

SOCIALISM FOR THE 1990s

A Socialist
Organiser
pamphlet
60 p



Break the consensus!

By Tony
Benn MP

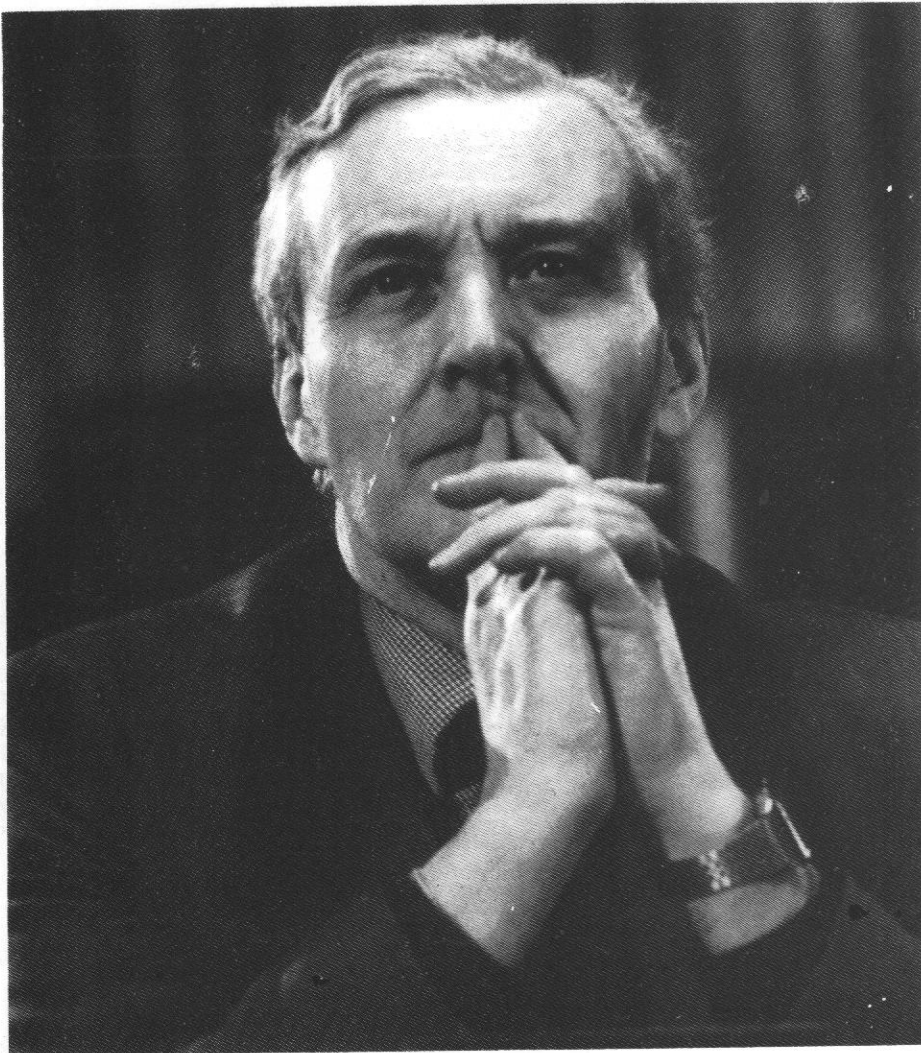
The administrations which have governed Britain in modern times may perhaps best be classified not by reference to the traditional electoral cycle, but by identifying four different periods of consensus, which have followed one after another. The first, the pre-war consensus, underpinned the National government and lasted from 1931 to 1940; the second, the wartime consensus, ran from 1940 to 1945 when the coalition was in power; the third, the welfare capitalist consensus, lasted from 1945 until 1976; and the fourth, the monetarist consensus, which began when the Labour Cabinet accepted the IMF terms, has lasted from then until the present day. To lump governments from different parties into the same categories may seem strange, but, looking back on all the various policies that have been followed by successive administrations, it is the similarity between them, quite as much as the differences, which now seem to be so strikingly obvious.

When the OPEC oil crisis occurred in 1973, all the underlying weaknesses of our economic system were exposed.

It became clear that the economic base on which the 'welfare consensus' depended had finally collapsed, actually ending half-way through Labour's term of office, when the IMF demanded, and received, assurances that public expenditure would be cut, supposedly to restore business confidence. At the end of its twenty-one-year life span, it was clear that the welfare consensus had neither revitalised British industry nor retained public support with the electorate, which successively defeated Wilson, Heath and Callaghan, who had all tried to make it work, thus paving the way for the election of a very different kind of Conservative government.

Democracy and socialism have been successfully kept off the political agenda, under governments of all persuasions, since 1945. Yet despite all that, the pressure for more democracy and for the ideas of socialism are strongly felt, and widely shared. But, like the early trade unionists, the Chartists and the suffragettes, they will only secure their objectives by organised strength and by pressing them onto reluctant parliamentarians and a frightened Establishment, who will only concede when they realise that they can no longer hold the line. It has often happened before.

The polarisations and confrontations that these class policies produced were certainly reflected in the thinking of the wider labour movement. But they were



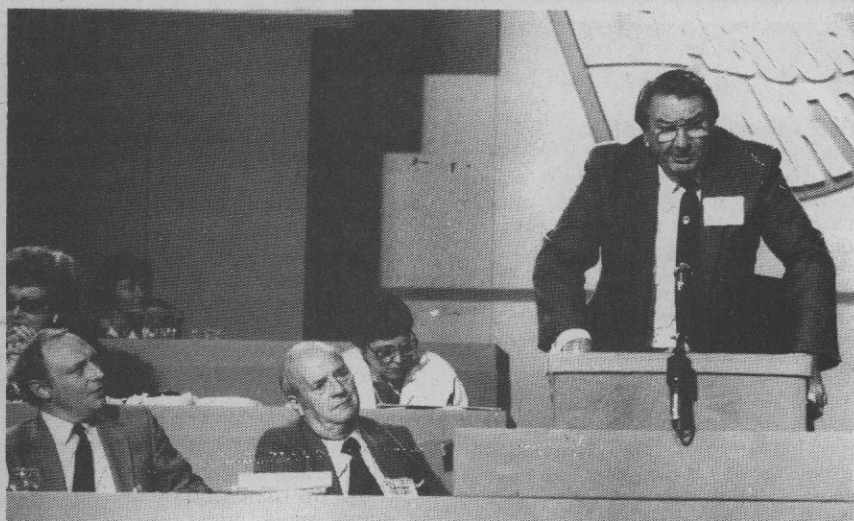
not articulated in the presentation of the case in the House of Commons, where an informed consensus began to develop in which the Tory wets, the SDP-Liberal Alliance and the Labour right were content to limit the argument to the question of which of them was best qualified to administer an unchanged economic system. It is certainly true that many people in the Conservative Party and the Alliance, and some inside the Labour Party, backed by the majority of the Establishment and political commentators, now believe that it may be possible to reconstruct our political system on the old Victorian, or modern American, principle that Whigs and Tories, Democrats and Republicans will forever play the game of ins-and-outs, within the broad framework of the policies and institutions evolved during the monetarist consensus which any successor will inherit from the Thatcher administration. In that sense, despite all that has been said about the destruction of the consensus by Mrs Thatcher, there still is a wide measure of agreement among parliamentarians as to how the political future might be shaped.

But despite the renewed evidence of the traditional huddling together at the top, the economic prospects as oil revenues and the privatisation windfall profits run down are poor, and the price that has

been paid by millions of people in unemployment has created a much stronger resistance to the government of the day than we have seen since the 1930s.

So far the strength of this feeling has been mainly articulated outside Parliament, and if it forces its way upwards then we are heading for a very different sort of politics. Politicians of all parties, who are now seeking to retain or gain office in a basically unchanged system, may find that the next real radical challenge comes from outside the formal system: there are forces which will seek to be heard and will make demands and back them up with organisational strength. That should neither surprise nor alarm socialists, for looking back over the years since the war it is arguable that our problems today really derive from the failure of consensus and the failure to give the country the chance to face up to the basic reforms that are necessary in its industrial, economic and political structures if social justice is ever to be achieved. Indeed our whole history shows that every period of change has been heralded by some pressure from underneath or outside the House of Commons, Whitehall or the City of London.

(Extracts from '50 Years of Consensus Rule' by Tony Benn, in his book 'Fighting Back' [Hutchinson £6.95]).



Reopening the ideological debate

By Eric Heffer MP

Since 1983 the Party has been moving increasingly to the right. There is a greater concentration of power in the hands of the leadership and the National Executive has, to a large extent, been down-graded.

Now they plan to change the character of the Party Conference, step by step, so that the Party at grassroots level will not be determining policy.

And there has been retreat after retreat. The most blatant retreat is on the Common Market. Whatever you might think about this new policy, it has never been redefined and discussed by Party Conference — the Labour Party has just been slid and manoeuvred into a total change. Changes are also being made in the Party's attitude to public ownership, the nuclear bomb and a whole series of other issues.

It is time that this was changed. The drift away from basic socialist policies must be reversed.

It's all very well saying we want a nice friendly discussion in the Party. Certainly, we want a friendly discussion. But the Campaign Group felt that the best way to do it was to concretise it, to spotlight the political issues by a contest for the Leader and the Deputy Leader.

Now the so-called 'soft left' and the centre have got to make their minds up. Are they really left wing? Do they want the Labour Party to be a socialist party which goes out and fights for working class politics? Or have they now abandoned all socialist ideas?

We are standing on a programme defined by the Campaign Group. It contains a number of important points. We want:

- An extension of public ownership.
- The restoration and development of the rights of the trade unions.

- All out opposition to racism.
- Greater democracy; the abolition of the House of Lords.
- A restoration of local democracy and an extension of local authority rights.
- Women to have genuine equality.
- The labour movement has got to support all those who are underdogs in one way or another, or who, like lesbians and gays, are being persecuted.
- A different international policy — one of 'realignment' and getting out of NATO.
- The abolition of all nuclear weapons.
- A move away from nuclear power so that nuclear weapons cannot be restarted again.
- We think Labour must have a much more realistic attitude towards Eastern Europe. At the same time, of course, we defend the democratic rights of all the people in Eastern Europe. We oppose dictatorship in Chile and in other parts of the world. We fight on behalf of those who are fighting for their liberation.

These are the issues we believe we have got to go out and fight for.

The initial reaction to the announcement that Tony and I would be standing was surprising. I do not think people should react in that way. We have the rules; we are entitled to contest. If you are the leader, you should simply say: they are entitled to do so and it will be a choice between their views and ours. Unfortunately it did not come over like that. Now they are talking about the ideological debate, and that, of course, is right.

Even if we are defeated in this election, they will not defeat socialism. You cannot wipe it away. Even in countries where the right wing have got firm control of the party — in Germany, Italy and so on — they have not got rid of socialism. Maybe for a period it is in retreat. But the very concept of socialism, of workers' struggle, cannot just be swept aside. As long as capitalism is there the working class will be there and so will socialism.

Socialism for the 1990s

This special issue of *Socialist Organiser* has been produced to respond to the Labour Party's Policy Review. It surveys the campaigns needed for Labour commitments which the Policy Review is trying to scrap, and for other immediate issues; and the arguments over what socialism is and how it can be achieved.

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Socialist Organiser no.362-3, 28 June 1988.

Published by *Socialist Organiser*, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Printed by Press Link International (UK) Ltd (TU). Typeset by Upstream Ltd (TU). Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of *Socialist Organiser*.

Kinnock clears the decks

By Martin Thomas

Labour's Policy Review — or to put it more accurately, the Labour leadership's Policy Review — is an exercise in clearing the decks.

The 48-page document published by the National Executive Committee shelves almost every halfway radical policy commitment, substituting a lot of vague words. Labour Party conference in October is supposed to be able to amend the Review document, and certainly Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions should send in as many amendments as possible; but clearly the idea is to ram the whole document through with the excuse that all matters of detail must be considered at the second stage of the Review.

The second stage will then be able to build on the vague, but unmistakably right-wing, words of the first stage. The aim is nothing less than to scrap the last 10 or 15 years of Labour Party conference policy-making, and to install instead policy made from the top down on the basis of opinion polls and market research.

Labour Party conference has voted unequivocally for unilateral nuclear disarmament. The 1983 manifesto hedged slightly: "All this cannot be done at once, and the way we do it must be designed to assist in the task to which we are also committed — securing nuclear disarmament agreements with other countries and maintaining cooperation with our allies".

But there was also a clear commitment: "We will cancel the Trident programme, refuse to deploy Cruise missiles and begin discussions for the removal of nuclear bases from Britain, which is to be completed within the lifetime of the Labour government".

In the Policy Review there is almost nothing but hedging. "The fast-moving developments in world events following the US-Soviet Summits will have their

effect on our review of how Labour's non-nuclear defence policy can best meet the challenge of the 1990s. These developments emphasise the relevance of this policy... In the meantime we consider that nuclear weapons create hostility and distrust which stunt the lives of individuals and communities across the world and that reliance on such weapons of mass destruction cannot contribute to the effective defence of our country or to the collective security of nations".

In the early '80s Labour developed the following policy: "Common ownership: we believe it is wrong that private individuals should, through ownership of the means of production, reap the benefits of the collective efforts of others and exercise unaccountable power over the lives of others... We believe in the social control of production, not the anarchy of the market".

