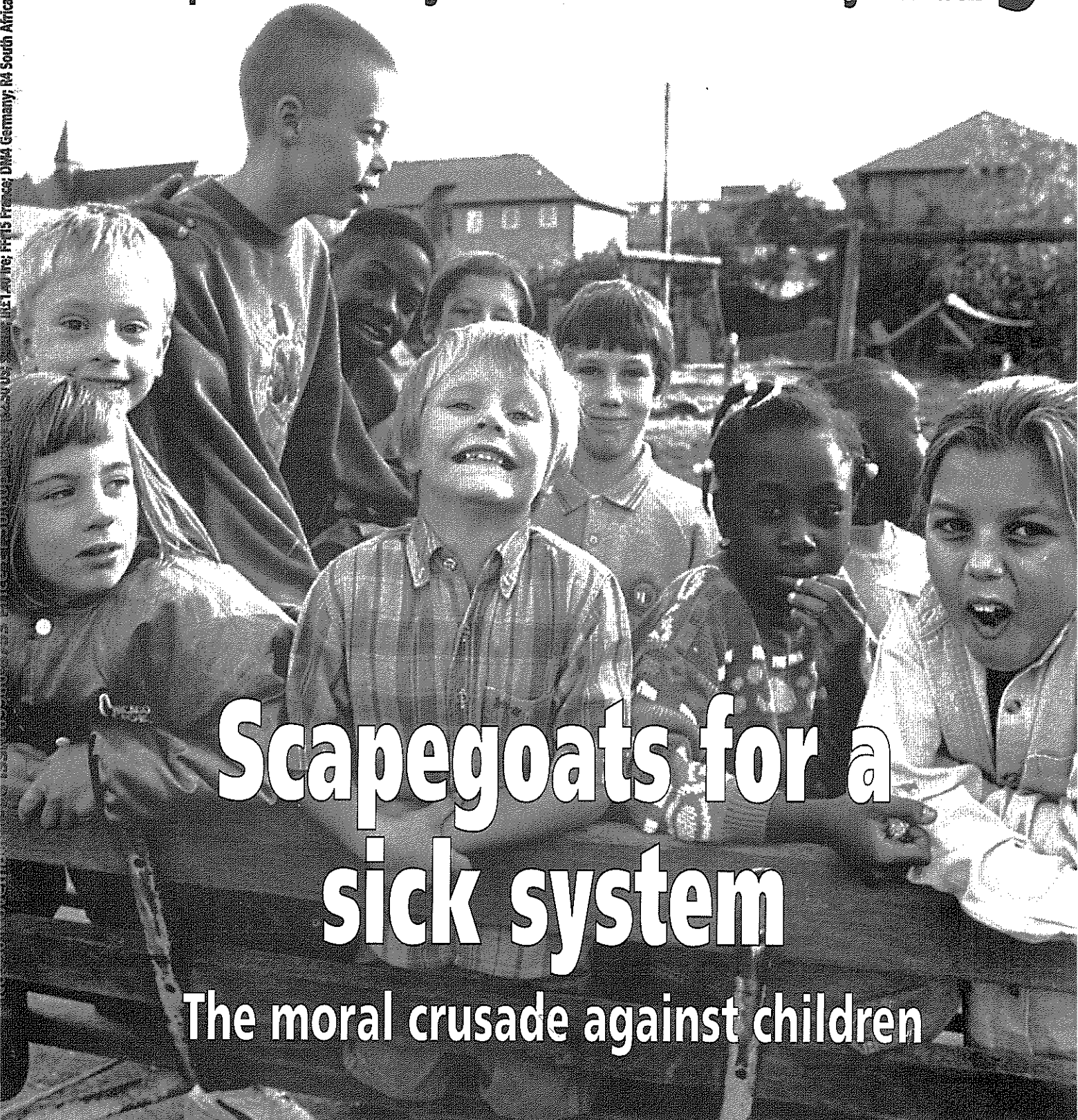


Workers' Liberty³⁶

The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself



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Tony Blair and the rise of the new Hitlerites

JORG Haider's fascist party won 28 per cent of the vote in Austria's 13 November Euro-elections — one per cent less than the Socialists, long the country's biggest party! Haider's success is one more terrible warning for socialists and democrats: we are in a race with the burgeoning forces of fascism all over Europe. We compete with the fascists to win the support of the millions of angry and frustrated youth of a capitalist society which combines great prosperity at one pole with poverty, cultural deprivation and, often, social outlawry at the other.

In France, Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National has held ten to fifteen per cent of the vote for twelve years. In Italy, Belgium and other countries, the far right has won a strong electoral base. In Germany, in the 1930s, less than two and a half years before taking power, the Nazi party had only 18 per cent of the vote. From that base they mushroomed.

Europe in 1996 is not Germany in 1930. The economic dislocation is milder. The fascists' base is still mainly electoral, while by the end of 1930 Hitler's SA had 100,000 organised stormtroopers. Most of the 28 per cent who voted for Haider are not hardened fascists, but people, demoralised and disillusioned people, who respond to his populist demagoguery against immigrants, Europe, and the Austrian Establishment. Yet Europe in 1996 is a much more dangerous and alarming place than Europe in 1986, or 1976.

Since World War 2, Austria has had a model "Blairite" political system. Two "centre" parties have competed and cooperated to manage a commonly-accepted system. The Socialist Party has been a shade to the left, the People's Party, a shade to the right. They are now in coalition. Austrian politics has been so stable as almost to seem catatonic. There have been very few strikes, often only half a dozen small industrial disputes per year over the whole country. *All this "responsibility" and "moderation", all this striving for political "safety", consensus and caution, has produced a most volatile and dangerous situation.*

The social results of privatisation and cuts in Austria have been less devastating than those of Thatcherism in Britain. Unemployment, at seven per cent, is lower than most other countries in Europe. Yet those ills have been enough to show millions of Austrians that capitalism is a system which ebbs and flows without regard to human needs, where insecurity and fear are the basis of life for the great majority, the wage-working class. Maybe it is precisely because Austria's Establishment has tried so hard to build a superstructure of bureaucratically regulated consensus, that the backlash against that Establishment has been so dramatic.

Today, in Britain, thousands of children are being pushed out of schools, with both main political parties hurling threats

and insults at them — "uncontrollable", "not enough moral education", "fast-track punishment for young offenders". If those children are difficult to deal with now, what will they be like as young adults, four or five years older, bigger, stronger, and angrier? Consensus politics is building a ready-made army for the fascists.

Tony Blair wants a "New Labour" government to continue the essentials of the Tories' public-service cuts and anti-union laws, to push young people into cheap-labour "workfare" schemes, and to promote "the dynamism of the market and the rigour of competition". To hold it all together, he wants a moral crusade by the men and women in expensive suits to teach exploited and impoverished young people to be moderate and self-denying — in a society where cultural and spiritual life revolve around gawping at and talking about the ostentatious

public piggery of high consumers! It will not work. It will create a backlash, and that backlash may do worse than strengthen the Tories. If Britain lags behind much of Europe in developing a big fascist movement, this is probably because the Tories stole the National Front's thunder in the 1980s. Disappointment with a duck-egg-blue Blair government is likely to generate a dramatic new growth of the far right, on the model of Austria or France.

"A moral crusade by the men and women in expensive suits to teach exploited and impoverished young people to be moderate and self-denying will not work. It will create a backlash, and push youth into the hands of the new Nazis."

Increasingly, the signs are that we are entering a new cycle of history in which the question *socialism or barbarism* will again be posed to the workers of Europe as sharply as it was in the 1930s. Once more, everything may depend on the strength and the energy of the socialists, the fighters for workers' liberty. If we don't organise, educate and lead the rebellious youth, then the barbarians of New Hitlerism will.

We do not and can not know how much time we will have. But Haider's election success, in the midst of a long and deep economic depression, should focus the minds of all socialists. The labour movement is in no state of mind, body or spirit to win the socialist alternative to barbarism. We need to regenerate and reorient the labour movement. We need to rearm and regroup the socialists.

We may not have as much time to sort ourselves out as the professional optimists and the complacent sectarians among us imagine. We must find the strength and resources to rise to the immense responsibilities that fall on us. Writing in 1937 of the responsibilities of his own generation, WH Auden expressed it like this:

*We are left alone with our day
And the time is short
And history to the defeated
May say alas, but cannot help or pardon..*

Starving us into cheap labour

I BEGAN signing on in late August, having turned 18 in June. I began a part-time further education course in early September. It's slightly more interesting than Richard and Judy, isn't it?

But the government will go to almost any length to deny an unemployed school-leaver doing a part-time course what he's entitled to. You would think the dole was some valuable, desirable honour, not the inadequate, small, socially embarrassing excuse for an income that it is.

I go to the dole to tell them I'm doing a course. Whoops! My claimants adviser (the narky woman on the front desk), when told of my aspirations to an education, says: "You'll have to sign off, you're doing a full-time course." This I find worrying — I like to eat while I study. It is also a bit annoying, as I started my course in the knowledge that it was part-time. That is, it fell in line with the government's new law, the Jobseeker's Allowance, which came into force at the beginning of October.

This law has two main purposes — to save the government money, and to fill shit, poorly paid jobs at the bottom of the employment market.

The legislation allows the Benefits Agency to cut people off if they refuse to take up a job paying £2.50 an hour for 40 hours a week — as any sane person, as well as the mad malignants who drew up these new laws, would. Your benefits are cut off for 1 to 26 weeks, according to a sliding scale of nastiness. The idea is to starve you into taking the shit jobs.

This is the first 'legitimate' though immoral way the government achieves its goals of cost-cutting and shit job filling.

The second way is by deliberately obscuring and confusing rules regarding claimants, leaving the outcome of claims to the discretion of staff who may be ill-trained or are under pressure to fill quotas. It seems now that the job of Benefits Agency staff is to get as many people cut off as they can, or on to state training schemes.

Anyway, knowing that Ms Narky on the front desk was wrong about the 16-hour rule and my part-time course, I went to see a student adviser at college who gave me a letter stating this. Because of the change in the law reducing a "part-time course" from 21 to 16 hours, all FE colleges have similarly cut their courses.

As I explained to Mr Narky (no rela-

tion, same job) upon returning to the dole office with my college letter: "It is possible that every further education establishment in the country got it wrong when they cut their courses, specifically in line with government guidelines. It is possible that thousands of lecturers, teachers, principals and advisers are as thick as the people who work in this office. It is possible, but it's not very fucking probable."

This did not go down well.

Aside from my large gob, Mr Narky also realised that with an official letter from the college stating more politely what I'd just said, this bullshit about 16 hours was not going to do as an excuse for cutting me off.

So he dreamed up a new one. "Mr Baker, as you can see from the guidelines, you must have been signing on for three months before you can start an education course." But, hang on! "I wasn't 18 until

"I'm lucky. I still live at home and can find part-time work. For many more, this law will cause misery."

June, and I was still at school, anyway. It would have been illegal for me to have been signing on for three months!" Mr Narky looks puzzled.

I'm now late for my course. I sign on, everyone there telling me not to expect anything.

Six weeks pass. Lo and behold, an enormous cheque lands on my mat for about six weeks' missed payments. Wehhey! I go to sign on the same day, expecting no trouble but, guess what, someone tells me to sign off.

With a cheque for £200 in my back pocket, I'm all smiles and resigned. I do the hurdles to the Post Office before they can cancel me on the computer. What had probably happened was that, on paper, there were no grounds for cutting me off, but, in person, the people on the front desk thought I was an easy write-off.

If the rules were less ambiguous, they couldn't get away with this. But then their very ambiguity exists for misuse.

A few weeks later, dole money safely tucked away, I go for one last row, this time with the adjudication officer, Chief

Nark. "Take a seat, Mr Baker, I'll be with you in just a minute."

15 minutes later Chief Nark returns. What he'd been doing for 15 minutes was scanning my documents for an excuse to cut me off. "You say here that you are unwilling to give up your course if we find you a job, therefore you do not meet the criteria of being 'available for work', which you agreed to when you signed the Jobseeker's Agreement."

Uhh? "So, because I won't give up a part-time course..."

"No, it's not a part-time course. It's a full-time course..."

"Don't start. I've had this row already. Because I won't give up my course you're cutting me off."

"Yes."

"First I was cut off for taking too long a course, now for being on a short course. If what you say is true, then there's no point in having a 16 hour rule, because any length of course, from 1 hour to 100, disqualifies me from benefit. You can't call me lanky and shorty at the same time, can you?" Chief Nark's eyes begin to cloud over. "This is illogical. You are presenting me with a contradiction in terms. Don't you think this is ludicrous?"

Chief Nark's ears pop in confusion. "I can't comment on that. I am merely carrying out the rules of the Employment Act."

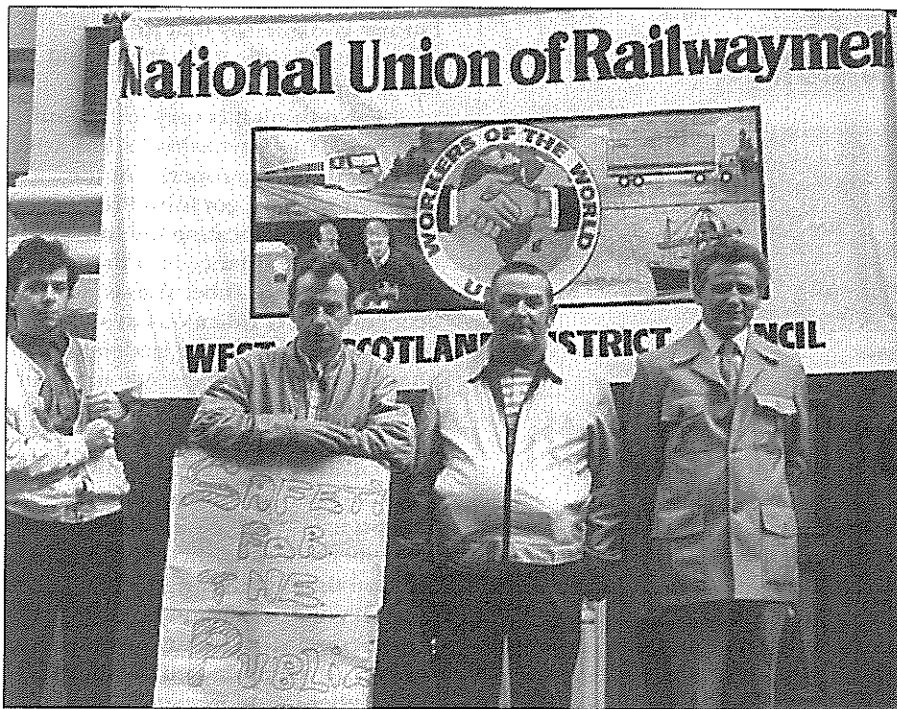
He's had enough, and I'm about to explode. As a result of these laws, many young people will become homeless. I'm lucky. I still live at home and can find some part-time work. For many more, this law will cause misery.

The fact that I know so many of the low-paid workers in the dole shop hate this nonsense too makes me feel even more frustrated. Through union action, they should refuse to do this dirty work for the Tories.

None of us have to put up with the JSA, nor the government's new Workfare schemes, where you do a full-time job for your dole. The Tories can't do anything to us unless we let them.

I went back to college, to the students' union, and got them to make a leaflet, telling people their rights under the JSA. We are going to leaflet the Jobcentre and hopefully get a campaign going. There's enough people angry about this measure to take action.

Teddy Baker



Scotrail workers take on union bashers

AN important test of strength with implications for the whole of the railway industry is now underway at Scotrail — the company that runs all regional train services in Scotland.

RMT traincrew are engaged in a series of one day strikes for an 11% pay rise and a guaranteed break. The strikes — the latest took place on November 2nd and 4th — come on top of an overtime ban that has seen between 200 and 250 trains cancelled per day.

The train crew strikers have been joined by Permanent Way (track) workers who were out on November 3rd and 4th to win the re-instatement of Joe Morrison, an RMT rep sacked for carrying out his trade union duties.

In a clear escalation of the dispute Scotrail managers have sent home Jim Ferry, the RMT District Council's Queen Street guards' rep, for the same crime of carrying out his trade union duties.

It looks as if John Ellis, the director of Scotrail, is trying to get a reputation for himself as a tough cookie who can break strikes. He hopes this will make it easier for a management led buy-out to get the Scotrail franchise when the company is finally put up for sale.

Behind this lies the employers' offensive against all train grades. The

guards' job has been broken up into four different grades — so as to weaken and divide people. Drivers face the prospect of huge splits opening up between the terms and conditions of workers in different companies, with drivers on the more lucrative Inter-City routes on very different rates to us on the regional railways.

Management have done their best to draw the ASLEF leadership into their web. Pressure from the ranks has forced them to ballot over the issue of the 37 hour week. But it is vital that the RMT does not just wait for ASLEF before we escalate the action any further. The first strike day ASLEF are considering isn't until 25 November.

It's great to see the RMT moving to a ballot of all Scotrail workers for a 37 hour week but it's also vital that the RMT leadership don't miss the core issue in the train crew strikes, a 11% across the board payment for past-productivity. A shorter working week is vital, but so is the pay rise!

Any shorter working week must be immediate. We don't want *promises*. London Underground workers have seen that promises of a shorter working week may mean absolutely nothing.

By a Scotrail drivers' rep

Glenroy Watson: rank and file challenge

LONDON'S Tube workers are among the most militant and powerful workers in Britain. This summer, a series of one-day strikes saw the capital's transport system once more brought to a halt in an impressive demonstration of industrial strength. But the Tube workers face problems, too. They are divided across unions — and grades too, to some extent — and often find themselves blocked and defeated by a leadership unwilling to rely on the strength of the rank and file. Given this background, the current election for the London Underground representatives on the RMT national executive is of great importance.

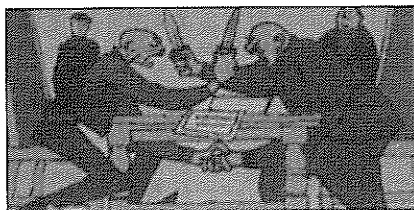
Glenroy Watson, a driver on the Piccadilly line, has made a strong challenge for the post. He told *Workers' Liberty* that he wants to see the RMT devote more energy and resources to building really effective rank-and-file unity.

"I'm standing for the RMT executive because I want to see the union backing up the people in the front line and giving a clear lead to its members. People need to feel that the union is really behind them. I don't think that is how they feel about it right now. There have not been enough resources and back-up going to the people who need them. I think some of the leadership just sit there at head office and don't think they have got a responsibility to the people in the front line, but it's us who make the union what it is.

"The biggest problem Tube workers face is disunity. We have got three different unions with different traditions. People are members of different unions, sometimes because of their grade, but often for all kinds of other reasons. People also have a real loyalty to their particular union. I don't think you can build unity across different unions by saying "join my union". You do it by concentrating on the issues, on the things that matter.

"That's what we've tried to do this summer and last summer during the strikes. We tried to build unity on the picket lines. We do need one union, but the question is always raised, which one? I'm loyal to the RMT, but

INSIDE THE UNIONS



The GMB's friends in the north

It seems like only yesterday that the GMB was projecting itself as the very model of a modern, successful British trade union. The "Flare" campaign was supposed to be reaching out to "growth" areas like women and part-timers. General Secretary John Edmonds was Neil Kinnock's favourite "modernising" union leader and amalgamation with the declining T&GWU was in the offing — on terms generally favourable to the GMB.

The amalgamation fell through — much to Edmonds' annoyance — because of the hostility of the GMB's regional barons in the North. But even so, Edmonds reckoned he could come back to the T&G in a year or two with a new unity proposal and meanwhile the GMB would grow stronger whilst the T&G declined. His confidence was boosted by the 1994 "check-off" campaign (imposed by Tory legislation) in which the GMB actually gained members.

Now, suddenly, it all seems to be going very badly wrong. Membership is once more in decline and the GMB is running a £5 million per year deficit. Morale amongst officials and lay activists is at an all-time low while stories of corruption, nepotism, incompetence, patronage and bullying rise to the sur-

face like scum in a stagnant pool.

The first major scandal broke last month in the Northern region. GMB Regional Secretary Nick Anderson had constructed an extraordinary network of corruption and nepotism. Two of Anderson's daughters had well-paid positions in the union. So did his son-in-law and the partner of a third daughter. Anderson's personal assistant, Nancy Maxwell, was channelling union business to her partner (a Jarrow printer and Labour PPC called MacEvenny) to the tune of £4,000 per month. Ms Maxwell's son also worked for the union, as regional Health and Safety officer.

When reports of Anderson's nepotism and, widespread misuse of union money began to appear in the regional press and in *Private Eye*, Edmonds and the EC were forced to act. Anderson and Maxwell have now been sacked and a number of other officials are suspended, pending further investigations. There may yet be prosecutions.

But Edmonds' troubles are not over, nor are they confined to the Northern region. The union's Midlands region is presently in a state of semi-paralysis, with no less than 7 of its full-time officials either suspended, on extended sick

leave or otherwise out of action. Regional Secretary Ken Gregory (the only Regional Secretary to oppose the sacking of Anderson, incidentally) seems determined to drive out anyone who stands up to him in any way. A charge against one official was referring to Mr Gregory as a "fellow employee of the union"! This particular official was charged with gross misconduct and then offered an early retirement package. Although Mr Gregory does not go in for the bizarre nepotism that characterised Anderson's regime in the north, some of the other allegations against him and his cronies are remarkably similar — in particular, the alleged practice of "double-claiming" expenses (i.e. claiming individual expenses for all-expenses-paid jollies abroad) is exactly the same charge that finally led to the sacking of Ms Maxwell.

Meanwhile, morale in the Midlands is at rock-bottom and the region has recorded the worst membership decline in the entire union.

Edmonds has so far stayed out of the Midlands situation but it seems unlikely that he can continue his Pontius Pilate act for much longer.

By Sleeper

I'm not going to say that the one union must be the RMT. We should not give people ultimatums.

"I also think it is very important for the RMT to start using its link with the Labour Party properly. At the moment we have got John Prescott going round advocating the introduction of private finance into the railways and the Tube. That is not acceptable. It is ridiculous to see the party we finance in the leadership of attacks on our members. We have got to turn the link into something worthwhile. If we don't, it will go.

"I also want to see the concerns of black workers getting proper consideration from the RMT and the labour movement. Back in the 1970s, the old NUR on the Underground had a branch put up a motion to the union's conference [AGM] calling for no black workers to be promoted to any position higher than foreman. When you think about it, that's a terrible thing for a trade union to be discussing. We have moved on since then, but black workers still need a voice. It is not a question of getting me elected to the RMT executive, and that's all there is to it, but it is vital that the union takes up and fights for the rights of black workers".

Chinese dissident jailed

CHINESE dissident Wang Dan was jailed for 11 years on 30 October on charges of "conspiracy to subvert the government".

Wang Dan, then a history student at Beijing University, was a leader of the protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and sentenced to four years in prison as a result. After being paroled in February 1993 he continued to speak out against injustice, and was arrested again in Beijing on 21 May 1995.

According to Human Rights Watch, "China's urban dissident movement, after seven years of struggling to survive and reassert some measure of influence in the country's political affairs since June 1989, has in effect been comprehensively smashed. In a series of political trials held since 1994, and similar to the one Wang Dan now faces, the authorities have driven home the message that no degree of overt political opposition, however peacefully expressed, will be tolerated."

London hospitals crisis

A WOMAN in East London with breast cancer is told she must wait ten weeks for an urgent operation. An elderly woman from Camden & Islington who has banged her head in an accident and suffers double vision is told she must wait six months for a specialist out-patient appointment at Moorfields Eye Hospital.

These are just two of the growing number of victims of an increasingly desperate crisis gripping hospital services in London and across the country. And it's set to get worse: in London alone the combined financial shortfall facing health authorities next year is almost £100 million.

Senior NHS managers are deliberately circulating the rumour that the Tories have decided the health service is so seriously under-funded, they will not attempt to bail it out of the growing financial disaster faced by health authorities. But the probability is that a succession of scandals will explode into news headlines between now and the next election. Only a government convinced it will lose and intent upon a scorched earth policy will be able to ignore the likely consequences.

It's not only the deprived inner-city health authorities which are facing draconian cutbacks. Tory-leaning outer London districts are also feeling the draught.

So, even while health chiefs in East London debate the possible closure of Newham General Hospital's busy A&E unit, and propose to axe the only children's hospital serving Hackney, and while Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham bosses contemplate a massive £19 million cuts package, health authorities in Brent & Harrow, Kingston & Richmond, and Merton, Sutton & Wandsworth are looking at cuts of up to 80% in waiting list treatment for their local population.

Hillingdon Hospital hit the headlines when it announced that it could not accept emergency referrals of patients over 75 from local GPs.

A few days later it claimed to have solved the problem by finding extra cash and beds for the elderly. Unfortunately, these beds still have patients in them, who must die or be discharged before there is any real vacancy. The underlying problems, the dislocation of services and underfunding of community care, remain unresolved.

Meanwhile, Trust bosses from London's surviving A&E units discussed with

the hard-pressed London Ambulance Service how to avoid an embarrassing repetition of last year's trolleys crisis, in which dozens of patients at a time were stranded for hours on end in corridors for lack of emergency beds.

They decided that the best scheme is to share out the misery by a system of "rota closures" in which each A&E unit (not yet named) should close on a "semi-permanent basis."

Again, none of this resolves the underlying problem — that by implementing Tory policy and axing vital acute beds, London's hospitals no longer have the capacity to deal with the effects of a cold winter: they have become dependent upon the greenhouse effect.

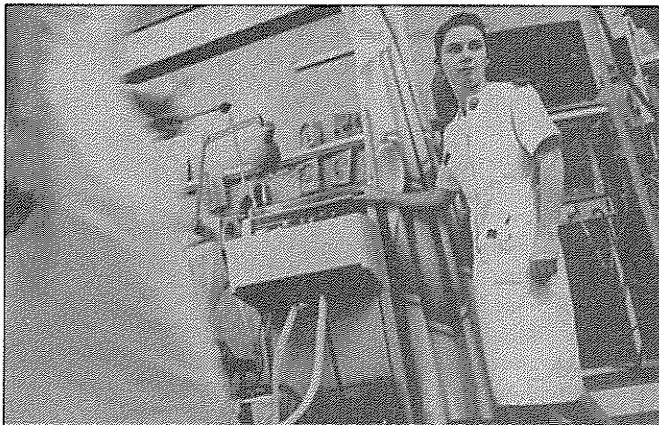
But while public anger and newspaper headlines focus on the popular areas of acute services (emergencies and waiting list treatment), health authorities are facing a rising tide of misery in the neglected area of mental health.

In East London & City Health Authority, management have proposed slashing no less than £13 million from mental health. Out of a £19 million cuts package, Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham warns that, without additional government cash to cover the soaring cost of caring for mentally disordered offenders, they will have to slash 12% from their £95 million mental health budget, effectively demolishing community-based services. Only the most severely ill would get any treatment at all.

