIN'S CORPSE INTO THE AMBULANCE ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON

reinforcements. An ambulance arrived at the side entrance. An hour and a half later the ambulance moved round to the front and backed up to the entrance, so that its open doors blocked the view of the people outside. Tempers flared and people demanded to know what was going on. A local community relations counsellor went in and

emerged after half an hour to announce that McCurbin was dead. Some time later, McCurbin's lifeless body was put into the back of the ambulance.

When news of the killing became public knowledge police declared that McCurbin died of a heart attack brought on by drug abuse. But the post-mortem revealed no

trace of drugs. Clinton McCurbin died of 'asphyxia consistent with restraint during a violent struggle'. On Monday his mother, who was out of the country when her son died, threw a wreath of red and white flowers into the shop where police killers struck. She was not allowed inside to see the spot where her son's life was squeezed away.

LICENSED TO KILL

The killing of Clinton McCurbin takes police violence against black people to a new level of barbarism.

Early one September morning in 1985, armed police with dogs smashed down the door of 22 Normandy Road in Brixton, shot 38-year old mother of six Cherry Groce and left her lying paralysed in a pool of blood on her bedroom floor. In January the police officer who crippled Cherry Groce for life walked free from the courts after being found not guilty.

In October 1985 black mother of five Cynthia Jarrett collapsed and died during a police raid on her home, after police had arrested her son Floyd for 'stealing' his own car. Her death sparked a revolt against police terror on Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham. In December 1985 the inquest returned a verdict of 'accidental death'. The jury decided that the police pushed Cynthia Jarrett, but didn't think that it was 'deliberate'.

Last October Anthony 'Crumpet' Lemard, a young black man from Notting Hill, died in a police cell shortly after his arrest. Police claimed he died from a massive injection of drugs, but the hundreds of black people who marched on Notting Hill police station didn't believe them. In

January 1987 Trevor Monerville was found battered and brain-damaged in Brixton prison after two days in police custody in Stoke Newington. Police pleaded ignorance about how he got his awful injuries.

Last week police chief Kenneth Newman complained that in some areas of London a police officer cannot make an arrest without invoking the wrath of local people: 'Indeed his experience if he lays hands on a black man may very well be that others will unite to prevent the arrests and perhaps to assault him.' When police lay hands on black people these days, it's their victims who are lucky to get away with their lives, never mind a beating.

Thatcher's Britain is a racists' paradise where police get away with harassing Cynthia Jarrett to death, shooting and crippling Cherry Groce in Brixton, and battering blacks to oblivion inside police cells. Up to now the police have got away with every act of brutality against the black community, whether it be in the privacy of their own homes or in a dark corner of a police cell. Now they think they can get away with killing black people in broad daylight on busy shopping streets. They must be made to think again.

TORY GANGSTERS GUN FOR TAMILS

The spectacle of 58 Tamil refugees stripping on the runway of Heathrow airport last week, to stop the British home office deporting them to their deaths, summed up the way in which black immigrants and refugees are abused in Thatcher's Britain.

Tory immigration minister David Waddington slammed the 'gangsters' who got the refugees into Britain for running an immigration racket and slated them for treating the Tamils 'just like cattle'. But the real gangsters are the British politicians who have backed the butchery of Sri Lankan soldiers against the Tamils, and herded the refugees from detention cells to deportation like so much cheap meat.

The divisions between the majority Sinhalese population and the minority Tamil community that provoked the conflict in Sri Lanka were imposed and maintained during 150 years of British rule. 'We can't go back to be massacred like the 200 people hacked to death last month,' one refugee told *ins*. A month ago he fled from Sri Lanka as the Sinhalese army stepped up its pogrom against the Tamils. The British government has been in it up to its neck.

Other refugees told us that the Sinhalese army is using British arms and British mercenaries: 'There are British pilots for the helicopters and big tanks for Sri Lankan troops.' Officially the Tories have nothing to do with the mercenaries. But they have been deployed, with government approval, from British consulates all over the country. These British-backed gangsters have played an active part in the slaughter of 20 000 Tamils since 1983.

Contrary to Waddington's claims that 'genuine' refugees can easily obtain a passport out of Sri Lanka, refugees are putting their lives on the line to do it: 'The passport office in Jaffna was closed in 1983,' one refugee told *ins*, 'people have to travel to Colombo to get papers, last year a busload of Tamils were burnt to death at a military checkpoint.' Rather than risk their lives on the road to Colombo, many refugees have had to resort to using Sinhalese agents to smuggle them out.

Tamil refugees who have made it to Britain really do know what it is like to be treated 'like cattle'. As soon as they arrived last week immigration police tried to herd the refugees back on board a plane before anybody could protest. The Tamils had to go through the humiliation of stripping off their clothes on the tarmac before the authorities agreed to let them in.

Next they were shunted into detention centres like Latchmere House to be interrogated by the home office pending deportation. 'Latchmere House is a real prison,' one of the Tamils told us: 'You get one visit for 15 minutes, you're banged up in your cell after 6pm, if you want to go to the toilet you have to use a bucket.' The British authorities are treating Tamil refugees like cattle before sending them back to the slaughter they tried to escape.

The Tories have triggered a scare about Tamil refugees to try to turn people against an imaginary foreign threat to the British way of life. Our job is to turn people's anger against the Tory hypocrites and gangsters who are trampling over refugee rights.

Andrew Calcutt

FROM GREENWICH TO GLENDA JACKSON'S GREENHOUSE

Kinnock rises to Tory bait

The Greenwich by-election has shown how the gutter press and the Tories are dictating Labour Party policy

Deirdre Wood, Labour's candidate in the Greenwich by-election, broke down and cried at a weekend press conference. Her party leadership had forced her to endure the humiliating ordeal of facing the media to reply to a scurrilous story about her family in Sunday's *News of the World*. Instead of dismissing the dirty trick, Neil Kinnock's team allowed the sordid scribbles of a puerile 'newspaper', produced behind Wapping's razor wire at the expense of 5500 sacked print workers, to become a big topic of political debate. Wood's televised tears summed up the way in which the Labour Party now expects us to offer ourselves up to be judged by the standards of the Tories and the gutter press.

SOCIALIST CONFORMISTS

As we go to press, Labour still clings to its lead in Greenwich, though the Alliance is closing the gap. But whatever the result on Thursday, the establishment has used the by-election as a successful exercise in pressurising the Labour Party to conform. Kinnock has risen to the bait, banning any hint of radicalism from Labour's campaign, and instructing Wood to forget any ideas about being a member of the hard left.

The Greenwich campaign indicates how the Tories and the media, abetted by the Alliance, have turned the Labour Party itself into the biggest issue in British politics. Their attacks on Labour's 'loony left' figures such as Wood, on Kinnock's lack of statesmanship, on Glens Kinnock's 'domineering', etc, now dominate debate and divert attention from real issues like unemployment or racism. The Tories dropped a commons motion containing a vicious personal attack on Kinnock, because they recognised that too many individual insults might offend the



DEIRDRE WOOD LEANS TO THE RIGHT TO FIT IN WITH KINNOCK'S CONSERVATISM

electorate. But they seem to be on to a winner with their political assault on the Labour Party. Whether the discussion is on the economy or defence, the question that comes to the fore is about the lack of credibility in Labour's alternative to the Tories.

The Labour Party has proved vulnerable to attacks from the right because it shares its opponents' commitment to salvaging the capitalist system.

Kinnock is attempting to outdo the Tories in presenting Labour as a responsible party

of government that moderate and middle class voters can trust. He has submitted the labour movement to an examination set by the establishment, and has to come up with the answers it wants to hear. When the Tories pick out Labour policies and ask 'How much will it cost?', 'Do you support the police?', 'Are you a patriot?', Kinnock replies on their terms. In effect, the Labour Party's policy statements and speeches are being written by the authorities.

LITTLE ENGLAND

Labour's latest party political broadcast captured the Kinnock approach. It featured Glenda Jackson in a greenhouse, comparing the problems of the British economy to those of a suburban flower bed. The message was clearly directed to voters who potter about in English country gardens. The broadcast was an advert for Labour's loyalty to the Union Jack and its chauvinist Little England mentality. The main theme was the need for more patriotic economic policies to keep up with the competition — symbolised by a flowerpot holding a miniature Japanese tree being put on top of a box of British blooms. Left-wing Labour supporters in living rooms across the country must have been curling their toes up in embarrassment.

Kinnock's 'how dare you suggest I'm subversive' attitude gives the right wing scope to crack the whip on every political issue. The Tory campaign against Labour's credibility is reflected in the opinion polls, which still give the government a narrow lead, especially in marginal seats. The panic this is causing among Labour chiefs was

reflected in national executive member David Blunkett's remark that he would starve if he put his last fiver on Labour winning the general election. But the problem for the working class is even more serious.

The pro-capitalist direction of Labour policy means that, if we put our shirts on Kinnock, we will suffer even if he should win the election.

The Labour leaders' instruction that activists must not rock the boat is becoming more strident, as the general election looms nearer and the party's prospects appear bleaker. Greenwich Labour activists were told to forget about the by-election, because the party machine was running the campaign via the media. Many on the left are giving in to the pressure to keep quiet about Kinnock's crimes against socialism, because they can see no way forward other than electing a Labour government of some sort.

A CHANCE TO FIGHT

Yet there is an alternative to waiting for Kinnock. Several struggles reveal that we can begin to get organised to defend our class now, if we give people a focus to fight around.

Last week we explained how the George Roucou Defence Campaign in Manchester had mobilised 1500 workers for a work-time demonstration against the council shop steward's deportation. This week we report on the victory of the Wombourne 12 Defence Campaign, which has forced the authorities to drop the charges against nine gay men and three lesbians arrested for protesting against a Tory who wanted to gas them. Elsewhere, the Inner London Teachers' Association has taken a principled stand against the authorities and the Labour Party leadership. The teachers are refusing to cooperate with a video made by the police and their Labour employers, the Inner London Education Authority, because they have a policy of not allowing members of the racist police force to 'educate' their classes.

None of these initiatives will change the face of British politics between now and the election. But they indicate that we have a chance of organising to fight for what we need, instead of blindly hoping that Kinnock will both win the election and then become an ally of the working class.

The Revolutionary Communist Party contested the Greenwich by-election to raise the possibility of fighting for a change. We are campaigning for *The Red Front* as a bloc of left-wing individuals and organisations who won't pay Kinnock's price (see page 9). It can provide a focus for all those who are more interested in hitting back than in digging the garden. Unless we build such an alternative and prevent Kinnock having his way with our movement, Deirdre Wood won't be the only one in tears.