Specifically: "We are committed to... higher public spending... We will

'The debate about the Policy Review is a debate about whether Labour is to be a distinctive political party with distinctive Labour policies'.

establish a publicly-owned stake in each important sector of industry and take back those sections of public industries which have been hived off by the Tories... We will require major firms in each sector... to enter into planning agreements... Common ownership is an integral part of a democratic economy, because as long as large concentrations of capital remain in private hands, then power too will be concentrated". (1981 document, 'The Socialist Alternative').

The specific commitments never matched up to the general claims. If "major firms" were to be regulated only by

"planning agreements" — with no clear means of enforcement — and the banks were to remain untouched, then there would not be "social control of production" and "large concentrations of capital" would "remain in private hands". Instead of replacing the profit economy by planning for need, Labour proposed only to tinker with the profit economy.

But there was some commitment to some attempt at social control. In the Policy Review, that has gone. "Few would disagree that the market is the most appropriate means of ensuring the efficient distribution of many goods — certainly in a modern, industrialised society".

"Common or social ownership is not limited to state ownership", insists the Policy Review. True enough: but Labour's 1981 document explained clearly enough that state ownership is nonetheless central. "This 'market' is one in which only a hundred companies control 40 per cent of manufacturing output..." Municipal ownership or worker cooperatives may be fine for small enterprises, but the major centres of industry, commerce and finance will be run either as capitalist empires or under centralised social control.

In fact the Policy Review is not even advocating more municipal enterprise and workers' cooperatives. It is saying, in coded language, 'no nationalisations or renationalisations'; and it is saying that employee share-ownership and ownership by pension funds are forms of socialist common ownership!

It proposes social control **only** for 'monopoly suppliers' — businesses where even the keenest Thatcherite or Reaganite concedes the need for some public regulation!

All commitment to higher public spending has gone. Planning agreements have disappeared. Instead we have a warmed-over version of Harold Wilson's slogans of 1964 — "a talent-based economy... transformed by a technological revolution", but without even Wilson's National Plan. Instead of planning, the "central question" is "how best to help the companies, the enterprises and risktakers [I think they mean capitalists], the managers and workers...who will meet the challenges of the next decade."

"The heart of a rational economic policy must be a commitment to full employment and the measures necessary to secure it", says the Policy Review. But — having defined the "central question" of socialist policy as how to help the capitalists! — it proposes no measures to get full employment.

A government investment bank is mentioned as a **possibility**; there is much talk about the need for better training, without any specific proposals; and that is all.

Labour's previous policies — a 35 hour week without loss of pay; increased public spending; and expanded training schemes with trade union nav and condi-

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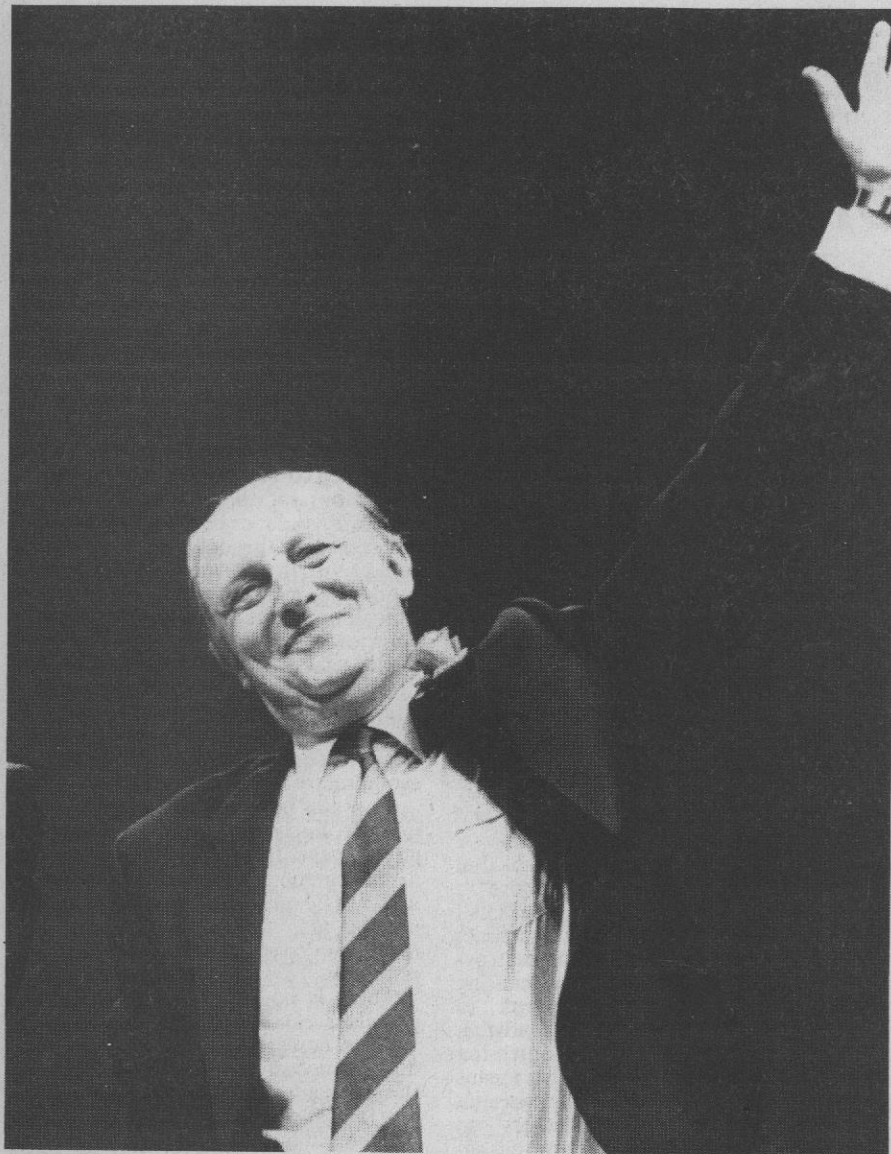
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Kinnock waves goodbye to Party policy

tions and a guarantee of a place for everyone unemployed for more than 12 months — were inadequate. But they were moves in the right direction. They have all disappeared in the Policy Review.

Many other commitments have disappeared:

- *Abolition of the House of Lords.
- *Repeal of the Immigration and Nationality Acts.
- *The right to free nursery education for all three to five year olds.
- *Phasing-out of nuclear power.
- *50% increase in housing investment programme, a freeze on rents, and an end to enforced cut-price sale of council houses.

The general commitment to "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families" has also gone. Some other policies which have been scrapped — import controls, price controls, withdrawal from the EEC — were never supported by the Marxist left; but, like better policies, they are being ditched in an undemocratic way.

Withdrawal from the EEC is the **only** issue on which the Policy Review is ex-

PLICIT about scrapping previous policy — no doubt because the Labour leaders believe, correctly, that the broad Labour left's commitment to withdrawal is one of its weakest points.

The surviving policy commitments make a shorter list. They are:

- *A Charter of Employment Rights, including a minimum wage. (There is no commitment to any details of this charter, however).
- *Repeal of Tory anti-union laws, except the clauses making ballots compulsory for strikes and for the election of union executives.
- *Removal of "the worst features" of the Tories' changes in housing benefit.
- *A Freedom of Information Act; an elected police authority for London.
- *A Repeal of Section 28, and a law to ban discrimination against lesbians and gays.

It does not add up to a socialist policy, or any comprehensive policy at all, for the 1990s. The debate about the Policy Review is a debate about whether Labour is to be a living political party, with distinctive Labour policies, or merely an electoral machine in the style of a US political party and a vehicle for selling phrases and packages chosen by market-research experts.

The lessons of Wallasey

By Lol Duffy (Labour candidate in Wallasey, 1987)

If the Labour Party nationally had achieved what we achieved in Wallasey at the 1987 election, we would now have a Labour government.

We reduced a Tory majority of 6,708 to a mere 279. We increased Labour's vote by 39 per cent. The 70th marginal on Labour's target list will, next time round, be number five.

We started our campaign in November 1986, when, on dark and rainy nights during one of the worst winters in memory, we leafleted the entire constituency to introduce our policies. "Lol is standing for Parliament as a working-class socialist who will not accept the privileged wages and life-style that buys people off."

"He will only take the national average wage and use the rest for the benefit of the labour movement. The campaign of Wallasey Labour Party will be open and honest. We will be calling door to door to answer your questions about Lol's and Labour's policies".

For months we carried out a political survey of the constituency. By a door to door survey, asking for people's views on policies — Labour and Tory — we explained our policies, refuted the lies, and recruited to the Party. We began to involve new people in the campaign.

When a struggle broke out we didn't run away from it, scared. We stood with the workers and gave active support. A strike on the Leasowe estate, of women shop workers, put the idea of a socialist campaign for a Labour victory to the test. The strike was against harassment of staff by hired bouncers and for union recognition.

The Labour Party played a role of leadership in the dispute, alongside the TGWU, supporting the picket lines, helping to organise meetings of support, and raising funds. The strike was successful, the union was recognised, and the hired thugs left. And we brought some of the strikers into the Labour Party. They were among the best fighters in the election campaign.

The press denounced 'Marxist Lol'. Frank Field, the Labour MP in the neighbouring constituency of Birkenhead, said voters should not support me. Yet this was the result:

	1987	1983
Chalker (C)	22,791	22,854
Duffy (Lab)	22,512	16,146
Richardson (SDP)	8,363	10,717

Working-class socialist policies *can* win mass support. We need a Labour Party which will do everywhere what we did in Wallasey!

Oiling the worn-out machinery of capitalism

By Vladimir Derer

(Hon. Secretary, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, writing in a personal capacity)

The 'Statement of Democratic Aims and Values' will be the most important NEC document to be debated at Conference this year. It will serve as the basis for the final more detailed, policy proposals which will be presented to Conference in 1989.

It begins with the statement that "the true purposes of socialism and therefore of the Labour Party is the creation of a genuinely free society", and goes on to argue that this can only be achieved through a more equal distribution of power and wealth. To accomplish this "a major change in the institutional framework of the country" to "change the balance of power in Britain", would be necessary.

If these objectives are to be taken seriously then the measures outlined in the statement are *hopelessly inadequate* both to reverse the present trend towards even greater social inequality or to tackle the problem of Britain's chronic economic decline.

Unless these tasks, or rebuilding the economy and ensuring greater equality, are undertaken any prospect of bringing about "a genuinely free society" is a pipedream. The proposals in "Aims and Values" will clearly fail to achieve this.

The aspect of the document that gives the greatest cause for concern is the limited role assigned to the public sector. On the one hand emphasis is placed on the role of government in ensuring the

efficient working of the economy. On the other hand specifically only "Health care, education, and social security" is to be "allocated irrespective of the purchasing power of those who receive such services..." and "housing and transport (made) available to those who cannot afford, or do not choose to make private provision." In addition "the public utilities — the water, gas and electricity industries, and the rail, post and telecommunication networks", also remain outside the domain ruled exclusively by market forces.

But: "In the case of the allocation of most other goods and services", however, it is argued that "the operation of demand and supply and the price mechanism is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption."

Think what this implies. It means that if UK capitalist enterprises choose to produce such supposed "non essentials" as cars, computers, washing machines and refrigerators abroad, thus destroying employment in Britain and causing the UK balance of payments to deteriorate, this is "generally satisfactory" as an example of "the operation of demand and supply". It also means that in periods of sharp increases in prices it would not be "satisfactory" to subsidise foodstuffs since this would involve interference with "the price mechanism".

Apart from this highly restricted direct state intervention in the economy, the NEC's 'Aims and Values' confine themselves to merely oiling the worn-out machinery of British capitalism. The role of the government is reduced simply to providing conditions for "a well-educated and trained workforce, large and consistent investment in research,

design and development" (10) and to the setting up of "institutions and means... to ensure that capital is available in amounts, at prices and for purposes which facilitate initiative, development, production and sales..." (24).

Under Thatcher Britain has suffered a major decline in manufacturing industry but this decline was not due to lack of finance. On the contrary profits have boomed in recent years; thus the idea that we can rebuild our manufacturing industry by an injection of cheap capital is laughable. The reality is that the private sector is unwilling to invest in British industry; no amount of capital being "made available" by the state will change this.

The Tories are peddling the fiction that the country's economic performance has radically improved. In fact Britain's trade deficit rises inexorably and central to this deficit is the appalling collapse of British manufacturing. This cannot go on for ever.

So long as the impact of the steadily deteriorating balance of trade in manufactures is cushioned by the flow of North Sea oil, the grave malaise of the British economy can be misrepresented as an economic recovery. However, as soon as the oil runs out the economic reality will become obvious.

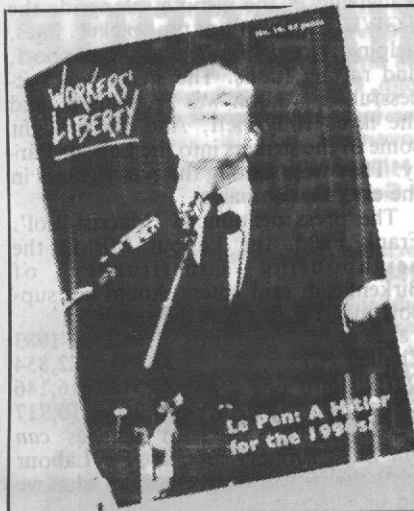
Once this becomes clear a general election is likely to produce a Labour government. But if Labour is elected on a programme constructed in the dream world of Thatcherite "prosperity" it will not be able to introduce the radical measures essential to deal with the economy.

There is no way Britain's economic problems can even begin to be tackled without embarking on a massive state-directed investment plan in the sectors of the economy that are crucial to industrialisation. To be effective such a plan would have to include a substantial measure of state control through the nationalisation of major financial institutions, and of at least one top company in each major manufacturing sector, together with compulsory planning agreements.