Other mental health services admitting they are under severe financial pressure include Bexley & Greenwich, Brent & Harrow, Croydon, and Enfield & Haringey.

Earlier this year, Stephen Dorrell unveiled a new government policy on mental health, under the title "Spectrum of Care." Under the impact of the financial crisis, this 'spectrum' will range from nothing at all to the hopelessly inadequate.

Will Labour do any better? If the Tories stick to their guns, and refuse to pump in more money, the full-scale crisis of next year's funding squeeze will begin



to be felt within months of Tony Blair taking office. Britain's health spending is well below the European average. But the crisis will also coincide with key decisions on whether Labour wishes to enter the single European currency, and embark on the public spending cuts (or massive tax increases) called for by the Maastricht Treaty.

It is vital that campaigners keep up the pressure to ensure that the needs of the sick and the elderly prevail over the ambitions of the bankers and big business.

*By John Lister, Information Director,
London Health Emergency*

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Postal workers: don't throw the vote away!

A 61 per cent vote to continue the strikes. The massive campaign of lies, threats and scare stories by Royal Mail and their Tory backers only proved what we all know. The overwhelming majority of CWU members still want to finish what we started last June — to achieve our demands for a shorter working week and a decent basic wage and to defend duties in Delivery without having to accept teamworking or having to wait 15 months to get anything.

Yet despite this magnificent vote the only sounds coming from union HQ have been cooing ones. Instead of using the vote to force Royal Mail to back down, they may just throw it away.

A document has already gone through the EC that is now being used as the basis for negotiations with management. The document, which has been kept secret from all but EC members, proposes that whole ACAS deal be taken off the table. In its place, joint working parties would be set up on ways of working, delivery issues and union/management relations. These working parties would have no pre-conditions and would go on as long as both parties wanted. Our leader Alan Johnson has even talked about them lasting until after the General Election. In the meantime, the negotiations on this year's pay claim will go on as a separate issue.

This is a recipe for giving up. Our best hope of getting what we want doesn't lie in endless talks with manage-



ment, despite the negotiating skills of those involved. Royal Mail won't mind. It won't cost anything. In the meantime they can try to dripfeed some of their schemes into the weaker areas. And if at the end it all breaks down, they can go on the offensive again.

What EC members need to ask themselves is this:

- Are Royal Mail prepared to concede to our demands?
- Are they prepared to scrap their ideas on teamworking?
- Are they prepared to safeguard second deliveries?
- Are they prepared to grant an amnesty in all discipline cases connected with the strike where there have been no criminal charges brought?

If the answer to any of these is no then the strike vote must be activated. Quickly.

Our best chance of winning our demands lies with the 65,000 who voted yes to more strikes and the authority we have with the rest of our

members. We've been waiting a long time for a cut in hours and decent basic pay. We want it now, not some time in the future. Attacks on the second delivery are going on now. CWU activists, including divisional, area and local reps are being victimised now.

A Manchester postal worker

WE are not alone. Throughout Germany and Europe, employed and unemployed workers are taking action:

- against increasingly brutal government cutbacks in the welfare state;
- against increasing mass unemployment,
- against the destruction of public services,
- against the more and more unbridled accumulation of wealth by the rich and the super-rich,
- against a Europe in which the banks, corporations and cabinets call the tune.

People are taking action in Spain, in France, in Italy, and the day after tomorrow there will be a major national demonstration in Switzerland. In Belgium, hundreds of thousands of people have demonstrated and struck to protest against a state apparatus which is rotten with corruption and crime.

In the steel industry, we have been in struggle repeatedly since the start of the year to defend social security and job security and against Bonn's austerity package. We have fought alone, and with others. Our struggle was strong, but not strong enough.

The employers' ruthless attack on sick pay has pushed almost every one of us into action, and has strengthened our resistance. We have been given new courage by the exemplary action of our colleagues at Mercedes and Opel.

In the past many of us had the impression that we were fighting for others, but now others have taken the movement forward. They have fought on our behalf. They have refused overtime and special shifts. Thanks to them, the Rambos on the bosses' side have got cold feet.

I'll say it again quite clearly: for heaven's sake, don't forget all this by the time of the next election in 1998! Vote the fat man out! Make sure that the Chancellor's parties are kicked out! Let's make sure that no-one dares to go into coalition with them!

Capital and the government want to rip so much out of the regional collective agreements that they will become worthless for us. Today it's sick pay, tomorrow holidays, then the thirteenth month's pay, and then weekly working hours. All is to be torn up, and agreements negotiated only at enterprise level.

In that way, they reckon, they can put us under more pressure and

Workers' Liberty

Incorporating Socialist Organiser

THE WORKING CLASS WILL RISE AGAIN!

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of race or sex." Karl Marx



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The banner reads: "Hands off sick pay"

German trade unionists say:

"We are not alone"

force more concessions out of us. They can play us off against each other, and fear and resignation will play into their hands. They have already taken a lot from us, especially from women, the unemployed, and youth. But they want to take more from us, and we still have a lot to lose.

Unfortunately one or two of us are still of the opinion that these ongoing attacks can be beaten off with days of action such as today's. A bit like a shower from which you get protection by putting up an umbrella. This is a mistake. What we face is not just bad weather. The climate has changed. After Bonn voted through the cutbacks, they smelled blood. The demands become even wilder: increase taxes for the mass of the population, tax pensions, increase the age of retirement, cut disability benefits, make more and more cuts, and then things really get going.

So that everyone understands that from now on wealth is to be redistributed only from the bottom to the top, the leader of the FDP in Hamburg has now demanded a tax on beggars!

The way forward is: join the unions! No moaning and waiting for others. Above all, get involved and work together. Only in that way can we change things in the trade unions which don't suit us.

Colleagues, we go forward on the basis that reason, morality and justice have not died out in this country — not, above all, among ourselves, the majority of the population. One sentence from our history is relevant today as seldom before: "Whoever does not share the struggle, shares the defeat!"

● Speech made by H Dierkes and J Schuring at the IG-Metall union rallies on 24 October in Duisburg. Abridged from a text provided by the German Marxist fortnightly Sozialistische Zeitung. Contact: SoZ, Dasselstr. 75-77, 50674 Köln.

Class struggle in Germany

CLASS war is once again a feature of German life. On Thursday 24 October, after the breakdown of the negotiations on sick pay between unions and bosses, 400,000 metal workers demonstrated their anger and determination.

In Sindelfingen (near Stuttgart) a banner read: "It's high time for class struggle!" Probably only a minority of workers identify as yet with such slogans, but there is real potential for important mobilisations, and not just for the defence of 100 per cent sick pay. Everywhere trade-union spokespeople linked the conflict with the employers to the general government attacks on the welfare state.

A new law passed in September allows employers to pay only 80%, and the big car, truck and steel companies want to take advantage.

The union leaders lack any strategy linking the current conflict to the wage round, unemployment, and austerity. But even partial movements against the increasingly hard-line attitude of the capitalists, who are going to attack the whole system of collective bargaining, to reduce the "costs of labour" in the name of competition in a "globalised" world, may lead to a major confrontation.

Socialists are relaunching the debate on interprofessional action, on general strike action, on demands against unemployment, on the reduction of working hours without loss of pay, and on public investment according to social needs not profitability.

On 14-16 November the DGB (German TUC) meets in Dresden. Probably a revised version of its statement of aims will be put to the congress, eliminating any reference to alternatives to capitalism. A (rather heterogeneous) trade-union opposition has been formed which demands that the vote on the draft should be postponed. But also on the agenda is coordination in struggle against the continuing offensive of the employers and the government.

(Adapted from an article by Manuel Kellner, of Sozialistische Zeitung. Contact: SoZ, Dasselstrasse 75-77, 50674 Köln).

Racist backlash in Australia

SINCE winning government seven months ago the conservative Coalition has used a scare campaign about the size of the Federal deficit to make deep cuts to social spending.

Despite Australia having a low deficit as a proportion of GDP by international standards, and the second lowest rate of taxation in the OECD (behind Turkey), the government refused to consider raising revenue to reduce the deficit.

Instead it focused its attack squarely on those least able to resist and in the process fostered a climate of racism and intolerance that has been seized upon by the talkback demagogues and the two openly racist independent MPs.

The government has tried to sell the idea to workers that their Budget cuts are simply removing 'middle class welfare' entitlements. Today the incomes of 70% of households are less in real dollars than they were in 1976. The Liberals are banking on many people being prepared to accept these cuts as making sure no-one else gets a better deal.

This climate of fear about job security and falling living standards is proving to be the right one for breeding racism against Aborigines and Asians. While most of the media attention has been on

newly elected MP Pauline Hanson's maiden speech in which she talked of rivers of blood in Australia, the real campaign attacking Aborigines was begun by prime minister John Howard and his Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Herron.

The very first actions of the government was to accuse ATSIC (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, an Aboriginal elected body which distributes government funds to Aboriginal community organisations) of financial mismanagement and appoint an administrator. Since then the Minister has refused to use his legislative powers to protect Aboriginal cultural sites and has refused to make a submission to a Human Rights Commission hearing on the 'stolen children'.

This hearing is reporting on the practice, which continued up until the 1960s, whereby white social workers, police and others could forcibly remove Aboriginal children from their parents and relocate them hundreds of miles away. The parents were never told of their children's whereabouts nor were the children told of their parents.

To add insult to injury the Minister, supported by Howard, announced that it was all in the past and anyway many of the children were better off getting a

white education than they would have been if they had stayed with their families.

Hanson's speech, in which she called for all Aboriginal funding to be reviewed; an end to Asian immigration, Australia's withdrawal from the UN, and the cutting of all foreign aid, and predicted an Asian invasion of Australia, has drawn no comment from Howard except to say he supports her right of free speech.

However, alarmed at the support she has received from talkback radio and opinion polls, every State premier and four of Howard's back bench have condemned the speech.

Conspicuous by their silence are the ALP, where no Labor politician has responded to the speech in Parliament, and Howard.

The tactic, if that is what you can call it, of the ALP appears to be to remain silent and let Howard take the heat. If that is the case it is doomed.

Remaining silent in response to this ignorant garbage will not build the support necessary to claw back the massive Coalition vote, many of whom were workers suffering from Labor's economic restructuring.

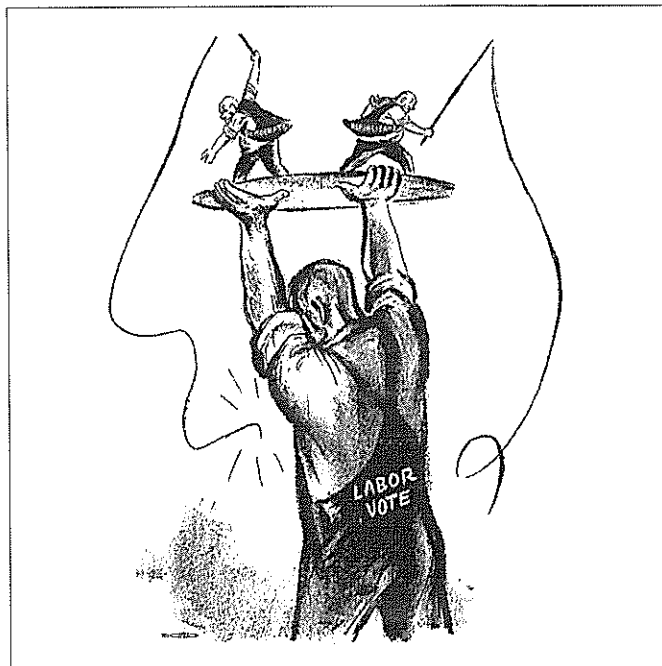
Tony Brown

US Labor builds

THE new-formed American Labor Party has "set a goal of training a cadre of 1,000 workers to put on workshops throughout the country", according to the new issue of its paper, *Labor Party Press*.

It has established an economics educational programme, "Corporate Power and the American Dream", which is "designed to help promote debate and discussion on alternative economic programmes for working people", and scheduled a three day "train the trainers" session at the Rutgers Labor Education Center on January 16-18, 1997.

The Labor Party, established at a conference in Cleveland, Ohio, in June 1996, and has decided not to contest the 1996 presidential election, but is working hard to build rank-and-file support. It has now been endorsed by nine unions, including the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, the United Electrical Workers of America, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, the International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union, and the United Mine Workers, as well as numerous local branches of other unions.



This working-class view of the two-party system is coming back into fashion in the USA!

Behind the Michael Collins controversy

NEIL Jordan's film *Michael Collins* has aroused great controversy even before we have had a chance to see it. A film about a man killed by the old IRA, it has been widely denounced as Provisional IRA propaganda. Any film that shows Ireland's war of independence, so the argument goes, must help the Provisionals. Is this so?

Michael Collins was a son of a small farmer who spent nine of his 31 years working as a counter clerk in London, returning to Ireland for the 1916 Rising. He led the armed forces of Catholic Ireland to victory in the war (1919-21) against the British occupation forces; but for half a century most nationalists saw him as a traitor, and many still do today.

In its form Collins' victory was less than the independent republic declared by a minority in 1916 and endorsed by the representatives of the Irish Catholic-Nationalist majority in 1919. Ireland was partitioned, much against Collins' will, and Britain granted Ireland only the right to set up a self-governing state within the British Empire with the British king as its king. There could be no "Republic".

But if the form was less than "the republic", the substance was not far from it. As Collins said, the Treaty gave Ireland the freedom to win freedom. By the '30s, the state Collins set up had evolved so far that Eamonn De Valera could truly describe it as a republic within the Commonwealth. It remained neutral when Britain went to war in 1939: by any standards that was a fully independent state.

This was more Collins' achievement than that of any other single person. But in 1921 Sinn Fein had split over the Treaty. A narrow minority of the Dail deputies backed Collins. The capitalists, the big farmers, the "stake in the country people", and the Church rallied to the Collins wing of Sinn Fein; most of the poor in the countryside, especially in the south and west, went the other way. They had seen "the Republic" as a possible great transformation of their lives; and they saw the surrender of it as the betrayal of their hopes.

Civil war, in which the issues and the options were very confused, erupted in June 1922, when Collins obeyed a British ultimatum to try to disarm his



Liam Neeson (centre) plays Michael Collins

opponents. Collins was killed in an ambush soon afterwards. His side won the civil war; but inside a decade, those who lost it won power legally, in January 1932, and put their stamp on orthodox nationalist history. Collins died at 31; his rival Eamonn De Valera lived to be 94, was Taoiseach for 21 years and President for his last 14 years, dying much honoured. De Valera built on Collins' achievement of 1921, and could do as little as Collins to win Irish unity.

This founder of the Catholic Irish bourgeois state and his section of Sinn Fein represented rational bourgeois politics. Acknowledging that does not for socialists make him "ours". The poor people who fought and died for "the Republic" against the forces Collins organised, and all those who refused to opt for "the fleshpots of Empire" — those, confused though they surely were, were our people. The tragedy is that the hard-headed realists were on the side of the big bourgeoisie and that the mystics and unreality-mongers were dominant on ours.

How, Neil Jordan has asked, can a film about Collins, help the Provisional IRA? It is surely a disingenuous question.

By all accounts, *Michael Collins* is a dramatically heightened and simplified account of Ireland's war of independence. British rule is presented as an everyday tyranny it never really was. Britain's real savagery, for example, state forces shooting indiscriminately into a crowd in a sports ground, is made worse even than it really was. Of course this

must be a help to the Provisional IRA! Their paper *An Phoblacht*, which is one of the most skilfully dishonest publications on the face of the earth, is making hay with Jordan's film.

It can be argued that they don't have a right to. Collins' IRA represented a conclusive majority in what is now the 26-county state — and in two of the six counties of Northern Ireland as well. The Provisional IRA represents a minority even within the Catholic minority in Ireland's minority state: in all-Ireland terms, the equivalent of what the Provisional IRA is trying to do in the Six Counties would be the Irish Protestant minority trying to bomb the whole of Ireland back into the UK. But reason, fact and argument are weak tools against the power of movie images.

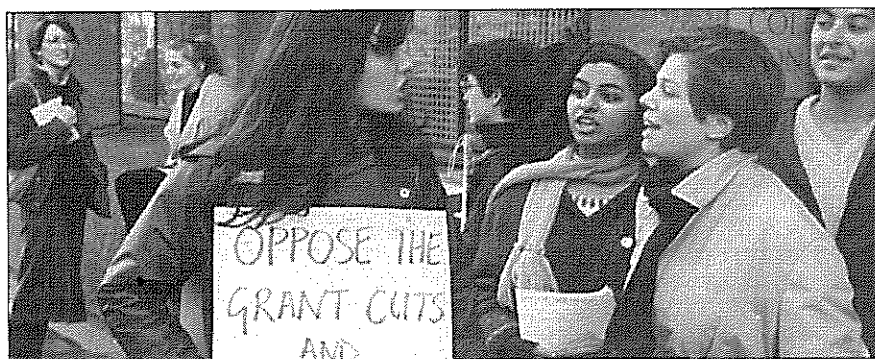
Yet by all accounts, the story Neil Jordan's film tells is true in its essentials — the story of the erection of an independent Irish state in a heroic war against a mighty opponent. Collins led an often ragged band of guerrillas to something like victory over the greatest empire the world had ever seen. Should that story not be told? You don't have to be an Irish nationalist, or Irish, to glory in it — it has inspired people in many countries across the globe.

The way to deprive the Provisional IRA of the chance of misusing this story is to promote real discussion of real history and the present real Ireland. The public debate triggered by Neil Jordan's film may help us speed that urgent work.

Paddy Dollard

The Campaign for Free Education debates New Solutions

Who should pay for higher education?



Everyone

By Erin Lyon*

I THINK we agree on a number of principles: 1. Higher education is in need of reform; 2. Students shouldn't have to pay tuition or top-up fees.

However we must look at the realities of higher education and society before we deal with the question of reform. Higher education participation rates have increased from 1 in 8 in 1979 to 1 in 3 today. Funding, however, has not been increased to match the increase in students. In fact, we have seen a 25% reduction in spending on students in higher education since 1990.

Looking at the present number of students in higher education, and bearing in mind these numbers are increasing, the idea of returning to grants at a pre-1979 levels would mean an increase of 6.5 pence on the basic tax rate — thus hitting the poor. A return to 1979 grant levels would cost £11 billion. No political party would implement this tax increase to cover these costs.

The simplistic arguments offered by Rosie Woods in *WL35* do not in the long run solve the problems of student hardship — the big money on the Trident and Euro-fighter planes has already been spent and to remove these defences would only save a few million pounds. What we need is a recurrent funding policy which would guarantee higher education institutions a source of income so they could plan in the long

term to ensure a quality education and quality environment for students.

So we need a funding system that alleviates student hardship, improves quality and ensures access for all. How? A partnership on education funding — society, business, the individual.

Three obviously separate and defined groups each benefiting from higher education. This is not a round-about way of saying students from working-class backgrounds should pay for their education; it is a straightforward way of suggesting that those who benefit from higher education should pay for it. I think it needs to be stated that the New Solutions policy of funding higher education would mean at long last that a contribution would no longer be paid by the families or by poorer students, but out of the higher income that comes with having a degree.

Those who receive the benefits of higher education often pay back society's investment through the tax system or by entering professions that benefit others (medicine, teaching, social work, etc.). However, it is not the whole community, but the individuals who undertake it who retain most of the benefits through access to rewarding jobs — in both financial and non-financial terms.

So, to answer your question, Rosie, "realistic for whom?", I think the answer is "for everyone."

** Erin Lyon is President of Exeter University Guild of Students, and a supporter of New Solutions*

The rich

By Alison Brown*

1. An across-the-board (regressive) increase of 6.5p on the basic tax rate is not the only option open to government for raising revenue. A simpler and fairer (and long overdue) option is to tax the rich.

2. Erin is in favour of graduates spending a large chunk of their working lives paying back their maintenance costs from their student days. Why? Because graduates earn more (a bit of a generalisation, but we'll leave that aside for now). So why not tax high earners more because they are high earners, whether they were helped on their way by a university degree or by an old school tie?

3. "No political party would..." A pathetic excuse which reduces political campaigning to picking between parties and accepting anything they agree on (which, let's face it, is quite a lot). Please note that progressive change in society has come not from spin doctors but from struggle. The student movement should fight for what students need, rather than scrabbling for crumbs that fall from the politicians' table.

4. Let's try extending the 'principle' that "those who benefit from education should pay for it." Kids benefit from school education, people benefit from treatment when they are ill, unemployed people 'benefit' from a fortnightly giro. Shouldn't all these people repay the cost once they return to the world of work, perhaps through a 'partnership' funding policy?

New Solutions live in a world where everything has a price, but nothing has any value.

** Alison Brown is a member of the Campaign for Free Education*

The backlash against children

By Penelope Leach

THE business about Ridings School and other things in the press about the "indiscipline" of children reflect a real problem — but it's a problem that's partly being used as a cover for other issues: a lack of resources in schools, lack of support for teachers, underfunding and selection. Possibly some of the ministers concerned in the debates are jolly pleased to have these issues to blast the headlines with.

If they can make it appear that the education system is breaking down because the UK's youth are impossible, violent and delinquent, and so forth, then they don't have to look too closely at the system and its resourcing.

Of course, John Major must also be conscious that the exaggerations make teachers and educationalists extremely angry. So he's also got to appear to be supportive by saying: "The majority of teachers do a wonderful job. Some of my best friends are teachers."

To really get to grips with what is going on there is a lot of detailed data that people don't usually refer to, for instance, Rachel Hodgkins's very careful statistical study of the ethnic background of excluded pupils. I try to base my opinions on that kind of thing, not just on impressions.

I think it's almost worse to have individual school selection linked to individual school funding than the old "11 plus". Now even quite well-meaning schools can't afford to offer education to the children who need it most.

At least in the bad old days, and I do think they were appallingly bad, schools' expected and recognised job was to offer an education to everybody. Now with exclusions and so on, there's a growing



Excluded, pressurised, demoralised... brutalised

minority of children whom nobody wants, and nobody's got to have, except ultimately the bootcamps. Many 14 and 15 year olds are losing their right to education. And then everyone will be surprised when they don't turn into good, law-abiding, democratic — preferably right-voting — citizens by the time they're 18.

There has been a backlash against children, really since the time of the Bulger murder. I think we are very frightened of children. We don't really seem to like them or talk to them or regard them as people like ourselves, and therefore all we can think to do is to squeeze harder and harder and harder. And the harder we squeeze, the more people pop out

through our clenched hands. There's a lot of talk — some of it sensible, some of it not — about education for parenthood. I think that comes a little late in the story. For me, the story starts with the need for government, the taxation system and so on, to recognise that being a parent makes a major difference to people's lives. Parents these days have virtually no special recognition of the fact that you work the same hours as everybody else, you earn the same money as everybody else, the same is expected of you as non-parents — and yet your time and your money and your energy have to spread to cover more people.

A great deal of the flak parents are getting makes me very angry. It's easy to say that it's the parents' job to get their children off to school and see they do their homework and so on, but just how is a single mum supposed to manage? How are the family supposed to eat if she doesn't work, and will someone please show me the nice family-friendly employers who will allow her to work convenient hours?

There is a certain amount to be said for the "parent support group" argument, though it can get patronising. It has to start with a much harder socio-economic recognition of what it means to be a parent. You need the resources. And who's going to have access to these parenting classes? Are they going to start in schools? There are some useful initiatives, but will they survive?

This is something that could possibly be different under a Labour government — I don't know — but what tends to happen at the moment is that new ini-

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Making space for the "lost boys"

By Jane Ashworth

AS THE TEACHERS fight it out for more resources and events take an ugly turn in The Ridings School, the debate about disaffected youth has grown narrower and narrower. When the government used to think there was such a thing as society, pupils who were not doing well at school were a cause for concern. Now that the government says society costs too much, the arguments are no longer about how reforms could be made, but about how to discipline pupils into accepting schooling. The issue has been privatised: disaffection is now a personal, moral weakness which can be beaten out of children or fined out of parents.

A future with employment would be the most immediate remedy for the situation. That is not going to happen without a vast shift in the balance of class forces. There are changes which could be made, which are winnable even now, even from a very right-wing Labour government.

Children spend seven hours a day, and 39 weeks a year in school. The rest of their life is spent in their home and in their community. When mass unemployment has meant three generations on the dole and the development of informal coping structures, too often the children's sphere is the unsuitable environment of the streets.

Media stories about violence, drugs, "taxing" and gang rule have a base in truth, and that world is not where junior-age school children should be. When Jack Straw calls for a curfew, he voices the anti-children response to the problem. But he is addressing a big social issue. It is not that he is meddling with issues which of no concern to the labour movement, but that his is a right-wing answer to the problem. He is blaming children and families for a situation which is not of their making.

The situation produced by twenty years of mass unemployment demands of the labour movement more than trade-union responses and implacable hostility to public sector cuts. What is needed is a clear-headed response to the social consequences of the economic crisis, which does not deny the facts of brutalisation but which recognises the types of reforms

needed if working-class areas are to free themselves from the burdens of poverty and social decay.

In the education debate, we need to look at the whole lives of pupils. Quality childcare before school, after school and during the holiday times is essential. Play centres run by local organisations would make a substantial improvement to the quality of children's lives. Creating safe environments, with decent food, run by adults with the time and inclination to listen, talk and play with children, would protect children from the dangers of their streets and ease parental worries about what their children were doing, who with and where.

Alongside such community centres for children would go facilities for parents to get the support they need to keep their heads above water in an impossible difficult situation. Breaking down the isolation of unemployment with drop-in centres, hosting toddler groups, credit unions, advice shops and so on, does make a difference to the morale of women trying to cope.

There have been such facilities in the past, and some councils still do provide such services, but most do not plan them with the participation of the users. Not only does such neighbourhood planning validate a service, it offers opportunities for people to learn the skills of organisation which used to be learned in the labour movement. It allows them to come together to restate that what the media insists is a personal inadequacy is in fact a common problem and not of their own making. It is part of a process of building solidarity where the traditional solidarity of the workplace no longer exists. Such rebuilding will encourage and help create the space for politics. It will challenge the decisions of Labour councils. It will create the space where the "lost boys", as the police propagandists call them, can re-examine their relationships with each other; make real decisions about what is good and what bad; where they can express their alienation and depression without losing respect for themselves and those around them and without having to resort to real-life video-game violence to make themselves heard.

tiatives get funded for the first two years. Even if they look really good, at the end of two years they are supposed to become self-resourcing. And of course they don't, so they die.

For instance, I'm associated with what I think is a good, very simple scheme based in Camden to provide twice-monthly, safe babysitting for single parents, so that they can get out for an evening. We've shown that it works; there have been no scandals; nothing has gone wrong. It's a good idea which for very little money could make a major difference to quite a lot of families' lives. How limited can your aims be? But we've been struggling for about seven years now to get even this resourced as a service rather than an experiment.

I resent the media's idea that there is a simplistic family-values morality to be taught. It sounds pretty silly in a pluralistic society. For example, how are we going to push Christian marriage in a society that not only has given up going to church but has largely given up getting married; a society where most people aren't, even by the stroke of a pen, Christian anyway? It seems to be all upside down.