DEBATING THE RED FRONT IN KIRKBY

'Put your class first'

Last week Dave Hallsworth returned to Kirkby, where he won 664 votes for the RCP in November's Knowsley by-election, to debate the idea of *The Red Front* with a local Labour Party activist.

Hallsworth took up the idea that events in Knowsley, where Kinnock had unilaterally replaced a left-wing candidate with his own man, were unique. He pointed to the softening of hard-left candidate Deirdre Wood in Greenwich as an example of the same process. 'Kinnock's slogan is "Don't rock the boat"', Hallsworth said. 'Everyone in this room knows what is happening and that we can achieve nothing by a Labour government anyway. It doesn't put the working class in power. We are arguing for a strategy, through *The Red Front*, that shows it is possible to fight back.'

'We are asking you to put your class before the Labour Party.'

The local Labour activist agreed on the need to find a way forward, and branded those leading his party as 'pure bastards'. But he argued that the Labour Party was 'the only representative of the working class', and that to avoid polarising or splitting the left, we should 'join the Labour Party and fight'.

In the discussion after the speeches, it soon became clear that everybody agreed with the basic demands on jobs, housing, trade union rights and equal rights for the oppressed, outlined in *The Red Front* platform. The differences arose over how to fight for them. Labour supporters upheld the importance of unity, and claimed that

they could see no contradiction between supporting these objectives and campaigning within the Labour Party.

Our supporters argued that unity within the Labour camp meant unity on Kinnock's terms. They pointed out how the Labour leadership had already abandoned black youth and pickets in its quest for respectability, and that Kinnock was now turning on his own supporters like the *New Statesman* over Zircon. Any militant action was to be stamped on in case it interfered with Kinnock's election campaign. This closed down any possibility of fighting for our demands in the Labour Party. 'We haven't got the luxury of waiting years for Labour to save us,' said one. 'We're being hammered now, and we need to fight back now.'

The Labour supporters were angry at Kinnock, but resigned to his cause as the best on offer in the election. 'What else can we do?' asked one. 'We have to hope and pray that a Kinnock government will do something.' Our supporters pointed to evidence that groups of workers and activists, from the gay community to the coalfields, were looking for a way to do something else and to have a go now.

Instead of sitting back and praying for Kinnock to be converted, we should be out organising them in a campaign to defend our class, around *The Red Front*.

The debate on *The Red Front* has only just begun. If you want to have your say, write to *ms*.

Alan Harding

Which way forward for the working class?

EDINBURGH: Debate between RON BROWN (Labour MP for Leith), BILL MORRISON (Scottish National Party prospective parliamentary candidate for Leith), MIKE FREEMAN (Revolutionary Communist Party)

Friday 27 February 7pm
Chamber Street House
Chamber Street
Edinburgh University

PONTEFRAC: Discussion with speakers from Telecom engineers' strike, miners' union activist, sacked print worker and eye-witness from French rail strike

Thursday 26 February 7pm
Red Lion Pub

ELECTION STALEMATE IN THE SOUTH

Ireland unfree and unstable

Last week's election in the Irish Republic put a new party in power, but it won't bring peace to Ireland's unstable political system

The inconclusive results of the Irish election, in which Fianna Fail failed for the fourth time in a row to get an overall majority, exposed the shaky political set-up in the state artificially created by Britain's partition of Ireland 66 years ago.

Fianna Fail won 81 seats, three short of the 84 needed for outright victory, but enough to make its leader Charles Haughey the next Taoiseach (prime minister). Outgoing premier Garret FitzGerald's Fine Gael went down to a devastating defeat and its Labour coalition partner polled poorly. Des O'Malley's Progressive Democrats, a Fianna Fail breakaway formed last year, failed to 'break the mould' of Irish politics, but moved into place as the third party in the polls. The hung Dail holds out the prospect of another bout of electoral upheaval.

The fudged outcome of the election is nothing new in Irish politics. Since 1973, every election has produced a change of government, indicating the lacklustre appeal of the two main parties. Indecisive voting in the early eighties resulted in a narrow defeat for Haughey in May 1981, an equally narrow defeat for FitzGerald in January 1982, and a slim majority for the Fine Gael-Labour coalition in November 1982. Three elections in 18 months revealed the impasse of establishment politics in the South, which has not been broken this time round.

The fragility of the political system stems from the economic domination of the Twenty-six Counties by foreign capital and its political subservience to British interests.

The Irish Free State resembles a European outpost of the third world, in hock to foreign capital. Its per capita national debt, a legacy of the Irish industrial revolution in the sixties and seventies and profligate public spending in the eighties, is the highest in the world, and servicing it absorbs every penny of the country's massive income tax toll. Unemployment stands at 20 per cent and a third of the population lives on welfare benefits.

DUBLIN DISREPUTE

The parlous state of the economy was the overriding issue in the election and all the establishment parties accepted the need for big cuts to bring it back from the brink. Even the parties which claim to speak for the working class — the Labour Party and the Workers' Party — speak the same language of crisis and cuts, despite their rhetoric about 'social justice'.

The Dublin establishment is not just an economic vassal to foreign interests, it depends on British patronage for its political survival. Through the partition of Ireland in 1921, Britain has maintained its control over both the Six Counties in the North and the Twenty-six Counties in the South. While a British Army of occupation keeps the nationalist community in check in the North, the Border has created an inherently artificial and unstable entity in the South. The Dublin establishment can only hold it together with the backing of the British authorities. The economic crisis has compounded the historical weakness of Irish capitalism and created a volatile political climate in the South.

The Irish establishment has always had trouble getting a grip on society because it has never really controlled the power levers.

British domination has narrowed the scope for the development of Irish capitalism and undermined the authority of the ruling elite. The economic and social chaos wrought by the recession has weakened its standing even further. A succession of scandals enveloping government ministers and the guardians of law and order have served to



CHARLIE HAUGHEY: BACK IN THE DRIVING SEAT BUT NO LONGER THE DARLING OF IRISH VOTERS

underline the instability at the heart of the Irish Republic. Dublin's descent into lawlessness has brought the feeble Twenty-six County regime into further disrepute.

In recent years the Dublin establishment has come under pressure from Britain to put its house in order. For years British governments felt free to leave the South to its own devices, while they concentrated on keeping control in the Northern war zone. But the British authorities now have to contend with growing instability in the South, as the recession ravages the economic and social order. The nightmare prospect of upheaval North and South of the Border is keeping Britain's rulers from their sleep.

The unusual prominence the British press gave to coverage of the Irish election shows Whitehall's worries about what goes on across the Irish Sea. Most media commentators greeted the collapse of the faltering Fine Gael-Labour coalition as a merciful release and prayed for a majority government. The paper of British business, the *Financial Times*, indulged in wishful thinking and mused that 'the Republic could benefit from having a healthy left-wing party.' Anything that could help contain the threat to the established order in the South — even a socialist alternative to the mainstream parties — is OK by Britain.

POLITICAL IMPASSE

The Anglo-Irish agreement which Thatcher signed with FitzGerald in November 1985 is in part an attempt to restore credibility to the beleaguered Irish bourgeoisie, and keep the lid on growing popular dissent. It has got the backing of all the establishment parties in Ireland who are as desperate as Downing Street to stop the rot.

Both Fianna Fail, which claims the mantle of republicanism from the forces which opposed the treaty which partitioned Ireland in 1921, and Fine Gael, which emerged out of the pro-partition forces, still make nationalist noises as a sop to the residual support that exists in the South for a united Ireland. But both are right behind the Anglo-Irish deal which ratifies partition and brings the South under closer British supervision. Even Charlie Haughey, who boasts that his is 'the republican party', made clear his commitment to the deal in the pre-election debate.

The British and Dublin regimes have united in their efforts to solve the political stalemate in

the South. But the only force which could break through the impasse in Irish politics — the working class — is ignored.

Demographic and structural changes have changed the shape of the Irish electorate, and upset the traditional alignment of political forces. They have also created a formidable working class. But the established parties are too steeped in the past to keep pace with the changing contours of modern Ireland or to relate to the new political force it has brought into being.

The majority of Ireland's three million people no longer live off the land. The rural population is still large by European standards, but since industrialisation in the sixties and seventies it has been overtaken by town and city dwellers and depleted by emigration. After more than a century of British domination, Ireland's main export is still people, who are now leaving in droves of 30 000 a year. Others have flocked to the towns and cities to find work and escape from the industrial desert of Donegal and its neighbouring counties.

BREAK THE STALEMATE

A third of the population now lives in the greater Dublin area in sprawling corporation housing estates like Ballymun, teeming with teenagers and children, where 25 per cent of people are out of work. Ireland's modern dispossessed care little who fought with whom in the civil war of the twenties. The majority turned out to vote for Fianna Fail in the election to prevent the possibility of a Fine Gael-Progressive Democrat coalition. Sinn Fein, which stood 24 candidates for the first time on a non-abstention ticket, found little support for its economic or social policies.

The working class could be a powerful force for change in the stagnant marsh of Irish politics, but it lacks a leadership which could harness its potential power.

More parties contested last week's election than ever before, but for ordinary people there was less choice than ever. The hung Dail is a fitting testimony to the dead-end politics of the existing party system. Until the working class gets a party which can unite the struggle against the decrepit Dublin regime with the fight against imperialist domination, Irish politics will remain locked in a stalemate.

Joan Phillips

THE
PROPAGANDA
WAR

JUST SAY NO

Last week's decision by the Inner London Teachers' Association to boycott school showings of a police video on the dangers of sex attacks on children was principled and courageous. Now London teachers need to step up their resistance against a Labour-controlled authority which is more concerned to obey Tory dictates than it is to defend the rights of pupils and teachers.

The video *Have Fun, Take Care*, was produced jointly by the Inner London Education Authority and the Metropolitan police. It features friendly bobbies and England football manager Bobby Robson — all warning children of the dangers of being abducted and abused by strangers. It is part of a wider campaign by the establishment to stir up fears about sexual crimes and thus win wider approval for more intense police surveillance and interference in people's lives.

The police are very keen to promote an image of concern over child abuse. A spate of shoot-outs and violent deaths in police custody has created an unprecedented level of public suspicion and hostility towards the forces of law and order. The police are out to cultivate a softer, caring image and thus restore some of their lost popularity.

The police are particularly interested in finding an excuse to enter schools in inner-city areas. They hope that this will provide them with information about potential 'troublemakers' as well as enhancing their status as the forces of law and order in the local area.

Teachers in inner London have long opposed the intrusion of police into the classroom. They point to the 'proven history of racism' of the police in London and the resulting high level of hostility of children towards the police. In East London, where teachers have taken the lead in cutting off links with the police, there is a long record of police brutality towards black people, and of indifference towards savage racist attacks.

