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Japan: capitalist success turns sour

By Martin Thomas

The Japanese stock market is "in free fall", or "like a bottomless swamp", according to leading Japanese financiers.

From 39,000 in early 1990, the Nikkei index of share

prices has fallen towards 16,000.

It could go much lower. Since shares are only bits of paper entitling the holder to a portion of the company's profits ("dividends"), share prices should bear some proportion to dividend pay-outs.

In the mid-'80s, Japanese share prices soared out of all relation to dividend payments. The boom fed on itself: people would pay

"Now the bubble is bursting and Japanese capitalism is in trouble on other fronts too."

"over the odds" for shares because they thought share prices would go up, and share prices would go up because people paid "over the odds".

Now the bubble is bursting. And Japanese capitalism is in trouble on other fronts, too.

Property prices, which rose to such heights that a caretaker in central Tokyo could become a millionaire by selling the tiny flat that came with his job, have fallen by about 40%.

Japanese banks have been hit by the property slump and the stock market crash: most

of them are now technically bankrupt by international standards.

Industrial production has been falling sharply, and is now 4.2% below its level of a year ago.

The most immediate knock-on effect of Japan's slump for other major capitalist countries is the drying-up of the flow of Japanese investment cash into countries like the US and

Britain. In 1991, for the first time in a long while, Japan showed a net inflow of capital.

The Tories are right that the recession is international. But that recession — which, if Japan's difficulties worsen, could develop into a longer and deeper slump — is caused by the inbuilt imbalance and irrationality of the capitalist system which the Tories champion.

Hardline right-winger goes more "left" than Kinnock would dare Beregovoy tries to rebuild support

France's new Socialist Party prime minister, Pierre Berégovoy, has taken the same course as Australia's Paul Keating.

Beregovoy, like Keating, is the former finance minister, a long-standing labour right-winger, a champion of "social-democratic Thatcherism". But, with hard-line free-market policies bringing only discredit for the SP government in France and the Labor government in Australia, Berégovoy and Keating have switched to more interventionist policies.

Beregovoy has promised

to find jobs, training, "or a suitable form of community service" for 900,000 unemployed by the end of October. He has made another concession to the SP's fast-dwindling base by suspending French nuclear weapon tests.

Keating's turn has markedly revived the Australian Labor Party's popularity. It remains to be seen if Berégovoy can do the same for the French SP.

As yet there are no signs that any of the British Labour Party's "soft left" leaders will even dare to think of something as bold...

Strong left challenge in Blackpool

Left Unity is looking to repeat the success it had at the recent National Union of Students (NUS) Women's Conference at the NUS National Conference this week (13-16 April).

The conference, being held in Blackpool, will be electing a new National Executive Committee (NEC) and addressing a number of important issues.

Janine Booth heads a strong Left Unity slate for the NEC elections in a challenge to the ruling Labour Students (NOLS) clique.

Left Unity and AWL supporters will be pressing for NUS to support making solidarity with all forces genuinely fighting the state in South Africa. NOLS are focusing on giving "total support" to the ANC, ignoring the increasingly bad role

they are playing in strikes in South Africa.

The growth of the far right in Europe and in Britain is the background for a debate on racism and fascism. Left Unity has a unique position which calls for a united, democratic, labour movement-based fight against the racists.

Only Left Unity's policy addresses the growth of anti-semitism, supports 'no-platform' and gives adequate emphasis to self-organisation and self-defence of black communities.

Abortion rights and employment and training are the other two main debates. An important issue will be the recent extraordinary NUS conference at which NOLS cheated to win abolition of NUS Winter Conference. Left Unity will be campaigning to defend NUS democracy and calling the Kinnockites to order.



Anti-fascist protest in Rochdale

Police arrest one of 300 anti-Nazi protesters outside a British National Party election meeting in a Rochdale pub. The BNP members were escorted out of a back entrance by police. The BNP's can-

didate in Rochdale got 620 votes, but candidates in East London gained more alarming scores: 1310 in Bethnal Green, and 1107 in Bow and Poplar. Photo: Paul Herrmann, Profile.

Italy's 'party-ocracy' in trouble

By Colin Foster

Italy's 44 year old "party-ocracy" is in trouble following the General Election on 5 April.

The Christian Democratic party (DC), which has ruled Italy since 1948 with various coalitions, was reduced to 206 seats in the 630-seat parliament, declining from 34% to 30% of the vote.

The Socialist Party, which in recent years has been the DC's main coalition partner, also lost ground, and the renamed Communist Party, now PDS, slumped from 27% to 16% of the vote.

The big gainer was the Lombard League, a regionalist movement based in northern Italy, which got 9% of the vote. Following the election, the League has called for mass refusal to pay taxes.

Its slogans included "an end to the Roman robbers", and "Closer to Europe than to Rome". It claims that the central government in Rome is corrupt and wasteful, bleeding the industrial North in order to siphon money into crime-riddled public projects in the underdeveloped South.

For 40-odd years the Italian state machine has been run as a giant machine of patronage. The

plum jobs in the state sector are parcelled out to different parties — mainly to Christian Democratic factions and to the Socialist Party — and extra jobs are created to buy off and secure those parties' bases.

"For 40-odd years the Italian state machine has been run as a giant machine of patronage."

The Lombard League mobilises anger against this corruption — but also against state-sector workers generally (the

League says 90,000 out of 200,000 workers on the Italian railways should be sacked) and against the people of the South. As with Flemish regionalism in Belgium, it has vicious right-wing overtones.

Mario Segni, a reform-minded Christian Democrat leader, has proposed a transitional government with an emergency programme of four points:

- replacing the proportional-representation electoral system by first-past-the-post, in order to get stable governments;
- dismantling "party-ocracy" in the state sector;
- measures against corruption;
- measures against the Mafia.

Liverpool purge brings council poll chaos

By Dale Street

Nominations closed on Monday 6 April for the 34 Liverpool City Council seats being contested in the May elections.

In two of the wards two names have been nominated as official Labour candidates, for reasons yet to be explained.

There are also a further 22 "Labour" candidates, "Independent Labour", and so on.

The right wing has gained control of the council Labour Group by expelling about a third of its members. Expelled councillors are standing as various sorts of independent "Labour" can-

didates. The "Broad Left" is also standing a number of other independent candidates.

The Broad Left is itself deeply divided, mainly between the *Militant* and *non-Militant* factions. Last year the *non-Militant* faction formed the "Liverpool Independent Labour Party" to underline the split.

