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Thatcher edits the news: behind the Tory censorship crusade
—see pages 8 and 9

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly 19 February 1988 40p

No to divisive deals at Ford's Yes to national action in the NHS

UNITY OR BUST

The action by workers at Ford and in the health service has given the government and employers a fright. But both struggles are in danger of being knocked back by management's manipulation of divisions in the workforce. And the union leaders involved are guilty of going along with the bosses' splitting tactics.

The national strike at Ford closed the company down precisely because it was *national.* The skilled engineers and assembly line workers at all plants came together to reject a three-year pay and productivity deal. As we go to press, however, Ford managers are talking about a new deal designed to break the strikers' unity. Ford seems set to make concessions on work practices to the engineering craftsmen, in a bid to exploit the old divide between its skilled and semi-skilled employees.

Action against low pay and cuts by nurses and other health workers has shown the potential for uniting them in a national initiative. The Tories are now working overtime to ensure that this potential is not realised. Their propaganda offensive and their divisive pay proposals seek to split 'caring, professional' nurses away from the rest of the health workers.

We need firm unity in action to counter these tactics. That must mean focusing the struggles at Ford and in the health service on the one need which all workers have in common — the need for a job at a living wage. If we are sidetracked into debates about which workers are most productive or efficient, or which ones deserve skilled status or professional standing, it will undermine such unity and give the employers the advantage.

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Inkatha: Botha's stooge army
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US elections: nobody for president
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Waldheim's critics are war criminals too
see page 11



Tory moralism means misery for us
see page 13

VICTORY TO THE PALESTINIANS!

The assassination of three Palestine Liberation Organisation officers in a bomb explosion this week shows how far the Israeli regime will go to crush the Palestinian struggle for self-determination

'They came to my house and dragged me outside. One soldier kicked me in the testicles, another hit me on the shoulders with a wooden stick.' Abdel Latif is a 19-year old Palestinian from the village of Salim, on the Israeli-occupied West Bank. An Israeli patrol dragged Latif and three other youths from their homes and told them to clear the barricades of burning tyres from surrounding streets. 'Then they took us to the front of the village. A bulldozer was waiting there. They made us lie down on our stomachs by the side of the road. I could hear the bulldozer, but I couldn't see it. I couldn't move because my arms and legs hurt too much.'

The Israelis buried the four Palestinians alive. Villagers had to dig them out with their bare hands and smuggle them to hospital, where they were given oxygen for six hours and injected with bronchial dilators. Issam Shtaiyeh is still in hospital with a fracture below his left hip, fissures in both wrists and swollen knee-caps. The other three discharged themselves, afraid that the army would find them and inflict more punishment.

SAVAGERY

This piece of savagery is the latest in a catalogue of torture which the Palestinian people have endured at the hands of the Israeli occupation force. Israeli soldiers were terrorising Palestinians long before the recent uprising in the occupied territories became the focus of media attention. But 10 weeks of fierce fighting in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have shown that Israel is prepared to use every force to crush Palestinian resistance. On Monday the Israeli secret service bombed the PLO boat which was preparing to take Palestinian deportees on a protest voyage to Israel.

The upsurge of Israeli violence makes a mockery of the 'peace' moves promoted by Ronald Reagan and Israel's other Western allies.

They know that the survival of Israel means there can be no compromise on the Palestinian demand for self-determination. But diplomatic manoeuvres are useful in distracting attention from the brutal subjugation of the Palestinian people.

SHOT

For the Palestinians there can be no peace so long as the state of Israel exists. According to official figures more than 50 Palestinians have been shot dead or bludgeoned to death by Israeli troops since the uprising began on 9 December. The real death toll is well over a hundred. Thousands more have suffered broken bones and battered bodies, under Israel's Iron Fist policy. Up to 250 000 Palestinians at a time have been put under curfew. The security forces have shunted thousands of youthful resistance fighters through military courts, and interned hundreds of others without trial.

But the relentless repression has not subdued the Palestinian will to resist. Men, women and children armed with nothing more than stones have confronted troops firing automatic rifles. Tens of thousands of Palestinian workers have refused to go to work on construction sites, in citrus groves and factories. Israeli troops have forced Palestinian store-keepers on the West Bank to open their shops to break the commercial strike, but they simply pull the shutters down once the soldiers have passed.

UNREST

The authorities are most worried by the spread of unrest into traditionally peaceful areas such as Jerusalem. Palestinians from inside the 'Green Line' — pre-1967 Israel — have also protested against Israel's terror tactics in the West Bank and Gaza.

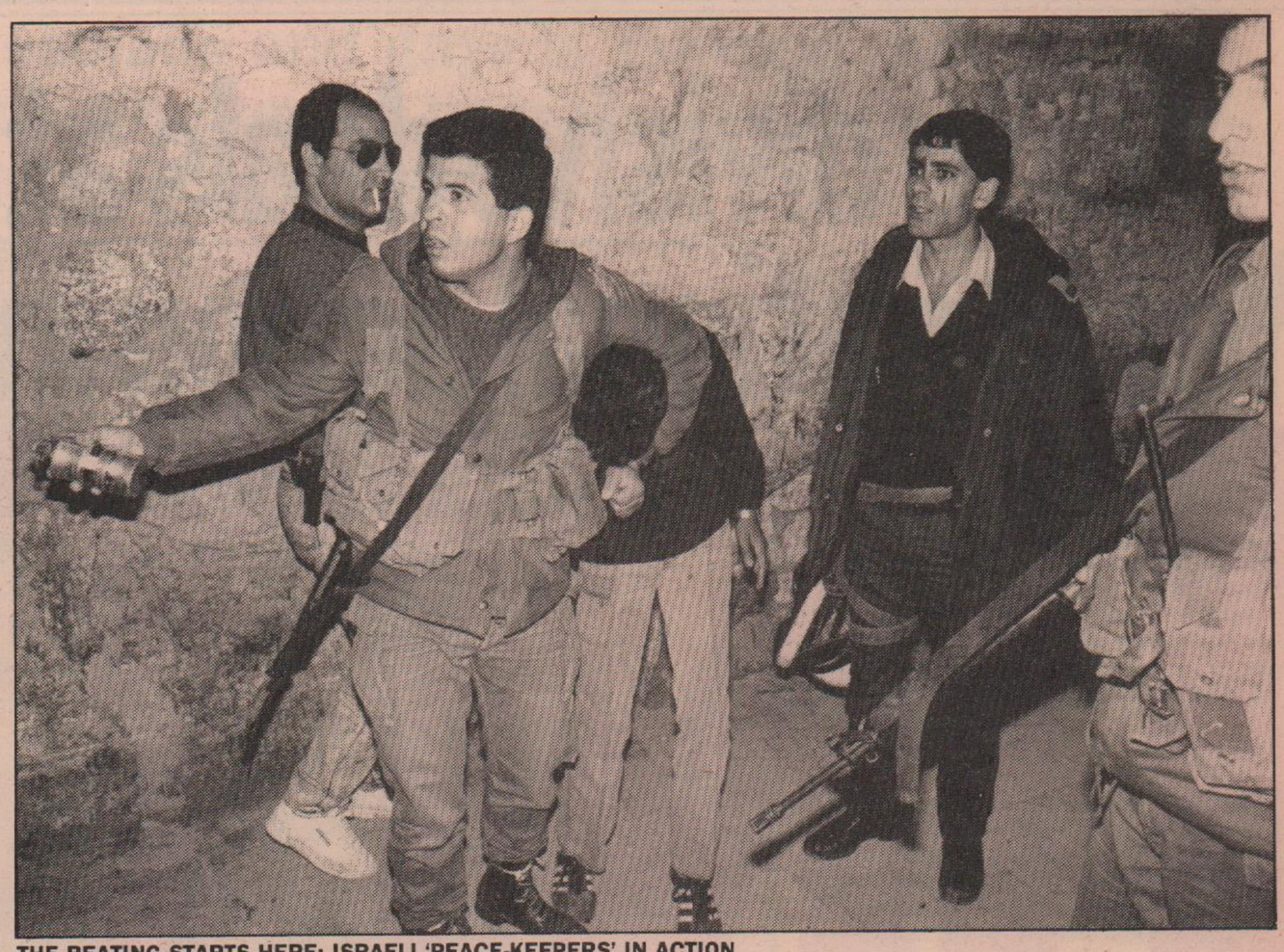
The official reaction to the uprising in Israel confirms that there is no possibility of a diplomatic settlement to the conflict.

The vast majority of Israelis believe that violent repression is the only way to guarantee the security of the Zionist state. A poll in the Israeli daily *Hadashot* showed 63 per cent in favour of the government's military policy. Another 27 per cent advocated still tougher measures.

The USA has been critical of Israeli terror, and called for a diplomatic solution. Last week Reagan launched yet another peace initiative by calling for a face-to-face meeting between Israeli and Arab leaders. At the same time the USA has increased its multi-billion dollar annual aid package to Israel. Israel already gets $3 billion a year from the USA. Now a refinancing agreement on Israel's debt means an extra $2 billion handout — a total American subsidy of well over $1000 for every man, woman and child in Israel.

The West's diplomatic games are a charade. Their only purpose is to conceal the continued oppression of the Palestinian people. A genuine peace can only come through a victory for the Palestinian people and the destruction of the Zionist state which lies at the root of their oppression.

Daniel Nassim



THE BEATING STARTS HERE: ISRAELI 'PEACE-KEEPERS' IN ACTION

Continued from page 1

UNITY OR BUST

Ford workers can win their wage claim if they reject all attempts to involve them in divisive productivity deals. Far from turning inwards to argue about skilled and unskilled status, they need to turn outwards to unite with workers from other motor manufacturers in Britain — many of whom are now involved in similar pay and productivity disputes (see page 5).

Health workers can win a decent wage rise if they organise national industrial action. A campaign involving one million nurses and ancillary workers in the NHS would be a powerful counter to Tory attempts to divide and rule (see page 4).

The first step towards building and maintaining such unity in action is to overcome the influence of the trade union officials who help to keep us apart. Leaders of the transport workers' and engineers' unions act to reinforce the divisions between craftsmen and assembly line workers, and between car-workers in dispute at different firms. Health union officials have kept action in the NHS confined to token local protests. And they have echoed the Tories' ideas about the difference between nurses and other health workers.

The Tory government will act as one national force against the health workers. The car capitalists take a similarly united approach to dealing with disputes. To win, we will have to match their attitude. Activists from Ford and the NHS need to take control of their own struggles, to be vigilant against all management/union attempts to divide them, and to organise national all-out action until they win decent pay and conditions for every worker involved.

The return of the draining board fetus

THE draining board fetus hit the headlines again last week. The media told the story of a 21-week old fetus which allegedly survived for three hours in a metal dish after it was aborted in a Carlisle hospital. Police have been called in to investigate. Liberal MP David Alton, author of a parliamentary bill to reduce the abortion time-limit from 28 to 18 weeks, has called for an inquest and for the fetus to be issued with birth and death certificates.

The anti-abortion groups Spuc and Life, which leaked the story, have known about the case since last July when the operation took place. So why have they chosen this moment to publicise the story? The media splash has been timed to coincide with the start of the committee stage of Alton's bill. By spreading scare stories about late abortions, the pro-life lobby aims to strengthen the case for more restrictions on women's abortion rights. By making the desecration of the fetus the focus of public debate, the anti-abortionists hope to bury the issue of women's rights.

Almost every attempt to amend the abortion law has been accompanied by a draining board fetus story. It first appeared in the run-up to Labour MP James White's attempt to cut the number of abortions by half in 1974. A scurrilous book called *Babies for Burning* by Michael Litchfield and Sue Kentish alleged that aborted fetuses were being made into soap, left screaming on draining boards and thrown into buckets. The authors crucified an abortion doctor as a self-confessed fascist with rooms full of books about Hitler, and claimed that doctors were aborting women who were already in labour.

The *Sunday Times* revealed the book to be a pack of lies. The 'fascist' doctor turned out to be a Jew, who had lost his wife and son in Auschwitz and was himself imprisoned in Dachau. But this did not stop the anti-abortion lobby using the book or the press from quoting from it. James White named it as his main source of knowledge. The same stories were circulated in 1979 when Tory MP John Corrie introduced another private member's bill to change the time-limit on abortion. The press printed hysterical stories about a 20-week old fetus which 'struggled for life' after an abortion, a 'living' 20-week old fetus which was baptised by a trainee Roman Catholic priest, and a 26-week old fetus which lived on a life support machine for three days.

We have to expose the hypocrisy of a system which makes a fuss about the unviable product of a late abortion, but which allows wanted premature babies to die daily because of inadequate facilities. The medical staff who carried out the Carlisle abortion have no case to answer. The current time-limit accepted for abortions is 28 weeks: this abortion was well within this restriction. The fetus was not viable: no fetus has survived at 21 weeks because the lungs are not formed. The abortion was carried out on clear medical grounds: there was a serious risk that the baby would be born with a severe congenital abnormality. The fact that women and doctors involved in perfectly legal late abortions can be terrorised in this way shows that the establishment has succeeded in creating a climate in which abortion is considered a criminal act.

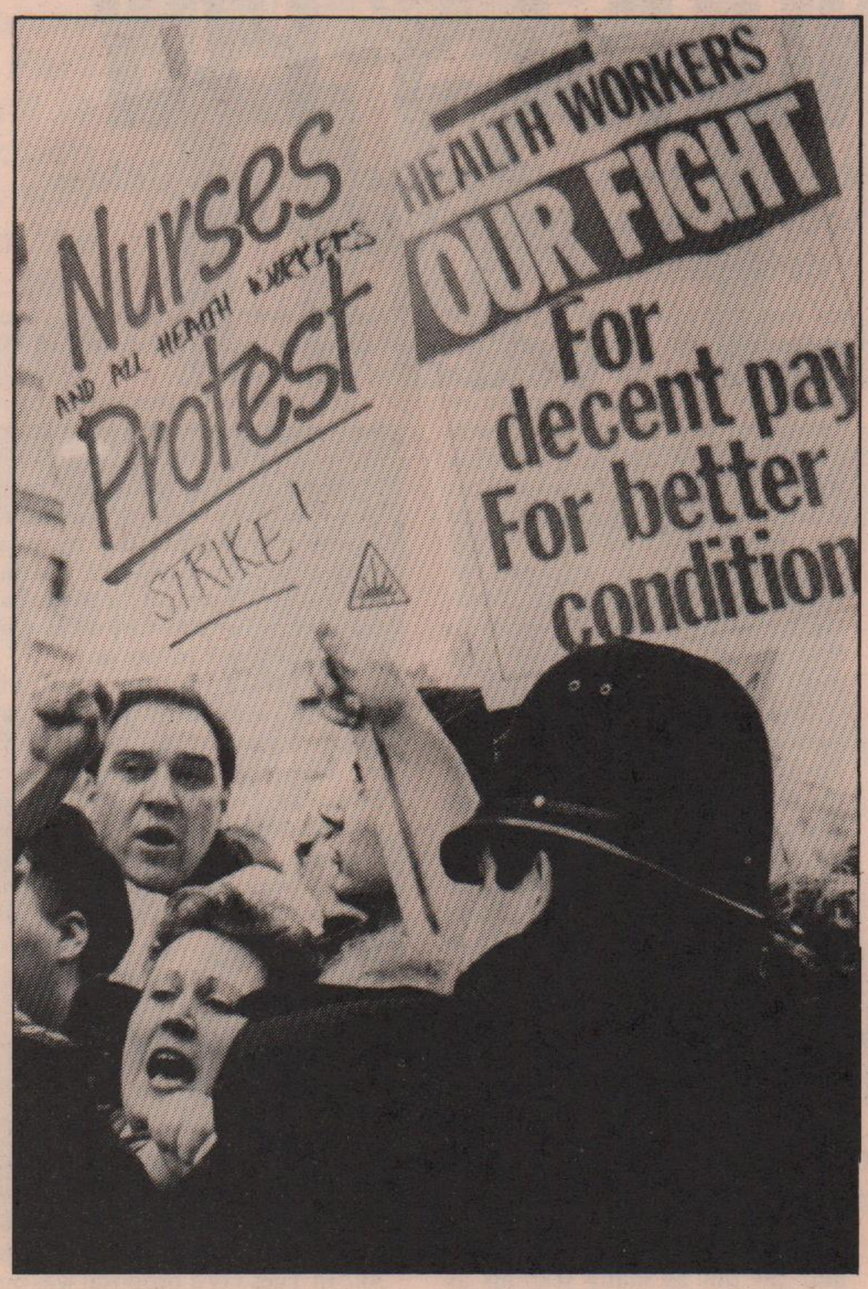
We have to expose the hypocrisy of those who uphold the absolute right to life of the fetus in the womb, but who deny women facing an unwanted pregnancy the right to control their lives in society. When asked about the Carlisle abortion, Alton declared that if his bill is passed 'babies like this would be saved.' If Alton's bill is passed thousands of women will be damned. They will be forced to have a baby they do not want, forced to throw in their jobs, forced to forsake their independence. Faced with low-life propaganda about draining board fetuses, our aim should be to re-focus the debate on the issue of women's rights.

