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WORLD** —
see page 11

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly

11 March 1988

40p

WHO SAYS THERE IS NO WAR IN IRELAND?

- ARMY HELICOPTERS ATTACK ARMAGH FUNERAL
- SAS GUNMEN SHOOT-TO-KILL IN GIBRALTAR



MAIREAD FARRELL:
In 1976 she was
jailed by a no-jury
court. In 1980 she
led the hunger-strike
by republican women
prisoners, in support
of their demand to
be recognised as
prisoners of war. On
Sunday she was
shot dead by the
SAS.



BRENDAN BURNS:
after he died in a
premature explosion,
British troops left his
torso to rot in a
Crossmaglen
barn, where his friends
found it days later.

THREE IRA members were gunned-down by the SAS in cold blood in Gibraltar on Sunday. They are the latest victims of the shoot-to-kill policy which the British government operates against those who oppose its rule in Ireland.

The British authorities first sought to cover up the truth about the killings, using some whitewash left over from the Stalker affair. Through the media, they claimed that Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage had been shot by the Gibraltar police, in a 'gun battle', after planting a '500lb bomb'. But those lies were too big even for the BBC to sustain. It soon became clear that the IRA volunteers were unnamed, had not planted any bomb, and were shot in the street at point-blank range by plain clothes British SAS men. When Tory foreign secretary

Geoffrey Howe told the commons on Monday that they could have caused casualties in 'three figures', all the British forces had found was an alarm clock. The only three figures in the real death toll were those left lying on the pavement in Gibraltar, with blankets covering the SAS bullet holes.

Recent events expose the truth about Britain's dirty war in Ireland. The executions in Gibraltar came just a fortnight after an Irish civilian, Aidan McAnespie, was shot dead by a British soldier on the Border at Aughnacloy, County Tyrone. Only a day before the latest killings, huge Chinook military helicopters ferried hundreds of troops and paramilitary police around the South Armagh countryside, to attack the funeral cortege of IRA volunteer Brendan Burns, killed with his comrade Brendan Moley in a premature explosion near Crossmaglen.

Britain is using the same flying fortresses which the Americans used to terrorise Vietnam, and the same shoot-to-kill tactics which the Israelis employ to dispose of Palestinians. The conflict in Ireland stands on a par with these international struggles, as a war between

an oppressed people fighting for their freedom and an occupying military power. The Tories excused the Gibraltar executions, like every other, on the grounds that the dead were 'evil terrorists'. That opinion of republicans is not shared by thousands of nationalists in Northern Ireland. On Saturday nationalists in Crossmaglen protected the IRA men carrying Brendan Burns' coffin from baton-wielding troops and police. On Monday nationalist youth in West Belfast took on British forces firing plastic bullets, in an angry protest against the shooting of the three IRA volunteers from their city. The British authorities may crow about the setbacks suffered by the IRA over the past year. But so long as Britain denies Irish people their right to self-determination at the point of a gun, there will be others to take the dead republicans' places in the fight for Irish freedom.

**TROOPS OUT NOW!
SELF-
DETERMINATION
FOR THE
IRISH PEOPLE!**



David Rourke

OVERTIME BAN ENDS MINERS NEED FRESH START

Miners have voted to call off their overtime ban, after five months in which it had failed to put British Coal under pressure to withdraw its new disciplinary code.

The end of the overtime ban leaves miners vulnerable to victimisation under the draconian disciplinary rules, and facing a concerted offensive by the coal board on every front. British Coal may now pay the miners the 4.2 per cent wage rise it has frozen since November, but the issue of pay has long been a source of conflict which is unlikely to disappear. The question of six-day working, along the lines proposed by the employers for Margam in South Wales, is another bone of contention. The NUM leaders have no strategy for resisting the employers' plans to make miners work harder for longer hours for no reward.

Coal bosses are speeding up their rationalisation of the industry, pushing through more closures in Scotland, South Wales and Yorkshire. This process will accelerate under the impact of privatisation in the electricity industry. To avoid wholesale closures British Coal would have to boost productivity in existing pits to sell to privatised electricity generators at more

competitive prices. The move by the South of Scotland Electricity Board, to put its contract out to tender to cheaper foreign competitors of British Coal, steps up the pressure.

When the electricity suppliers threatened to ignore a court ruling to delay its tendering exercise, Scottish miners' leader George Bolton told the judge to sequester the Board's assets! All the NUM leadership can offer its members is a strategy of relying on the same courts which fined and jailed them during the strike four years ago to defend their jobs.

The impasse facing the miners after five months of a fruitless overtime ban reveals that Arthur Scargill's re-election as NUM president has made not the slightest difference. Now that the ban has been lifted, the door is open for negotiations with management. In its present state of powerlessness, the miners' union can gain nothing from negotiations except humiliation on the bosses' terms. Four years on from the end of the last overtime ban and the start of their year-long strike for jobs, rank and file miners are in even more urgent need of a new political strategy to unite their forces.

GLASGOW HEALTH WORKERS

Health workers in Glasgow voted last week for an all-out strike. Local union officials have done their utmost to block it.

On Tuesday 1 March a mass meeting of over 200 workers at the Western Infirmary in Glasgow voted overwhelmingly to organise all-out industrial action, with emergency cover under their own control. They are determined to hit back at the Greater Glasgow Health Board's plans for privatisation of ancillary services, due to come into effect at the end of this month. They have no faith in the official union campaign of selective action which is getting them nowhere.

Their vote was also a reply to GMB full-time organiser Billy Gifford's announcement that his union, which represents porters, domestics and other ancillaries, would be discussing the specifications for in-house tenders with management. Gifford claims this is the way to get the best deal for the workforce. But domestics and other hospital workers realise that Gifford's idea of a good deal would be good for union officials and a disaster for union members.

Workers at the Western Infirmary who are willing to fight to defend jobs, wages and conditions have been badly let down. The hospital's joint shop stewards' committee set about sabotaging their plan for action before it started.

Step One: the GMB stewards' committee called its members to a meeting and lied to them about the strike vote. The committee claimed the vote was in favour of holding a ballot for all-out action, and not a mandate for all-out action itself. It did this knowing full well that the GMB leadership, like the leadership of all the other health unions, will

STRIKE SABOTAGED

not allow a ballot for all-out action, but only for selective strikes.

Step Two: stewards called on management to throw out unemployed workers who were distributing leaflets in the canteen, calling for the implementation of the strike call. Management took the opportunity to call the police, who then harassed other activists distributing leaflets outside. Management hauled a steward before a kangaroo court to threaten immediate victimisation.

Step Three: the leading clique on the stewards' committee is now refusing to hold another mass meeting on the grounds that there is nothing new to report. It seems that only when private contractors come into the hospital in a fortnight's time to measure up all the jobs for their tenders will the union saboteurs find anything 'new to report'.

Health workers at the Western

are unsure about what to do next. But one thing they are certain of is that they have been sold out. A bottlewasher in the GMB remarked that 'these stewards must have a real contempt for rank and file members, to believe we are so stupid as not to know what we voted for.'

There is a danger that the union leaders, whose only concern is to maintain a working relationship with management, will succeed in demobilising the rank and file. The priority now is to bring together workers who want to organise effective action against privatisation. Time is short. But it is still possible to give some nasty surprises to the time and motion men when they arrive in two weeks' time to carve up our jobs.

Alan Harding

Revolutionary Communist Party members and supporters sold 1400 copies of *tns* on last Saturday's national NHS demonstration in London.

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IS THERE A SCOTTISH SOLUTION?

The working class
and the assembly debate

Mick Hume and Derek Owen

POLICE HOUND BLACK YOUTH MARKED MEN

MICHAEL GROCE walked free from the Old Bailey last week after a jury found him not guilty of robbing a building society. The only prosecution evidence was a blurred video recording of a black man running into an office and then out again. Police claimed to have 'computer-enhanced data' to prove that Groce was that man. Expert witnesses proved that the police data was fabricated. 'If one of my students had brought me these data, I would simply disbelieve them,' said medical physicist Dr Alfred Linney. Statistician Dr Joe Schwartz thought there was a million-to-one chance that the figures were accurate. He suspected that 'the results have been cooked.'

REVENGE

Groce doesn't need to commit a robbery to attract the attention of the police. His 'crime' is that a police marksman shot his mother in the spine during a raid on her Brixton home in September 1985. The police said at the time that they were looking for Michael, and they have hounded him ever since. In February 1986 they were forced to drop an assault charge against him. Their frame-up campaign is an act of revenge

for the trouble they got into after crippling Cherry Groce for life.



MAIMED: TREVOR MONERVILLE

Trevor Monerville is another victim of police vindictiveness. He was arrested again last week after police claimed wrongly that he broke his bail conditions. In November Monerville was held on a trumped-up charge after an alleged street incident in

Hackney. But his real 'offence' is that he gave the police a bad name when he emerged from Stoke Newington police station in January 1987, brain-damaged, concussed, partially paralysed and suffering from impaired vision.

Trevor's father John Monerville says that Hackney police have stopped his son four times in the past fortnight. 'They all knew who he was,' he added. The scars Monerville received in police custody last year have made him into a marked man for life.

Last week the Metropolitan Police issued a glossy pamphlet to show their commitment to stamping out racist harassment. But the most systematic harassment of black people is carried out by police officers. And if a black youth has the audacity to cause them any embarrassment, they'll go back and get him again and again and again.

POLICING THE FAMILY

Social control in
Thatcher's Britain

Joan Phillips

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FIGHTBACK IN HANDSWORTH
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Say No to the Cuts
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GUTS WANTED

MARGARET THATCHER may not have got everything she would have liked from last week's Nato summit. The final communiqué fudged the issue of modernising nuclear weapons, of which she was the keenest supporter. The English translation affirmed that the missiles should be 'kept up to date, where necessary', while the German version said only that they should be 'kept in an adequate state, where necessary'. But she won't be too worried about that. The summit was a big success for her where it mattered — in domestic British politics.

Thatcher used the summit to promote herself as the most senior Western leader. She struck a pose both as the talent-spotter who 'discovered' Mikhail Gorbachev, and as the firmest opponent of the Soviet Bear, who would not be taken in by Gorbachev's sweet-talk. Her performance helped to strengthen her hold over parliamentary politics, by creating a militaristic climate with which Neil Kinnock's Labour Party cannot cope.

On her return to Britain, Kinnock tried to needle Thatcher over her enthusiastic support for nuclear weapons which, he claimed, had caused her to be 'sidelined' in Brussels. Thatcher accused him of talking 'claptrap'. Then she dismissed Kinnock with a ringing declaration that 'Labour has no memory, no stomach, no spine and no guts.' That was the end of the debate, with another quick knock-out victory for the Tories.

Whatever problems she might face on issues like the NHS, Thatcher understands that the old standards of anti-

Sovietism, patriotism and militarism will stand her in good stead. The official opposition parties, both old and new, are closely committed to the British state and deeply embedded in the attitudes of Empire and Cold War. She can always unnerve them with accusations that they are soft or gutless towards communists, terrorists, foreigners in general, or anything which is supposed to threaten 'the British way of life'.

The Tory government has lost its way on several fronts. The economy is immeasurably weaker than ministerial statements would have us believe (see below). Tory policies on issues like the NHS and the poll tax are profoundly unpopular. The only new policies the government can offer are empty, paper initiatives like this week's scheme to revive the inner cities without spending any money. In these circumstances, the Tories rely more and more on the political weakness of their opponents on the big issues like defence.

The government has sought to make the maximum mileage out of the chauvinism Thatcher stirred up around the summit. This week the Royal Navy began sabre-rattling exercises around the Malvinas, while the SAS shot dead three unarmed Irish republicans in Gibraltar. The Tories cheered all of this to the rafters, to show that they are still the party best equipped to carry the Union Jack as a symbol of British imperialism around the world. Labour simply buckled before the government's gung-ho assault, proving Thatcher's

assessment of its stomach and spine correct.

On Monday foreign secretary Howe blandly announced to the commons that the authorities had lied and that the IRA members gunned down by the SAS had not, after all, any arms or explosives about them. Labour foreign affairs spokesman George Robertson humbly replied that the commons 'speaks with one voice' in supporting the shoot-to-kill policy. This is the sort of 'opposition' which has reduced the Labour Party to a state of irrelevance.

The Tories can steer clear of serious trouble so long as they dominate such key debates. To change this state of affairs, we need an opposition movement which will not give in every time the government yells 'defence' or 'the national interest'. In a nation controlled by a capitalist elite which survives by exploiting the third world, these buzz-words are demands to defend the interests of the ruling class across the globe. We have no interest in so doing.

The working class requires a new political leadership. One which has memory enough to seek to avenge the crimes which Thatcher has committed under the Union Jack, from the South Atlantic to South Armagh. One which has guts enough to take sides with those, like the Irish, who resist her government. One which has spine enough to stand up to the chauvinist backlash. Faced with such a movement, Thatcher will need more than clever translations to retain her image of invulnerability at home.

BEHIND THE BUDGET

AS we got to press, chancellor Nigel Lawson is preparing to deliver his budget speech. Whatever he announces, and however he boasts about an 'economic miracle', it cannot disguise the fact that the British economy is weak and uncompetitive.

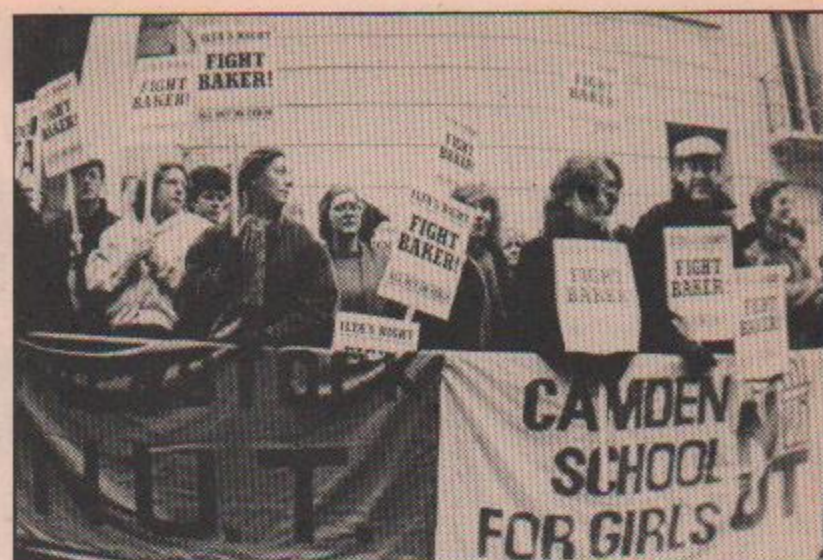
Last week's announcement of a record current account deficit of £900m in January gives a truer picture of the state of British capitalism. The government used the poor trade figures to hint that it would not be making very big tax cuts in the budget. Lawson would like to take a big slice off the tax burden. But he fears that British business would take advantage of a large

increase of money in the economy to inflate prices and compensate for low profitability. Past experience has taught the Tories that inflation is no solution to the problems of an economy which can't compete in world markets.

The Tories want to use the breathing space provided by rising government revenues to redouble the drive to rationalise British industry. Most of the cash will be used to reduce the government's deficit on spending and to pay off past debt, rather than to fund huge tax cuts. The Tories' commitment to a high, or even

rising, sterling exchange rate is their way of telling British industrialists to expect no artificial props in their attempts to improve competitiveness.

Instead, the Tories want the employers to step up their attacks on pay and work practices. Here the government is leading from the front, with its ambitious plans to rationalise the civil service, privatise nationalised industries like electricity, and allow the shipyards to sink. We must not allow the hype about tax cuts and miracles to blind us to the way in which they are planning to save their system at our expense.



BEATING BAKER MEANS DEFEATING LABOUR'S CUTS

ILEA ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK JOBS AND DEMOCRACY

I heard last week that 30 jobs are due to go in my department. There are 30 jobs in my department. That's how I knew I was going to be out of work.' This education support worker's experience is typical of what's going on in the Inner London Education Authority. Ilea has budgeted for £93m cuts, in line with Tory spending restrictions. If the cuts go through, at least 6000 jobs will start to disappear from May onwards.