There can be no misunderstanding about what the NEC majority meant when they approved the extremely limited scope for state intervention outlined in 'Aims and Values'. Any hint that this should be widened was voted down. Ken Livingstone's amendment that the Party should be "committed to social ownership of the decisive sectors of the economy" was lost by 22 votes to 4. It is clear that the party leadership and the NEC are determined to get elected on a programme quite unequal to the task Labour will have to face.

The authors of 'Aims and Values' condemn the present society for only giving the "full right to choose" to a privileged minority, whilst denying it to the great majority. They spell out the reason for this: "there is... an undeniable relationship between the resources that an individual can command and the choices which it is possible for that individual to make". The Labour Party therefore remains committed to "the redistribution of wealth and power" (7).

Yet the measures proposed cannot



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fulfil this commitment. Since capital overwhelmingly is to remain in private hands, and since it is its private ownership that causes and perpetuates inequality, there is no basis for believing that 'Aims and Values', if acted upon, would reduce these inequalities. Unless the ownership and control of the major means of production is taken out of the hands of the few, there is no way Labour can "ensure that... change brings benefits that are available to everyone" as 'Aims and Values' pledges.

There is no such commitment in the statement. Indeed when Tony Benn moved an amendment that the Party's aim as stated in Clause IV of the Party Constitution, namely "to secure for the workers by hand and brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible on the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control" be included in the text — the

NEC defeated it by 22 votes to 4.

'Aims and Values' acknowledges that "women and black people are grossly underrepresented in the institutions that form opinion". It argues that "the full emancipation of both women and the ethnic minorities demands special measures to elevate their standing and status". Yet this comes from an NEC which has consistently opposed the rights of Labour women to elect their own representatives on the NEC, and the rights of black members to organise autonomously. The NEC can hardly claim an intention towards positive action in society as a whole when it refuses to allow the benefit of these measures to black people and women within its own party.

There is nothing in the document that reaffirms Labour's long-standing commitment to remove all nuclear weapons from Britain. That the leadership's intention is to ditch unilateralism was borne out by the Party Leader's TV interview on 'This Week Next Week' (5

June).

NB: Numbers in brackets refer to paragraphs of 'Aims and Values'.

Joint North London meeting on Labour leadership contest, supported by Hendon North, Hendon South, Hornsey & Wood Green, and other CLPs.

Your chance to question the leadership contenders

Sunday 10 July, 2.30, at Caxton House, 129 St Johns Way, N19.

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Socialism and democracy

By Bob Fine

If a socialist democracy is to be our goal, then the policy review should be democratic too. The bureaucratisation of 'Labour Listens' and the determination of policy by closed committees and powerful individuals should give way to open and informed debate.

Labour should draw on the wealth of expertise of groups within and without the Party who have fought democratic struggles over racism, sexism, prisoners' rights, police harassment, trade union rights, electoral reform, local government powers, gay rights, official secrets and so on. The Labour Party should take evidence from groups like the National Union of Mineworkers, the prisoners' rights group PROP, women's sections, black self-defence groups, etc., and integrate their demands into a general socialist programme.

The more the Party looks outwards in order to engage the multiplicity of democratic struggles already being waged against the many arms of the state,

the greater will be its capacity to offer its own lead to these struggles. For example, what credibility will all the talk about trade union democracy have if the Party is seen to fold its arms when the existing rights of trade unions are threatened and workers are left to defend them unaided?

A policy review of that sort is much needed in a Party which, until now, has accepted uncritically most of the parameters and structures of the existing state. The radicalism shown by the Thatcher government in restructuring the state, making fundamental changes in the administration of the civil service, the nationalised industries, the NHS, and local government, forces the question of democratisation on to the agenda of the Party.

Should we win the next election, the Labour party will inherit a very different and far more hostile state apparatus than it has encountered in the past.

Unless we prepare now to transform and tackle this apparatus, with the kind of determination shown by the Tories, but with different forces at our disposal, it will stand against us as a mighty obstacle to the implementation of any

kind of socialist programme. Democracy is on our agenda not just because it is a good thing, but because it has become necessary for any other reform.

The immediate problem with the Labour Party's attitudes towards the state is not that they are reformist, but rather than they are not even reformist. Where are the perspectives and programme for democratising the judiciary, the magistracy, the police, the army, the civil service, the prisons, the Health Service, the nationalised industries, and, not least, Parliament itself? Where is the lead which the Labour Party should be giving on all these questions?

Again and again the Party has allowed the democratic ideas and impulses raised among workers by their experience of state injustice to slip through its fingers and turn into demoralisation or a feeling of impotence in the face of an untouchable force. The policy review should be an opportunity for the party to learn from its past mistakes, like the disastrously bureaucratic attempt at industrial democracy in the Bullock proposals of the mid-1970s, and from the new demands which Thatcherism has put upon it.

A Bill of Rights

The miners' strike showed that the **police** enforce the interests not of the majority but of the ruling class. Their rigid hierarchy, their training, their separation from the rest of society, and the personal ties of their upper ranks make sure they do that.

Society could have an alternative, more democratic way of regulating itself — patrols organised and controlled by the labour movement and local communities. Police duty should be made a part-time job of every citizen, like jury service.

In the meantime we must fight for more control over the existing police force.

- Chief Constables and their Assistants to be elected at regular fixed periods.
- Directly-elected Police Committees to have full operational control over the police in their area.
- Access to any police station and to police files at any time for members of the Committees.
- Elected tribunals, completely independent of the police, should hear complaints against them.
- Democratic rights within the police, including the right to form trade unions and the right not to be used as scab-herders.

Far from MI5 being under democratic control, members of the last Labour government were probably themselves under surveillance by it. **MI5** and other branches of the secret service should be scrapped.

- Labour should also advocate:
- Replace the **armed forces** with

a people's militia.

- Scrap all nuclear weapons. Britain out of NATO, NATO out of Britain.
- Democratic rights for troops.
- Workers' control of the armaments industry, and conversion of the bulk of it to socially useful production under workers' control.

Four-fifths of all **judges** come from public school and Oxbridge backgrounds. Their background, training, and way of life makes them hostile to the working class.

Not only judges, but also **magistrates and JPs** are unelected. They are chosen only after they have shown themselves to be staunch supporters of the status quo.

- All judges, JPs and magistrates should be elected.
- End vetting of juries.
- All legal representation to be paid for by the state. Wealth should not determine whether you get a fair trial.

At present **local councillors** can be brought to court and surcharged and disqualified for carrying out the manifesto on which they were elected, if — in the opinion of an unelected official auditor — that is financially irresponsible. Central Government can break many of its own laws with impunity.

- Autonomy for local councils.
- The right of each citizen to effective redress against central government through the courts.

Within the **civil service** real power lies with the top ranks, who are flesh and blood of the ruling class. Many go on from the civil service to top jobs in finance and industry.

The **Official Secrets Act** should be abolished; a **Freedom of Information Act** introduced; and top civil service jobs made elective and paid workers' wages.

It took a long and sometimes bloody struggle by the labour and women's movements to get our present rights to vote. But at the same time as the capitalist class has conceded wider voting rights, it has protected itself by moving real power away from **Parliament**.

- Abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy. Remember: a Labour government was sacked in a 'coup' by the Queen's representative, the Governor-General, as recently as 1975 in Australia.
 - Give MPs full access to official files and documents.
 - Annual elections on a fixed date.
 - A legal right to meetings in work time to hear the different political candidates and debate the issues.
- Equal TV and radio time for all parties except fascists.

The Policy Review document rejects the idea of a **Bill of Rights**. In fact this could be a tremendous mobilising idea in the fight for democracy.

Bringing women's, black, and lesbian/gay groups together with the trade unions and labour movement and groups like the National Council of Civil Liberties to discuss the elements of a Bill of Rights could be the basis of a strong campaign. The campaign for the Bill of Rights could be conducted on the same basis that the Chartists and suffragists campaigned for their demands — by industrial action and civil disobedience.



Police attack black youth for protesting against racist attacks



Wapping picket

Repeal the Tory anti-union laws!

By Philip Hutchinson
(Dover Port Committee,
National Union of Seamen,
in personal capacity)

The union has tried every possible method to placate the courts and purge their contempt. But none of its has worked, and none of it will work while the law is so much against us and is being used by both the Government and the shipowners to break the union.

Obviously they're trying to prevent the officers of a union actually calling a strike. But even if the union officials don't want the strike, and the men still strike, they take it out on the union funds.

Irrespective of any of the national officers, Sam McCluskie or anybody else, saying strike or don't strike — no matter what he says — we will still be on strike in Dover. And because of that they will punish the whole union, not just the small area of Dover.

We now have the most repressive

trade union laws in Western Europe. Margaret Thatcher and Jeffrey Stirling have been working on those laws for eight or nine years now. They have finally formulated them after taking on the NUJ, the miners, the NGA and SOGAT, and they've been very well planned.

The TUC has to become more of an educating and organised body, which it hasn't done so far. That's the only way to overcome the law.

I believe the Labour Party should commit itself to repealing the Tories'

trade union legislation, but in all reality I don't believe they will. At the end of the day there are parts of the legislation that the Labour Party will want to keep.

We need to make the Labour Party socially conscious, which it's not at the moment. I support the present challenge to the Labour leadership. We not only need to rearm the Labour Party, but to re-heart it — put the fight back into it.

It's a matter of getting people actively involved, making people aware, and them becoming activists again.

A Workers' Charter

- ☐ The right to strike. The right of strikers and their families to receive state benefits.
- ☐ The right to picket. The right of pickets to defend themselves.
- ☐ The right to organise. The right of individuals to join unions, of union officials to get access to workplaces, and of union representatives to have time off and facilities.
- ☐ The right to negotiate. Employers should be legally compelled to

recognise unions with majority support and to negotiate with them. Unions should have a right to company information. Individual workers should have protection against unfair dismissal, with tribunals being able to force employers to reinstate them.

- ☐ The right to safety. The right to information on all risks and hazards, and the right to stop unsafe jobs.
- ☐ The right to trade union independence. Unions' decision-making and political activity should not be controlled by the courts.

Fight cheap labour!

By Katherine O'Leary

From September the Government plans to bring in another cheap labour scheme. Following on from YOPs, YTS, the Community Programme, and the failed Job Training Scheme, comes the Employment Training Scheme.

For unemployed people over 18, it means working 40 hours a week for dole plus £10. It will replace the Community Programme — which at least pays trade union rates — and the abortive Job Training Scheme. No new money will be spent to provide real training.

The new 'ET' threatens to be for over-18s what YTS is for 16-18s — cheap labour, and increasingly forced cheap labour. The ET scheme will in theory be voluntary, but in practice unemployed people will face threats of having their benefit cut off unless they go on a scheme.

It is a horrific scheme. The reason we're in this situation is that the labour movement has utterly failed to mount a fight back against the previous 'training' schemes.

The TUC gave YTS full support — despite increasing disquiet among rank and file trade unionists, who were worried by the high level of job substitution and the appalling health and safety record of the previous scheme — YOPs. Then TUC general secretary Len Murray was so enthusiastic about the YTS that he personally appeared in YTS advertising!

The TUC has stubbornly remained in the Manpower Services Commission, the body in charge of the training schemes. The hope was to soften up some of the Government's worst proposals. The actual result has been to legitimise a continual erosion of the pay, conditions, and expectations of a large section of the working class.

The Government is clearly trying to move towards the US system of 'workfare' — working for your dole. This would have been totally unacceptable to any self-respecting trade unionist only a few years ago. Now the TUC supports ET on the grounds that if they oppose it the Government will come up with something worse!

It's time the TUC got out of the MSC (now renamed Employment Commission), and started to fight workfare. The Labour Party also has a key role to play. Shamefully, the Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities has given the green light to Labour councils to put in their bids to become ET managing agents with access to thousands of cheap-labour trainees.

Labour councils should have nothing to do with aiding and abetting the Government in its attacks on the unemployed. They should have nothing to do with replacing real jobs with ET

schemes.

The section in Labour's Policy Review document which you would expect to address this issue — 'Education and Training in the 1990s' — says *absolutely nothing* of any substance. It's an expert exercise in circumlocution!

One of Labour's goals, it says, is to ensure that "everyone, including the redundant and long-term unemployed, has the opportunity to acquire new or improved skills..." This could mean absolutely anything. In the absence of any concrete reference to the Tories' schemes, it is only possible to draw one conclusion: Labour in power would intend to keep on the Tories' schemes, maybe in a modified form.

On education and training for 16-19 year olds, the 'aims' are even more baffling. The main one is to provide "integrated patterns of academic and vocational education". These will apparently be "modular in structure".

Again, you have to read between the lines. It seems that as far as Kinnoch and his co-thinkers are concerned, some form of these schemes is here to stay.

Labour should be about providing real jobs and real training, on decent wages or grants. The Policy Review's woolly beating about the bush is no good for anyone — particularly not the unemployed.

A Workers' Plan

□ Take the money from the rich to expand public services! Trident will cost as much as building 550 new hospitals. Before last October's crash, shareholders were coining gains at twice the rate of the entire NHS budget. Tory tax cuts for the rich amount to more than the whole NHS hospital budget.

□ Expand provision in each area according to a 'people's plan' drawn up by service workers and the local community.

□ Bring back all privatised ancillary services in-house. End charges on glasses, drugs and dental care.

□ A £70 across the board increase in all health workers' wages, and a statutory minimum wage.