Education minister Kenneth Baker has angrily condemned the teachers' stand. He described the teachers' view that the motives of the police were 'anti-black and anti-working class' as 'twisted logic'. Given the record of police repression in inner-city areas, in the miners' strike and at Wapping, this seems an admirably straightforward and logical description of their motivation.

Baker went on to issue instructions to Frances Morrell, left-wing leader of the ILEA. He demanded that she 'exert her authority' and force teachers to show the video and allow the police into London classrooms. Alliance leader David Owen devoted a special press conference in the middle of the Greenwich by-election campaign to demanding firm action from Morrell.

They need not have bothered. Today's Labour Party is so concerned to display its deference to the establishment and its respect for law and order that Morrell had already set about whipping the teachers into line. 'We strongly recommend the video' Morrell declared. She insisted that it was up to headteachers to get together with school governors to ride roughshod over opposition from the teachers.

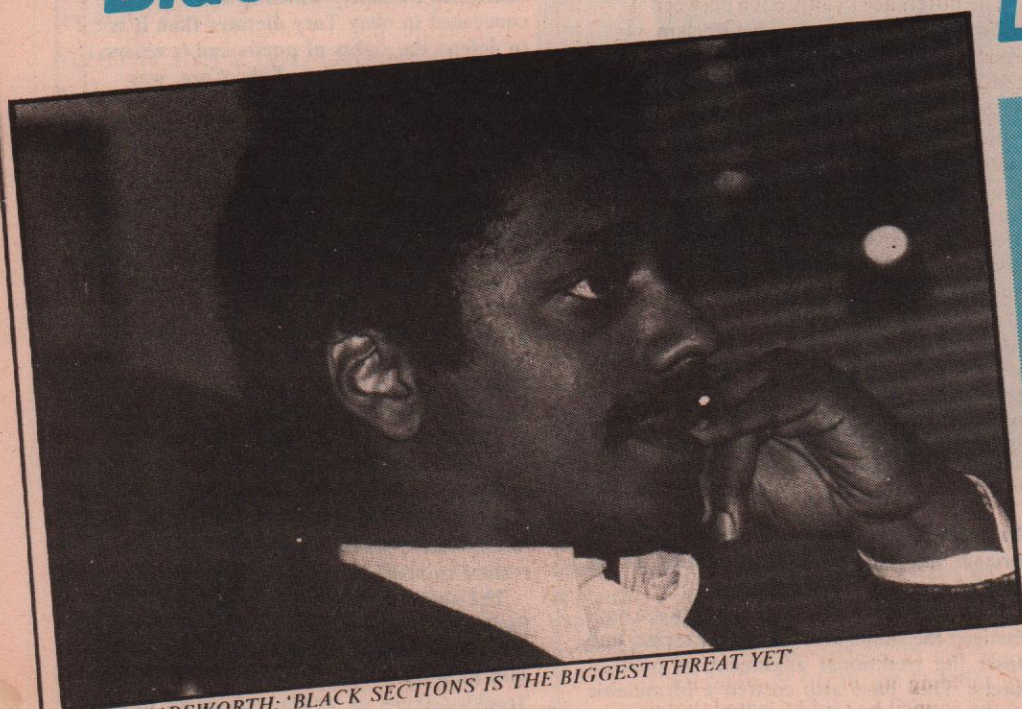
Inner London teachers have got a fight on their hands. Defending civil liberties against police interference in schools now means taking on the Labour Party as well as the Tories, the police, the media and the SDP.

HOW CAN WE FIGHT RACISM?

THE RACE FROM

The Tories are central issue
Marc Wadsworth
Black Sections, and Kenan Malik
Racism, recently debated
anti-racist movement should
contribution from the page

Black Sections: fighting inside the Labour Party



MARC WADSWORTH: 'BLACK SECTIONS IS THE BIGGEST THREAT YET'

The Tories are going to use racism as a major weapon at the next election. It has already started with the introduction of racist visas for people from black countries. And then there has been the coordinated attack by the state on black people in St Pauls, Handsworth and Brixton — where I come from.

Yes, these attacks by the state's bully boys have been coordinated. They have been undertaken as a means of breaking the resistance of the most oppressed and the most militant section of the working class — black youth. We saw the state acted at Orgreave, during the miners' struggle. Now we're seeing it at Wapping and in black communities.

MASS PARTY

Earlier last year something very significant happened for the left and black people: the socialist Campaign Group of MPs voted to support our struggle for the right to self-organise in the Labour Party. Now Black Sections are involved in [the left-wing umbrella group] Labour Left Liaison on the principled basis that the groups inside it support us.

Some people argue about us being in the Labour Party in the first place, because of its racist past — its support for immigration laws, for instance.

But Labour is the mass party of the working class. And 99 per cent of black people are working class, so there's not a great deal you can teach us about class politics.

Neil Kinnock thinks he is black because he has been down a coal mine. He thinks he knows best, like so many labour movement bosses. They are long on virtuous statements about equality and working class unity. But where's the action?

What have they got to say when black people

are under attack? What do they say about the racist visas? Perhaps they're scared of a racist backlash from their white members. Institutionally racist structures in this movement have operated as viciously against black workers as anything repressive managements have thrown at us. Black self-organisation — Black Sections — is the biggest threat yet mounted to that. To help in this process, and not continue to hinder it, the white left must abandon forever its imperialist past.

In a speech some time ago I talked about the white, colonising left. The traditional tendency has been for white left wingers *themselves* to decide the political priorities and then mobilise us behind them. We never got a look in.

The left has always seen black people as on the edge of political development.

At last year's Labour Party conference we witnessed Frances Curran, Militant's representative on the national executive, attack Black Sections on behalf of the right wing only a few days after they had expelled her socialist colleagues from the party.

OVER YOU

Now we've got the spectacle of Linda Douglas, the Labour Party Young Socialist representative — the first black person on the national executive — chairing the divisive and neo-colonialist black and Asian advisory committee. It's divisive in its very title. You see, Black Sections unite people of Asian and African descent according to our own self-definition of black. Well, I appeal to Linda Douglas to stop doing the work of the hard right for them and resign from the committee.

We won't be dictated to by whites of any ideology. As Paul Robeson Jnr put it, 'You can walk with us — that's fine, even if we're arguing as we walk. But if you stand in our way, we'll walk over you.'

Workers Against Racism fighting for unity

Marc Wadsworth's plea for support for the Labour Party and for Black Sections is not very convincing. 'We won't be dictated to by whites of any ideology' he declares. The history of Black Sections suggests otherwise.

Take the question of the right of Black Section delegates to participate in the selection of Labour parliamentary candidates. In 1984 Russell Profitt was selected as the candidate for Lewisham East. The Labour Party national executive declared the selection invalid because the Black Section had taken part. The decision led to 18 months of wrangling between the local party and the Labour leadership. The Black Sections declared it to be a crucial issue in their fight with the Labour leadership.

The result has been a complete victory for Kinnock and his supporters.

In not one instance since the debacle at Lewisham East has a Black Section delegate participated in the selection of a black candidate. This is true even in constituencies with strong Black Sections, such as Nottingham East, where Sharon Atkin was selected.

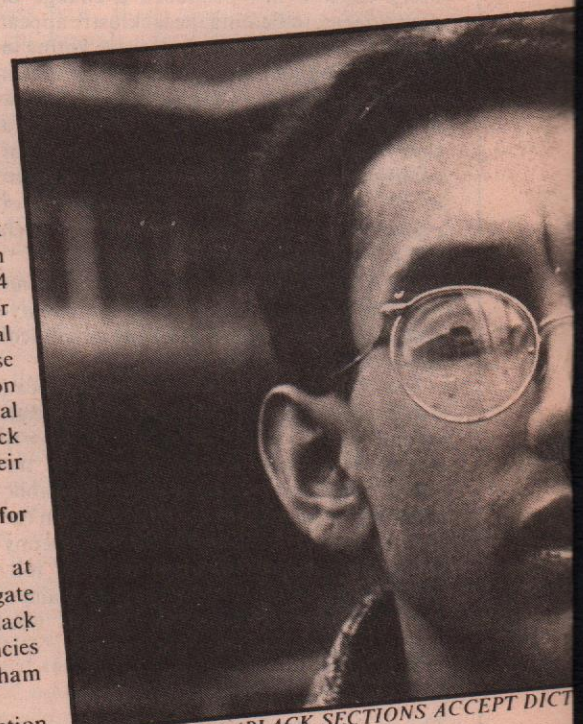
Indeed, Amelda Inyang, the Black Section nominee in Deptford last year, warned Black Sections to 'keep a low profile' in the run-up to her selection conference. Black Sections have accepted the national executive rules and have given up without a fight.

'FLAWLESS' RACISM

The final humiliation for Black Sections came back in Lewisham East. Last October, Profitt was confirmed as candidate by the Labour Party leadership — after the local Black Section agreed not to take part in a re-run selection procedure. Far from standing up to 'whites of any ideology', Black Sections have meekly accepted the dictates of the Labour Party leadership.

If Black Sections have grovelled to Kinnock on the question of delegates, they have been equally abject over policy issues. Last year prospective black MP Diane Abbott publicly declared her support for Roy Hattersley's economic programme — a programme which accepts mass unemployment and the necessity for wage restraint. Ernie Roberts, the white left sitting MP whom she is set to replace in Hackney North, at least had the merit of standing up to such anti-working class policies.

Keith Vaz, prospective Labour candidate for Leicester East, wrote in *Tribune* last year that 'Labour's policy on race is almost flawless.' Really? Could this be the same party which supports immigration controls and police raids on black communities? Is this the same party whose leader paid tribute to PC Keith Blacklock after condemning the youth on



KENAN MALIK: 'BLACK SECTIONS ACCEPT DICT' Broadwater Farm in Tottenham for using 'mindless violence', and also accused blacks in Handsworth of 'tribalism'?

The truth is that Black Sections have consistently put the interests of the Labour Party before the interests of the black community.

The real debate between Neil Kinnock and Marc Wadsworth is not about how best to defend black people's rights. It is about how best to ensure that the Labour Party wins the next election. Kinnock is afraid of losing the racist white vote; Black Sections are worried that the black vote might slip away from Labour.

Last year, when the Labour Party was conducting its inquiry into black representation in the party, the leaders of Black Section pleaded to be 'allowed to act as a transmission belt from the black community into the party. They warned the party about the key 'ethnic marginals', constituencies where the black vote could decide the outcome of the election. Black Sections were necessary, they argued, to ensure that the black vote went to Labour in the key constituencies.