Anne Burton

the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party weekly | No 7 | Editor: Mick Hume

WHO WILL LEAD THE HEALTH WORKERS?



WHAT health workers need to beat the government and win a decent wage increase and improved conditions is a short, sharp burst of all-out industrial action under their own control. What they are getting instead is a long, limp campaign of ineffective protests under the control of the trade union officialdom. The only thing which these leaders are likely to beat is the retreat.

Here is the agenda of forthcoming protest action planned by the leaders of the TUC, the health unions Cohse and Nupe, and the Royal College of Nursing:

24 February: Scottish TUC day of action
5 March: TUC national rally
9 March: RCN lobby of MPs
14 March: Cohse national day of action
13 April: RCN national rally
May: RCN petition requesting more funds for NHS

The union officials will also call various low-key local actions, like the weekly two-hour protests now planned in London.

This 'plan of action' is even more pathetic than the protests organised by the TUC during the 1982 dispute over health workers' pay. Between April and September 1982, the TUC called a total of 12 days of protest — eight of which it described as involving 'intensive nationwide industrial action'. Today, the union officials don't even dare to call their one-day protests 'industrial action', never mind 'intensive nationwide'. All they can manage are 'protest lines' and feeble gestures, most of which the professional RCN can safely support or match without infringing its 'no-strike' constitution.

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At the end of their drawn-out, demoralising campaign of 24-hour stoppages in 1982 the union leaders signed a deal which left the majority of health workers with a gain of *nothing*. Going by that precedent, the present dispute will end with most nurses and ancillary workers winning less than nothing — if we allow the union officials to control the campaign.

The trade union leaders are organising these derisory protests, not to put real pressure on the government, but to try to pull their members back into line. They want to prevent any more outbreaks of unsanctioned strike action by angry health workers. The union bureaucrats are having a varying degree of success with this in different parts of the country.

▼

The spread of action in the health service, like the strikes in the car industry, has shown how narrow is the much-hyped North-South divide within the British working class. The experience which all workers have in common — that of being exploited by the capitalist class — means that any of them can be forced into conflict with their employer, regardless of where they live. The health dispute has, however, exposed the deep North-South divide within the structures of the official labour movement.

The union bureaucrats retain most influence in their traditional strongholds of Scotland and the North. Thus they have been able to bring many health service protests in these areas under their control. The officials are much weaker in places where they have no history, like London and the South. Thus the health campaign in these areas has been marked by some of the most militant displays of rank and file action.

But where the union bureaucracy is weak, those calling for all-out rank and file action have come up against another barrier: the influence of established left-wing organisations. The left is filling in the gaps in the bureaucrats' defences, insisting that the only way ahead lies through more days of action under the control of the union machines. The most militant suggestion the left has come up with is for a 'one-day general strike' to be organised by the TUC. Leading left wingers are also echoing the union officials' timid appeals for public sympathy for the poor NHS, rather than campaigning for working class support for the health workers' fight for a living wage and improved working conditions.

The old left's servile attitude to the TUC and health union leaders today seems a far cry from the past, when it claimed that the 'self-activity of the working class' was the answer to all industrial disputes. It indicates how far the left has adapted to the mood of the Thatcherite times. This trend has been evident for a few years now. But the health dispute marks a new low-point in the left's descent into defeatism, as it goes down with the sinking ship of the trade union bureaucracy.

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In the miners' strike of 1984-85, left-wing groups refused to campaign for rank and file control and fully supported Arthur Scargill's leadership. This proved disastrous, as Scargill's bureaucratic methods failed to bridge the divisions among the miners or to win wider solidarity. But at least then left-wing activists had the excuse of saying that Scargill was easily the most radical trade union leader in Britain. They can hardly use that one today. The health union officials whose leadership the left is backing are out-and-out bureaucrats without one fighting instinct among them. They are moderate machine men like Tom Sawyer of Nupe, who has condemned calls for strike action as 'insulting' to his union. And the idea that we should look to bumbling TUC chief Norman Willis to organise a 24-hour general strike is a truly grotesque insult to health workers' intelligence.

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The left's explanation of its own role as the last outpost of the union bureacracy shows how little it understands about the way to win the health dispute. Leading radicals say that we have to look to the trade union officials to organise action, because there aren't enough experienced militants or socialists among the health workers to get independent rank and file initiatives off the ground. There are two big holes in this argument.

In purely trade union terms, it is contradictory. If there really are no rank and file activists to put the pressure on, then the union bureaucrats will organise nothing. In which case, the left's argument amounts to advising health workers that nothing can be done. Is that the best we can offer those who have already shown their willingness to hit back at the Tory government?

In political terms, the left's emphasis on official union bodies is equally misplaced. It may well be the case that there are few traditional trade union militants in the health service today. But a struggle like the current dispute inevitably throws up new potential leaders, like the workers who have initiated local protests under their own steam. These people will not spontaneously become the active socialists for whom the left is waiting. That depends on the influence brought to bear on them by the organised left. Telling them to sit back, stop thinking for themselves and look up to the trade union bureaucrats is the surest guarantee that they will never develop into a new leadership for the health workers.

The success of the health workers' struggle depends on their ability to break free from the stifling influence of the trade union bureaucracy. They need their own leaders, who are prepared to mount the all-out action — with emergency cover under workers' control — which can bring decisive pressure to bear on the Tory government. That will require a political outlook which can cope with all of the Tory propaganda about nurses' responsibilities to their patients and so on. It will also require a strategy for uniting all levels of health workers, from nurses to cleaners, in a coordinated challenge to the authorities.

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The basis for such unity in action lies through emphasising that which all health workers have in common: the need for a basic pay rise and improved conditions, which will allow them to lead a decent life. Appealing for sympathy for particular NHS services or depicting a group of nurses as an especially deserving case is no substitute. It will cut no ice with the hundreds of thousands of ancillary workers who don't figure in this special pleading, but whose involvement in industrial action is of vital importance. The one way to give every NHS employee a stake in winning the struggle is by putting the demand for a living wage and better working conditions for all on top of the list.

The task of left-wing activists in the health dispute is not to provide protection for the weakspots of the union officials. Instead, we should seek to *exploit* those weakspots and drive a working class wedge into the wall of bureacracy.

We need to politicise the struggle and encourage the emergence of a rank and file leadership through a campaign for all-out action centred on the issues of jobs, pay and conditions. That should be obvious by now to those who have had as much experience of the machinating trade union leadership as has the British left. But it seems that many left wingers are too set in the outdated ways of the official labour movement to make the break. If they insist on lining up behind the useless bureaucrats and defending their hopeless campaign, then health workers will have to view these left wingers as another hurdle to be overcome.

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HEALTH UNIONS' APPEAL TO THE TORIES

HOW NOT TO FIGHT FOR NURSES' PAY

The evidence submitted by the health workers' union Cohse to the review body on nurses' pay reveals a feeble defeatist strategy

While nurses have taken militant action for better wages and conditions in the health service, their leading representatives have tried to avoid the issue of living standards in favour of displaying their commitment to a caring NHS. Trevor Clay of the Royal College of Nursing says the current dispute 'has nothing to do with pay'. Rodney Bickerstaffe of Nupe has renamed picket lines 'protest lines' and called for silent vigils, candlelight rallies and petitions as alternatives to industrial action.

The health union Cohse has appeared to take a more aggressive line on nurses' behalf. It was the first union to back 24-hour strike action by nurses — at the Maudsley Hospital in London — at the start of the spate of walkouts. The Cohse leadership has outflanked the other health unions by calling a day of action on 14 March. Yet Cohse's submission to the pay review body for nursing staff, midwives and health visitors is fully in line with the approach of the RCN and the other TUC unions. It is a mixture of apologetic requests, special pleading and dangerous concessions to the divisive policy of the Tory government.

Cohse follows the other organisations representing nurses in opening its case for higher pay with the claim that this is necessary to overcome the employers' problems of recruiting nursing staff and keeping them in the NHS. The union submission details national and regional staff shortages, high rates of overtime working to cover vacancies and the widespread use of agency staff.

Low staffing levels are a problem for nurses because they end up doing all the extra work. But Cohse's approach confuses the nurses' problem of low pay with management's administrative difficulties. As far as nurses are concerned the starting point of any argument for higher pay must be the fact that they are not being paid enough to live on.

For NHS nurses, the big worry is how to survive on pay levels that are rarely much above the low-pay line and often well below it. Nearly 40 per cent of nurses earn less than the Council of Europe 'decency threshold' of £135 a week. Only the higher-paid grades of sister take home the average wage for non-manual workers — around £220. All other nursing grades fall well below this average, with most students and auxiliaries getting considerably less than half this rate.

Cohse is reluctant to specify the sort of flat rate increase that would be necessary to provide nurses with a living wage and the measures necessary to win it. But it is keen to convince the government that nurses deserve more money. It tries to do this through 'external pay comparability', by showing that nurses and auxiliaries are being paid less than workers with similar levels of skill and responsibility in other occupations:

'Cohse...believes that a proper evaluation of what the whole range of qualified and non-qualified nursing staff jobs entail...will clearly indicate that nurses' jobs have been considerably undervalued when compared with jobs with similar job profiles.'

Cohse believes that providing such information about nurses to the review body 'should lead to them being paid a fair remuneration for the job they do'.

Cohse seems to believe that wage bargaining is an intellectual exercise or a game of cricket. If the unions can convincingly demonstrate to the review body that nurses have had a raw deal, then Cohse expects that the bosses will do the decent thing and pay up. In the real world, bosses pay up when they are threatened with industrial action, not when they are swayed by sentimental arguments. The naivete of the union leaders about the elementary laws of the class struggle is almost pathetic: 'Cohse can see nothing in the nature of the job nursing auxiliaries do which warrants in absolute terms such a low remuneration.' It is not so much the nature of their job as the feebleness of their union that explains why nursing auxiliaries are so badly paid.

DEFENSIVE

The unions' response to the divisive tactics being used by the Tories also reveals their overwhelmingly defensive posture. Tory health minister John Moore has proposed regional pay rates for nurses, with higher rewards in the South-east, to make it easier to attract staff where shortages and discontent run highest. Cohse replies that this will 'be inefficient because the costs of administering and monitoring it will rise substantially'. They also argue that regional differentials would not solve the problems of 'recruitment and retention'. But we should reject Moore's attempt to deepen divisions in the nurses' ranks, not because it might cause problems for the employers, but because it would further undermine the unity of the nurses.

The unions' apologetic arguments and their failure to counter divisive Tory ploys concedes the propaganda advantage to the government.

Cohse's response to management threats to remove 'special duty payments' — the issue that provoked the night-shift protest in Manchester last month — is equally feeble. This mighty union 'sincerely hopes that the review body will dismiss these proposals from management'. Cohse follows up with a grim warning that if the review body accepts the proposals, then 'we might be faced by a major revolt within the nursing profession.' The use of the word 'we' is significant — it indicates that any eruption of militancy among the nurses would not be initiated by the union leaders and that it would confront them as well as management.

DIRECTION

The leaders of the health unions and their policies are a serious obstacle to the fight for better pay and conditions for nurses and all health workers. Activists in all unions in the health service need to get together at hospital, regional and national level, to work out a strategy that can give political direction to the spirit of militancy demonstrated in recent weeks.

Two basic issues need to be resolved:

1. A flat rate pay demand, calculated not according to spurious comparability or job evaluation criteria, but according to what health workers need to ensure a decent living in 1988;

2. A plan for nationwide all-out indefinite industrial action, with full emergency cover under rank and file control, until the government pays up.

The current drawn-out programme of fragmented regional protests suits the needs of the union leaders for a low-key, controllable campaign, but puts no real pressure on the Tories. We need to work out tactics that hit the government and maximise working class support for the health workers.

Pandora Anderson



COHSE'S BALLOONS AND PUBLICITY STUNTS WILL NOT DEFLATE THATCHER

Scottish health struggles

Alan Harding spoke to a shop steward from Glasgow about the fight for all-out action in the health service in Scotland

Q. Is Scotland different in the health dispute?

Steward: 'As well as the attack on wages and conditions we have privatisation looming. We've known that domestic, catering and laundry services were under threat but we didn't know where the first blow would fall. In January, with 24 hours' notice it leaked out that the union leaders were planning a token lobby of the Greater Glasgow Health Board. The reaction of workers was overwhelming. A thousand turned up to oppose all privatisation. So notice was served not only to the bosses but to the union officials that they won't get things all their own way.

'We passed a motion that if one hospital was attacked and took action all other hospitals would take solidarity action. Many of us understood this to mean that if one hospital came out everyone else would. But it's now being interpreted as meaning some limited form of solidarity action. So the consequences of not keeping control and following up the lobby is that divisions may be re-established between hospitals.'

Q. What is the Scottish TUC planning?

Steward: 'The Joint Trade Union Committee proposed 24-hour action for 24 February. Beyond that they have refused to give any lead saying it is up to individual hospitals to take what action they want. Angry stewards tried to put forward a coordinated plan for as many hospitals as possible. We recognised that we had to act together. But some only wanted to bring out certain sections.

'In my own hospital, Western, I could see that selective action wasn't going to work. In fact it was a joke. We had the mailroom out — two workers! Management did the work and the two men stood like lemons outside with a banner. One of them phoned in sick, they couldn't see the point and neither could many others. I decided that we had to argue for all-out action and get out as many sections as possible. We would get everyone represented on an action committee with the expertise to organise emergency cover under our control. And we would stand firm on the principle of no to privatisation: no to all in-house tenders.'

Q. That seems reasonable. So what happened?

Steward: 'The stewards wanted to stick to just bringing out a handful of people. I said that at the next meeting I would be arguing for all-out action, and was told that I would have to stand aside from the stewards' table. Fair enough. Then it was said I shouldn't argue that at all. No way. The mass meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 9 February. On Monday the Greater Glasgow Health Board released its first privatisation plans. Tenders were invited to privatise domestic services at the Victoria, Stobhill, Gartloch and at all health centres and clinics.

'As soon as the news came out hospital workers throughout Glasgow began to respond. News that strike action was going to be taken at Stobhill and Victoria shifted the discussion at the Western. At our mass meeting of 300 on Tuesday a proposal was put for two-hour action or a day, with the emphasis on the more token action. But when I argued for all-out action it went down well. A motion went forward for an immediate one-day strike. A hundred people, mostly domestics, formed a picket line. It was so rapid that we left no emergency cover at all and had to go back and organise! We knew that some union bureaucrats had plans to go to one of the possible private contractors to ask them not to be private contractors. So we went down to demand no negotiations. Over a hundred workers went and it was a great publicity move.'

Q. What happens next?

Steward: 'You can still see the problems. The fact that Astms members didn't come out could reinforce divisions. The domestics are less sure now that it's worth coming out because it was mostly them on the picket line. It made it clear to me how important it is to have rank and file control of the strike. We will now be pushing hard at the next meeting for an action committee and we will be setting up the necessary communication and organisation.'

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IS THERE A SCOTTISH SOLUTION?

The working class and the assembly debate

Mick Hume and Derek Owen

SECRET TALKS COULD SPLIT FORD'S STRIKE

•HOLD THE LINE

Whatever shabby deal their union leaders work out with management behind the scenes, Ford workers need to take decisive action to hold their strike together for the full claim

As we go to press rumours abound about secret talks and shady deals at Ford. While strikers have been taking turns to man picket lines outside 22 Ford plants throughout Britain, their union leaders have been holding secret talks with management. On Monday the media leaked details of two concessions which transport union chief Ron Todd (TGWU) and engineering union leader Bill Jordan (AEU) were set to pursue at negotiations starting on Tuesday. These developments threaten to divide the workforce and split the strike.

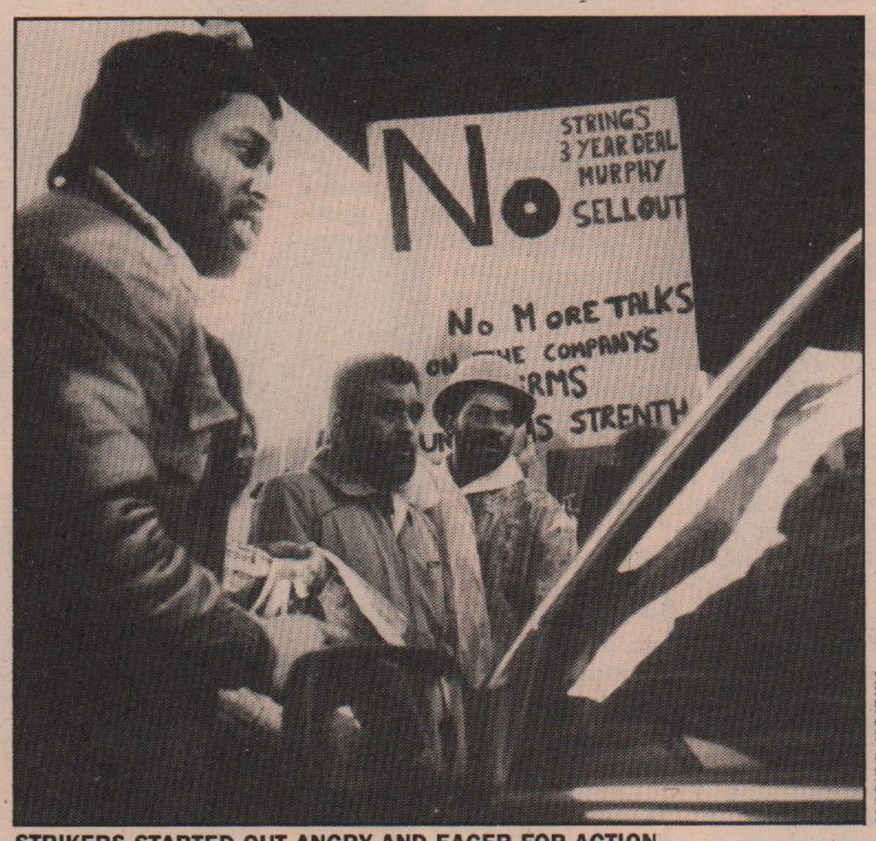
The first compromise revealed by the media was management's announcement that it was prepared to discuss a two-year deal. Ford strikers have been unanimous in opposing the company's demand for a three-year pay and productivity package. Many might see a two-year agreement as a significant advance for the union side. Some will even be tempted to accept it. But they should remind themselves of the conditions of the previous two-year deal which union leaders agreed to in January 1986.