Fascists gain in Germany

The fascistic "Republican Party" won 11% of the vote in the regional elections in Baden-Wurttemberg, west Germany, on 5 April.

The even more brashly racist Deutsche Volksunion won 6.3% in Schleswig-Holstein, with the slogan "Germany should stay German".

Support for the racists reportedly comes mostly from male self-employed and young working-class people in the big cities.

It has been boosted by the strains, stresses, and disappointments of German reunification. West Germans have faced higher taxes and a big influx of migrants from East Germany and Eastern Europe.

In a recent opinion poll, nearly two-thirds of Germans said that the influx of refugees was the biggest problem facing the country. Germany has relatively liberal provisions for asylum written into its constitution — every asylum-seeker must be allowed into the country and have their case considered — and

has had larger numbers of refugees coming in over recent years. The latest influx is from Yugoslavia.

The Christian-Democratic government wants to change the constitution. The opposition Social Democrats are so far refusing to cooperate on that; but instead of offering answers to the social and economic problems on which the fascists feed, they are proposing a Grand Coalition with the Christian Democrats, which they call a "national commonsense pact".



The media-oriented "image"-building was no substitute for political campaigning and probably only made Labour appear tacky and untrustworthy. Photo: John Harris

Why Labour lost

The General Election of 9 April could have marked the turn of the tide for the labour movement.

The Tories could have been defeated. The dead weight of a long decade of major working-class setbacks could have been sloughed off.

That chance has gone. Labour lost the election. The Tories have a majority of 21 seats, for 43% of the vote. They look secure for five years.

This Tory victory is therefore — it must be said plainly — a very grave defeat for the working class and for the labour movement. We will pay a heavy price. The recovery of labour movement self-

confidence and combativity will be slower, more drawn-out, and more fraught with difficulties.

Why did Labour lose? Why did the Tories win? The short answer to that question comes in two parts.

Neil Kinnock and his friends did not seriously campaign against the Tories over the last five years, as an opposition that meant business would have done, seizing on issues like the poll tax. And Neil Kinnock's Labour Party appeared before the electorate as an untried and untrustworthy gang of Tory understudies, concerned only to win votes at any price.

The voters chose to stay with the Tories they knew rather than take a risk with the "me-too" pale-pink pseudo-Tories who staff Labour's front benches.

The nasty personal attacks on Kinnock were effective because Kinnock does appear in political life with the brand of the turncoat and the traitor on his forehead. He is a man who has, for political advantage, trimmed and changed and abandoned all the political opinions he formed when he was honestly thinking about political issues, and not about how best to gather votes.

Neither Kinnock nor the Labour Party could have had a convincing reply to the jeer that Kinnock was not to be trusted. Ironically, the very alacrity with which Kinnock embraced and adopted Tory and Liberal policy, abandoning his own previous views, destroyed his credibility as a man to be trusted with any policies at all!

When Labour's leaders rushed to endorse calls for the Government to use public money to compensate the speculators who had got their fingers burned at Lloyds of London, a lot of people who agreed with the Tory Government's final

decision not to compensate must have been convinced that this Labour front bench of belly-crawling ex-radicals was hysterical and unbalanced, not only by socialist standards, but by any standards of proper political behaviour.

When the Kinnock front-bench gang of former leftists, having shed their own souls, slithered around Westminster, the spectacle was revolting, and not only to socialists.

When Kinnock made his speeches

"Neil Kinnock and his friends did not seriously campaign against the Tories over the last five years, as an opposition which meant business would have done."

about "dying for his country", or about "serving democracy", or about how he "loved" Britain as much as Glynis, they were embarrassing not because he was insincere — probably he was being completely sincere — but because he was plainly speaking under compulsion and duress, saying what the tabloids wanted him to say (and much good it did him with them!)

Kinnock and his team might have got away with it if they could at the same time have offered alternatives to the Tories' policies, and if they had put up a fight on issues where everyone knew the Tories were wrong. But Labour's central policies have been only marginally different from those of the Tories, and they have been a woefully wet and wimpish Opposition. The con-

sequence is that they appeared to the electorate as an especially tacky gang of politicians on the make, willing to say and do almost anything to win office.

The Thatcher era opened with an unemployed Liverpoolian, Alan Bleasdale's fictional Yosser Hughes, capturing the imagination and sympathy of Britain with his desperate plea: "Gi's a job". The Kinnock era closed with Labour's leaders winning only the disdain and contempt of large numbers of Labour's natural supporters with the cry, "Gi's a vote".

Socialist Organiser said all this throughout the campaign and over the long pre-election campaign.

We warned that Kinnock's policy of sitting tight and hoping that the Tories would lose the election, tipping the ripe apples and plums of office into the arms of the waiting Labour Party, was irresponsible. It meant passive speculation rather than a struggle to win and to create the majorities necessary for victory.

When John Major took over from Thatcher 18 months ago, he said that he could win the election despite everything because the Tory Party was "one of the greatest fighting machines in Western Europe". That was and is true. And Labour responded to that machine by mimicking the noises its engines made, as if that could give them its power; and they stood gawping as it bore down on them, with the confidence of idiots that Major's tank was certain to run out of fuel. They got everything ridiculously wrong.

This is the short, immediate answer to the question, why did Labour lose. But the labour movement which is now trying to orient itself after the fourth successive Tory victory needs to look at the more basic explanations also. Those

explanations lie not only in the nature of the Kinnock-led Labour Party, and in its inept performance against Major, but in the political system under which we live.

Consider what really happened in this election. The labour movement which found itself compelled to go into battle under the leadership of the Kinnock gang did not fight just a political party: it fought the dominant forces in our bourgeois society. With odd exceptions like the *Financial Times* — whose readers will not have followed its advice to vote Labour! — the entire Establishment gathered around the Tory party.

The *Financial Times* itself, doing an opinion poll of top bosses, found that 92 per cent of them backed the Tories, with 7% Liberal and just 1% Labour.

The Establishment's control over our lives does not depend on elections. The decisions which shape

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

Karl Marx
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The end of Kinnock's road

Neil Kinnock will, it seems, resign as Labour Party leader. Good!

He has been leader for nine years, during which the Labour Party has been turned into a depoliticised one-faction organisation — a sort of right-wing equivalent of the SWP or Militant, much bigger, linked to the unions, able to win millions of votes, but still for all that a party increasingly organised as a narrow, intolerant, social-democratic sect and run on quasi-Stalinist lines (often by "ex-Stalinists").