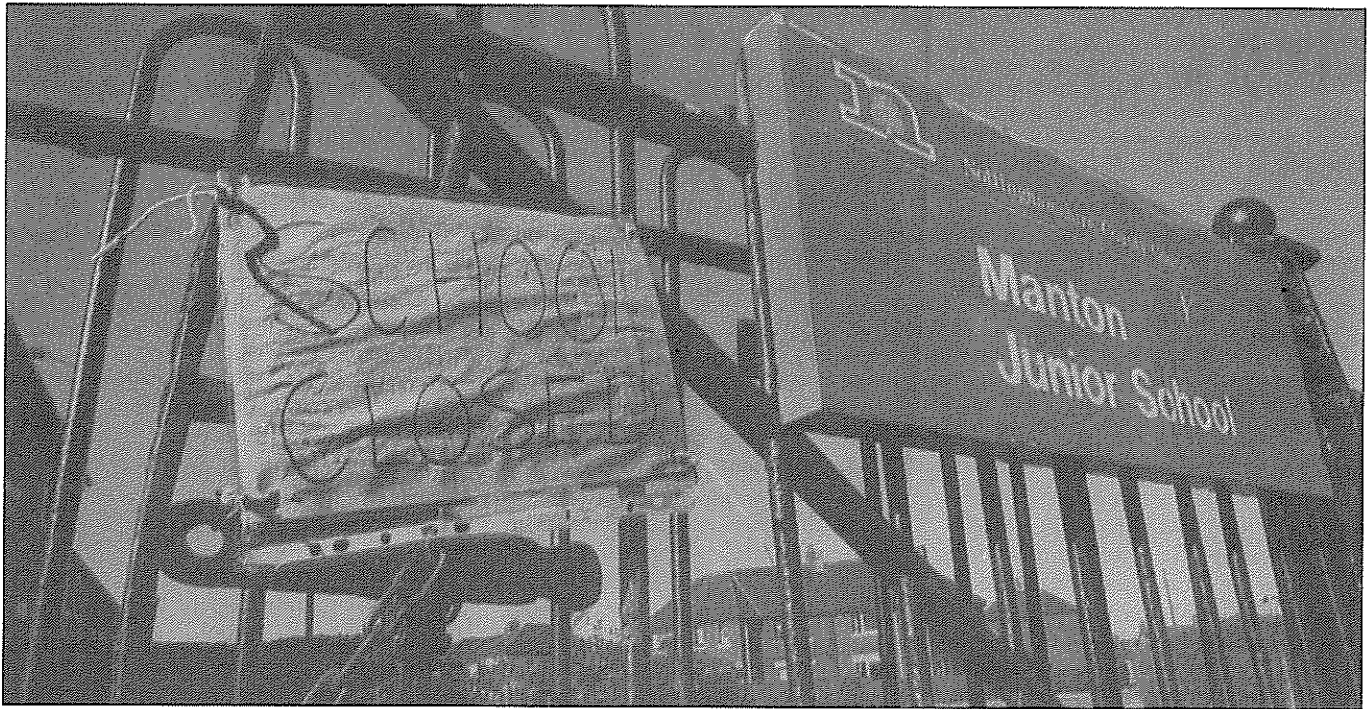
The issue I get really hot about is how teaching morality should be done. The idea that you can teach children to be reasonable and non-violent, self-controlled and self-disciplined by hitting them really winds me up. Children don't do what you say if it isn't what you do. "Don't do as I do, do as I say," doesn't work, and that covers the versions called "I hit you for your good not for mine," or "I do this in love." A loving whipping? Thanks very much.

We should think a bit more about positive examples, about showing children the behaviour that we want. Many schools do this. They are run as co-operative communities where children understand that the reason for not running in the corridors is not to knock the little ones over; and there are a few schools that have school councils which consult about making the rules with the people who have to keep the rules.

The best way I can think of undoing all the work that has been done against bullying would be to go back to using the cane. I absolutely guarantee that a school that reintroduced the cane would reintroduce bullying. I'll certainly pin that principle to my flagpole!

Luckily, I think teachers know that, even if a failing government, on the run-up to an election, pretends not to.

* Penelope Leach is the author of *Children First* and many books on childcare.



The Tory attack on education

By Christine Blower*

NIGEL de Gruchy and the union he leads, the NASUWT [National Association of Schoolmasters / Union of Women Teachers, the second biggest teachers' union], are campaigning to win members from the National Union of Teachers. The NUT is not in favour of vilifying children. De Gruchy's high profile, sensationalist media campaign will clearly make a recovery in the Ridings School more difficult. But it is not just De Gruchy and the NASUWT. The Tories and Labour are vying with each other for profile, despite having only minimal differences in policy.

In the run-up to the general election the government will look for groups to blame for the failure of their social, economic and education policies over the years. Teachers are an obvious target.

Education has suffered from the Tory policies of privatisation and their fetish of the market. They have attacked education as part of their overall attack on local government. They have systematically undermined the gains of comprehensive education, both ideologically and financially. The crucial turning point was the 1988 Education Reform Act.

Firstly, teachers were deskilled and deprofessionalised by the state imposed

National Curriculum. Secondly, the opportunities for teacher classroom co-operation were limited by increases in directed time, more paperwork and workload (and by school management), and the education service was fragmented by local management of schools (LMS) and grant maintained (GM) schools. Ridings is an example.

"Real comprehensive education is the answer. The Tories' two-tier system is the opposite of this."

In Calderdale, where the Ridings School is situated, there are six Local Education Authority (LEA) schools and nine grant maintained. This means that there is less money from the local authorities for the LEA schools: the LEA has to pay the GM schools a definite amount, plus their 15% for services formerly provided locally. It has meant less money for borough-wide behavioural support teams, and educational psychologists.

Calderdale also has grammar schools, which means that the children who go to

the Ridings and who went to the previous schools (Ovenden High and Holmfield) had already been classified as in the lower ability and socially deprived range. In the context of high unemployment and poor housing it is not surprising that the Ridings School has suffered.

Exclusions arise out of this situation. The NUT says that we would ballot teachers in a school where a member has been physically or verbally assaulted, usually on whether or not to refuse to teach the child. The NASUWT goes straight for strike action. This is not the right approach. It vilifies the child, and it does not address the underlying social causes of the violence in schools. It is true that some children do benefit from a fresh start in a new school, but 50% of children excluded at secondary level do not return to mainstream education.

In the present climate, the LEA has much less room for manoeuvre in terms of addressing the children's needs, because the curriculum can no longer be adapted for them. One-to-one provision and the involvement of outside agencies would go a long way to addressing this problem.

League tables put additional pressure on schools to solve difficulties by ejecting children. Class sizes generally need to be reduced, and more resources made avail-

* Christine Blower is currently senior vice-president of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and from Easter 1997 will be President of the union.

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The bad boys in education

By Anna Edgar

RECENT PRESS reports claim that "problem" pupils are on the increase and are holding schools to ransom. At Manton Junior School, Worksop, governors overturned a decision to expel a boy. The NASUWT threatened to strike if he stayed. The school had to find £14,000 from its own budget to provide isolated one-to-one tuition. Eventually, after much conflict, the whole school was closed.

It is simplistic to blame "bad" boys and girls for these incidents. There are many causes of "bad" behaviour in schools. Class size is one of them. As classes of 35-40 become common in primary schools, insecure children lose motivation, fallen behind and express frustration through disruption. It is worse if children have learning difficulties. We need smaller class sizes.

Scotland has a legally protected class maximum of 30, but central government has recently changed health and safety laws on space in English classrooms so children can be crammed like sardines. Notts Education Committee minutes (1996) admit "providing for (disruptive) pupils with special needs in mainstream schools, whether primary or secondary, will not be sustainable as class sizes grow". This is a real and worsening problem.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Emotional or Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) need support. Notts County Council has a long history of providing this and often well. In 1991 Government legislation forced the integration of pupils with special needs and emotional difficulties into mainstream schools. Experts agree this is an excellent policy, if properly run, but complain that the government failed with funding, although figures from Notts County Council show their efficiency in managing the transition within the limits set by the government.

Karen's dyslexic child for example is in a mainstream class of 30 but is given no special-needs support because other children are "more needy". Karen has to pay for a private tutor. Tracy's child's dyslexia was identified but no solution was offered. She had to contact the Dyslexic Institute for advice and read up to find out what was available. She battled to get her child examined by an educational psychologist. Two and a half hours a week of one-to-one tuition was officially recommended. The

school reluctantly provides 40 minutes a week in a group of three. Tracy is also paying for a private tutor.

Julie's story is more dramatic. Her child has hydrocephalus, mobility problems and epilepsy but it took her six months to get a statement so her child could go to special school. She had to write to the press, and her husband had to occupy a county official's office, before a statement was granted.

In all these cases, the children have recognised learning difficulties, and understandably such parents are bitterly disillusioned. There are many more cases, all demanding more structured support for parents, more training for teachers, and more resources to allow the system to cater for all who need it.

The head teacher of Nethergate special school expressed concerns about inadequate resourcing for mainstream integration. Children get frustrated, play up or play truant. Outreach teachers from her school can only provide primary schools with one session of special-needs teaching a fortnight and secondary schools once a week. She believes Government legislation prevents realistic solutions to the problem of half-empty special schools and over-stretched outreach teachers.

Pupil Referral Units take mainstream pupils for mornings or afternoons for counselling. Head teachers feel this service is stretched so thinly that it has become "woefully weak". Many children need long term and consistent support, but this cannot be provided, so schools expel the pupils, who can then only move into another mainstream school.

Teachers also mention league tables and media pressure as contributing factors. Schools are pressurised into prioritising resources for pupils who will "produce the goods" for the league tables. Less academic children lose out, even being segregated into "drop out" classes. It creates terrible discipline problems when pupils are labelled "losers" and become disaffected.

The issue of discipline, "bad" behaviour and "problem" children is not one of individuals. It is one of a system so poorly resourced that it is failing vulnerable children, who are reacting by becoming disruptive. Perhaps, rather than expelling scapegoat schoolboys, it is time for the real "bad boys" of education to be given a taste of their own "kick out the offenders" medicine.

able to address all children's needs. Real comprehensive education is the answer. The Tories' two-tier system is the opposite of this.

Someone has truly said that education now is about valuing only what we can measure, rather than measuring what we value. The National Curriculum does not address educating the whole child. There is a lot of talk about the 'intrinsic worth' of the child, but this is plainly not what is going on in education.

The key to many things in education today is the state of the national union.

Last October's demonstration by teachers was big and successful, but it has not been seen by the leadership of the NUT as part of a specific campaign. They have indicated no obvious next step, unless you count a vague general election campaign. The left needs to focus on things like a national petition and on a lobby of Parliament in February. We need to involve our allies, most notably parents, in real campaigning work.

Trade union unity among teachers is important. There are two broad views about how we might go about achieving it. One is to create a union of all teachers, and the other is to create a union that includes all workers in schools and colleges. Issues of poaching members from UNISON arise in the second option. Many issues in schools do affect all workers there. Organising all workers on one site would strengthen the trend towards seeing the school as the basic unit of the union. Overall, that would have an atomising, not a unifying effect. It is better if we continue to be organised on the level of the employer, and this means the LEA.

Within the TUC, the NUT has had talks about talks about merging with the NASUWT. The recent actions of De Gruchy have not helped, and in any case they are resolutely opposed to unity with the NUT. The Broad Left within the NUT [the right-wing faction, the current leadership] would probably prefer to merge with the ATL [another, smaller, teachers' union], especially if they succeed in joining the TUC. But whatever our trade union structures, the same issues arise: how to defend members, how to put forward alternative policies in education. Here the balance between left and right in the NUT is crucial.

On the NUT Executive now the Broad Left have 21 out of 43 seats, the Left has 19, and there are two independents who generally vote with the leadership. One of these, Marion Darke, is to become a Regional Officer and so there will be a by-election in Outer London, which the Left may well win. The prospects are that by the

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A S Neill, who set kids free for a society in chains

By Martin Thomas

AS NEILL, FOUNDER of Summerhill School, died in 1973 at the age of 90. In his practice and in his writings he was the most uncompromising advocate of freedom in education.

"Their reaction to freedom is rapid and tiresome. For the first week or two, they open doors for the teachers, call me 'sir', and wash carefully. They glance at me with 'respect', which is easily recognised as fear. After a few weeks of freedom, they show what they really are. They become impudent, unmannerly, unwashed. They do all the things they have been forbidden to do in the past: they swear, they smoke, they break things. And all the time, they have a polite and insincere expression in their eyes and voices.

"It takes at least six months for them to lose their insincerity. After that, they also lose their deference to what they regarded as authority. In just about six months, they are natural, healthy kids who say what they think without fluster or haste."

Summerhill is based on a simple idea: "To renounce all discipline, all direction, all moral training, all religious instruction."

The children come to lessons or stay away as they please. They make up their own rules in a school government and enforce them themselves. They play as much as they want to and learn what they want to.

True, the bill for breakages is higher than at other schools. True academic standards are not high. Summerhill has mostly had to deal with 'problem' children with whom the conventional school system has already failed. Yet it proves that human freedom can work. The school does not collapse into havoc.

The freedom is not licence for unlimited damage. "What would you do if a boy started to hammer nails into the grand piano? It doesn't matter if you take the child away from the piano, so long as you don't give the child a bad conscience about hammering nails. No harm is done by insisting on your individual rights, unless you introduce the moral judgement of right and wrong. It is the use of words like naughty, or bad, or dirty, that does



Children need adventure, freedom, the right to protest

harm."

The freedom is less than total on another count too. Neill's writings alternate between stating that schools should not try to mould children into pre-set patterns, and describing the pre-set pattern into which he tries to mould children (happiness, sincerity, balance and sociability). No one can run a school without, consciously or unconsciously, setting aims for education. You can minimise the use of moral and physical terrorism; but you cannot abolish moulding entirely.

Neill saw through the limits of conventional "progressive" schooling: "The child of spirit can rebel against the hard boss, but the soft boss merely makes him impotently soft himself." He was clear that he was against present-day society, and he was clear that what he could do in his free school was strictly limited by society.

But he regarded revolutionary activists as neurotics, and "I would rather see a school produce a happy street cleaner than a neurotic scholar." Isn't the only rational course for a street cleaner today to be "neurotic" in Neill's sense?

At times, Neill resolved his dilemma by opposing himself not only to present-day society, but to society in general. "The very nature of society is inimical to freedom. Society — the crowd — is conservative and hateful toward new thought." Many Summerhill pupils, we are told, spent years at Summerhill attending virtually no lessons — and then, once interested, covered conventional syllabuses in a short time. But they went to other schools to do that work — and to that extent the functioning of Summerhill depends on ordinary schools and on middle-class parents able and willing to arrange education flexibly for their children.

Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto*, attacked the early utopian socialists for a "fantastic standing apart from the contest." Neill did that. "But", Marx added, "these socialist and Communist publications contain also a critical element. They attack every principle of existing society. Hence they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class."

"To produce a new stratum of intellectuals"

By Antonio Gramsci

IT IS NOT ENTIRELY true that "instruction" is something quite different from "education". An excessive emphasis on this distinction has been a serious error of idealist educationalists and its effects can already be seen in the school system as they have reorganised it. For instruction to be wholly distinct from education, the pupil would have to be pure passivity, a "mechanical receiver" of abstract notions — which is absurd...

In the school, the nexus between instruction and education can only be realised by the living work of the teacher. For this he must be aware of the contrast between the type of culture and society which he represents and the type of culture and society represented by his pupils... If the teaching body is not adequate and the nexus between instruction and education is dissolved, while the problem of teaching is conjured away by cardboard schemata exalting educativity, the teacher's work will as a result become yet more inadequate. We will have rhetorical schools, quite unserious, because the material solidity of what is "certain" will be missing and what is "true" will be a truth only of words: that is to say, precisely, rhetoric.

This degeneration is even clearer in the secondary school, in the literature and philosophy syllabus. Previously, the pupils at least acquired a certain "baggage" or "equipment" (according to taste) of concrete facts. Now... the pupil does not bother with concrete facts and fills his head with formulae and words which usually mean nothing to him and which are forgotten at once. It was right to struggle against the old school, but reforming it was not as simple as it seemed. The problem was not one of model curricula but of men, and not just of the men who are actually teachers themselves but of the entire social complex which they

express... The pupil, if he has an active intelligence, will give an order of his own, with the aid of his social background, to the "baggage" he accumulates. With the new curricula, which coincide with a general lowering of the level of the teaching profession, there will no longer be any "baggage" to put in order...

The traditional school was oligarchic because it was intended for the new generation of the ruling class, destined to rule in its turn: but... it is not the fact that pupils learn to rule there, nor the fact that it tends to produce gifted men, which gives a particular type of school its social character. This social character is determined by the fact that each social group has its own type of school, intended to perpetuate a specific traditional function, ruling or subordinate. If one wishes to break this pattern one needs, instead of multiplying and grading different types of vocational school, to create a single type of formative school (primary-secondary) which would take the child up to the threshold of his choice of job, forming him during this time as a person capable of thinking, studying, and ruling — or controlling those who rule...

It will be necessary to resist the tendency to render easy that which cannot become easy without being distorted. If our aim is to produce a new stratum of intellectuals, including those capable of the highest degree of specialisation, from a social group which has not traditionally developed the appropriate attitudes, then we have unprecedented difficulties to overcome.

* From Antonio Gramsci, "Prison Notebooks", pp.35-43. Gramsci was writing (in the prison where he, as a leader of the Italian Communist Party, had been put by Mussolini's fascist regime — and therefore in sometimes coded language) about the "progressive" educational reforms of the fascist government in Italy, and their relation to the traditional school.

conference at Easter 1998 the Left will have a majority on the Executive and be in a position to lead the union.

The 'Left' on the Executive are members of the two organised left caucuses, the STA and the CDFU, of both, or of neither. They share a common perspective of active trade unionism and agree on the need for the union leadership to adhere to conference policy. They are not, like the leadership, for a do-nothing policy until Labour wins a general election, nor do they believe that Labour will provide all the solutions to the problems of education.

Many of the differences on the left are about personalities, but clearly we should unite on a common platform on what to do in the union, and not be put off by differences on wider political issues in Britain or internationally. Rank and file movements in the unions should minimally be for union democracy and for fighting policies which are delivered by members' action.

In the CDFU, we have been accused of being "syndicalists", but we should unashamedly insist on addressing the immediate concerns of teachers.

If the Left stands to win a majority, we must have a properly worked out strategy by the time we do. Here the Executive members have an important role. We need to discuss how to campaign for what members have voted for, how to involve members in taking action, and how the union fits around this. Many of the committees in the union are not accessible to ordinary members or even to Left Executive members. These need to be opened up, or, if necessary, restructured. A rules revision conference should review union organisation, and look at the way officials work. I would personally want to expand the role of lay officials and include many of the local activists in union structures.

There is, unfortunately, a general trend right across the labour movement of lower participation. The STA has around 500 members and the CDFU around 100, and although these are generally the backbone of activists within the union, it's a paradox that the Left is now better represented on the Executive when its base has shrunk. A united, democratic Left should campaign and fight for members. It is not just about being accountable to a caucus; it is also and fundamentally about delivering on the promises we made to members when they elected us to the Executive.

Left victory in 1997 would result in incremental rather than dramatic change in the short term. We should use existing people on the Executive if they are willing to support our project. But the serious Left can afford to make no deals with the "Broad Left"!

Blair's Act of Uniformity

Ken Coates MEP
questions Tony Blair's
Christian socialist
credentials and his plans
for the labour movement.

THE Blair "project" is about removing any socialist elements that may still remain in the Labour Party's intellectual framework. I don't just mean the constitution, but policy commitments like full employment. These socialist elements are to be replaced by an explicit support for the workings of the capitalist market and its consequences.

This fundamental shift is then presented as a new form of ethical socialism. In *The Blair Revelation*, we have taken to pieces the claimed components of that ethical socialism. We have shown that in every case the people who are "prayed in aid" as spiritual guides were very much more radical than Blair himself. This is true whether you take Archbishop Temple, who preached something rather more radical than the old Clause Four at the time when Sydney and Beatrice Webb were drafting their formulations, or John MacMurray, a Scottish theologian much under the influence of both official communists and Christian communists in the 1930s.

The outlook of those who advocate the Blair "project" contrasts unfavourably with the representatives of the earlier tradition in every respect. Some of the words and formulas may appear similar, but their meaning is radically different. An entirely new content has been put into the original forms.

Blair and his supporters have corrupted the idea of human self-development as the central moral or ethical aim of socialism. Marx opposed capitalism because it was incapable of allowing human beings to develop to their full potential. In arguing this he was drawing on a substantial philosophical tradition going back to Aristotle, via Kant and Hegel. Blair uses the words of this tradition without understanding their meaning. He takes the words from the people he names explicitly and also from the fact that some echo of them could be found in the writings of Liberal thinkers like the Victorian idealist T H Green, who did read Hegel and Kant.

But the central problem for Blair and his supporters is their attempt to square this ethical basis with their support for the capitalist market. Today, all Blair really

seems to have is a notion of discipline. His idea of "community" is associated with all kinds of unpleasant authoritarian notions — about curfews and so on — which really don't look at the kinds of shatteringly disintegrative forces which his much beloved market has brought to bear on working class communities all over the land.

In fact, without a critique of the market, all talk of community is empty. This has been known a long time. Remember Marx said, a long time ago, that the true anatomy of civil society is to be found in political economy. That idea was understood perfectly well by Blair's gurus, but not by Blair himself. The great virtue of John MacMurray was that he made a special study of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and understood better than many official Marxists what Marx was trying to say.

The idea is to outlaw the dissent which has made the labour movement into a free movement.

Another aspect of all this is that much of what we are commenting on isn't Blair himself. It's what others write about him, or for him. And what he encourages them to write. What Blair actually presents is just a set of words that are supposed to have good effects. Their object is to encourage people to identify with Blair and to discourage anything that makes people recoil from him. Artistically performed — as they are — they can have a momentary effect, but the problem is that the next hour, or the next day, those configurations that made public opinion receptive to something turn everybody off.

The spin-doctor-driven moralism is backfiring like mad. If you want to find people who are concerned about mass unemployment, you are as likely to find them in the churches as you are in certain kinds of political party.

Many ministers in the main denominations are very much alive to the problem of unemployment. These are people who go out comforting the widows of jobless young men who have committed suicide or parents who have fallen into terrible poverty and can't provide for their children.

I have worked alongside such church-

men for a considerable number of years now because I try to get the churches together in order to influence the political argument in the European Community about unemployment. This is a constituency drawn by its experiences to become concerned. If somebody preaches to them a "line", they can smell a rat. Some of the things that are being promoted as Blair's Christian concerns don't ring true with concerned Christians.

The Cardinal of the Scottish Catholic church, for instance, has picked up on the hypocritical authoritarianism. He has criticised New Labour for "scapegoating" easy targets like winos and squeegee merchants while failing to denounce the economic and social forces that create poverty and unemployment. He has also picked on the fact that though Blair says he is against abortion, anti-abortion campaigns are not even given the right to have a stall at Labour conference.

I believe that it is right that the secular authority should not be dictated to by the churches on an issue of civil morality, and that we should listen to all the points of view. It is not right to say that we are only going to listen to one point of view. If you are convinced that you are right, you have no fear of the opposing argument and no need to censor your opponent.

The response of the spin-doctors to Cardinal Winning's criticism of New Labour for blaming the poor has been hysterical. They have talked all kinds of rubbish about the Cardinal needing to apologise to Blair, and therefore shown themselves to be suffering from a complete failure to understand what moves voters.

There are a hell of a lot of Catholic voters in Scotland who care deeply about unemployment and already sceptical of New Labour's commitment to devolution. They don't like the heavy squad being unleashed on their Cardinal. Cardinal Winning does not come across to me as a spokesman for deepest reaction and religious obscurantism. He is a champion of the poor and the unemployed from within the Catholic tradition. If he wants to meet Tony Blair to express his concerns, then Blair should meet him. All these demands that he has to first apologise to Blair are insane.

AN important aspect of *The Blair Revelation* is our challenge to the twisted history of the Labour Party

that is current in New Labour and makes up a central part of Mandelson and Liddle's book. Perhaps the key misunderstanding is the explanation of why the SDP split. All the arch-villains knew they were never going to make it into the leadership of the Party and felt uncomfortable with the Party's move to the left. But the essential question was that their own personal advance had been halted.

The idea that they represented a sensible stripe that didn't go along with Bennism is ridiculous. In the mid '70s they were only too willing to go along with things that are now labelled "Bennism." Roy Jenkins, for instance, even had a chapter on regional economic development written for one of his books by Stuart Holland, who was the author of the Alternative Economic Strategy and the originator of a lot of the ideas about planning agreements. Such ideas were supported right across the Party. To say otherwise is to reinvent history. That doesn't mean that the Alternative Economic Strategy was right — almost certainly, multinational capital had already developed beyond the national framework — but that is a different question. The SDP offered nothing distinctive till they got themselves into an alliance with the Liberals, which was exactly the same kind of project as Blair is going for now.

The real history of events leading up to the great reforming government of 1945 is also garbled. Mandelson and Liddle give great weight to the contribution of Hugh Dalton and Herbert Morrison — Mandelson's grandfather. But the really important contribution after the MacDonald split was made by Ernest Bevin. He held the party together when it was down to around 50 MPs and the Liberals were a serious threat. Bevin organised the trade union movement to sustain and solidify the Labour Party. He built the *Daily Herald* into a substantial political instrument with 2 million readers. He also learnt from Keynes, whereas Morrison knew nothing and Dalton wrote books on the economy which repeated the economic orthodoxy of the time, which is, of course, very similar to the orthodoxy today.

In fact, if Dalton had been put into the same position as MacDonald's Chancellor, Snowden, then he too would have proposed major cuts in public spending and attacks on the unemployed. Bevin, on the other hand, did understand what Keynes was saying. That's why Bevin was able to move the Labour Party towards the full employment policy during the war and after. When Blair says that the real architects of post-war Labour were Beveridge and Keynes, he is leaving out Bevin who gave Beveridge and Keynes a political

anchor in a social class — the working class — and in the labour movement.

I'm not saying that all we have to do is revive Keynes. But we can learn from part of that experience which is valid. You don't have to live with mass unemployment. We lived without it for 30 years, we can do again. Getting rid of mass unemployment is a prerequisite for an advance for the labour movement.

WHEN Morgan Phillips said that "the Labour Party owes more to Methodism than to Marxism", that was hogwash, but the trade unions did owe an awful lot to Nonconformism. You could see the same kind of thing in Poland with Solidarnosc and the Catholic church, where it was the only organisational form that was not incorporated into the political establishment. People who were quite agnostic became Catholics because they were able to express themselves differently. In Britain, Nonconformism was exactly the same kind of thing. It allowed people to express themselves differently but within the religious framework.