STRANGELY SILENT

There was barely a word in the Black Section submission to the inquiry about the problems facing black people — such as immigration controls, police harassment, race checks. Nor have the Black Sections their vast resources and their links with Labour Party to mobilise behind the struggles waged by blacks over the past

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ATES OF LABOUR LEADERSHIP

years. Where have Black Sections been in the campaign against the deportation of Metso Moncrieffe or in the fight against race checks in dole offices?

Wadsworth is strong on rhetoric about 'the white, colonising left' when he writes for *The Voice* or makes speeches to black audiences. When it comes to real black struggles, though, Wadsworth is strangely silent. Instead he gives his allegiance to the Labour Party — a 'white, colonising' organisation if ever there was one, and a party that has disgraced the cause of anti-racism since its foundation.

RED FRONT

On one point I am in agreement with Marc Wadsworth. The coming election will be crucial for the working class and for all black people in Britain. For the first time we are not going to be faced with an unappetising choice of Labour, Tory or Alliance.

The Red Front, an electoral bloc of individuals and organisations committed to working class politics, will be contesting seats across the country.

The platform of *The Red Front* includes opposition to all immigration controls and all forms of discrimination, and support for all anti-imperialist struggles. It also demands the repeal of all anti-union laws and the right of everybody to a decent job and housing. Workers Against Racism is giving its full support to *The Red Front*. Our message is simple — defend black people's rights, not the Labour Party.

THE TREVOR MONERVILLE CAMPAIGN

ACTION NOT WORDS!

This week it was the Tamil refugees, last summer it was visitors from the Indian subcontinent, before that it was 'black muggers and drug dealers' in the inner cities. Ever since Margaret Thatcher raised the spectre of Britain being 'swamped' by immigrants before the 1979 election, the Tories have stirred up racial prejudice to strengthen their own position and to put Labour on the defensive.

Anti-black statements by Thatcher, immigration minister David Waddington and home secretary Douglas Hurd all give an official stamp of approval to an army of freelance racists. While the politicians stir up fears that the British way of life is threatened by an alien horde, the racist thugs go to work in workplaces, on housing estates and on the streets.

CHALLENGE COMPLACENCY

Trevor Monerville, a 19-year old black man from Hackney who recently emerged from the custody of the Stoke Newington police brain damaged and partially paralysed, is one victim of the racist climate of Thatcher's Britain. The question of what direction the Monerville campaign should now take has provoked a fierce debate between local Labour politicians and supporters of Workers Against Racism.

One big problem we face as the Tories step up the racist offensive is the weakness of anti-racism in the working class. The official labour movement's record of indifference or even hostility towards anti-racist activity has forced many black militants to organise and fight on their own. Challenging the labour movement's complacency on the issue of racism and fighting to overcome the isolation of black people are urgent priorities for anybody concerned to defend the whole working class from the Tory onslaught.

The Labour Party is an obstacle to the emergence of an anti-racist current in the working class. Labour governments have introduced and upheld the immigration laws that underpin racist prejudices in British society. Neil Kinnock has reassured British racists that any future Labour government will keep immigration controls and will apply them 'firmly'.

Despite Labour's racist record, many anti-racists still believe that a future Labour government would fight racism.

Many anti-racist activists have become involved in the Labour machine, either in radical local councils like Hackney, or in Black Sections. Labour's equal opportunities committees, police consultative bodies and black

constituency organisations may provide some jobs and resources for black people and may eventually help to put a few black faces in parliament. But because these bodies go along with the Labour Party's nationalistic anti-immigrant policies, they cannot help in the wider struggle against racism.

In the end it is the Labour Party, not the black community or the cause of anti-racism, that benefits from the race relations quangos and Black Sections. These initiatives allow Labour to project an anti-racist image, while keeping intact its support for the police, the courts and the immigration authorities.

The Revolutionary Communist Party stands for action against racism, not for token gestures. We set up Workers Against Racism to mobilise opposition to all forms of immigration control and to organise resistance to racist attacks. The difference in approach between the Labour Party and Workers Against Racism was highlighted at a well-attended public meeting organised by the Trevor Monerville campaign committee in Hackney last week.

On the platform were local MP Brian Sedgemore, prospective MP Diane Abbott, and Barnor Hesse, until recently a salaried employee of the Hackney council police committee support unit. The Labour dignitaries emphasised the need for a patient pursuit of the facts about what happened to Trevor Monerville between 1 January, when he was taken into police custody in good health, and 6 January, when he was released without charge as, in his father's words, 'a mental wreck'.

Although the meeting began with the insistence of the Monerville family and all those present that two police officers leave the room, the Labour politicians tried to keep the protest campaign within official channels and procedures.

'REFORM' RACISTS?

Sedgemore had earlier appealed for a public inquiry. He favoured this, not as an expression of outrage, but as a safety valve to release the pressure building up in the community. In a letter to the council he said he feared that there might be an 'explosion of anger' if the authorities refused to take action. At the meeting Abbott emphasised the need to 'reform the police' — the same Stoke Newington police who have a long and grisly record of racist violence (see *ins* 4, 30 January).

Hesse has consistently opposed calls for a demonstration outside the police station. At the meeting he insisted on the importance of maintaining relationships with the authorities. From the floor, councillor Tommy Sheppard,

chairman of Hackney council's police committee, tried to use the case to show the need for 'a different kind of police consultation process'. Shepherd's scheme for establishing fraternal relations with local police led him into a meeting with Metropolitan police chief Kenneth Newman this week — he hopes to persuade Newman to act as an intermediary between the council and Stoke Newington police station.

Representatives of Workers Against Racism, who have actively backed the Monerville campaign committee from the start, challenged the cynical manipulation of the campaign by the Labour bureaucrats. The only way the Monervilles will get any satisfaction from the authorities is by mobilising the biggest possible campaign of protest to shake the Stoke Newington police out of the conviction that they can rule the streets with a reign of terror. In the six weeks since the case of Trevor Monerville became public knowledge, the anger of the local community has already been allowed to dissipate.

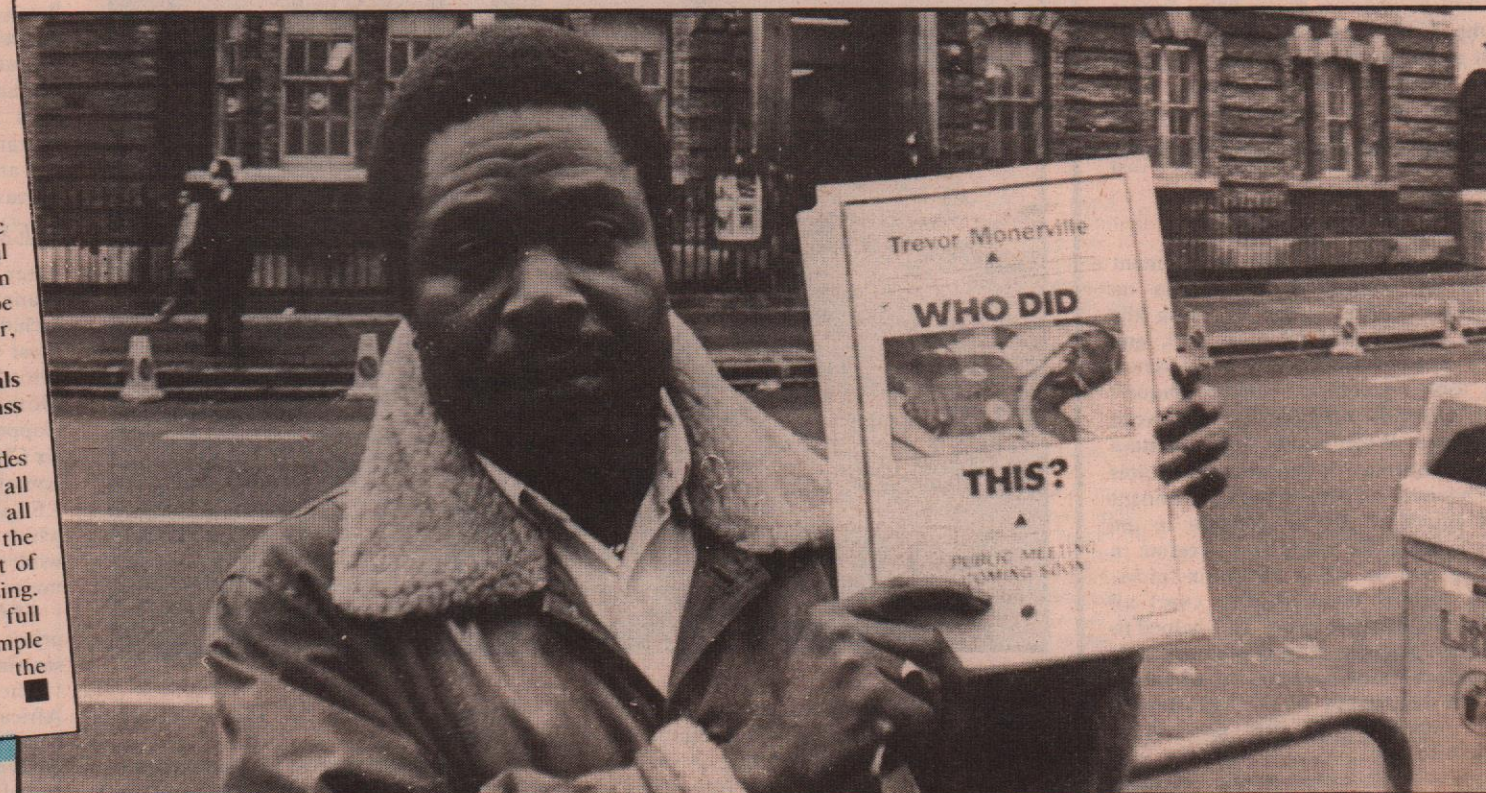
Workers Against Racism wants to make sure that the Trevor Monerville case is not buried like that of previous victims of Stoke Newington police. In 1983 Colin Roach, a black youth, was found dying of shotgun wounds in the doorway of Stoke Newington police station. Four years later, when the case has been forgotten by all but the immediate family, the Labour-sponsored inquiry has yet to report. We don't want the Monerville case to disappear into the same official channels.

Thousands of people in Hackney, white as well as black, are outraged at the racist violence of the police. If this anger is directed into militant protests, their voices can be heard. The thugs in Stoke Newington police station, and in all the agencies of the British state, will begin to get the message that we will not tolerate attacks on black people. This would strike a blow against the racist system and a blow too for the cause of working class unity.

For the British working class, taking a stand against racism is a matter of immediate self-interest.