Kinnock was a socialist turncoat who tried and failed to turn himself into a right-wing Labour statesman. It was not in their own interest for the bourgeoisie and their press to let him succeed.

They would have needed Kinnock's services as prime minister if a mass working class movement had welled up to overwhelm the Tories. Because he was successful in dampening such movements — against the poll tax for example — Kinnock lessened his own possible value to the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie and their press wanted Kinnock's scalp, not his stewardship at No.10.

But this obvious traitor to socialism is also a tragic figure. In his own way he refracts the great tragedy of British Labour in the 1980s.

We began that decade with not unreasonable hopes that we could reconstruct and re-fashion the British labour movement as a fighting socialist force able to defeat not only the Tories but also everything they stood for. We are now, as Kinnock goes, ruefully assessing the damage after the Tories' fourth election victory.

Kinnock played his part in inflicting that damage on the movement he tried to serve. He was, nevertheless, one of those who set out after June 1979, when the Tories defeated the Callaghan government, to ensure that from now on it would be a socialist labour movement that confronted the Tories.

He broke with the serious left when Tony Benn stood for deputy leader in 1981, and he did it in the name of a more "constructive" left-wing approach. The "cuddly" left could hold the balance, linking both the right wing and the hard left in a common movement: that is what Kinnock and his friends said. Some of them probably meant it.

In fact the fate of the Labour left, hard and soft, and of the Labour Party in the '80s, was largely shaped before Kinnock became Party leader in 1983. In 1980 and afterwards, the labour movement had the choice of either mobilising to stop Thatcher — before the slump and unemployment bit deep, before Tory anti-union laws hamstrung militancy — or of accepting being cut down drastically.

Neither the trade union leaders nor the Labour Party leaders — long-time left-winger Michael Foot and his associates — were willing to use direct action, strikes, and mass mobilisation

"Kinnock was a socialist turncoat who tried and failed to turn himself into a right-wing Labour statesman. He did not even get the Parliamentary majority for which he gutted himself."

against a parliamentary majority: they had been scared out of their wits in the mid-'70s by talk of a military coup among sections of the army (the then Chief of Staff, Lord Carver, later admitted that "fairly senior officers" had talked of a coup).

That cravenness shaped the Labour Party. The soft left moved steadily to the right. Sections of the hard left took "power" in local government and did exactly what Foot had done: they bottled it.

As the Tories went through the country in the early '80s like the Vandals of old, pressure built up in the Labour Party and unions for an election victory on any terms: the need to make the Labour Party socialist and fit to govern on behalf of the labour movement was pushed aside.

Soon those who referred to it were denounced for indifference to kicking the Tories out. By the time Kinnock took over, after the Tory victory in 1983, the pressure to shed or modify unpopular policies was immense. After the Tories won again in 1987, Kinnock and his erstwhile soft-left friends set out to turn themselves into so many David Owens.

As a socialist Kinnock was always a crude demagogue, with nothing thought out and with an underlying curiously Militant-like streak of brutal philistinism. He brought the same traits to the work of shedding his and the Labour Party's "socialism".

There could be no doubt of his will to do his dirty work, but he always lacked conviction as a bourgeois politician. At the end, as he made his little declarations about his "patriotism" and his love of British democracy — with one eye all the time on the press and the TV cameras — he sounded remarkably like a schoolboy reciting verses under the stern gaze of a sceptical and malignant schoolmaster. He looked like someone who could not quite believe in himself, someone who maybe heard a voice inside his head saying "what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world yet loses his soul". As it happens, Kinnock did not even get the Parliamentary majority in the search for which he gutted himself.

Kinnock is going. But the entire Labour leadership is responsible for what has happened. They nurtured and sustained Kinnock. They will continue on Kinnock's road, if we let them.

In 1983 almost the whole Labour Party, demoralised by election defeat, hailed the election of the Kinnock-Hattersley "dream ticket" to the leadership. Socialist Organiser made itself very unpopular, even on the Labour left, with our warning: "The election of Kinnock and Hattersley means a centre/right coalition now rules the Labour Party. Its clear purpose is to ditch policies — particularly unilateralism and public ownership — and to obtain maximum freedom of manoeuvre for the leadership..."