The Church of England belonged to the government. The pulpit had the royal coat of arms hanging above it. You got the King's message there. It was like having only one television channel. Literacy and communication turned round the Church: what we got during the English revolution was an explosion of religious tolerance, including of spectacular "deviations" like the Ranters and the Diggers.

The English revolution was the point at which people suddenly won the freedom to express all their humanitarian longings. It's a very important moment in our history. After that the King was brought back and you had the Act of Uniformity which outlawed all this dissentient thinking. Executions, imprisonment, discrimination were all used. All that was about extirpating the notion that we are all equal in the sight of God, that God speaks equally to all of us and that there is nobody licensed to be a priest who can tell us what to do, and so on.

At the same time, they purged the Church. All the old clergymen who stuck to the relative freedom were thrown out and you had to sign the Act of Uniformity to go on being a priest. It doesn't take much to imagine Blair's Members of Parliament signing this awful Act of Uniformity — "New Labour, new life for Britain" — which was voted through the conference and got standing ovations for slush.

The idea is to outlaw the dissent which has made the labour movement

into a free movement. The leaders of New Labour are against working-class people getting together and discussing politics. They are against anybody thinking. They are against any idea that might lead to a challenge to the status quo.

We have all come well beyond the time when we had to think in theological terms, but our forebears did have to think in those terms. There was no other way you could express it. I have tried to draw out this point because we are at an historic juncture. If they get away with their new Act of Uniformity, it is something that is designed to finish the historically formed left in Britain. It is an attack not just on us, but on our ancestors and our progeny. After all, what choice will those who come after us have if the political system is closed down against us all? I don't think they can succeed, but I know what they are trying to do and that's why it is necessary to speak about it.

We must tell the truth and not fear for the consequences. There are too many people deluding themselves that after the election things will open up for the left. That will only happen if we speak the truth now, if we stay silent we will lose. What we are doing is challenging a very powerful political apparatus that has enormous patronage powers in parliament and links with the media. But challenge it we must. That's what we've tried to do in the book.

There is no future for Labour with Tony Blair as leader and with the disciplined and integrated apparatus he has around him in control. Blair wants to dilute the Labour Party into a grand coalition with Liberals and wet Tories that will administer some kind of technological quick-fix to capitalism. The fix won't work and the coalition won't hold, but in the meantime the structures of the labour movement could be broken to pieces.

We must try and stop it. But to do so, we must say it like it is. We must not pretend we can go on for a long time as the left wing of this monstrosity, or put forward the socialist case in New Labour-friendly terms. If the Labour Party is to be saved, Blair must be removed as leader. Of all the responses we've got to the book, the one that cheers me the most was from Christopher Hill, the Marxist historian of the English revolution. He sent us a wonderful letter saying it was a good book and then posing the question: "How do we get rid of this man?" That is, of course, the correct question. *Ken Coates was talking to Tom Rigby.*

The Blair Revelation — Deliverance for Whom? By Michael Barratt-Brown and Ken Coates MEP, Spokesman Books. £6.99

Chaos in Russia

Bob Arnot reports on the background to the nationwide protest strike in Russia on 5 November

OVER the course of the last twelve months, if the western media are to be believed, Russia has made huge steps towards democracy, with the completion of presidential and Duma elections. The economy is beginning to stabilise. The monthly rate of inflation is now down to almost zero, and the collapse in production has at last been arrested. If Richard Layard, an academic from LSE and economic adviser to the Russian government, is to be believed in his recent book, then there is to be a boom in Russia!

In fact, recent events have provided yet another twist in the continuing disintegration of the Russian economy and society. Russian democracy, trumpeted as such a great success, has been further exposed as a hollow sham. Yeltsin's election win was only possible because of his massive misuse of state funds, his extravagant promises, his vice-like grip on the media and the odiousness of his neo-Stalinist, anti-semitic, nationalist, Communist Party opponent, Zyuganov. But, as Yeltsin has been increasingly sidelined by his illness, it has proved necessary for the real power that lay behind him to become ever more obvious. The strata of the old ruling elite who have done so well out of the transition process have begun to position themselves for the inevitable demise of Yeltsin. For example, Chubais, who as architect of Russia's privatisation process presided over the grabbing of state assets by sections of the old ruling elite, has now manoeuvred into a position where he can place his own business cronies directly into positions of political power.

The most recent move has been the appointment of Boris Berezovsky as Deputy Secretary of the Security Council, and much has been made of the fact that this was done without Yeltsin's knowledge. If this is the case it simply confirms how far removed Yeltsin has become, but it is largely irrelevant.

Yeltsin, after all, is (was) the populist figurehead of a social group, and his replacement is inevitable at some stage. What Berezovsky represents is precisely that stratum of Russian society that has done well out of the transition process. Berezovsky has become extremely rich from car dealerships, banking, and his media interests, which include newspapers, magazines and television. How he gained control of the privatised public television network (ORT), and how he has used that control, is a particularly instructive example of the development of the new ruling group.

Yeltsin charged Chubais with running the privatisation process. This was supported by western neo-liberal economists who thought that what was being created was the necessary institutional framework for a liberal, democratic capitalism. Chubais restricted access to the sale of shares in the TV company and

"In early October one million civilian defence sector workers were placed on pre-strike readiness. They are owed around 10 trillion rubles in unpaid wages and have not been paid for three or four months."

Berezovsky's company LogoVAZ emerged as the majority shareholder. In the presidential election campaign, Berezovsky's control of ORT and Chubais' membership of its board meant that it showed the president in a favourable light while exposing the Stalinist credentials of Zyuganov and reminding Russians of the 1930s, the camps, and the purges. So Yeltsin wins the election but becomes a lame-duck president, and Berezovsky is appointed to the security council.

As a recent *Financial Times* article points out, Berezovsky is one of seven business leaders who, on some estimates, between them control almost 50% of the Russian economy. Interviewed by the *FT*, Berezovsky explained: "Before the elections, business realised that if business is not consolidated — if we are not strong and decisive — we will not have a chance... It is not possible to have this [market] transformation automatically. We need

to use all our power to realise this transformation."

The net result has been a peculiar conjunction between the old *nomenklatura* and the new financial elite, who to a large extent are one and the same, and they are now firmly entrenched in government.

And what is happening in the real economy? Even if the official level of inflation fell to 0.3% in September, the reality for ordinary working people is that price rises for essential goods and services continue. With over 2,000 commercial banks, many in a parlous state and some even of the biggest, like Tveruniversalsbank, collapsing, it is difficult to talk of stabilisation. And then there are the spectacular stories of embezzlement and misuse of funds that are beginning to emerge in the Russian press. For example, US investors have accused Inkombank's administrators of

embezzling \$62 million, alongside misuse of company credit cards, the lavish spending by the ex-prostitute mistress of a vice-president of the bank, and the re-routing of customers' money into private offshore accounts.

The supposed halt in the decline of production simply has not happened. GDP fell 6% in the first half of 1996, and industrial output by 8 or 9%. Output of a

wide variety of industrial goods collapsed even further, with production of trucks down almost 20%, tractors down almost 40%, and combine harvesters down 66%. Light industry declined by a further 20%, and agricultural output also continued to fall.

To satisfy the imperatives of western financial institutions, the Russian Central Bank has continued to control stringently the money outflows. However, the control of the money supply has meant a cash crisis for industrial enterprises which can no longer get credits from government, or indeed payments for government orders which have been completed. So enterprises cannot pay their suppliers. There has been a massive growth in inter-enterprise debt. Wages have not been paid in wide sectors of industry. And enterprises do not pay their taxes; for example, in October 1996, only about 45% of planned taxes will be collected. That in turn means that the government

does not pay teachers, health workers and miners. If workers do not have cash incomes, they cannot purchase goods and services, and the whole cycle of decline is reinforced.

Those that have prospered, the supposed "New Russians", operate in the areas of trade and finance. The export of raw materials and semi-finished products has continued unabated, and that has provided the basis for the importation of western consumer goods for a small proportion of the population. Trade and finance flourish as the real economy and production languish. Russia proves that a restrictive monetary policy can provide apparent stabilisation, but only at the cost of a collapse in production and the immiseration of large sections of the population.

The situation of pensioners is particularly acute. The Gaidar "shock therapy" of early 1992 saw inflation rates reach almost 3,000%, and that effectively destroyed any meagre savings pensioners may have held. Pension increases since then have been inadequate, but, more important, the pension fund is currently owed 40 trillion rubles by enterprises and 13 trillion by the federal government, and so owes pensioners 17 trillion in unpaid pensions. Pensioners' demonstrations and marches are a common occurrence in many Russian towns and cities.

The wage arrears problem is potentially even more explosive. Real incomes for the majority of Russian workers have fallen about 50% since the early 1990s, but by mid-October workers were owed approximately 43 trillion rubles in unpaid wages, and the armed forces another 6 trillion. About 16 to 18 million people, a quarter of the workforce, have not been paid for work they have done. According to *Izvestiia*, a gravestone has been unveiled in the city of Krasnoyarsk inscribed, "Wages, RIP. We Remember You. Date of death October 1995." Some workers in the city have received no wages for 12 months.

The combination of low pay and no pay, and the breakdown of the old structures of social support through the enterprise, has led conferences of labour collectives in a number of rayons and cities in the Kuzbass to establish "Salvation Committees". In an open letter to Chernomyrdin, one such committee argued: "Most families in this city are living in poverty. People are starving without going on hunger strike. They simply do not have any money to buy food. Miners, power industry workers, construction workers, teachers and doctors, not to mention pensioners, are having to fight for their survival."

A brief survey of some of the strikes in October gives an idea of the extent, both geographic and sectoral, of the actions taking place. In early October one million civilian defence sector workers were placed on pre-strike readiness. They are owed around 10 trillion rubles in unpaid wages and have not been paid for three or four months. Workers in the plants that build and dismantle Russian submarines have been picketing the finance ministry, and workers at a military communications production plant in Belgorod not only went on strike but threatened to block the main road to Moscow.

Teachers' strikes and protest actions occurred in almost 2,000 schools on 4 and 7 October, as their wage arrears in some regions now amount to seven months. Employees of the Academy of Science also took strike action in a number of cities and one Institute Director, on the eleventh day of a hunger strike, pointed out that over half the scientific institutes could be closed in the next three or four months if funding for wages was not forthcoming. Engineering workers from the giant Uralsmash plant have set up a picket outside the home of the regional governor of Sverdlovsk to protest wage arrears and new tax laws that might bankrupt the company. Nuclear power workers, medical workers and miners have also been on strike or protested during the month. There have even been reports from a psychiatric hospital that the patients are preparing protest actions because their hospital has received no funds since April of this year. The poverty and desperation has also led to reports of self-immolation, suicides, and even cannibalism.

OVER the first three quarters of this year, Goskomstat reports that nearly 4,000 enterprises have participated in strikes, and that clearly underestimates the number participating in all sorts of protest. The groundswell of protests was at last taken up by the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR), with a nationwide protest strike on 5 November. At the time of writing, several features are clear from the reports available. Protest actions occurred in more than 50 regions of Russia, and the unions claim more than 15 million people participated. The Ministry of the Interior claims that only 320,000 people participated actively in street demonstrations. About 40,000 marched in Moscow, but in St Petersburg the local TV station reported only 8,000 demonstrators. Participants in the Moscow demonstration

report that not only pensioners, but also considerable numbers of younger people, were involved. Participation has clearly been higher in regions and sectors with a record of strikes in the past. Some of the biggest demonstrations were in Primorsky Krai, in the Russian Far East, where strikes and protests have been particularly sharp since the summer. Union leaders estimate that more than 160,000 people participated in meetings and protest actions. More than 20,000 demonstrated in Vladivostok, and 15,000 in Khabarovsk. In the mining industry it has been estimated that 290 out of 350 pits joined the action.

The government has argued that enterprise directors and regional administrators have caused the wage arrears problem by mismanagement or misuse of funds — but this does not explain why the problem should be so generalised and growing; and they have promised to pay the wage arrears — but that is precisely what they have done on every other occasion when they have been pressed.

Russia is trapped between the political economy of the old system and the ruling group's desire to break through to the market. The transition to some form of capitalism can be achieved only at the expense of the working population. Even given the decline in living standards, that requires further attacks on the position of workers in the enterprises. The wage arrears problem is simply the phenomenal manifestation of the form that the attack has taken. Rather than casting whole sections of the workforce out of jobs, the regime has opted for the apparently easier strategy of non-payment. However, the crunch must eventually come.

The new forces entering government know only too well that workers in the crumbling productive sector can be paid only if taxes are imposed on and collected from the successful trade and finance sectors, something that they will surely resist. That is why Chubais has already begun to argue that bankruptcy and closure of ailing enterprises are the only route forwards.

The demonstrations and strikes on 5 November should not be viewed as the disappointing end to the strike waves of 1995 and early 1996. What they could and should represent is the beginning of a growing struggle against the ruling group. An enormous onus now passes to the FNPR and the nascent left in Russia to begin to think through the strategy and tactics of the coming period. Their responses will not only influence events in Russia, but also resonate throughout the world economy.

Natalia Trotsky's 1956 broadcast to Russia

ON the eve of the Second World War, on 25 August 1939, Hitler and the French ambassador to Germany, Coulondre, try to frighten each other; Coulondre says to Hitler: "The real victor [in case of war] will be Trotsky. Have you thought that over?"

"I know," Hitler replies, "but why did France and Britain give Poland complete freedom of action [to reject German demands]?"

By the end of his life, the name of Trotsky had thus become another word for the proletarian revolution. Trotsky personified socialism: the past of socialism, whose greatest achievement, the Russian Revolution of October 1917, he, together with Lenin, had led; the socialist present — fighting indomitably against overwhelming odds; and the hopes and aspirations for a socialist future. Trotsky's voice was silenced by an assassin on 20 August 1940.

Trotsky's political legacy was continued, among others, by his companion of 38 years, Natalia Sedova (who lived until 1962). After Stalin's successor, Khrushchev, denounced Stalin as a mass murderer, Natalia broadcast this speech into Stalinist Russia in June 1956. It is as if the voice of Trotsky himself, though 16 years dead, was trying for the last time to reach the workers of the USSR, and those aroused in Poland and Hungary.

THIS is Natalia Ivanovna Sedova, widow of Leon Davidovich Trotsky, speaking from Mexico City. I am addressing myself to the workers and peasants and, in the first place to the young people in Soviet Russia.

The present rulers, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan and others, having inherited the Stalinist dictatorship, are conducting an intensive propaganda campaign [denouncing Stalin] so as to distract from themselves the powerful wave of dissatisfaction and hatred for the thieves of the victories of the proletarian revolution, a wave which grew in your hearts.

They are the same men who supported Stalin in all his bloody massacres, the aim of which was to frighten you with terror and thus to retain power in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Just try and think: Who are these direct heirs of the unbalanced Stalin who declared themselves collective leaders of Soviet Russia? They admit, they admit to the entire world, that for many decades not one among them, among the collective leaders, dared — for fear for his own life — to come out with a proposal for steps which would have saved the lives of millions of workers and peasants who were



banished to concentration camps.

I realise with bitterness that many of my listeners were brought up completely in a Stalinist spirit. Young people were taught history which was thoroughly permeated with lies.

Will [they now] tell of the beautiful friendship with Hitler and Ribbentrop which culminated in Stalin's signing of the Hitler pact and which gave a green light to a world war?

The government leaders are in a dilemma. Where should they stop? They have already begun to put the brakes on further unmasking of lies.

The reason for this is clear: their own power is based on this truly monstrous tissue of lies — of lies of the bureaucracy against Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and hundreds of other members of the Opposition. They dare not continue repeating the lies nor denounce them.

Here they try to divide the Stalinist period into two periods: the first period during which they enthusiastically elevated Stalin to the dictator's throne, and the second period when Stalin elevated himself to the status of a deity and thrust on his followers the "cult of personality".

No, the crimes began not from the moment the leader became mentally unbalanced. The so-called "cult of personality" was a natural consequence of the entire period after the death of Lenin and the banishment of Trotsky.

Everything you were taught about Trotsky since that time is vile slander. Those who participated in the revolution and went through its first heroic stages could not believe those lies. But serious changes in the balance of social power will be required before you, young people, will be able to uncover historical truth.

In his testament, Lenin warned the party as follows: "I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man... more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc." These lines were written on the 25th of December 1922. Further, on the 4th of January 1923, Lenin condemned Stalin's position on the Geor-

gian problem and entrusted Trotsky with launching a fight against it. And in a third document Lenin declared that he breaks off all personal and comradely relations with Stalin. While Lenin was still alive, Stalin concentrated in his hands tremendous power by placing his men in important posts. Lenin's testament was not carried out and its publication was forbidden.

Leon Davidovich (Trotsky) understood that by continuing the exposure of the counter-revolutionary regime he was undoubtedly risking his own life. Yet this consideration did not prevent him from merciless criticism (of the regime). Day after day, until the last hour of his life, he continued to appeal to revolutionary workers of the world to rise against these oppressors.

The plan for the industrialisation of the country was worked out by Trotsky. However, at that time Stalin and his clique put their stakes on the peasants and fought this plan. Only after Trotsky was exiled to Alma-Ata and after the opposition was suppressed was Stalin forced to begin the industrialisation of the country. He did it in his own manner with unheard-of cruelty and at the cost of tremendous sacrifices on the part of the population.

Trotsky sharply condemned this method, as well as the forced collectivisation of the peasants, which was accomplished by savage repression, mass deportations and arrests and which resulted in the general famine in the Ukraine during which millions of peasants died. Trotsky also fought against the system of slave labour in the concentration camps.

Russia's present rulers look into the future with some confidence. They know that during the reign of the Leader [Stalin] all the heroic figures of the proletarian revolution were done away with. They believe that nowhere in the world are there any forces that might threaten them.

But they are wrong. Even a weak blow to the myth which they themselves created, even a partial unmaking of the falsehood of the regime on which their rule is based, cannot but sow doubts and discord among the new growing generation.

In the end no admissions and promises can save the decayed Stalinist oligarchy. The task of overthrowing Stalinism is the task of the Russian workers and peasants. I send you my greetings and fiery confidence in your victory.

[The full text of Natalia's speech will be found in *Socialist Organiser* No.611]

FORTY years ago this month the Hungarian working class was waging a life or death struggle for socialist democracy. From the capital, Budapest, to the smallest village, workers and students, often armed with little more than petrol bombs, were desperately resisting the invasion of thousands of Russian tanks. It was in the industrial areas that the fighting was fiercest. At the end of four days, Dunapentele and Czepele — called “Red Czepele” because it had such a high proportion of Communist Party members — had been pounded into ruins.

Hungary was occupied by the Russian army at the end of World War 2. By 1948 it had a fully-established Stalinist regime. The Security Police, the AVH, had constructed a pervasive spy network. The so-called trade unions policed the draconian labour laws introduced in 1950. Those found guilty of even minor crimes were given long sentences in labour camps.

The Hungarian economy became a milch-cow for Russia. In 1948, finance minister Erno Gero announced that 25% of national expenditure was going to pay Russian war “reparations”. These were also the years of the “personality cult” of Stalin and of his Hungarian counterpart, Rakosi. It is recorded that Rakosi admonished a Central Committee member for describing a Party decision as “wise”. That term, he pointed out, was reserved for himself! Between 1948 and 1950 almost half a million Party members were purged, and a large number paid for even the mildest criticism with their lives.

In 1949, the veteran Party leader Laszlo Rajk was hanged after he had “confessed” in a show trial to being a secret “Tito-Trotsky-Fascist”. In Hungary, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Stalinist leaders who had been exiled in Moscow were used as a battering ram against the “indigenous” Party leaders from the wartime underground, as Stalin ensured complete control.

WHEN Stalin died in 1953, the East European workers began to move. There were mass demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, and two weeks later the workers of East Germany rebelled. Although the German revolt was crushed by Russian tanks, it led the Kremlin to ease up. After Khrushchev publicly condemned Stalin in 1956, new upheavals began, in Poland.

On the morning of 28 June 1956, the workers of the Zispo Locomotive Factory

in Poznan, Poland, struck. An elected committee presented management with demands on pay and conditions. Workers from other plants joined the strike, and the demands soon became political: “Out with the Russians!”, “Freedom and Bread!”

Russian tanks surrounded the city, and Polish troops crushed the strike, but the bureaucrats had been shaken. “Disgraced” Stalinist liberalisers like Gomulka were brought back into the leadership. When the Poznan workers came to trial in September, the sentences were relatively mild. Further trials were abandoned. In October, Khrushchev suddenly arrived in Poland,

backed up by large-scale troop manoeuvres on the border. Armed groups of workers appeared on the streets. Khrushchev got no more from the liberalising Polish leadership than a routine declaration of Polish-USSR friendship. For the first time a satellite regime had refused to toe the Moscow line.

This gave confidence to critical voices in Hungary. The government agreed to rebury Rajk, and 200,000 followed his coffin on 6 October. The Petofi Circle, a group of young reform-minded Communist Party members, called for a demonstration of solidarity with Poland. The government



Workers Stalinist

Kate Buckell tells the story of 1

“The Hungarian revolution created a system of workers’ councils



broadcast, denouncing them as "fascist rabble". A delegation went into the Parliament building to see the Party leaders. After an hour it had not returned, and people grew restive. Almost jovially, the huge bronze statue of Stalin was toppled. The AVH fired on the crowd, killing several people; street-fighting broke out and continued throughout the night. The rebels seized public buildings. By morning, with Budapest under rebel control, a desperate bureaucracy installed Nagy as prime minister. Later that day, martial law was declared, and an announcement made that Russian troops had been called in.

THROUGHOUT September, unrest had been growing in the industrial areas as the news from Poland filtered through. Copies of the critical intellectuals' *Literary Gazette* had found their way onto the shop floor. The first demands of the workers were for genuine trade union democracy and workers' control. Initially the Party tried to fob them off with promises. Now the workers seized control themselves.

On the evening of 23 October, the workers of Csepel Island struck. Armaments workers distributed guns around the factories. By the next morning, the strike was general throughout Budapest, and each factory had elected a workers' council. Within the day, they had linked up to form a Revolutionary Council, whose authority was accepted by virtually the whole population of the city.

The same happened in other towns: the workers of a factory would strike and elect a council. The factory representatives would come together, seize the radio station, disarm the AVH, and begin the distribution of food and supplies. By the end of Wednesday 24th, effective power lay in the hands of the workers' councils throughout the country.

against t tanks

e Hungarian Revolution of 1956

permitted the demonstration, and then, on 22 October, the day before the march was due to happen, they banned it. 100,000 marched despite the ban, and a resolution was read out from the Writers' Union which called for the removal of the Rakosi clique, the formation of a new government including the reformer Imre Nagy (who had been expelled from the Party in mid-1955), free elections, control of the factories by workers and specialists, and equal social and economic relations between Hungary and Russia.

As the crowd moved on to the Parliament building, the Stalinist leader Gero



and counterposed it to both capitalism and the Stalinist system."

The next step, of linking the councils together, was never completed. However, in the full between the first and second Russian interventions, regional links were made. On 29 October a widely representative meeting was held in Győr. The programme of the workers' councils was never fully proclaimed. It was often confused or partial, and expressed undue confidence in people like Nagy. But everywhere three demands came through clearly:

- That the workers should control, economically and politically;
- That the corrupt Stalinist bureaucracy be overthrown;
- That small nations like Hungary have the right to self-determination.

CAUGHT between the Russians and the workers' councils was the Nagy government. Both workers and intellectuals had welcomed Nagy's appointment as prime minister; the bureaucrats, however, saw Nagy as a liberal figurehead who might quell the rebellion by his reputation and sweet promises. Nagy tried to serve both the Russian bureaucracy and the workers, and ended up satisfying neither. On 30 October he announced that the Russians had agreed to withdraw. Within

two days, it was clear that he had been deceived. The Russians had had to withdraw the troops used in the first assault because they were "infected" by the spirit of those they were fighting and had become "unreliable", but they brought in fresh troops for the showdown. For a week, from 4 November, all-out battle raged, until in the end the insurgent workers were crushed by overwhelming military might. Nagy took refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy, left on an assurance of safe conduct, and was arrested and then shot in 1958.

33 years after 1956, the Stalinist regime finally fell; and it was as if history were an adult revisiting a place it had remembered from childhood as grand and awe-inspiring, and finding it petty and dull. In October 1989, after a year or so of accelerating liberalisation, the Communist Party voted itself and its one-party regime out of existence. The consequence has been neither the workers' commonwealth which socialists had hoped for in 1956, nor the fascist horror which Stalinists had claimed to be the only alternative to the Russian tanks. By mid-1995 the old stultified economy had been decisively dismantled, with 75% of the large state-owned enterprises either shut or

privatised. Hungary today is a tawdry, market-capitalist system, with increased inequality and poverty but also enrichment for a large minority. It has attracted more Western investment than the other East European states. There is parliamentary democracy. Socialists can at last argue their views freely, but for now no-one much listens. Independent trade unions can organise, but they are feeble.

The difference between 1956 and 1989 was 33 years of evolution. After securing himself in power, János Kádár, the man put in by the Russians to replace Nagy, tried to guard against new explosions by riding society with looser reins than the old high-Stalinist regime. This "goulash communism", with increasing ties of trade and debt to the West from the 1970s, gradually transmuted the Stalinist bureaucracy, formed as an instrument of terrorist rule and forced-march industrialisation, into a sprawling, time-serving officialdom. A sizeable reform-minded middle-class grew up.

The working class was less terrorised and beaten down — but also more atomised. Its life became more and more dominated by the battle to survive and prosper in black and grey markets of many shades. Its political consciousness was eroded not only by the way the bureaucracy clogged up all channels of education and information with its lacklustre jargon, but also, especially in the 1980s, by the failure of the West European workers' movement to offer hope for a real alternative both to capitalism and Stalinism.

At the end of this evolution, reformists in the bureaucracy were able to trash the old framework, and win the workers' support for doing so, without great risk. Opinion surveys showed that workers wanted a social-democratic, welfare-state society; the facts show that they have, reluctantly and for now, accepted market capitalism, with very little welfare provision, as the only "actually existing" alternative to Stalinism.

Yet the precondition for the more-or-less peaceful collapse of the European Stalinist states was the sharp, nerve-breaking, confidence-shattering revolutionary blows delivered to the bureaucracies by the Hungarian workers in 1956, the Czech and Slovak workers in 1968, and the Polish workers in 1980-1. Those workers' revolts represented the radical, clear-cut alternative to Stalinism. What we have seen so far is only a pale refraction, a half-way house.

How we might have won

BEFORE the Hungarian uprising of 1956, there had been many revolts against bureaucratic rule. In 1953 there were the strikes and uprisings in East Germany. In 1956 there was the uprising in Poznań, in Poland. None of those, however, had reached the stage of creating an alternative power structure. In Hungary, the combination of internal Communist Party leadership struggles around de-Stalinisation, an intense Hungarian national sense of grievance against Russian overlordship, and direct action by the working class, led to a movement which did create the outline of an alternative system of working-class self-rule.