□ Expanded training, retraining, and adult education, with access for all, and with trade-union rates of pay.

□ Open the books of all public sector bodies and private companies to trade-union inspection.

□ Automatic escalator clauses to increase wages, benefits, pensions and grants monthly in line with a working class cost-of-living index; and a fight for real increases, too.

□ Cut hours, not jobs: work-sharing without loss of pay.

□ Nationalise all the major businesses and banks, with compensation only for small shareholders. Integrate workers' plans for each enterprise with a democratically-decided workers' plan for the whole economy.



School students strike

Labour and Ireland

By Patrick Murphy

On the issue of Ireland, the Labour leadership is not abandoning hard-won socialist policies... because there have never been any!

The lack of any independent socialist policy on this issue is largely the responsibility of the left, not just the leadership.

For the whole 20 years of the 'troubles' the Labour and Conservative parties have had a bipartisan approach to Northern Ireland. They have agreed not to differ on the essentials, and to have a common policy on 'security', i.e. beating down the Northern Ireland Catholics.

Some differences were established between Labour and the Tories after 1980. Labour brought forward its commitment (in words) to a united Ireland. It became Labour policy to abolish the Prevention of Terrorism Act and plastic bullets.

Recently, however, those differences have been swamped by the all-party support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement — a treaty making Dublin a partner with London in the running of Northern Ireland, which was signed in November 1985.

Now all parties either support a united Ireland by consent, or at least are committed to accept it; but none have any plans to do anything to achieve consent. Labour's commitments on civil liberties issues are almost laughable in the aftermath of the Gibraltar killings. Front bench Labour MPs applauded the extra-judicial killings, and it was left to Eric Heffer to dissent.

A renewed bipartisanship is in force. Labour fully supports the centrepiece of Tory government policy, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and this includes support for a much stronger 'anti-terrorist' drive.

Probably many Labour activists agree with the leadership on this. They are unhappy with the tougher security, but consider the Agreement to be broadly pro-nationalist and anti-unionist. One major reason for the lack of challenge to the leadership — and the fact that the Policy Review has not found it necessary even to mention Ireland — is the lack of any credible alternative from the would-be Marxist left.

Most of us tend to fall back on religious repetition of the slogan 'Troops Out Now', as if it were the only and ultimate solution to the Irish question. Most Labour activists who think about it know that this is inadequate. 'Troops Out' alone wouldn't, in itself, lead to a democratic solution. Unless it were coupled with some programme to get a solution seen as democratic by both Catholics and Protestants, it would lead not to a united Ireland but to full-scale civil war and bloody repartition.

Some people are persuaded that such rational assessments must be discarded

in order to purge themselves of British chauvinism or anti-Irish racism. ('Are you saying that they can't run their affairs without our help?') Others retain the gut instinct that British troops shouldn't be there, but recoil from the left's arguments because of their implications.

So most Labour activists are not happy with the prospect of another Labour Government beating down the Northern Ireland Catholics — another Roy Mason — but know of no alternative. It is time we took the Labour leadership up on their commitment to a united Ireland, for that is the positive democratic solution, and forced a discussion throughout the movement on how that is to be achieved.

We need a proposal which could unite the people of Ireland, and in the first place the workers of Ireland. The territory comes second. Socialist Organiser believes the best formula is a federal united Ireland, with regional autonomy for the mainly Protestant areas, and maybe confederal links with Britain. But other formulas can and

should be discussed.

We can only take the debate further by proposing answers to the central problem in Ireland, the existence of two antagonistic Irish traditions or communities. The prospect of new Roy Masons can be avoided, but only if we have a positive alternative.

To begin with we need a wide-ranging discussion which focuses on the two main requirements of any solution:

- The right of the Irish people as a whole to self-determination;
- The need to conciliate both major traditions in Ireland.

We need to commit a Labour government to:

- Working actively for the objective of a united Ireland within the lifetime of a Parliament.
- Calling a conference of all parties, including Sinn Féin, to discuss the terms of a settlement.
- The dismantling of the repressive apparatus used to beat down Republicans. End the Prevention of Terrorism Act, abolish Diplock courts, and end the use of plastic bullets and strip-searching.
- British military and political withdrawal as part of a political settlement.

Resist the poll tax!

By Ian McCalman

Speaking at a rally of shop stewards and union representatives in Glasgow recently, Campbell Christie, general secretary of the Scottish TUC, said: "I believe non-payment is not a runner unless we have a movement of mass opposition to the poll tax".

But it is only around non-payment that a mass movement will be built! The confusion is deliberate in that it reduces the non-payment option to a mirage which recedes ever further into the distance.

The Scottish TUC has called for a 15 minute stoppage in the autumn, but this is a mere gesture, inadequate in itself and unrelated to the issue of non-payment.

At least John Maxton, Labour spokesperson on the Poll Tax in Scotland, is honest. Writing in the Glasgow Herald the same week, he denounced non-payment as a "dangerous diversion".

Maxton did not use the argument that non-payment is wrong because it is illegal. He is well aware of the strength of the view that the Tories have no mandate in Scotland, which so overwhelmingly voted to reject them at the last election. Instead Maxton concentrated on the dangers that non-payment would cut local authority finance, alienate the media, and leave the poor liable to reprisals. All his arguments are based upon the conviction that any non-payment campaign would be a failure and therefore not worth attempting.

Maxton's defeatism clearly spells out

the views of the Labour leadership, yet they are aware of the strength of feeling at grass roots level and the need to head off opposition at the special Labour Party conference on the poll tax in September.

Many branches have already submitted resolutions ranging from straight non-payment to demanding of Labour-led regional councils that they do not penalise non-compliance through warrant sales or arrest of wages.

The resistance of the Labour leadership to a policy of non-payment is aided at a local level by their Stalinist and left Labour allies in the trade unions.

When motions appeared before the executive of Glasgow Trades Council calling for a Glasgow-wide conference on the poll tax in September, they received only one vote. Nothing must be done to upset the Labour Party and trade union leadership! Instead of open meetings of the Glasgow 'Stop It' campaign, decisions are now in the hands of a small committee which meets privately every fortnight.

Faced with such a combination of hostility and duplicity, some activists have turned to activity purely on a local community basis. Important as that is, we must not allow it to become unrelated to the argument within the organised trade union and labour movement. We have to argue for organising campaigns at all three levels — community, trade union, and Labour Party.

Powerful as the forces ranged against us may be, we have the advantage in terms of the arguments and the strength of feeling inside the working class. Making non-payment a reality is a vital ingredient in reorientating the labour movement.



Agenda for a Women's Ministry

By Cathy Nugent

We believe a new Ministry for Women remains the right way to tackle the complex prejudice and discrimination that still face the female majority.

"This Ministry would be close to the centre of power in Whitehall yet accessible to women through their

active involvement at regional and local levels. It would ensure that government is informed of women's real needs and that these are placed high on the political agenda."

Fine words, full of good intentions — but that's about all there is to the Policy Review's references to women and what a Labour Government would do for women.

There are some — vague — promises aside from the commitment to establish a Women's Ministry.

- to flexible working hours to ensure that women will be more able to cope with childcare responsibilities;
- to the right for women to return to full-time employment after periods out of work caring for dependents;
- to strengthening Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Legislation;
- to increases in Child Benefit.

Fine words like "freedom" and "fairness" and "an end to discrimination", "opportunity" and "choice" are crammed into this Policy Review but they fill out a document which is vague and inadequate in its real policy commitments.

The commitments on women's demands are not only vague but also not new. Other issues that affect women are scarcely tackled. There is no commitment to free nursery provision,

low pay is inadequately dealt with, the unionisation and involvement of women in the labour movement is not mentioned.

A Ministry for Women could not fundamentally tackle the oppression of women. Socialists should not be opposed to such a Ministry, but we should argue that it has to have a far clearer role than that outlined in the document. It should for instance take up the issues outlined in the Charter for Women reproduced in this pamphlet.

But when the idea of a Ministry for women is made central, that is top-down socialism, taking the struggle for equality out of the hands of ordinary women. Such a Ministry is certain not to be "accessible" while the Labour Party refuses to support the struggles of women workers (the healthworkers for instance) and refuses to fight for adequate resources, for better housing, nursery facilities, against privatisation, all of which directly affect women's lives.

Women in the Party have to say clearly: enough of these fine words and vague promises, the best way to "tackle prejudice and discrimination" is to take up the demands of working class women — the women who have suffered most under the Tories — women who have a real interest in changing society and fighting for the kind of changes that will ensure the liberation of all women.

For women's liberation

- ☐ Stronger equal-pay and sex-discrimination laws. Full rights for part-time workers.
- ☐ Publicly-provided nurseries, under community control, available free of charge at all times.
- ☐ Legal and financial independence for women.
- ☐ Free and freely available contraception and abortion: a woman's right to choose!
- ☐ Special programmes of access to education, training, and jobs to ensure real equality.
- ☐ A campaign to make the labour movement habitable for women and to win real equality for women within the movement.

No backtracking on the Bomb!

By Walter Wolfgang (Vice-chair, Labour CND)

In the world arena, the struggle for European and world nuclear disarmament is now joined.

Gorbachev's proposals for the achievement of world nuclear disarmament by the year 2000 provide the possibility of progress. But this prospect has caused European and American hawks to mount a series of counterattacks; their stated aim is to prevent European and world nuclear disarmament.

The INF treaty is the first agreement on nuclear disarmament since World War 2. Previously we only had agreements on arms control, agreements which sought to control the direction of an escalating arms race.

But the reductions proposed by the INF agreements, though tremendously important, affect only about 5 per cent of nuclear weapons, and that only if they are not sabotaged by the substitution of new nuclear weapons. Substitution of new nuclear weapons has already been proposed inside NATO, notably by Mrs Thatcher. The decision on substitution by NATO has been postponed because of the opposition these proposals have engendered, but they remain on NATO's agenda. Yet Britain has already commissioned new nuclear weapons, and that proposal has not been properly opposed by Labour in the House of Commons.

There is hope of a Start treaty resulting in a 50% cut in nuclear arsenals; to see these proposals in proper perspective it must be realised that even a 95% cut in nuclear capacity would leave the US and the Soviet Union with enough nuclear weapons to destroy each other. The prospect of a Start treaty has already been delayed largely because of American insistence on its Star Wars project, which represents a major escalation of the nuclear arms race into outer space.

So the struggle for disarmament is on and will be with us for the rest of the century.

There is a need to mount a counterpressure against the nuclear hawks to allow disarmament a chance to succeed. That counterpressure can best be exerted by a European country refusing to have nuclear weapons on its soil and closing all nuclear bases. This could trigger off refusals by other European countries to allow nuclear weapons to be deployed and would strengthen the doves in the United States. In that situation the US is more likely to agree to speed the disarmament process while they have some negotiating counters left.

After years of discussion the Labour Party has adopted the policy of unconditionally abandoning nuclear

weapons and closing down nuclear bases on British soil and in British waters. That policy will not only make us relatively safer in an unsafe world, it provides us in the new situation with a vital lever to encourage European and world nuclear disarmament. Provided there is the conviction internationally that Labour will carry out this policy, it can have an effect long before a Labour Government takes office.

To throw doubt in this situation on Labour's commitment to its own conference policy is to hamper the world-wide disarmament process.

In the last election that policy should have been advocated by relating it to the prospect of world-wide disarmament in order to gain the maximum amount of credibility. This was not done. Instead there was a commitment — never sanctioned by conference — that all the money saved should be expended on conventional weapons, although there was a rough balance between the two power blocs. Since then there have been rumours that the policy review would be used to ditch Labour's only remaining radical commitment.

An amendment to put Labour's commitment to scrap nuclear weapons and close nuclear bases into the interim Policy Review document was lost in the NEC, though another amendment reaffirming Labour's commitment to the mutual dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact was carried. Then came Kinnock's famous television interview where he said that in the new world situation there was no need for "something for nothing" unilateralism.

Mayhem broke loose. A special interview with The Independent was set up for Neil Kinnock. That interview was "on the record". It was reported in The Independent on 21 June. He reaffirmed that he wanted a trade-off with the Russians on Polaris and Trident. But what would he do if there was no trade-off? Would he keep Polaris and Trident?

Kinnock replied: "In terms of our defence interest it is better for us not to be nuclear dependent. If you think that our defence interests, and our ability to support our obligations in the alliance, are better met by using our resources for different objectives, then that is the way in which you will go". He confirmed that this was the defence policy on which he had fought the last election, but he said "there is much greater confidence the exchange will take place".

In a roundabout fashion, at least, the diluted anti-nuclear-weapons commitment on which the last election was fought was now reaffirmed.

A Russian response to Labour's unilateral nuclear disarmament would help the snowball effect which I have described above. But it is not essential and must on no account be made a precondition for Labour's initiative.

In his original television interview, Kinnock clearly underestimated the

pressure that would be brought by European and American nuclear hawks. He stated that the election of Mr Dukakis as President would clear away the impediments to the disarmament process. While Mr Dukakis's election is not certain, Mr Dukakis has already made it clear that he supports NATO's policy of the first use of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear disarmament would-wide has not yet been achieved. It has moved into the realm of practical politics, but an intense struggle is going on world-wide between the disarmers and the friends of nuclear weapons. Here Labour's undiluted unconditional initiative is absolutely essential.

The next Labour Party conference must clearly affirm its commitment to unconditionally abandon nuclear weapons and nuclear bases within the lifetime of the first Parliament of a Labour Government. There should also be an amendment to the Policy Review document which clearly states that commitment.