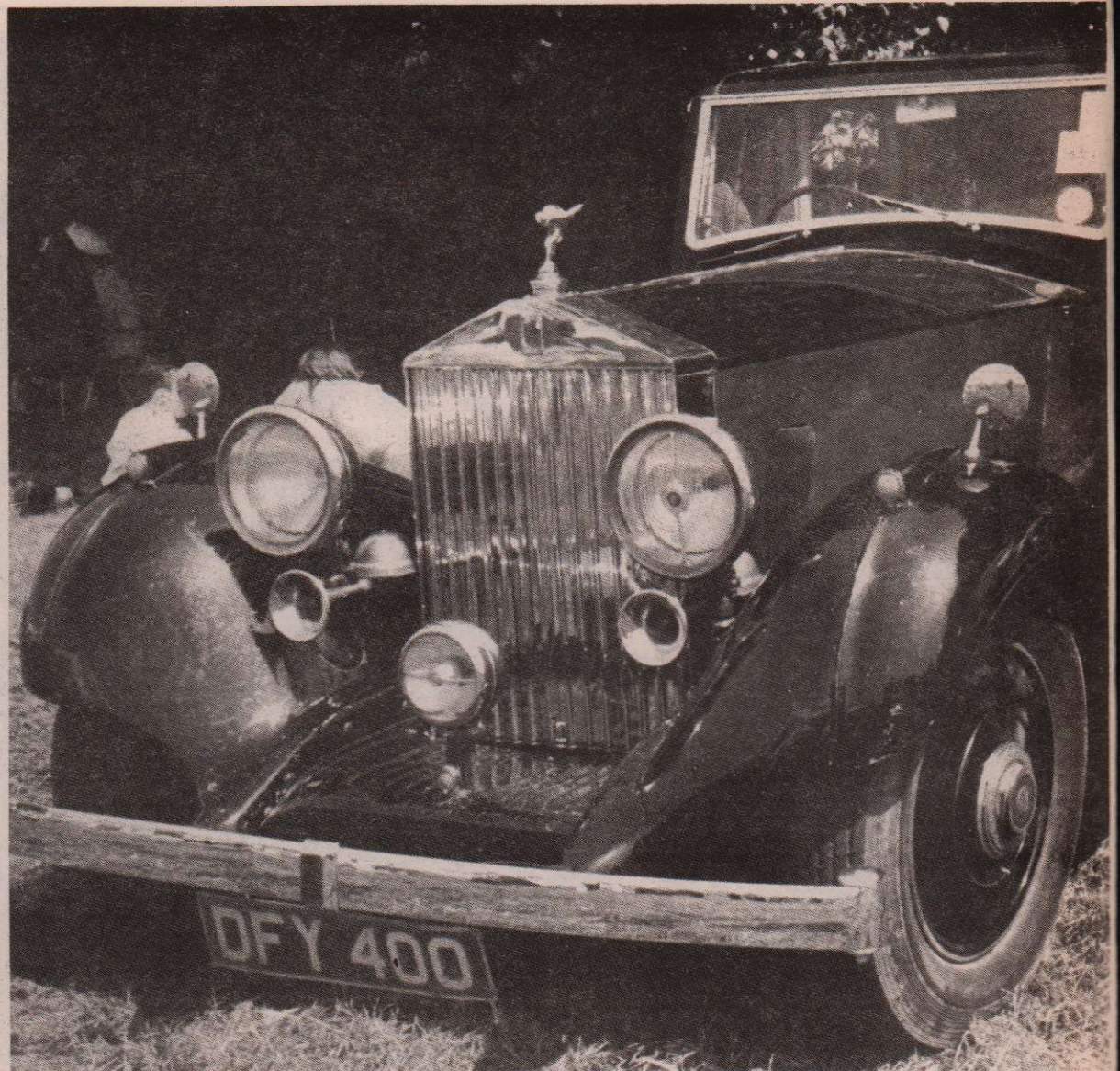


Photo: John Harris

"The Tory Party is conscious of itself."

From page 3

British society are only very rarely submitted to the electorate for a decision, and then only obliquely and indirectly.

The key decisions are in the hands of the top capitalists, ensconced in a vast network of social connections, channels of influence, and structures of authority. The Establishment has a considerable measure of control over what people do in elections. And anyway, as some candid bourgeois commentators put it during the election campaign, elections are to do with selecting the people who will make the decisions — in consultation with the Establishment.

For example, the British electorate never decided to scale down and cripple the Health Service, and in a straight referendum would, on all indications, vote against what the Tories are doing.

All this power, the wealth of the bourgeoisie and its ability to "create facts" and shape opinions, was brought into the balance on the side of the Tory Party.

The gross unfairness of the gruesomely biased tabloids is only one of the visible pustules on the face of this supposedly democratic system.

We live under capitalism, and the Tory Party, the party of the capitalists, is this system's "natural party of government". The Tory Party is rampant capitalism conscious of itself and — after Thatcher — self-righteously asserting capitalism's drives and imperatives.

Against this, what is the labour movement and its political party? The contrast with the bourgeoisie and its political party tells us a great deal.

While the bourgeoisie run society, and shapes opinion not only by ideas but by the weight of the way they run it and of the institutions through which they run it, the working-class movement is the movement of those on whose economic exploitation everything

"The power and wealth of the bourgeoisie was brought into the balance on the side of the Tory Party."

else is erected.

The working class does not run society day-by-day, industry-by-industry, firm-by-firm. It has neither the great institutions which shape opinion, nor the wealth and power which exert an automatic influence on the vast middle layers of society.

It mobilises, it struggles; but it is normally, on every level, at a serious disadvantage.

In political struggles such as this election was, the advantages are all with the capitalist Establishment. In trade union struggles, unemployment depresses the labour movement and gives the capitalist massive advantages; and the Tories have used their political power to legally hamstring the unions.

On the level of ideas, the naturally dominant ideas are those of the ruling class and the systems they run and personify. Most people do

not easily (or at all) form an overall picture of our society, of how it works and how it came into being. It is very difficult to imagine a different society — socialism — and more difficult still to believe in it; and to dedicate yourself to the fight to win a different system, as socialists do, you have to travel mentally quite a long way from the conventional mentality of the capitalist world in which you live.

What is, is. It is difficult, for people who have known nothing else but Thatcherite Britain, to conceive of even a radically modified version of this system, like the capitalism with a more "caring" face which the labour movement gained during and after Second World War and which is now a receding memory for many, and for a whole generation — the tens of thousands of young people on the streets, for example — something they have never known.

Powerful labour movements like ours have been shaped by combining battles in three arenas: for trade-union advantages, and the elementary working-class solidarity which trade-unionism breeds; for parliamentary power to win laws to our advantage; for the idea of a better world, different from the capitalist one, different from the prevailing capitalist ideas of what the world can be like.

Where Marxists, in the minority, advocated that the labour movement should be reconstructed around a drive to wipe out capitalism, the majority of the labour movement, while it talked about winning socialism "one day", fought in its best period only for radical reforms. It fought to modify, civilise, and humanise the capitalist system. It fought for

Socialist ORGANISER

NOT OUR DREAM

By Reg Race

INSIDE Labour Party Conference Free Cwical! Health pay swindle



rampant capitalism What of labour?"

"When it fights, the labour movement can win. It can, and did, win enough people around the core of the labour movement to gain electoral majorities. It did that in 1945."

legislation against extreme exploitation and in favour of working-class organisation, and for welfare provision, which superimposed elements of "the political economy of the working class" (the expression is Karl Marx's) on the still-dominant political economy of the bourgeoisie.

When it fights, the labour movement can win. It can, and did, win enough people around the core of the labour movement to gain overall electoral majorities. It did that in 1945, despite the tremendous advantage that Churchill's war leadership gave the Tories, and despite a vicious and dirty Tory campaign (they alleged that Labour would set up an authoritarian state "with its own Gestapo", and so on).

The Labour leaders of that time were a long way from SO's idea of socialism, but they were honest reformists. They did not go into that election pleading with the elec-

torate for the chance to show that they could make a better job of carrying through Tory policies than Churchill could, nor rely on the tacky arts of the Public Relations consultants or on political beauty-contest razzmatazz to sell the same policies as the Tories under a different label and with pink packaging instead of blue.

When it fights — when it represents something distinctive — the labour movement can win. Kinnock did not fight. He shadow-boxed. The US-style rally before a big hand-picked audience in Sheffield was Kinnock's best idea of fighting — it was as if, like superstitious savages, Kinnock and his advisers believed they could conjure up a triumph by mimicking it in advance.

Kinnock did not represent anything politically distinctive. Even Labour's pledges on the Health Service were tepid and conditional, "as resources allow".