POLICE

The 1986 pay deal outlawed unofficial action and tied the unions to sustaining 'uninterrupted production'. District union officials' commitment to stamp on shop stewards taking unofficial action matched management's determination to put 'trouble-makers' on final warnings and dock bonuses. The 1986 two-year deal had the effect of turning the unions into a shopfloor police force accountable to the employers rather than their members. We don't want to repeat this experience. Ford workers rejected their union leaders' recommendation to accept a three-year deal, and they must do the same with any two-year offer.

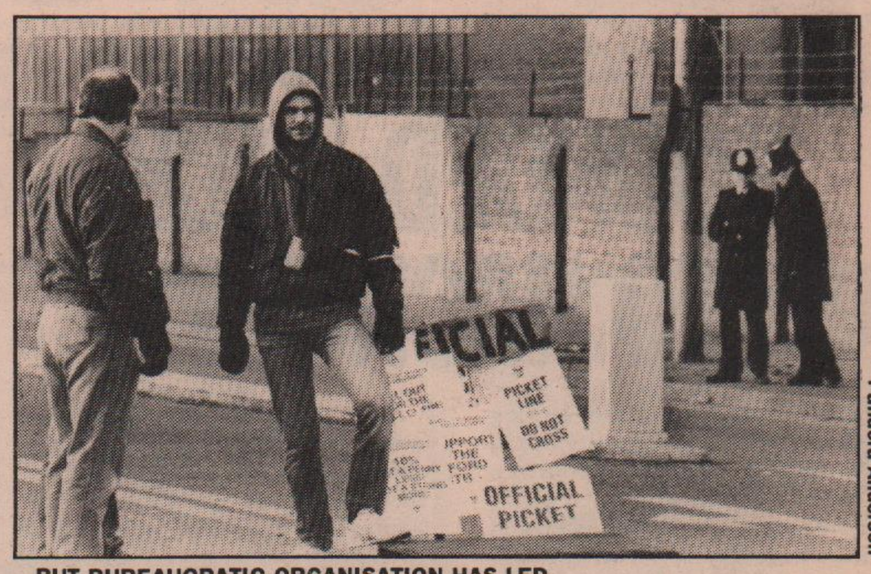
Any pay deal must be based on what we need now, and we should decide when we need more.

The second concession which the media unveiled was a commitment by the company to review proposals for further flexible working. Ford's original proposals would have meant skilled maintenance men (grades four and five in the company's pay structure) working part of their shift on the assembly line, under the supervision of semi-skilled 'team leaders' (grade three). One reason why skilled workers went on strike was to preserve the demarcation between 'time-served craftsmen' — mainly engineers and electricians — and other workers. Grade two semi-skilled production workers — most of whom belong to the TGWU — were equally unwilling to work alongside higher grade operatives who would receive more pay for doing the same sort of work.



Andrew Calcutt

STRIKERS STARTED OUT ANGRY AND EAGER FOR ACTION...



Pandora Anderson

...BUT BUREAUCRATIC ORGANISATION HAS LED TO PASSIVITY AND ISOLATION

Striking workers cannot afford to trust their union leaders and their employers to reach a deal that satisfies everybody. Management appears to have suspended its attempt to blur the demarcation between skilled and semi-skilled workers, but it is still keen to wrest further flexibility and speed-ups from semi-skilled workers. This means that skilled workers will be under more pressure to accept the new deal than semi-skilled grades. The employers are out to split the strike wide open by stirring up sectional conflicts among the workforce. Not one striker has anything to gain by allowing management to divide our forces.

The employers have always known that productivity strings would add to sectional divisions. Linking wage rises to flexible working is their tried and tested method of exploiting such tensions.

To avoid falling into this trap strikers must stick together and restate their refusal to consider any productivity strings. Instead they should make the issue of low pay, which affects all hourly paid employees, a unifying focus. The threat of redundancies, confirmed by Ford last week, also hangs over every worker.

Fighting for every job and decent pay for every worker is the only basis for uniting our ranks against the employers.

The union leaders hope to persuade rank and file strikers that any deal they do in secret talks behind the scenes is the best that can be expected. They are counting on their members fighting shy of a prolonged struggle to win acceptance for a compromise settlement. Their disorganisation of the strike makes the prospect of them succeeding in securing a return to work on management's terms more likely with each passing day. To hold the strike together and to hold out for the full claim, rank and file strikers have to confront the twin problems of fragmentation and demoralisation. The vast majority of workers have no active involvement in the dispute and most strikers have no means of finding out what is going on.

Two weeks ago rank and file workers were excited at their own action in forcing union leaders to call a national stoppage and in closing down every factory in the country. Since then, union officials have managed to dampen workers' enthusiasm and turn the strike into a dull routine.

SIDELINED

At Dagenham union officials soon established a pecking order among the pickets. Convenors spend most of their time inside ramshackle caravans and tents outside the factory gates. Shop stewards check the passes of staff and apprentices entering the plant, and chit-chat with police enforcing the 'six picket' rule. A handful of rank and file strikers chop wood for the braziers. This sort of organisation has the effect of consigning the majority of strikers to the sidelines, spreading demoralisation among activists and reinforcing bureaucratic control over the dispute.

If the strike is to achieve the result that rank and file workers need it must involve every worker in making the decisions and organising the action. Carworkers do not live together in close-knit communities like the miners, and the dangers of isolation are so much stronger. This makes it all the more important to find some means of bringing strikers together and improving channels of communication.

Activists must press for mass meetings where problems can be aired and action agreed by the largest possible number of strikers.

The official TGWU strike committee is another control mechanism. On Friday 12 February Todd called national officers and plant convenors to Transport House. Their get-together turned out to be the inaugural meeting of the self-styled strike committee. Rank and file strikers were not invited. Most of them did not even know about the meeting until after it had happened. The job of the this exclusive club will be to sell any secret union-mangement deal to the majority of Ford strikers.

These committee-men are responsible for the sale of 13 000 jobs at Dagenham during the last decade, and they are the same people who just three weeks ago were telling Ford workers to accept management's first offer. These wheeler-dealers have exercised too much control already. Rank and file workers cannot let them stay in the driving seat any longer. We should elect our own strike committee and make its members accountable to us.

DANGERS

Local trade union leaders have endorsed the divisive containment strategy of their superiors. Convenors have blocked requests for a meeting of all shop stewards from the various plants (body, engine, knock-down, and paint, trim and assembly) which make up the Dagenham estate. Picketing is organised along sectional lines (body plant at one entrance, engine plant at another, and so on), and there has been no opportunity for direct contact among strikers from various sections. Left-wing convenor Joe Gordon did give permission for a mass meeting of assembly plant workers on Monday, but it was badly organised and few strikers turned up. Even Gordon is unwilling to step outside his own patch and call an estate-wide mass meeting. Meanwhile, the danger of a split in the strike grows every day.

Many strike activists are aware of the dangers of fragmentation and demoralisation.

Some have said they are prepared to 'make waves and start talking directly to other sections', even if it means being thrown off picket lines by convenors. They must waste no time in making unofficial contact with rank and file militants in neighbouring plants and at other Ford sites throughout Britain. The only way to keep the strike solid is to give the strikers a stake in it.

Andrew Calcutt

Spread the action

RANK and file activists must take advantage of the general unrest in the motor industry to work out a platform of demands and a programme of action to unite all workers across the industry.

Apart from the 32 500 Ford strikers, 6000 workers at the Land Rover factory in Solihull have voted to take strike action from Sunday against management's pay and productivity package. Workers at Renault's van plant in Dunstable are set for action. At the Vauxhall car plant in Luton, the situation is more confused. Engineers have voted two to one against a strike, while transport workers voted by a narrow margin to come out.

Since Vauxhall's other car plant at Ellesmere Port has voted to accept the company's offer, union officials may claim there has been a majority decision against strike action. Activists must reject their attempts to put a block on strike action, and set about swaying moderate workers to their side. They should also try to bring out the Bedford van plant in Luton, which is owned by Vauxhall's GM-Isuzu subisidiary.

Although the British car industry has surged back into profit over the past two years, the employers are under pressure from the expanding hi-tech Nissan plant in the North-east. Firms competing with Nissan's 'total flexibility' outfit cannot afford to relax their drive to hold down wages and revolutionise work practices. But nor can workers in these firms afford to give an inch on wages and conditions. This clash of wills has led to the current showdown in the motor industry. Just because their employers are in fierce competition for control of the market in motors does not mean that carworkers should see each other as competitors. They all have one thing in common — an interest in securing decent wages and working conditions.

The outbreak of unrest across the industry provides the best opportunity for them to unite their forces.

YOUNG IRISH IMMIGRANTS

'LONDON WAS LIKE A DARK ROOM TO ME'

Thousands have come in search of jobs, homes and a chance to enjoy themselves. But London has little to offer Irish youth except disappointment. Andrew Calcutt reports from Kilburn

'I'm Bernie, I'm 23 and I'm an immigrant. I came over with £200, which soon ran out when I couldn't get work. I spent four weeks in a friend's bedsit, then I found a room in Neasden. There's no hot water, and the kitchen is closed at five o'clock every night. I want to go home to Ireland, but where would I go? My father's not working and my mother only scrapes by on her part-time job. This is the only place where I've a chance of working.'

Bernadette is one of an estimated 50 000 young Irish immigrants who arrived in London last year. She came in search of work. A few years ago, when foreign-owned assembly plants seemed to be springing up all over Ireland, she might have got a job at home. But now the big companies are pulling out, and nearly 60 per cent of all Irish youth aged 15-24 are opting to leave what one called 'dead-end, dirty, dreary Ireland' for 'glamorous London'.

'It could have been New York for all I knew. I didn't know anyone. London was like a dark room to me.' Kevin arrived from Cork at 8am one morning in September. His first sight of London left him wide-eyed. But the search for accommodation soon brought him down to earth. 'I asked how to get to Kilburn High Road, and eventually I found a place in Chapter Road hostel. There were two of us in a room not big enough to stand up in. You wouldn't put a cow in there to bear a calf.' Kevin refused to be treated like an animal. He moved on, but only to another hostel.

Kevin will be lucky to get off the hostel circuit. In a recent survey conducted by the Kilburn Irish Youth Action Group, nearly 70 per cent of respondents said they were 'in temporary accommodation, or homeless'. Council tenants and home owners together accounted for less than five per cent of replies. Only four per cent were renting from housing associations. And the proportion of these 'lucky ones' is declining. Housing associations are now telling young Irish people to 'go home and put your name on the list there,' while London boroughs regularly offer travel warrants home to keep them out of the queue for council accommodation. 'Single bedsit, no cooking facilities' is the best they can get in 'glamorous London'.

Jobs are not as scarce as decent accommodation, especially in recognised Irish districts like Kilburn, Acton and Hammersmith.

If you're a fit young man and you get to the Crown Hotel in Cricklewood for 6am, chances are you'll be offered a labouring job on a building site for £25 a day. Young women can get shop work, cleaning or bar jobs. But jobs which pay a decent, secure wage are few and far between. All the work on offer is low-paid. Most jobs are temporary and 'on the lump' — cash in hand without insurance stamps or sickness cover.

RUNAROUND

Short-term, temporary contacts inevitably lead to long lay-offs. But obtaining state benefit is touch-and-go. Social security officials put young Irish immigrants through a runaround which makes ordinary three to four-week delays seem like an instant response by comparison. Further restrictions are due in April, when statutory rights to benefit for 16-18 year olds will be withdrawn under the terms of the new Social Security Bill.



Andrew Calcutt

IRISH EMIGRES QUEUE FOR JOBS AT 6.30am IN KILBURN

If young Irish immigrants manage to cope with poor accommodation, casual low-paid jobs, and hostility from the state welfare system, they still face the prospect of police intimidation. 'On a Saturday night outside the National Club in Kilburn, you'll find 50 policemen waiting for the boys to come out at 2am. "I don't like you" they say, and put you straight into the van. I've been stopped almost everywhere, just because I'm Irish.' And there is always the threat of being locked up under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which allows police to hold Irish people for a week without charge or evidence.

London's young Irish immigrants are victims of Britain's domination over Ireland.

The British establishment has turned the North into a war zone, and held back the economic development of the South. North and South of the Border, Irish youth turn to emigration as a means of escape. Yet when they arrive in Britain, they face a combined onslaught of state harassment and anti-Irish prejudice fuelled by the media.

The thousands of young Irish people now living in the heart of London, many with direct experience of the Irish War, are a living reminder to us of what British imperialism has done to the Irish people. But they are also a potentially explosive force to be mobilised in the fight for Irish freedom.

HOUNDED BACK TO HACKNEY

Racists have hounded Mervin Mitchell and his family out of their house in suburban Redbridge, on the outskirts of East London. A year of continual harassment forced the Mitchells to give up their home and move to Mervin's mother's flat in Hackney.

In March 1987, *tns* reported that 14 neighbours were taking Mervin to court for 'causing a nuisance' by playing his tiny 9.5 watt portable radio-cassette. When the case came to court, the prosecution implied that Mitchell's house and car were too good for a black man. The magistrates issued an injunction against Mitchell and ordered him to pay £300 costs. There was no evidence against Mitchell. His neighbours ganged up on him because he was a black man living in an all-white suburb, and the courts were happy to enforce their respectable brand of racism.

'The injunction was always hanging over us,' said Mervin's wife Leona. 'I got so paranoid that if our son Joel was out the front enjoying himself, I would go out and tell him "shush, you've got to be quiet." In the end, we just felt we couldn't go on living there.' 'My boy is just three years old,' added Mervin. 'But they wouldn't even look at him, never mind say "hello". It was always a worry. If they took us back to court, there was no telling what we might have to pay. And there didn't seem to be any way of getting the injunction withdrawn.'

The Mitchells were forced to withdraw to Hackney. But they continued to make regular visits to their house in Redbridge. One night, Mervin noticed a neighbour spying on him as he was about to leave. Mervin drove off, then turned back and parked nearby with his headlights off. He saw his neighbour and two others walk over to his house, carrying what looked like cans. As soon as Mervin turned on his headlights, they ran away.

PROWLERS

Nobody can prove what the three prowlers were doing that night. But the police don't want to prove anything anyway. 'They are not interested in what I have to say,' said Mervin. 'They only want to arrest me.' Even when another (white) neighbour spoke on his behalf, the police did not want to know. 'He said "It's all because the man is black." And they just looked at him as if to say, "Shut up, we don't want to hear about that." '

The Mitchells have not given up hope of returning to Redbridge. 'Our home is our home,' said Leona. 'And we don't want to give it up.' For the time being, however, they are bumping into their own furniture, packed floor-to-ceiling in Mervin's mother's flat, and paying the mortgage on a house which the respectable racists of Redbridge have stopped them living in.



David Rourke

SUBURBAN BIGOTS GAVE MERVIN AND LEONA MITCHELL A RACIST RECEPTION IN REDBRIDGE

Computerised racism

POLICE and immigration officers raided the London School of International Business in King's Cross last Friday. Detectives turned the college into a temporary interrogation centre, interviewing more than 200 students, most of them from West Africa. Several were detained overnight and are due to appear in court to face immigration charges.

The raid shows how the police have stepped up their surveillance of the black community. It also demonstrates the use of new technology in their war against immigrants.

The business school was one of 20 colleges which have been under police watch for six months. The names of over 40 000 foreign nationals were fed into the home office computer — called *Holmes* — and matched against information about resident permits, visa applications and passport data. The police routinely use *Holmes* in investigating murders, rapes and other serious crimes. The King's Cross raid shows that it is also at the forefront of the authorities' drive against black immigrants.

The state has vastly increased its store of information on black people. Much of this has been obtained through covert snooping — 'fishing raids' on black workplaces and housing estates, checks on passports and national insurance and medical cards, and information obtained during routine investigations.