Ilea is a Labour authority which has proved willing to inflict Tory cuts on its workforce. Ilea workers are also under direct attack from Tory central government. The Great Education Reform Bill (Gerbil), which Kenneth Baker is steering through parliament, is a 170-page hit-list of cuts. Gerbil also aims to turn schools and colleges into a mouthpiece for Tory propaganda about moral standards. The Tories want to get rid of the 'loony left' Ilea. They plan to abolish it in 1990.

There are two issues at stake here for Ilea employees.

The Tories' abolition plans are an attack on democracy, and we should oppose this attempt to remove our right to an elected education authority for London. The Labour authority's cuts programme is an attack on jobs and working conditions, which education workers must unite their forces to resist.

FUDGE

Ilea leaders are keen to fudge the distinction between the two issues. They claim that the only way to save London's right to an elected education authority is to defend the Labour administration and support its cuts budget. But if we divide our ranks by defending a Labour employer which is committed to drastic cuts, how can we expect to unite our forces against a Tory government bent on attacking democracy?

Many Ilea workers, threatened with redundancy, are determined to fight. Their union leaders, whose loyalties lie with the Labour employers, are not. When Ilea managers call a staff meeting to explain the job losses, union officials often share their platform. Many executive positions in the NUT, the largest teachers' union, are occupied by headteachers. In other words most NUT leaders are low-level managers who endorse the policies of their superiors in Ilea's Labour group.

Union leaders dare not allow a militant campaign against Baker

because they fear that workers' militancy would also be directed against Labour.

Instead they are organising futile publicity stunts which have the effect of demobilising resistance. Last month's rally in the Royal Albert Hall was billed as a mass demonstration in defence of education. 'A thousand people turned up,' explained an angry teacher from Southwark. 'There was no mention of defending jobs. Instead we were treated to Archbishop Worlock arguing that the Baker Bill doesn't give sufficient scope for religious education. The whole thing was totally removed from the kind of action we need.'

SQUABBLES

Last week NUT officials unveiled a new 'helping hand' logo to replace the union's 'flaming torch' image. They claimed that the old image was 'too militant', and did not properly reflect the 'professionalism' of NUT members. Officials from the NAS/UWT, the second largest teachers' union, have tried to project a similar image. Teachers' leaders are making a play for sympathetic press coverage on the grounds that 'professionals' deserve better treatment. But press coverage has never won a dispute, and the focus on 'professionals' can only reinforce divisions among the various Ilea unions.

There are more than a dozen unions in Ilea, and their squabbles have already done too much damage. Union leaders gave out a host of contradictory instructions for the Ilea-wide one-day strike on Tuesday. NUT national officials refused to back the strike call. Local officers called for a small delegation from each school to attend the protest march, while unofficially they encouraged strike action. The NAS/UWT made the strike official. Schoolkeepers in the Greater London Staff Association were asked to take a day's leave, while Nupe members were left in the dark by their officials.

Rank and file members can overcome the bickering of their officials by uniting around the issue which concerns them all — the need to defend jobs and conditions. They will have to organise their own independent campaign, to prevent union leaders and their Labour allies from stifling their initiatives. But if they are prepared to take matters into their own hands, there is still time to get results.

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• What is your experience of the increase in official and freelance 'queer-bashing'?

Graham: We suffered an arson attack at *Capital Gay* in December. Somebody shoved lighted paper under the door. We were lucky that it was a fire door which didn't burn fast and the fire was discovered. We were unlucky in that we'd just installed our new computer system by the door. So £16 000 worth of equipment just melted and put a layer of tar over the office. It's done nearly £20 000 damage — we weren't insured.

Paud: Nine of us were charged with conspiring to import indecent or obscene material. From the day of the customs raid in 1984 until we won our campaign two and a half years later the growth of *Gay's the Word* was stopped.

Mike: Greetings cards with nudes on have been stopped at customs. Milliverts — who publish gay magazines like *Zipper* and *Body Check* — have had to stop sending them through the post. One of our shops in Earls Court was raided for selling magazines which you can still buy on news stands nearby.

• How do the police treat your organisations today?

Graham: The day of the arson attack the police came round and said 'Do you have any enemies?' Then they said, 'We don't hold out any prospect of catching whoever did this.' The police have done nothing. Arson is one of the most serious crimes after murder and rape. They were here immediately and it was immediately diagnosed as arson. But they did nothing.

Paud: About five years ago the police tried to have *Gay's the Word* redefined as a sex shop. Council inspectors came round and said it wasn't justified.

Mike: The superintendent in Lambeth invited the Gay Business Association to put across to the police what homosexuality is about. Some police are homophobic, definitely anti-gay. Most have got us stereotyped. Some of them had never knowingly met a gay person other than when trying to arrest them. They had visions of everybody being like John Inman or perverting little boys.

• Now there's the Clause in the Local Government Bill which seeks to ban 'the promotion of homosexuality'. What effect will this have on lesbian and gay life?

Graham: Any right-wing anti-gay person will take action to stop anything they don't like. The Marriage Guidance Council

ARSON, CENSORSHIP AND THE CLAUSE WHAT THE WITCH-HUNT MEANS

Jon Hann went to find out what impact the anti-homosexual witch-hunt is having on the lesbian and gay community. He spoke to Lisa Powers from *The Pink Paper*, Graham McKerrrow from *Capital Gay*, Paud Hegarty from the *Gay's the Word* bookshop, Mike McCann from the Gay Business Association and, in a personal capacity, Tiny Longman, public relations manager at Heaven nightclub

clearly promotes homosexuality when trying to keep gay lovers together. If the Pride march gathers in a park owned by a local authority, that could be promoting homosexuality.

Lisa: The effect will be huge, psychologically and materially. Huge numbers of organisations will fold or be drastically affected by the loss of grants. The Clause is saying you shall only teach one form of sexual behaviour as acceptable. Lesbian and gay teachers can be sacked simply for saying 'I'm lesbian or gay and I'm happy.' Entertainments licences are given by local councils. Granting them to lesbian and gay clubs could be seen as promoting homosexuality. There have been past attempts to do clubs for 'licentious' dancing. This will come back again.

Tiny: I don't think the Clause will affect us for some time. Those who want to attack gay life will use the back door and won't go for a head-

on collision against the big guns like Heaven. They'll go for the back door, the smaller places.

• What do you think lies behind the Clause?

Lisa: It's about forcing people back into the closet. I'm watching it happen already. More lesbians and gays are being forced to be defensive. They're saying it's the fault of those nasty left-wing organisations, or the fault of the GLC for giving us those grants, or the fault of those activists who do things like abseiling into the house of lords. It's amazing the speed with which some people turn on their own kind.

Graham: Legislation leads public opinion. The Clause is encouraging an obvious move towards more homophobia. Since it was introduced there's been a CS gas attack on a pub in Kent, the arson attack on *Capital Gay*, and the *Star* has followed the *Sun* in using the word 'poof' in headlines.



AN ARSON ATTACK ON THE LONDON OFFICE OF CAPITAL GAY DID £20 000 DAMAGE

• One sign of the new climate was that after the arson attack on *Capital Gay*, Tory MP Elaine Kellett-Bowman said it was 'right to be intolerant of evil'. How do you respond to the spread of these sort of statements?

Graham: I was shocked. I thought that's how confident they are, that a Tory MP can encourage arson. It adds to your feeling of vulnerability that she can say that and get away with it.

Tiny: The Clause betrays the fact that the people who put it together thought they could get away with it. Ten years ago they wouldn't have stood a chance. Elaine Kellett-Bowman probably sincerely believes that these awful men should be treated if not put out of their misery. It's very frightening. Voices like hers of illogical hatred have been silenced over the last 10-20 years in that nobody's taken any notice of them. 'Stupid cow I won't bother to report that' they would

say. Now it's good copy, even in the responsible press.

• At first the Labour frontbench said they would support the Clause. Their spokesman Jeff Rooker even said 'No one in their right mind wants to promote homosexuality.' Have you been surprised by the Labour Party's retreat?

Graham: The Labour Party's got its knickers in a twist over the Clause. In the run-up to the election they started trying to backtrack on lesbian and gay rights, sending out letters to people saying don't do anything. Labour's let us down badly.

Lisa: We've had a lot of false friends — people who were nice about lesbian and gay rights because they thought the time was right to be nice. The Labour Party is the perfect example of our fair-weather friends.

RIOT POLICE EXECUTE LABOUR HOUSING POLICY

BEFORE dawn on Monday, a convoy of 30 police vans drew up at a crossroads in North London. Scores of riot police sat waiting for the signal to evict nearly 300 squatters from the Stamford Hill council estate in North London.

As we go to press, the police are still waiting for the go-ahead. They want the TV cameras to disperse before going in to kick down doors and break squatters' heads. But they have carried out a few 'guerrilla raids' on the quiet. Shortly after they arrived on Monday, police beat up a couple of squatters who were walking across the estate. This is the latest in a series of casual police attacks on squatters.



SQUATTERS ERECT BARRICADES ON STAMFORD HILL ESTATE ON MONDAY

The paramilitary police have been called in by Hackney Labour council. The council accuses the squatters of queue-jumping, and says that the 100 empty flats they occupied are wanted to house 'homeless families languishing in bed and breakfast accommodation'. But the Labour council has shown little concern for the homeless in the past, and this is not the real reason for the imminent invasion of Stamford Hill.

To comply with Tory spending restrictions, Hackney council needs drastic cuts in its annual bill for bed and breakfast accommodation. Housing chair Brynley Heaven came up with

the idea of kicking squatters out of semi-derelict flats and dumping homeless families in them. The council will save money that way because many of the squatters are single and homeless, and there is no legal obligation to house them.

Hackney council is shunting the housing queue around and creating a new generation of homeless on Tory orders. At the same time, 10 per cent of workers in the housing department are due to lose their jobs in cutbacks. Those threatened with redundancy must take a stand alongside squatters under threat of eviction.



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Tory employment chief Norman Fowler has been to the USA to study work-for-dole schemes. This is likely to be the jumping-off point for the second phase of the Tories' crackdown on claimants. The first phase is outlined in the new Social Security Act and the government white paper 'Employment and Training'. They are due to come into effect in April, but many of the measures involved have already been 'piloted' in selected inner-city districts.

THE AVAILABILITY TRAP

'Wait here, please. Someone would like to see you,' says the clerk behind the signing-on counter, and the circle begins. Instant Restart and 'availability for work' tests, sprung without warning on claimants turning up to sign on, are among the traps set for more than a million long-term jobless in the government white paper 'Employment and Training'. The idea is to trick claimants into disqualifying themselves from receiving benefit. For example, in answer to question Number 11, 'write against each day the hours you can work', claimants must answer '8am to 6pm', 'Nine till five' or '8am to 4pm' could lead to disqualification. New claimants must be word-perfect on all 18 questions or they won't even get on to the unemployment register.

The original availability tests, introduced a year ago, have been used to disqualify 10 000 claimants. The new, revamped tests are designed to net at least 100 000 claimants in the 12 months from April. Department of employment managers are trying to stop dole office workers giving claimants the right answers. Consistent failure to meet the full quota of disqualifications will be a disciplinary offence for clerical officers. Fraud investigators will also be sent to trawl council estates for 'malingerers'.

The threat of disqualification is already more than some people can bear.

Thames Television's *This Week* recently told the story of Rachel Caine, who killed herself after learning that she had been disqualified after 'failing' the availability test. 'I have chosen the "opting-out" clause,' Caine wrote, in a mocking suicide note addressed to the home secretary. Then she lay down in front of an express train. DHSS managers admitted that Caine should not have been disqualified. By that time she was dead.

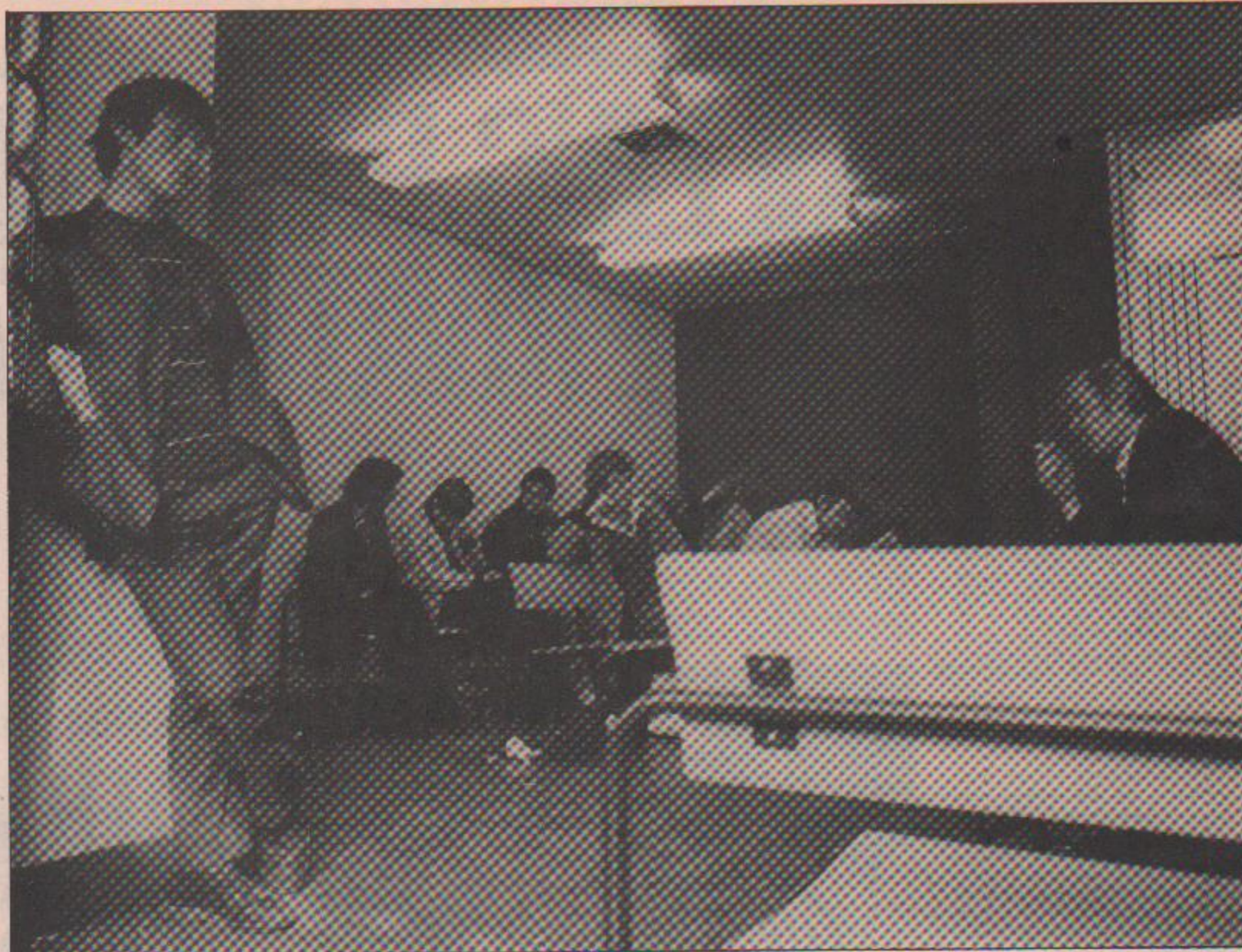
Increased pressure on the unemployed will mean more tragedies. But the Tories are not yet setting out to murder us. Their intention is to intimidate the jobless into accepting poverty-line pay and pitifully small 'training' allowances. One of the few ways of ensuring you pass the availability test is to volunteer for a Job Club. But that's no escape, either.

JOB CLUB: NO JOKE

Job Clubs are 'informal groups of unemployed people'. Advertised benefits of membership include use of a telephone and free postage for job applications.

But Job Club's real purpose is to act as a staging post for Tory cheap labour schemes.

Until now, claimants and dole office workers have treated Job Club as a joke. Everybody knew that volunteering would save your benefit, and that nothing much would happen if you didn't show up at the appointed time. This is due to change. Management are instructing counter staff to press-



NEW TORY BENEFITS AND 'TRAINING' TRAP

VICIOUS CIRCLE FOR UNEMPLOYED

Andrew Calcutt explains how the new Social Security Act and the white paper 'Employment and Training' will create a vicious circle of low-paid jobs, cheap labour schemes and shrinking social security benefits

gang one in five long-term claimants into Job Clubs. New club members who fail to turn up for their induction course will be disqualified from benefit.