The Hungarian revolution created a specifically working-class system of workers' councils, and counterposed it to both capitalism and the Stalinist bureaucratic system. They were defeated and crushed by the Stalinist Russian army, as had been the Paris workers of 1871 by the army of Versailles. But in the Central Workers' Council of Budapest they recreated the classic form of work-

ing-class democracy, the lineal continuation of the Paris Commune, of the Russian Soviets in the pre-Stalinist era, and, to an extent, of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919. Replicating the Russian Soviets of 1917, they showed that those were no accident or aberration.

A revolutionary organisation which had a clear programme and trained cadres involved with the mass action might very well have changed the course of events in 1956. No such thing was possible. The Stalinist rulers, before and after 1956, were fanatically diligent in repressing revolutionary socialist activity. That was one determinant of what happened in 1989 and after: the Stalinists had done too thorough a job of wiping out independent working-class politics for revolutionary socialism to be a factor in resolving the crisis when Stalinism began to collapse. The great task now in Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR is to recreate a socialist working-class movement, untainted by Stalinism.

Marx and Engels on education

Scattered through the writings of Marx and Engels is a more developed and coherent concept of education than most people realise. Colin Waugh looks at the evidence.

MARX and Engels' best known piece of writing, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, refers to education explicitly three times. First, in describing the rise of the bourgeoisie, Marx and Engels say:

The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy, later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

'Elements' here probably means people, and the model for the situation they describe is probably England in the years leading up to the Reform Act of 1832. They can't be talking about the education of children, because in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844), Engels had described the limited schooling for working class children in this country, and concluded that 'the bourgeoisie has little to hope, and much to fear, from the education of the working-class'. Therefore it is likely that they had in mind here the education of adults, for example through the Mechanics' Institutes. The industrial bourgeoisie, then, constructs a group of educated adults amongst the workers.

The second explicit reference to education in the *Manifesto* comes when Marx and Engels discuss charges made against Communism by spokespersons for the ruling classes:

But, you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations when we replace home education by social.



School can furnish the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie, but we must fight for the education we want

And your education! Is not that also social and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society, by means of schools &c? The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.

In England in 1847 most industrial capitalists who employed children were required by law to give them access to schooling under what was called 'the half time system'. Where this requirement was not simply ignored, schooling was often provided in the factory at the end of the day by an old worker, who was expected to drill the children in religious knowledge. There also existed privately run local schools catering for working class children. These would include most children under the minimum legal age for starting work (9), plus some children whose parents could spare them from employment, and employed children on part time release from the factories which did not have their own schools. In France and Germany, on the other hand, schooling was conducted by the state. Socialists and communists were generally in favour of children being educated systematically in groups but they were often critical of the existing methods of doing this.

The *Manifesto's* third and last explicit reference to education indicates the kind of measure workers might fight for in order to

'rescue education from the influence of the bourgeoisie':

Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, &c, &c.

So two out of the three explicit references to education in the *Manifesto* deal with its institutional framework. On this, Marx and Engels took the view that the education of children should be combined in a particular way with productive labour, and they stuck to this position from the mid 1840s to the ends of their lives. To understand why they did so, it will be helpful to consider what lies behind their claim that the bourgeoisie 'supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education'. We shall see that this is in turn linked closely with their views about what ideas are and how they are produced.

The *Manifesto* seeks to show that the processes which will change capitalism to socialism are already active. One such process, it claims, is that by which the industrial capitalist class, in forcing its way to social dominance, produces a class of wage labourers whose life circumstances drive them towards overthrowing it. This process is ideological as well as economic, and as such has three sides to it. First, there is the phase in which the bourgeoisie produces within the working class people who possess 'political and general education'. Secondly:

... entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

And thirdly:

... in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class ... Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.

So Marx and Engels believed that three educated groups would exist within the proletariat on the eve of revolution, and all three would have received their education within or from the bourgeoisie. Yet they also believed that the working class must act for itself, and they were familiar with examples of working class efforts towards collective self education. Thus Engels, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, described the high level of reading and discussion amongst Chartist workers in Manchester, and he would probably have known about the struggles within the Mechanics Institute in London, in which workers, albeit artisans rather than labourers, resisted attempts by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge to restrict its activities so as to exclude socialist lecturers and political discussion. Why, then, did they choose to emphasise so strongly in the *Manifesto* the influence on workers of bourgeois education?

In the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels ask:

Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?

What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.

From this two things follow. First, when the working class has developed to a stage where it can bid for state power, it will already be developing for itself 'ideas, views and conceptions' that reflect its unique conditions of life, social relations etc. To the extent that the development of society would by then have pitted the working class as a whole against the bourgeoisie as a whole, those ideas would be socialist ideas, not just ideas about how particular groups of workers could get the best deal for themselves within capitalism. And, secondly, before this stage, the working class must get most of its ideas from the bourgeoisie, because that class monopolises the means of 'intellectual production'. Nevertheless, a situation where workers can draw from the full range of bourgeois learning the ideas that they choose is better than one where the bourgeoisie can decide for itself which crumbs of knowledge it will let selected workers have.

A large part of the *Manifesto* is devoted to detailing some of the ideas taught to the workers by socialists from other classes and showing why they are either wrong (e.g. feudal socialism, petty bourgeois socialism, 'true' socialism etc) or right but limited (e.g. the 'critical-utopian' socialism of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen). The working class can use some educated people as

'weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie' but there is a much wider group (which may include some of the same people) which the bourgeoisie can use to fight the working class. As educated people, Marx and Engels themselves had to choose which side to serve. The point at which Marx crossed over from being a radical democrat to being a socialist coincided more

or less with his completion of his PhD thesis. Normally this would have been his gateway to becoming a university teacher. He had already decided otherwise, and he announced this in a coded way by including in the introduction to his thesis a quotation from an ancient Greek tragedy about the mythical hero Prometheus. (In that mythology, heroes occupied an intermediate status between gods and humans.) In the quotation, Prometheus, tortured by Zeus for taking fire from heaven and giving it to humans, says that despite this torture he would rather have done that than been a lackey of the gods. Quoting this was Marx's way of saying to the university authorities that he intended to bring the means of intellectual production to the workers, rather than getting a job within a system of higher education that shut them out.

In taking this step, Marx was also separating himself from the group of educated people with which he had up to then been involved, i.e. the Young Hegelians, particularly their left wing, which included the Bauer brothers (criticised in *The Holy Family*) and Max Stirner (the main focus of criticism in *The German Ideology*).

DURING this period, Marx, with Engels, was trying simultaneously to work out exactly where the idealist philosophical thinking of Hegel and those who followed him was wrong, and to expose and move beyond the weaknesses of the materialist thinking which some contemporaries, notably Ludwig Feuerbach, had picked up from French revolutionary thinkers of the 18th century and counterposed to Hegel. In other words, he was trying to find a way in which the expertise of educated people like himself could be used to strengthen rather than to mislead the workers' movement.

In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, written at this time, he argued that:

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

The 'materialist doctrine' here means that of the 18th century thinkers. 'The educator' refers not to teachers but to all aspects of people's environment. The points at issue are made more explicit in *The Holy Family*, where Marx and Engels wrote:

There is no need of any great penetration to see from the teaching of materialism on the original goodness and equal intellectual endowment of men, the omnipotence of experience, habit and education, and the influence of environment on man, the great significance of industry, the justification of enjoyment etc., how necessarily materialism is connected with communism and socialism. If man draws all his knowledge, sensation etc., from the world of his senses and the experience gained in it, the empirical world must be arranged so that in it man experiences and gets used to what is really human and that he becomes aware of himself as man... If man is shaped by his surroundings, his surroundings must be made human.

But there is a problem:

As, according to Helvetius, it is education, by which he means not only education in the ordinary sense but the totality of the individual's conditions of life, which forms man, if a reform is necessary to abolish the contradiction between private interests and those of society, a transformation of consciousness is necessary, on the other hand, to carry out such a reform...

The problem is, then, that of a vicious circle. To change minds you need to change the environment ('the educator'). But you cannot start to do that without a change of mind. So nothing can get started. In his third thesis on Feuerbach, Marx is saying that those who hold this view of society (and of education as a way of changing it) can only get over this problem by imagining a sort of miracle. They would have to suppose that there is some supreme organising intelligence which stands above the environmental forces which normally shape thought processes.

Marx and Engels' intention in *The German Ideology* was to attack the standpoint shared by Hegel and the Young Hegelians, according to which there could be ideas which are not governed by material circumstances. As they put it later on, 'Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence'. That is, consciousness can only arise from material objects, matter organised in such a way that it can think — in other words, from human brain cells. There is no such thing as a disembodied intelligence, idea, god etc, no intelligence except as embodied in something which really exists, namely a brain or a number of brains.

Marx and Engels then argue that the Young Hegelians are not real revolutionaries, because, instead of encouraging people who are oppressed and exploited to take action, they just tell them to look at reality in a different way. Against this, Marx and Engels insist that:

... people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. 'Liberation' is an historical and not a mental act...

In short, seeing the world differently is not a sufficient condition for changing it, let alone a valid substitute for doing so. On the basis of this critique of the Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels then start to sketch out their solution to the vicious circle inherent in bourgeois materialism.

Their starting point is that humans differ from other animals

in one crucial respect, namely that only humans produce their means of subsistence. Non human animals take the means of subsistence from their environment but only humans systematically use some parts of their environment as tools to change other parts. Tools presuppose plans. Only humans make plans. Therefore humans are the only animals which can act on the basis of consciousness rather than purely from instinct. At first:

... man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct, or that his instinct is a conscious one.

Consciousness, then, is something which arises only amongst humans, and only amongst humans in groups; and it arises there in the context of production, of work. Consciousness is simultaneously a set of relations amongst humans, within humans and between humans and their environment:

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; ... where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into 'relations' with anything, it does not enter into any relations at all. For the animal its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.

Groups of humans make and use language, but they also make and use that for which language is the vehicle, namely thought — to the extent that it is not purely private and individual. So collective thought — consciousness — is itself a non material tool which humans make and which they use — to operate on their environment, to produce other, material, tools and to produce more and/or different consciousness (in other words, to think about thinking). In short, consciousness is a means of pro-

The Hired Boy

By Patrick Kavanagh

"Boy" means 'bired hand', denoting status, not age; as one of them told a sociologist in the '30s: "Sure, you might be a boy 'til you're seventy."

Let me be no wiser than the dull
And leg-dragged boy who wrought
For John Maguire in Donaghmoyn
With never a vain thought
For fortune waiting round the next
Blind turning of Life's Lane;
In dreams he never married a lady
To be dreamed-divorced again.

He knew what he wanted to know
How the best potatoes are grown
And how to put flesh on a York pig's back
And clay on a hilly bone,
And how to be satisfied with the little
The destiny masters give
To the beasts of the tillage country —
To be damned and yet to live.

● Patrick Kavanagh, a devout Catholic, was the author of the profoundly revolutionary long poem "The Great Hunger" (1941) about rural life in independent Ireland. The "Hired Boy" appeared in a Stalinist magazine in 1936.

duction, but a mental or intellectual rather than a material one.

There is nothing contrary to materialism in this idea. Every book, for example, is an intellectual product in so far as it exists as a body of ideas that can be distinguished both from the author's manuscript and from all the printed copies produced from that manuscript. Both the manuscript and all of these physical books could be destroyed and yet the book as an intellectual product could still exist, for example in people's memories. But the same goes for every product. Every product that can exist as a material object can also exist as an idea. Ford Fiestas, for example, are material objects; but 'the Ford Fiesta', the design, is an idea. An idea can also be a means to the production of a material object. For example, a designer's idea of what a component in an engine will be like is a no less necessary condition of that component being made than the metal it is made from, the lathe it is made on, the worker who operates that lathe, the power that drives it etc. The designer's intellect produces an idea, an intellectual product, and this idea then functions as one of the means of production of the component, as an intellectual means of production alongside material ones.

Once it is agreed that consciousness, though non material, is a tool — that is, something which humans produce in order to produce other things with it — the vicious circle inherent in the materialism of Helvetius, Robert Owen and Feuerbach disappears, because we can see that consciousness can be used to change the world at the same time that it is changed by the world. In fact, the most decisive changes to consciousness tend to occur when we try out an idea in practice and find it doesn't work. However, if consciousness arises from human interaction with the world in this direct way, if it is intrinsically no more mysterious than any other tool, how can it ever be wrong? Our thinking can be incomplete, but how can it be at odds with what we do?

"The working class can use some educated people as 'weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie' but there is a much wider group which the bourgeoisie can use to fight the working class."

TAKEN on their own, Marx and Engels' words in the *Manifesto* — that 'the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class' — could mean that ideas just reflect material life, real struggle etc but cannot themselves become an agency within it. But in *The German Ideology* they spell out more of what they mean:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time the ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

So, for them, ruling class thinking does not just reflect the social order but actively intervenes in it, by getting into the minds of other classes and structuring every aspect of life. In particular, it gets in between working people's experience and their capacity to reflect on that experience, which is already limited by their exclusion from the means of mental production. It presents them with a predigested version of what their experience means, at the same time that they are denied, so far as possible, access to other ways of making sense of it. This, then, is how, in class society, ideas can be at odds with productive activity, such that they reflect it but in a distorted fashion.

Under capitalism, the bourgeoisie as a whole dominates the production and distribution of ideas:

The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age; thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.

And the ruling class under capitalism may recruit people from all classes to distribute its ideas. Some of the people who do this ideological distribution work may be recruited from amongst the working class or pushed down into it from the petty bourgeoisie. Thus, as the *Manifesto* explains:

The bourgeoisie ... has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers.

Since the proletariat is recruited from all classes, and since at the start its educated elements are either formed by or drawn from other classes, these distributors of ideology can easily find routes by which to infiltrate it.

However, the working class also has several factors on its side. First, as the *Manifesto* again explains, capitalism tends to get rid of the divisions which previously stopped those at the bottom getting together. It 'rescue[s] a considerable part of the population from the idiocy [i.e. the isolation and self-absorption.

CW] of rural life', and under its rule, 'national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible'. In other words, capitalism weakens the loyalties that tied the poor to the rich under feudalism. Secondly, then, the class instinct that this releases develops to a point where it becomes a basis for positive planning. Workers start to see how they could run things for themselves.

Class instinct starts to grow into a distinct form of consciousness:

... the conditions under which this class lives are such as to give it a sort of practical training, which not only replaces school cramming, but renders harmless the confused religious notions associated with it, and even places the workers in the vanguard of the national movement of England. Necessity is the mother of invention, and what is still more important, of thought and action. The English working-man who can scarcely read and still less write, nevertheless knows very well where his own interest and that of the nation lies. He knows, too, what the especial interest of the bourgeoisie is, and what he has to expect of the bourgeoisie. If he cannot write, he can speak, and speak in public; if he has no arithmetic, he can, nevertheless, reckon with the Political Economists enough to see through a Corn-Law-repealing bourgeois, and to get the better of him in argument; if celestial matters remain very mixed for him in spite of all the effort of the preachers, he sees all the more clearly into terrestrial, political and social questions.

In short, the working class begins to learn from its own experience, despite the bewildered who try to prevent this:

... a class is called forth ... from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness, which may of course arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class.

But for this learning from experience to develop beyond a

certain point, the class must try out its plans on the real life environment. That is, it must undertake actions aimed at changing that environment, because only through doing that can it change its own consciousness, including its consciousness of itself. In other words, there has to be a revolutionary movement:

Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution.

So what looks to the old materialism like a vicious circle looks to the new materialism like a dialectical process. The class instinct of workers starts to turn into class consciousness, which then helps trigger a revolutionary movement, which in turn steps up the development of communist consciousness. And this consciousness, so Marx and Engels thought, gets better and better at finding its way through the maze that people peddling the bosses' ideas build in its path. In his introduction to the 1888 English translation of the *Manifesto* Engels explained that Marx

... entirely trusted to the intellectual development of the working class which was sure to result from combined action and mutual discussion. The very events and vicissitudes of the struggle against capital, the defeats even more than the victories, could not help bringing home to men's minds the insufficiency of their various favourite nostrums, and preparing the way for a more complete insight into the true conditions of working class emancipation.

The fact that the working class movement would pass beyond the stage where it needed to be taught by the bourgeoisie did not mean that it could do without thinkers and teachers, but rather that it must produce its own. Writing in 1874 of the working class movement in Germany, Engels set out what he thought the main task of these 'teachers' must be:

In particular, it will be the duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer insight into all theoretical questions, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old world outlook, and constantly to keep in mind that socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, that is, that it be studied. The task will be to spread with increased zeal among the masses of workers the ever more lucid understanding thus acquired and to knit together ever more strongly the organisation both of the party and of the trade unions.

WE have seen that in 1847, the *Manifesto*, in putting forward a demand for 'free education for all children in public schools' and the 'abolition of children's factory labour in its present form', added, 'combination of education with industrial production'. In 1867, Marx was to include in *Capital* a detailed justification of this demand, which he and Engels were shortly after to write into the Geneva Resolution of the International Workingmen's Association. Marx was also to reiterate it in his critique of the Gotha Programme drafted by Wilhelm Liebknecht at the merger of the two main socialist parties in Germany in 1875, and Engels was to stress it again in his attack on *Dubring*, written over the period 1876-78 and re-issued by him in the 1890s.

In putting forward this demand, and especially in re-asserting it in the later stages of their activity, Marx and Engels were aligning themselves with a section of industrial employers against a growing body of liberal opinion within the bourgeoisie as well as some socialists and trade unionists. It involved them in arguing for employment-related education (and therefore, by implication, against liberal education) and for child labour in factories, against efforts by socialists to organise for its abolition.

Marx and Engels' concept of 'polytechnical education', as it came later to be called, was addressed to a situation in which rapid mechanisation was altering all aspects of the social order, but it was not just an abstract scheme for what education would be like 'under socialism'. Rather, it was a plan for mobilising the organised working class to attack the strongest section of the capitalist class — the factory owners — in the area where they must have seemed least vulnerable — that is, in their capacity to break the resistance of any group of workers by replacing them with machines. It was aimed at winning from the state under capitalism a system of vocational education many features of which the bosses themselves wanted but which would both strengthen the working class under present circumstances and prepare it to run production for itself later.

Marx wrote that:

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge, objectified. The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of pro-

duction, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it.

He saw it as both desirable and inevitable that machines, and the factory system that went with them, would replace earlier methods of production. However, there and then one of the central effects of the growth of production by machines in factories was the tendency for women and children to displace skilled adult male workers. In *Capital*, Marx uses the printing industry as an example of the effects that follow a change from hand to machine production. The machines themselves are operated by adults, but boys are employed to spread the paper out under the presses and take it out again after the impression has been produced. Marx explains that previously boys employed in printing were trained in all branches of the trade, enabling them to work as artisans within it for the rest of their lives, but that now they learn only this unskilled work, and are unemployable in any field once they are sacked at 17.

The same thing, he thought, was happening across many branches of industry, while the constant invention of new machines meant that section after section of workers were being sacked without warning. Mechanisation, then, was intensifying competition amongst workers, including competition between women and child workers on the one hand and men on the other, while also putting pressure on adult workers to exploit their own children (for example when employers try to cut wages rather than buy machines). At the same time, the

design of machines was becoming more and more scientific — based, that is, on underlying abstract principles, for example on the principles of mechanics or the laws of chemistry. Therefore the concrete knowledge of specialised processes that workers had acquired at an earlier stage was becoming less valuable, both for controlling their work under capitalism and for organising it under socialism. These trends, towards mechanisation and towards the domination of production by science, were bound to continue.

Marx and Engels proposed that the workers use the education of child factory workers as a weapon to break the capitalists' dominance over this process of development. They therefore argued against attempts to get child labour banned. For example, in 1875 Marx commented on the Gotha programme:

'Prohibition of child labour!' Here it was absolutely essential to state the age limit.

A general prohibition of child labour is incompatible with the existence of large-scale industry and hence an empty, pious wish. Its realisation — if it were possible — would be reactionary, since, with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society.

In the Geneva Resolution, they proposed that the labour of children between 9 and 12 be restricted to 2 hours a day, that of 13 to 15 year olds to 4 hours, and that of 16 and 17 year olds to 6. No parent and no employer should be allowed to use juvenile labour except when combined with education. They then wrote:

By education we understand three things.

Firstly: Mental education.

Secondly: Bodily education, such as is given in schools of gymnastics, and by military exercise.

Thirdly: Technological training, which imparts the general principles of all processes of production, and simultaneously initiates the child and young person in the practical use and handling of the elementary instruments of all trades.

A gradual and progressive course of mental, gymnastic, and technological training ought to correspond to the classification of the juvenile labourers...

The combination of paid productive labour, mental education, bodily exercise and polytechnic training, will raise the working class far above the level of the higher and middle classes.

What they meant by 'mental education' is open to debate. Engels at least gave a lot of importance to both ancient and modern languages, since in criticising *Dubring* he refers to:

... the two levers which at least give the opportunity of rising above the narrow national standpoint in the world as it is today: knowledge of the ancient languages, which opens a wider common horizon ... and knowledge of modern languages, through which alone the people of different nations can communicate with one another and acquaint themselves with what is happening beyond their own borders.

At any rate, they were quite certain that factories could and should be made into educational institutions:

From the Factory system budded, as Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future, an education that will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only

method of producing fully developed human beings.

Aligning themselves with those spokespersons for industrial employers like Nassau Senior who argued for the half time system through the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Marx and Engels sought to persuade the organised working class to fight for the extension of that system into one in which general education, physical education, applied science, wide ranging hand skills and paid work under controlled conditions would be integrated. They thought that the struggle for this, and its partial achievement under capitalism, would help significantly to bring about the transition to socialism, in which the full potential of this type of education would be realised:

Though the Factory Act, that first and meagre concession wrung from capital, is limited to combining elementary education with work in the factory, there can be no doubt that when the working class comes into power, as inevitably it must, technical instruction, both theoretical and practical, will take its proper place in the working-class schools. There is also no doubt that such revolutionary ferments, the final result of which is the abolition of the old division of labour, are diametrically opposed to the capitalistic form of production...

As to who would run a system of factory schooling under capitalism, Marx and Engels apparently thought that working class pressure could force governments to create a legal and financial framework for it, while at the same time denying them control over the crucial aspects of teaching and learning within it. In the Geneva Resolution, for example, they argued that, for the protection and development of working class children and young people, the only possibility was 'general laws, enforced by the power of the state'. But they distinguished sharply between provision thus forced out of the state by the workers' movement, and the demand in the draft of the Gotha Programme for 'elementary education by the state'. Of this 'altogether objectionable' demand, Marx wrote:

Defining by a general law the expenditures on the elementary schools, the qualifications of the teaching staff, the branches of instruction, etc., and, as is done in the United States, supervising the fulfilment of these legal specifications by state inspectors, is a very different thing from appointing the state as the educator of the people. Government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school. Particularly, indeed, in the Prusso-German Empire ... the state has need, on the contrary, of a very stern education by the people.

This would not make sense unless Marx assumed that the organised workers, having forced the state to provide for a valid system, would then carry on a struggle in and around that system about how it would be run, who could become a teacher, what they would teach, by what methods, how it would be assessed and so on, because without such a struggle, the state or even individual factory owners would sooner or later take control of these decisions and turn a concession by the capitalist class into a further weapon against the workers.

Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen each developed ideas that Marx and Engels drew on when they put together the demand for polytechnical education. But Marx and Engels reworked those ideas entirely, in the light of their own, completely different, worldview, so that they produced a programme for action round education by the working class that was based on processes already at work within the capitalist social order, rather than on a model of what the socialist future must be like. Through fighting for that programme, they thought, the workers could both 'rescue education from the influence of the ruling class' and reclaim for themselves 'the means of mental production'.

When the Queen's man sacked Labor

Janet Burstall reviews the Australian left's response to the greatest political crisis in their country's history, the 'Kerr coup' of 1975.

TWENTY-ONE years ago, on 11 November 1975, Governor-General John Kerr, acting on the Queen's authority, sacked Australia's Labor government. "At a conservative estimate 750,000... stopped work" in the following days.¹ Many more workers struck, in proportion to population, than in the movement of June 1936 which prompted Trotsky to declare: "The French Revolution has begun."

Phil Ilton recalls: "Rally after rally was attended with members waving banners and placards demanding a general strike. [Left papers] sold like 'wildfire'... All left-wing groups experienced similar phenomenal upswings in their popularity. What it did reflect was the anger and confusion of Labor supporters — they'd buy almost anything 'left-looking' and they wouldn't give you 10 cents for a copy, they'd throw you a dollar or two dollars, or more."²

Labor had won office in 1972 after 23 years of unbroken, stifling conservative rule. Gough Whitlam's government took Australian troops out of Vietnam, introduced a publicly-funded health service, opened higher education to those who could not afford fees, repealed the "White Australia" immigration policy, and made a start on redress for Australia's Aboriginal people. It was a reformist regime: when hit by the world capitalist downturn of 1974-5 it floundered and started to turn against its working-class base. The opening for the Governor-General came from a budget crisis in which the Upper House of Parliament blocked Whitlam. Yet the widespread working-class gut reaction to the dismissal was that "our government" had been struck down by the ruling class.

And the early 1970s in Australia were a time of radicalism and spontaneous mass working-class outrage. Intellectuals had been writing and talking freely about socialism and revolution. The movement against the Vietnam War had brought tens of thousands on to the streets. There was a large and hungry audience for left-wing ideas.

To the left of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) had a few thousand members and, allied with ALP left-wingers, sizeable influence in the trade unions. It had loosened up, breaking with both Moscow and Beijing, and was under the pressure of an organised Left Tendency. I was then a member of the CPA, but left because of what I saw as their reformist response to the 1975 crisis.

The Socialist Workers' Action Group, forerunner of the International Socialist Organisation (linked to the British SWP), had about 20 members in Melbourne. On 14 November it managed to lead some 15,000 workers to the Stock Exchange, from an official labour demonstration 50,000 strong. Also very new, but a bit larger and more "orthodox Trotskyist", was the Socialist Work-

ers' League, based in Sydney. These left groups united with broad sections of the working class and social movements to agitate for the reinstatement of Labor and the defeat of Malcolm Fraser, leader of the Liberal opposition. Whitlam and the ALP, however, saw this as a matter of re-electing Labor to show



Gough Whitlam

Fraser that the Australian people would not stand for the constitution being undermined. The ALP did not use its majority in the House of Representatives to defy Governor-General John Kerr. It accepted Kerr's election schedule — and Fraser won the election on 13 December.

The CPA responded to the crisis with energy, publishing their paper *Tribune* daily. *Tribune's* headline on 12 November was "Defeat Fraser-Kerr coup: national stoppage". *Tribune* went on to say: "The Communist Party calls for action to continue and rise still higher. A national stoppage should be called, and united action committees set up in factories, offices and localities to resist Fraser and campaign against him."

However, the powerful Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union (AMWU), led by CPA and left ALP officials, did not attempt to override the inertia of the ACTU (Australian TUC) by starting a strike movement on its own. According to a former Queensland Metal Workers' organiser whom I spoke to, an ex-CPAer still loyal to the CPA political tradition, AMWU leaders like CPA president Laurie Carmichael did their utmost to put the brakes on the movement for a general strike.