It means mobilising resistance against every attempt by the Tories to make black people the scapegoats for the failure of their system. It means, too, taking direct action in defence of black people, in defiance if necessary of the Labour bureaucrats who want to keep protests within the strict limits dictated by Kinnock's appeal to moderate (and moderately racist) middle class voters.

Keith Tompson



JOHN MONERVILLE NEEDS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE AUTHORITIES TO FIND OUT WHO PARALYSED HIS SON

BRITAIN MOVES IN ON MOZAMBIQUE

'MARXIST STATE' TO JOIN COMMONWEALTH?

Mozambique's moves towards membership of the Commonwealth shows how Britain is muscling in on southern Africa, writes **Andy Clarkson**

'M'arxist Mozambique is getting help from an unlikely quarter in its battle against famine and sabotage by South African-backed insurgents. Since president Samora Machel died in mysterious circumstances in a plane crash last October, Britain has doubled its military and economic aid to the beleaguered front line state, while British charities lead the international relief campaign.

Thatcher's offer to help Mozambique is part of a shrewd scheme to consolidate British influence in southern Africa.

Mozambique has been at war since the sixties. It gained independence from Portugal in 1975, after 10 years of liberation struggle sparked a revolt in the Portuguese armed forces which brought down the Caetano dictatorship. Since then, Portugal's former colonies of Mozambique and Angola have suffered terror and sabotage campaigns run by South African-sponsored mercenaries.

The Mozambican National Resistance Movement (MNR) is the agent of apartheid inside Mozambique. Its terror gangs have killed more than 20 000 people since 1979. Their campaign has helped to wreck the economy and infrastructure. An estimated four million people are now starving to death. Mozambique's desperate Frelimo government is seeking shelter in the British Commonwealth.

SCRAMBLE

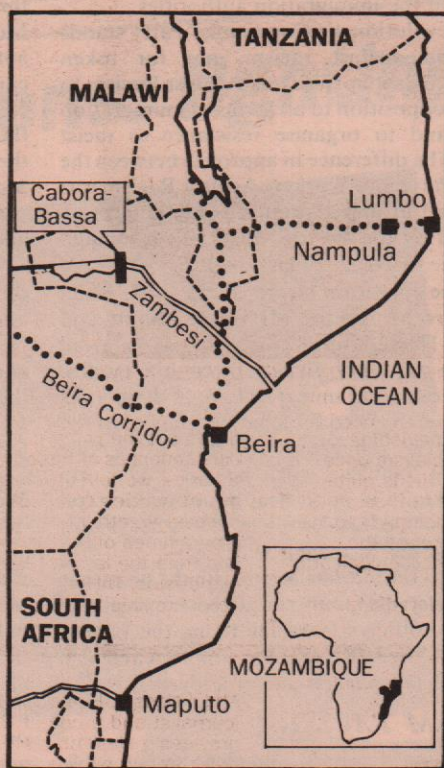
Britain's colonial past and its big stake in the apartheid system put it in a unique position to exploit the conflicts in southern Africa. Britain enjoys close links with both South Africa and the embattled former British colonies on its front line: Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi. This allows Thatcher to pursue a subtle strategy, backing South Africa while offering to embrace its victims.

British aid to Mozambique helps to disarm Commonwealth critics like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, who are embarrassed by Thatcher's opposition to sanctions against South Africa. The new policy helps Britain keep the Commonwealth states in line, without making concessions on its support for the apartheid regime. Even more importantly, aid to Mozambique assures Britain of its privileged position in the scramble for control over the country's vast untapped mineral wealth.

SABOTAGE

Until recently the British government approved of South Africa's attacks on Mozambique. They served to bring the country's radical leadership to heel, and softened it up for Western interference. Britain took advantage of Mozambique's isolation during the struggle for Zimbabwean independence. When South Africa, Britain and neighbouring Commonwealth states put the squeeze on Mozambique, president Machel agreed to act as mediator in the conflict between the white racist regime in 'Rhodesia' and the black liberation forces. In 1979 Machel threatened to expel all Zimbabwean guerrilla bases. This helped to force Robert Mugabe to the conference table at Lancaster House in London, where he signed the settlement which safeguarded British interests in the new state of Zimbabwe.

In the eighties the South African-sponsored MNR rebels have sabotaged



..... RAILWAYS

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique's ports, cut its rail and road links and destroyed its electricity and water systems. The Mozambican government has been faced with annihilation.

Mozambique has had little choice about submitting to Western demands.

Last month the government agreed to introduce a far-reaching programme of economic readjustment in return for a paltry but much-needed \$75m loan from the International Monetary Fund. The programme is designed to turn the mineral-rich country into a paradise for Western investors. It will finish off Frelimo's efforts to create a more egalitarian society through price and rent controls, subsidies, free health care and state farming. The first to benefit from the 'liberalisation' of the Mozambican economy is the British-owned Lonrho corporation, which has vast agricultural, mineral and tourist interests in the country.

STARVATION

Oxfam and Save the Children have arrived to mount a badly organised and under-funded famine relief operation. Meanwhile Western governments and investors are moving into Mozambique.

The British Military, Advisory and Training Team (BMATT), based at Nyanga barracks in eastern Zimbabwe, has been training Mozambican soldiers to officer standard for years. Now it has doubled its

intake to 120 soldiers on each 12-week course. Whitehall has allowed British security firms like Defence Services Ltd and Hall and Watts to use their ex-SAS instructors to train hundreds of Mozambican commandos.

In 1981 British aid to Mozambique stood at a meagre £1.8m. This year it is budgeted to reach £25m. EEC funds are being used to shore up Mozambique's crippled transport network and port facilities, such as the 180-mile long Beira corridor. This vital artery comprises a road, a railway and an oil pipeline. It is Zimbabwe's shortest route to the sea, and has been the target of sustained attacks by South Africa and by its MNR surrogates.

The Beira corridor's capacity is being beefed up to provide an alternative road and rail route for black African exports, which currently have to travel via South Africa. Day and night, 12 000 Zimbabwean troops guard the length of the corridor. They will soon be joined by the British-trained Mozambican forces.

EXPLOITATION

The West portrays its military and economic aid to Mozambique as a selfless gesture to help lift the Mozambican people out of the chaos and starvation caused by their South African neighbour. But its real purpose is to build the infrastructure needed to make the country fit for exploitation.

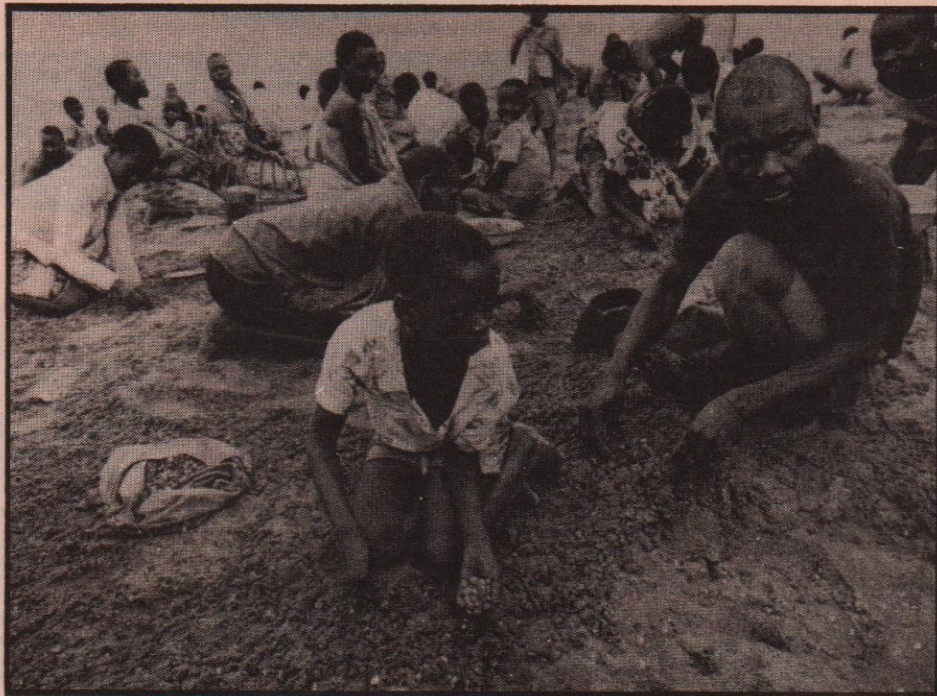
When Machel died last October, Britain moved in with offers of protection. The British government is happy to let South Africa intimidate and tame Mozambique. But it has no intention of letting apartheid capitalists grab Mozambique's economic wealth. Besides its agricultural potential, Mozambique's barely touched mineral wealth includes reserves of coal, titanium, tantalum, copper, bauxite, graphite, phosphate, marble, gemstones, uranium, diamonds, natural gas and oil.

The Mozambican people have been fighting imperialism for more than 20 years.

Their victory over Portugal in 1974 inspired the peoples of southern Africa to rise up against their oppressors. Now Mozambique is on the defensive. Britain's phoney 'Commonwealth of nations' can offer no respite. It is just the diplomatic front for another gang of thieves and butchers, equally as bad as Portugal and South Africa. The way to freedom for the people of Mozambique lies in joining the black South African working class in the fight to throw all imperialist powers out of Africa.

FAMINE IN MOZAMBIQUE

WESTERN GREED, AFRICAN HUNGER



The West disclaims all responsibility for the fact that four million are starving in Mozambique. It blames the economic chaos on South Africa's destabilisation campaign, and on the

economic policies of the Frelimo government.

But the Western powers projecting themselves as the true friends of the Mozambican people are guilty of genocide in Africa.

South African sabotage has brought Mozambique to its knees. But it only exacerbated the problems of an economy whose development was stunted by centuries of foreign domination.

For nearly 400 years, Mozambique was a Portuguese colony. During that time nothing was done to develop industry and agriculture. Portugal plundered Mozambique and left its people to rot. It couldn't even raise the capital needed to exploit the country's mineral wealth. Mozambique's single major engineering project, the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric dam, was a frequent target of Frelimo attacks during the liberation war. It epitomised the country's degradation by imperialism. It was largely built by South Africa, which exploited Mozambican resources to produce electricity — and then sold the power back to Mozambique at a tidy profit.

WESTERN PLUNDER

After independence, Mozambique was shunned by Western aid agencies and excluded from capital markets. Until recently West Germany, a big investor in apartheid, vetoed all EEC development aid for Mozambique. In 1981 president Reagan stopped US aid after Mozambique expelled six CIA agents. Even today, the famine relief operation is being hampered because the EEC insists on sending its own surplus grain, which takes weeks to reach southern Africa, while next door in Zimbabwe a huge stock of maize is waiting for buyers.