PRESSED

But the authorities also receive information openly, through their 'ethnic monitoring' procedures. In the past few years, anti-racists have pressed for the introduction of 'ethnic monitoring' — race checks — as a means of combating discrimination. Many local councils and government departments like the civil service now monitor the racial composition of their workforce. The government is also trying to check up on the race of benefit claimants and Jobcentre users. The Commission for Racial Equality is pushing for the introduction of such monitoring in the next national census.

The King's Cross raid shows that *any* information which the state collects on black people will be used against them. The home office does not discriminate between information obtained covertly and information gathered openly by anti-racists — every scrap gets fed into the computer.

Far from aiding the government in its harassment of the black community, anti-racists must oppose any attempt by the state to snoop on black people — from ethnic monitoring in council offices to passport checks in dole offices.

letters page

TEACHERS: NO CUTS, NO BANS

THE Tory government has decided to abolish the Inner London Education Authority, but not before Ilea's Labour bosses announced their own 12 per cent cuts programme for 1988-89. This will mean the loss of at least 9000 jobs. There will also be less equipment, and a severe reduction in non-statutory education.

These cuts will affect all Ilea workers. Yet last Tuesday's official one-day strike against the cuts involved 5000 people in a virtually silent march. Attempts to vocalise the call for 'no cuts' met with apathy, born out of a real failure of leadership on the part of the Inner London Teachers Association executive.

The Ilta executive have given in on the issue of 'no cover' for vacant posts, despite real rank and file opposition to the high level of vacant posts. Yet instead of fighting for their members' jobs and conditions, they are fighting for their employer, Ilea, in the face of its abolition; an employer, incidentally, which has implemented the Baker proposals almost without hesitation.

A further day of action has been called for 8 March. It is now abundantly clear that we ourselves will have to mobilise Ilea workers to take strike action and call upon other rank and file activists to support our fight. We need local picket lines, leaflets and petitions to advance the campaign. But most importantly, we need to make our voices heard on 8 March.

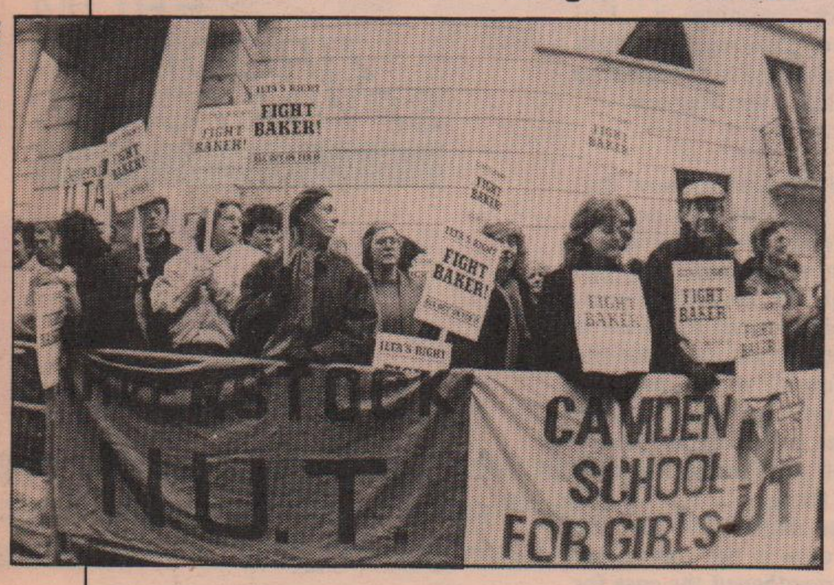
NUT members
Hackney

EARLIER this year, myself and some other teachers got a motion passed at our trade union branch in support of our Fight Alton's Bill campaign activities, calling for free abortion on demand, and donating £40 to the group.

I am disgusted to find out that the National Union of Teachers has issued a circular which bans motions on funding groups 'not directly related to education and the professional interests of teachers'.

All NUT members must fight to ensure that their branch opposes this ruling. A good way to win support against the ruling would be to ask colleagues to read the centre page article in *tns* 6 (12 February), which shows how essential it is for trade union members to discuss and act on political issues whether related to the workplace or not.

Adrian
Southwark



David Rourke

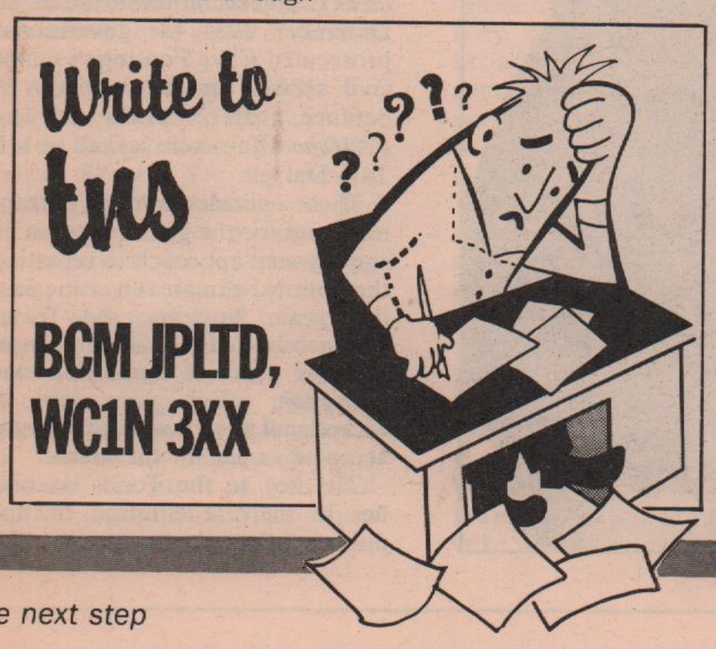
ABORTION IN CANADA

SHELLEY (letters, 12 February) asks whether recent alterations to Canadian abortion law can be regarded as a positive development. On 28 January the Supreme Court declared that section 251 of the criminal code, dealing with abortion, was in violation of section seven, the charter of rights and freedoms. As a result, the federal state of Canada no longer has the legal means to regulate abortion. In theory, there is nothing in federal law that says you can't walk into a clinic and get an abortion.

In reality, however, little has changed. The complexities of the constitution allow each province some jurisdiction over the interpretation of federal laws. So, for instance, Ontario has decided that it will pay for some abortions through its equivalent of the NHS, while British Columbia says that abortion committees (a panel of doctors who decide on eligibility) will be retained, and that doctors can only perform the operation in specially designated hospitals. In Prince Edward Island you cannot get an abortion anywhere for love or money.

The consensus is that some form of regulation is necessary. The old law may have have been too blatant about denying women's rights. But 'the rights of fetuses' is the question that concerns everyone now. It is likely that before the year is out the establishment will have formulated a law that will reinforce restrictions on abortion, without giving offence to legal academics.

Janice Bryan
East London



STOP THE 'QUEER-BASHERS'

A FRIEND of mine was leaving the New York club to visit the gay centre in Manchester. It was cold and pouring with rain. But one bigot had braved the bad weather to act as a policeman for the Tories' attack on lesbian and gay rights. 'You dirty poof bastard, wait till I get my hands on you', he screamed. People like him think they are doing society a favour by beating up 'queers'. Anyone who feels like it can go out and enforce the moral laws of this society.

Coming up against the silence of the authorities has brought it home to me that the government wants to label me as an outsider. I'm not keen on politics, but I can see I have to fight.

***tns* reader**
Manchester

I ATTENDED the National Union of Students' lesbian and gay conference at Newcastle University in January. It seemed as if the organisers had done a double-booking with Tory 'queer-bashers', because while we were in the bar on Saturday night, we were verbally and physically abused by rugby club types who hurled bottles and chanted the sort of things that we have come to expect from bigots.

With Clause 28 hanging over us, the incidents at Newcastle show the sort of climate and attitudes which lesbians and gay men are subjected to, even within the 'trendy' student milieu.

Dave
Newcastle

SOLIDARITY WITH HEALTH WORKERS

ALTHOUGH a lot of workers joined the health workers' demonstration in Liverpool, the majority did so in their own time, by taking sick leave or a day's holiday. In one school, eight teachers took bereavement leave for the afternoon!

It is understandable that workers cover their backs in this way, when union leaders have such low horizons. Local Nalgo chiefs called for a one-hour strike at lunchtime. Technically it was a strike, because they did not consult management. However, they did not consult most of the workforce either. As a result, many council workers never even knew they were 'on strike'.

Against this background of evasion, the news that Vauxhall carworkers at Ellesmere Port had taken strike action for the day was enthusiastically received by demonstrators.

The carworkers' action showed the potential for militancy. It also, by implication, highlighted some of the widespread doubts as to the effectiveness of strike action. One Vauxhall militant told me he was buoyant about getting his brothers out for the health workers, and maintaining the plant's record of coming out in solidarity with other workers, eg, the miners. But he was pessimistic about fighting his own bosses over pay and pensions at Ellesmere Port, where the majority have just voted to accept a two-year pay and conditions deal. He says they were forced into 'good industrial relations' so as to enable Vauxhall to compete with Nissan's new factory in the North-east.

Nevertheless, Vauxhall carworkers should be congratulated for the action they took. It shows other workers what can be done.

Ralph
Liverpool



Mark Wilson

EMERGENCY COVER: UNDER OUR CONTROL

SARAH (letters, 12 February) implies that health workers should go on strike without providing emergency cover. After years of slavery wages followed by talks and more talks, I can identify with her sense of frustration. But I disagree with the conclusions she has drawn.

Our union leaders have got together with management to arrange 'emergency cover' which is far more extensive than the usual nurse-patient ratios. This manoeuvre is part of their attempt to reduce our action to a series of adverts for nurses' 'professionalism' and 'commitment'. It all adds up to a disgraceful strategy which will produce nothing but a series of belly-laughs for the Tories. Yet this does not mean we should abandon the whole idea of emergency cover.

Our aim must be to put maximum pressure on the government by asserting our right to decent pay and conditions, and winning active support for our fight from other workers. We will not achieve this by pretending that all hospitals are like car factories which should be shut down altogether in the event of strike action. What we need to do is get ourselves into a position where we create as much disruption as we see fit. In other words, we want to make sure that rank and file workers, not health authority managers or trade union officials, make the decisions on what constitutes emergency cover and how to organise it. Like every other question in connection with health workers' strikes, it's all about 'who is in control?' If we get that right, nothing can stop us.

Tracy
Bloomsbury health worker

the propaganda war



MAGGIE, NEIL AND DIRTY DEN

A NEW soap opera is about to hit our screens. Joining Dirty Den and Angie, JR and Sue Ellen and Des and Daphne will be Neil and Maggie. Last week, after having said 'No' 10 times since 1966, MPs voted to televise the house of commons. The cameras should be rolling by October.

Of the major industrialised countries, only Britain, Ireland and New Zealand still keep cameras out of parliament. In Britain regular radio broadcasts of the house of commons began in 1978. The house of lords has been sending television viewers to sleep since 1985. So why the fuss about cameras in the commons?

SULLIED

Labour MP Joe Ashton is concerned that television would misrepresent the work of MPs. 'Constituents will say, "I've sat here watching television for seven hours and I've never seen our local MP once," ' he claimed. 'They won't understand that the poor bloody sod has been upstairs in committee or leading a delegation to ministers.'

Ashton's defence of the overworked MP is moving. But for anyone naive enough to believe that absent MPs with fat expense accounts are really stewing away in a committee room or debating the finer points with ministers, there could hardly be a better cure than watching seven hours of parliament daily.

Ashton is also worried that the hallowed traditions of the house could be sullied by 'lesbian Vikings coming over the balcony four times a week' if cameras were present. It's a concern shared by Norman Tebbit, worried that television will introduce bias into the proceedings. The Chingford Skinhead showed he was not a man to tolerate bias when he went to great lengths to expose the supposed anti-American and anti-British bias of the BBC coverage of the joint US-British air raid on Libya in 1986.

NAIVE

The idea that television has the power to misrepresent the government is as big a myth as the notion of a hard-working MP. There has rarely been a period when the government has had such control over the media. The real difference between supporters and opponents of cameras in the house is not about misrepresentation or manipulation. It concerns their understanding of the British political process.

The guardians of British democracy on the left believe that television can democratise Thatcher's Britain. The *Morning Star* argued that television would 'make parliament more responsive to the needs of British people'. 'Too often,' it claimed, 'members of the house of commons have been inclined to see themselves as an exclusive club, wedded to anachronistic rituals and an even more outdated contempt for the public.'

Thatcher and Tebbit have a more cynical understanding of the inner workings of democracy. They recognise that the house of commons *is* an exclusive club — the 'gentlemen of England' as Tory MP John Stokes described it during the debate last week. Parliament's arcane traditions are not the result of a lack of accountability. Parliament plays no role in the real decision-making process in British society. Its sole function is to carry out the 'anachronistic rituals' that pass for democracy.

REDUNDANT

The Tories have always recognised that parliament is a redundant institution when it comes to decision-making. As Tory MP John Biffen pointed out: 'The prime minister chose *Panorama*, not parliament, for the announcement of the wide review of the NHS.' This might have been 'good tactical judgement', he added, but 'it did not reflect a generous judgement on the status of the commons.'

The establishment fears that televising the house of commons would reveal it for what it is — an empty talking shop. It would expose British democracy as a set of 'anachronistic rituals' covering up the fact that real power lies not in parliament but in a centralised bureaucracy watched over by the executive and an increasingly militarised state apparatus. Decisions are made not through reasoned debate in the house of commons but according to what is necessary for the ruling class and what is possible given the prevailing balance of class forces.

CHIMPS

'My concern is for the reputation of the house,' Thatcher told parliament last week. Well might she be worried. For more than 50 years stability in British politics has been maintained through the working class accepting the fiction that parliament gives the public a say in the running of the country. It's a myth that enables the ruling class to maintain control largely through consent and with the minimum use of force. The more people see parliament as just a 'chimps' tea party without the charm', as the *Sun* delicately put it, the more they will question the assumptions on which their consent rests. It is this that terrifies the establishment.

This is a development that we wholeheartedly welcome. We want to see cameras in the house of commons because we support any measure that exposes British democracy for the sham it is. The sooner that workers recognise that members of parliament have no more say over policy than do the regulars in the Queen Vic the sooner they will turn to the only arena that can determine their future — the class struggle.

Kenan Malik



Chris Beresford





THATCHER HASN'T STOPPED PEOPLE READING

FROM ZIRCON TO SPYCATCHER

CEN

Many people rega to suppress Spyca that there

These days it is no longer considered a sign of left-wing lunacy to ask if Britain is becoming a police state. It has become commonplace for respectable figures in the media and the establishment to accuse the government of 'bullying' or 'authoritarianism' as censorship becomes an everyday occurrence. Some daring critics of Thatcher's style have even ventured to use the label totalitarian. The presumption that there is something irrational about the government's censorious activities unites Thatcher's opponents right and left.

While it is undoubtedly the case that the Tories' crusade to ban *Spycatcher* has gained a momentum of its own, this view obscures the rational kernel of Thatcher's policies.

The effect of the Tories' clampdown on the media has been to foster an atmosphere of restraint and conformity in British society. From the point of view of the establishment this is essential to prepare the ground for the exercise of open censorship and repression which will be necessary to silence the real opponents of the system in the future.

CHERISHED

It is not difficult to see why the Tories have upset the sensibilities of such committed defenders of the status quo as BBC chairman Marmaduke Hussey and Tory backbencher Richard Shepherd. The past 12 months are littered with examples of the government riding roughshod over privileges and prerogatives which they have long cherished. The treasury solicitor's office sends out letters to newspaper editors almost weekly requesting an undertaking not to publish stories and threatening action if no undertaking is forthcoming. The courts issue restraints and injunctions against the media as a matter of course. The police conduct raids on the offices of the BBC and the homes of journalists with a casual disregard for the lofty ideal of 'freedom of speech'. And a new home office watchdog committee monitors the extent of sex and violence on the small screen. The age of permissiveness is surely over.

MOTIVES

The *Spycatcher* saga, by virtue of its scope and longevity, is the most blatant example of the official clampdown. The Tories have argued all along that their concern is to safeguard the security services. But the timing of the government's legal action, *after* the *Spycatcher* allegations had become public knowledge, raises questions about its motives. The spectacle of senior ministers travelling half-way around the world to suppress a book whose story has become as familiar as the plot of *EastEnders* has earned the government a reputation for pig-headedness. The fact that Thatcher has dismissed the opinions of seven senior judges — two in the high court, two law lords in informal session and three in the appeal court — who have overruled the censors is cited as evidence of her arrogance. After last week's apparently conclusive ruling against the government in the appeal court, Thatcher's insistence on taking the case to the house of lords is adduced as a sign of dementia.

Countless editors, judges and politicians have argued that the government's case for doggedly pursuing a permanent injunction against newspapers divulging the contents of the book cannot be sustained by logic. They profess puzzlement at the argument that *Spycatcher*'s revelations will damage the security forces, given that its contents have become common currency. Indeed this was the import of last week's court of appeal judgement. Sir John Donaldson, the master of the rolls, argued that the worldwide distribution of *Spycatcher* had destroyed all secrecy in the book's contents and had thus removed all rationale for banning it. Undeterred, the government sought and was granted leave to appeal to the lords against the decision.