Job Club members will provide the first intake for Training for Employment, a new 12-month 'training' scheme which, from September, will replace the Job Training Scheme and Community Programme. Fowler says that participation in the scheme will be voluntary. He also says that trainees' allowances will always be higher than their benefits. He is lying on both counts.

TRAINING FOR EXPLOITATION

According to benefit managers, refusal to join the Training for Employment scheme will not mean automatic disqualification. But it could cast doubts on a claimant's 'availability for work'. In other words, refusing to 'volunteer' will probably lead to benefit reduction or disqualification. Fowler has already made YTS compulsory for claimants under 18. His trip last week to assess workfare (work-for-dole) schemes in the USA indicates

that the Tories are considering the pros and cons of conscripting the next age group (18-24) on to their latest scheme.

Claimants sucked on to the new scheme will be financially worse off. Trainees will receive £10 more than their current benefits. Out of this they will be expected to pay travelling expenses up to £5. The £5 that's left will hardly cover the cost of their meals. 'Benefit Plus' will turn out to be 'Benefit Minus'.

The white paper argues that Training for Employment will be a big improvement on the schemes it is due to replace. Yet, initially, the new programme will offer roughly the same number of places at about the same cost as before. It cannot be anything more than another cheap labour scheme. The most significant change is that trainees will be more tightly controlled by training agents and training managers, as well as their on-site employers.

Policing the unemployed is the real aim of the new programme.

At the end of their 12-month Training for Employment placement, claimants will be expected to go back into a Job Club. Job Clubs also serve as pick-up points for employers looking for dirt-cheap labour, and new Training for Employment 'graduates' will be

easy meat for them. Those who try to escape this vicious circle will be threatened with disqualification from benefits again.

DISQUALIFIED FROM EATING

The threat of disqualification already forces many training scheme 'graduates' to accept low-paid jobs. In West Yorkshire, for example, standard rates for unskilled labouring and assembly work have slipped towards £1.20 an hour. Yet once the 'graduates' have accepted these princely pay rates, restrictions on benefit entitlement, as laid down in a series of social security acts, mean that they cannot afford to quit.

Until 1986, claimants forfeited six weeks' benefit if they left their job voluntarily, or lost it through 'misconduct'. In 1986, the disqualification period was increased to 13 weeks, and the total of 'voluntary jobless' fell as more people were scared into keeping their present jobs. When the Social Security Act comes into effect in April, the disqualification period will rise to a nightmarish 26 weeks. For the government, the increase

will mean more savings in social security expenditure, and a fall in the total of registered unemployed (because few denied benefit will bother to sign on for nothing).

Countless low-paid workers will be forced to carry on in miserable conditions, because giving up their job would leave them with next to no income for six months.

The effects of the current 13-week ban are outlined in 'Disqualified from Benefit', a booklet published last month by the Low Pay Unit. 'A man had an accident on the way to work, leaving him unconscious in hospital for two days. His employer dismissed him for misconduct because he failed to ring in to say he was sick. When he signed on for benefit he was disqualified for three months.' This example is far from exceptional. If you're asthmatic and have to give up a job in a woodyard, you're not entitled to benefit. Pregnancy also counts as 'voluntary redundancy'. Anyone who leaves work to nurse a sick relative, or to meet childcare commitments, will be penalised. The Low Pay Unit report shows that claimants are automatically disqualified except in clear cases of compulsory redundancy. As a result, half a million claimants lose some benefit each year, and more than 50 per cent of them receive no payment at all for 13 weeks.

The Tories admit that extending the disqualification period will punish thousands of claimants. 'We came to the conclusion that it was right to consider whether six months was sufficient penalty,' said social security minister Tony Newton. They kindly decided that six months' destitution was 'sufficient penalty' for those who would rather sign on than work for a pittance.

Even if you survive six months' disqualification, you could be drafted into another dead-end scheme or low-paid job. When their 26 weeks of starvation are up, claimants will receive their first giro on the same day as a Restart letter instructing them to come in for an 'availability' interview. And so the vicious circle begins again.

The Israeli authorities imposed new restrictions on foreign journalists in the occupied West Bank last week, in a South African-style attempt to hide the repression there from prying eyes

ISRAEL CRACKS DOWN ON MEDIA

KILLING PALESTINIANS IS A PRIVATE AFFAIR

Television viewers around the world were recently shocked by pictures of Israeli paratroopers using rocks to try to break the arms of captive Palestinian youths. The film of the beatings was a serious blow to Israel's already battered public image. The CBS cameraman was rushed by helicopter to an army base to identify the paras responsible, who were promptly arrested. Both the Palestinian victims were released without charge. Israeli officials went on TV to apologise for this 'aberration' in the army's behaviour.

But subsequent events have confirmed that the soldiers were only carrying out Israeli state policy.

Once the uproar started to die down the Israeli authorities reversed their previous actions. The sadistic soldiers were quickly released back to their unit. Several Knesset (parliament) members demanded the resignation of the senior commander who ordered the arrests. Meanwhile, the Palestinians were charged with stone-throwing and now face months or possibly years in prison.

CLAMPDOWN

Two of the paratroopers have been charged with brutality. But as far as Israel is concerned, their real crime was getting caught. Brutality against Palestinians is the officially favoured tactic of the Israeli army. Defence minister Yitzhak Rabin has publicly announced that his policy is to use 'force, might and beatings' against the Palestinian uprising. But Israel's rulers would rather the rest of the world did not have a front row seat.

Israeli demands for tighter controls on the media grew louder after the CBS exposé. Last week's restrictions on journalists reflected the majority cabinet view that journalists should be banned from covering unrest in the West Bank and Gaza.

But even before the beatings controversy the Israeli authorities had started clamping down on the media.

Dozens of journalists and photographers have been threatened in recent weeks, some by soldiers pointing loaded rifles. This is on top of the routine military censorship which was a feature of media coverage well before the uprising. The radical paper *Derech Hanitzot*, the first to break the news of pregnant Palestinian women miscarrying

after being tear-gassed by troops, was recently closed. Its West Bank correspondent Ribhi Aruri has been placed under administrative detention for at least six months.

The main opponents of a blanket ban on journalists in the territories are defence minister Rabin and chief of staff Dan Shomron. They would prefer, where necessary, to use the army's

established power to declare a 'closed military area' to keep journalists out of specified zones. But they want journalists around so that the army can use TV film of demonstrators to identify leading Palestinian protesters. Military intelligence teams have posed as journalists to film demonstrations — a trick which will be hard to pull off if the media has been banned altogether.

The debate over media coverage shows how narrow is the divide between the so-called doves and hawks in the Israeli establishment. While some want to ban journalists entirely, others prefer to use the media as a cover to spy on Palestinians. Either way, beating Palestinians is seen as fine — as long as it is done discreetly.

Daniel Nassim



A PICTURE OF REPRESSION WHICH ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT THE WORLD TO SEE

SOUTH AFRICA

BOTHA UNDER PRESSURE

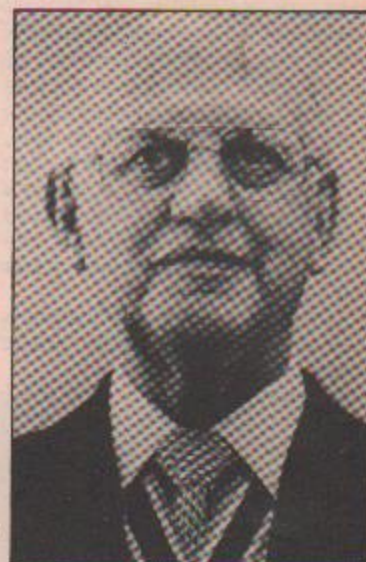
The two landslide by-election victories won by the far right in South Africa last week emphasise the problems faced by PW Botha's ruling National Party.

Despite the pre-election crack-down on 17 black organisations, Botha's traditional supporters remain unimpressed. Afrikaner farmers and blue-collar workers in two Northern Transvaal constituencies overwhelmingly supported candidates of the far-right Conservative Party in the by-elections. The Conservatives and their allies in the paramilitary AWB accuse Botha of selling the birthright of Afrikaners, through his attempts to defuse black resistance with a mild programme of reforms. The drift away from the ruling party could mean major losses for the Nationalists at the next election. Botha's future attempts to reshape apartheid and stabilise capitalism in South Africa will be constrained by the need to show his commitment to white power.

On the other hand, big business is enraged at Botha's heavy-handed bans. It has seen a painstakingly created relationship with the black trade union movement almost wrecked overnight through the crackdown on the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Now the employers fear that black working class action will take a more militant form. Led by Gavin Relly, chairman of the giant Anglo-American Corporation, business organisations have approached Cosatu for talks on maintaining 'peaceful collective bargaining'.

South Africa's European allies are also angry. EEC countries specifically set up a 'positive measures' programme of aid to black groups inside South Africa to stave off demands that the EEC should impose punitive sanctions. But last week Botha announced draft legislation which will block foreign funding of organisations with 'political purposes' and halt the EEC's own aid programme. The issue topped the agenda at last weekend's EEC foreign ministers' meeting, despite British and German attempts to prevent this.

After 13 years of war in Angola, South African troops are bogged down in a costly and unpopular war.



APARTHEID CHAMPION: BOTHA

Angola's Fapla army is now an effective battle-hardened force and its anti-aircraft gunners have taken a heavy toll of South Africa's ageing airforce. Around 8000 South African troops have been besieging the Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale since last October, with little sign of progress. Cuito Cuanavale looks increasingly like South Africa's Stalingrad and Botha's attempts to impose a favourable peace deal on the region look unlikely to succeed.

Botha has become more defensive as one setback after another hits his regime. The Western media has portrayed him as a well-intentioned reformer hemmed in by the right. But Botha remains a loyal champion of apartheid whose instincts tell him that the only solution is to resort to even greater repression at home and abroad. In the short term such measures may succeed. The mass anti-apartheid organisations are silenced for the moment and the unions are in some disarray. But the will to fight remains. On the day after Botha banned 17 organisations, 2800 workers at the Mercedes Benz plant in the Eastern Cape occupied their factory demanding the release of shop steward Msimeli Nonyukela who had been detained under state of emergency regulations. Within 24 hours police released him.

Russell Osborne

NATIONAL TENSIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION

Conflict in Sumgait

The explosion of ethnic rivalries between Azerbaijanis and Armenians has so far claimed 30 lives in the town of Sumgait in Azerbaijan. The Kremlin's official acknowledgement of the rioting indicates that the smouldering national question can no longer be ignored by the Soviet leadership.

For 50 years the Kremlin has pursued a policy of indirect rule in the Caucasus. The Soviet bureaucracy relied on the local party machine to maintain stability. Many of the local leaders turned republics like Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan into their local fiefdoms. The local leaders were happy to allow regional culture and religion to flourish and to be seen as the

representatives of their ethnic group. This prevented ethnic and religious conflict from acquiring any serious public manifestations.

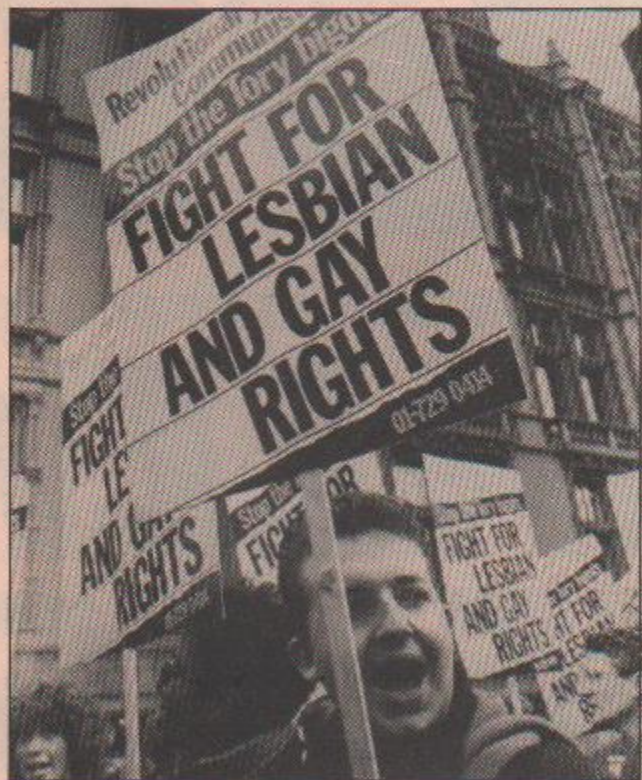
UNSETTLING

The Soviet leadership's programme of economic restructuring and modernisation has come into conflict with the autonomy enjoyed by the local party machine. The Kremlin needs to rationalise its resources and to break down parochial barriers to the development of an efficient division of labour. The Kremlin can no longer afford to leave matters to local party bosses. The unsettling effects of economic rationalisation has brought underlying ethnic tensions to the surface. Often

local party leaders have played a prominent role in promoting ethnic identity to strengthen their bargaining positions with Moscow.

Urban areas such as Sumgait, which have a mixed ethnic population, are most vulnerable to a nationalist explosion. These are also the towns which have the most strategic economic importance. The Kremlin's economic policies require a quick resolution of the ethnic problem. It cannot, for example, afford an outbreak of violence in the highly mixed city of Baku, the seat of the Soviet oil industry. The violence at Sumgait reveals the difficulties the Kremlin faces integrating its republics into its modernisation drive.

HOW TO STOP THE CLAUSE



IN Nottingham, some activists have voiced doubts about the feasibility of winning council workers to a strategy of non-implementation of the Clause. These doubts fall to take two factors into account: first, there has never been a serious attempt to persuade straight people to fight for lesbian and gay rights; second, the mounting opposition among council workers to Tory attempts to turn them into 'soft policemen'.

'Ethnic monitoring' was a soft-focus attempt to get workers involved in surveillance of black people. Social workers are now being pressured into taking a directly coercive stance in their work. And the Clause leaves no doubt about the policing function which the Tories have in mind for local authority workers.

The debate about 'loony left' councils has set up lesbians and gays as targets, and the Tories may be able to take some council workers with them. But many can see that they will not be passive bystanders if the Tories are allowed to carry out their offensive, but that council workers will themselves become the Tories' agents, pointing the finger at lesbians and gays who apply to use council facilities.

Many council workers do not want to become plain clothes police. Popularising the idea of fighting for lesbian and gay rights among them is our best chance of keeping the bigots at bay.
Joanne Hayes
Nottingham

BILL (letters, 26 February) sees positive images as the central issue of the campaign against the Clause. But positive images are only one of many tools for achieving the aim of equality for homosexuals. By all means congratulate local authorities who use it; but when those same authorities stand in the way of building a wider campaign aimed at promoting lesbian and gay rights, clearly they should be criticised.

Bill argues that positive images do not promote homosexuality, because 'sexuality is very basic and cannot be changed.' The fact that he avoids saying that a person's sexuality is something they are born with shows that he is aware of the problems with such an assertion. But even if it were

correct, it would not make for an effective argument against the Clause. By protesting that homosexuality is not being promoted, Bill implicitly accepts that there would be a problem if it were. This clashes sharply with his insistence that 'we must assert...that we are proud of our sexuality, that it is in no way second best.'

Protesting that lesbian and gay children will suffer without positive images will cut no ice with the people promoting the Clause. The only way to beat them is by mobilising enough people against them. And no one will take effective action in support of lesbians and gays if they see the possibility of promoting homosexuality as a problem.
Paul
Bristol

'AMATEUR' BRITISH BOSSES

APART from the British Aerospace/Rover link-up, last week's news also included confirmation of the merger of two British 'hi-tech giants' in telecommunications: Plessey and GEC. However, I have learnt that their technology leaves a lot to be desired.

One of their first joint efforts is to supply transmission equipment to Bulgaria. But the executives who tendered for the contract have promised to put Plessey transmission equipment with GEC power plant — only to discover that they don't match. This amateurish attitude is not confined to exports for the Soviet bloc or the third world. The computerised Plessey system which controls all

London's traffic lights went down over Christmas when one transistor blew out. Not exactly 'fail safe' is it?