Another prominent CPer from the time whom I questioned insisted indignantly that the CPA had tried everything in order to get a general strike. He said that my questions implied that I thought the problem in 1975 was a crisis of leadership. However, the evidence is that the CPA were swayed by the likes of ACTU leader Bob Hawke, who argued that Labor was in bother for being too radical, and excessive militancy would scare the electorate.

The CPA, like the ALP, made "democracy" the key focus. A vote for Labor, in their view, would be a vote for parliamentary democracy and a rejection of the undemocratic actions of Kerr and Fraser. This approach required only the mildest criticisms of Labor. "Workers' action is directed to defence of limited capital-

ist democracy", said Laurie Carmichael (*Tribune*, 19 November).

Workers felt a mixture of class sentiment about "our government" and outrage at "unfair play" by the rules of parliamentary democracy; but the CPA's activity was all based on "defence of limited capitalist democracy."

The CPA did criticise Labor's record, but mildly and vaguely. *Tribune's* editorial of 25 November declared: "The working class and other movements today enthusiastically support the return of Labor to power. But they want more than they have been offered in the past. They will expect action to curb the ruling class that has precipitated the crisis — not conciliation and encouragement for them by Labor... the core of Labor's support... will want more dramatic changes in terms of ending discrimination, extending democracy and social liberation. This means that the power of the ruling class must not only be defeated in this current crisis, but broken totally. It means abolishing authoritarian relations between ruler and ruled in the workshop, in the offices, in all social institutions including the family."

The CPA had been arguing for the election of Labor, and for

the strengthening of the official left factions in the ALP, as the way to social progress ever since the 1930s. The Left Tendency of the CPA, growing out of student radicalism, had begun to criticise this approach, analysing the ALP as an obstacle to socialism and anti-working class in government. Its views tended more to sectarianism than to an appreciation of the contradictory role of the ALP, but in any case were too abstract to equip it to publish any practically useful proposals during the political crisis. As a CPA member at the time, at Macquarie University, I did not even know that the CPA had a Left Tendency, let alone that its stronghold was in the same city as me, at Sydney University. Further research in the student press may reveal that the Left Tendency applied its analysis to the events of 1975 on the campuses where it was most influential, but it is certain that it was unable to crystallise its position in the CPA during the crisis.

Could the small left groups have influenced events? I think so. A united front of the Marxists could have threatened to win over sections of the CPA, and pressured the CPA leaders into taking the initiative, defying the ACTU, and setting up the "united action committees" called for in *Tribune*. The combined strength of the SWL, the SWAG, the Communist League ("Mandelite"), and the Left Tendency of the CP, with their student movement, labour movement and women's liberation connections, and their press, would have been quite formidable. Instead, the rest of the left didn't even seem to notice that the CPA was in a position to influence industrial action. The CPA got away with its left rhetoric and inaction unchallenged. General strike agitation was popular, but remained vague.

Some left groups organised a meeting at Sydney Trades Hall, to call on the ACTU to call a general strike, but the meeting was unable to reach agreement.

The central demand of the SWAG's *Battler* was "a national general strike until Whitlam was reinstated", with the slogan "Strike to stop Fraser." The Socialist Workers' League's *Direct Action* (13 November) advocated: "No restraint! Fight back! Labor should call for a General Strike." *Direct Action's* editorial said: "A general strike can defeat the Liberals who will be powerless against the combined efforts of the labour movement."

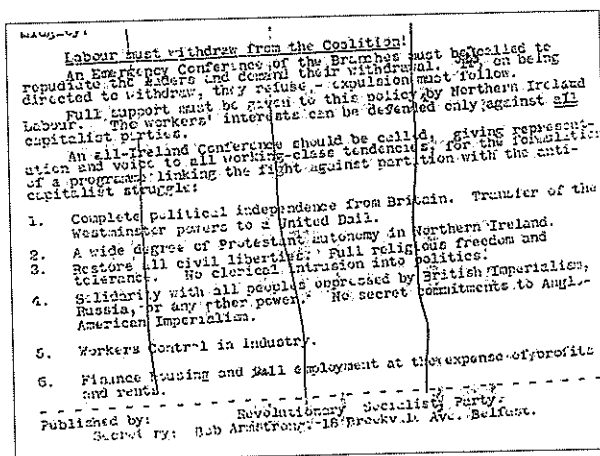
The SWL seemed to think that the same ALP which had quietly given up its parliamentary mandate to Kerr could call a general strike. Others, a little less improbably, appealed on the ACTU to call it; and yet others, such as the "Healyite" Socialist Labor League, seemed to think that they could get it just by putting the slogan on the front page of their paper.

The left doubted the opinion polls which showed Fraser in the lead, seeing them as part of the conspiracy to defeat Labor. They thought a vote for Fraser was a vote for dictatorship, a vote for Whitlam a vote for democracy, and obviously most people would not want to vote for dictatorship. Throughout Fraser's years in office, the left would allude to the Chilean dictatorship, and depict him on posters Hitler-like, with a small dark moustache.

The fact, however, is that parliamentary democracy continued in Australia after the coup much as it had done before. So how could the left groups give practical expression during the crisis to their commitment to class politics and socialism?

Direct Action (27 November) argued that "The offensive of the coalition [conservative] parties can only be effectively countered and the living standard of the working class maintained and extended by fighting for socialist policies... This is why the Socialist Workers League is standing candidates in the coming election. The Socialist Workers campaign will enable workers to tell the Labor leadership that its policies are unacceptable, that we do not wish to make sacrifices to the capitalist system, that we want Labor to defend our interests against the interests of the employers." The SWL election platform was a catalogue of reform demands on wages, education, women's rights, Aboriginal land rights, etc.

As we were saying



INCOMPREHENSION of Irish realities still blinds much of the left. An ignorant hostility to the Irish Protestant minority still predominates, even though it is hostility to a big part of the Irish industrial working class. The idea of advocating a solution in Ireland based on Catholic-Protestant mutual accommodation is still seen as both treasonous and heretical, especially by "Trotskyists". It is with satisfaction as well as surprise, therefore, we discover that the small Trotskyist group that existed in Ireland in the 1940s, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, advocated a policy which resembles our own on the question of Protestant-Catholic relations. It called for "a wide degree of Protestant autonomy in Northern Ireland".

It seems to us that federalism is the only feasible arrangement now, but our fundamental idea has been expressed like this since 1969: "As much autonomy for the Protestant Irish minority as is compatible with the rights of the Irish majority". The exact details will be worked out in discussion and negotiation. The RSP's policy is underdeveloped, but its character, tendency and implications are unmistakable.

The RSP was initially linked to the British Revolutionary Communist Party, and then a separate organisation. In the late 1940s' discussion amongst Trotskyists about the class nature of Russia, they adopted the position of the Workers' Party of America, that it was bureaucratic-collectivist.

Always tiny, the RSP disappeared at the end of the 1940s. One of its members was Matt Merrigan, who has been central to the Irish left for half a century.

This leaflet was found by Bruce Robinson in the archives of Max Shachtman in the Tamiment Library, New York.

— not an outline of a policy for workers' action in the crisis to attack the power of the ruling class.

The SWAG concentrated on warning how vicious Fraser's attacks on workers would be: vote Labor, they said, but rank and file action was what we really needed. In the context, they were saying that the working class could not aspire to government even when highly mobilised in a great political crisis. They left out politics.

The new groups of Marxists in Australia in 1975 had little experience of their own to draw on. Marxists also develop ideas from the experience of socialists and class struggles in other times and places; but that too was a weak point for the Marxists in Australia. I have yet to find any written material or oral reports from the period discussing the relevance of the relatively recent example of France in 1968, or the writings of Rosa Luxemburg on the political mass strike.

"The political tricksters who believe they can conjure up a mass strike and then terminate it with a wave of the hand are in error... Mass strikes cannot be made on command... When the class conflicts have become so pronounced and the political situation so tense that parliamentary means are no longer sufficient to advance the cause of the proletariat, then the mass strike is urgently necessary... only when the situation has become so extreme that there is no more hope for co-operation with the bourgeois parties... does the proletariat obtain the impetus necessary for the success of the mass strike. Accordingly, the mass strike is not reconcilable with a policy centred around parliamentarism."³

Luxemburg made a sharp distinction between protest action and a general strike to win. An orientation by the left to agitate for the CPA-influenced unions to break away from the ACTU's inertia and set up the action committees which they called for would have tended towards a real political mass strike; but in effect the left groups — by focussing on the ACTU, or even, in the case of the SWL, on Labor — were trying to get a protest strike.

Another relevant source of ideas from history was the Communist International's discussion in 1922 on the united front and the "workers' government". Karl Radek explained it like this:

"The German, Norwegian and Czechoslovakian workers will... prefer a coalition of labour parties which would guarantee the 8 hour day and an extra crust of bread, etc..."

"Now this question arises — shall we recline upon this soft cushion and take a good rest, or shall we rather lead the masses into the fight on the basis of their own illusions for the realisa-

tion of the programme of a Workers' Government? If we conceive the Workers' Government as a soft cushion, we are ourselves politically beaten... On the other hand, if we keep alive the consciousness of the masses that a Workers' Government is an empty shell unless it has workers behind it forging their weapons and forming their factory councils... such a Workers' Government will... become... a lever for the conquest of power by revolutionary means."

The crisis focused attention on the sources of bourgeois power. Agitation for a workers' government could have concretised that focus, on the role of the Senate (the Upper House), the Governor General, the law, the media, and repressive methods. As it was, the Marxists floundered as they tried to express simultaneous support and criticism for Labor ("critical support").

The time for general strike agitation which could perhaps have shattered the strong hold of the union bureaucracy was from about mid-October (as the conflict between the Labor government and the Liberals in the Upper House reached crisis-point) to late November — about five weeks. It would always have been a long shot. Maybe the revolutionary left was too weak to win whatever it said and did. The terrible shame is that despite the mass upheavals and the heady days of working-class fightback in 1975, the story that took hold in the following years was that a radical Labor Government could not survive. This history, told and sold, lent momentum to the drive of Bob Hawke and the right in the labour movement, to reshape the ALP as the solid reliable party of capitalist stability which held office from 1983 to 1996.

Whitlam's government had lost the confidence of the ruling class. Any government which persistently took the side of the working class against the ruling class would likewise face the full battery of ruling class methods for bringing it down. Any workers' government would have that in common with the Whitlam government.

The revolutionary story to be told is that working-class people will stand up to defend a government that they feel is theirs. They will use methods which strain against the limits of parliamentary democracy and which recognise the power of the ruling class resides in many institutions outside parliament. The main reason that they didn't get to stand up for themselves more effectively in 1975 was that the leaders of the ALP, the unions and the CPA all worked hard to keep the movement and its understanding of the issues framed within parliamentary democracy.

It would have been possible in 1975 to fight for a workers' reform government, and for the working class to defend that government from the ruling class with extra-parliamentary methods which pointed beyond the government's limits. The revolutionary story of 1975 is the story of what the working class could have done itself, with an understanding that it could act independently, not just as a cheer squad at an extended ALP election rally.

[This article is part of a larger research project. The author welcomes comments, and especially documents or memories from people active in November 1975: send c/o Workers' Liberty, PO Box 313, Leichhardt, NSW 2040, or by e-mail to janet.burstall@tafensw.edu.au].

Footnotes

1. *Tribune*, 19 November 1975.
2. Phil Iltton, *The origins of the International Socialists in Australia: a history of the Socialist Workers' Action Group*, Melbourne 1984, pp.45-6.
3. Rosa Luxemburg, *The political mass strike*, in *Selected Political Writings*, Jonathon Cape, 1972, p.181.

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Trotsky and Marxism II

By Max Shachtman

TROTSKY was a warrior of internationalism. He did not conclude his analyses with the tired yawn of a dilettante who has just turned out a literary essay and has nothing further to do. The organisation of groups of intelligent, devoted, and zealous men of action to carry out a programme of struggle was not the least of his preoccupations.

In this field Trotsky has been criticised, not only by enemies but also by friends, more than he had perhaps been in any other. But rarely has such criticism been objective, or made with a sense of proportion. What Trotsky did and tried to do in the building of the Fourth International — and we date this work back at least to the time of his expulsion and exile by Stalin — he was compelled to do under unprecedented handicaps, virtually single-handed, and in the most complicated situations imaginable. Marx had not only an Engels to work with, but others who also attained a certain significance in stature. Lenin had about him, even in the period of the 1906-16 reaction, to say nothing of the following period, a group of distinguished collaborators. Moreover, both Marx and Lenin, however difficult the circumstances under which they worked, never suffered anything like the fetters and gags imposed upon Trotsky. Trotsky, from the moment of his expulsion down to the day of his death, was deprived of the highly-qualified and experienced collaboration to which he had been accustomed. The ravages of Stalinism, on the one side, and of the official labour bureaucracy on the other, plus the hammer-blows of defeat then descended on the head of the working class, one after another, year in-year out, wiped out a whole generation of revolutionists. Probably ninety-five percent of the international Trotskyist movement was made up of young militants, with comparatively little experience in the revolutionary or labour movements. They were primarily disciples, avidly absorbing the brilliant teachings of an incomparable leader; they were not yet collaborators.

In such a situation, the burden that Trotsky cheerfully assumed was colossal! It is only slightly exaggerated to say that he was an International, a general staff of the world revolution, all by himself. What malicious adversaries set down as his "lust for power", was nothing more than a courageous determination to promote the cause of the working class, a keen appreciation of the need of imbuing as large a section of militants as possible with the revolutionary doctrine of Marxian internationalism, and a perfectly objective awareness of the historically important role he had to play.

Did he make errors? More than one! The wonder is, however, that under the circumstances he made so few. And in judging his life and work as a whole, all his errors put together occupy a pretty small corner of the picture. Our comrades, the writer included, had more than one difference of opinion with Trotsky, not only while the split was taking place in the American section of the Fourth International, but often before it. But what weight in the scale have even our differences on the question of the Soviet Union in the war compared with all that Trotsky taught us about the principles of the Russian revolution, about the course of its development and its decay? What weight

in the scale have our differences with him on the estimation of the regime in the Socialist Workers Party and of the merits of the respective groups, compared with what he taught the whole revolutionary movement about bureaucratism and workers' democracy, beginning with *The New Course* in 1923 (and even earlier), compared with the truly titanic and uncompromising struggle he conducted for almost twenty years against the most vicious and most powerful bureaucracy the labour movement, and perhaps society as a whole, had ever seen?

Trotsky understood better than anyone else that internationalism meant nothing without a world organisation of internationalists. Trotsky was the founder, the guide, the heart and brain, the motor of the Fourth International. Not even death can deprive that International of the heritage he left. It would be idle to deny that the International was dealt a murderous blow when the assassin's mattock pierced the lion's head, a blow it will be long in recovering from. But the rock the International was founded on cannot be pierced; there is no axe powerful enough to break through that solid system of ideas which Trotsky's genius incorporated into its foundations.

TROTSKY was the author of the programme of the Fourth International, as well as of its principal programmatic documents both before and after its formal founding. It is not only the programme of the world party of the social revolution. It is the fighting programme of workers wherever they engage in class struggle. Wherever that struggle is effective, it is fought along the lines sketched in the programme of the International. Wherever the workers take up the struggle for their class interests, they follow the lines of that programme whether they have read it or not.

Trotsky's revolutionary optimism was irrepressible. The fatal sicknesses of capitalism and the permanent social eruptions it is heir to, were no secret to him. He preserved his revolutionary perspectives to the last, right in the midst of the blackest period the movement has ever known. Scoffers and faint-hearts there are a-plenty to dismiss Trotsky's revolutionary ideas and perspectives today as "fantasy." They are not more numerous today than they were between 1906 and 1917, when he outlined the course the Russian revolution would take, and they are not wiser.

Under the banner of the First International, Trotsky liked to say, the foundations were laid. The Second International mobilised the masses into independent political movements. The Third International was the banner under which the Russian workers and peasants triumphed. The Fourth International will lead the struggle for world victory! The Fourth International — that was Trotsky's crowning work. Its ideas are his heritage to the proletarian socialist movement. Its victory will be his great vindication, the victory of the permanent revolution.

* From *New International*, September 1940. The first part of this article appeared in *Workers' Liberty* 34.

We are not your slaves!

Are women workers any closer to equality with men?

By Helen Rate

IN Europe, North America, and elsewhere in the world, more women are waged workers than ever before. In Britain this trend has been particularly pronounced.

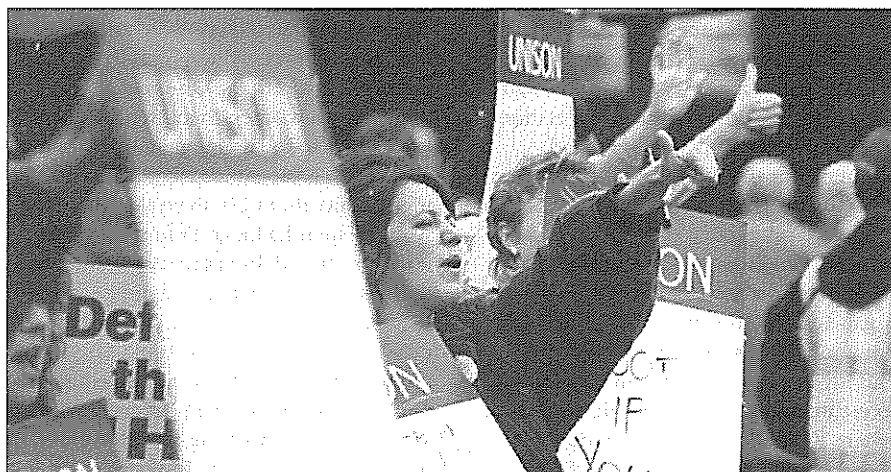
At the beginning of the eighties feminists and socialists liked to predict that the Tories, in a fit of revenge against homebusting working women, would drive women back into the home. We were particularly concerned about married women (or women with partners) and women with children. But most of these women stayed in waged work: in 1993/4 46% of all women with pre-school children and 63% of married women with children, were working. Single mothers were not so fortunate. The employment rate for these women has declined from 49% in 1979-81 to 39% in 1993/4.

Overall more women were working in the 1990s than at the beginning of the 1980s. But only slightly more. In 1995 64% of all women of working age were in employment; in 1981 61%. Bigger increases came in the '70s (52% of women were working in 1971).

The proportion of men in waged work has dropped, whilst the proportion of women in the workforce has increased (to 44% in 1993, from 37% in 1971). As this proportion increases, women have come up against barriers to employment.

According to the government female unemployment is about 7% (compared to 10% for men), but the government's count of women who are "actively seeking work" excludes many women with partners who do not sign on but still looking for work.

The Tories' cuts in welfare provision, their privatisation of the economy and their introduction of a market in health and education services have put a lot of pressure on an already shaky family structure. That has increased the burdens of women's lives, in some ways bolstered women's traditional role in the family and kept women away from the world of work. Women care for sick and disabled relatives at home — a consequence of



the way the Tories have implemented "community care" — more often than men.

There is also a long history of poor public childcare provision in Britain. Even during the war, when millions of women were mobilised to "serve" in the war industries, only a quarter of working mothers got help. After the war most nurseries were closed down.

Working-class women, many of them mothers, wanted to work. A "compromise" — the creation of part-time jobs for these women — was found, which enabled the Establishment to balance their need for female labour and the need to prop up the family, and its vital role in reproducing the next generation of wage slaves.

So began a trend which continued until it became a "norm" for *all* women, including married women and women with children, to work. In the past working-class women with children had worked at home — taking in washing or the like. Now we had "proper" jobs in the "official" economy; but the state would not bother with providing childcare. Grannies, neighbours, relatives and childminders had to fill the gap.

The Tories have been forced into "doing something" about childcare. There has been pressure from employers. The Tories have had to recognise that women are a *useful* but also a *permanent* part of the workforce. This recognition represents progress for women.

Unfortunately the results of the government's shift in childcare policy have been pitiful: a cranky nursery voucher

scheme which has been criticised by the Tory-run local authorities where it has been piloted!

There are still only 985,000 day care places available in Britain. The biggest area of expansion in childcare over the last 10 years has been in registered childminders. Women have been able to get into waged work through the creation of thousands of extremely low-paid jobs for other women! Publicly funded provision in local authority nurseries has been substantially reduced, while private nurseries have grown, making nursery provision even less accessible for low-paid working-class women.

Many women, and men too, want to spend more time bringing up their children, but what choices do they have? Staying at home means poverty for women and their families. In the era of mass male unemployment and generalised low wages, women's earnings have become more necessary; male unemployment has made many women the sole "breadwinners". In Afro-Caribbean families a woman's income is likely to be of even greater significance because of the low labour market status of black men.

There are limits on female employment — job cuts, welfare cuts, the lack of childcare — and these factors are partially bound up with ruling class bolstering of the family. But there is a powerful economic push for working-class women to go out to work, one which has not even been inhibited by the appalling lack of childcare provision. The poverty and hardship which generates that push is hardly likely to go away under a Labour government.

WOMEN'S work is usually low paid — three million women would benefit from a minimum wage set at £4.26. Naturally, capitalism needs the cheapest workers available. These have been thus far been women — as long as they have the skills, and plenty of jobs in modern capitalism don't need that many skills. Low pay has been determined by sex-segregation in the economy. Perhaps this accounts for the lack of a male backlash against women working (although there will be a lot of conflict in relationships between individual men and women over the issue). Also, men often have to accept the economic necessity of women working.

Part-time work — and 50% of all women workers work part-time — is ill-organised and low-paid. Part-time work is not a modern invention. However, today employers are using part-time contracts to create and reshape a whole workforce where flexibility and low pay dominate. Despite the intervention of the Euro-bureaucracy part-time work still means fewer rights.

Flexible work is a very mixed blessing for women. A school term contract sounds like a good idea, but it is only a realistic option for women whose wages are high enough they can afford to take 3 months off every year. And media and government hype of "teleworking" is a bit rich when you consider most wage work done in the home is extremely low-paid piece work.

The part-time "sector" of the economy is undergoing a transformation. The number of hours that part-time employees work is decreasing. The part-time employment of men is rising, or rather men can no longer expect to be in full-time jobs. Most of the new jobs created in recent years have been part time, and many of these have been taken by men. An estimated 38% of all employees are now part-time workers. There has also been a drive for greater productivity — workers have to do the same amount of or more work in less time. The conditions, if not always the wage rates, of women and men's work are moving closer together.

I WOULD argue that working-class women have made real, if partial, progress by their increased participation in waged work. Women are now seen to be and regard themselves as independent individuals. Women will sacrifice a lot in order to be able to earn their weekly pittance because work gives some freedom, a chance to escape the isolation of the home, to be with workmates, to have some self-respect.

However, for many working-class women the experience of going to work is miserable: juggling with a hundred daily tasks, coping with many small disasters, and facing the grinding purposelessness of "working to pay the childminder". Also women still earn on average 72% of men's rates. Often women have only added another kind of slavery — wage-slavery — to traditional domestic slavery, which continues to fall in the main to us. One recent estimate shows women living with a child under five spend an average of 65 hours a week on basic childcare tasks, while men spend about 20. Even if women want to spend a lot of time with their children, the 65 hours leaves them exhausted. That is not equality!

On the other hand, more working-class men face similar rotten circumstances: low pay, job insecurity, part-time contracts. And different rotten circumstances. A young working-class black man living in the inner city who may never find work is not economically privileged. Working-class women face a whole raft of problems which are common to both men and women.

Capitalist propaganda often attempts to show *general* progress in society by referring to progress for *particular* individuals. A lot of women have done very well indeed — 32.9% of all managers are now women. They tell us all women can get to this position — with the right attitude. This is rubbish. Women at the bottom of the heap do not feel "averagely" better off because some have done well.

There is a lot of inequality *between women*, between, say, the nanny who earns £1.50 a hour looking after a child and its mother who earns maybe 15 or 20 times that amount, who rushes off to power breakfast at 6.30 in the morning and doesn't even have to pause to give the offspring a quality kiss good-bye because she lives with the comforting knowledge that the child has constant access to super-exploited professional love. This is sisterhood?

Under capitalism, women have undertaken waged work in various different ways at different times. As in all class societies, this has been structured by a sexual division of labour. Historically, the sexual division of labour, centred on the household and the family, generated and perpetuated sexual inequality and with very few exceptions, women's waged labour was lower-paid than men's. That remains true, but not without very real contradictory developments. I would argue that, outside of the home where women still do

most of the work, there has been a "levelling down" between men and women — some men are being "super-exploited" too!

The question of equality for women is inextricably, and centrally, bound up with the issues I have written about here. Women cannot be equal unless there are no barriers of discrimination to their participation in the labour force. Many other areas where equality can and must be won flow from this. For instance, progress in this area has pushed forward the equal treatment of girls in school. Young women now out-strip men when they leave school. They have more qualifications including in maths and science. Until the barriers have come right down women will not have all the choices they deserve including, if they want, the right to look after their children full-time during the early years without suffering hardship.

Women's participation in waged work gives women, potentially at least, a greater expectation of equality. This expectation is what socialists must relate to. However, the labour movement, whilst pays lip service to the cause of women's rights, does very little to *mobilise* around the problems women face. What sort of fight do we need?

Low pay for women must in the first place be fought by a struggle against low pay for *all* workers — by fighting for the minimum wage for example. Agitation for a general minimum wage should not stop us from using aspects of Equal Pay legislation: it is now, technically, possible to win equal pay for work of equal value. We are still in favour of a levelling up between men and women.

The labour movement's weakness on these issues is part of a pattern of passivity in the face of a systematic offensive against our class and a mood of defeat. Although the structures for organising women in the labour movement are in place (and have been for a long time), many of them remain quite irrelevant. Women's TUC conference, for instance, has no real debate, and is even more stitched up than the general conference.

In the future, if the labour movement is to rebuild, the issues that will be central are those that are also of primary importance to million of women workers. The same issues are affecting working-class men more and more.

The example of the kind of struggle that we need now and in the future is that still being fought by contract cleaners at Hillingdon hospital: women who had the courage to stand up to spiv bosses against all the odds, and say "we will not be your slaves".



Was the USSR state-capitalist?

MARTIN Thomas (WZ34) misunderstands Shachtman's argument against the notion that the USSR was "state-capitalist." Shachtman describes the USSR as a society with "No capitalist class, no capitalist private property, no capitalist profit, no production of commodities for the market, no working class more or less free to sell its labour power on the open market." For a Marxist, such a society cannot be capitalist. If this society is described as state-capitalist, then "state-capitalism" is being used as a meaningless and self-contradictory label.

Shachtman's argument would have been clearer if he had left out "no production of commodities for the market." While it is perfectly true that a society without commodity production cannot be capitalist, there was always some production of commodities in the USSR. There were "shops, money, wages", as Martin points out. Does the existence of these things indicate the existence of capitalism? Not necessarily, according to Marx. Commodities, money and wages [paid to the soldiers] all existed in Ancient Rome, yet capital did not. "It [capital] can spring to life, only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence meets in the market with the free labourer selling his labour power." This suggests an empirical question: In the USSR in the Stalinist period, to what extent was production based on free labour hired by the state?