In these circumstances, all the natural advantages of the Establishment's party, the natural party of government, won the election for the Tories. Even the slump worked for them: because Labour had no distinctive policy to win people to, and because Kinnock was palpably untrustworthy — if he could not be trusted to stick to his own chosen beliefs, how could he be trusted with Margaret Thatcher's or John Major's beliefs — many unhappy people thought it safer to stick with the natural party of capitalism.

This is the basic, underlying reason why Labour lost the election. Kinnock's craven, passive, Tory-mimicking politics

enhanced and strengthened every one of the natural advantages the Tories always have.

If a Labour victory would have been the beginning of the turning of the Tory tide that has flowed for 13 years, favouring and encouraging working-class action, is this fourth Tory victory likely to lead to the opposite?

Probably not. The Tory press brouhaha that the election signifies the death of socialism is no more than a continuation of the long-term bourgeois campaign to achieve just that, the death of socialism: it is an attempt to improve on their election victory by further pulverising the Labour Party: it is a form of pressure on the Labour Party to go further to the right and finally to cut its links with the trade unions.

Most of the arguments in the press are rhetorical and spurious. For example, the jeering rhetorical question they throw at Labour: if you can not win in a slump, when can you ever win?

In the given circumstances, the slump triggered an additional need for safety and caution in those not wiped out by it. Something similar happened in the 1935 election (and in 1931, though that was complicated by the defection of the Labour leader Ramsey MacDonald to the Tories).

Labour is in a much improved position in Parliament. The official Labour Party argument that the Party is well-placed to win in the next election is — other things being equal — not entirely spurious.

And the Tory victory is a victory for a Toryism that has felt compelled to moderate its Thatcherism in order to survive electorally. It is a

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"When the Financial Times endorses you, and you can't get your own people out to vote, something is wrong"

By Tony Benn MP

I think what the Labour Party will want to do now is have a discussion about the future.

The Policy Review took us back to 1979. That was what it was all about. We were in favour of nuclear weapons, like Callaghan; in favour of a European currency system, like Callaghan.

In the five years ahead we will want a serious discussion.

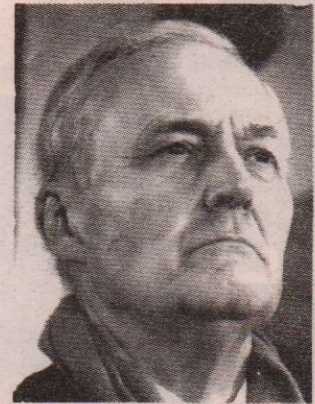
The war in Ireland is a civil war within Britain, and it has never been discussed in those terms.

Do we really want a centralised capitalist Europe, where everything is run by the Bundesbank?

Do we really want to live in an American Empire, under the name of the 'New World Order'?

We need a much more common ownership, and a more democratic society. These are the issues which we will want to discuss.

I do not think there is a desire



for recrimination. There is a desire for discussion.

Socialism will come back on to the agenda in a big way. Capitalism is in a deep crisis, in Britain, in France, in Germany, in America, and in Japan.

The Party has to play a much bigger role in deciding policy. During the election campaign, the connection between what was being said in the TV studios and what was being said on the streets was very limited.

When the *Financial Times* endorses you, and you can't get your own people out to vote, then something is seriously wrong.

Good news from West Belfast

One piece of good news from the election is the defeat of Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, in West Belfast, and the election of Joe Hendron, another nationalist.

If you want to know why, consider the scene at the count.

West Belfast includes both the Catholic and the Protestant heartlands — the Catholic Falls and the Protestant Shankill. They are separated by only a few streets — and by a great wall erected by the British authorities to prevent sectarian fighting.

Adams seems to have lost because some Protestants voted "tactically" for Hendron to put Adams out.

As the results were announced, Adams's supporters set up a great chant directed at Hendron and his friends: "UDA! UVF!" That is, it was the votes of such people which gave Hendron the seat. That is, further and inescapably, that all Protestants are UVF or UDA.

In response, Hendron, a constitutional nationalist and a long-time member of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, denounced all the paramilitary organisations, Catholic as well as Protestant, reeling off a long string of initials — IRA, UDA, INLA, UVF, IPLO.

Adams then jeered that Hendron had the seat, but Sinn Fein had the "nationalist" vote, that is, the Catholic vote, as if Protestant votes must count for less.

It was a revolting spectacle of crude Catholic sectarianism, which showed up the blatant communalism under Sinn Fein's Republican mask.

It recalls an incident six years ago, after the London-Dublin agreement was signed giving Dublin a political say in the running of Northern Ireland. The SDLP and its leader John Hume were among the behind-the-scenes architects of the agreement; Sinn Fein, like the Protestant politicians, was a bitter opponent of it.

In the face of the big Protestant protest movement that followed, Sinn Fein proposed — and the SDLP gleefully refused — a common electoral front to the SDLP! Given that Sinn Fein and the SDLP were in opposite camps on the issue of the day, the common front could only be on the basis of Catholic-sectarian head-counting.

Sinn Fein says it is a Republican movement, based on the ideas of Wolfe Tone, whose central idea was the unity and equality of all the people of Ireland, Protestant and Catholic alike. The SDLP is a bourgeois party; it is nevertheless a lot nearer to the unity-building politics of real Irish Republicanism than are Adams and his gang of armed Catholic communalists.



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GRAFFITI

The "natural Conservative voter" goes Liberal – or NF

GRAFFITI

According to Kenneth Baker, proportional representation would only help the fascists.

David Morris, the Conservative ex-MP for Birmingham Yardley, seems to have a different view on the subject.

Early on Friday morning the Right Hon member found his 2,500 majority converted into a Labour majority of 162.

Who was to blame? Morris left the local press in no doubt where he was pointing his finger – at the National Front, who scraped together 192 votes.

All natural Conservative voters, whined the ex-MP.



John Taylor

Someone else who has discovered a lot about "natural Conservative voters" is John Taylor, the black Tory candidate for Cheltenham.

But the Liberal Democrats were laughing all the way to the polling stations.

The Liberals already have a record of racism in Tower Hamlets, and their candidate in Cheltenham, Nigel Jones, described himself as "the local man". No-one was in very much doubt what he meant.

At least David Alton (who was not allowed on the TV by Liberal Central Office) will have some company on the pariah section of the backbenches.

McDonald's have been a little softer on the British establishment. Last week their outlets were giving away a free copy of the Daily Mail with every McBreakfast.