Nor is the much-vaunted System X telephone exchange — the great white hope of the 1990s. MPs were definitely not amused recently when the new System X in the house of commons went out of action. Despite technology minister John Butcher's talk about the revival of British industry, somehow I don't think that the real giants of telecommunications technology, IBM and Ericsson, will be quaking at the threat of British competition.

Richard
Liverpool

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FLOWERS FOR THE NORTH-EAST

ON Monday the government launched the national version of 'Action for Cities', a programme to revitalise urban areas. Here in the North-east, the local launch will be the culmination of visits from Tory notables who have recently been commuting from London for a few photocalls against a backdrop of demolition sites.

The theory is that by eradicating the remainders of Britain's industrial past, we can all start again with a clean slate. Yet although some areas give the impression that the North-east is back on its feet again, the 'recovery' is all based on credit and the service sector. A number of big

stores in Newcastle give £1000 credit if you have a job. Coachloads of people from as far as Leeds and Carlisle come to the biggest shopping centre in Europe — built in Gateshead with a rate-free incentive. But the banks and other vested interests now feel a pressing need to call in their credit. And the Tories are desperately trying to redress the lack of real return on massive local investment.

Apart from Nissan in nearby Sunderland, manufacturing is the one thing there's no sign of. Gateshead is basing its future prosperity on the 1990 garden festival (look what it did for Liverpool!). County Durham is

planning to invest £75m in a strategy of 'renewal through tourism' that will create 2000 mickey-mouse jobs. Meanwhile the Tories are using their new 'action' programme as an excuse to redirect cash from local councils to specific projects, such as those endorsed by Newcastle's CBI-backed Conservative action committee. Their plans are an attack on local democracy, which could lead to a greater shake-up of jobs and services. Instead of benefiting from urban renewal, we could find ourselves living in a Tory theme park.

Austin
Newcastle

YARDIES 'FARCE'

SCOTLAND YARD'S new campaign against the organised crime ring, the Yardies, must be seen for what it is — a further attempt to isolate and criminalise black youth in the inner cities.

Having been exposed as thugs in uniform at the Notting Hill carnival, this is the first real chance for

the police to get back at the black communities since the Broadwater Farm disturbances of October 1985. This farce is a perfect opportunity for the police to saturate areas with a high 'ethnic' population under the guise of preventing drugs, vice and extortion rackets. The real purpose is to

harass, beat up and generally intimidate black people, while giving the impression through the media that the police are curbing a crime wave of mafia proportions. We cannot be taken in by this latest attack.

Iain
Stoke Newington

CIVIL SERVICE STRUGGLES

RESTRUCTURING the civil service is the Tories' latest strategy for cutting public expenditure. This includes the loss of 8000 jobs in the DHSS, which means halving the workforce in some offices and closures in others. Many DHSS workers can see that all-out action is the only way to match management's tactics. Yet the activities of our union leaders have obscured the issues.

There was supposed to be a union-backed campaign for a 'yes' vote in last week's ballot over strike action against job losses. But at Brixton all we had was a 15-minute briefing, with no discussion because it would have taken the meeting beyond the prescribed limits to facility time, and an announcement that there would be no strike pay. Then it was straight into the vote. Not surprisingly, the vote was two to one against strike action.

It is becoming clear that union officials, even the Militant supporters who control the national executive of our union — the CPSA — have no interest in leading effective action. Their proposals are designed to pre-empt rank and file initiatives, not encourage them. Assistant general secretary John Macreadie has talked a lot about a one-day general strike in defence of the NHS. At the same time, he has persistently refused to



CPSA GENERAL SECRETARY
JOHN MACREADIE

back the unanimous vote by workers at Brixton unemployment benefit office who want to take action alongside department of employment staff in North London who are striking against job cuts. Macreadie doesn't want to 'generalise' this dispute, because it might get out of hand. Instead, he is trying to contain it within one region. Leaving our livelihoods in the hands of politicians like him is clearly a recipe for disaster.
Two DHSS workers
Brixton



ANDERTON: MAN OF THE MOMENT

MANCHESTER police chief James Anderton grabbed the headlines again last week when his views on crime were published in *Woman's Realm*, shortly after he had pledged to keep his mouth shut. Anderton has earned notoriety for his outspoken bigotry and his claim to be God's prophet. But while he is widely regarded as a crank, Anderton's backward views on morality are gaining ground. In contrast to the consternation which greeted many of his previous outbursts, Anderton's latest pronouncement provoked a chorus of approval.

Cyril James Anderton, Commander of the British Empire and holder of the Queen's Police Medal, is the son of a Wigan miner who grew up in a flagstone-floored pit cottage. He won a scholarship to Wigan grammar school and at 16 became a colliery clerk for two years before joining the Royal Military Police. When he left the army in 1953 young Anderton joined Manchester city police, where he was marked down as a leader of men. His rise through the ranks was meteoric by police standards, and in 1976 at the age of 44 he became Britain's youngest chief constable.

Many people have looked to Anderton's religious background to find the formative influences on his subsequent controversial career. His boyhood was punctuated by bouts of Bible-bashing and thrashings with his father's leather belt. This is said to have shaped his adult attitudes to morality and the language in which he expresses them. Anderton is best known for his views on pornography, homosexuality and crime and punishment, and the excremental imagery he employs to articulate them.

MESSIANIC

God's cop once described pornographers as 'garbage in the sea of life...not content until nearly everyone is floating like trash in the same filthy waters'. His judgement that homosexuals who 'freely engage in sodomy and other obnoxious sexual practices' were 'swirling around in a cesspit of their own making' caused a furore. He described crime as 'a bursting boil on the skin of life', and suggested that sex offenders should be castrated, violent offenders 'flogged until they beg for mercy' — preferably by him — and persistent offenders despatched to penal work camps to be humiliated into penitence.

Anderton's religious convictions certainly explain his own perception of his Messianic role, but they do not explain why his rather eccentric beliefs should be so widely disseminated by the media. Anderton's outbursts have undoubtedly become more forceful in line with his progression from Methodist lay preacher to Roman Catholic stalwart. But the fact that they have come to monopolise media attention has got more to do with the shift in the political climate after Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, than with Anderton's conversion to Catholicism after the Pope came to Manchester in 1982.

Anderton's tempestuous career as chief constable in Manchester spans the years of British

economic decline and Thatcherite moral revivalism. The more the pressures of recession have increased division and conflict in society, the more the ruling class has tried to keep control by rallying the British people behind the banner of patriotic morality. The Tory crusade has focused people's fears and anxieties on the threat to the British way of life posed by family breakdown, rising crime, sexual promiscuity and countless other indices of a general descent into slovenliness. It has also provided a platform for bigots like Anderton to preach their reactionary moral message.

Anderton came to prominence when his men raided 264 bookshops, newsagents and warehouses in a crackdown on pornography, seizing copies of the *Sun's Page 3 Girl Annual* from a Manchester supermarket. The chief said the raids should be a lesson to those 'who openly hanker for total debauchery and lewdness'. Anderton is a rabid opponent of homosexuality, authorising plain clothes patrols to hunt down gay men in public lavatories and special squads to raid gay nightclubs. He has condemned homosexuality as 'an abomination which should never have been legalised'. This is consistent with Anderton's traditional approach to family values. He lays down strict rules about the clothes his wife of 31 years is permitted to wear and about the hairstyle she should adhere to, and is dismissive of women's abilities to be anything but skivvies like his wife who brings him breakfast in bed.

WORRYING

Anderton has become the bogey of the left, especially for his insistence that plastic bullets should be deployed against rioters, for the assistance his force gave in crushing the miners and for ousting his deputy John Stalker who said too much about Britain's shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland. His attacks on 'idlers', race relations experts, women, gays and 'extremists' have not endeared Anderton to the left.

But while many left wingers object to Anderton's aggressive exposition of anti-working class prejudice, they have failed to challenge the broader reassertion of morality of which he is only the most vocal exponent. Left wingers might have different motives than Anderton for calling on the state to ban page 3 and for the courts to pass tougher sentences on rapists. But the consequence of these campaigns is to lend legitimacy to the moral and legal code he upholds — and to strengthen the repressive powers he wields against miners, black youth, homosexuals, students and anybody else he considers 'obscene'.

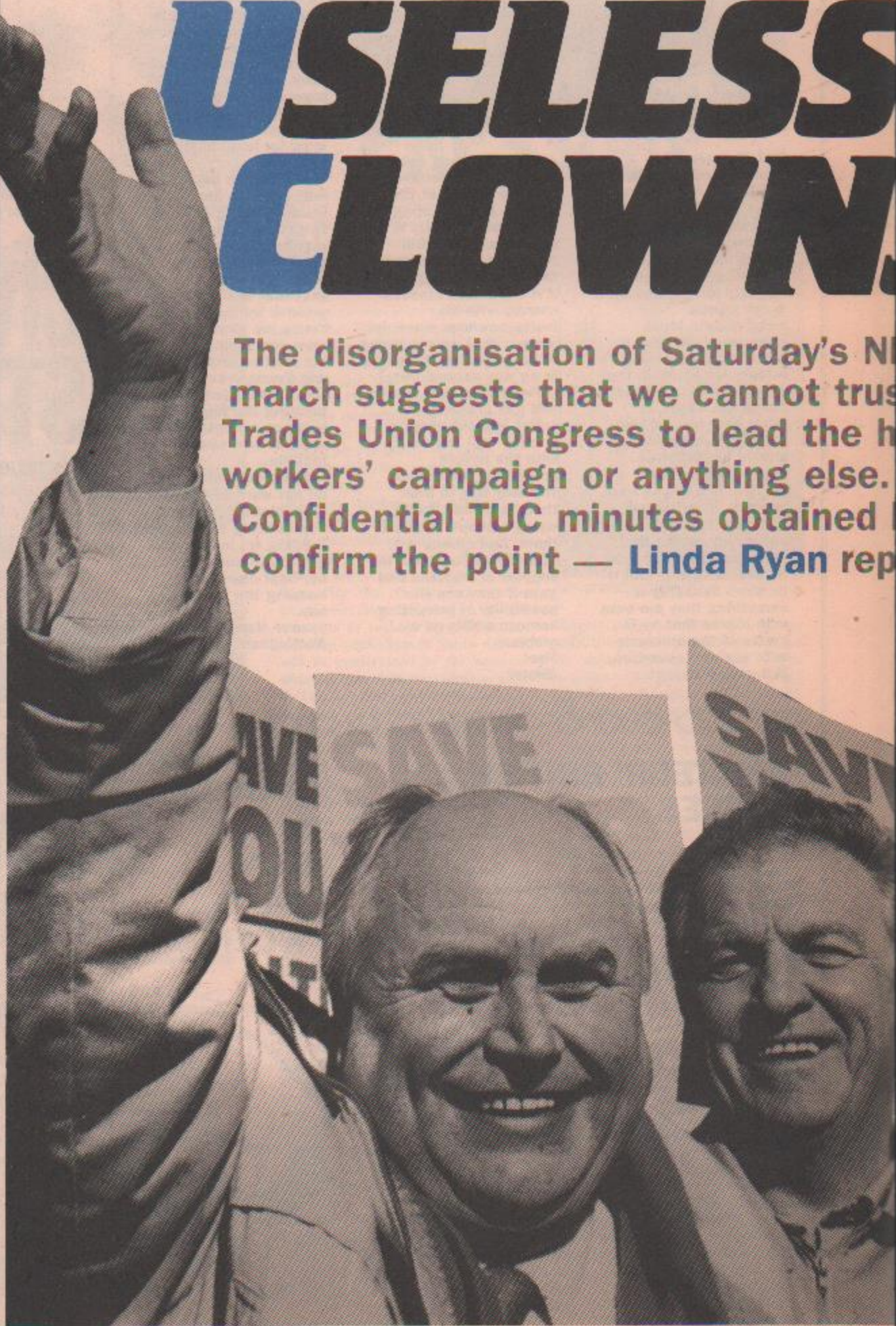
'Some of my critics want to portray me as a Bible-thumping, baton-swinging, anti-working class, right-wing dictator' complained the unassuming Anderton. The most worrying thing is not that such a man has come to occupy a prominent position in the state machine as chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers, but that left wingers can agree on some of the targets of his clean-up campaign.

Joan Phillips

TUC

TOTALLY USELESS CLOWN

The disorganisation of Saturday's NI march suggests that we cannot trust Trades Union Congress to lead the h workers' campaign or anything else. Confidential TUC minutes obtained confirm the point — Linda Ryan rep



TUC CHIEF NORMAN WILLIS, FLANKED BY FELLOW GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBER KEN GILL, PLAYS THE FOOL

'Can you announce that the lesbian nurses have arrived? somebody asked TUC general secretary Norman Willis. 'No' barked Big Norm, over the microphone he had left switched on. Then he went back into his bad routine of silly little jokes and songs. This fiasco was supposed to be the start of a rally against the Tories after Saturday's big NHS march in London. A mile away, at her party's local government conference, Margaret Thatcher could rest content that the TUC leadership was doing a fine job in disorganising the display of anger against her health policies.

Traditional TUC national rallies used to involve a line-up of top trade union officials and Labour MPs on an impressive purpose-built platform. Instead, the thousands upon thousands of marchers who poured into Hyde Park on Saturday were met by a shabby three-ton truck, from the back of which Willis kept up his third-rate variety act for an hour or so. Then he introduced the speakers: himself, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston (appearing as president of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and as 'a representative of the Christian church'), Jack Jones (retired transport union leader, now unofficial spokesman for Britain's pensioners), and agony aunt Claire Rayner (who Willis introduced as 'a friend').

FLABBY

There was not even a health service union official on the lorry, never mind a health worker. This angered many of the nurses and other hospital workers on the march. It all added up to an unprecedented public display of what a flabby, ineffective body the TUC has become today. It should have proved conclusively to all who saw it that, even when it identifies a cause which can bring mass support on to the streets, the TUC is no longer capable of organising a walk in the park. Yet the left-wing groups heckling Willis at the front of the rally were still calling on him to organise a '24-hour general strike for the NHS'. They might as well have asked Claire Rayner to lead the revolution.

Saturday's rally was a graphic illustration of the crisis of the official labour movement leaders. It confirmed that, for those like the health workers, who are looking for a lead against the government, the TUC is a redundant body.

The Thatcher years have taken a heavy toll on the TUC leaders. They have been removed from the positions of national influence they enjoyed in the seventies, cold-shouldered by Tory ministers and squeezed out of many quangos and public bodies. This process has exposed the way in which they relied for their status on the goodwill of governments and employers, rather than the active support of union members. Over the post-war years, the unions had become bureaucratic machines which 'recruited' many of their members through sweetheart deals with the bosses. Millions of workers were paper members of unions, but had little involvement in their organisations. Now that the government and many employers have taken a more hostile attitude to the union officials the TUC has been left adrift, with no access to the corridors of power and no real base of support.

LIMP

Ten years ago 'beer and sandwiches' trade unionism meant TUC chiefs enjoying all-lads-together lunches with Labour prime ministers in Downing Street. Today it means officials from the general and municipal workers' union handing out canned ale and limp sandwiches on Saturday's NHS march, in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with the public.

The TUC has responded to its fall from grace by trying to fit in with the Thatcherite times. Top union officials like Willis have sought to appear as harmless and as useful to the establishment as possible. They fear that any involvement in industrial disputes will mean more embarrassment and a further loss of face. Thus their priority is to avoid anything which smacks of struggle. The TUC discussions of the health dispute, as revealed in confidential minutes obtained by *ms*, illustrate its useless attitude.

TOKEN

In January, as the debate about the health service took off in the media, the TUC was wary of organising anything. It opted for an 'NHS Day' to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the service — in July. The minutes of an 11 January meeting of the TUC Health Services Coordinating Committee, which brought together officials from the unions involved, note a suggestion that regional union bodies should also be asked to organise their own local activities on NHS Day. This proposal received an unenthusiastic reception because of the 'constraints in terms of budgeting and time'. These days, six months is too short a time in which to expect TUC regions to organise a token day of protest.