EEC leaders see the protection of grain prices as far more important than the plight of starving Africans.

The famine in Mozambique and across Africa is not a natural phenomenon. It has been caused by the greed of Western governments and financiers. It won't be ended until the Western plunder of the continent is stopped.

READ THIS!

● HATTERSLEY AND HEFFER

A tragic convergence

Roy Hattersley, Choose Freedom: The Future of Democratic Socialism, Michael Joseph, £12.95
Eric Heffer, Labour's Future: Socialist or SDP Mark 2?, Verso, £4.95

Hattersley and Heffer represent opposite wings of the Labour Party, yet their books reveal some striking convergences. Both entered Parliament under the wing of Harold Wilson in 1964, both look back to 1945 for inspiration, and both look forward, with different degrees of enthusiasm, to a Kinnock government.

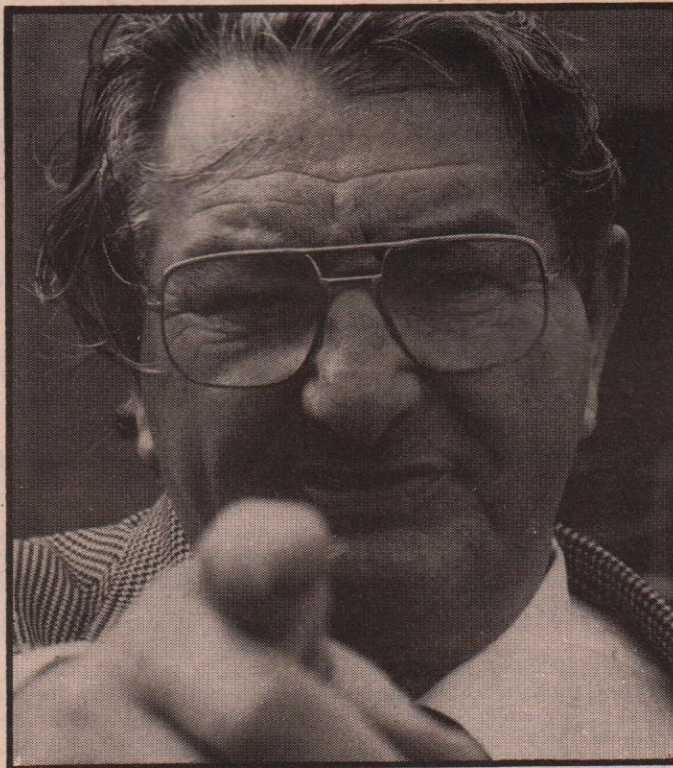
Hattersley's thesis is that if Labour is to win the next election, it needs a new ideology. Through a turgid discussion of equality and liberty he attempts to provide one. He reaches this following momentous conclusion:

'Too little equality results in too little freedom. But the active promotion of total equality may actually inhibit the freedom that greater equality is intended to make possible. The problem is knowing where to draw the dividing line.'

COBBLED

Hattersley's long-winded redefinition of socialism amounts to a call for a fairer distribution of wealth and power.

Both Shirley Williams and Ken Livingstone have found much to agree with in Hattersley's theories. Williams comments that 'Hattersley has come close



'THE LABOUR PARTY NEEDS YOU': HEFFER WANTS SDP MARK 2 IN POWER

to losing any distinguishing characteristics socialism once claimed to have.' This is quite true, but it doesn't bother Livingstone, who demands to 'be the first to congratulate the author on a brilliant ideological defence of equality'.

However, when Hattersley

draws out the policy consequences of his new theories, we find the incoherent mix of policies that Labour has cobbled together from its old programmes of the seventies and from the last two Tory manifestos. Thus he wants to abolish public schools and

private medicine, while extending 'employee share ownership plans'.

What is Heffer's alternative to the 'SDP Mark 2'? He repeats phrases about the need for 'a truly socialist perspective', but it is not until the last chapter that we get any idea of what this might mean. He then provides a modified traditional list, including demands for nationalisation, the 35-hour week, etc.

Yet Heffer recognises that 'Labour will go into the next election with the present leadership and policies determined by it' — policies that bear little relation to his list. He acknowledges that the left is so desperate for a Labour victory that it is 'reluctant to raise legitimate criticisms of the way in which the party is going'. And he endorses this defensive outlook, declaring that it would be 'counter-productive to challenge the leadership before the next election'. Heffer will keep his radical policies in his back pocket while campaigning to put the SDP Mark 2 into power.

PYGMIES

Despite his intransigent radicalism, Heffer's acceptance of the horizons of the Labour Party means that he is destined to walk in the shadow of pygmies like Hattersley and Kinnock. Even in this short book Heffer reveals a grasp of the history of the working class movement and of the Marxist tradition that is alien to Hattersley, whose attempts to confront Marxism are simply embarrassing.

Hattersley's book is recommended only to insomniacs, but Heffer's reveals much about the predicament of today's Labour left and deserves a wider readership.

John Hann

● THE NASSER I KNEW

The West of Eden

Mohammed H Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez through Egyptian Eyes, Andre Deutsch, £12.95

Lord Hailsham must feel as if he is being savaged by the proverbial dead sheep. Tony Benn's main contribution to the class struggle this year, apart from referring the Zircon film row to the commons committee of privileges, has been to demand an inquiry into Hailsham's role in the 1956 Suez crisis. This daring call for a full investigation followed the publication of secret cabinet papers under the 30-year rule at the end of 1986.

Benn's complaint was not even news in 1956. It was clear to most people at the time that the government, of which Hailsham was a very junior member, was

lying through its teeth to the house of commons about its role in the crisis then unfolding in the Middle East. In October 1956 the British had launched air raids on Egypt's main cities and dropped paratroopers on the main towns in the Suez canal area. The British attack, supported by French troops, followed an Israeli invasion of the Sinai peninsula. The British and French governments asserted that their assault on Egypt was intended to prevent the war closing the canal, the vital artery between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

Mohammed Heikal confirms that everyone in Egypt, and in the West, knew that Israel's invasion of the Sinai peninsula was a put-up job to give Britain and France an excuse to attack Egypt and overthrow the radical nationalist regime of Gamal

Abdul Nasser. Heikal, an Egyptian journalist and friend of Nasser, provides a clear account of the crisis from the Egyptian point of view.

The real aim of the invasion was to protect the Suez canal from the Egyptian government. In July Nasser had ordered the nationalisation of the canal company, Egypt's principle asset, which had been controlled from Paris and London since 1888. The Anglo-French invasion was preceded by three months of crude and vicious propaganda in which British prime minister Anthony Eden compared Nasser to Hitler because his government had dared to challenge British authority in the Middle East.

The Suez crisis is not just a matter of history. The problem of declining economic and political power, which provoked Britain's bloodthirsty assault on Egypt in 1956, grips all the Western states today. The people of Lebanon, Chad and Libya can testify to the modern West's growing brutality. Benn may prefer to target the bleary old windbag who presides over the

house of lords for events which happened 30 years ago, but the lessons of Suez have yet to be learnt by many on the left in Britain.

The British attack in 1956 provoked a wave of spontaneous protest throughout Britain which was similar, albeit on a greater scale, to the recent protests at the US/British air-strike on Tripoli and Benghazi. In 1956 as in 1986 the Tories kept control (even though they were forced to ditch Eden, they remained in government for another eight years). In 1956 as in 1986 the leadership of the labour movement failed to direct the spontaneous anger of the Trafalgar Square crowds against the government. They were too busy convincing their supporters and the establishment that they were even more opposed to the 'mad dogs' of the Middle East. Nasser and Gaddafi, than they were to the military attacks. We already know that Hailsham fights for his class. We need to know who will fight for ours.

John Johnson

ANTI-NUCLEAR ANIMATION

Overkill

When the Wind Blows, Jimmy T Murakami (Director)

The title of Raymond Briggs' cartoon-strip book, on which this animated film is based, is taken from the lullaby 'Rock-a-bye baby'. You remember, 'When the wind blows the cradle will rock.' This self-conscious understatement is typical of the film. Throughout, the juxtaposition of the childish, the homely and the innocent with the horrible reality of nuclear war is designed to impart a frisson which is both moving and chilling. All it imparted to me was a smug, sentimental, patronising, nostalgic aura which suffocated a potentially very funny and very shocking account of

Armageddon.

Our cartoon characters are a retired working class couple, Jim and Hilda Bloggs, trying to muddle through the three-minute warning and the fortnight of fallout after the bomb has dropped. Briggs is not content even to depict them as decent, simple people. He insists on making them stupid too, inviting us to laugh at their gullibility, when we are not being touched by their good nature. It is not enough that they quietly believe in 'the powers that be', represented here by county council and government leaflets ('The Householders' Guide to Survival' and 'Protect and Survive'). Jim has to intone solemnly that the leaflet must be 'really authoritative', coming from the council.

Hilda responds to the news that war is on the way by putting the kettle on and taking the washing in, more concerned about marks on the wallpaper than constructing the 'inner core of refuge'. A 'pre-emptive strike' to her is something the 'blessed communists' in the unions get up to. Jim, who talks in what are meant to be engaging malapropisms, takes charge as befits the man of the house. He sets about slavishly implementing the letter of the official instructions, even nipping out to buy a protractor to get the angle right when he leans the doors against the living room wall. They are so unbelievably trusting and clumsy however that when the bomb falls and the radiation sickness overcomes them, there is more bathos than pathos in their demise.

Jim and Hilda may be one-dimensional but they are certainly more than a few broad strokes of the cartoonist's pen. They are precisely delineated to represent a particular vision of

Englishness. They live in a picture-postcard corner of rural Sussex, where the postman and milkman call like clockwork and Jim enjoys a pint with the local farmer. To them a world war is a rosy memory of Churchill and Monty and VE Day, something 'we' won. It wasn't a nasty nuclear business, you knew where you were with it. Just in case we aren't getting the picture, the voices of John Mills and Peggy Ashcroft (as Jim and Hilda) are there to coax us the rest of the way. In their darkest hour our unhappy couple turn, of course, to the consolation of religion.

We don't need an image of a society which never existed, and which we wouldn't want to invent, to make us long for survival. We don't need a 'Listen with Mother' lesson to teach us the obscurity of war, conventional or nuclear. We don't need a model of helplessness and inevitability. We don't need this film.

Pat Ford

Work or full pay

To survive in capitalist society everybody needs either a job at a living wage, or the same level of income in the form of benefits. We cannot afford to go poor just because employers cannot make enough profit out of our labour, or because the state cannot afford to maintain our living standards.