A statement that the money saved on nuclear weapons should be redirected to job creation and resources for welfare services is also essential. And at the same time the question of Britain's unilateral withdrawal from NATO should also be raised, even if it is not won this year.

But after that there must be a campaign linking Labour's unilateral commitment to European and world disarmament. Within that campaign, Labour's commitment to remove all nuclear bases must be clearly stated. To have an impact on the world situation this campaign should take place in the country and in the House of Commons and should be clearly and unequivocally supported by the leader of the Party.

Constituency Parties should not wait for this, and should campaign on the Conference policies as from now. This will also make it more difficult to make further attacks on the policy by the use of the final Policy Review document which will be published in 1989.

The policy of the Party on this and other matters is the property of the Party as a whole. It is not the property of any single individual and can only be amended by Conference. At a time when the struggle between the disarmers and the friends of nuclear weapons takes place on a world scale, Labour's contribution can be vital even before it achieves office.

In the past a Balance of Power has often broken down into war after a detente process had begun but had not been consummated. The stakes are not confined to Labour's electoral credibility, though that too is important. The real stakes are the survival of the human race.

In the new and in some respects hopeful world situation, Labour's clear and consistent advocacy of British unconditional and unilateral disarmament is vital.





Le Pen

Socialism or barbarism?

By John O'Mahony

When four and a half million French voters mark the twentieth anniversary of the greatest strike in history by backing an openly fascist party, then it is time for the labour movement and the left throughout Europe to beat the alarm drums.

No fascist movement has had this sort of support since World War 2. Jean-Marie Le Pen's main plank in the presidential election on 24 April was hostility to France's two and a half million immigrant workers, most of whom come from North Africa; but his National Front comes forward as the embodiment of a comprehensively right-wing outlook on the world.

The stock exchange crash of 19 October last year has yet to register in the world's economy. We do not yet know what its repercussions will be, but a profound, or even catastrophic, slump is probable. The comparatively easy and civilised politics of consensus which governed the countries of Western Europe for most of the '50s and '60s have already been strained by economic tensions since the mid-70s. A big slump will wreck them. The French fascists' fourteen percent of the vote is a tremendous base for extreme reaction at the beginning of what may well be a dramatic shift in Western politics.

Now, of course, France in 1988 is not Germany in 1930; nor does Le Pen yet have the same strength that Hitler had in 1930. By the end of 1930 Hitler's SA had 100,000 organised storm-troopers; Le Pen base is still mostly electoral.

But what if the stock market crash disrupts the economy fundamentally? There are no grounds for complacency. Yes the differences between 1988 and 1930 are important; what there is in common is also important.

Disappointment and disillusionment with the Establishment and the official Left gave Le Pen his first electoral boost in 1983-4, when the Socialist-led Government turned sharply towards austerity and cuts. The 'cohabitation' of the Socialist president Mitterrand and the Gaullist prime minister Chirac between 1986 and 1988 swelled the fascist protest vote further. Now, after Mitter-

'Once more, maybe, everything will depend on the strength of the internationalists, the revolutionaries, the fighters for workers' liberty — will we be strong enough to shape the course of history, or will we once again be prophets unarmed?'

rand's presidential victory, a new Socialist-led Government is being formed, which will be less inclined even than Neil Kinnock to tackle capitalism seriously. There will be more disillusionment, more despair, more fuel for the fascists.

Nor is it just a matter of France. The electoral success of the French far right will inevitably boost fascism throughout Europe. The success of the racist bigots in France will give oxygen to the forces

of racial intolerance in Britain.

Marxists have said repeatedly that the choice for the workers of the world is either socialism or barbarism. There has been much barbarism in Europe this century. For four decades it has been mainly in the Third World. In Vietnam and Cambodia, US imperialism rained napalm on the people. In Afghanistan, the USSR has done the same sort of thing for the last decade. Across the Third World, the advance of capitalism has driven millions of peasants off the land and left them to starve — while American farmers are paid not to produce food, and Western Europe accumulates huge stockpiles.

For four decades, the choice of socialism or barbarism has receded for the working class in the metropolitan countries. We have lived under the constant threat of total barbarism — the destruction of civilisation through nuclear war — but from day to day there have been in-between choices. The looming prospect of the dislocation of the world economy on a scale not seen since the end of World War 2, and the rise of the racist barbarian Le Pen, show that the in-between choices may soon disappear.

Many times before workers have faced the choice of socialism or barbarism; their organisations have failed them, and they have paid the price in barbarism.

We may now be entering a new cycle of history in which the central question of modern time, socialism or barbarism, is again posed to the workers of France and other parts of Europe, immediately and urgently.

Once more, maybe, everything will depend on the strength of the internationalists, the revolutionaries, the fighters for workers' liberty — will we be strong enough to shape the course of history, or will we once again be prophets unarmed? We do not and cannot know how long or short the time-scales will be. But Le Pen's election triumph, in the shadow of a looming economic slump, should focus the minds of all serious socialists.

The labour movement is not now in any state — of collective mind or body — to secure the socialist alternative to barbarism. We need to regenerate and reorient the labour movement. We need to rearm and regroup the socialists. We do not have all the time in the world.

For racial equality

- ☐ End deportations, scrap immigration controls.
- ☐ Full equality for black people and immigrants. Special programmes of access to education and training to ensure real equality.
- ☐ Labour movement support for black community self-defence against racist attacks.
- ☐ A campaign to recruit black people to the labour movement using material in appropriate languages and to purge racists from all positions in the movement. Support for black workers' right to have their own caucuses and sections.

What is socialism?

By Colin Foster

The basic principle of socialism is 'from each according to ability; to each according to need'. Instead of the economic system basing itself on each individual competing with each other to make money, it will base itself on people cooperating to satisfy their needs.

Socialism is about *planning* — the conscious control by society over production and distribution. Capitalism is a chaotic system, subject to periodic crashes, recessions and slumps.

'All elections to administrative and managerial positions will be for fixed, short periods. Rotation of responsibilities will cut against vested interests. Administrators and managers will be paid at workers' wages, so that they have no privileges to defend'.

Socialism will abolish the chaos that causes crashes and slumps.

To do this we will need public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy. But socialism will mean a quite different sort of public ownership to those we know today. It will not only be more extensive — which it must be to establish real control over the economy. It will also be organised differently.

Nationalised industry has rightly been criticised for being bureaucratic. But socialist planning will depend upon real democratic control by workers.

To make planning democratic, the process will have to be quite complicated. People in particular industries and localities will have to discuss and draw up proposals for planning targets. A balance will have to be found between local, national and international decisions.

Won't this make life an endless round of meetings? Won't it lead to decisions being dominated by the minority who can be bothered to sit through all those meetings? Even if that minority are to begin with only the most active and dedicated people, won't they in time become a bureaucracy with vested interests?



This is a real danger. But a lot can be done to avoid it.

At present what democracy we have is almost entirely to do with life outside work. Under socialism, democracy will be centrally about what is *produced*. A great part of democracy will be about the workplace and based in the workplace.

Meetings can be held in work time to maximise attendance. Each workplace group will be able to elect its own delegate, mandate him or her, get regular reports, and replace its delegate whenever it wishes. Socialist democracy will thus mean much more *real control* than any democratic procedure in society today.

Of course, some people will be more active than others. Some will speak in

meetings and get chosen as delegates, and some will not. But there can be sufficient checks and balances to stop that unevenness solidifying into bureaucracy.

All elections to administrative and managerial positions will be for fixed, short periods. Rotation of responsibilities will cut against vested interests. Administrators and managers will be paid at workers' wages, so that they do not have privileges to defend.

Three things are necessary for this sort of democracy to work:

- that everyone has a decent standard of living, so that they are not preoccupied by the struggle to survive or the struggle to get a better job;
- that the working week is short enough for every worker to have time and energy to take part in the democratic

debates;

- and that everyone has a high basic level of education.

Without these things, as Marx once put it, "all the old crap" will indeed revive. But those things are possible. Capitalism has generated the technology and the productive capacity that make them possible.

Socialism would not mean an end to debates and disputes. How should cities and housing estates be designed? What should replace the advertising hoardings? What forms of transport should we develop? Can we reclaim the deserts and develop them for human settlement?

Should we organise things so that everyone lives in several different parts of the world at different times of their life? Can we have an international language? What sort of energy should we use? Wind and wave power, or can nuclear energy be made safe?

All these issues — and many we can't even imagine now — will be debated with great vehemence, because the debates will not just be idle speculation. The decisions will matter — because humanity will have taken conscious control of our destiny for the first time ever.

Making sure that democracy operates is one thing. But you can't live on democracy. You can't eat meetings. Once the whip of wage-labour is taken away, how do we make sure the necessary drudgery is done?

Socialism will not be able to take away the whip of wage-labour straight away. At first, wages will be made more equal, but there will still be wages. People will have to work for the same reason that they have to work today: that they won't have enough to live on if they don't.

The difference will be that everyone will have the right to a decent job, and that workers will have real control over their conditions of work and what they produce. But there will still be drudgery, and it will still have to be done.

Over time, socialism will whittle away wage-labour. More and more goods — food, transport, housing, education, entertainment, clothing — will be distributed free ('to each according to their need') so that people do not need to rely on wages to buy them.

Meanwhile, people will become more and more aware that their work is to serve the common good. In present-day society, a job is simply a way of getting a wage to live on. Most people prefer it if their job is also something socially useful, but that isn't what your wage depends on. So most people, reasonably, see work as a matter of doing as little as possible for as much as possible.

Under socialism work will be different; and so, in time, people's attitudes to work will become different. Most people will *want* to contribute to the common good, and the pressure of majority opinion will be enough to push along any minority that doesn't.

The development of science and technology will allow us to reduce drudgery to a basic minimum, shared out equally; and creative work, over and above that drudgery, will become something most people *want* to do, not

sharply separated from 'leisure'.

Does that seem utopian? Remember that the 19th century socialist Blanqui was confronted with the objection: "Under socialism, who will empty the chamber pots?" (which, he retorted, just meant 'who will empty *my* chamber pot?') One of the less spectacular achievements of technology, the flush toilet, has made the objection obsolete; and not even the most sceptical can think it is utopian to think that everyone will clean their own toilet in the future society!

Won't all the meetings and debates make for inefficiency? And isn't a modern economy too complex to plan? Won't we end up like the Soviet Union, with shops full of large metal buckets but empty of toothbrushes?

Not everything will be done by meetings! There will be managers and administrators, and they will take decisions. But they will be elected and accountable, and they will not be a fixed class of people separate from everyone else.

Certainly planning will not be complete at first. Large areas will have to be

'Socialism will not just change society, it will change people. Under socialism people will live in different ways'.

left to the market economy and the balance of supply and demand. Many smaller enterprises will remain in private ownership.

We will win fuller social control over what we produce as we become more cooperatively-minded, more educated, more skilled — more like socialist citizens. But even in the earliest stages we could avoid the monstrosities of the Soviet Union.

What stops toothbrushes being produced in the Soviet Union to meet a need which everyone knows about is a huge hierarchy of bureaucrats, each passing the buck, blocking change, and looking after their own sectional interest. In a workers' democracy, production would be quickly adjusted to meet the need, and any manager who was obstructive would be out of his job.

But there's a lot that's not worked out about this idea of socialism. It is true that no perfect model of the future socialist society exists. The main 'models' — those countries that claim to be socialist — are not socialist at all.

But society has progressed before without anyone having a blueprint! Capitalism is undoubtedly an advance over feudalism; but no-one in feudal society had even a vague idea of how capitalism would work.

We do have general principles about how socialism would work, and soundly-based theories about why the *modern working class* is the class that —

for the first time in history — can make socialism. And general principles are all that is possible in the nature of the case. If socialism is to be genuinely democratic, decisions about precise structures must come from below. If socialism is to liberate the working class, then it will liberate creativity that we cannot possibly predict in advance.

For socialism will not just change society. It will change people.

We can see a small beginning of that change in the transformations that big class struggles — like the miners' strike of 1984-5, or the French general strike of 1968 — make in people's minds. Socialism will be a much bigger and more permanent change in the way people live, and so it will make bigger transformations.

Official capitalist ideology makes some very odd assumptions about human nature. We are supposed to do nothing outside our family circle for any reason except money, and nothing inside it for any reason except love. And this is supposed to be basic human nature, as unchangeable as the fact that we each have one head and one nose.

In reality human nature has changed a lot over the centuries. The way people live has changed. The stereotype household of mum, dad, two children, a cat and a mortgage has not existed forever. Indeed, it is breaking down before our eyes today, even within capitalism.

Under socialism people will live in different ways. Some, almost certainly, will still want the stereotype bourgeois household. Some will prefer bigger communal households.

Whatever people choose, the socialist society will 'socialise' housework. That is, it will make publicly-provided childcare, cleaning, and restaurant facilities available to everyone. It will have to do that in order to liberate women, and to make sure domestic slavery is combatted as well as wage-slavery. After a few years of that, even if there are men who still want a wife tied to the kitchen sink and nappy-changing, they won't be able to find one.

The status of children will be changed, too. They will have their own rights as independent beings. They will not just be the property of their parents.

The most basic job of socialism is getting rid of poverty. That is one thing it could do very quickly. Capitalism has created tremendous productive capacities. If we take those into social control, and if we eliminate the huge waste within capitalism — from unemployment, the arms race, pointless competition, advertising, the luxuries of the wealthy — then we can certainly make sure that everyone has enough.

We can do that for the first time in human history. And that in itself will be the basis for a revolution in human nature: we will remove the fear of being done down by our fellow-beings which affects even the most prosperous workers today, in these times of mass redundancies.