At the same meeting, some officials suggested that the high level of public feeling about the health service meant that the TUC could benefit from organising an additional protest 'in the near future'.

Proposals included 'a mass lobby of parliament, a rally or May Day activities'. At this stage, however, the TUC chiefs didn't want to know. They pointed out that 'recent experience in organising national rallies and petitions was not encouraging in terms of media coverage and general public support.' Instead, 'an opinion poll commissioned by the TUC would be likely to produce a positive response to the long-term prospects of the NHS and should attract media attention.' The TUC is now so scared of upsetting middle class public opinion that it wanted to make sure most people really were opposed to health cuts before it would endorse so much as a petition.

ALIENATE

What changed the TUC's mind, and led to the calling of Saturday's march, was the spontaneous outburst of militancy among health workers. At a meeting of the Health Services Committee on 28 January, Willis noted that 'concern had been expressed at the volatility of feeling among NHS, particularly nursing, staffs.' The 'concern' among union officials was that their members might be getting out of control. They were also afraid that the protest and strike action taken by health workers was centring on the issue of pay — which was likely to alienate the middle class and establishment support which the TUC wants so desperately.

Willis told a meeting of the TUC General Council on 27 January that 'while these grievances [among striking health workers] were pay related...the public aspects of the matter had concentrated on staff shortages, the closure of services and growing waiting lists.' To court public opinion, the TUC thus had to bring the campaign back under its control, and emphasise charitable appeals to 'Save the NHS' rather than militant demands for a decent pay rise for impoverished health workers. As Ada Maddocks of the local government workers' union, Nalco, advised the General Council meeting, 'It was also important that the government was not permitted to shift the debate away from funding to industrial relations issues and the trade unions.' The TUC leaders' major concern was to avoid acting



ANGRY HEALTH WORKERS NEED ACTION NOT CHARITY

as trade unionists at all, and instead to turn the labour movement into part of a moderate lobby against a tuppenny tax cut.

Saturday's march and rally was designed to do just that. It was called, not to advance the cause of nurses and ancillaries, but to hold them back. The pathetic disorganisation of the whole affair showed that, despite the evidence in the opinion polls it cherishes, the TUC has sunk so low that it still did not really believe thousands of people would turn up.

The TUC's timid and tepid approach to the health campaign is matched on all other issues today. Take the recent TUC discussion on privatising public services.

Over the last few years, the Tories have used, to force through big cuts in jobs, pay and conditions. Already in the health service more than 20 000 ancillary jobs have disappeared, and a new privatisation assault is beginning in Scotland. Workers in some local councils have also suffered significant job cuts and worse working conditions. The response of the public sector unions has usually been not to fight against all cuts, but to join with management in promoting in-house tenders for the services concerned. These in-house tenders try to keep out the private contractors by imposing cuts and efficiency savings of their own, with union support. Now the TUC has taken this sacrificial approach a stage further.

EXPERTS

Through the TUC Public Services Campaign, the unions have agreed to pay to hire the services of the Royal Institute of Public Administration to help the union bureaucrats construct in-house bids that will win tenders for local government services. If further help is required from financial experts then the TUC will call on Unity Trust, the investment bank in which it has a stake, to assist. The minutes of a 22 February meeting show how Willis

commended this exercise to the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee:

'The project could reflect well on the unions concerned and the TUC. It was a clear example of how unions were responding to new situations with new approaches and the TUC's role was to facilitate this.'

Trade unionists might believe that the 'TUC's role' is to 'facilitate' the defence of their living standards against the employers. But according to the rules of the TUC's New Realism, its job is to facilitate cooperation with the cuts process. Willis believes that entrusting local government jobs and services to the book-keepers of the capitalist system will 'reflect well' on the TUC in the eyes of the British establishment. He is unconcerned about how it will affect the workers who suffer the consequent in-house cuts.

PARANOIA

The thing which most terrifies the TUC leaders today is that they might be accused of taking political action against the government. The TUC has always been quick to crack down on political initiatives within the labour movement which go too far in a left-wing direction. But now its sense of paranoia about anything political has reached new heights. On 22 February, a meeting of the TUC Trades Councils' Consultative Committee discussed a complaint against Coventry Trades Council:

'The committee were informed that Coventry Trades Council was holding a conference "Building for Socialism" which was outside the remit of a Trades Council. The TUC office had written to the Trades Council asking them to cancel the conference on February 6: if they did not do so consideration would be given to removing the name of the Trades Council from the recognised list.'

This minute says it all about the modern TUC. A few years ago, Trades Councils would only be threatened with expulsion from the official labour movement if they

became involved in a controversial issue like a campaign for Irish freedom. Now the mere mention of the word 'socialism' is considered a crime against the organisations of the working class. Meanwhile, the TUC Public Services Committee congratulates itself on the fact that 'in the house of lords, the Bishop of Manchester was making points on the Local Government Bill very much in line with views expressed by committee members' at their meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The TUC has been tamed. It is incapable of mounting a militant public campaign against any government policy. TUC leaders are presently preoccupied with internal matters, trying to protect the paper unity of their body against the bitter divisions over single-union, no-strike deals. Over the last couple of years, TUC unions have been at war over these scabbing deals, pioneered by the right-wing engineers' and electricians' unions. The traditional left-wing unions, such as the transport workers', have tried to pose as principled opponents of such union-employer pacts. But in practice they have signed single-union deals of their own. The row is really about which set of union bureaucrats is entitled to do which deal, in their battle to boost declining membership rolls at each other's expense.

PATHETIC

The TUC has tried to bury this conflict by repeatedly postponing a decision on whether to discipline offending unions. Now, however, the top-level TUC review body has produced a confidential draft report on the dispute. It suggests legitimising 'compulsory binding arbitration' — no-strike deals by another name — and allowing the TUC to arbitrate in rows over which union gets to sign such deals with particular employers.

Thus the TUC, the body which is supposed to lead the British labour movement, now sees its role as granting union officials the right to sign away their members' basic rights.

How much more evidence do we need that looking to the TUC is no way to defend the health workers or anybody else? Willis and Co are committed to chasing after a middle class public opinion heavily influenced by the ideas of Thatcherism. They want to ban discussion of health workers' wages and conditions in favour of an appeal for charity for the NHS. The TUC's lack of success in getting public figures to support Saturday's march shows that it cannot even achieve that modest ambition. But the union leaders will continue along these pathetic lines, only staging token initiatives in an attempt to control union members and divert them from taking proper action.

STAKE

A '24-hour general strike' called by anybody would be an ineffective affair. But the left's idea that the TUC would — or even could — organise such an initiative is a cruel joke at health workers' expense. Leaving the leadership of the health campaign in the hands of the TUC is a sure guarantee that the anger displayed by health workers will be dissipated, and the Tories will win.

Health workers need a new rank and file leadership of their own, to organise the united all-out action which can bring real pressure to bear on the government. They need to put the issues of pay and conditions on top of the agenda to give every hospital worker a stake in the struggle, and appeal for active solidarity from other sections of the working class. Trade union bureaucrats whose idea of action is cracking jokes and applauding agony aunts on the back of a lorry cannot be trusted to organise beer and sandwiches, never mind a national strike.

(Additional information from Joe Hall)



BAD SPORTS

LONELY PEOPLE

THIS IS THE POINT in the football calendar at which the season is effectively over for most clubs. They know that they will win nothing. They will not be relegated. But they still have up to a dozen games to play. So the players go through the motions, for their wages, like any employee has to. The crowds which come to watch them fall off. But some people still go each week. These are the ones I worry about.

Some go for the joy of watching 'the beautiful game' being played. There are still some players it is worth paying to see for the sake of it. But they don't play for Crewe Alexandra, Peterborough United or Stirling Albion, clubs in limbo in the middle of the lowest divisions in the English and Scottish leagues. Yet somebody goes through the turnstiles during the dead season to watch these teams. The lowest crowd in England last Saturday was at Darlington, where 1773 somebodies turned up to watch them beat Rochdale 2-1 in a match that could not have meant less. They cannot all have been related to the man called Clayton who scored both of Darlington's goals.

Most of these people do not go to pointless games to give their local heroes a rousing cheer for effort. They go to boo at their own team. They hurl obscenities and orange peel at their players. They demand that their manager resign every week. At the end of the game, when their side has gone down to another defeat, they trail out of the ground with a look of smug satisfaction that their expectations have been met in full. Mr Clayton's relatives were probably the only Darlington supporters truly delighted to see him score on Saturday. For the rest, the important thing is not the winning, but the taking part in a lynch-mob.

The fierce emotions generated by these love-hate local loyalties show why football first endeared itself to the bosses. During the industrial revolution, employers often helped organise leagues based on workplace teams. They encouraged workers to work off all their anger and frustration by kicking seven bells out of each other on the football field on Saturday afternoon, rather than taking it out on the boss from Monday to Friday. As the game grew, so this function of emotional release was largely transferred from the pitch to the stands. Before the war, countless thousands of workers used the weekend ritual of watching football as the excuse for venting their spleen. The handfuls of people who go to grotty football grounds today solely to get their rocks off are the legacy of this.

The labour movement never countered this diversion of energies. So the lonely people on the terraces at Peterborough, Crewe or Stirling still uphold the old international workers' slogan 'The Enemy is at Home'. But all it means is telling the local centre forward he's a bloody cart-horse who wants castrating.

Joe Punter

PROBLEMS OF PERESTROIKA

WILL BUKHARIN LIVE AGAIN?

Nikolai Bukharin is about to be 'rehabilitated' in Mikhail Gorbachev's Soviet Union — or is he?
Gemma Forest investigates

Fifty years ago this Sunday, at four o'clock in the morning, a dingy court in Moscow sentenced 15 men to death and three to prison terms of more than 15 years. Among those executed was Nikolai Bukharin, the most senior Communist Party member in the dock. He was the only one to have the crime of trying to assassinate Lenin added to the list of trumped-up charges — spying, sabotage, multiple murder — levelled against the defendants.

An intellectual who joined the Bolsheviks after the 1905 revolution, Bukharin rose to become the chief organiser of the Soviet Union's New Economic Policy after Lenin's death early in 1923. He favoured the growth of private enterprise, and especially encouraged capitalist farmers to enrich themselves, believing that prosperity on the land would lead to a boom in the towns. In the late twenties Stalin turned from the New Economic Policy to a bloody collectivisation of agriculture and an all-out programme of industrialisation based on terror. Bukharin opposed him and met his fate in the last great showtrial of the thirties.

Bukharin's commitment to market rewards as a means of spurring individual initiative is enough to make Gorbachev treat him favourably in the era of *perestroika*. Likewise, Bukharin's hostility to Stalin's abrupt change of course just before the thirties, the decade of the 'command economy' with which Gorbachev wrestles today, also stands him in good stead. To the new thinkers in the Kremlin, old Nikolai's mixture of party loyalty and mild dissent is useful, as is his willingness to accept experimentation in the field of literature and culture. His whole reputation smacks of *glasnost*. From *The Times* to the *Sun*, Western leaders have portrayed Bukharin as a symbol of democracy and liberalism, and have urged that he be reinstated. The official Communist parties of Western Europe have mounted an equally ardent defence.

CAUTION

Professor Stephen Cohen, Bukharin's influential biographer, is delighted by the prospect of rehabilitation. Back in 1973, in *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*, Cohen described his subject as 'the symbol of Bolshevik resistance to the rise of Stalinism'. Bukharin was 'more important in Bolshevik politics and thinking than Trotsky', argued Cohen, and his interest in European thought 'set him apart as a thinker from the older Bolsheviks, including Lenin'. Cohen says his book had a sympathetic response from Gorbachev during the latter's summit visit to Washington in December.

Gorbachev would like to disinter Bukharin. If he could present him as the embodiment of revolutionary continuity between Lenin and the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45, that would do much to discharge the legacy of Stalin and enhance the prestige of his own regime. There are two factors, however, likely to make Gor-



BUKHARIN AWAITS HIS SENTENCE

bachev move with caution. These are his own unstable political situation in the present, and Bukharin's chequered career in the past.

Gorbachev's hesitations reflect his fears about pressing ahead with economic reform. How far can he go in questioning the 'top-down' norms established under Stalin, to which the traditionalists in the Kremlin are still so attached? How much can he bluster about introducing economic competition, of which Bukharin was the leading advocate in years gone by? Talking about such changes is important for Gorbachev, but implementing them is a different matter. The Kremlin's recent declarations against overmanning in industry have already fuelled popular fears about permanent unemployment. Any additional boost to private enterprise threatens to send the black market even further out of control. Following Bukharin down the road to the free play of market forces would be to invite Western investors — especially German ones — to press for the most exploitative terms when agreeing to run factories in the East.

The Soviet Union is already in difficulties. Its reserves of foreign exchange are low, its oil and gold sell at weak prices, it runs a burdensome military sector, and its indebtedness is rising. In this context, to dig up Bukharin and the past could provoke a political storm. The fall of Boris Yeltsin shows why.

SLOW

Two years ago, as head of the Moscow Communist Party, Yeltsin asked a party congress 'Why after so many years have we not succeeded, why are the same problems brought up every five years at party congresses?' By autumn 1987 he had been removed from his post. Since then hardliners of the Brezhnev epoch, led by Gorbachev's deputy Yegor

Ligachov and abetted by the Soviet military, have forced Gorbachev to slow the pace of reform. At the celebrations of October 1917 last year, Gorbachev delivered a stern defence of Stalin's collectivisation policy and of the disastrous 'non-aggression' pact he agreed with Hitler in August 1939.

The strikes in Armenia and Estonia, the riots in Azerbaijan and growing turmoil in Eastern Europe have compounded Gorbachev's hesitation. The last thing he needs is a furore over the Communist tradition in Russia.

'SOFT WAX'

If Bukharin was a representative of Leninist firmness and anti-Stalinist dissent, his return to the fold might be more easily contemplated. But his record shows he was no such thing. In his dying testament, Lenin described Bukharin as 'the most valuable theoretician' and the 'favourite' of the party. But he went on: 'His theoretical views can with only the greatest reservations be regarded as fully Marxist, for there is something scholastic in him. (He never has learned, and I think never fully understood, the dialectic.)' Lenin's collected works, which are mass-produced in the USSR, reveal that this point was made repeatedly about Bukharin over the years.

In 1915 Bukharin opposed Lenin's call for the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. Lenin wrote to his lieutenant, Zinoviev: 'I'm so furious now with Bukharin that I cannot write' (4 July 1916). In the 1921 controversy over the role of Soviet trade unions, Bukharin compiled a platform calling for mandatory nominations by unions to industrial management bodies. Lenin condemned him for making 'a transition to syndicalism' and 'a mistake that is much more serious than all of Trotsky's put together'. Charging Bukharin with substituting eclecticism for dialectics,

Lenin remarked that 'any "unprincipled" person, any "demagogue" can leave any mark he likes on this "soft wax".'

Not long before his death, in 1922, Lenin dictated a telegram to Stalin when Bukharin tried to overturn the state's monopoly over foreign trade. He pointed out that the simple tariffs proposed by Bukharin would be no match for Western exports with subsidies behind them:

'We must oppose this with all our might and carry our opposition right to a party congress.... The only system of protection worthy of consideration is the monopoly of foreign trade. In practice, Bukharin is acting as an advocate of the profiteer, of the petit-bourgeoisie and of the upper stratum of the peasantry in opposition to the industrial proletariat.'

On all these issues — the national question, trade union 'responsibility' for the economy, commercial relations with the West — Gorbachev's tendency is to side with Bukharin against Lenin. But as long as the queues to look at Lenin's tomb remain long, Gorbachev will have to hold his peace. On the other hand, efforts to portray Bukharin as a serious opponent of Stalin simply will not wash.

AMBIGUOUS

In the twenties Bukharin was Stalin's right-hand man. Once his opposition to crash industrialisation was crushed in 1929, he recanted, remained on the central committee and left only silence and a few ambiguous criticisms between 1930 and 1934. From 1934 to 1936 Bukharin endorsed Stalin's rule, becoming editor of *Izvestia*, drafting a new Soviet constitution and representing the Kremlin abroad. Only when he was arrested and tried did Bukharin lash out against his accusers.