Research suggests that 7% of "don't knows" who read the Mail are persuaded to vote Conservative. Is this worth a seat in the Lords for Ronald McDonald?

The Devil or the deep blue sea – which would you

choose?

The Devil is played by the SWP, doing a very passable impression of anarchism. Publicity for their "Marxism '92" features a picture of Big Ben crumbling, or rather exploding.

Have the SWP planted a bomb there? Has their "Labour or Tories – it makes no difference" spiel turned their minds and led them to throw out the whole of bourgeois democracy?

There are certainly no hints of workers' power in the publicity, no alternatives to Westminster. It is just a pictorial form of the old anarchist slogan "Smash the state".

The great blue sea is played by socialist. "Vote to break the British state", its pre-election front page proclaimed. Exactly where you have to put your cross to do this is a topic for after-dinner conversation.

Gerry Healy lies a-mouldering in his grave, but his "dialectics" go marching on. Ken Livingstone MP startled voters in Brent East by telling them that the candidacy of the "Leninist" group in his constituency was "an MI5 plot".

If so, Britain's secret state is a spent force: the "Leninist" candidate got just 96 votes. Labour won Brent East with a greatly increased majority. It's a pity we did not have a more sensible candidate.

Livingstone learned his "police conspiracy" mania while working closely with Gerry Healy in the early 1980s.



The SWP playing at being the Anti-Christ

Evelyn Waugh, Essex Man and the Edsel



PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

Feeling a little depressed just at the moment? Spare a thought for Robert Harris, the lone pro-Labour columnist on the Sunday Times.

Comparing himself to Last, the tragic hero of Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* (trapped forever in a jungle clearing, forced to read aloud the entire works of Dickens to a lunatic, over and over again) Harris comments:

"This is roughly how I feel this morning, contemplating my future career as a political columnist: 1,200 words a week, week in, week out, stretching into the 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th and maybe even – God preserve us – the 18th successive years of Conservative rule, all of them under the leadership of John Major. I ask you: what kind of life is that?"

Harris's explanation for this sad state of affairs is simple: we are a nation of liars. "The cynics were right after all. People may say they would prefer better

public services, but in the end they will vote for tax cuts. At least some of them had the decency to feel too ashamed to admit it."

I predict that this sort of explanation for last Thursday's debacle will achieve some currency in leftist circles. It chimes in with the noises already being made by the likes of Martin Jacques, to the effect that Labour can never win while it retains the vestiges of its traditional commitments to collectivism and redistribution – everything, in fact, that makes it a distinctly working-class party. The spirit of Essex Man, we will be told, has risen from the Dagenham Marshes to permeate the very soul of the British electorate.

The other obvious explanation is no more encouraging: it's all the fault of the tabloid press.

David Hill, Labour's Director of Communications, described the tabloid campaign as "the most vituperative attack on any political party I have ever seen". There is certainly plenty of justification for bitterness on this score. The dirty, snarling, personalised anti-Labour and anti-Kinnock barrage of the *Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Star* reached new depths in the last week of the campaign.

Academic studies of the 1987 election have shown that the Tory tabloids influenced about 2% of undecided voters: in a lot of key marginals that 2% would have been crucial. A



Celebrations in the City. Labour had no alternative to capture the imagination of our side

more recent survey of the Tory-held marginal Basildon showed that 50% of homes read the *Sun* compared with only a third that take the *Mirror*. Perhaps Saturday's *Sun* was right to boast: "It's The Sun Wot Won It!", claiming that its puerile anti-Kinnock front page had been prominently displayed throughout Basildon on polling day.

But the press is scarcely less hostile to Labour these days than it has been in previous elections this century. If we subscribe to the popular leftist myth of an all-powerful Tory press, we cannot explain Labour ever having won an election. That said, given the importance of Tory marginals in the South East, and the evidence of a distinct pro-Tory swing in the final days of the campaign, it may be that on this occasion the tabloids did make a crucial difference.

But the fundamental reason for Labour's failure cannot be explained by either the spectre of Essex

Man stalking the land, or the invincibility of tabloid propaganda.

As in 1987, Labour is acknowledged by friend and foe alike to have won the campaign at the PR level. What Neil Kinnock and his team failed to do was convince the electorate that they offered a worthwhile alternative to the Tories.

And all the slick marketing, triumphalist rallies and soft-focus videos in the world won't persuade the punters to buy a product that they don't believe in. A lecturer in marketing from Cambridge University drew a cruel but apposite parallel in this week's *Independent on Sunday*: "Business history is strewn with expensive marketing campaigns that failed. One of the most famous is Ford's Edsel which, although the most hyped car to date when it was launched in the 1950s, flopped. Labour's campaign now joins it."

So the tabloids may have made some difference. But not the crucial difference.

Falling into liberal ideas



PLATFORM

By Mark Nevill

Martin Thomas in his fourth paragraph – "I wish I could send my daughter to Summerhill" – condemns his article, "Summerhill at 70".

The vast majority of us can't afford private education, be it Summerhill or a local prep school. But, with Summerhill, this isn't the main issue. What is, though, is the type of community which enables children best to develop and empower

themselves socially.

Whilst recognising Summerhill's inadequacies in A S Neill's "compromise", what we have to realise is that at present and in any future society, adults will and must take decisions for children. Within that, children need to thrive, challenge, feel free and, above all, be happy.

Any Marxist parent, child care worker or anyone who has an understanding of children's needs and development, will understand the need, the responsibility which goes in placing boundaries and decisions upon children. Without this, the child risks emotional and physical harm.

Whilst agreeing with some of the philosophies of A S Neill which enable children to make decisions empowering themselves and to have equal status with adults, what we saw at Summerhill was only partly the above.

Yes, some were highly articulate and I was impressed by the conduct of the meetings. But what I also saw, which Martin Thomas didn't, were unhappy children, potential violent, cruel adults along with one or two spoilt brats.

The decapitating and bullying incidents which were arrogantly quoted by Martin Thomas, say

more than what he discusses.

Whilst at school myself, bullies bullied, there was violence to animals from dissecting fish to shooting cats. The difference was that we would do this between ourselves, when no adult was around. When found out by adults, we were reprimanded by a good shout right through to a bruising beating.

Looking back now, it wasn't necessarily being told I was wrong but the method with

"Every system of care, education and society is imposed on children without consent. As Marxists we want a society without abuse or oppression towards children..."

which I was made to correct my ways. Directly after the decapitating incident, where was the criticism, who explained to the boys that what they did was cruel and violent? Will Martin Thomas go out to the woods and teach his daughter similar acts? I think not.