That is socialism, in short: the liberation of humanity from poverty, insecurity, wage-slavery and state tyranny; the achievement of conscious control over our destiny. It is worth fighting for.

Is socialism possible?

Socialism, workers' liberty, a society as different from the Eastern bloc as it is from Western capitalism — it may be a good idea. But is it realistic? Can we ever win that sort of socialism, or is it best to settle for the sort of half-measure that the Policy Review proposes? Mark Osborn discusses the issues.

I want to tell you about a woman who was 35 years old at the beginning of 1968. Her name is Marie and she lives in a village outside Nantes, France.

Marie gets up at 4.30 every day and goes to work by bus. In 1968 the bus was rickety and took an hour to take her to town — where she got off, walked through the back doors of the office block and helped to clean the fourth floor.

Marie disliked the Communists and thought that De Gaulle was bearable. She said that the North African immigrants she worked with smelled bad and were stupid.

Marie took the shopping back home, cleaned the house, and cooked for her husband.

There's a problem summed up. Socialists say that the way out of waste ignorance, war and poverty is for the working class — the vast majority in the major capitalist countries — to take power from the capitalist class and run society in their interests.

To do this the working class must become an organised collective force, aware of its own power and its own interests. The trouble is that it is not. Most of the time, most workers like Marie, accept their lot. Everyday life, tells them that capitalism is the natural way to organise the world. They take out their discontent not on the bosses but on other workers.

After all, capitalism had allowed some improvements. Marie's mother used to wash all the family's clothes by hand and use an outside toilet, and Marie was better off. Besides, Marie was too exhausted at the end of each day to think too closely about the world — let alone do anything to change it.

It is comparatively easy for the capitalists to be a ruling class. They have education, leisure, a clear sense of their own interests and a powerful network of institutions and connections binding them together as a class. But how can exhausted, downtrodden workers, bombarded with prejudices and lacking opportunities to learn come to clearly see their place in the world as part of a revolutionary class? Or will better-off workers always see their interest in getting what they can out of the system,

and will worse-off workers always be helpless objects for charity and welfare?

These questions were answered in practice in France in May 1968. People who had written the workers off were eating their words by June.

The spark of student action lit a huge fire of discontent as French workers struck in the biggest strike ever. Office workers joined factory workers and black joined white, as workers proved to themselves that they could unite to change society. Millions of people like Marie, who previously had not even joined trade unions, came on to the stage as players in world politics.

In the heat of the action and influenced by a small group of revolutionaries, the workers in Nantes formed their own Central Strike Committee or Workers' Council. Marie was a delegate from her workplace — for a week or so she helped to run the town. She helped to organise the distribution of food, the schooling of children and the control of traffic. For a week Marie was a revolutionary.

Alongside all the conservative ideas in Marie's head there had always been

'Workers do have the ability to change society. In times of upheaval this creativity comes to the fore'.

some different ideas. She believed that workers should have democratic control in their workplaces, and should get a better deal. She thought that unemployment shouldn't be allowed. She thought that every working class family had a right to a decent life, and that this was more important than making profits for the rich.

Suddenly she found that she could do something about it! Indeed she, and the workers of Nantes, had to do something about it. They saw that they had the power to stop society by their general strike; and they had the power to restore society by organising themselves in workers' councils.

We can see the same transformation of workers' outlook even in some small strikes. We could see it on a bigger scale in the miners' strike of 1984-5. In France in 1968 it happened on a bigger scale again.

A strike is not just a consciousness-raising session, it is a struggle. If you lose, then the defeatism which crippled you before the strike may cripple you again.

The same is true of general strikes.

A matter of weeks later Marie voted for De Gaulle in the election that was

designed to and did get the workers' movement back on to solid bourgeois ground.

Marie voted for De Gaulle because she was demoralised after the ebb of the strike movement. De Gaulle promised to make reforms and restore order. So she voted for him.

In 1968 Nantes was unusual. Revolutionaries had more of a base than elsewhere, where the bureaucratic and conservative Communist Party kept control and fobbed workers off with half-measures.

But the story shows three things.

One: that workers do have the ability to change society. In times of upheaval, the creativity which is usually buried under a dead weight of inertia comes to the fore. Workers' ability to organise, to control, to plan — an ability which capitalism develops but at the same time restricts — flowers. France 1968 was not unique. The same working class creativity has been shown in Poland in 1980-81, in Portugal in 1974-5, in Hungary in 1956, and in many other times and places.

Two: that democracy for the working class is not just a matter of parliamentary elections. Workers can organise their own 'parliaments', like the Central Strike Committee in Nantes, with a more direct and flexible form of democracy than Westminster.

It is important to get socialists elected to Westminster. But if we did get a socialist majority in the House of Commons, that would only be the start of the story. That socialist majority would face obstruction and defiance from the House of Lords, the monarchy, the courts, and the top ranks of the civil service, the police and the army. The final weapon of the old ruling class — which it would certainly try to use rather than quietly go down to defeat — would be armed resistance, like Pinochet's coup against Allende in Chile in 1973.

We could defeat the obstruction, and reduce the armed resistance to manageable size. In France in 1968, some police and troops refused to be used against the strikers.

But victory or defeat would not depend on votes in parliament. They would depend on how well workers were organised, and how boldly they acted, in the workplaces and the streets.

Three: that when the parties based on the working class cut down their aims in order not to clash so much with everyday conservative prejudices, then they fail to serve the workers.

Not only the French general strike of May 1968 showed this, but also the British miners' strike of 1984-5. The Labour leaders sat on the fence and refused to support the miners clearly and actively. That failure may have been decisive in weakening workers' confidence and solidarity, and letting the miners go down to defeat.

The struggles to stop the poll tax, to save the Health Service, and to scrap nuclear weapons raise the same problem today. We can win these struggles — but we need a labour movement that gives a lead, rather than always backpedalling to seem respectable.

Yes, we can win socialism — but we need to organise for it!



What went wrong in Russia?

By Geoff Ward

We want socialism. We want the complete overthrow of capitalism. Yet everywhere that revolutions calling themselves socialist have been made — the USSR, China, Vietnam, Cuba — today there are systems very far from the workers' liberty we want. What went wrong? How can we do better?

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was a genuine socialist revolution. It put the economy and society of Russia under the control of democratic workers' councils (called 'soviets').

But the Bolsheviks who made the revolution did not believe that socialism could be built in one country alone, least of all in backward Russia. They saw their revolution as the first step in an *international workers' revolution*.

After World War 1 there were workers' revolutions in many countries of Europe. But they were defeated — because in those countries there were no clear-headed, cohesive revolutionary parties like the Bolsheviks. The Russian workers' revolution was isolated. And worse: it was beset by civil war, attacked by Russian counter-revolutionaries and invaded by the armies of 14 capitalist states.

By the end of the civil war in 1921 the Bolshevik Party was in control of a state devastated by war and isolated by the defeat and ebb of working class revolution in Europe. The opposition parties had mostly gone over to the counter-revolution, and were all banned. Like industry, the working class had been decimated by war. Famine and disease stalked Russia.

Many workers returned to their peasant roots in the countryside. There at least they could eat.

The system of 'War Communism' rested on forced expropriation of grain from the peasants. With the end of the civil war it began to break down. Trotsky and Lenin realised that in order to

stimulate the economy it was necessary to make concessions to private trade and farming.

The effect of this was to strengthen the merchants and rich peasants (kulaks) at the expense of the working class and poorer peasantry. With the dispersal of the working class, the soviets had been seriously weakened as organs of democracy, and it was to a large extent the 'Old Guard' of the Bolsheviks who ran the state apparatus.

These Bolsheviks partly depended on the bureaucracy they had inherited from Tsarism.

Gradually Bolsheviks became bureaucrats and the bureaucrats, balancing between the middle class and the workers, became more powerful.

Before his death, Lenin began a struggle against the bureaucracy. Trotsky took up this struggle from 1923. But as the revolution ebbed, the bureaucrats won out.

The bureaucracy was increasingly differentiating itself from the working class. Military officials, technicians, party functionaries and managers were gradually becoming an independent social layer rising above the working class, and defending their own material privileges. Stalin's doctrine of 'Socialism in One Country' meant that the Communist International was being transformed into an instrument of Russia's domestic policy.

Once the opposition was firmly routed and Trotsky was sent into exile, Stalin took a sharp turn seemingly to the left, adopting much of the Opposition's platform but in a brutish form. He announced the elimination of the kulaks as a class and embarked on forced collectivisation of the farms. He also announced the first Five Year Plan with a crash programme of industrialisation.

The Stalinist bureaucracy fell out with the NEP bourgeoisie, with whom they had allied against the working class. As Trotsky would later put it, the bureaucracy fought the NEP bourgeoisie to decide which of them, bureaucracy or bourgeoisie, would have control of the wealth of society. The bureaucracy won, emerging as the sole master of Russian society.

Internationally the combined effect of the rise of Stalinism and the terrible convulsions of capitalism squeezed and decimated the Marxists. The millions of workers who had organised themselves into revolutionary Marxist parties were dispersed or channelled into utterly bureaucratic Stalinist parties which just served the Kremlin's foreign policy. Only the most stubborn and clear-headed Marxists around Trotsky, remained true to the ideals and ideas of 1917. They were isolated.

Against this background, revolutions took place in China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam and other countries under the leadership of Stalinist parties after World War 2. These were revolutions made by parties with middle class leaders and, usually, a mainly peasant base of support. They took place in countries where the capitalist class was weak, disorganised, and corrupt, and where the working class was also weak and ill-organised. When the Chinese revolutionaries entered the cities in 1949, they told the workers to stay at work and obey their managers — and then they proceeded to build a system of tight state control over the working class. These post-war revolutions took as their model not the workers' democracy of 1917, but the bureaucratic police state built by Stalin.

The struggles of Solidarnosc in Poland showed vividly that working-class socialism cannot be identified with the Stalinist systems, but is mortally hostile to them.

The Solidarnosc programme demanded:

- *Workers' self-management in the factories: managers to be subject to recall by elected worker's councils.

- *Opening the books of the bureaucrats' economic planning.

- *A reform that will abolish the privileges of the bureaucracy.

- *Wages and social benefits to be protected against inflation by escalator clauses.

- *Trade union inspection of health and safety at work.

- *The right to work for all.

- *Expansion of crèches and nurseries. Extended maternity leave, with job security.

- *Longer holidays and a five day work week (instead of six days).

- *Free elections, civil liberties, and 'abolition of secrecy in public life'.

- *Access to the media; 'the allocation of paper, printing facilities, and broadcasting time must be subject to social control'.

- *Free trade unions and the right to strike.

The confusions and hesitations among the Solidarnosc leadership are secondary. In the fight for such demands, the socialist side was Solidarnosc's not the bureaucrats'!

Battered by fascism and Stalinism, and then lulled by the big post-war expansion of capitalism, the working class has not yet been able to recreate mass revolutionary parties. But struggles like those in Poland in 1980-81 or in France in 1968, show that the working class still has the potential to create a new society. Indeed, world-wide the working class is far stronger and more numerous today than ever before.

The USSR is not socialist!

By Eric Heffer

Since the late 1940s it has been clear to me that the Soviet Union wasn't the socialist millennium at all. The workers there have been as bureaucratically controlled — and more so, in some respects — as in capitalist Britain. Therefore a fundamental change is necessary in the Soviet Union, and the fight for such a change is as important as in this country.

Even if there are no capitalist moguls in the Soviet Union, there are state bureaucrats who manipulate society and have developed into something like a new class. The USSR is not socialist. It's not the sort of socialism that I believe in.

What about the economy based upon a type of public ownership? That should certainly not be destroyed. It should be defended. I want Gorbachev to develop democracy and democratic ideas and free discussion in the Soviet Union. But I have a feeling that there will be some forces there who want to destroy the socialised character of the economy in the Soviet Union — and that I am not in favour of.

One way to define it is to spell out what programme you think the workers in the Soviet Union should fight for. I think that what they have to fight for is

- genuinely free and independent trade unions;

- the right to have free publications, which can express their own points of view clearly;

- the right to have political organisations, quite separate from the Communist Party;

- the right to have free elections.

I think the one whose views I come closest to is Luxemburg — in that sense I suppose I am a Luxemburgist. I really have got a great affinity with what Luxemburg said about the Soviet Union immediately after the Russian Revolution — total defence of the revolution, but at the same time enough understanding to be critical of events.

These are all the things the workers have to fight for. I don't agree with the idea now of individual states hiving off. I think there has to be a genuine freedom in all these states, but it would be a tragic thing if some parts of Russia hived off as independent states, and suddenly became Islamic Fundamentalist or something of that kind. I think that would be retrogressive.

The important thing is for the workers to fight for free and independent trade unions, the right to have their own type of 'Solidarity', and the right for free political organisation, the right for freedom of speech, the right for free elections, and the right to have independent organisation.

Will the workers in the CP controlled

states get that peacefully? Will the bureaucrats surrender?

It depends, of course, on how strong they are, whether the army could be used against them. I don't know — maybe it would, maybe they can't get it peacefully, I don't know, but I do think they have to try. To judge by what has happened in various other countries where the military have ended up as the dictators it may well be that they couldn't get radical change in the USSR peacefully.

One of the strangest things on the left is the double standards, where you have people who are right to get very excited about Chile, South Africa and so on, but who either sympathise with the rulers in the Eastern Bloc or are very reluctant to say anything against them even when they do things like the rulers of Chile and South Africa do — suppressing Solidarnosc, for example. It is



Eric Heffer

one of the biggest areas of weakness on the left.