Although Bukharin disliked Stalin, he was indeed 'soft wax' in his hands. More importantly, he failed to see how the Leninist tradition had been destroyed in the terror of 1929 and after. Of Stalin, he remarked in 1935: 'It is not him we trust but the man in whom the party has reposed its confidence.' But by this time the party was an entirely different animal to what it had been in 1917.

It is fashionable on the left to say that Gorbachev may rehabilitate Bukharin but never Trotsky. But even bringing Bukharin back from ignominy has its snags. As Stephen Cohen observes, Bukharin differed from Trotsky in that his views had a mass base among the bureaucracy and the peasantry.

CONSERVATIVE

Bukharin drew Stalin's fire only because of what he represented in social weight. Without this behind him, Trotsky nevertheless was such a threat that he and his supporters received even harsher treatment. Contrary to Cohen's view, it was Lenin and his real heir, Trotsky, who were most immersed in internationalism and 'European thought'. While Bukharin was a vacillating symbol of rural and conservative resistance to Stalin in the thirties, the Bolshevik sort was Trotsky's.

It was Trotsky who demolished Stalin and Bukharin for their patriotic slogan of 'socialism in one country'. It was Trotsky who attacked Bukharin's alliances with the peasant middle class as opportunist and disastrous in its practical results. We would like to see Bukharin rehabilitated. But we are more interested in the rehabilitation of the countless communists who died when, in wooing the peasantry, Bukharin aborted the revolution in China in 1926. We want to rehabilitate those communists who died in the purges of the thirties — purges which Bukharin's policies encouraged and in which he was, despite himself, complicit.

An international conference on third world debt took place in London last month. The £600-a-head Park Lane bash drew dignitaries from Western banks, Latin American finance ministries and academia. Capturing the general air of pessimism, one speaker stated that after five years of muddling through 'we are thoroughly muddled' and 'no longer have a strategy for dealing with the debt crisis'. Recent events prove how right he was.

Since the outbreak of the debt crisis in 1982 Western policy-makers have managed to prevent a collapse in the world banking system. A series of strategies to contain the debt crisis has so far been successful in postponing the day of reckoning.

But while the global financial system has proved to be remarkably resilient, the problems now facing the Western powers may soon become insuperable.

When Mexico announced a moratorium on debt payments in August 1982, the prevailing wisdom was that this was simply a short-term balance of payments hitch provoked by the country's loss of earnings on oil exports. Through the Bank of International Settlements 13 Western nations put together a \$1.85 billion lending package, while the US administration gave \$1 billion in advance payments for oil. This exercise aimed to allow Mexico to resume payments while adjusting its external trade position.

RECESSION

At the time US treasury secretary Donald Regan argued forcefully that the debt problem was a temporary aberration. At the September 1982 meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Toronto, Regan vetoed proposals to double the IMF lending facilities, insisting this was unnecessary. He was soon proved wrong. The world recession was making it increasingly difficult for all third world countries to pay their way. Rising interest rates in the West pushed up the costs of servicing debt. Economic slump also meant reduced foreign currency earnings, as both export levels and prices of raw material products plummeted. A massive flight of capital from third world countries, as investors sought to protect their wealth by moving into stronger currencies, further aggravated balance of payments problems.

Within six months 20 more countries were in the same position as Mexico. The West woke up to the threat posed by the debt crisis, and responded by imposing austerity programmes on the third world. Debtor nations were forced to accept economic policies dictated by the West through the IMF. New 'standby' credit was made available only if the debtor countries met their targets.

The IMF programmes sought to shift resources from consumption and investment in the third world to the payment of debt.

With little prospect of raising money through increased exports, debtor nations were forced to slash import bills. From 1981 to 1985 Latin American imports fell by 40 per cent. Debtor nations were forced to stop purchasing capital goods and other materials essential to industrial development just to meet the demands of Western banks. They had no choice but to axe welfare spending and open up their economies to more foreign control.

AUSTERITY

For a small country like Bolivia, austerity meant capital investment falling by an average of 22 per cent a year between 1980 and 1984. Mining output, crucial to the country's economy, fell by 20 per cent in 1985 and 37 per cent the year after. Wages are now less than



GUATEMALA CITY: THIRD WORLD POVERTY FILLS THE COFFERS OF WESTERN BANKS

THE WEST BLEEDS THE THIRD WORLD

NO WAY OUT OF THE DEBT TRAP

Tony Kennedy reviews the problem of third world debt

half the level they were before the debt crisis. IMF strictures have led to a 60 per cent fall in capital investment in Mexico and average wage cuts of 40 per cent since 1982. The coffers of Western banks have been filled through hunger and poverty in the third world.

The debtor nations are facing economic ruin. Yet they now carry the added burden of massive debt payments. According to World Bank figures, there has been a net outflow of capital from developing countries of \$85 billion since 1982. Even the World Bank, set up to provide money for industrial development in the third world, received more than it lent last year.

Despite the IMF offensive, third world debt continued to grow.

In 1982 the total debt of 123 developing countries was \$747 billion. Today it stands at more than \$1000 billion. The cost of servicing Latin American debt as a proportion of foreign currency earnings has risen from 45 per cent in 1983 to 55 per cent in 1987. Together austerity and new IMF loans have barely allowed debtor nations to meet spiralling interest payments. They have done nothing to deal with the underlying debt.

SLACKENING

American treasury secretary James Baker made a lame attempt to confront this problem. At the October 1985 meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Seoul he urged private banks to support increased lending facilities from the World Bank by opening new credit lines to the third world. He argued that economic growth, rather than austerity, was the most effective solution to the debt crisis. The praise heaped on the 'Baker Plan' could not disguise its irrelevance. By 1986 many of the world's strongest economies were showing signs of slackening, and concern was growing over the US

trade and budget deficits. In these conditions there was little likelihood of indebted nations becoming engines of growth.

The West has made important changes in dealing with the debt crisis recently. These involve banks making provisions against losses on debt, and the adoption of a 'menu' approach (see box) to reducing debt involving a sample of choices.

COMPETITION

Loan loss provisions, setting aside part of current profits as an insurance against future losses, are not new. In May 1987, however, the US bank Citicorp set aside \$3 billion, bringing its total provision up to 30 per cent of its third world lending. Citicorp's move was a public admission that a substantial part of the debt would never be repaid. It forced other banks with a large stake in the third world to follow suit and take a knock on profits.

But the increased provisions mean more than the banks taking a realistic view of the status of their loans.

In recent months US banks have been attempting to outdo each other in levels of debt provision. Medium-sized banks such as American Express, Wells Fargo, and the Bank of Boston have increased provisions to 50 per cent of their third world lending. They aim to make provisions that remove the debt issue as an obstacle to expanding operations in other areas. These banks realise that the largest US banks such as Chase Manhattan, Bank America and Citicorp, with enormous stakes in third world debt, will find it difficult to do the same. They cannot afford more reductions on already depressed profits.

This practice, dubbed 'macho-provisioning', is being used as a form of competition. While the

largest US banks remain burdened with third world debt, big regional banks are trying to seize opportunities in other areas. National Westminster, the most profitable UK bank, favours a big rise in provisions from the present 30 per cent. Only pressure from the Bank of England has prevented such a move. The Bank is concerned that action by NatWest will put pressure on Midland and Lloyds whose third world debt problems are greater.

The 'menu' option is a move towards more individual and bilateral initiatives by both debtors and creditors. The recent Mexican debt-for-bonds deal illustrates this trend. The plan involved Mexico putting up \$10 billion of bonds redeemable after 20 years. The aim was to offer new bonds to banks in exchange for existing debt at a substantial discount. The plan

amounted to swapping new debt in exchange for a greater amount of old. Optimists within the Mexican government were talking of writing off up to \$20 billion of existing debt. The most striking feature of the scheme, however, was the financial backing given by the US treasury. The USA's big stake in the Mexican economy explains its concern to stabilise the financial situation.

FEARS

In the event Mexico sold only a quarter of the new bonds in exchange for \$3.6 billion of old debt. This shows that many bankers remain unwilling to 'forgive' big slices of the debt. Rather than accept the losses they continue to hope that Western governments will take the measures necessary to prop up the world financial system.

But the latest developments indicate that the resilience of the system in recent years cannot last forever.

Provisions and menus are not a new internationally agreed initiative on third world debt, but rather confirmation that there is no agreement. A situation in which both governments and banks are seeking their own solutions is much less conducive to control than cooperation through the IMF and World Bank. A new world recession can only encourage these competitive mechanisms. The renewed pessimism about the problem of third world debt reflects fears that recrimination rather than cooperation will dominate the deliberations between banks in the late eighties.

Some items on the menu

• DEBT/EQUITY SWAPS

These are schemes whereby banks can exchange their debt with particular countries for shareholdings in companies operating in that country.

• EXIT BONDS

These are bonds offered by third world countries in exchange for bank debt. The debtor nation expects to buy the debt at a discount to make the deal worthwhile. The attraction to banks is that they offer an 'exit' from the obligation to take part in future

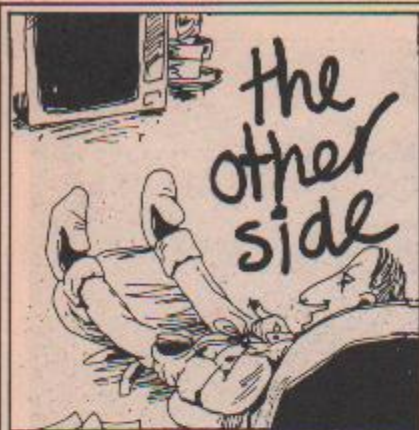
loan deals with that country.

• PAYMENT IN LOCAL CURRENCY

This involves banks accepting payment of interest, usually a portion of it, in the debtor's currency rather than in dollars and other Western currencies.

• CAPITALISATION OF INTEREST

This means converting due interest payments into additional debt. In effect, it means removing payment to a future date.



REAL ROYALS

THE ONE GOOD THING about Andy and Fergie is that they show up the British royal family in its truly revolting colours. The TV special on their trip to Los Angeles (ITV, Sunday) provided plenty of ammunition for those who would like the modern royals to be shown the same respect as was Charles I (ie, allowed to wear two shirts and a fresh wig for their execution).

That Duke of York person is the perfect prince. He is overweight, over-fond of himself, arrogant, empty-headed and awful. He is a university rugger-club chap without the balls, a B-movie war hero without the script writer, an upper-class twit extraordinaire. For him, the highlight of the American trip was posing on board USS *Nimitz*, the world's biggest warship, and gurgling like a sticky little schoolboy at the display of aerial airpower put on for him. He didn't look so cocky when giving a speech about the wonders of Britain at a big charity dinner attended by hard-bitten Hollywood dignitaries. He told them to buy more British cars and films which were 'the best in the world'. Nobody seemed sure whether he was joking or not.

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The Duchess of York is equally good at showing the obnoxious side of the female royals. She got a lot of stick during the trip, for being basically naff, ignorant and intolerable. But we want more of this sort of thing, to show the world what inherited wealth is all about. She spends vast sums on dresses that look like runched-up red duvet covers, and mixes them with tacky Union Jack hairslides. She boasts on television about Windsor castle having 'very good, old-fashioned loos. Water comes down and it all works and everything, yah.' She behaves at all times like a Sloane Ranger stereotype who has only just grown out of snogging-and-puking public school balls at the Empire Ballroom, Leicester Square.

• • • • •
With their almost-permanent holidays and haughty, horsey demeanours, the Yorks are spitting images of royal parasitism. Not for them any of this worrying about the inner cities or charitable works. They are real monarchists in a feudal mould. Their US trip, however, also confirmed that the British ruling class no longer has the status to lord it in the style to which their family has become accustomed. While past royal visitors to Hollywood were pictured meeting stars like Charlie Chaplin, Andy and Fergie had to shake hands with a tin robot from some obscure sci-fi picture. When they went to the big social evening of their trip, the organisers had to send guests a photograph of the unknown couple, so that they would know who the royal ones were. They also sent out instructions on how to speak to the nauseous pair: 'The Duchess should be addressed as "Ma'am", as in "Spam"'. And so say all of us.

Eddie Veale



DEGSY TELLS ALL

LABOUR'S LIVERPOOL ECHO

HATTON, TAAFFE AND MULHEARN TELL THEIR STORY

Derek Hatton, *Inside Left: The Story So Far*, Bloomsbury, £3.95

Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn, *Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight*, Fortress £6.95

Early in the first volume of his autobiography Derek Hatton describes his fateful encounter with Militant. After a Labour Party ward meeting in Wavertree in 1975 he went for a drink with the stocky tight-lipped print worker who was to become supremo of Liverpool's formidable District Labour Party machine and the key figure behind the scenes in Militant's effective control over Liverpool city council between 1983 and 1987:

'Now Tony Mulhearn sat there in the pub and told me there was a group, centred around the *Militant* newspaper, which said and believed all the things I did. It spoke the language I understood. I think I could have jumped up and hugged him there and then. I had never read the paper, never read the books. I was an activist. I just wanted to get on with it, but here was someone actually crystallising all the things I had been thinking, and telling me he agreed.'

PRODIGY

Who was this youthful prodigy, a spontaneous Militant member, whose every instinct and prejudice could be endorsed by the veteran Merseyside Marxist? Hatton offers his own characteristically modest introduction:

'I was an ordinary Liverpoolian, with a perhaps more than generous helping of the wit and arrogance with which most Scousers are blessed, but all of those things were my strengths, not my weaknesses.'

Hatton's account reveals how Militant works by organising labour movement activists without in any way challenging their existing political outlook, which inevitably reflects the dominant influence of Labourism and the feebleness of British Marxism.

Far from being a strength, Hatton's know-nothing activism is the historic weakness of the British working class, one which has been consistently indulged and intensified by the British left.

Who were the main influences on Hatton? He provides fulsome introductions. Mulhearn is 'a powerful man in every sense of the word', but also, reassuringly, 'very gentle and caring'. Peter Taaffe, the Birkenhead-born editor of *Militant*, is 'the greatest political thinker' ever met by Hatton, with 'no equal where political strategies are concerned'. What was the political outlook promoted by the inspirational Militant leadership that had such resonance with young Hatton? In their more substantial work, Taaffe and Mulhearn write over and over again about the influence of 'the ideas of Marxism', but they avoid specifying what these ideas are. Hatton has no such inhibitions.

'What they were saying to me then — and what Militant says today — is very little different from the things which Keir Hardie said when he founded the Labour Party,' Hatton continues, explaining that 'for example our philosophy of taking control of the means of production is essentially Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution.' In fact Keir Hardie emerged from the traditions of radical Liberalism and never adopted the ideas of Marxism: Engels regarded him as a demagogue and an opportunist. Labour's Clause Four was drafted not by Hardie but by the Fabian Sydney Webb, who was even more hostile to Marxism than Hardie.

CANDID

Hatton's candid exposition of the basics of Militant theory blows the gaffe on Taaffe and Mulhearn and all their verbiage about 'Marxism'. Militant's programme is rooted in the traditions of British Labourism, not Marxism. The Labour Party's constitutional commitment to nationalisation has always been a goal postponed to the indefinite future, which it has retained as its claim on the loyalty of the working class. For Marxists, state ownership of

industries and services is simply a form of capitalist organisation of society: the goal of working class struggle is to overthrow the capitalist state, not to extend its control.

Militant distinguishes itself from other trends in the labour movement by organisational and personality factors not by political criteria.

Hatton heaps contempt on 'ultra-left' groups because 'they do not know how to organise.' Taaffe and Mulhearn condemn the Labour leadership and soft-left council leaders because they lacked the willingness to fight and determination to go all the way of Liverpool's Militant leaders. According to Hatton, 'Marx said: "It's a socialist's job to organise,"' though he provides no reference for this endorsement of the Militant method from the founder of scientific socialism.