Defend union rights

We stand for the repeal of all laws that restrict the rights of workers to take action in defence of working class interests. We reject all state intervention in strike ballots, union elections or any other labour movement activity.

Equal rights for all

We are in favour of the widest extension of civil liberties and for equal rights for all. We oppose discrimination against women and campaign for free, all-day nurseries and free abortion and contraception on demand. We oppose discrimination against black people and all restrictions on immigration. We reject the Aids panic as a propaganda device designed to proscribe homosexual activity and bolster conventional morality.

Stop the war drive

We oppose all forms of militarism, both conventional and nuclear, and all alliances among imperialist powers. We condemn Western military interference in the third world and support countries such as Argentina or Libya against imperialist aggression. We support all anti-imperialist struggles and put priority on supporting the fight for freedom in Northern Ireland.

Greenwich guts

IN the heat of the by-election campaign, Greenwich Labour councillor Trevor Allman had the courage to denounce the Labour Party as a 'barrier to socialism' and to pledge his vote to Revolutionary Communist Party candidate Kate Marshall. The Labour Party told him to resign straight away.

Allman's honest appraisal of where Kinnock's party is going put all the gutter press smear stories about Labour's left wing into perspective. Far from controlling the party, many Labour activists are deeply concerned about the way their ideas are ignored as the Labour leadership courts moderate voters.

In Greenwich, we met

many left wingers who voiced similar views to councillor Allman. We hope they will now follow his lead in making the break, and give their support to *The Red Front*.

John Gibson
RCP election agent
Greenwich

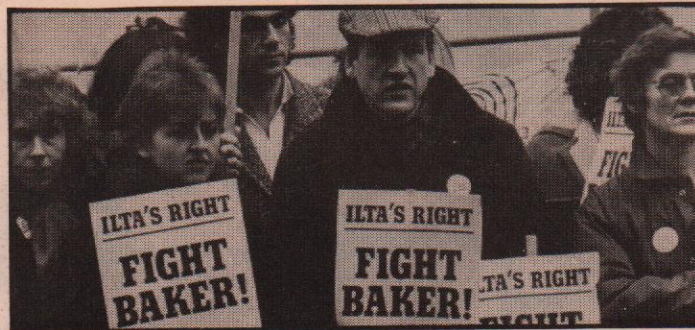
Greenwich Greens

FOLLOWING Markus Widera's letter (20 February), can I reassure you that my interpretation of Green politics, and that of many people I know, is anti-capitalist. I say this as a working electrician who has no option but to be a

member of the EETPU. I welcome your exposure of the Labour Party as a compromising band with little to offer the working class. Kate Marshall has been saying some very sensible things in the Greenwich by-election and using simple, accessible language to get through to people.

What Greens find difficult in left-wing politics is the amount of time spent in quibbling over dogma and factionalism. I welcome all socialists (and I regard myself as a Green socialist with anti-labellist tendencies) to find what they have in common with the Greens and to recognise there are many ways to a better world. Listening is as important as preaching.

Graham Bell
Green Party candidate
Greenwich



David Rowke

Teachers' trap

I AGREE with the Haringey NUT member (letters, 20 February) that teachers are demoralised after two years of ineffective industrial action. But I think the key factor is the union's acceptance of the settlement proposed by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

The NUT leadership recommended that we accept the Acas deal so we wouldn't have Baker's plans forced upon us. Many teachers disagreed, but the leadership's propaganda in favour of the deal persuaded the middle ground to vote its way. The 'lesser evil' accepted by the NUT is no such thing. The Acas deal is

almost identical to the Coventry agreement we rejected two years ago, and in many ways makes teachers' conditions worse.

While our leaders talk about stopping Baker's law, what they want above all is to preserve their negotiating procedures. Their backing for the Acas settlement shows their willingness to sacrifice our working conditions to this end. Many teachers feel that there's no point opposing Baker, as we've already lost the battle. We should fight Baker, but not the way our leaders want us to. The first step towards rank and file control is to expose the traitors in our midst. The sister in Haringey is right — we have to break the rules if that's what it takes to win.

Jenny Midwinter
Leeds NUT

The right track

IN early January, I argued with fellow London Transport workers that the ballot and the one-day strike called for by the National Union of Railwaymen was a ploy to get the officials back into negotiations about competitive tendering. Many workers found that hard to accept and went on to support the officials. Now, a leaflet from the NUR tells us that a working party has been set up to 'ensure that competitive tendering is used fairly'.

Workers know, not least from what the NUR itself said in building for the ballot, that competitive tendering means redundancies and wage cuts. But now that the union officials have got their feet back under the negotiating table, they tell us that it can be 'fair'. In the words of one worker I spoke with, 'I am no commie but you people certainly got it right about this.' The only way to defend our jobs is to do it ourselves and control it ourselves. We are right about that, too.

Denis Ryan
London Transport

Maxwell's Wapping

I SEE that Robert Maxwell's London *Daily News* hits the streets this week. Some commentators have wondered why he's bothering to bring out this 24-hour rag, as it has little chance of competing with the nationals in the morning and London's evening paper market is down from its peak of two million to around 500 000.

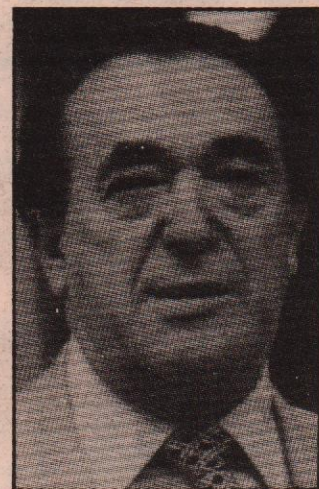
The answer is that Maxwell's new paper is an

attempt to finish off the print unions. Murdoch used his imaginary London *Daily Post* as the excuse for setting up Wapping. Maxwell, displaying his usual grossness, has actually set his paper up. But the aim is broadly the same.

Inside the Mirror Group headquarters in central London, the London *Daily News* is produced in two 'security floors' sealed off from the rest of the building — a sort of Fortress Holborn. One journalist told me that everyone on the paper was frightened to say anything out of line, for fear of losing their jobs. The *News* also paves the way for Maxwell to transfer all Mirror Group printing out of Fleet Street, using fibreoptic technology to print all his titles at provincial sites and bypass the Street unions. The *Independent* has already done this.

Maxwell sacked two Sogat officials last week for distributing a leaflet opposing management's rationalisation plans. Maxwell criticises Murdoch for not doing things 'the British way'. But his own actions show that the British capitalist way is just as dirty and devious as any other.

Andrew
London NUJ



Civil service witch-hunt

A LIST of 122 Militant 'activists' and 147 'sympathisers' in the civil service has been sent to the prime minister and Scotland Yard. This could signify the resumption of the tradition of official witch-hunts against left-wing government employees.

In 1948 the Labour government declared a purge of civil service left wingers. Although few were actually affected by the hysteria, it played a key role in whipping up Cold War anti-communism. In 1962 the Tory government, faced with a pay revolt, produced the Radcliffe report which said

the civil service unions were riddled with communists. Absurd as it was, such was the furore that all the anger over pay disappeared within days.

We don't know who produced the latest hit list, but judging by their frenetic red-baiting over the last 40 years, I wouldn't be surprised if right wingers in the CPSA (civil service union) are involved. It's not just Militant supporters who are in danger. Anyone who defends the members against the bosses will be targeted. And we will all suffer if a witch-hunt against the left is successful. We must defend all activists who come under attack and expose anyone who colludes with the Tories and police.

Paul Foster
London CPSA

Caterpillar slows down

THERE'S a lot of doubts and divisions gnawing away at the occupation of the Caterpillar plant at Uddingston against management's plan to close down and cut 1200 jobs. Members of Apex, Tass and Astms have pulled out and gone back on the payroll, because they doubt where the occupation can go next.

The joint occupation committee is determined to win, but lacks a way to victory. Time and energy are being wasted trying to get the government to put pressure on Caterpillar. Nobody seriously believes the Tories will bail out Scottish workers — except perhaps the Labour MPs who've been chatting up secretary of state Malcolm Rifkind.

Neil Kinnock met some of the stewards in a Glasgow hotel. He said he couldn't come to the factory because 'if the Labour Party becomes too closely associated it may

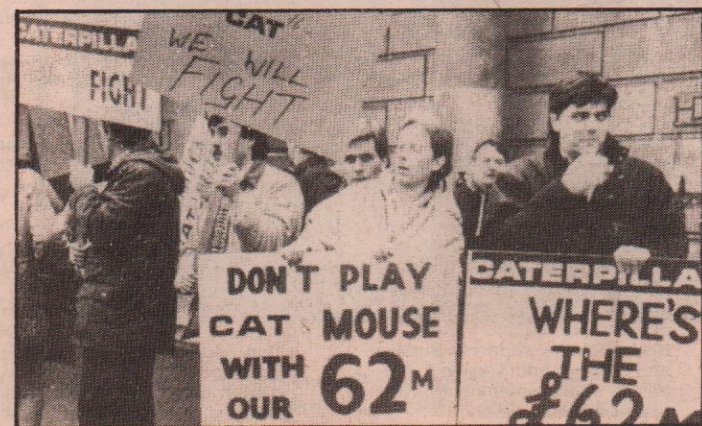
make the government less inclined to hear your case.' In fact, he didn't want to associate himself with the 'illegal' occupation in case he got a bad press. Glasgow workers can't expect anything but double-dealing if this man gets to power. In any case, we can't afford to wait.

Lobbying for sympathy from politicians didn't keep the Gartcosh steelworks open. Caterpillar workers can only rely on the strength of the working class. Thousands have already given money to

the occupation. Now Caterpillar workers should approach their supporters directly and argue for dockers, railwaymen, truckers and engineers to black the company's goods.

Dockers in Greenock and Whiteinch have offered their support. Those leading the Caterpillar occupation should make it clear that blacking action is the only strategy for victory. The determination of Caterpillar workers must not go to waste.

Frank Durkin
Glasgow



Casual cuts

MY rep from the Inland Revenue Staff Federation recently asked me to attend an important union meeting. When we got there it wasn't a union meeting at all. In fact, the union had invited management to address permanent staff. The people who were missing were the casual workers, who have never been recruited to the union. But it was the casuals that management wanted to talk about. Their wages come out of the 'computer budget' which has now run out. So management wants to phase them out — fast.

They offered two alternatives: keep the casuals on until the end of this month, and limit clerical assistants' overtime to four hours between now and the end of April; or keep them until the end of March, and cut out the assistants' overtime altogether. Without the casuals, our workload would be ridiculous, and many permanent workers depend on overtime to top up their wages.