This then takes me back to my

first paragraph. "I wish I could send my daughter to Summerhill". This would be his decision, not the child's. Rather than accuse the press of liberalism (of which they are guilty) I think Martin Thomas's approach to Summerhill falls into liberal ideas.

Every system of care, education and society is imposed on children without consent. As Marxists, we want a society without abuse or oppression towards children, whether this is through the family, with an open network to the egalitarian community which we want, or a community-based family where responsibilities and care are shared throughout the community.

This is an important debate, something which has been left off the Marxist agenda for many years.

Obviously Martin Thomas wasn't attempting to take on this debate but, coming out with such an article, siding with the outdated and now very much liberal ideas of Summerhill, rather than with any serious Marxist attempt to come to terms with the oppressive family unit and the ongoing abuse which occurs to children in our society. This certainly doesn't help the debate in a socialist paper.

'Don't let the leaders gut the party'

From page 5

Toryism from under whose feet the Thatcherite monetarist and free-market certainties have been blown away.

The true measure of what Kinnock is, even in his own reformist terms, is found in the fact that he did not even dare to pick up and run with the banner of resurgent Keynesianism — the old basis of Labour's post-war politics, now undergoing a certain revival in bourgeois circles as the monetarists are discredited.

No: the labour movement has, because of the Kinnockites, missed a great opportunity to defeat the chosen party of big business and put into government the party still based on the trade unions, and that is a grievous failure: but it does not leave the labour movement positively worse off than we were before the election.

Politically, the Tories have been forced into a degree of retreat. For sure, the National Health Service is not safe in Tory hands, but when John Major, after the election, emphatically pledged that the Tories would not scrap the NHS, he was not only repeating the old lying Tory denials of what they have already done; he was also registering, on behalf of post-Thatcher Toryism, the massive public condemnation of Tory NHS policy.

If Labour's leaders had any go in them, they would now begin to fight the next election by launching a great single-issue crusade for the National Health Service.

Where now for the Labour left? Left-wing candidates like Jeremy Corbyn, Bernie Grant, and Dennis Skinner got exceptionally high swings in their favour.

They proved that where left-wing policies are advanced they can win the support the right-wing second-class Toryism of Kinnock failed to win.

That is the proper lesson to be learned from Labour's defeat in the election. The dominant forces in the Labour Party will not learn that lesson; they will use the election defeat they have brought down on our heads to argue for more of the policies that brought defeat.

They will argue that Labour must complete its transformation into a continental-style "social democratic" party, exclude the trade unions from politics, commit Labour irrevocably to Owenite policies, and do everything to make itself into a replacement for the now-defunct SDP except adopt the name. (And who can be sure even about that, if they get their way?)

And what will the Labour left do? The broad Labour left has been

crushed not only by the repressive regime that Kinnock and his friends have imposed on the party in recent years — with the banning of newspapers such as *SO* — but also by the great and paralysing wish in the ranks of Labour and the trade unions to get the Tories out at any cost, and not to question what Kinnock says and does if only it works. That mood has made honest rank-and-file members of the Labour Party, reluctantly and not without heart-searching, endorse or vote for the expulsions of socialists.

The election defeat will not necessarily put an end to that mood now, any more than it did in 1987. It may even intensify it.

Yet the resignation of Kinnock, and the offensive of the right wing to pull the party further their way, must reopen the question settled in favour of Kinnockism in the mid-'80s. The central question is: what is the Labour Party? Where is it going?

Is it to cease being the party of the labour movement and become a mildly "left" depoliticised machine — perhaps financed by the state, as in so many European countries political parties are — for electing careerists to Parliament? Or will the party, in the wake of its fourth election defeat, take stock of itself?

The entire logic of recent Labour Party history suggests that it will continue down the last bitter stretch of the road on which the renegade socialist Kinnock has led it.

Many Labour Party leaders — not only the Right, but also a section of the "left" who have lost confidence in the working class and in Labour as a working-class party — will argue that Labour should make its central concern between now and the next election a campaign for Proportional Representation, coupled with a commitment to coalition which will bind any future "Labour" government to what its Liberal coalition partners will accept.

Yet they may not prevail. The left may be able to ensure that they do not. We may be able to prevent the tremendous historic defeat for working-class politics that such a transformation and destruction of the old Labour Party would represent.

There is an important parallel here. When in October 1959 Labour lost its third General Election in a row, the Party leaders round Hugh Gaitskell decided to make Labour a continental-style social-democratic party. They immediately launched a big campaign to purge it of all vestiges of socialism. It looked like nothing could stop them.

Then, slowly, the rank and file of the party and the trade unions, even



We must fight for the NHS. Photo: Paul Herrmann, Profile

trade union leaders, asserted themselves against Gaitskell. They refused to let the leaders gut the party.

That can happen again, despite the different situation the labour movement finds itself in. It can be made to happen.

Now is the time for the left to reopen the whole series of questions closed in the Labour Party for the last five or six years. Tony Benn

"If Labour's leaders had any go in them, they would now launch a crusade for the NHS."

should stand for the leadership and use the leadership contest to take the campaign into the unions.

There are technical difficulties — Benn would need the backing of 55 Labour MPs to stand — but they are not insurmountable. The left in the Party should start now to argue that we must challenge John Smith, or whomever else the right wing chooses as Party leader.

And the hard left? The dominant mood on the hard left now is to accept as an accomplished fact the complete loss

of the Labour Party and the elimination of mass trade-union-based — albeit reformist — working-class politics in Britain.

Every serious socialist for many decades has argued for transcending and superseding the old mass working-class politics, replacing the structures created by the trade unions at the beginning of this century with a reorganised labour movement that would consistently and comprehensively pursue the class struggles of the working class and aim, by way of taking state power, at the complete elimination of the bourgeoisie. Only then, we argued with tragic accuracy, could the gains of the reformist working class movement be made secure.

The transformation of the Labour Party now aimed at by some of its leaders is a transformation entirely in an opposite direction. That would be an unmitigated defeat for the working class, a tremendous historical setback.

The "revolutionary" socialists who can contemplate that with either pleasure or resigned acceptance are hopeless sectarians, people unable to relate to or deal with the working class and the labour movement as they really are. The "revolutionary" triumphalism — "we told you so" — with which a sect like the SWP contemplates what is happening to the Labour Party conceals a paralysing defeatism. Their refusal to do anything more in the election than mouth "vote Labour" — for catchpenny opportunist reasons of not offending people — is based on the same defeatism.