BREEZY

The central organisational commitment of Militant is to work within the Labour Party machine. 'Our aim,' writes Hatton, 'is to keep as many supporters as possible within the Labour Party to go down the road with us.' Militant's inability to organise outside Labour means that it has been forced to accept the expulsion and humiliation of its members and to continue down the road behind Kinnoch. Militant's lack of a programmatic alternative and its parasitic dependence on its Labour Party host means that it is destined to act like the Labour Party in situations where it acquires influence within the Labour machine. Both Hatton's autobiography and the Taaffe and Mulhearn account document the rise of Militant in Liverpool and the consequences in the recent confrontation between the council and the government. The virtue of Hatton's work is that it covers the subject in a breezy 174 pages, while his mentors meander over a tedious 500-plus. It can be no

accident that every cliché, platitude and tired metaphor of radical journalism features at least once in their book.

The Militant celebrations of the 'momentous events' in Liverpool between 1983 and 1987 fail to identify what was distinctive about Liverpool and what was the fairly typical conduct of a left-wing Labour council. Liverpool was unusual in that, at least in the early days, the council was able to mobilise significant popular support from a working class with a strong sense of local identity and a deep hatred for the Tory government. Partly because of the spirit of working class resistance and partly because of the Militant character of the council leadership, Liverpool was singled out for attack by the Tories, the media and by a shamefully cringing Labour leadership.

SMEARS

Both books document the calculation and ruthlessness of the establishment, the sewer-scraping techniques of the press and the disgraceful manoeuvres of 'the Labour witch-hunt. Hatton and his family, in particular, had to endure an endless stream of smears, allegations of corruption and fabricated stories. For putting up with all this, as well as the insufferably self-important Degsy, the loyal Shirley emerges as a truly heroic figure. The soft-left hacks mobilised by Kinnoch against Militant are richly deserving of the scorn with which they are treated in these accounts.

In most respects however history has revealed Liverpool's Militant council as little different from other Labour councils.

Far from mobilising the working class, Militant dissipated resistance through its focus on council manoeuvres between cuts and rate rises, and the debates about capitalisation and loans from Swiss bankers, which culminated in the 'grotesque chaos' of the scheme for 31 000 redundancies. Like generations of Labour leaders, the Liverpool Militants celebrated as historic achievements the council's meagre programmes of job creation and house construction. They particularly demoralised resistance by pretending that the election of a Militant-run council overrode the distinction between the council as employer and council employees as workers. The council leadership's manipulation of divisions among council unions and its constant recourse to the courts deepened confusion and undermined resistance.

SIDESWIPE

Hatton's sideswipe at the 'loony left' over its concern with 'black mayors and gay rights' has provided the pretext for the soft-left attack on Militant. It is striking that the same people don't object to the same prejudices when they are expressed by the Kinnoch camp, where they are even more deeply entrenched than they are in Militant. The soft left hate Hatton, not because of his politics, but because of their snobbish distaste for his vulgar and provincial style of conspicuous consumption. They prefer the more discreet cosmopolitan affluence and sophistication of Bryan Gould or Hilary Wainwright.

These two books are a lesson in the consequences of what Lenin called 'economism', the attempt to organise the working class by generalising its existing level of consciousness. When Mulhearn told Hatton he agreed with everything he said, the result was the growth of an organisation which echoed the existing outlook of the more militant workers. Over 30 years Militant has built a clone of the Labour Party in Liverpool. The ideas of Marxism now have to be established there from scratch.

Mike Freeman

There has been intense speculation about the future of the London-Dublin accord following a series of controversies about British conduct of Irish affairs. Commentators have pointed out that Thatcher has failed to consult the Irish government, failed to appease the Loyalists and failed to keep her promises to the Northern nationalists. Articles in the British and Irish press have conjectured that there is a conspiracy by the Tories to wreck the Anglo-Irish deal. In fact recent events reveal that the November 1985 accord has served Thatcher's purpose well.

The current conviction that the Anglo-Irish agreement is not working stems from a mis-assessment of what it was supposed to achieve in the first place.

■ The unfree state

The Anglo-Irish agreement was widely thought to give Dublin a say in Northern affairs. But British officials had no such intention. By paying lip-service to the idea of consulting Dublin, the British hoped to get a firm commitment to increased security cooperation against the IRA. While Westminster dithered about discussing Dublin's demands for reform of the security forces and the courts, it wasted no time getting down to the business of cross-Border security. London's deal with Dublin has brought the South under closer British supervision, and confirmed that it is little more than a satellite of Westminster.

British judges dismissed the appeal of the Birmingham Six against their conviction for the 1974 pub bombings, causing great offence to the Irish government. In another rebuff to Dublin the British attorney general Sir Patrick Mayhew declared that he would not divulge the findings of the inquiry into the Royal Ulster Constabulary's shoot-to-kill policy. Mayhew had already upset Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail government by refusing to cooperate with Dublin's extradition proceedings. Then in the face of Irish criticisms of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Tories decided to make the anti-Irish legislation permanent. When Haughey launched his inquiry into the shooting of Aidan McAneaspie by a British soldier three weeks ago, Thatcher told him to mind his own business. The subsequent revelation about the release from prison and re-entry into the Army of Ian Thain, the only British soldier convicted of murdering a nationalist while on duty, further inflamed Irish feelings.

Yet despite all the insults the Irish government remains committed to a deal which gives Dublin nothing and Westminster everything. While Thatcher becomes daily more arrogant in her dismissal of Irish complaints, Haughey becomes increasingly servile in his concern to appease London.

When the Irish Taoiseach pleaded with the British prime minister to make good the damage done by the Birmingham Six and Stalker affairs, Thatcher issued a characteristically contemptuous reply: 'Do you know, I was asked today how long the Irish problem has been going on. I always thought 400 years. I was told 700 years, so you know, you have to take the long perspective.' Most people saw this as a kick in the teeth for Haughey, but the man himself had a different assessment: 'She listened carefully and courteously throughout to the views I put forward; confirmed her view of the importance of the relationship between the two governments; and made it clear that she considers the Anglo-Irish agreement the best hope for the future.'

While Haughey complains that British officials are refusing to abide by new Irish rules on extradition, his government is rounding up republicans like former Sinn Féin MP Owen Carron pending their removal to stand trial in a Diplock court across the Border. Nor have Haughey's worries about the use of special powers such as the PTA against Irish people in Britain prevented him from using similar extraordinary powers of search and seizure at home. So far this year the Irish garda (police) have seized more arms and explosives in the South than British forces have captured in the North. Haughey was not embarrassed to boast about his latest arms find in Monaghan on the same day that Irish nationalists were burying the latest victim of Britain's shoot-to-kill policy, Aidan McAneaspie, in a Monaghan cemetery.

Haughey has made it clear that no matter how many Irishmen the British Army and the RUC shoot to kill, his government will still back Britain's war against the IRA to the hilt. 'I want to emphasise that our determination and resolve to do everything in our power to defeat the men of violence,' he emphasised, 'will in no way be lessened by the unfortunate events and difficulties of recent weeks.' Dublin's commitment to a deal which ratifies British rule in Ireland and which confirms its own subordination to Westminster is indeed a success story for Thatcher.

■ Loyal to Britain

When the Anglo-Irish agreement was signed many people predicted that it would not last long in face of Loyalist intransigence. During the backlash which followed the accord, many in the labour movement here argued that the Unionists would 'veto' Britain's latest political initiative because it threatened the Union. But the accord had conceded nothing of any substance to Irish nationalists North or South, and aimed to strengthen rather than undermine the Union. This is why the Loyalist campaign against the accord was no threat to Britain. The longer the accord has lasted the clearer it has become that its aim is to bolster British rule in Ireland, and Loyalist opposition has wilted.

The Loyalists rely on the link with Britain to maintain their privileged access to jobs, houses and political power over their Catholic neighbours. This means that Westminster has always been able to rely on them as dogged defenders of British rule. But it has also made Unionists sensitive to anything, like the Anglo-Irish agreement, which looks like shifting the sectarian status quo, however slightly. Unionist MPs resigned their Westminster seats to fight by-elections on an anti-accord ticket, Loyalist mobs took to the streets and Protestant paramilitaries vented their sectarian rage on Catholics. Behind all the hot air, however, the protests were pretty tame by Loyalist standards.

Since there was no basis to their claim that the accord would undermine the Union, the Unionist alliance against it fragmented. Thatcher's refusal to ditch the deal concentrated the minds of the more level-headed Loyalists, who began to talk of the need to come to an accommodation with Westminster. Official Unionist Party general secretary Frank Millar stated that the only alternative to accepting the agreement was to break the Union. There was thus no alternative but to submit, and only the need to save face prolonged the process of accommodation.

In July last year the two main Unionist parties published *An End to Drift*, a document proposing



THE HUMILIATIONS BRITAIN HAS HEAPED ON DUBLIN HAVE NOT STOPPED IRISH PREMIER CHARLES HAUGHEY SHAKING THATCHER'S HAND

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT GAME, SET, BUT NOT MATCH TO THATCHER

Joan Phillips argues that the Anglo-Irish agreement has been a success story for Thatcher

talks with the Tory government. Although there was no movement from Loyalist leaders Ian Paisley and James Molyneaux, and leading authors of the report resigned, the scene was set for secret negotiations with the British. The return of one of the resignees, Peter Robinson, to the Unionist fold in January coincided with Loyalist proposals for a new system of devolution to replace the Anglo-Irish deal. More recent Unionist statements have even suggested that Dublin should have an official office in Belfast. The British are now hoping to launch yet another sham assembly in the North, which was always their aim, to cover up their colonial war in Ireland.

The fact that the Loyalists have had to come to terms with the accord reveals that they have no veto over British initiatives, and that the British state calls the shots in Ireland. The exercise in facing down Loyalist protest in the conviction that it could not last, and in forcing the Unionists back round the devolution table, has been another success story for Thatcher.

■ Nationalist resistance

The Anglo-Irish agreement was heralded as the start of a new era of reform for Northern Ireland nationalists. Many people took Thatcher's promises to reform the security forces, outlaw sectarianism and eradicate discrimination at face value. But the establishment could never introduce reforms on this scale because British rule is based on the oppression of nationalists.

Thatcher wanted to create the illusion of progress, win over more nationalists to a moderate approach, and isolate the republican movement the better to destroy it. In the two and a half years since Hillsborough the reforming face of the accord has yet to appear, while its repressive function becomes ever clearer.

British rule in Ireland depends on the permanent subjugation of the nationalists. This means that Britain cannot make significant concessions to the nationalists and the nationalists have no choice but to resist their oppression. Given that there is no possibility of breaking the cycle of repression and resistance, Britain is forced to fight a war of containment. Throughout more than 18 years of occupation, the British have pursued a succession of political initiatives alongside military terror to try to contain the war within 'acceptable levels'.

All parties to the accord agreed that its central purpose was to 'isolate the men of violence', by strengthening the cause of constitutional nationalism. The government hoped to deliver defeated Loyalists and revived moderate nationalists into a new devolved assembly, and prepare the way for a new round of anti-republican repression. This strategy seemed to have some success among war-weary nationalists, but it had no impact on the core of republican support in the nationalist ghettos.

The clearer it becomes that the Tories cannot deliver on their promises of reform, the more Irish

nationalists will once again turn their backs on the idea of a British solution. In the mean time the reality of British repression which has come to the fore in recent months can only harden the outlook of that section of the nationalist community which wants nothing to do with any London initiative. In this sense the Anglo-Irish accord can never be a complete success for Thatcher — and she knows it.

■ British lies

Thatcher's biggest success has been in selling the Anglo-Irish agreement in Britain. The Labour Party's whole-hearted support for the agreement and confusion among British radicals about the meaning of the accord have allowed the government to give its rule in Ireland an image of respectability and fairness.

In the week that Thatcher did her deal with Dublin we wrote in *Ins* that the accord 'gave the British authorities everything they wanted' and 'gave the Irish people nothing but the promise of more intense repression'. Our opposition to the accord was based on a clear analysis of the relationship between the British state and all the participants in the Irish War, and on the conclusion which flows from this: that Britain can never be anything other than a force for barbarism in Ireland. If we are to build a movement in this country that can speed the day when the resistance is victorious, we must expose the truth behind Thatcher's Anglo-Irish lie.

Shere Hite, Women and Love: A Cultural Revolution in Progress — The New Hite Report. Viking Press, £14.95

Over a period of seven years Shere Hite sent out 100 000 questionnaires (each containing hundreds of questions), asking American women for their views on love, relationships and marriage. The 4500 anonymous replies form the basis of the third Hite report, complementing her earlier studies of female and male sexuality.

The report consists of 900 pages of quotes (from one line to several pages) from these replies, interspersed with statistical generalisations and comment from the author. The thoughts of her respondents are marshalled under chapters such as 'The Major Problems in Love Relationships', 'Loving Men who are "Bad for You"', 'Extramarital Sex and Affairs' and 'Women Loving Women'.

DISTORTION

Sections are introduced by the statistics: 98 per cent of women want the men in their lives to talk more about their feelings; 47 per cent have to provoke a fight to get their man to talk; 91 per cent of divorced women say they made the decision to split; 82 per cent say their love relationships with other women are excellent; 93 per cent of women who have never married say they love being single; 70 per cent of women married for over five years are having affairs; 76 per cent of single women will sleep with a man on their first date.

There has been much controversy about how accurate these figures are in relation to American society as a whole. Hite's sample was large, but not random. She says that it corresponds by age, class, race, etc, to the general female population, but the distribution of many of the questionnaires via women's rights and political organisations must have distorted the response. Further distortion will have occurred in the interpretation of the replies. For example, Hite says '46 per cent of single women are waging a conscious struggle against the hold stereotypes that say "you must have a man", have on part of their minds.' Hites writes as if she had asked this as a specific question, which she didn't, or as if 46 per cent replied saying, 'I am waging a conscious struggle, etc', which I doubt.

PIGS

In fact Hite's survey is probably as reliable, or as unreliable, as any other opinion poll. Certainly there are no real surprises here. Women are unhappy and angry with men, men behave like pigs and don't listen, women get on better with each other. So what's new? What's new is the



SHERE HITE: PILLORIED

THE HITE REPORT

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT UNHAPPY WOMEN?

widespread hostility with which the book has been greeted, reflecting the growing climate of moral repression. It is becoming unacceptable even to describe just how unsatisfactory and unstable are family and personal relationships in contemporary society. Hite has been pilloried across America on television and in the press, because the majority of her respondents explode the myth of the blissful monogamous heterosexual marriage.

NONSENSE

Understanding the book's reception should not blind us to the fact that Hite's own analysis is incoherent nonsense. She sees a 'cultural revolution in progress', claiming that 75 per cent of women are now financially independent of men and are creating the 'biggest realignment of thought in two centuries or more'. She says that 'gender may be the basic, original split', that 'patriarchy...may be the system underlying all other systems,' but women will 'transform the

culture with our values' and create 'a new social contract'.

BOLSTER

Her own statistics that 84 per cent of women put a loving relationship as the top priority in their lives, while 74 per cent complain that men do not, show how far from reality she has strayed. These are not simply the statistics of dependence. They also show how widespread is the belief that unhappiness and unfulfilment in society are problems which are generated by and can be resolved in personal relationships. Hite encourages this belief. The very size of the book is significant here. By relaying the replies of these women in such detail she is claiming a privileged status for their experience of relationships. This is not just letting women speak, or giving them a voice. She is using their voices to bolster some very dubious ideas of her own, most of all the notion that the way to solve a problem is to talk about your own experience of it. *Joanna Doyle*

THATCHER IN LATIN AMERICA AN IMPERIALIST, NOT A POODLE

Latin America Bureau. *The Thatcher Years: Britain and Latin America.* £3.50

The research and information body, the Latin American Bureau, has produced this collection of essays on a number of key issues in the relationship between Britain and Latin America over the last decade. The book provides a clear and informative account of Margaret Thatcher's grisly record in the region. It shows that far from simply providing a diplomatic echo of US aggression, Britain has been prominent in the supply of material aid to the most reactionary and repressive regimes. Thatcher has renewed large-scale military aid to Pinochet's Chile, laid on counter-insurgency training for army officers in El Salvador and given official backing to the notorious

KMS (the British mercenary organisation).

The conclusions drawn in these essays however serve to obscure rather than illuminate the reasons behind British interference in Latin America and its uncritical support for US policy there. The 'special relationship' between Britain and the USA, Reagan and Thatcher's affinity for free market economics and their mutual abhorrence of progressive regimes are all cited to explain British conduct. The 'poodle' theory is popular too; Thatcher is Reagan's lapdog and will support him against good sense, international opinion and even wider British interests.