Instead of attempting any such empirical analysis, Martin demands that the goalposts be moved: he replaces Engels' concept of state capitalism with an "integral state capitalism" where "... the workers would be to a considerable extent state slaves as well as wage slaves." This is to redefine "state-capitalism" to be a society like the USSR, which naturally makes it a simple matter to show that the USSR was "state-capitalist."

"The USSR was a statified economy based on wage labour" says Martin. Unfortunately, by "wage labour" he means labourers who are formally paid a wage, regardless of the actual social relation between "employers" and "wage labour." There is no doubt that industrial workers in the USSR were paid wages and piece rates. But the convict labourers who worked to build a grandiose canal system were also paid wages and piece rates! Thus Martin's claim that "the compounding of wage labour with state-slavery in the USSR did not so transform it so as to make it not wage labour at all" translates to the observation that paying workers by the hour, or by the piece, was standard practice in the USSR.

This observation tells us nothing about how the status of the industrial "wage workers" compared with the status of the convict "wage workers." Under the NEP the difference was quite clear, but in the period 1929-1940 there was a qualitative change in the status of the industrial workers. By introducing an internal passport system in December 1932, the rulers were able to significantly limit a worker's right to leave one job and seek another. The legal status of workers reached its nadir in 1940, with the enactment of a statute making it a criminal offence to be absent from work. Yet in 1940 it was still (relatively!) better to be outside the gulag than within. Even in 1940 the industrial workers in the USSR were not slaves or convicts — but neither were they the free wage labourers of capitalism. The closest analogy, I think, is between the status of industrial workers in the USSR, and that of rank and file soldiers in a conscript army.

Finally, Martin claims "the Stalinist USSR was an aberrant episode within the capitalist era". Yes of course! The world economy was unquestionably a capitalist economy throughout the entire lifespan of the USSR. So what was the nature of the Stalinist aberration? Its distinctive features were the militarisation of industrial labour and the forced collectivisation of the peasantry, which created a peculiar combination of pre-capitalist economic relationships with the technology of capitalism. A regime resembling "Asiatic" despotism set itself the target of developing modern technology, and at a breakneck pace!

In the 1930's the USSR was almost an autarky, but the rulers could not completely seal off their society from the capitalist world. Nor could they indefinitely resist the internal and external pressures for change that were created by coexistence with western capitalism. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 is therefore no great mystery. Nor, since 1991, should it cause much heartache among Marxists if the Stalinist USSR is described as "pre-capitalist."

Roger Clarke

Where does culture come from?

THE ongoing debates about football and *The X-Files* raise basic questions about how socialists deal with the question of cultural

and ideological phenomena in society. These questions revolve around the basic question: are socialists going to accept bourgeois explanations for the existence and functions of cultural phenomena? Or are we going to offer an alternative — and if so what?

Fundamentally, on a social level, there is a similarity between all socio-cultural phenomena, from rap to opera, from classical novels to thrillers, from sci-fi to soap operas and "real-life" drama. I believe this goes beyond questions of the artistic merit, realism and believability of individual styles or pieces of work. This is that culture is a part of the ideological superstructure of capitalist society, and as such serves vital ideological functions for capitalism. This view is widely accepted among sociologists who study cultural and media issues — including both Marxists and many non-Marxists.

Of course, cultural phenomena can originate as a form of expression within the working class, more or less independent from the ruling class and in some sense progressive, even revolutionary. But the ruling class will not tolerate working class cultural phenomena on a large scale for long — it will either take over and incorporate them, or (less frequently) suppress them. Take the example of rap — initially a form of cultural rebellion by oppressed blacks in America's ghettos, now big business for record companies. Or the Japanese adult-cartoon genre, manga — initially a rare source of cultural rebellion within an otherwise largely straitjacketed society, now hijacked and used to spread reactionary, militarist messages. Or the phenomenon of the "rave" — either controlled within nightclubs owned by bourgeois business people, or suppressed under licensing laws or (more recently) by the Criminal Justice Act.

More frequently, however, cultural phenomena are a creation of the ruling class and their media. For instance, contemporary films are dependent on business support to cover the massive budgets now needed to acquire box-office prominence. So why does the ruling class create or take over cultural phenomena at all? Partly, to prevent workers from creating their own cultural phenomena. Partly, to provide a means of escapism for workers, to alleviate the alienation caused by capitalism and dissipate revolutionary urges. Partly, to ensure proletarians have something to do with their time other than political activity.

Primarily, however, cultural phenomena are used by the ruling class because they can and do serve ideological functions. For instance, war films and novels often glorify militarism. Police dramas encourage a "law-and-order" perspective, where the police are ultimately the good guys against the evil and incessant tide of crime and the vicious criminal villains, and where the occasional "bad egg" cop can be put

down to individual characteristics and not the nature and structure of the police force. Even fantasy, adventure, horror and sci-fi often revolve around pro-capitalist ideological concepts such as the individual (usually male, white) hero, the evil villain, and militarism. During BBC2's recent *Star Trek* season, a number of commentators pointed out the extent to which this programme could be identified as the "Cold War" transposed into space. This is demonstrated by facets of the series ranging from the naval-style discipline of the Federation to the heroic "rugged individualism" of the characters, and the way in which the villains so often conform to stereotypical images of Russian Stalinists.

This viewpoint is not mere postulation. It is backed by a good deal of systematic research. Take for instance Jerry Palmer's work on thrillers. Palmer studied a range of thrillers and concluded that they conformed to a standard format which revolved around the lone hero surviving and succeeding in an unpredictable, individualistic, Hobbesian world. He likened this to the role of the "risk-taking" individual in the ideology of capitalism. Take also the work of feminist authors such as Fowler and Ferguson, on women's magazines. These were found to support consistently pro-capitalist and patriarchal ideology, and perhaps most significantly, their content and popularity varied with the needs of capitalism. Women's magazines initially grew out of the desperation of the Depression, providing an escape and an ideological alternative to working-class women in the form of the ideology of romance. Since the 1960s, with the increasing need for women in the workforce, the magazines have increasingly adapted, being more sympathetic towards female labour than their earlier counterparts.

So how do the listed topics fit into this critique? *The X-Files*, irrespective of whether it is "good" or "bad" dramatically and "accurate" or "inaccurate" in its portrayals, is successful because it serves a function for the capitalists — and does so in a way acceptable to workers. It reinforces the view of the "uncertain world." It promotes fear of the power of "big government", which in America can be used to justify welfare cuts and lax laws in areas such as firearms and environmental protection. At the same time, it contains a semi-revolutionary cynicism about politicians, the military, the police and business. This is, however, portrayed in such a way as to deny real outlets and present flawed ones. We should seek to change society by exposing the truth, implies the series — not through working-class struggle.

Football almost certainly began as a proletarian social phenomenon, but has been steadily taken over by the bourgeoisie. This can be

shown not only in rising ticket prices, the erosion of the terrace culture, and the rivalry encouraged between different nations and regions. It can also be shown by the rise of cynical professionalism within the game, the massive wages offered to players (which gives the message that individual proletarians can rise to positions of wealth and therefore promotes individual, rather than collective, action against poverty), the rigid and often unfair disciplinary system, the intolerance of free speech by managers and referees, the pay-to-view systems now being used by the satellite companies, and so on. To describe the take-over of football as only an attack on the terrace culture, or as only a means of extracting cash from fans, is to miss the point that football has survived partly because of the ideological functions it performs.

Finally, if culture is primarily an ideological construct, can it be used for progressive ends? What about supposedly left-wing films, books, and so on? The answer is that, very often, these offer a fairly accurate view of society (e.g. the portrayal of the plight of French working-class youths in *La Haine*) but fail to suggest an effective means of changing it — or, alternatively, portray rebellion and revolution, but in an historical or fantastic setting.

Fantastic books, programmes and so on usually offer a vision of change through magical, supernatural or super-technological sources, or individual heroism, so that even when rebellions occur, they cannot be copied by ordinary people. "Realistic" works often offer no solution at all, presenting merely a depressing picture of human suffering, or stressing escape through individual achievement.

Material of a genuinely revolutionary nature, or dangerous to ruling class power, is suppressed — either directly (for instance, through censorship and bans) or through a blank-out by publishers or distributors (as *Workers' Liberty* should be well aware). If it surfaces at all, it is usually only because it has been salvaged by some section of the left, to be used for specifically radical purposes. Of course, there are fairly progressive authors, film makers and so on, but the ruling class will retain hegemony over culture for as long as it retains dominance in society. We learn from Marx that culture cannot ultimately change society. Changing the material base of society is a prerequisite to changing its ideological superstructure. Only through revolutionary social change can the problems in contemporary culture — profit motivation, ideological bias, racism, sexism and so on — be genuinely resolved.

Andy Robinson

Moralism or Morale?

THE Tories have used recent disputes regarding discipline in schools, and pupil exclusions to yet again attack teachers and schools but also to attack society in general and blame a lack of morality and the breakdown of the family unit. So what are the answers to this?

They call for a moral code to be drawn up with more emphasis on family values and, just to be clear about what they are saying here, they were none too happy that the draft moral code did not clearly state heterosexual married couples only, more power for schools to discipline students and finally the return of corporal punishment.

The debate over behaviour in schools and pupil exclusions will continue but alongside this we need to be looking for solutions to the current problems in our education system. Schools have faced more and more cuts over the past few years and have been bombarded with countless pieces of mindless Tory legislation.

There is not a problem with morality in our society but a problem with morale. The constant attacks from this government have left many in society demoralised and unable to see a clear future.

The call for the return of corporal punishment is something which we should clearly fight against. It is totally unacceptable and open to abuse. Violence does not solve the problems. In fact violence breeds violence. In my experience the most violent students in schools come from extremely violent and abusive backgrounds.

The situation cannot be resolved with bland statements and reactionary accusations. We need to look at the lack of resources and funding in our schools but also look at examples of good practice and training for demoralised staff in schools. We need to build up links between home and school but not in a threatening way. We should also look at the legislation which has been imposed on schools and the total inappropriateness of the curriculum for many students. It is these sorts of issues that we should be addressing and fighting for before the Tories totally destroy the comprehensive system.

Louise Neil

● We have had to hold over to the next issue long Forum pieces from Jim Higgins, Barry Finger and Harry Holland. But keep it coming!

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The life and death of Peter Graham, 1945-71

By Sean Matgamna

Exactly 25 years ago, Peter Graham died in Dublin at the hands of semi-gangster members of the "Republican" guerrilla organisation, "Saor Eire", of which he was a member. (Its nearest equivalent today would be the INLA and IPLO). He had been beaten with a hammer, subjected to other indignities, and then shot in the neck and left to choke on his own blood. He was 26 years old. An electrician from the Coombe district of Dublin, Peter had joined the Stalinist "Connolly Youth Movement" at 20 and become a Trotskyist a year later.

I knew Peter Graham well, and cared about him. He was marked by high dedication and subordination of everything narrowly personal to his socialist politics. He was one of the most determined militants I have known. He does not deserve to be forgotten.

How did a Trotskyist come to that end? In the late 1960s, guerrilla warfare, as depicted in the experience of the Cuban revolution and the writings of Che Guevara and Regis Debray, had great prestige on the left. Ireland was a place of shadowy — and soon to be all too substantial — secret armies; most of Irish revolutionary politics was the memory of such "armies".

The main Irish Trotskyist organisation, the League for a Workers' Republic, which Peter joined, was a passive and rather sectarian group. But Ireland's own endemic guerrillaist tradition was so pervasive that it found reflection among Peter's sectarian-Trotskyist comrades, even while they ritually crossed themselves and mumbled the standard Marxist caveats about "terrorism".

The middle-class (and very young) leaders of the group repelled him with their dry painting-by-numbers "orthodox-Trotskyist" passivity, while simultaneously shunting him towards "the anti-imperialist militants" of Saor Eire by their open moral awe before them.

Trotsky wrote somewhere that the pre-revolutionary Russian Social Revolutionary terrorists operated in an atmosphere of sustaining moral approbation from the middle-class liberals of the Cadet party. So it was with Peter and his "orthodox Trotskyist" comrades. In their press the thrilling physical-force-now Saor Eire revolutionaries were depicted not only as part of a division of labour in Irish revolutionary politics, but as an advanced, heroic and serious part of it.

For the LWR leaders this idea was



not allowed to interfere unduly with middle-class career building. Peter was in earnest.

Beginning with the reasonable idea that it was necessary to learn to use guns where there were hostile private political armies, the desire not to be among the laggards, to be with the vanguard — the same desire that leads luckier people to mere extremes of sloganising — pulled Peter into Saor Eire and then into its "actions".

Saor Eire was a group of dissident Republicans, one or two of whom were ex-Trotskyists. They robbed many banks in the South between 1968 and 1971, and shot Richard Fallon, an unarmed Dublin policeman who tried to stop a robbery. In November 1970 Taoiseach Jack Lynch went so far as to announce publicly that to deal with Saor Eire he had activated the law allowing internment without trial. Then, amidst political uproar, he drew back.

But Saor Eire's ideas made no sense, and their activities even less. This group came to be as tightly sealed off from Irish society and the Irish working class as an airbubble in the bloodstream. Some members were on the run. Politically, as Peter discovered, nothing could be done with such a group, selected on the basis of "action" and not politics.

Some members, like Sean Morrissey, an ex-Trotskyist who would be acquitted of murder and jailed for robbery, were patently sincere, politically honest, and uncommonly selfless people. Others were gangsters.

It is not for nothing that Marxists have rejected the form of "politics" represented by Saor Eire.

Peter joined the Mandeliste international organisation (USFI) some time after he was already involved in Saor Eire. Because we were linked by ties of personal friendship as well as old ties of politics, he worked at maintaining links with Workers' Fight (a forerunner of the

AWL), despite our large political differences. Peter was something of a romantic eucumenicist!

Remarkably cool, Peter was, in his own way, tragically clear-headed. Making and stubbornly holding to the enormous and all-defining political misjudgement which cost him his life, he kept his head clear of the mystifications which lead so many would-be Trotskyists today to weave inappropriate "socialist" fantasies around the activities of the Catholic-chauvinist Provisional IRA. (He did, of course, "back" the Provisionals against the British state, as others of us too felt obliged to).

The last time I saw him, about ten days before his death, Peter and I spent a long afternoon in a fierce and furious political row, and never once did he resort in political self-defence to such all-purpose left-wing abracadabra notions as the idea that Ireland is going through, or can be made to go through a "process of permanent revolution", in which bourgeois nationalist activity will at some point turn into the socialist revolution. Peter had too much self-respect to take refuge in what he knew to be nonsense.

It would, perhaps, be easier to account for him, had he shared such notions or fitted tidily into the standard "Trotskyist-populist" left, but he did not.

Had he survived physically, Peter Graham would have survived politically, and grown. So I choose to believe.

Peter Graham was an honest and brave revolutionary socialist who met a premature and politically useless death in a sordid and meaningless skirmish that never should have happened. Two worlds, at least, separate the Coombe electrician from Robert Gregory, the son of Galway landowners and colonial administrators, about whom Yeats wrote the famous poem "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death", but for me Yeats' poem sums up Peter's wilfulness and his strange detachment:

*I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above
Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love;
My country is Kilcartan Cross,
My countrymen Kilcartan's poor,
No likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before.
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public men, nor cheering
crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of
breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.*

The circus is coming to town

THE CIRCUS is coming to town! In early 1997 the "Lambertist" Workers' Party of France will organise a big "international conference against privatisation and deregulation" in London. The "Lambertists" specialise in such affairs. They also have a long history as an ultra-factional, quasi-religious sect. Their nearest equivalent in the history of the British left is the old WRP of Gerry Healy, with whom they were long connected.

A German Stalinist, Willi Munzenberg, was famous in the 1930s for his talent in organising showy "broad" congresses, committees, appeals and celebrity setpieces even while the Communist Parties were denouncing all other labour groupings as "social-fascist". The Lambertists are the, stodgier and more "workerist", Munzenbergists of today.

Their French organisation claims to have become a broad "Workers' Party", where four diverse tendencies, "socialist", "communist", "anarcho-syndicalist", and "Trotskyist", all have formal status, and which is open to anyone supporting a very modest, indeed anti-Marxist, platform — separation of Church and State; liquidation of the Fifth Republic; a "democracy, the content of which the people itself will define"; "recognition" of the class struggle; and no interference by political parties in trade unions or vice versa. In fact, the Workers' Party has the same office, the same leading functionaries, the same newspaper, and the same politics (without any hint of dissent or debate) as the previous "Trotskyist" group....

Their tabloid *Informations Ouvrières*, reporting on their latest conference (20-23 October, in Paris), claims that it rallied "all the tendencies of the workers' movement". Yet twelve full pages covering the conference report no dissent from an "introductory report" which, in a rich sauce of talk about struggle by "the people" for "democracy" against "the speculators", propounded the cranky long-held Lambertist dogma that the productive forces have ceased to grow in modern capitalism. The Lambertists' "workers' movement" is delimited by their own dogmas.

Such "masquerade and charlatanry" (as Trotsky put it, referring to Munzenberg) is very different from the usual and desirable business of small revolutionary organisations initiating broader campaigns and giving them the best "front"

possible. Here, the show is the campaign. The clothes have no Emperor. The show is the bulk of the "revolutionary" politics, too, because those "revolutionary" politics largely consist of the self-promotion of "the party".

The Lambertists do not collaborate with any other left group in France. Their comment on the presidential election campaign in 1995 by Arlette Laguiller of Lutte Ouvrière, which got 1.6 million votes, was that Laguiller was just the same as Chirac... For the first several weeks of the great strikes of November-December 1995, their paper downplayed the workers' action in favour of a demonstration which they themselves had organised for 9 December in opposition to state funds for church schools. Their

"The show is the campaign. The clothes have no Emperor".

comments on the strikes were very perfunctory, their distinctive "line" being their pet slogan of "a sovereign Constituent Assembly". The Lambertists' theatrical talent is reserved for their own stage, not used to play a big part on the wider scene of class struggle.

The Lambertists, like the "Healyites", emerged out of the disarray of the Trotskyists in 1948-52, when the labour movement subsided and Stalinists won victories in China and Eastern Europe. They shared the "official" Trotskyist view that the Stalinist victories signified the creation of "deformed workers' states", but (rightly) jibbed at the conclusions, and so seceded.

The then political leaders of what would become the "Lambert group" — Marcel Bleibtreu and others — were disoriented, unsure, and probably depressed too: their group had declined from 1500 members in 1948 to 150 in 1952 (which still made it one of the biggest Trotskyist groups in the world at the time). Pierre Lambert came to the fore because he was a talented improviser with ready answers (work in the right-wing union federation Force Ouvrière, in alliance with some anarcho-syndicalists; and, later, campaigning in support of the Algerian nationalist MNA). Untroubled by theoretical scruples, he would, like the British Lambert, Gerry Healy, manipulate or discard political ideas to fit the practi-

cal schemes.

Lambert elbowed aside the old political leaders, and eventually expelled them in 1955. The political line, previously minimalist and dispirited, shifted into syndicalist ultra-militancy. "The odious comedy of elections will change nothing. Let's prepare the struggle for power!"; "General strike for bread and peace" were the headlines, from a tiny group in the midst of the unmilitant 1950s.

In 1958 a military coup toppled the French government and installed as president Charles de Gaulle, who imposed a new constitution (the "5th Republic") with a weak parliament and strong powers for himself. Something snapped, and the Lambertists shifted sharply to the right. They closed down their weekly paper and replaced it with a small duplicated bulletin which declared: "The working class today is incapable of intervening as such in political struggles". The wild calls for a general strike were replaced by advocacy of an defensive "workers' united front" "to preserve the workers' movement" from immediate and complete suppression. The fetishistic harping-on about a Constituent Assembly (which today is their answer not just in France, but also in Algeria, Israel/Palestine, Ireland, everywhere*) has its roots in this shift.

In May 1968 they started by denouncing the student movement ("the junketing organised by Cohn-Bendit and Co. at the Sorbonne"), did their best to take people off the streets on the decisive "night of the barricades" (to go and "build the revolutionary party"), and then claimed that the great general strike was all due to their slogans.

In the 1970s and '80s, much of the Labour left shamed itself by continuing to lend "names" to Healy's stunts, long after his group had degenerated into craziness, thuggery (and, eventually, worse than the Lambertists, taking money from Arab dictatorships). The experience should have inoculated socialists against giving any credence to the Lambert circus. Has it?

Colin Foster

* For example, their now defunct Irish group, the LWR, Catholic chauvinist and workerist, advocated a Constituent Assembly to unite Ireland. But for Catholics and Protestants to accept such a body presupposes unity. A "means" was proposed for achieving unity which presupposed unity! Charlatanism.



Middle-class nationalist "history"

PETER Beresford Ellis' *History of the Irish working class* was originally published in 1972 and first republished by Pluto in 1985. The arrival of a new edition, like the end of the IRA ceasefire, is a sharp reminder of how little has really changed within "the nationalist family."

This book would be better named "A nationalist history of the Irish working class" (or, "A history of the nationalist working class in Ireland"). For the author, the working class in Ireland is simply those nationalists who work. The preface to the 1985 edition states:

"The majority of the Irish working class stands clearly against Britain's colonial connection with the island but, in the north, a section of the Ulster working class, deliberately segregated from their compatriots on sectarian lines, enticed from their roots by a century and a half of propaganda, *occupy a unique place as a force of reaction and a stumbling block to social progress*. In Ireland today, as in previous centuries, the main-spring of socialism is the national struggle" [my emphasis].

This is a picture of Ireland and of its working class all too common on the British left. In fact, the work of Beresford Ellis and co-thinker Desmond Greaves can be seen as a sort of political travel guide to Ireland for 1975-1985 vintage British socialists. In a period when Ireland, and in particular the nationalist struggle, was the testing ground for militants, "England's Vietnam", many people took the new cause *célèbre* seriously enough to set about doing some reading on the matter. There is a lot to read. It is a complex history, or, to be more exact, set of histories. Busy revolutionaries were hungry for a quick summary. That is what

Beresford Ellis provides, and it has not been a proud or helpful contribution.

A generation of socialists have now been brought up on a diet of myths about Ireland. The national struggle is the main-spring of socialism (and even progress!). It is, first and foremost, an anti-imperialist struggle. Its initial nationalist stage will spill over into a broader socialist revolt, draw in Southern workers and even the best of the Protestants. Yet the Protestant working class are nothing more than the dupes and puppets of British rule, and can only be an obstacle until the inevitable nationalist victory. This diet has produced a politically malnourished left, incapable of thinking at all clearly about the issues.

Despite dealing at length with various aspects of the national struggle, on which he says very little that hasn't been said before and said better in orthodox nationalist histories, Beresford Ellis makes a passing reference to some "aspects of working class history which deserve more detail" but which he didn't have time to deal with properly. What are these aspects? In his own words: "For example: the branches of the First International in Ireland, the early history of Irish trade unionism which began in the latter part of the 18th century; the agrarian terrorist organisations of the 17th-18th centuries and the Irish soviets of 1920-3." We can tell almost as much about his standpoint from what he omits as from what he includes. It isn't that all of these aspects would be rich in examples which would challenge his basic line, it is more that they might get in the way of his linear narrative account of more or less inseparable nationalist and working class movements.

If it was a matter of time, I would suggest editing out the rosy picture painted early in the book of the egalitarian and co-operative life that was to be had in Celtic Ireland before the "crushing slavery of the Anglo-Norman feudal system." This section is mainly a defence of Connolly's attempt to establish communism as a legitimate native Irish creed. Connolly's *Labour in Irish History* was concerned to

"Gaelicise communism" as much as to "communise Ireland." It was a valiant and understandable impulse, all the more so in a Scottish immigrant and ex-British soldier constantly having to confront allegations that socialism was an alien influence peddled by outsiders. It was, nevertheless, history used selectively to deal with problems of contemporary political strategy.

To repeat and reinforce it now, without even the justification Connolly had, is to simply rationalise the surrender of so many socialists to romantic Irish nationalism. But that is part of the author's purpose.

The emergence, resilience and dynamic of Protestant working-class politics is one of the central enigmas of Irish working class history. There has been no general history which unlocks it, but the kind of account served up here simply doesn't address the problem. Most of the time, Protestants as a section of the class are simply missing ("a unique force of reaction").

Occasionally, the narrative forces the author to tread close to some really important moments. Connolly and Larkin, for example, spent a lot of time in Belfast building a union and supporting a strike movement. There were a lot of Protestants in Belfast and they were heavily involved in these strikes. At the same time, 1910-14, Connolly and Larkin were keen to organise labour politically and were in the process of establishing a labour party.

Protestants were not at all hostile to a political labour organisation. They had labour leaders such as William Walker, there had recently been a significant split in the Orange Order because of bitter working-class opposition to the Unionist bosses. The leader of the Independent Orange Order, Lindsay Crawford, shared platforms with Connolly and Larkin to ensure that the Orange card was not used to divide the class and defeat strikes.

Most of the major questions which continue to dog the Irish workers' movement came up during this period in Belfast in intense form. Was a labour party which united Protestants and Catholics possible? Would it be an

Irish labour party or a section of the newly established British Labour Party? Could the strike movements in the north, allied to the titanic battles in the south, be used to remould workers' politics on both sides, to create something independent of Green and Orange boss politics?

Beresford Ellis has to describe the 'moments' but he never seriously addresses the questions. For example, he recounts an episode when William Walker was trying to ensure that Protestant workers voted Labour and not Unionist in a local election. Walker famously declared that "Protestantism means protesting against superstition, hence true Protestantism is synonymous with labour." Walker was, in all sorts of respects, a disreputable and confused character, but here he was trying in a smaller way to do what Connolly was praised for doing with the Gaelic Catholic tradition; convince people that their cultural identity and their class feeling could be married to one another. I think they were both wrong, but where Beresford Ellis praises Connolly's vision, he condemns Walker for appealing to sectarian instincts.

Real problems of class unity are dissolved into a story of bad-dies and goodies, in which liberation for Protestant workers is only possible when they abandon their own identity but adopt the identity of the nationalist. For Beresford Ellis the real tragedy is not the final triumph of sectarian and national politics at this crucial period, it is the fact that Protestant workers failed to see that they were on the wrong side and thus consigned themselves to an historical limbo, stuck between nationalist heaven and Unionist hell.

This is not, therefore, particularly useful as a history of the working class, whose story is viewed as a subplot of the much more important history of the "Irish people" and their national war. The only reason for focusing on the working class section of that people would seem to be that they are much the better part, the fighters, the most oppressed, the more progressive. The bibliography is full of names like Farrell, Devlin, McCann; the

The American way of justice

FILM

TWO films currently on release deal with the American way of justice. The first, *Lone Star*, is a modern day western-cum-murder mystery. It tells the story of a Texas small-town sheriff, Sam Deeds (Chris Cooper), who finds himself investigating a 30 year old murder with which his dead father, a former sheriff of the same town, is connected. Deeds is forced to reassess his relationship with his father — in Deeds' words, "the fucking legend" — only to uncover secrets destined to cause him more pain. Along the way this film manages to evoke many small episodes in the history of America.