STRICTURES

It should be obvious by now that Thatcher's concern is not to suppress Peter Wright's unexceptional observations on the operation of the security forces. Her intention is rather to establish the principle that the state has the sole right to decide what constitutes a threat to national security, and that it can take extraordinary measures of censorship to deal with such a threat.

The Tories might have lost the *Spycatcher* case in the courts, but they have strengthened the case for more censorship.

Thus the important thing about last week's court of appeal judgement was not that it rejected the government's request for a permanent injunction, but that it endorsed Thatcher's call for restraint. The judges made a purely *pragmatic* decision that *Spycatcher* could not be suppressed since it had been published around the world. But they upheld the *principle* of tighter state censorship over security matters. Sir John Donaldson issued strictures against both the security services and the media. He ruled that members and former members of MI5 and MI6 should not succumb to the temptation to break their vow of silence, and that the media must 'ponder the needs of the nation' before printing material pertaining to 'a security service which is indeed secret'. The upshot of the *Spycatcher* saga has been to foster an acceptance of censorship and repression among wide sections of British society.

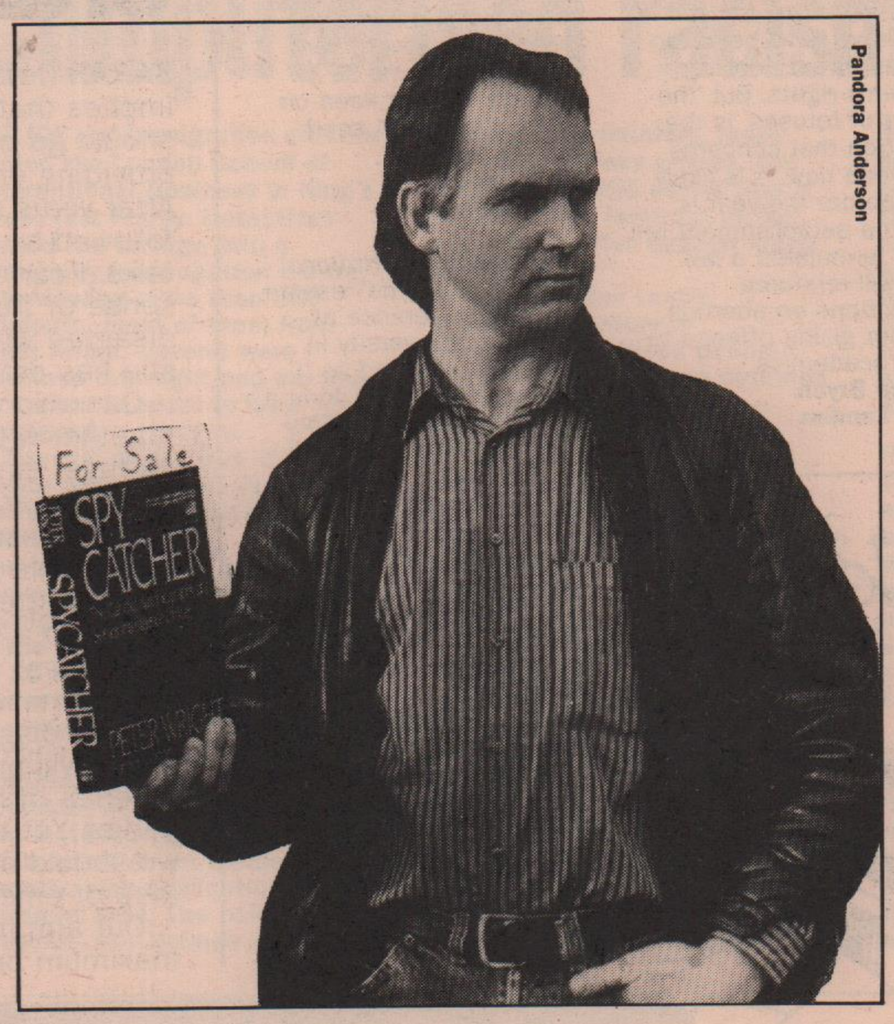
RECASTING

The climate of censorship began to be established during the Tories' second term of office after the 1983 general election. In October that year the courts jailed Sarah Tisdall, a clerk at the foreign office, for giving information to the *Guardian* about the deployment of *Cruise* missiles. In December 1983 an MI5 inquiry led to the dismissal of employment department official Ian Willmore who divulged information to the London listings magazine *Time Out*. In January 1984 the Tories announced their intention to outlaw trade union membership at GCHQ, the government spy centre at Cheltenham, amid allegations of leaks of top-secret information. In December 1984 the government prosecuted Clive Ponting, a senior civil servant at the ministry of defence, after details of the *Belgrano* affair were leaked to MP Tam Dalyell.

These episodes were important test cases for the government in its step-by-step approach to recasting the political climate. Over the past two years, however, the Tories have accelerated the pace of change.

Today acts of censorship and repression, which were seen as exceptional a few years ago, are now accepted as par for the course.

The key to the Tories' success lies in their redefinition of 'the public interest' to mean 'the



Pandora Anderson









SPYCATCHER, BUT SHE HAS STRENGTHENED THE CASE FOR CENSORSHIP

THE AGE OF NSORSHIP

rd Margaret Thatcher's concerted efforts *tcher* as irrational — **Joan Phillips** argues is method in the Tories' madness



Pandora Anderson

RAIDED: DUNCAN CAMPBELL

national interest'. In the past it was seen as the task of newspapers to publish what the public wanted to know. Today it appears that the task of newspapers is to publish what the state wants the public to know. The result has been a growing clampdown on press and television coverage of anything remotely pertaining to defence and security matters, and the definition of 'the national interest' has been extended to cover issues of sex and morality too.

Thus in October 1986 the government obtained an injunction to stop the broadcast of the BBC series *Secret Society* which included a programme on the Zircon spy satellite project. The Zircon project was far from being secret, but this did not deter the Tories who were keen to use the issue as a lever to open the door to more censorship. The Zircon controversy raged into 1987 and culminated in Special Branch raids on the BBC headquarters in Scotland, the home of journalist Duncan Campbell and the offices of the *New Statesman*.

The BBC has been the main target of the Tory clampdown on the news. In June 1986 Tory Party chairman Norman Tebbit launched an unprecedented attack on the corporation for its coverage of the joint US-British air raid on Libya. Tebbit accused the BBC of 'uncritical carriage of Libyan propaganda', warning that such disloyal conduct would not be tolerated in future. If anything the BBC coverage was more blatantly pro-American and pro-British than ITV's, but this was of no concern to a government which wanted to set a precedent for stricter controls on TV broadcasting. The Tories pressed home their advantage later in the year by accusing the BBC's *Panorama* programme of persistent left-wing bias.

At the height of the *Spycatcher* controversy in December 1987 the government was granted an injunction against BBC Radio Four to prevent the broadcast of *My Country: Right or Wrong*, featuring interviews with three former members of MI5, three former MI6 agents and two former GCHQ employees. The terms of the injunction were draconian, effectively preventing the BBC from broadcasting any programme containing interviews with past or present members of the security and intelligence services, or even including information about them. The programme had been given the go-ahead by the D-Notice Committee, the system of voluntary self-censorship by the media which allows a government minister to veto a story if it is believed to endanger national security. The Tories were well aware of the plans to broadcast the programme but bided their time before issuing an injunction in a manner calculated to provoke uproar.

Yet again the government had made an issue out of a programme which contained harmless material but mentioned the buzz-word 'national security', as a device to tighten its control over the media.

In a similar fashion the government created a stink about Tory backbencher Richard Shepherd's bill to reform Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act in January. Thatcher made it clear that she would not tolerate any attempt to revise the terms of the act, and insisted that Shepherd should withdraw his bill until the government itself drew up legislation later in the parliamentary year. Shepherd's Protection of Information Bill was presented as a legitimate attempt to preserve national security, but it was given the ton-of-bricks treatment nonetheless. The prime minister ordered a full Tory turn-out under a three-line whip to kill the bill. Thatcher's strong-arm tactics provoked one of the biggest backbench revolts in her nine-year rule, but it had the effect of adding to the atmosphere of censorship which the Tories have cultivated so assiduously.

REGIMENTATION

There are countless examples of how the government has widened the scope of censorship. At the end of last year the courts fined Jeremy Warner, the business correspondent of the *Independent*, for refusing to identify his sources to officers from the department of trade and industry who were investigating alleged insider dealing by civil servants. Warner was asked to reveal sources for two reports in which he correctly predicted the outcome of City takeover bids. It now appears that any journalist who refuses to divulge to the government information given in confidence could risk prosecution under any number of laws. While the authorities stopped short of making a martyr out of Warner by sending him to prison, they scored a success by making editors think twice about printing information that could be construed as contrary to the 'national interest'.

The Tories have twisted every leak by press and television to their advantage. The government seized on leaks by the *Sun* about the content of the Queen's Christmas Day Speech and about the recipients of New Year honours to launch a panic about breaches of confidentiality by the press. This had the desired effect of making every newspaper editor round on the *Sun* for bringing the good name of the press into disrepute. It was a clever ploy by the government because everybody loves to hate the *Sun*.

But the consequence of the controversy will be an even harsher regimentation of the press.

Another act of censorship perpetrated in 'the public interest' was the recent decision to shelve the Stalker-Sampson report on the deaths of six unarmed Irishmen in Armagh in 1982. The prolonged inquiry into the Royal Ulster Constabulary's shoot-to-kill policy against nationalists and republicans revealed that the killings were sanctioned at the highest level. The inquiry itself turned out to be an integral part of the cover-up. When attorney general Sir Patrick Mayhew announced that it would not be 'in the public interest' to publish the result of the inquiry, he meant that it would not be to the advantage of the state for the British people to learn the truth about their rulers' dirty war in Ireland.

The grip of the censors stretches beyond the sphere of state security to cover the arena of morality too. In September 1987 home secretary Douglas Hurd declared the need to stop Britain's 'descent into slovenliness' in response to an outcry about sex and violence on television. The government set up a new Broadcasting Standards Council to do the job. Last week the council said it would give the BBC and ITV six months to clamp down on sex and violence before considering legislation to make the screening of sex or violence warnings mandatory.

SERVILE

The impact of the Tories' campaign to enforce conformity is evidenced by the fact that all four television channels openly admit that they now engage in extensive self-censorship. Even Channel 4, which still retains a reputation for radicalism, is not immune. On the same night as the courts dismissed the appeal by the Birmingham Six, Channel 4 dropped its scheduled programme *Acceptable Levels*, which ironically enough was dealing with the question of censorship and the Irish issue. This was the crowning achievement for a broadcasting system which has doctored the news on the Irish War to fit the official version of events and censored controversial plays and films so as not to challenge the government's lies.

The government crackdown has produced a particularly servile new regime at the BBC.

The controversies over its Libya reporting and the Zircon affair led to the forced departure of director general Alisdair Milne and others who would not toe the Tory line. The new team of Marmaduke Hussey, Michael Checkland and John Birt have pursued a craven policy of bowing to every whim of the government. On the occasion of Thatcher's celebration as the longest-serving prime minister this century, the producers of *Panorama* repented of their sins by turning over the programme to the Tory leader to make an hour-long party political broadcast.

Nowhere is the Tories' success more apparent than on the opposition benches. Labour leader Neil Kinnock's response to the Zircon, *Spycatcher* and Stalker scandals was to call on the government to be more consistent in its censorship. The logic of the Labour Party's position is that the Tories should have taken action against Chapman Pincher who wrote *Their Trade Is Treachery* in 1981 based on conversations with Peter Wright, hounded Duncan Campbell who first revealed details of the Zircon project, and prosecuted John Stalker for breaking the Official Secrets Act by publishing inside information about his shoot-to-kill inquiry. A Labour leadership which is bending over backwards to prove its commitment to state security cannot be expected to challenge the climate of censorship and repression which now prevails.

MOUTHPIECE

There is nothing irrational about Thatcher's policies. The growth of censorship and repression runs parallel to the breakdown of consensus and stability in British society. In a period of relative prosperity and social peace such as the fifties and sixties the establishment did not need to use the media, the courts and the police as political tools in the service of the government.

In an era of recession and revolt the ruling class is compelled to use all the means at its disposal to enforce the interests of the capitalist class against the exploited and oppressed.

Thatcher wants to make the media the mouthpiece of the government and the employers, the courts must wield their power against strikers and dissidents, and the police are employed to put down resistance to the system. Her campaign of creeping censorship aims to accustom people to the exercise of repression against the real threat to state security — the working class.



JOHN STALKER'S SHOOT-TO-KILL INQUIRY WAS SHELVED IN 'THE PUBLIC INTEREST'

Don Reed

INKATHA vs UDF

THE 'TRIBAL CONFLICT' LIE

Western pundits blame 'tribal conflict' for the recent upsurge of violence in South Africa's Natal province — Russell Osborne explains what's really at stake

Ten-year old Skumbuzi Shezi was playing in his house in Edendale, a rural shanty town just outside the small city of Pietermaritzburg in Natal, when supporters of Zulu Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha movement burst in. They were looking for Shezi's father, a prominent supporter of the United Democratic Front. They seized the little boy instead, took him outside and beheaded him.

Inkatha member Helmina Shange, a 61-year old grandmother, was at home with her children and grandchildren when a group of young United Democratic Front supporters came for her. The youths told the children to get out because they only wanted her, poured petrol over her and set her alight. Helmina Shange was badly burned, but lived to tell her story to the press.

In recent months the Western media have revelled in such grisly incidences of the violence in Natal.

STOOGES

More than 400 people have been killed and thousands more have been maimed in fighting between Zulu followers of Buthelezi's moderate Inkatha movement and supporters of the radical nationalist United Democratic Front. According to Western media commentators the violence is the result of 'tribal conflict' between different black groups. In reality it is part of a political struggle between president PW Botha's stooges in the black community and opponents of the apartheid regime.

Buthelezi has always protested his opposition to apartheid and refused to accept 'independent' status for his KwaZulu homeland. But he has played an important role in helping the Botha regime to maintain control. Inkatha is the most successful example of the government's strategy of using black stooges to replace the police and the army within the townships. Unlike the stooge leaders of South Africa's other 'homelands', Buthelezi can claim some support in the KwaZulu countryside. Here jobs are few, the land is overcrowded and overgrazed, and membership of the Inkatha patronage machine is essential for survival. In the poverty-stricken rural areas Inkatha's 'warlords' have long ruled the roost, extorting membership dues from local people and victimising anybody who can't show an Inkatha membership card.

RIVALS

The recent upsurge of violence is predominantly an urban struggle around Natal's major cities. Inkatha supporters frequently terrorise the local townships; their aim is to drive their United Democratic Front rivals out of the area around the city of Pietermaritzburg. Last week after a mass Inkatha meeting, well-armed thugs swept into the township of Ashdown, attacking residents and their property. The following day busloads of armed men arrived in Pietermaritzburg city centre and attacked people in the streets around the local headquarters of the Cosatu union federation. Claiming that they were looking for amaqabane (comrades), the thugs laid into passers-by with clubs, spears and knives.



BUTHELEZI'S ZULU HERITAGE HAS NO APPEAL FOR APARTHEID'S YOUTHFUL OPPONENTS

CONTEMPT

Residents of townships all around Pietermaritzburg have laid criminal charges against Inkatha leaders responsible for the killings and in some cases have even obtained court orders restraining them from undertaking further attacks. Local warlord Sichizo Zuma showed his contempt for such legal niceties by going out and shooting two men who had just obtained injunctions against him. Witnesses who went off to the police to complain were themselves promptly detained, while Zuma is still at large.

While Buthelezi's thugs terrorise the townships, Inkatha's trade union front organisation Uwusa is involved in smashing black unions.

Uwusa is notorious for its sterling service on behalf of the union-busting British company BTR. Inkatha supporters conducted a reign of terror at BTR's Sarmcol factory near Pietermaritzburg, assassinating two union activists while local police stood by. This scab union outfit is now assisting the mining companies in their attempts to smash the National Union of Mineworkers. A gang of 400 Uwusa thugs killed four NUM members and injured 67 in what mine management described as a 'faction fight' at Randfontein Estates gold mine a fortnight ago. Mine management has tried to drive home the defeat of last year's national miners' strike by forcing returning workers to leave the NUM and join the scab Uwusa.

Buthelezi's efforts to smash the opponents of apartheid have won him the support of the business community both inside and outside South Africa. His Durban-based Inkatha Institute is a sophisticated operation of speech-writers, analysts and publicists financed by big business. In 1986 Inkatha and Natal sugar barons joined forces in the so-called KwaNatal Indaba, a conference designed to pave the way for a multi-racial capitalist Natal with a power-sharing executive.

FETED

In an increasingly strife-torn South Africa, Buthelezi is seen by apartheid leaders as a guarantor of capitalist order. He is feted by Western leaders like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. His opposition to sanctions and his support for capitalism as a liberating force in South Africa makes him an acceptable alternative to the African National Congress and more left-wing organisations. The right-wing American labour federation, the AFL-CIO, rewarded his pro-Western sentiments by naming him co-winner of its annual George Meaney Award for human rights in 1982.