Judith Hart, a former Labour minister for overseas development, gives Thatcher's support for the invasion of Grenada as a prime example of such an

irrational stance, lambasting Thatcher for ignoring 'the Queen's concern' over an ex-colony and for 'so cheaply yielding... British and Commonwealth international influence' to Reagan's marines.

DETERRENT

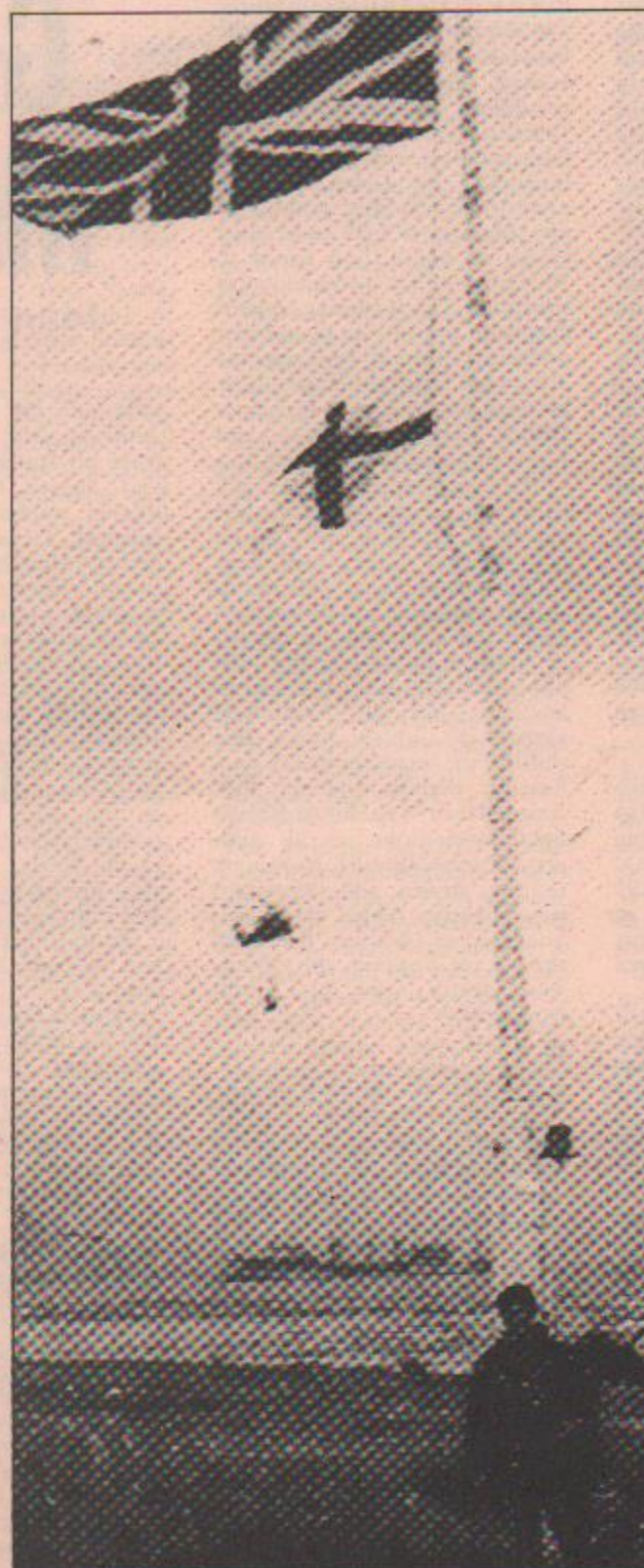
The reactionary consequences of this type of nationalism become apparent when the two main areas of British interest are discussed — Belize and the Malvinas. Britain maintains 1800 troops in Belize (formerly British Honduras) to ward off Guatemala's claim to sovereignty over the ex-colony. Where it was quick to condemn the US military presence in Central America, this book now discovers that 'progressive opinion both in the UK and Central America supports the presence of the British troops.' This is one of the largest forces that any Western power has in Latin America, and as its mobilisation during the recent disturbances in St Kitts shows, it will be used by Britain to protect its wider interests where necessary. For the moment it serves nicely as a deterrent to left-wing guerrilla forces in Guatemala and as a staging post for arms supplies to the Contras.

The Malvinas conflict gives the Latin American Bureau team further problems. They are desperate to criticise Thatcher, but at the same time they support British intervention themselves. They get round this by criticising her for not being imperialist enough. Hugh O'Shaughnessy castigates her for having a poor intelligence network in the South Atlantic and for maintaining 'the garrison on the Falklands at derisory levels'. Jimmy Burns goes even further in pointing out 'her failure to send a dissuasive force of nuclear submarines' in the months preceding the conflict.

REMEMBER

British and US policy in Latin America are intimately linked. They are there for the same reason, to protect their own and the West's economic and political interests. Britain plays a subordinate role only because of its military and economic inferiority, but this was not always the case. In 1870, for example, Britain sponsored the war against Paraguay, resulting in the massacre of 1.5m Paraguayans. Next time these authors indulge in some chauvinistic anti-Americanism, or see a positive role for Britain in this region, they would do well to remember that.

Ian Haden



FLYING THE FLAG IN THE FALKLANDS

REPORT FROM THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

MAKING SENSE OF THE PRESENT PERIOD

The March meeting of the RCP's Political Committee focused on the pattern of class relations which has emerged in recent months and the implications for our work. Here we summarise the main themes of the discussion.

The broad pattern of class relations which we have discussed in *tns* in recent years has been given a new shape in the period following the general election and the stock market crash last year. The Tories' victory in the June election signalled the start of a new offensive against the working class, which was given added impetus by the experience of the October crash.

Fortunately for the ruling class, conditions of continued political stability have allowed Thatcher to keep a grip on the economy. The prevention of an outbreak of international economic warfare has benefited British capitalists and allowed them to sustain their credit-led boom. The sense of optimism about the prospects for the British economy contrasts with the emergence of bourgeois pessimism about the state of the German and US economies. But British capitalism cannot avoid the approaching crisis for long. There are growing fears that soon international cooperation will give way to an economic power struggle — one which Britain is ill-

equipped to survive.

As we anticipated at our December 1987 conference, the British ruling class has pursued its offensive at home, trying to press home its advantage while the going is good. Already this year the Tories have stepped up their attacks on a number of fronts.

The trade unions continue to be the main target of the employers' offensive, especially in the public sector. The Tories have thrown down the gauntlet to workers in the health service, education and the civil service. They have moved further in establishing a climate of censorship and repression. In many cases, such as education, the government has met only rhetorical opposition. In other instances Tory attacks are beginning to generate protest and even resistance. But it is a testimony to Thatcher's strength that only over the NHS have her opponents managed to create difficulties for the government.

The general election results now appear even more important than at the time. Labour's defeat deprived the opposition of any political focus. This experience has exposed the weakness of the labour bureaucracy and thrown the official labour movement into profound crisis. The Labour Party has been forced into retirement and has ceased to play the role of an opposition party. Labour's paralysis has had

a devastating impact on the left. The Labour Party's defeats in 1979 and 1983 were followed by prolonged post-mortems. But to this day there has been no debate about the way forward after June 1987.

The implications of Labour's election defeat are slowly entering into public consciousness. It is becoming evident that there is no alternative to the Tories in the parliamentary sphere.

This revelation accounts for the conservative mood which pervades the working class. Even those who are forced to protest or struggle have accepted the realities of Thatcher's Britain. It is striking that the upsurge of protest during the past two months has not been paralleled by a shift in mood. Nor has it strengthened Labour's position or weakened that of the Tories.

Struggles waged in the present climate inevitably have a fragmented character. The absence of any unifying objectives in the political sphere means that strikes and other struggles fail to generate any change in the wider public mood. It also means that struggles waged from such a narrow perspective do not put any significant pressure on the government.

The labour bureaucracy has prevented the politicisation of various struggles on both industrial and social issues. The leadership of the Labour Party is convinced that any struggle which is overtly political will only expose its weakness. The trade union leaders have been so traumatised by the experience of defeat that they want to avoid political battles at all cost. The union leadership is overwhelmed by a sense of its own demise and looks upon every major strike as yet another nail in its coffin. The TUC hopes to regain its influence through good behaviour rather than through mobilising its members.

Whatever the inclinations of the labour bureaucracy, the capitalist offensive forces people to fight. Workers are drawn into struggles usually because they have no choice, rather than because they have a positive desire to have a go. The struggles of the past few months

anticipate the pattern for the period ahead. These struggles invariably have a limited defensive objective. Even when workers spontaneously push forward in a militant direction, the labour bureaucracy takes advantage of the underlying conservative mood to hold back the struggle.

In these circumstances there is a marked reluctance to face the facts. Workers are not yet prepared to look for new alternatives. Most working class people see the collapse of Labourism as a sign of their own weakness and a symptom of the Tories' invincibility. Yet more and more people are forced into situations where they have to fight. In some cases workers will be discouraged from

joining battle with the employers, while in others they will fight for relatively modest objectives.

The conservatism and stability which prevail can easily blind us to the volatile nature of class relations. The hesitancy which now characterises most struggles could easily give way to more militant demonstrations of class anger. Tory provocations may well become a catalyst for outbursts of more generalised resistance.

The retreat of the labour bureaucracy has weakened one of the most effective agencies for policing the working class. The shape of the new political configuration is not yet clear. Nor is it obvious how the ruling class proposes to manage working class dissent in the period ahead.

The unique features of this period are that the working class is excluded

from access to the state, and the Labour Party has no role to play. Whether or not these are temporary or permanent developments will become clear in the next couple of years.

Given the unresolved and uncertain character of this unfolding political drama, it is vital that we actively engage the working class in a political dialogue. We need an accurate assessment of the mood and consciousness of the working class if we are to be effective in advancing our political alternative. We have to put forward arguments about the need to fight for anti-capitalist objectives, and, through gauging the response, sharpen our arguments. Only through this engagement will the party be able to work out the propaganda and tactics that are appropriate to the situation.

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Monday 14 March, 7.30pm
The Griffin
Colston Street
Bristol

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Irish Freedom Movement

LONDON IRISH FORUM

Wednesday 16 March, 7.30pm
'Loyalism — myth and reality'
Room S53, St Clements Building
London School of Economics, Houghton St WC2
(Holborn tube)

BRISTOL DEBATE

'Which way forward for Irish solidarity?'
Speakers: IFM, Labour Committee on Ireland,
Labour and Trade Union Group
Thursday 10 March, 7.30pm
Mall Coach pub (near Littlewoods)
Broadmead
Bristol

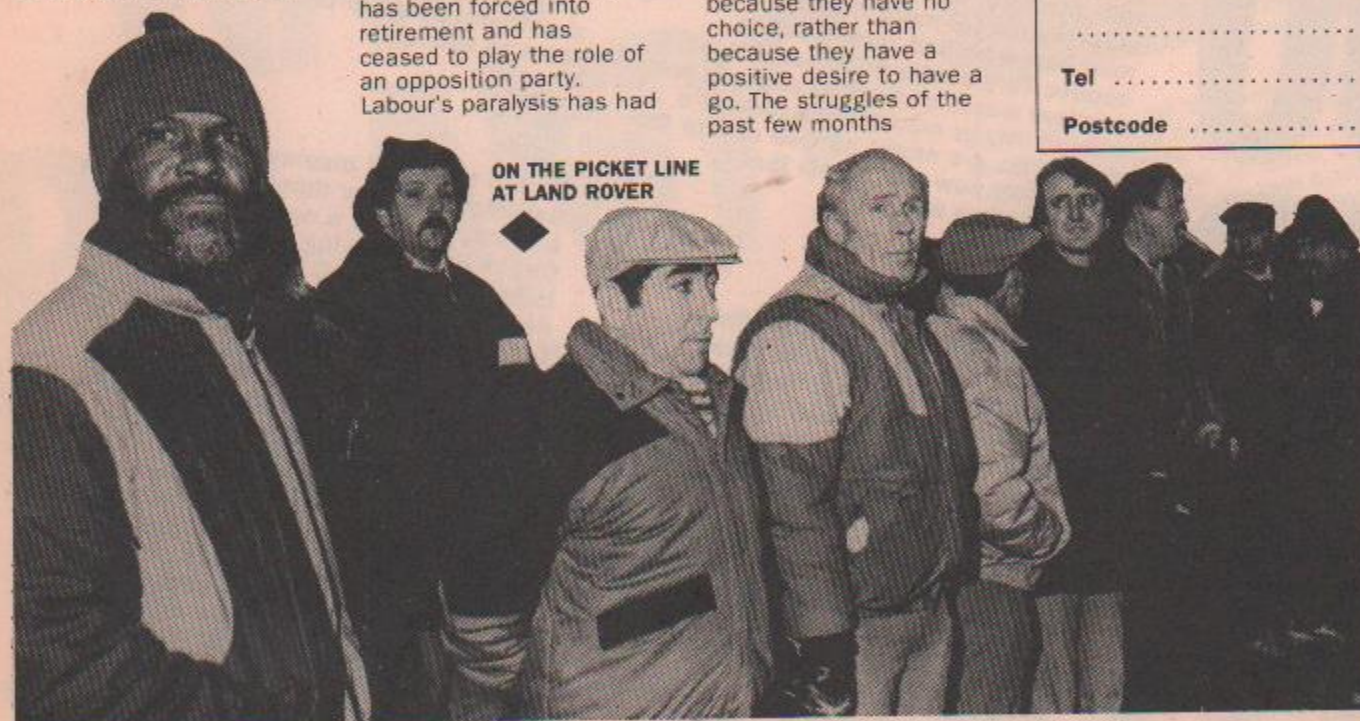
International Women's Week

DURHAM PRISON PICKET

Sunday 13 March, 1pm
'Stop strip searches! End British torture!'
Called by the Irish POW Campaign
Phone 01-729 0414 for transport details from London and elsewhere

FIGHT BACK DAYSCHOOL

Half-day conference
Saturday 12 March 1.30- 6pm
Quaker Meeting House
Woodhouse Lane (Opposite University)
Leeds
Workshops include:
• Women freedom fighters
• Making the unions fight for women
• The Clause, Alton's Bill and moral reaction
• Building a new opposition
Tickets £2/£1 UB40
Evening social. Creche and refreshments available.



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LESBIANS
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see page 4

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly

11 March 1988

40p

**HEALTH
SERVICE
MARCH
SHOWS
ANGER —
AND
DANGERS**

**50 000
WASTED
VOICES**



HAVE you heard the one about the archbishop (Trevor Huddleston) and the agony aunt (Claire Rayner)? These were the people the TUC put on its rally platform on Saturday, to point the way forward for more than 50 000 marchers who had turned out to oppose Tory health policies. If this criminal waste of popular anger is the official labour movement's idea of a campaign, we might as well run up the white flag now and admit that Thatcher has won.

No church leader, Sunday Mirror columnist or other middle class spokesman has ever defeated a government determined to force its policies through. The only body which can bring real pressure to bear on the Tories over the health service is the organised working class. Most of the 50 000 who marched on Saturday were working class people looking for a way to win. If all they are offered is another sermon about the Christian virtues of the NHS, they will soon drift away, disillusioned.

There are already danger signs that

the campaign is losing its impetus. The union leaders claim that they have done their bit by calling Saturday's march, and are leaving it to Labour politicians, churchmen and other respectable dignitaries to talk the Tories into showing some charity. We should not hold our breath waiting for them to succeed.

To tap the spirit displayed on Saturday and give those angry workers a voice, we need a new direction. Let's forget about looking to the TUC, the Labour Party, the C of E or any other dead institution to lead the campaign. Let's look instead to our own forces. Health workers hold the key. They need a national campaign for united, all-out action to beat the Tories. The issues around which to build such action are the ones which can give every health worker a stake in the struggle — jobs, pay and working conditions. A campaign on these class lines could inspire solidarity action from other workers. It would also send the respectable representatives of the middle classes scurrying off TUC platforms. But we should not worry about silencing these defeatist voices of restraint and moderation.