I pointed out that casual staff should be present, that this wasn't a union meeting, and that we were talking about people's jobs. I said that we should fight for permanent jobs for the casual workers, most of whom are young single mothers. If we don't start fighting for the casuals, they'll get away with murder on our jobs. It's going to be an uphill struggle — with management and the union joining forces to stitch things up.

Sue
Manchester



If you would like to respond to any of these points, raise questions or comment on what you have read in the next step you can write to tns, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone the letters page over the weekend on 01-729 3771.

GREENWICH: WHAT WE LEARNT

The RCP campaign for Thursday's Greenwich by-election has been a difficult challenge, but a valuable experience. Our first problem was that we had no record of work in the area, so few local people had come across the RCP before. It was fairly clear from the start that a three-week campaign would not be long enough to acquaint Greenwich voters with our policies. We knew we could only have a marginal impact on the election. Nevertheless, the Political Committee of the party felt it important to take this opportunity to promote the party's programme, and to gain some useful experience for the future.

The RCP was effectively the only left-wing party contesting the election. This followed the pattern of last year's Knowsley North by-election. In Knowsley, the Labour leadership imposed a right-wing candidate on

the local party. In Greenwich a hitherto hard-left candidate was transformed into a faceless moderate. The effect was the same in both elections: the working class was offered no real alternative to the pro-capitalist candidates.

Greenwich highlighted the Labour leaders' 'don't rock the boat' warning to activists. Their message is that getting Labour elected is all that matters. To achieve this, all sections of the Labour Party are to fall in line and refrain from raising issues likely to be controversial with middle class voters. This quest for respectability has often preceded general elections. But events like the Greenwich campaign show that the Labour leaders are now taking it further than at any time in living memory.

Our supporters working in the campaign reported that

voters showed little enthusiasm for any of the parties. Many people on the working class housing estates supported Labour — but few expected to get anything much from voting for their traditional party. We came across a surprising number of working class people who said that they would not vote. Some took this attitude because they weren't concerned about politics, while others declared that there was no point voting for Labour since Kinnock's party would make little difference to their lives.

An angry minority said they would abstain in protest at the miserable choice offered by the old parties. The main failure of our campaign was that we didn't convert this anger into positive support for the RCP alternative. The party will have to relate to this mood and learn how to

convince people that it is possible to fight for a change. It is our responsibility to mobilise these people, to prevent working class anger turning into anonymous, isolated abstentions.

Our supporters were struck by the insecurity and intense concern for the future felt by local Labour canvassers. Many Labour activists were genuinely disturbed about the direction in which their party is heading. They were often prepared to accept our criticisms of Labour Party policy, and made no bones about admitting that it offered nothing to the working class. But they stuck to the belief that change could only come through Labour winning, and concluded that working with Labour was the only way forward.

This unwarranted faith in Labour has a long tradition. It is a view that is not

easily susceptible to rational argument. One of the most frustrating things about left-wing politics is that even though we can win the arguments on specific issues, so many activists remain immune to accepting the consequences of our case and breaking with Labour. Despite this, the present profound disenchantment with Kinnock among Labour activists is an important development. It adds further weight to our argument that now is the time to start building an alternative.

Whatever result the by-election brings, our intervention in Greenwich has shown that attitudes are far from fixed and that many people are prepared to consider new ideas. The campaign has been a useful exercise in teaching the party some lessons. It has posed the questions which we have to answer

convincingly to become credible. It has also shown that the party still lacks the experience to key into the prevalent mood among angry people who distrust the Labour option. This is why we must take every opportunity, both in elections and in other struggles, to enter into a dialogue with this section of the working class.

Finally, the Greenwich experience has confirmed the relevance of our perspective of building *The Red Front* as a bloc of all those who want to fight for the working class. From day one of the campaign, we met people who were mad at Labour but couldn't see a way to express this anger. *The Red Front* could give shape and coherence to their sentiments. The potential for *The Red Front* is there. We now need the will and the imagination to realise it.

Frank Richards

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DIARY

LEEDS: Wednesday 4 March, 7.30pm. Open forum on Aids. Speakers from the RCP, Leeds Health Authority, Gay Switchboard and Nalogo Aids working group. Main Council Chamber, City Hall

LONDON: Tuesday 3 March, 7.30pm. Living Marxism forum: The problem of class consciousness. University of London Union, Malet Street WC1 (Goodge St tube)

SHEFFIELD: Thursday 5 March, 7.30pm. Public meeting: Defend Turkish workers — No more deportations! Speakers include James Wood (RCP), and Mustapha Palcik and Abdulla (both under threat of deportation). At SCAU, West Street (opposite the dole)



STRIKING BACK!

A day of discussion and debate on the way forward for Scottish workers. Saturday 7 March. Registration 10.30am. Woodside Halls, near St George's Cross underground, GLASGOW. Tickets £1.50/50p from RCP PH8, 340 West Princes St, Glasgow G4 9HF. Or call (01) 729 3771

the next step

Behind the 'IRA bomb plot'

The hysteria over the arms and explosives found in Cheshire woods last week, and the arrest of two 'IRA terrorists' in Manchester, is another attempt to conceal the truth about Britain's colonial war in Ireland

The British police were cock-a-hoop about finding some explosives and arresting two Irishmen last week. The papers were full of stories about how the security forces had brilliantly tracked down the 'terrorists' and 'smashed an IRA bomb plot'. But if you go over to Northern Ireland, you don't have to be brilliant to come across tonnes of explosives and hundreds of hi-tech weapons. You can see them on the streets every day, being toted by British troops and Loyalist police to enforce the Crown's rule over Irish nationalists who want to be free from British domination.

The British authorities make the most of every opportunity to portray the IRA as a handful of ruthless killers threatening the British public. Scare stories about what two Irish republicans are up to in Britain help to hide the facts about what 30 000 members of the British security forces are doing in Ireland. The IRA is no murder gang. It is a liberation movement with thousands of supporters, fighting for Irish unity and independence.

The IRA only exists because the British government insists on holding six Irish counties as an outpost of the Empire.

The two Belfast men arrested in Manchester last week were pulled out of their car at gunpoint by police in full battledress. Local residents said they were 'shocked' by the sight of a paramilitary police squad waving shotguns in an English city. Those who live in nationalist areas of Irish cities like Belfast or Derry are more shocked if they manage to get through a day without being stopped, searched, harassed or arrested by an armed patrol of police or soldiers.

Thousands of Irish nationalists do not

experience British government through the polite conventions of parliament or the bland bureaucracy of the civil service. They feel the force of British rule through the boot that kicks in their door at 6am, through the plastic bullet that is fired at their child on the way home from school, and through the no-jury court that jails their friends and neighbours for life on the strength of a paid liar's evidence.

Those who join the republican struggle against this British injustice risk their lives in the cause of liberty. If they are ambushed by armed agents of the British Crown, they can experience a far ruder 'shock' than anything the residents of that Manchester street have

ever seen. An inquest now running in Northern Ireland has heard how the SAS trapped three young IRA volunteers from Strabane in a field and opened fire without warning. The Irishmen were hit 117 times — the last three bullets being shot through their heads at point-blank range. This is the dirty war which the British authorities want to bury by focusing attention on 'IRA terrorism'.

The gutter press used last week's arrests as the pretext for a completely speculative story about how the captured 'IRA unit' was out to assassinate Margaret Thatcher. They claimed that 'intelligence sources' had 'discovered' this plot. You don't need much intelligence to

discover that Irish nationalists have little love for the British prime minister. Thatcher has presided over fierce repression in Ireland. She sentenced 10 hunger-strikers to death by refusing to grant their right to political status, she introduced the supergrass and showtrial system, she stepped up the shoot-to-kill policy against republicans, and she has signed the Anglo-Irish agreement which endorses the division of Ireland.

She is only the latest in a long line of British rulers, from all political parties, who have treated the Irish people with the contempt that characterises an imperial tyrant.

As the two accused Irishmen were driven into Lambeth magistrates court last week, surrounded by armed police and helicopter escorts, Irish Freedom Movement supporters demonstrated outside calling for 'Troops out now'. We are not prepared to let official British lies and distortions go unchallenged. No amount of hysterical headlines and screaming police sirens can alter the fact that Britain's occupation of Northern Ireland is responsible for every bomb and bullet on both sides of the Irish Sea.

Debate

Ireland: a socialist solution?

John O'Mahoney — editor of *Socialist Organiser*

Mick Hume — editor of *the next step*

Wednesday 25 February 7.30pm

Room C3.7

Chesham Building

Bradford University



IFM SUPPORTERS BROKE THE SILENCE ABOUT BRITAIN'S DIRTY WAR IN IRELAND

The Wombourne 12 have won!

A campaign to defend homosexual rights has forced the authorities to drop the charges against 12 militant lesbians and gays, arrested for protesting against Tory bigotry

Wombourne had seen nothing like it. On Monday, 500 people marched through the Staffordshire village in defence of lesbian and gay rights. The demonstration had been organised to defend the Wombourne 12, nine gay men and three lesbians from the Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement. They were due to appear in the local magistrates court that day to face public order charges arising from their protest at the home of Bill Brownhill, the Tory leader of South Staffordshire council who had called for 90 per cent of gays to be gassed as a cure for Aids. But after a spirited defence campaign, the police announced that they were backing off and dropped the charges. The demo went ahead, partly as a victory parade, partly to demand why the 12 had been held in jail for a week over Christmas, and mostly to emphasise the need for a continued campaign against bigots like Brownhill.

'Aids abuse, no excuse — equal rights for all' chanted the marchers as they wound through leafy lanes to a rally outside Seisdon magistrates court. While vanloads of police lurked in sidestreets, the rally was addressed by speakers from the Wombourne 12, the

RCP, and the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights. The crowd gave a rough

ride to his appeal for a Labour vote in the general election. Referring to Neil Kinnock's



confession that he was 'a reactionary' on moral matters, marchers chanted 'Brownhill, Kinnock — one struggle, one fight'. The march moved on to protest outside the police station.

The success of the Wombourne 12 Defence Campaign shows that we don't have to let the right dominate the debate about Aids and lesbian and gay rights.

We can begin to win back some lost ground, if we organise our forces to take on the enemy and make no concessions. The need for an active campaign on lesbian and gay rights is pressing, as several left-wing Labour councils are showing signs of buckling under pressure from Kinnock, and watering down their policies for fear of offending prejudiced voters. If we don't build on the start made around the Wombourne 12, the Brownhills are set for an unopposed field day at our expense.

Monday's march ended with a call for a solidarity contingent on this year's Lesbian and Gay Pride march, building support from the labour movement and the left. This will be an important focus for us in the run-up to the summer march.

Don Milligan