POLARISED

While Buthelezi has forged links with Western governments and South African bosses, he is losing his grip on young blacks within KwaZulu itself. Buthelezi's pro-capitalist stance has alienated increasing numbers of his own followers who now look to the radical UDF to lead the struggle against apartheid. His compromising approach has less and less purchase on the youth who have grown up under the radicalising impact of the past few years of violent resistance to apartheid terror. This growing political divergence explains why the violence has come to a head in Natal now.

The upsurge of violence in recent months is a power struggle between those who want to make a deal with apartheid and those who want to smash it.

Buthelezi founded Inkatha as a 'national cultural liberation movement' in 1975 and it quickly became the dominant black organisation in KwaZulu. Initially Inkatha tapped into much of the popular nationalist tradition that is common to the African National Congress. Buthelezi was an African National Congress youth league activist and Inkatha shares the movement's black, green and gold flag and uniform. Increasingly, however, Buthelezi has relied on appeals to a narrow Zulu chauvinism to rally support. He likes to identify with past Zulu heroes and particularly the Zulu King Shaka who united disparate clans and established an empire before the coming of the whites. Inkatha impis (armed vigilantes) commonly chant the ritual battle cry 'Usuthu' before launching their bloody attacks on opponents. Buthelezi proudly claims direct descent from the chief who was Shaka's prime minister.

IRONIC

But King Shaka has little appeal for the increasingly militant and sophisticated youth of Natal. There has been a rapid growth of mass popular resistance to apartheid since 1983. Many young people feel more affinity with Nelson Mandela and other imprisoned leaders. Opinion polls show that support for the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela, even among Zulus, is far greater than allegiance to Buthelezi's Inkatha movement. The Zulu chief's conciliatory stance on apartheid has led many former supporters to change their loyalties, in favour of the more militant nationalist organisations.

Western politicians and pressmen are keen to present the fighting in Natal as a tribal conflict between two warring factions. This obscures the real conflict that is taking place in South Africa, between the apartheid oppressors and those fighting for freedom.

Botha rescues puppet chief

When South African forces defeated the attempted coup in Bophuthatswana last week, they also put paid to the myth of an 'independent homeland'.

'I thank the South African Defence Force for helping me get back to power to serve my people,' Lucas Mangope told the press last week. Mangope, president of the 'independent' black homeland of Bophuthatswana, was held prisoner at gunpoint for 15 hours as his soldiers staged a coup. Then three helicopter gunships and a dozen armoured vehicles from South Africa came roaring to his rescue. By returning Mangope to power, the apartheid regime destroyed any illusion that he ruled over an 'independent' country.

The Botha regime has tried to present the four black 'homelands' of Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda as independent nations. But the whole system is a mire of corruption, nepotism, coercion and murder held together by apartheid terror.

CONCILIATORY

South Africa's suppression of the attempted coup in Bophuthatswana is ironic given recent events in another 'independent homeland', Transkei. Africa's 'first woman prime minister' Stella Sigcau was purged in a coup and succeeded by the South African-trained and supported General Bantu Holomisa. Sigcau herself came to power after former prime minister Chief George Mantanzima had fled to South Africa 'on sick leave', following the arrival of a detachment of Transkei soldiers investigating the embezzlement of government funds.

Such events are increasingly embarrassing for Botha. The ragbag collection of stooges placed in positions of power in the nominally independent apartheid homelands are in serious danger of losing control. They are so corrupt that even their close supporters find it difficult to stand in the face of popular revulsion and resistance. The 'independence' of the homelands is maintained only through the force of South African arms.



THE WALDHEIM AFFAIR

AUSTRIA'S ANSCHLUSS FACTOR

Fenna King looks at the war crimes of Austrian president Kurt Waldheim — and at the hypocrisy of the other Western war criminals now calling for his head

Many Nazis tried after the war claimed that they did not know anything about deportations, death camps and mass executions. Austrian president Kurt Waldheim has a novel plea: he knew about the dirty work, but did not do any of it. 'Knowledge is not a crime,' Waldheim claimed after an international commission of historians revealed the following facts about his war record:

- Waldheim passed on transcripts of interrogations of captured Allied commandos which, because of Hitler's orders, meant their certain execution;
- He was in the 'immediate vicinity of criminal actions' especially in Banja Luka, West Bosnia, Yugoslavia, although 'there is no concrete evidence of how he was involved in deportations and camps';
- While in Greece, he 'knew of the practice of deporting Italian prisoners and internees to Germany in September 1943' and of 'countless executions', although as a 'liaison officer' he had 'little practical possibility of influencing events'.
- Waldheim turned a blind eye to the 'merciless deportation of entire Jewish communities' and the extermination of men, women and children in the concentration camps.

The 200-page report took five months to complete. Although the commission left a good many stones studiously unturned (one member apparently spent just two and a half hours leafing through the huge Yugoslavian collection of war crime files), it could not help but incriminate Waldheim. The commission members were struck by Waldheim's capacity for lying about his war record. They concluded that, although there is no firm evidence of Waldheim pulling any triggers, he was 'morally guilty' of involvement in 'human rights violations' and 'obvious injustice'.

COMPLICITY

Whatever excuses the commission invented for the president, there is no doubting his complicity in Nazi war crimes. It should be clear that when Waldheim, the elder statesman of the Austrian establishment, was a young intelligence officer in the German army, he acted as a willing agent of Nazism.

Yet Waldheim's war record is far from exceptional. Many German and Austrian Nazis who played a more senior role in the holocaust survived to pursue prominent post-war careers in public life. And there remains a substantial body of support for Waldheim which reaches to the top of Austrian society.

When Waldheim's Nazi past was first exposed during his presidential election campaign in 1986, the allegations provoked a surge of nationalist support which carried him into office.

The scandal has been rumbling along ever since; meanwhile, the president's popularity rating at home has risen by 20 per cent. When the Waldheim affair began to make headlines again in Europe and the USA last month, most Austrians seemed more concerned with the lack of snow in their ski resorts. Only last week in Austria, 72 per cent of respondents told an opinion pollster that Waldheim should stay in office regardless of whether or not he had lied.

These displays of solidarity with the president express Austria's reluctance to confront its past. The country has a history of chauvinist violence and victimisation which stretches much further back than Austria's integration into the Nazi Reich in 1938.

PREJUDICE

From the end of the nineteenth century, Austria's rulers held their weak state together by mobilising public prejudices against Jews and the many national minorities like Serbs and Czechs, Magyars and Slovenes. When the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg empire collapsed in 1918, most of these minorities gained independence in the new states of Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Rumania. This left the predominantly German-speaking population in Austria. The ruling class used Great Austro-German chauvinism, directed against their former subject peoples and the Jews, as a way of cohering the young Austrian republic. In November 1918, the new state's founding document asserted that 'German Austria is part of the German Republic.'

Plebiscites in 1921 in Tyrol and in Salzburg produced overwhelming majorities for annexation by Germany. Hitler's forces marched into Austria on 11 March 1938 virtually unopposed, under the banner 'One People, One Reich, One Fuehrer'. The annexation — Anschluss — unleashed a fiercer wave of anti-semitism within Austria. Hitler's chief of propaganda, Goebbels, complained that Jews ran everything up to and including the famous Salzburg Festival. Austria's role in Nazism was clear: within one year of the annexation, Vienna's Jewish population had fallen from over 200 000 to less than 70 000 (they dispersed by emigrating into 89 countries).

CONTINUITY

The chauvinist consensus in Austria did not disappear with the swastikas. There is a marked continuity between the support for the Nazis 50 years ago and the acceptance of racist ideas today. The Waldheim affair has helped to activate the bitter anti-foreign sentiments which were slumbering just below the civilised surface of Austrian society.

A new wave of nationalism is now sweeping the country.

Anti-semitism is not the central focus of this resurgent chauvinism. Austria's past persecution of the Jews has meant that only a few thousand remain in Vienna. They still face insults and physical threats, especially in the Leopold district of the city. But the more numerous minority communities and immigrant workforces have taken the place of the Jews as the number one targets. The Slovene community in the southern province of Carinthia (power base of Joerg Haider, new leader of the extreme right-wing Austrian Freedom Party) faces segregation in schools and elsewhere. Turkish, Yugoslav and other immigrant workers are also popular targets of Austrian nationalism.

SHAKEN

The Waldheim affair has embarrassed Austria internationally and shaken the ruling 'grand coalition' between the socialist SPO and the conservative OVP. But it has also brought the ruling class chauvinists running to the president's defence. The OVP leadership, which picked Waldheim as presidential candidate in 1986, threatened to dissolve the coalition and form a new one with the even more right-wing Freedom Party, unless the SPO dropped the call for Waldheim's resignation. In a crisis cabinet session socialist chancellor Franz Vranitzky bowed to the pressure from the right, but has since threatened to resign unless the Waldheim affair is resolved.

Waldheim has insisted that he will serve his term till 1992. He retains the firm support of the powerful right wing in Austrian politics, which is portraying him as the martyred figurehead of a small country blackmailed by an international Jewish plot. On Friday one of Waldheim's top allies, former foreign minister Karl Gruber, rallied the forces of reaction by denouncing the historians' commission members as 'socialists and people of Jewish stock'.

Even if Waldheim is forced out of office, it will not be by any popular rejection of his Nazi past or his present right-wing stance within Austria. His resignation would mean only that the Austrian authorities had bowed to international pressure. It would do nothing to alter the chauvinist climate in Austria as the fiftieth anniversary of Anschluss approaches in March.

What about the British war criminals?

THE Waldheim affair has made 'Austria-bashing' a popular sport, especially in Britain and America. The media and politicians have made outraged statements demanding his resignation, and encouraged attacks on all things Austrian. The Reagan administration has banned Waldheim from entering America. And Tory home secretary Douglas Hurd has joined in by announcing an inquiry into the facts about alleged war criminals living in Britain.

The anti-Waldheim outbursts from establishment spokesmen on both sides of the Atlantic are a gross display of hypocrisy. Waldheim is a war criminal. But the British and Americans helped many worse criminals (like Klaus Barbie) escape at the end of the war, put other ex-Nazis in power, and knew about Waldheim's war record when they backed his successful bid to become United Nations secretary-general. Indeed, many of the Western politicians now posing as democrats to denounce Waldheim are war criminals in their own right. And they serve in much more senior positions than he ever did during the war. Demanding punishment for war crimes committed 40 years ago provides them with a convenient distraction from those being carried out today.

What about Douglas Hurd himself? As Northern Ireland secretary from 1984-85, he was in charge of Britain's continuing shoot-to-kill campaign against Irish nationalists. Now, as home secretary, he happily deports Tamil and other refugees to face persecution and possible death. Is he innocent? Or take Margaret Thatcher, who was directly responsible for the cold-blooded sinking of the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano*, with the loss of hundreds of lives. Where is the line which separates her crimes from Waldheim's?

The Americans, too are harbouring scores of home-grown war criminals. Among them is Oliver North — like Waldheim a persistent liar, but now a national hero for his terrorist activities. President Reagan has sponsored Contra murder-gangs in Nicaragua, sent his CIA to plant car-bombs in Beirut and, with British help, blasted Libyan civilians into early graves.

The rulers of the Western world all have blood on their hands. But there are no commissions digging into the war crimes of these hypocrites. They have latched on to Waldheim as a convenient scapegoat against which to prove their democratic credentials. If we want to put an end to oppression around the world today, these are the guilty men and women we must bring to book.

AMERICAN ELECTIONS

NOBODY FOR PRESIDENT

Everybody says that the race to succeed president Reagan is 'up for grabs'. But one thing is already certain: American politicians don't have to be in the White House to be lame ducks.

James Malone reports

Before last week's Iowa caucuses, few commentators were prepared to put their shirts on any of the hopefuls for the White House. After the caucuses, the first major media event in the campaign for the Republican and Democratic Party nominations, things looked even less certain.

The outgoing Reagan administration may have run out of steam, but the collection of nonentities running for president aren't exactly power-houses either.

Iowa raised serious doubts about Reagan's vice-president George Bush, the one candidate who previously seemed closest (though not very close) to being a statesman. In the Republican caucuses Bush only managed a poor third behind senator Robert Dole and Pat Robertson, the television Christian evangelist. Bush cannot shake off his 'wimp' tag. His lame claim that he 'just cannot remember' whether or not he was at the key White House meetings during the Irangate affair has not helped his attempt to play the macho man in the media. In the run-up to this week's New Hampshire primary, Bush was being hounded again over accusations of collusion with Panama's notorious military dictator General Noriega.

CHARLATANS

The biggest embarrassment for Bush was placing behind Robertson, the preacher who claims to stop hurricanes with just a word to his 'employer' in heaven. 'You've got to give the credit to God,' remarked Robertson after the Iowa result. His success gives a boost to the moral right after the fall from grace of his fellow Christian fundamentalist charlatans and millionaires, Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, in an adultery and financial fraud scandal. No doubt Robertson's result helped him overcome the humiliation he faced at an underwear factory days before the poll, where his attempted lecture on moral fortitude was interrupted by women workers saying 'We make naughty black lingerie, the kind Madonna likes.' However, he still has about as much chance of reaching the White House as he has of stopping that hurricane. The short-term success of Robertson's crusade only goes to show how lacklustre the other candidates must be.



ROBERTSON: GOD'S CANDIDATE

On the Democrats' side, Japan-bashing protectionist Richard Gephardt beat senator Paul Simon (no, not *the* Paul Simon) and governor of Massachusetts Michael Dukakis. But the result was hardly conclusive. Gephardt's Iowa victory will no doubt be seen as a vindication of the important change of direction he made two weeks before the caucuses: he decided to darken his eyebrows for the TV cameras. Black candidate Jesse Jackson received nine per cent in a 99 per cent white state, but has no hope of winning the nomination. Gary Hart's dismal return of less than one per cent suggests that he should have stayed at home in Troublesome Gulch and made his headlines in the gossip columns.

It is not fair to place too much weight on the Iowa caucuses.

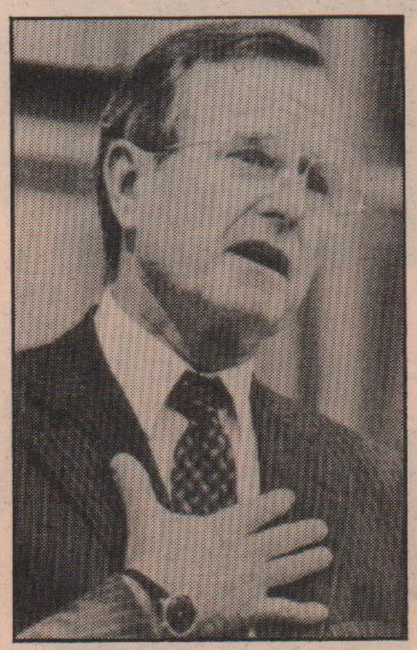
Iowa is a rural, virtually all-white state, representing a fraction of the electorate. Only a minority of Iowans brave the snow and freezing temperatures to sit in someone's kitchen, living room or barn on a winter's evening and chat about such faceless characters. The Iowa caucus poll was first deemed a 'crucial' starting test in the presidential race when an unknown named Jimmy Carter came top of the Democratic poll there in 1976, launching his successful drive to the White House. But Bush knows that winning in Iowa is not decisive. In 1980 he beat Ronald Reagan there, proclaimed that he now had 'Big Mo' (momentum) on his side, and then went on to be easily trounced by Reagan in subsequent primaries.

SLOG

The Iowa and New Hampshire polls will narrow the field of candidates from the starting total of 13; General Alexander Haig has already retreated from the fray. But an array of boring men still remain to slog it out until the party conventions in the summer. If the New Hampshire primary produces different winners, as is likely, the confusion will continue.

The campaign money spent by all the candidates exceeds $100m, a figure larger than the GNP of many third world countries — and these, remember, are only the primaries. Mega-bucks can bring the usual glitz and hype that surrounds American elections, but they cannot buy personalities for the contenders. Elections in the USA are not noted for depth of analysis or incisive political programmes. But the 1988 campaign is exceptionally vacuous. The pretenders to the crown, each trailed by their personal entourage of charisma advisers and hair-dressers, shake hands with bemused bystanders who don't recognise them and echo the familiar refrains: 'The time is now', 'We stand at the brink', 'We must challenge destiny', 'We must find the future'. The most oft-repeated of these clichés, 'America needs leadership!', seems a convincing argument against voting for any of them.

The fact that this year's campaign features numerous nobodies vying with each other to cut the least



BUSH: 'WIMP'

pathetic figure is a true reflection of the state of American politics.

Nobody has any answers to the mounting economic and political problems facing the USA. American politicians face real difficulties when they are confronted with the hard questions concerning the USA's decline. They are all keen to avoid the issue of the approaching economic recession in a country where a monthly trade deficit of $12 billion is now seen as a success story. The candidates, like the rest of the US establishment, haven't got an idea between them about how to deal with the crisis of American capitalism.