I think it is best understood as an historical question. The fact is that the revolutionary left in this country began as a left in support of the Russian Revolution. Therefore many on the left believe that anything that is said against the Soviet leadership, or the Soviet state, or the Soviet system is said by people who openly or secretly support capitalism. For decades they just did not believe the truth about Stalinism because, they said, it was all 'capitalist lies'.

When I moved support for 'Solidarnosc' in the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, I was told by one of the trade union leaders that I was adopting a very wrong attitude because after all Solidarity was a 'breakaway union'.

I said: 'if you are talking about a breakaway union from a democratic union there might be an argument, but these are not democratic unions in Poland, they are state unions. They are organs of the state, so you are not talking about the same thing'. But I did get that resolution through.

The trouble is that there has only ever been a handful of people on the left — and I'm talking about the genuine left — in this country who stood up and said

that Solidarity should be supported.

When they argue that the Catholic Church influences Solidarity, I point out that all the same arguments apply to Ireland. The fact is that priests in the struggle — not all of them, not the hierarchy in the main, but lots of them — have, like the Catholic workers, been active in the struggle for freedom and independence for Ireland. James Connolly remained a Catholic until the day he died, because it was part of a mass movement of the workers. But the role of Catholicism in the Polish labour movement confuses people who should know better.

When there should be an angry outcry from the left in protest at oppression in the USSR and Eastern Europe you normally, at best, get silence. And that's wrong.

This is a very big issue. I think we have to get pamphlets out on it. I have issued a statement on it as part of my campaign for the Deputy Leadership, in which I accused Mrs Thatcher of being a lying hypocrite when she says she favours Solidarity, because she deprives workers here of free and independent trade unions.

I said that Thatcher speaks with two voices. She certainly does, but the British labour movement should not speak with two voices. We have to speak with one clear voice and according to one simple standard in support of the right of workers everywhere to organise trade unions free of any state control.

The terrible double standards with which some on the left view the USSR also showed in their attitude to the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. You had a mass movement in protest at America's bloody war in Vietnam, and rightly so, but bored disinterest in the USSR's war against the peoples of Afghanistan.

I was one of the few left wing Members of Parliament who protested very strongly when the Soviet Union marched into Afghanistan. The best thing that Gorbachev has done up to now has been to start to withdraw from Afghanistan. It really was no different from Vietnam. We have to be honest about it — we can't go on having those double standards.

I know that is very much a minority view on the left, very much so. People feel that if you make a stand you are siding with right wing reactionaries. But you can make your socialist stand against oppression by 'left wing' regimes and at the same time distinguish yourself clearly from the right wing by putting questions and policies to them that they cannot possibly accept. You can show them as hypocrites because of it. It depends on how you do it.

We have to convince people that there is a separate view, a working class view — that you do not have to side with either the bureaucrats or with Thatcher

The working class is central

By Lynn Ferguson

There is a thread which links the Kinnock wing of the Labour Party with large sections of the Labour Left — a move away from the working class.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm, a long-standing member of the Communist Party whom Neil Kinnock calls "the most sagacious of living Marxists", argues for an anti-Thatcher alliance of Labour, centre parties and Tory wets. His model is the Popular Fronts which were so disastrous for the working class internationally in the 1930s.

Kinnock does not go all the way with Hobsbawm. He can see that it would be suicidal for Labour to give up the attempt to win a majority in its own right. But for sure the base he wants the Labour Party to relate to is not the working class. Kinnock's version is to trim the politics and trim again, to appeal to some elusive 'middle ground'.

What is the left-wing version? The view put forward by some admirers of Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council, and by some people in the 'Chesterfield movement', is as follows.

Manufacturing industry is in decline. The traditional working class is disappearing. More women are going out to work. Black people are a bigger proportion of the population. More and more people are working in service industries and in white-collar work.

Ergo, the working class is both politically less important, and moreover politically backward. The drive for change will come from the 'new social forces' — women, blacks, lesbians and gays, other oppressed groups. Radical politics should revolve around 'empowering' and prioritising the interests of these groups.

There have been changes in the workforce and in the workplaces. But these are changes *within* the working class. The task is to fight for the labour movement to unite all sections of the working class, including the most oppressed — not to switch horses on to a 'rainbow alliance' of oppressed groups.

The 'rainbow alliance' idea was popularised by the GLC after 1982. In 1981 Labour had been elected to the GLC with a clear commitment to confronting the Government and supporting workers' struggles. But in January 1982 the GLC capitulated to the courts over cheap fares.

The GLC slid away from its commitment to class struggle. It found an easier form of radicalism in championing miscellaneous oppressed groups. The GLC could fund radical projects, set up committees to increase representation for the oppressed, and so on. The Labour councillors could be liberal, benevolent administrators in pressure-group politics — rather than working-class fighters.

Much was creditable in what was done, but to call it a *socialist* project is



grossly misleading. Much of it was borrowed from the not-very-socialist United States. For example, in the US around 300,000 companies have their policies on equality and positive discrimination for women and blacks checked as a condition for getting Federal Government contracts. The GLC acted on a smaller scale along similar lines.

The US has lots of black mayors and feminist mayors. That's better than a white male monopoly. But it's not socialism. It's an improvement. But it hasn't changed the world, or changed conditions for the majority of black and women workers in the US.

The working class is still the force which can change the world. The changes that have taken place within the working class have not necessarily weakened it. Potentially they bring new sections into struggle. Remember the health workers' strikes earlier this year? Ten or twenty years ago, strikes by nurses were practically unknown, and union organisation in hospitals was scanty.

The working class has been written off many times before. In the 1960s theorists argued that the relative affluence of some workers — car workers in particular — had bought them off and destroyed all socialist or class-struggle thinking in them. The militancy of the late '60s and early '70s soon gave the lie to that!

Before 1984 many people argued that the miners, who were now Britain's highest-paid manual workers, with mortgages, cars, videos, and holidays in Spain, would never strike again. The great struggle of 1984-5 set the record

straight!

The working class has changed. The labour movement has to be transformed to take that into account. The needs of the women and black people who are entering the workforce in increasing numbers must be met. The working-class movement has to be swept clean of the sexist, racist, backward ideas that hamper it and hold it back.

But the working class is the only class that can transform society. The working class is weak because our movement is politically inadequate. The task is to tackle this crisis of politics, not to place hope in a rainbow alliance of the oppressed. The oppressed can best win real equality and real liberation if they are integrated into the working-class movement.

Many on the left have written off the working class over the years. The Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Parties has moved towards the liberal bourgeoisie, throwing its lot in with a section of the bosses rather than with the working class. This has led the Italian Communist Party to *attack* the working class from a political position to the right of Roy Hattersley.

The Maoists argued that the working class in Europe had been bought off. In France that led the erstwhile feminist Julia Kristeva to sing the praises of the United States.

Those who write off the working class lose their political bearings. We must reassert the centrality of the working class — including women and black workers! — and to fight for working-class politics in our movement.



The struggle in the Third World

By Clive Bradley

TV pictures of starving people in Africa are now almost commonplace. Everyone knows also that it not only those who face immediate starvation who live miserable, truncated lives, crushed by poverty, squalor, and ignorance.

The Third World — that is, *most of the world* — may often be only at the edges of the industrialised world's consciousness; but it cannot be ignored completely, even by callous Western governments. For socialists it is a major concern.

In fact the term Third World is rather loose. South America, Africa and Asia are not all the same. Parts of the 'Third World' contain dynamic industrial centres. The workers in those industrial cities earn low wages and live in bad conditions. Poverty is poverty. But the kind of poverty there is in Brazil's industrial city of Sao Paulo is different from the

kind of poverty that exists in southern Sudan.

The difference is important from the point of view of changing things. In Brazil the mass of the population face terrible conditions. Shanty towns on the hills of Rio de Janeiro get washed away in heavy rains, leaving many dead — and the rulers of the country do not care very much. Thousands of orphans roam the streets, often ending up as prostitutes. In rural areas, thousands starve to death. Amazonian Indians are dispossessed of their land by capitalist developers and left with nothing.

Yet in Brazil there is also a militant workers' movement that, since 1978, has developed a strong base in the industrial heartlands — and elsewhere. Largely as a result of working-class militancy, Brazil's military rulers handed over to civilians in 1985. Huge strike waves have scored important victories for workers.

The socialist potential of this movement — which in some ways is like the workers' movement in South Africa —

is immense. And it means that we need not only express *outrage* at the poverty and misery of Brazilian society; we can develop *solidarity* with a movement that has the power to change things.

How could it change things? Brazil's poverty is caused by profiteers who run the country — many of them foreign, but most of them Brazilian. Brazil is locked into the capitalist system, which churns out inequality day in, day out. Capitalism must be overthrown.

It is not possible, however, for even such a huge and resource-rich country as Brazil simply to escape from capitalism on its own. Russia in the 1920s showed that 'socialism in one country' is a disastrous illusion.

Just as a socialist transformation in Britain could only be a brief episode unless it became part of a Socialist United States of Europe, Brazilian workers need to unite with workers of other countries for — at least, as a first step — socialism on a South American level. Reorganisation of the continent's natural and other resources could break the back of poverty, though links with the huge wealth of a socialist North America or Western Europe would be the best way out.

In fact there have been important steps made towards continental workers' unity. Workers' representatives from different countries have discussed a continental strategy to fight the debt crisis. In the same way, we in Britain need to link up with workers in continental Europe to fight multinational capitalism.

Debt is a big problem in the Third World, and a socialist government there would probably cancel its debt as part of a general attack on capitalism. Most of the money Brazil borrowed to make up its debt went to Brazil's rich, who often funnelled the money straight out again into bank accounts in New York and Switzerland. Why should Brazil's workers pay?

For our part, in the advanced industrial countries where most of the banks are based, we should demand the cancellation of Third World debts.

We need other strategies. Solidarity with the workers' movements, and the construction of international workers' organisations, are the most effective ways to fight international capitalism. But in some Third World countries there are hardly any workers, and certainly no powerful movement. What could a British Labour government do?

It could give more aid. As capitalist governments already do, it could impose conditions on its aid. But instead of insisting that Third World governments cancel food subsidies and push down wages, it could call for free trade unions, higher wages, democratic rights, land reform, and cheap credit to poor peasants. It could give aid specifically to *opposition* movements of workers or of oppressed nations. It could pour resources into developing technologies to help the poor peasants who make up the majority of the world's population.

Internationalism starts now — in building links with Third World workers and making solidarity with the oppressed, and in fighting to overthrow capitalism in Britain.

Full employment is possible!

By Colin Foster

Everyone agrees that tackling unemployment must be central to Labour's challenge to the Tories. Yet Labour's leaders now argue that anything like full employment is utopian.

Maybe, they say, British capitalism can be coaxed and nudged down to one million unemployed rather than three million; but that's all. Labour's leaders now want to scrap even Labour's previous promise to get unemployment down to one million over five years.

In the 1950s and early '60s Labour's right-wingers used to say that modern capitalism — the 'mixed economy' — could guarantee fairly full employment, and so there was no need for socialism. Now they say that *no* system can give full employment... and so there is no point in trying socialism.

Why unemployment should have become inevitable, they don't say.

Some Tories say that workers have priced themselves out of jobs. Wages are too high.

But unemployment was lower when wages were rising fast in the 1950s and '60s. Since around 1970 real wages have stagnated or fallen in the US and risen very slowly elsewhere, but unemployment has multiplied.

If you compare different countries, usually the ones with higher wages have lower unemployment. Britain has lower wages than the US, West Germany, Japan or Sweden.

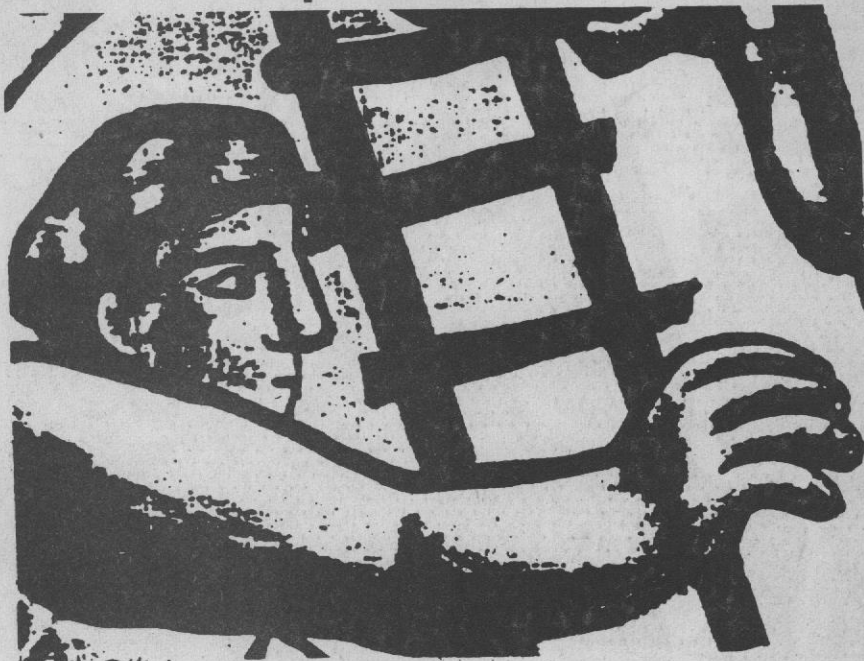
Unemployment is not caused by high wages. Both unemployment and pressure to reduce wages are caused by capitalist crisis.