Lone Star is a wonderful, piece of cinema. Over 2½ hours various American myths and legends are represented in the characters and situations. These are poked at and gently questioned. We see the historical and contemporary conflict between Texas and Mexico; the racial divisions between whites and Mexicans, and whites and blacks. The film also reworks a central theme of the western — how the rule of the gun and saloon bar justice sometimes over-rides "normal" due process in the bourgeois criminal justice system.

Chris Cooper portrays his character — a quiet, honest, man whose face betrays the loss of his life, of his father and his childhood sweetheart — with great style.

A Time to Kill gives a very different interpretation of "the rule of the gun".

In a courtroom drama — based on a John Grisham novel — you would expect a conventional Hollywood treatment: a glaringly obvious miscarriage of justice will be put right by the handsome/beautiful, or perhaps not so handsome/beautiful but brilliant, advocate who will "bend" the rules of the bourgeois court. That message will be that bourgeois justice does work, despite its limitations. Truth will prevail.

Not here! *A Time to Kill* is

initially full of moral ambiguity. It is deeply critical of American justice and its operation in the Southern States.

A black girl is raped and savagely beaten by two rednecks. Her father, stricken with grief and anger, guns down his daughter's attackers. A young white Southern lawyer is asked to defend the father, who is up against a racist judiciary which will not allow a fair trial.

We want the father to have a fair trial because we feel sympathy for him. But, the film asks us, perfectly reasonably, do we condone an "eye for an eye" killing?

From this point, the film goes astray because this question is not asked in a sober, cool-headed way. It is given the absolute maximum dramatic and emotional underpinning. And so I had to conclude: as entertainment this movie is pretty good; as social commentary it stinks.

This film says that in certain circumstances victims are right to take the law into their own hands, that an "eye for an eye" is justified. This is no rational way to order the world. Victims should have a say in how crimes against the person are treated, but only in a general way, because the balance of probability must be that their views will not be dispassionate or, indeed, be concerned fundamentally with justice.

A Time to Kill says if a black person walks free from a racist court, after committing pre-meditated murder, that is a good thing. That is not a recipe for building an equal society, but one where the oppressed begin to aspire to the old privilege of their old oppressors.

In the end *A Time to Kill* dished up its own version of the usual Hollywood nonsense and that left me feeling queasy. The film says: despite some pretty damn big limitations, bourgeois justice does work, even for black people, even in America, even in the Southern States of America! The hundreds of black men and women mouldering in America's prisons and on death row know that to be a load of old crap.

Helen Rate

roll call of nationalist historians. Those who challenge or question that version of history, particularly its understanding of class and the Protestants (Bew, Patterson, etc.), are nowhere mentioned. A history may dispute or even dismiss these views, but not even to have read them is absurd. Beresford Ellis' history is one that assumes that it is the truth, that allows for no serious doubts. In that, as in many other ways, it has the unmistakable stamp of Catholicism.

If this book is useful, it is as a case study of the history of the Irish question dominant on the left in Britain. If we are to challenge the strategy proposed by that left, then we need to challenge their history.

Patrick Murphy
History of the Irish working class
by Peter Beresford Ellis, Pluto

Vindication of a life

NEXT YEAR is the 200th anniversary of the death of Mary Wollstonecraft. She died at 38, while giving birth to her second daughter, only five years after the publication of her most famous work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The infant girl who lost her mother at birth was also named Mary. She went on to become a writer — the creator of Frankenstein — and married the poet Percy Shelley. Wollstonecraft's first daughter, Fanny, committed suicide at the age of 22 years.

In *Vindication* Frances Sherwood takes the facts of her heroine's life and weaves them together with fictional day-to-day events and feelings, describing relationships, bodies, emotions, landscapes and incidents in imaginative and vivid detail. The Wollstonecraft Sherwood creates takes on an apparently mythical stature, yet, because she remains profoundly human, she continuously lets herself down.

Reading *Vindication* is an incredible experience — once the story is in your head, it's hard to get it out. This is a novel of great highs and terrible lows for the reader. It is exhilarating, inspiring, passionate, exciting and also, in parts, gory, vulgar, horrifyingly shocking and sad.

Mary's life was, of course, one

of great highs and lows, all of which are here.

The highs and the thrills of of this book are the many achievements of Mary's life, her feminism, her intellectual abilities and her strength to survive in spite of a broken heart and a battered spirit.

And the lows, the cruelties? We see Mary's harsh childhood, saved only by her relationship with her friend Fanny; we read of Mary's insecurities, self-doubt and the sadness of her losses; we see her inadequacies as a mother and her failings as a lover.

Mary is shipwrecked on the way to Portugal to see her dearest friend Fanny on her deathbed. She travels to France during the revolution, has a love affair with Gilbert, the father of her first child Fanny, and subsequently escapes from Paris and the guillotine. Mary is later betrayed by Gilbert. This part of the story left me feeling exhilarated, inspired, sad and depressed all at once! And the forceful and striking depiction of Mary's stay in the lunatic asylum, Bedlam, her attempted suicide and depression left me feeling impotent and useless.

High emotion is relieved by the many amusing scenes. Sherwood describes Mary's friendship with the artist and poet William Blake and his wife Catherine and her first visit to the Blakes' printshop and home in Lambeth. Blake's eccentricities — including naturism and vegetarianism — provide plenty of scope for easy amusement. But Sherwood's description will have you laughing out aloud — wherever you may be. Sherwood's Blake is so wild you will just have to find out more about him. (For a passionate, though not so amusing account of Blake's life, Peter Ackroyd's biography *Blake* is well worth reading).

This novel will not change your life, but it will enhance it. *Vindication* is not a "woman's" novel. If you happen to be a man, don't deprive yourself of a stormy and thrilling adventure just because the hero is a woman and a feminist. Mary's philosopher husband, William Godwin, wrote his memoirs of Mary a few months after her death. On reviewing the memoirs, the bourgeois press described Godwin as a pimp and Mary as a whore. Their hatred of Mary Wollstonecraft gives us just the tiniest glimpse of the impact, the subversiveness and the importance of her published works.

Jill Mountford
Vindication by Frances Sherwood, Phoenix, 1994, £6.99

Racism and capitalism

By Mark Osborn

THE Tories' current Immigration and Asylum Bill is an example of a constant of capitalist society: racism. *Workers' Liberty* maintains that to beat racism we must understand what it is and where it comes from. This article aims to explain the relationship between economic exploitation and discrimination against black people, and outline the AWL programme to beat racism, in the hope of promoting debate with other anti-racist campaigners.

Modern anti-black British racism has relatively recent roots which lie in the history of slavery and colonialism. Racism did not start as a divide-and-rule trick imposed by the ruling class. The racist practice of slavery and colonialism came first; racist ideas came later.

When the slave trade started in the 16th century the British capitalists took slaves and sold them like cattle, bullied them and beat them. Then, they began thinking of them as sub-human. That is the natural way of things for slave owners. When Britain conquered territories and peoples and assumed the right to rule and make decisions for them, then British people began to believe those peoples were inferior.

The roots of modern racism can be traced back to the planter class of slave owners. Although fear and suspicion of the stranger and the outsider had existed before, it had not been fear on the basis of skin colour.

In the ancient world there were many societies based on slavery. But there was no idea comparable to 'race'. The ancient Egyptians looked down on the black peoples to their south, but they were just as scornful of other, lighter-skinned, neighbours. Egyptian artists caricatured the captives taken in war — but the peculiar dress of the Libyans or Hebrews was held up for ridicule as much as the features of the black southerners. In Greek society the slaves were frequently of the same colour as their owners. There were many white slaves from the north and the east. In Rome any citizen might become a slave and any slave a citizen. Slaves came from every province and every skin colour — so did the Emperors, of whom some were black.

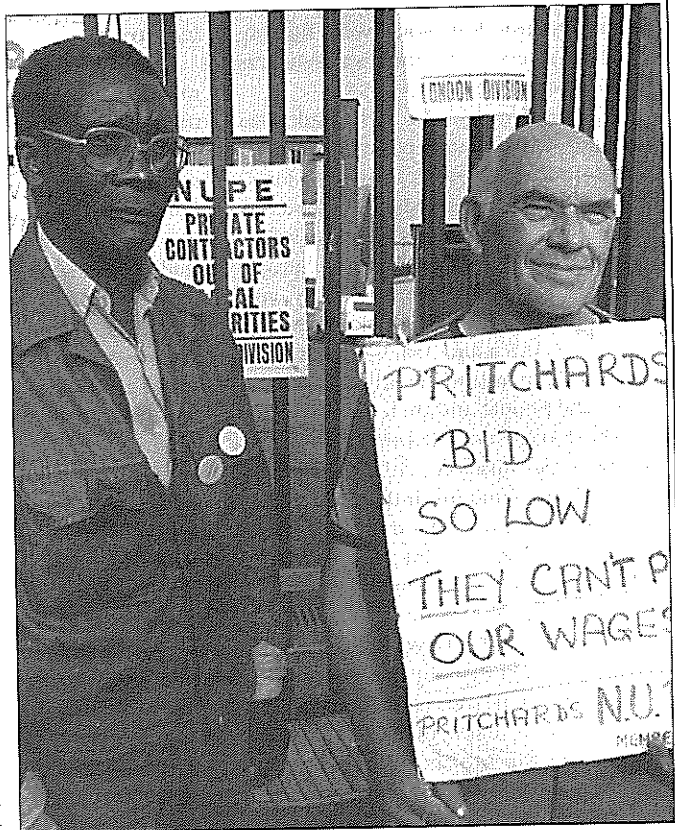
There is nothing 'natural' about anti-black racism in the psychological-biological

make-up of whites. This can be seen today by watching the way young children of different skin colours play together quite happily.

Modern racism was a product of the beginnings of capitalism. As Karl Marx summed it up: "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins... The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother-country and were turned into capital". Pre-feudal slavery was wedded to the most modern merchant capitalism in a drive which helped produce the capital for the future industrial revolutions. Tens of millions of African slaves were taken across the Atlantic. The population of Africa remained stagnant in the period 1650 to 1850, while that of Europe nearly doubled.

The slaves were part of the 'triangular trade'. Boats took slaves to the plantations, brought sugar back to Europe, and then took manufactured goods to Africa.

In the beginning there were Indian slaves and white indentured labourers too as well as Africans. Black slaves were taken from Africa as a simple commercial decision: it was cheaper than going elsewhere. The reasons were economic, not racist. Racist ideas squared an ideological circle for the capitalists. Their anti-feudal revolutions took place under the banner of liberty. Yet there was no liberty for the slaves. Paradoxically, it was because capitalism had developed the ideas of universal human rights and equality — the same ideas that would later inspire the revolts of



Fighting capitalism, building working-class unity

the colonial and enslaved peoples — that it also developed the ideologies of racism. Previous societies had had slavery and conquest — but their rulers had no need for general theories of racial superiority to justify the slavery and conquest. The poor had no rights, whatever their skin colour and whatever their ethnic origin. There was no need for special theories to cancel the human rights of a special category of poor people.

Under the pressure of economic compulsion — the economic need for slavery — writers and thinkers developed the gut reactions of the planters into fleshed-out theories. Those theories are as recent as the eighteenth century. Black people were called sub-human, allowing the bourgeoisie to have their 'liberty' and their slaves too. Pseudo-science said black peoples were inferior — because of head shape, or some other rubbish.

Some of the ideas that were developed were perversions of real facts. Take the racist view that black people are 'lazy'. In fact the slaves were not lazy, they were just rebelling. In modern capitalist society

the basic form of revolt is the workers' strike; the basic form of revolt in Stalinist society, where unions were forbidden, was absenteeism and, perhaps, throwing a spanner into the nearest machine. The equivalent on the plantation was: I am damned if I am going to work hard. The slaves were not 'lazy', they were fighting back! But, perversely, their struggle was turned back on them.

Colonialism and the slave trade also wrecked societies and civilisations. Much of the African past was destroyed. Colonial intervention in India reduced a fabulous treasure-house, the world's leading industrial nation, to backward poverty. Europe reduced Africa and India to poverty; and then built a whole racist ideology that the peoples of Africa and Asia were naturally 'backward'. In Ireland the British state brutalised the people and then blamed them for their own condition. They were described as "unstable, childish, violent, lazy, feckless, feminine and primitive".

But it is not true that only white men made slaves. The black Iraqis on your television screen during the Gulf war were brought there by Arab slave traders. The Arab trade in African slaves started earlier and finished later than the European trade, and probably enslaved more people. The history is not a simple black-versus-white one; in fact the African trade depended on the co-operation of many African chiefs who benefited from it.

At the same time, there was opposition to slavery, in the name of human equality, from white radicals. In Britain, for instance, during the American Civil War, the workers were solid for the Union despite their government siding with the slave-owning South and despite the unemployment caused by the Northern blockade of the South and the consequent lack of cotton for the Lancashire mills.

In the heyday of the British Empire, racism and nationalism penetrated every part of intellectual life. They had the effect of pinning the workers to the bosses in the mistaken belief that they had more in common with Queen Victoria than with the Indian poor. Frederick Engels wrote to Karl Kautsky in 1882: "You ask what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general: the same as the bourgeois think. There is no workers' party here, you see, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies".

Many labour movement leaders campaigned to restrict the entry of Jews fleeing Eastern European pogroms at the end of the last century. The first modern immigration act was passed against the Jews —

the Aliens Act of 1905.

Immigration laws have been one of the major mechanisms of state racism over the last 30 years. After the Second World War, capitalism expanded, and the British bosses toured Africa, the Caribbean and India looking for workers to work in British industry.

As the boom slowed the racist right mobilised. It was led by Winston Churchill, the supposedly great leader of British democracy in World War 2 and grandfather of the current racist bigot. In 1955 Churchill proposed "Keep Britain White" as a Tory election slogan. The Metropolitan Police described "coloured people" as "work-shy and content to live on National Assistance and immoral earnings." Black workers found 'colour bars' in clubs and housing. Black community organisations began life as self-help groups in response to this racism.

Racist attacks became more common, and in 1958 there was a riot led by organised racists in Notting Hill, West London. The Immigration Act of April 1962 began the current process of formal racism — laws which discriminate against black people. The Immigration Acts of 1968 and 1971 completed the process, barring almost all immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean and India except those joining close family here.

In addition to legislation there have been assaults from the right: "If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour" was a Tory election slogan in 1964. Thatcher said that "this country might be swamped by people from a different culture" before her election victory in 1979, taking some of the political ground from under the fascist National Front who, during the 1970s, organised some thousands of white British people.

On the street the police have posed a constant threat to black people. A Policy Institute report from 1983 shows that in the Metropolitan Police racism is "expected, accepted and even fashionable". Racist stereotypes have moved on to target black youth as drug dealers and criminals. Take the *Evening Standard's* coverage of the Operation Bumblebee police "crackdown on crime". The *Standard's* reporter went with police on a raid: the young woman "claimed she was 18" and her partner's wall was "covered in Bob Marley posters". Got the message?

But the story of racism is also the story of struggle and resistance. In the last 30 years the battle to confront all forms of racism has broadened out. The fight against racism must be bound up with the struggle to replace capitalism with democratic, working-class socialism. As Malcolm X said: "you can't have capitalism without racism".

A programme to beat racism

THE Alliance for Workers' Liberty organises socialists to fight for working class solutions to the crisis. If we do not then black people, Jews and foreigners will be scapegoated; the working class will be split along ethnic lines; and we will all lose — black and white.

Socialists must be part of the basic organisations of the working class — the trade unions and the Labour Party and help to turn them outwards to campaign on the estates and streets.

● **A decent home for everyone!**
Demand government money to enable local councils to undertake a crash programme of compulsory purchase of empty properties, renovation, and house-building, to create new homes at affordable rates.

● **Jobs for all! Cut the work week to 35 hours; create useful new jobs by restoring and expanding public services; provide training and re-training at union rates of pay. To pay for this: tax the rich, cut arms spending, take control of the big banks and financial institutions.**

● **Restore the Health Service and other public services.**

● **Jobs, training or education for all youth, with union rates of pay or an adequate grant.**

● **Make the police accountable to elected local committees. Defend civil liberties: fight to replace the existing bureaucratic, hierarchical capitalist state by a regime based on accountability and workers' control.**

● **Scrap the immigration laws! No more deportations!**

● **Fight for real equality in employment and housing. Council-house allocation by need, not by race under disguise of a "sons and daughters" policy. Special training programmes to ensure real equality in employment for ethnic minorities.**

● **Equality in the labour movement. No toleration for racist prejudice: special campaigns to recruit and integrate ethnic minority workers.**

● **Labour movement support for black communities' self-defence; united black and white workers' defence squads to beat back the fascists.**

● **The labour movement must stand up and fight! That is the only way to beat the Tories, the capitalists and the racists. Join the AWL.**

Fighting racism: Brick Lane, September 1978

By Tom Macara

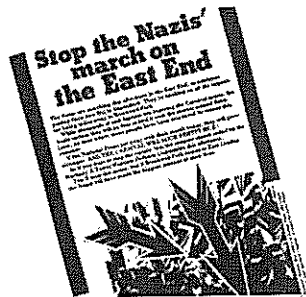
RUAH Carlyle [WL35] told the story of Cable Street, 1936, and how the Stalinist CP, which ever afterwards falsely claimed credit for the fascist defeat in the East End, actually started by telling its members to go to a Spanish Civil War rally in Trafalgar Square instead. A remarkably similar series of events occurred in East London four decades later, in September 1978, when fascists marched into the Bengali areas of East London. The role the CP played in 1936, only far, far worse, was played in 1978 by people calling themselves Trotskyists.

The organisations of the black community in East London had appealed to the labour movement for support in stopping a Nazi march on their area, planned for 30 September 1978. Hundreds of socialists responded. But Sunday 30 September was also the date set for an Anti-Nazi League rock concert at Brockwell Park, south London. Seeing the carnival and the great possibilities for organisational self-promotion as the most important thing, the then large, broad-front Anti-Nazi League, led by the Socialist Workers Party and backed by the International Marxist Group and the Communist Party, refused. They said in effect: "No, there's not much we can do, we've got a concert organised which mustn't be spoiled."

The ANL leadership — that is, primarily, the SWP — was given conclusive proof of the NF's intended march by *Searchlight* magazine a month in advance. They concealed the fact. As late as Friday 15 September, the ANL said that they still had no reason to believe the documents were genuine; they were investigating. The IMG [today, Socialist Action and Socialist Outlook] asserted that in their view the Front march was a hoax. But even if it were genuine, any attempt to mobilise people in defence of the East End would be "a diversion" from the Carnival. The thing that really mattered was the Carnival! Their central concern was to suck up to the SWP, which they were then propositioning about 'unity'. The following Tuesday, 19 September — after the ANL had promised to send its East London membership to defend Bengali Brick Lane — the IMG were still refusing to 'divert' their members.

The Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee called a press conference to assert that, with or without the ANL, a counter-demonstration would try to stop the fascists from reaching Bengali East London. There, the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory [a broad alliance of Labour and trade union activists initiated by *Workers' Action*, one of *Workers' Liberty*'s forerunners] announced that it was organising a national mobilisation for Brick Lane. The first issue of *Socialist Organiser*, the SCLV's paper, was rushed out early with a front page call for a mobilisation to defend Brick Lane. (Written by James Ryan, it was signed by black Hackney councillor Patrick Kodikara.)

In the following days, ANL, SWP, IMG and CP members — inside and outside the Defence Committee — strained every mus-



The leaflet with which *Socialist Organiser* supporters appealed to anti-fascists to defend Brick Lane, and the front-page call in *Socialist Organiser* no.1.



cle to prevent an effective response to the fascists. Facing intense hostility from Bengalis — and in some cases quite hysterically torn between following the line of their organisations and trying to retain some slight respect in the East End — they had shifted by the time of the stewards' meeting on Saturday evening, 29 September. The local SWP organiser promised that the ANL would after all divert many thousands of supporters from Hyde Park to Brick Lane. It did nothing of the sort. On Sunday 30 September, *Workers' Action* and SCLV supporters leafleted coaches and trains on their way to the Carnival, and were sometimes (for

example, on the Cardiff train) threatened with physical violence by SWP members, denounced as 'wreckers' and 'agents provocateurs.' In Hyde Park they distributed 20,000 leaflets calling for defence of the Bengalis. Paul Holborow (a member of the ANL Steering Committee and a leader of the SWP) announced from the platform that Brick Lane was in no danger: the police had given assurances on the question. Ernie Roberts and Arthur Scargill echoed the message: don't go, we don't want the Carnival split by 'Nazi provocation.'

In East London that day, the National Front celebrated its greatest triumph in years. Some 1,000 anti-fascists forced the police to refrain from attempting to take the Nazi march to its original destination in Redchurch Street, which leads into the top of Brick Lane itself, but, unchallenged and unmolested, they marched 1,500 strong through the City of London to Great Eastern Street in Shoreditch, "within spitting distance of Brick Lane", as NF leader Richard Verrall gloatingly put it. Meanwhile, there were up to 100,000 at the Anti-Nazi League Carnival in Brockwell Park!

Largest among the contingents in defence of Brick Lane were Bengalis organised by the local youth movements; *Workers' Action* and the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory; the Black Socialist Alliance, and detachments from the smaller Trotskyist groups. The remainder of the Brick Lane defence was made up of groups and individuals from anti-racist committees and the socialist organisations, including East London ANL, SWP and IMG. But these forces were not sufficiently cohesive and, crucially, nothing like big enough to take the initiative.

After the Nazi rally dispersed, groups of fascists began prowling the area. One gang of 50-60 thugs got through to Brick Lane and smashed up an Asian shop before being driven off. In several Underground trains and stations, black people and anti-fascists were attacked by cock-a-hoop National Front bullies. The hugely boosted morale of the Front led to an escalation of racist assaults in the area. What could have been a tremendous victory for anti-fascism, with every street crossing into the East End held, was forced to be a defiant but inadequate showing at one street corner, while the fascists marched and rallied with impunity. As I said above: it was like the CP's initial approach to Cable Street 42 years earlier. Except that the CP changed its line in time to mobilise against Mosley. The SWP, IMG and CP in 1978 did not do that.

Education and the struggle for human liberation

Dear friend,

IN the current demands and concerns of the student movement, something important is conspicuously absent: any broad concept of education.

We need that if we are to make sense of what we are campaigning for and of the social context to which we react. Without it, we risk floundering in confusion. With the odd exception, all students are against tuition fees. The vast majority are for grants and against loans. Yet the framework that most students and their national union operate within is one of bargaining with and making concessions to this system rather than making demands upon it or organising to fight for something beyond it.

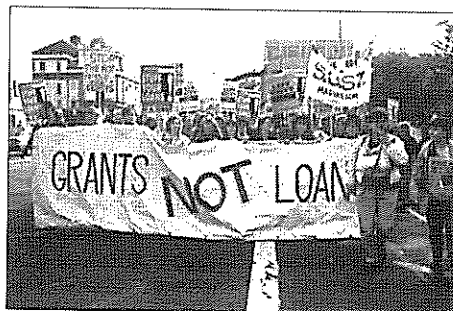
There is no ideal, no higher conception of education — let alone of society — for us to believe in and fight for. Without that, we can only react to the agenda of the government and the educational establishment. Without that, we have no agenda of our own to set.

Without that, student politics, for the small number of students who are currently politically active at all, will reduce itself to a blind thrashing about in the entrails of the National Union of Students, and to mere "personalities."

What is education? And what should it be? Is it "education" as it is offered up to us in the schools and colleges now? Is it what we get in the universities, where humankind's achievements in knowledge — the power to explain our history and control nature, science, ourselves, and our societies — is made so inspiring that we largely reduce learning about it to reading a couple of chapters of a textbook at the last minute so that we can knock off an essay as fast as possible and then go and get pissed.

This is "education" that breaks up knowledge into "modules" and "units" — the better to grade you, to make you a "unit" too, an economic one. And that, of course, is if you are able to study at all. This is a time when the few concessions won from the system for working-class people are disappearing and more and more people are excluded from higher education. The working-class element among students gets ever thinner, and students are once again being drawn mainly from the socially privileged.

And in the schools? The same — only



more so. The comprehensive schools, on paper at least, once represented some sort of educational ideal. They are now physically crumbling. Classes swell. The curriculum is standardised — the better to iron out the inconsistencies in the "product" delivered to the job market.

Increasingly we are moving away from any comprehensive educational ideal at all. Not even the Labour Party will now pay lipservice to equality in education. Once again the grammar, the grant-maintained and the private schools with scholarship schemes are set to cream off "the best" —

"You are being educated to 'know your place'. You can be part of that system or you can fight it. You can not do both."

for which read "the most useful to the system" — while thousands upon thousands of youth are dumped in the so-called "sink schools". There they waste a few years of their life doing nothing productive or fulfilling, before graduating to the Jobseekers' Allowance.

This is "training", not education. Throughout history humanity has held somewhat loftier ideals. Education is defined in the dictionary I have as: "The development of character and mental powers."

Why are we offered so little, in a society that still occasionally voices those educational ideals? Because in our class society, capitalism, the social norms and values of society are determined by the ruling class. "Character and mental powers" do not make money. We get what the rich think they can "afford" and what they find profitable. They own the world. Selective,

divisive education serves their interests.

That's their point of view — but what is ours? What is yours, as a young person trained to sift ideas? Do you accept it? Will you go on accepting it? The market is no immutable law of history. The world is rich. It is only the way society is organised that makes it a place of poverty, deprivation, and even starvation for so many human beings!

Capitalism stunts human beings rather than developing them, and reduces education to training, in a world where the immense wealth produced offers the objective possibility of a better and more human society. Human liberation is a material possibility — and, meanwhile, the student movement actually debates whether or not it is in favour of student grants!

Human liberation may seem a million miles away, but the class struggle that makes it possible permeates every aspect of life. Whether you care to acknowledge it or not, you are a part of it; you cannot abstain from society. In the small things, as in the large, we have to see education as a question of "their" education and "ours". "Their" education *or* ours! The ruling class know this, even if so many in the student movement do not.

Back in 1983, Margaret Thatcher's assault on the labour movement was in full swing. Resistance erupted in riots in Toxteth and elsewhere. A senior Department of Education official outlined "their" plans for education in a leaked secret report.

He wrote: "We are in a period of considerable social change. There may be social unrest, but we can cope with the Toxteths... but if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious conflict. *People must be educated once more to know their place.*"

It is a tragedy that the other side know the great potential power of ideas and that so many students seemingly do not. You are being educated to 'know your place'. You can be part of that system or you can fight it. You can not do both. Unchain your mind!

Yours for socialism,

**Mick Duncan
and Alan McArthur
Workers' Liberty**