PEANUT

The decline of US power since the sixties has produced one presidential flop after another. American commentators have bemoaned the decline in the stature of the presidency for years. Many claim that Franklin Roosevelt (1933-45) was the last strong president. The men who took the helm after John Kennedy's assassination in 1963 were notable failures. Lyndon Johnson was linked with the defeat in Vietnam; Richard Nixon was disgraced by the Watergate bugging scandal; Gerald Ford was remembered as the president who 'couldn't fart and chew gum at the same time'; and Jimmy Carter was an ineffectual peanut farmer with a crook for a brother and the humiliating Iranian hostage crisis for a legacy.

Reagan promised to restore confidence in the presidency, but after getting away with murder for a few years has now suffered the ignominy of the Irangate affair and the shock of the stock market crash. He ends his term as another loser. These presidential failures have not been due so much to the (undeniable) character flaws of the incumbents, as to America's fall from unrivalled world dominance.

HOCK

The present crop of presidential contenders hardly gives the American ruling class much hope for a turnaround in its fortunes. These stand-ins bring back memories of notoriously inept pre-Roosevelt characters like Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. But in 1988 the USA has much more to lose.

Today American capitalism faces intractable problems which must appear daunting to those standing for office.

The US economy is stagnant, and it has enormous difficulties trying to compete with its more dynamic rivals, West Germany and Japan. The federal budget deficit has ballooned to a record amount, and in order to finance it the USA has gone into hock to foreign financiers. Now the world's largest debtor nation, with its economy increasingly reliant on world trade, the USA is feeling more at the mercy of foreign powers than ever before.

What US capitalism needs just to keep ticking over are harsh austerity measures. But the candidates recognise that promises of belt-tightening won't inspire the voters. So they stick to platitudes and hope nobody asks any embarrassing questions. Their armies of marketing analysts cannot conjure up a message to match the challenge of America's crisis.

XENOPHOBIA

All of the candidates stress that they have important ideas, because a good president needs 'ideas'. Hart said that he came back into the race because the USA needed his 'power of ideas': his flimsy policy document turned out to be a rehash of his empty 1984 platform. Simon, who has tried to turn his folksy anti-image — complete with horn-rimmed glasses and bow tie — into an image, says he is an old-fashioned Roosevelt-style 'caring' liberal. But he hasn't a clue about how to finance his promised public works programme while balancing the budget within three years.

Despite the incoherence of the campaign, two main themes can be indentified: an affirmation of reactionary moral values and xenophobia.



DOLE: IOWA WINNER

The hostile response to Gary Hart's shenanigans reflects the way in which the establishment has endorsed 'clean living' and punished those who stray. Democratic senator Albert Gore stayed up one night trying to work out how to reply to the burning question asked of all the candidates — 'Have you ever smoked pot?' The next morning a shame-faced Gore admitted that he tried marijuana in college. The loudest fan of traditional morality is Robertson, who would like to see Aids victims quarantined and abortion outlawed. Bush and Dole may think Robertson is a nut, but they too pander to the moral rearmers.

VOICE

Producing anti-foreign filth is the one department where this election might outdo its predecessors. The targeted 'threats' from abroad include everybody from Western allies who are 'not doing their share' to the Asian 'yellow peril'. Gephardt's TV commercials against Korean cars are just one of many attempts to blame foreigners for America's problems.

The one force that could have something meaningful to say in this election is the working class. But American workers have no voice of their own. Only a quarter of them bothered to vote in 1984, and the present field of nobodies is unlikely to tempt many to go to the polling booths.



GARY HART IN TROUBLESOME GULCH

TORIES CHAMPION VICTORIAN VALUES

THEIR MORALS AND OURS

Last week Douglas Hurd called for a restoration of Victorian values — Joan Phillips explains what's behind the Tories' moral revivalism

Addressing a fringe meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England last week, Tory cabinet minister Douglas Hurd called for a partnership between church and state to reverse the national fall from moral grace. 'We need to work together,' urged the home secretary, 'to rebuild the moral standards and values which should form the sure foundations of a cohesive and united nation.' In a speech at Tamworth to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of nineteenth-century Conservative prime minister Sir Robert Peel the week before, Hurd had issued a similar manifesto for moral regeneration. The Tories' nostalgic appeal for a return to the moral values of the past reflects their growing fears for the future.

Hurd is concerned that traditional moral values have less and less purchase in the Britain of the late eighties. In his Peel bicentenary speech he remarked that the Victorian Tory leader would have been disturbed by the decline in religious worship, the lack of discipline and the loss of respect for the law that characterises the Thatcher era. He cited low church attendances, juvenile delinquency and soaring crime as indices of national degeneration.

COHESION

In stirring fashion Hurd appealed for a crusade to revive the moral values which had worked to hold society together in the last century. 'The amazing social cohesion of England, formed under Peel and the Victorians, is in need of repair. During the remainder of the twentieth century we have set ourselves the task of knitting it together again.' Hurd's speech to the synod last week was an attempt to whip the Church of England into line behind the Tories' moralising mission. While he was critical of the church's occasionally 'bizarre choice of priorities for discussion', Hurd was careful to distance himself from fellow Tory John Gummer who laid into the synod for refusing to challenge the 'condom culture'. He argued that there are strict limits to the amount of coercive power the state can wield on moral matters, and the church must play a much more positive role in spreading the gospel according to Robert Peel and Margaret Thatcher.



HURD PRAYS FOR THE NATION AT LAST WEEK'S GENERAL SYNOD

Why do the Tories put such a premium on morality and why have they chosen this moment to launch their revival crusade?

DIVISION

To understand the central role of morality today we have to examine the issue in the context of a society divided into antagonistic social classes. Capitalism is a system based on exploitation and oppression enforced by the rule of a small minority over the rest of society. Modern capitalist society entails the destruction of traditional communities and the break-up of established conventions. It leads to the uprooting of individuals and the rupture of family life. Capitalism divides society into exploiters and exploited. Some individuals — a small class of capitalists — own the means of production, land, raw materials, machinery and factories. Others — the working class — own only their ability to work. This system not only divides society into two major classes, it also sets worker against worker and capitalist against capitalist.

In a society based on such profound divisions and conflicts, norms which were once obligatory upon all lose their force. The old values which once acted to hold society together appear increasingly irrelevant. Modern capitalist society individualises and atomises people, and makes them less susceptible to universal codes of behaviour. The question of how to maintain social control thus confronts the capitalist class — this is where morality comes in. Conventional morality helps the ruling class to disguise the evils of the system and to make these appear inevitable and inescapable to the majority who suffer them.

IDEOLOGUES

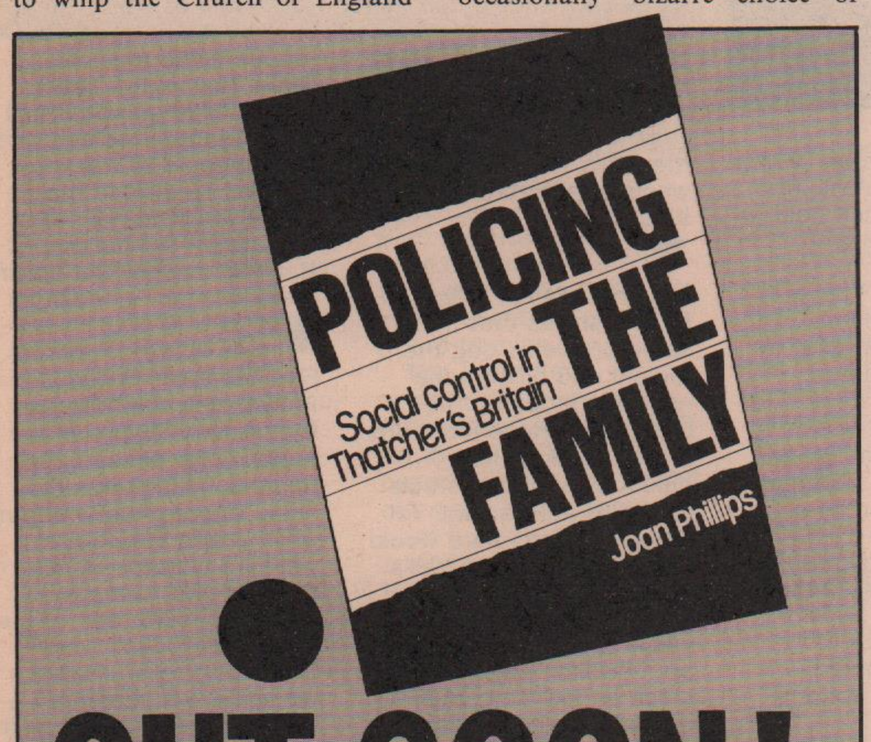
Robert Peel was just as obsessed as Margaret Thatcher with the immorality of the working class. The ruling class of the early nineteenth century was concerned too about signs of incohesion such as family breakdown, rising crime rates, heathen ignorance and general lawlessness. The capitalist class instinctively recognised that it had to establish a new set of social norms in response to the dislocations of early industrial society. Its leading ideologues set about constructing a new morality based on the elevation of the family and the nation. The connection between family morality and national well-being, which is a key theme of Tory propaganda today, was established early in the Victorian era.

The need to re-create social norms which uphold the family and the nation is particularly important in a period of upheaval. In times of social crisis the establishment has sought to strengthen its grip over society by rallying the nation around the family hearth and the national flag. Today, in conditions of economic decline and social unrest, the ruling class is especially keen to re-assert conventional values. This is the meaning of Hurd's demand for a campaign of moral renewal. The chief function of the official morality is social control. As British society slips further into recession its rulers are forced to resort to a more coercive moral code to head off the possibility of revolt.

CLOAK

The key theme of Hurd's speech to the General Synod last week was that the churches, parents, teachers and the individual must take responsibility for sowing the seeds of moral rejuvenation. The effect of the Tories' emphasis on personal morality is to encourage ordinary people to forget about the evils of a system which consigns them to poverty and oppression, and to think about the family, the nation, and the 'common good'. Hurd's espousal of Victorian values is an attempt to cover up the growing divisions and conflicts in society with the cloak of conventional morality.

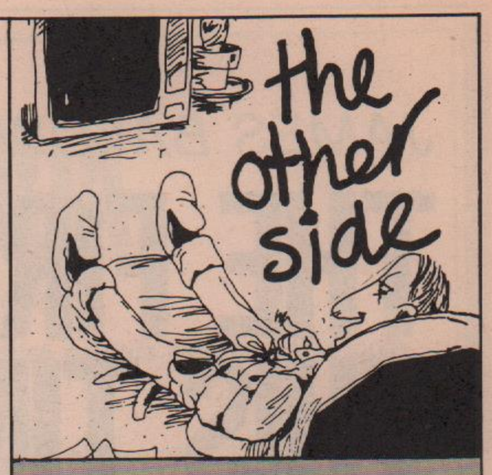
We should have nothing but contempt for Tory morality. The ruling class preaches the responsibility of the individual to conform to its values because the capitalist system would have no future if ordinary people began to act together as a class according to their own view of how society should be organised. Our task is to expose the official moral creed as a cynical apology for exploitation and oppression.



OUT SOON!

This new book sets the revival of traditional morality in the context of British capitalist decline and offers a Marxist challenge to the official orthodoxy

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Cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd



ANYBODY who doubts that British society is still divided along class lines should have watched last week's *40 Minutes* on BB2.

'What are the politics of this paper?' asked the teacher, holding up a copy of the *Guardian* to A-level students at Ruffwood comprehensive — and to the pupils from Rugby public school who were visiting her Kirkby classroom. One Rugby boy, whose first name sounded like Jongler (and a proper little Jongler he was), insisted that it was distastefully 'centre-left'. 'No, it's centre-right' said a Kirkby student. 'Why do you say that?' asked the *Guardian*-reading teacher. 'Because,' snorted the disgusted young scouser, 'it has pictures of the monarchy in it.'

On hearing this, Jongler's face took on the look of a man who has done something which will spoil the hang of his tailor-made trousers. His education in the world of wide lawns and narrow minds had not prepared him to hear people object to seeing photographs of the royal parasites on skis. These must be the 'leftists, pinkoes and one earring-wearers' whom the school regimental sergeant major back at Rugby had warned him to steer clear of during his visit to Liverpool.

The BBC sent the 10 brightest sixth formers from Ruffwood to spend a week at Rugby, and then took 10 jaunty Jonglers back up to Kirkby for a week. The exchange was described as 'a culture clash'. But it was more than that. Each side was stepping over the class line, into the enemy camp.

The working class students from Ruffwood proved to be more articulate and insightful than the Rugby team. They had no problem working out what the military parades, school house rituals and worship of authority at Rugby were all about. 'The Rugby system teaches you to win — no, to rule' reckoned Steve. But the apprentice members of the establishment from Rugby were too blinded by class prejudice to see the reality of life for the Ruffwood students and their families. Jongler couldn't see what the people of Kirkby, one of the most depressed areas in Britain, were complaining about: 'I mean they all have a certain standard of living here, nobody's starving.' He had just come back from the Kirkby chip shop, picking his way between the people who live on benches. A week earlier he had been Gay Gordoning it around caviare-serving waitresses at the Rugby May Ball.

The Rugby students said that the Ruffwood people couldn't fit in at public school because 'they don't understand discipline.' But the young Kirkbyites understood the discipline of the system which working class people live under all too well. They explained it in terms of responsibilities: 'If your parents are unemployed, you can't go to university, you've *got* to get out to work and earn.' The Rugby pupils' parents didn't work either. But they had no trouble finding £7000 a year school fees — 'that's more than most families live on in Kirkby.'

At the end of this 'Bash St Kids meet Lord Snooty' experiment, Jongler and pals couldn't wait to get back to Rugby in their luxury coach. 'If we stayed here,' concluded one, 'we'd lose all our morale and be converted...' his voice trailed off into a horrified whisper '...into left-wing people.' And what would the sergeant major say about that?

Eddie Veale

JAMES BALDWIN

THE FIRE THIS TIME?

Creation for Liberation: A Tribute to James Baldwin, 3 February, Lambeth town hall

A town hall more famous for hyped political notoriety than for radical literary figures may seem an unlikely setting for a tribute to one of the great writers of the century, a man who, when not in America, was usually found in the South of France. Nevertheless, over 1000 people came to Brixton on 3 February to pack into the main hall and the overflow rooms with video monitors, or just to be turned away.

△

James Baldwin, who died at the end of last year, was born in Harlem in 1924 and grew up through some very hard times. Poor, black and gay he left the States in 1948 to live in France; less, he always insisted, as an escape from the oppression of his homeland, than as a means of achieving the distance he needed to assess it more objectively and describe it more fully.

Baldwin made his mark on the literary world with novels like *Giovanni's Room*, *Another Country* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, which explored with great poignancy and precision what it was like to be black in America in the fifties and sixties, and what it was like to be a homosexual too. It was however as a social commentator and political essayist that Baldwin really made his presence felt. *Notes of a Native Son*, *Nobody Knows My Name* and especially *The Fire Next Time* were seminal works in the articulation of black anger and frustration. They spelt out with clarity and urgency the necessity of black liberation.

***Creation for Liberation* was organised by the Race Today Collective to provide a forum, for friends and critics and those simply inspired by his work, to pay homage to James Baldwin. Among them were writers Maya Angelou, Caryl Phillips and Florence Alexis, poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, Bandung File's Darcus Howe, musician Steve Williamson and half the cast of *Amen Corner*.**

▽

There can also have been few present, listening to the tales of Baldwin's involvement in the civil rights movement, of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, Langston Hughes and sixties radicalism, who were not sobered by the thought of how little progress we have made. The irrepressible Angelou asserted Baldwin's belief that the most noble cause was 'the liberation of the human mind and spirit', but liberation of any sort was a ghost at this feast. In the States the racists of Howard Beach are on the rampage, for the second year running the Martin Luther King march has been attacked and black poverty increases daily. The anti-gay backlash is reaching new heights of savagery and bigotry. In Britain the situation is no better.

James Baldwin was an outstanding chronicler of black life who wrote unflinchingly against the prevailing ideas of his time. The writers who followed him have yet to reach his best, and the rest of us have yet to light the fire for which he yearned.

Kunle Oluremi



TWO FILMS ON KENYA

WHITEWASH

White Mischief, **Mike Radford (director)**
The Kitchen Toto, **Harry Hook (director)**

Two films now doing the rounds provide an opportunity to explore the murky history of Britain's relationship with one of its most important African colonies, Kenya.

White Mischief is based on a real scandal among Kenya's notorious Happy Valley set, a degenerate colony of high society settlers blamed for letting the British side down. Debutante Diana Broughton (Greta Scacchi) marries rich old Kenyan settler Sir Jock (Joss Ackland) only to fall in love with uniformed hunk, the Earl of Erroll (Charles Dance). In January 1941 Erroll was found dead outside Nairobi, and Sir Jock was the obvious suspect.

●

Radford thoroughly disapproves of this lot sitting out the war in dissolute luxury while everyone else was back in Blighty sweating out the Blitz. He can take it no further than that, and gives us a glossy, sexy soap opera. When her lover's death opens Diana's eyes to the depravity of this circle she finds consolation with Gilbert Colville (John Hurt), the richest settler of the lot and a decent sort who thinks his Masai farmhands are 'the best people in the world'. Gesturing at some cattle he tells Diana that the Masai 'believe they belong to God...Actually, they're mine.' Just another bit of harmless British 'mischief', I suppose.