A lot of people say that unemployment is caused by new technology. But capitalism has been introducing new technologies continuously ever since the steam engine, and on the whole employment has expanded rather than declined.

Detailed studies can find only a few thousand job losses, among the millions in Britain in recent years, caused by new technology. In fact productivity in the advanced capitalist countries is rising rather slowly. Unemployment mostly reflects lower production, not higher production with fewer workers. And if you compare different countries, those with most new technology, like Japan and Sweden, generally have lower unemployment.

The most idiotic theory of all is that people are unemployed only because they are too lazy to get jobs. How does this explain the hundreds of applications that firms have often had even for low-paid, dead-end jobs? And was it something in the water, or in the atmosphere, that made workers throughout the advanced capitalist countries suddenly start to turn idle around the end of the 1960s?

The real reason why millions are unemployed is because the economy is



run for profit and not for human need.

Under the present economic system — capitalism — the aim of production is to expand capital, the accumulated wealth of the ruling class. Workers get jobs if it is profitable for the bosses, and not if it isn't.

Employment therefore expands and contracts in line with the pulse-beat of profits, investments and markets.

In boom periods each capitalist strives for an increasing share of an expanding market. New investment projects are rushed through. Speculation spirals.

But not every capitalist can have an increased share. Eventually the expansion falters. Investment is halted. Projects already underway are revealed to be unprofitable. The slump spreads from the credit system through the investment industries to every sector of the economy.

As workers lose their jobs, the capitalists who previously sold goods to those workers lose their markets. And those capitalists, in turn, sack more workers. The system spirals downwards.

People go short — because "too much" has been produced!

The slump levels out only when enough capital has been written off, and wages have been reduced sufficiently, for profits to be restored. A new boom starts — and with it the seeds of a new slump.

In the Third World, the rapid destruction by capitalism of the traditional economy in the countryside has generated huge and rising unemployment for decades. In the advanced capitalist countries, it was a bit different in the '50s and '60s.

A new framework allowing the rapid expansion of world trade after World War 2, and the growth of a wave of new industries, made booms strong and slumps shallow. Masses of new workers were drawn from underdeveloped countries and regions; more and more

women were drawn into wage-work.

Capitalism always made sure that there was a slight surplus of workers over jobs — otherwise workers' bargaining position would be too strong — and in slumps the surplus became bigger. But the real turn for the worse came after the late '60s, when the framework of international finances set up after 1945 began to break down.

Under capitalism men and women do not control our own social life. We are tossed around by economic forces, of human construction but beyond human control — supply and demand, profit and investment, credit and liquidity.

So capitalism, internationally at least, has no way to restructure itself except crisis.

The US is no longer super-dominant. New industrial powers have arisen. Previously central industries like cars and steel are in decline; new ones are emerging. The system knows no other way to adjust to these changes other than by the travail of trade wars, slumps, and deindustrialisation.

The remedy? We must take control of the means of production we have created and run them by democratic planning for need. We must replace the crazy patchwork of national rivalries with a cooperative international system. In place of the rat race, we must run society on principles of solidarity.

The National Health Service is short of staff. Record numbers are homeless. There is a big backlog of repairs to be done on houses, schools and hospitals.

There are plenty of jobs to be done. A planned programme of public investment could make sure that they are done.

We can start now with a fight for workers' control, for unity of the employed and unemployed, for work-sharing without loss of pay, and for training and re-training at trade union rates of pay.



Healthworkers on the march

Our task: transforming the labour movement

Our job is to inspire all the sections of the movement with the urgency of preparing for a head on clash with the Tories, and to equip them with the necessary democratic structure and flexibility to mobilise and educate millions of workers.

In the unions we have to fight for their independence from the capitalist state; for regular elections (for terms not exceeding two years) and of right of recall over union officials; against postal ballots, for direct participatory democracy; for a complete programme of democratic reform.

In each direct trade union struggle, we should strive to be in the forefront of supporting, extending and mapping a way forward for the struggle.

Important also is the women's movement. We fight to remould the labour movement to be habitable for women and to fight for their needs. On that basis a mass working class based women's movement can be built, and a socialist alliance created between the labour movement and the women's movement.

Some on the left, like Militant, hold that positive discrimination and autonomous organisation for women are divisive. It would be better, they argue to focus on the issues that concern

working class women and men equally, and on that basis to develop a united class movement.

That would be more tidy perhaps. But tidy or not, it is not possible just to shunt women's liberation on as another carriage behind the locomotive of the fight for socialism.

Women are fighting for their liberation now. Is it divisive? It certainly shakes up the traditional 'unity of the labour movement' wherein men may lead, speak and decide while women mostly stay at home, get a supporting role occasionally, and are cursed for 'backwardness' when they fail to rally automatically and being 'diversionary' when they protest at the sexism which oppresses them through language and even through physical harassment. But it also creates the basis for a new, more meaningful, unity of the labour movement, one re-defined by the oppressed female majority of the working class in line with their needs and their active participation.

Others on the left, like the SWP, argue against work in the Labour Party. Sagely philosophising that 'you can't change the Labour Party', they justify abstention from the struggle to change the Labour Party which is going on right now. Even if this struggle is destined to end with the left being purged, it is still a vital part of the process whereby the left must organise itself, educate itself, and

sort itself out. The SWP's abstention leaves it with a diet of straight militant trade unionism on the one hand, and general socialist propaganda on the other.

The other side of that coin is the comrades who, repelled by the sectarianism of many left groupings, confine themselves to local work (often very energetic work) in their Labour Party or trade union, or in some particular campaign. Doing so, they feel they are free from the sometimes incomprehensible disputations of the left groups and can see their work directly bearing fruit in the real labour movement.

Yet their perspective implicitly assumes that some benevolent providence will see to it that on the crucial day all this individual activity meshes together organisationally and finds a clear common programme politically. All historical experience suggests that this faith is misplaced. Time and again big broad left movements have been disastrously misled or rapidly dispersed in a crisis for lack of a coherent, organised, politically clear hard core which could play a leadership role.

There is, no doubt a percentage of folly in the disputations of the left groups; but then the task is to dispute for wisdom against that folly. Clear, adequate socialist ideas cannot be improvised. They have to be worked at.

Is Militant's programme socialist?

We need a socialist answer to the Policy Review. We need to win the labour movement to socialist ideas so that the movement can offer a real alternative to the Tories.

The Militant tendency is the best-known of the groups claiming to do that work of organising for socialism. So, does Militant have the answers?

Let's judge by experience. More than any other would-be Marxist tendency, Militant has had the chance to put their theories into practice — when they had a leading role in Liverpool City Council, in 1983-6.

It was a bad experience. It was not just that Liverpool lost. Victory does not follow automatically from correct politics, and even the most blameless leadership can be defeated in a struggle. And anyone can make mistakes.

There were far deeper problems in Liverpool. In 1984, Liverpool council did mobilise a mass workers' movement — but then, at the height of the miners' strike, they accepted a compromise agreement with the Tories — a deal which, according to Derek Hatton's autobiography, was specifically designed to break any potential Liverpool-NUM united front! Militant then declared this a 95% victory.

By then, they were already at loggerheads with the city's Black Caucus over the appointment of Samson Bond, a Militant supporter, as Race Relations Officer. They argued that the opposition from the Black Caucus was based on the vested interests of the local 'race relations industry'.

Even if this were so, it was ridiculous to pick that moment — when the greatest possible unity was needed against the Tories — to make a stand on that issue. Again, Hatton's autobiography makes it clear that the appointment of Bond was a political decision taken by Militant.

It revealed a *bureaucratic* streak that runs very deep in Militant's politics — something that will be familiar to anyone who has ever visited Labour Party Young Socialists conference as an oppositionist. Old techniques of boss politics were given a new, Marxist gloss. Opponents of Militant found themselves very summarily dealt with.

Militant's whole strategy for socialism is, indeed, highly bureaucratic. They call for a 'socialist Labour government', as if just voting Labour and appealing for socialism could create such a thing, without the labour movement being transformed. This government will nationalise the top 200 monopolies, with control on the basis of one-third representation from the government, one-third from the TUC, and one-third from the unions in each enterprise.

On this basis, Militant argues, the powers-that-be could be defeated. Popular, working-class support for the government would ensure its success and

By Gerry Bates

a peaceful transformation of society.

Militant used to carry a weekly back page 'What We Stand For' column which argued for nationalisations to be "carried through an Enabling Act in Parliament".

This programme is quite explicitly for socialism *from above*, to be achieved by a radical Labour government. It equates socialism with nationalisation. It is essentially a more radical version of the traditional Labour Party approach. Its fundamental flaw is that it looks at everything from the wrong end.

For socialism to be possible, a powerful movement of workers must be created which takes control over every aspect of life. Such a movement has to



Flash Harry Hatton

be built *from below*. Its focus must be rank-and-file action. Socialism will be achieved when the working class *takes over* the workplaces, the housing estates, and is able democratically to run society.

It will not do that through a Westminster-type Parliament — an assembly elected once every five years, insulated from day-to-day democratic control, and geared into a big, bureaucratic, unelected state machine. A more radical, grass-roots democracy will be needed, which is rooted more firmly in local communities and workplaces, and which replaces the old bureaucratic and military structures.

A socialist strategy therefore has to be based above all on *working-class struggle* in the workplaces and communities.

Of course, Parliament is very important. We need socialist MPs. Some of the far left, like the Socialist Workers' Party, downgrade the importance of Parliament in the perceptions and concerns of working-class people.

But socialist MPs have to be part of a strategy based *outside* Parliament, and relying on the strength of rank and file workers.

Militant are not unaware of the centrality of extra-Parliamentary struggles.

Yet the weight they give to such notions as an 'Enabling Act' can only undermine any sense of their priority.

Militant do criticise the model of the USSR and other states where a nationalised economy exists under a police state. But they still, somehow, consider that sort of system to be a great step forward. Indeed, they see it as the only possible next step forward in most of the Third World. They supported the USSR's military occupation of Afghanistan on the grounds of the tremendous social progress they thought it would produce.

Militant see nationalisation as the core of socialism *regardless of who does the nationalising*. And their scheme of the 'Enabling Act' raises a further question.

The idea that, if an Enabling Act were passed, the British ruling class would keel over and do nothing to defend its interests, is utterly absurd. The ruling class will do whatever they can to defend their interests, including violence on a huge scale.

Socialists must warn the workers' movement about this, and argue for workers to be prepared to defend themselves. Yet Militant argues that a *peaceful* transition to socialism is possible — one in which the ruling class does not resist, or not much.

With foolish optimism, they insist that the working class is so strong that the capitalists will not even dare to put up a fight! With equal blandness, Militant says that 'the hammer blows of events' will radicalise workers, always driving them to the left. So long as Militant is there, with its carefully-preserved 'Marxist programme', the workers are bound to be pushed towards it.

This bland 'compulsory optimism' is no better than an upside-down version of the habitual defeatism of journals like *Marxism Today*. And it leads to bureaucratic passivity. 'The programme' is always the music of the future. Now there might be too many risks, and since the future will always be better than the present, the risks are not considered worth taking.

This mentality affected the struggle in Liverpool. Socialist Organiser commented in September 1985: "Victory is inevitable in the long term; so why take risks now? If the situation is favourable now, it will certainly be more favourable in the future. And it makes no sense to risk positions, prestige and propaganda platforms for the sake of 'ephemeral' struggle."

"So Militant have tried to maintain a delicate balance: on the one hand giving Liverpool a profile as a fighting, socialist council; on the other trying to make sure they keep the council in office and themselves in the leadership of the council."

That delicate balancing act finally led to a fiasco. Militant's bureaucratic socialism from above is no alternative, in the long run, to Kinnockite new realism.

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The party rank and file must make their voice heard

Why we need a conference of Constituency Labour Parties

“Labour Listens,” says Neil Kinnock. But Neil Kinnock clearly listens only to the opinion polls and the Tory press:

Labour activists want a leadership that listens to the labour movement. That’s why Wallasey Constituency Labour Party is calling a conference of Constituency Labour Parties in the run-up to this year’s Blackpool Conference.

The initiative was announced at the Chesterfield Socialist Conference at a meeting with representation from 25 CLPs.

Even Kinnock loyalists have been badly jolted by his attack on unilateralism.

And at this year’s conference the NEC will propose a constitutional change requiring future leadership challengers to first get the support of 20% of Labour MPs, instead of the

present 5%. This means giving the Parliamentary Labour Party an effective veto over Party members’ rights to choose the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Party.

The NEC is also moving to increase the already considerable — and increasingly regularly used — powers of the NEC and Party leadership to impose candidates on local parties.

The leadership challenge of Tony Benn and Eric Heffer has blown the whistle on all this, and given the left the signal to reorganise.

Party members far too often still feel isolated in the face of Kinnock and Hattersley’s relentless move to the right. That’s why we need the conference called by Wallasey.

It is especially important now that the Labour leaders have published the Policy Review documents, with only a vague promise that they will be

open to some form of amendment.

Speaking to *Socialist Organiser*, Wallasey CLP secretary Richard Aplin explained that he is booking a venue for the conference in the North West sometime in September. A letter will soon be sent out to CLPs asking for support, sponsorship and help in organising the conference.

“There could not be a more important time for CLPs to get together. We need the strongest possible grassroots campaign to defend unilateralism, Clause 4 and party democracy. If we organise now then I am sure we can mount a successful defence.

“I would urge all CLPs to attend the conference we are helping to organise in September. If you want more information, contact me at 108 Seaview Road, Wallasey, Merseyside.”