The final frame features the smouldering glance of a black servant boy at a grisly cocktail party. He is played by Edward Mahindi, the young star of *The Kitchen Toto*, a much better film which centres on Kenya's colonial war of the fifties. Director Harry Hook, a Kenyan expat himself, subjects a more typical section of the settler community to a penetrating examination. He also brings the native Africans into the foreground.

▲

Mwangi (Edward Mahindi) is the son of a preacher executed by forest guerrillas for refusing to help the Mau Mau rebellion. The local district commissioner hires him as 'toto' or scullion. From below stairs Mwangi learns of the whites' weird ways — their flush toilets and flash cars, their sexual hypocrisy and easy brutality. And all the while, the understated racial antagonisms are mounting to a crescendo. Hook seems convinced that the petty racism of the settlers spoilt things, and set off the revolt. But this explains little, least of all the differing African responses to the struggle. Some Africans, like Mwangi's father, die in blind loyalty to the British. Others, like the insurgents, die fighting the British. And some like the Kikuyu who once formed this district commissioner's police are the victims of both sides. No doubt all of them suffered from petty racism.

◆

After the war, Britain planted thousands of new settlers on the best farming land in Kenya's fertile White Highlands. The Kikuyu became squatters on their own land and were pushed back into reserves. Intense competition for land divided the Kikuyu between comparatively well-off farmers with a stake in law and order, and embittered squatters. The 'emergency' began when the British rallied to the rescue of their 'Loyalist' African allies. Thereafter, the land war took on an anti-colonial aspect and every Kikuyu was confronted with the necessity to choose sides.

This is the true background to the dilemma which faces Mwangi in the film, and if Hook fails to bring it out sufficiently, he does at least succeed in establishing a sensitive portrait of a youth who is trying to find his way in a very unforgiving environment.

Jackie Reynolds



ANTI-RACIST SOCIOLOGY

A CYCLE OF DESPAIR

John Benyon and John Solomos (eds), *The Roots of Urban Unrest*, Pergamon Press, £7.95
Policing against Black People, Institute of Race Relations, £3.95
Policing in Hackney, Roach Family Support Committee/Karia Press, £6.95

The Roots of Urban Unrest is a collection of papers from a conference held at Warwick University in 1986. It begins inauspiciously. 'I have a reluctance', explains sociologist Stuart Hall in his opening address, 'about entering once again into what seems to me a terribly familiar and recurring cycle....There is a problem followed by a conference; the conference is followed by research; the research reinforces what we already know, but in elegant and scholarly language. Then nothing happens.'

■

For once I find myself in full agreement with Professor Hall, up to the point that he overcomes his reluctance. The book brings together the usual celebrities — Hall, Scarman and Richard Wells (deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan Police). If the names are familiar, so too are the arguments — more money for inner cities, greater police accountability, more black policemen, more black MPs, etc. The only note of reality is injected by an anonymous black participant: 'Academics, lawyers, sociologists, professors and university graduates...come and tell us that we should join this very police force that is shooting our people down. How can we join a force whose mentality is violence, whose whole mentality is racism, whose whole aim is to eliminate black people?'

▼

Policing against Black People shows that the same problems dog the radical end of the race relations industry. The Institute of Race Relations prides itself on its militancy and opposition to liberal anti-racism. Yet its conclusions here would barely raise one of Hall's or Scarman's eyebrows. The book presents a wealth of information about police attacks on black people since 1979. It describes swamp and 'sus' operations, police raids on black homes, and violence in police stations.

Having established that the police are racist to the core and could not be expected to defend the black community, the IRR then calls for 'the full democratic accountability of the police' and 'a commitment demonstrated by the top ranks of the police leadership through the ranks downwards to eradicate oppressive and racist policing'. It seems as if whoever wrote the conclusion somehow failed to read the previous 91 pages.

One incident highlighted is the death of Colin Roach, a black youth from East London. According to police he shot himself through the mouth in the foyer of Stoke Newington police station, and although the official inquiry agreed, the black people of Hackney did not. To diffuse the anger which they were venting on the police, Hackney council set up an inquiry.

◆

Five years on, *Policing in Hackney*, the report of that inquiry, points to the holes in the police case. Roach's hold-all was too small to carry the shotgun which killed him, there were no fingerprints on the gun and it was found at the opposite end of the foyer from Colin's body. The report tells us what we knew five years ago — that the police are liars. In the meantime they have continued to wage war on the black community in Hackney, counting Trevor Monerville and Tunay Hassan among their victims.

The ubiquitous Professor Hall wrote the introduction to this report. He calls on the home secretary to 'immediately institute a public inquiry'. Presumably to be followed by another report, and then a conference and then some research....

Kenan Malik

SUPPORTERS' CONFERENCE 1988



Pandora Anderson

IF you're a Revolutionary Communist Party supporter you should have a note in your diary to be in London on 27 and 28 February. That's the weekend we're holding our supporters' conference and it's one of the most important events in our political calendar. As we want to discuss the implementation of our perspectives, and the problems facing our activists today, the conference will only be open to signed-up RCP supporters.

◆

Recently party supporters have come to London for a variety of events, like the conference against the Alton Bill and the Bloody Sunday commemoration march. We appreciate that many comrades, particularly those of you from the North and Scotland, may be a bit tired of travelling. But this is one event you cannot afford to miss.

The supporters' conference is important for you, and it's important for the party. It's an opportunity for you to find out more about where the party's going. It's an opportunity for us to thrash out the problems you're having in your day-to-day work.

At the conference, leading members of the RCP will explain our analysis of the current political period. We'll discuss what our role in the current class struggle must be. We'll also look at what we can expect to achieve over the coming months. The conference will provide the opportunity to explain our plans for the RCP at national and branch level, so you'll be able to understand how the work you're doing fits into the big picture.

◆

We want all the sessions to be 'workshops' in the true sense of the word — places where problems get worked out. To allow this, it's important that you raise problems in an informed and considered way. All supporters should spend time before the conference thinking about the difficulties you come up against.

◆

Plan in advance which workshops you'll attend. If you're undecided, discuss the options with your branch organiser and with comrades in your supporters' group. If possible, organise things so that different supporters in your group go to different workshops — that way you can all report back on the various discussions at your meeting after the conference.

The more you put into the conference before you arrive, the more you'll get out of it. The best way to prepare is to make sure you know what's going on in the world, by studying *the next step*, the quality daily papers and the left-wing press. Familiarise yourself with the political issues and compare their explanations and analysis to our own. Look critically at *the next step*. Ask yourself, 'Are these arguments convincing?'

◆

This is a good opportunity to get to know the RCP inside out. Make sure you don't miss it.

The conference will be held in London. Transport from all our branches is available. Childcare and accommodation can also be provided — but let us know in advance. A pooled fare system will operate.

Admission will be by supporters' card only. The registration fee is £5 and should be paid in advance to your branch organiser. If you cannot register in advance for any reason, please contact our office (phone Fenna on **(01) 729 0414)** and let us know that you'll be coming.

Anne Burton

AGENDA

Saturday 27 February
9.30 Registration
10.30 Plenary: **British politics and the Party today**
12.30 Lunch
1.45 Workshops:
Fighting Alton's Bill
Campaigning against Clause 28
Irish solidarity
3.45 Tea break
4.15 Workshops:
A guide to the British left
Health workers' struggles
The problem of economism
Evening disco

Sunday 28 February
10.30 Workshops:
How the RCP works
Selling and using *tns*
A guide to state repression
12.45 Lunch and **student caucus**
2pm Plenary: **Where do we go from here?**

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Public Meeting
Stop Clause 28, No bans on lesbian and gay rights!
Thursday 25 February, 7.30pm
ICC, Mansfield Road, Nottingham

Irish Freedom Movement



Jim Collins

IRISH FORUMS

A series of fortnightly discussions on the issues that count in building support for the struggle for Irish freedom.
London: Wednesday 2 March, 7.30pm. **Counter-insurgency in Britain's Colonies**
Room S53, St Clements Building, London School of Economics, Houghton St (off Aldwych), WC2 (Holborn tube).
Tickets cost £1/50p unwaged
Leeds: Tuesday 23 February, 7.30pm. **Is There a Loyalist Veto?**
Committee Room C, Leeds University Students' Union

LIVING MARXISM

A series of discussions in London, examining how the world works — and how to change it.
The discussions are held on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm.
The last two in the current series are:
23 February: **The arms race and the problem of peace**
1 March: **Reform and revolution**
The venue is the University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1.
The tickets are £1.50/£1 unwaged per session.

the next step

MARCH
Saturday 20 February
Assemble 12 noon
All Saints, Oxford Road
Manchester

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL
FIGHT FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS

STOP THE CLAUSE

The backlash against lesbians and gays is growing, and so is the urgency of standing up for homosexual rights, argues **Don Milligan**

'THE Church of England is now committed to the proposition that it is less sinful for a man to sleep with his neighbour than with his neighbour's wife.' This was Tory John Gummer speaking out against Anglican bishops for their failure to challenge the 'condom culture' last week. He was speaking at the House of Laity of the General Synod — the parliament of the Church of England — on a motion seeking ways to uphold the traditional teaching of the church. The fact that the minister for agriculture now considers that it is his task to tell the church to crack down on homosexuality is a sign of the growing climate of reaction against lesbians and gays.

Gummer slammed the Church of England for refusing to give the 'clear and unambiguous moral lead which the nation demands'. In other words the church is failing in its Christian duty by not outlawing homosexuality altogether. Gummer condemned the bishops' decision not to act against the gay clergy, and backed the stand taken by the Bishop of Ripon, David Young, who recently refused to ordain homosexual priests. In response to the criticisms that greeted his outbursts, Gummer protested that intolerance was only right and proper since homosexuals after all are a 'disabled minority'. He took to task the Archbishop of York, Dr John Habgood, for refusing to oppose the 'promotion of homosexuality on the rates'.

The Tory minister was referring to Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill which seeks to prevent local councils from 'intentionally promoting homosexuality'. Once it reaches the statute books it could be used to outlaw anything construed as 'promoting homosexuality'. The sponsors of the clause have denied that they want to promote a backlash against lesbians and gays. Yet the reaction it has provoked so far shows that this is indeed the effect of Clause 28.

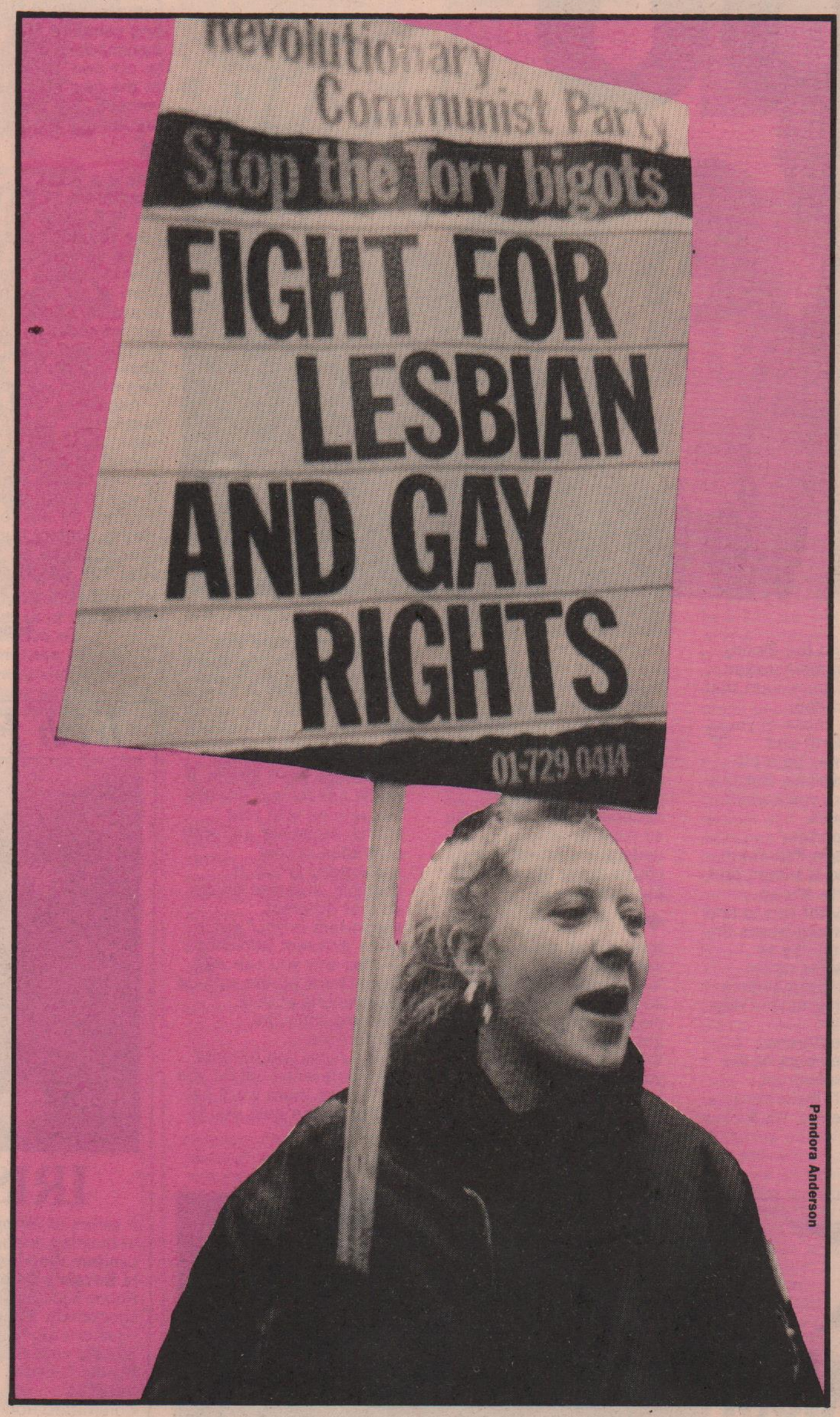
The debates on the clause in parliament have broken open a dam of prejudice against lesbians and gays. Supporters of the clause have argued that homosexuals have only themselves to blame for the rising tide of intolerance. They claim that lesbians and gays who keep themselves to themselves have nothing to fear from the law. The implication is that those who are open about their sexuality will risk persecution. As the editor of the *Sun* put it, 'Homosexuals who say that they are normal and society is perverse are risking a terrible backlash.' The message is that homosexuals must quietly accept the stigma that society attaches to them if they want to keep out of trouble. Those who protest will be blamed for their own oppression.

Since December when Tory backbencher David Wilshire introduced the new clause, the press have had a field day stirring up a backlash against lesbians and gays. The effect of the tabloids' homosexual-hunt is to create the impression that gay men are sex-crazed perverts who threaten the fibre of the nation. The tragic death of 14-year old paperboy Stuart Gough, who was sexually assaulted and murdered, became the occasion for a concerted attack on homosexuals. The media worked in unison to promote the message that *all* gay men are child molesters, who, given the opportunity, will corrupt or assault small boys. 'Once it was our daughters we had to worry about,' declared Terry Dicks MP echoing fellow Tory John Gummer. 'Now it seems our sons aren't safe either.' The *Sun* claimed that 'once such anxieties were more or less limited to young girls,' but 'today the graph of attacks on boys is moving upwards.'

What graph? The abduction, rape and murder of young boys by homosexual men is rare, and there is no evidence that these crimes are on the increase. Following the murder of Stuart Gough the gutter press printed a handful of stories about paperboys beating off sex fiends. The *Sun* told its readers of an attack launched by 'a man with odd-coloured eyes' and announced that it was 'the latest in a series against youngsters delivering papers'. Even the *Sun's* expert smear scouts could not track down more than a couple of such stories to substantiate its claim. There is no trend towards an increase in homosexual attacks on young boys. There is, however, a well-orchestrated campaign to brand all gay men as child molesters.

In an editorial declaring 'WHEN THE GAYS HAVE TO SHUT UP', the *Sun* argued that no reasonable person could possibly blame the homosexual community for what happened to Stuart Gough, just as no reasonable woman could possibly blame all heterosexual men for an act of rape or murder. But it then declared that 'people are not always reasoning' (especially not if the *Sun* can help it), and homosexuals 'would be wise' to stop complaining about inequality and persecution. The response to the murder of Stuart Gough crystallised the mood of reaction against homosexuals that now prevails.

In this climate of bigotry we are faced with a stark choice. We can give up the struggle for equality or we can fight for our rights. In reality we have no choice. To retreat would mean accepting the arguments of the bigots that we are diseased and perverted. It would mean accepting the closet and 'queer-bashing'. We have no alternative but to take on the bigots and challenge their prejudices. We have no alternative but to fight for the decriminalisation of homosexuality and for equal rights for lesbians and gays. Everybody who is concerned about the growth of reaction and committed to the cause of liberation should be in Manchester on Saturday, marching to stop Clause 28.



Pandora Anderson