For more than a decade, *SO* has repeatedly had to tell these people that their real political ancestors — whatever about their claims to be "Trotskyists" — are the ultra-left Stalinists of pre-Hitler Germany, whose super-"revolutionary" refusal to taint themselves with any connection with the Social Democrats ("counter-revolutionaries" as indeed they were) implied, as Trotsky told them, giving up on the struggle to stop Hitler, and accepting in advance the inevitability of Nazi victory over the German workers.

For the entire period of Thatcherite rule, the "anti-Labour" socialists have masked a passive acceptance that nothing could be done against the Tories with super-revolutionary (and, of course, true) self-righteous denunciations of the iniquities of the Callaghan-Foot-Kinnock Labour Party.

Serious Marxists do not give up on the working class or on its mass political movement like that. Serious socialists do not tell workers that nothing can be done with the existing labour movement. They tell them to struggle within their own organisations. Those who say "I give up" may build sects; they will not help the working class to emancipate itself from capitalist ideas or reformist leaders and organisations.

The lesson for the sectarian left, even at this late hour, is: do not abandon the mass labour movement to those who will now try to carry out the will of the ruling class and complete the transformation of the Labour Party! Join the Labour Party! Those who do not share the hardboiled sectarianism of the SWP, but have let themselves be driven out of the Labour Party in disgust over the last period (and many of them turned out to canvass for Labour in the election) should come back into the fight now.

For ourselves, we in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty will continue to advocate these ideas in the trade unions and in the Labour Party.

There is another central lesson to be drawn from the condition the labour movement finds itself in now: the need for socialist education and propaganda.

People do not become socialists automatically, faced as they are with the power of the bourgeoisie and their Tory Party, and living in a world dominated by institutions and economic processes that constitute an intense and persistent form of "propaganda" for acceptance of this capitalist society as the normal and only possible society. They need help. General socialist education in the labour movement is at its lowest ebb in decades. We need to integrate activity in the labour movement to promote the immediate interests of the working class with long-term explanation of what socialism is.

The collapse of Stalinism, the vacating of the field by many of those who have misrepresented socialism for so long, has cleared the way for a resurgence of the real socialism of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, and Leon Trotsky.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty exists to take that socialism into the working class movement and fight for it there.

PR? Yes, but not at any cost

Socialist Organiser's in favour of proportional representation. We are not very enthusiastic about it, but we are in favour of it because it would be a bit of an improvement in the system of democratic representation that we have now.

The labour movement should indeed launch a campaign for democracy. PR would be only a small part of the campaign for a comprehensive democratic reform which the labour movement needs. At the core of that campaign would be such demands as a republic (abolishing the monarchy and the House of Lords), annual parliaments, freedom of information, guarantees of democratic access to the media, reform of the judiciary, and so on.

PR would be a small improvement, not in any way a measure that would lessen the gross built-in advantages that the chosen parties of the capitalist class have in elec-

tions like that of 9 April, but an improvement nonetheless.

The idea of making a campaign for PR central to British politics could only occur to a bunch of middle-class academics radically unconcerned with the labour movement. "Charter 88", lavishly funded and backed by such bodies as the *Guardian* and *Independent* newspapers, wants to do just that.

Now some people in the Labour leadership want to make a campaign for PR central to what the Party does between now and the next election. Not all of those people necessarily want to go all the way towards transforming Labour into a continental-style social-democratic party, forever committed to coalition politics, but many of them do.

Robin Cook, the leading front-bench advocate of PR, had until now said that he was for PR but against deals with the Liberals. Now he has come out for a Lib-Lab alliance

The Tories probably gained in the

latter part of the election campaign from Major's firm rejection of both PR and Scottish home rule. Major was deliberately invoking the spirit of the Tory Unionists, the opponents of constitutional "tinkering", of 100 years ago.

Britain's membership of the EC, where PR is the norm, will push Britain towards PR and strengthen the Scottish and Welsh nationalists — but that could take a long time. With Tory opposition, PR could dominate British politics for many years, in the way that Irish Home Rule and Tariff Reform did a hundred years ago, marginalising other questions. If Labour focuses now on PR, it could derail British politics and the Labour Party.

To make PR a central cause for the labour movement makes no sense now. Labour should go for a majority at the next election. PR? Yes. PR as the main issue? No! Fight for a majority Labour government!

The great days of the '70s – and why their victory

Arthur Harper spirit of solidarity

By Jim Denham

Arthur Harper, who died last week aged 72, was a remarkable man. For a start, he must be the only person in history to be best remembered for having climbed onto the roof of a public convenience.

Of course, it was not just any old public convenience: it was the gentlemen's urinal outside the gates of Saltley coke depot in Birmingham and Arthur was putting it to good use as a podium from which to oversee the closure of those gates.

It was February 1972 and the miners were on strike over their pay claim against the Heath government. The Saltley depot was a crucial source of stockpiled coke for industry and flying pickets from Yorkshire Area NUM had been attempting, with little success, to stop scab lorries getting in and out.

The leader of the pickets, a little-known Yorkshire NUM official called Arthur Scargill, appealed to the Birmingham trade union movement for support: despite the indifference (or hostility) of the national union leaders, Scargill's call won a magnificent response from the rank and file in Birmingham.

Arthur Harper, president of the East Birmingham AUEW, was crucial to the success of Saltley. He invited Scargill to address the AUEW District Committee which then put out a call for a solidarity strike. In addition, meetings were organ-

ised at all the major factories in East Birmingham to ensure that not only would the strike call be answered but also that the strikers would march on Saltley to close the gates.

Close on 50,000 engineers

"Close on 50,000 engineers downed tools on the allotted day (10 February) and a large proportion of them marched on Saltley... Wave after wave of strikers came over the brow of the Saltley viaduct to swell the mass picket. Huge cheers and chants of 'Close the gates!' went out as each new body of reinforcements arrived."

downed tools on the allotted Thursday (10 February) and a large proportion of them then marched on Saltley. Those who were present will never forget the scene: wave after wave of strikers came over the brow of the Saltley viaduct to swell the mass picket. Huge cheers and



The victorious battle for Saltley gates

chants of "Close the gates!" went out as each new body of reinforcements arrived.

The police soon gave up the unequal struggle and the Chief Constable of Birmingham agreed to close the gates. Strikers from Fort Dunlop arrived just after the gates clanged shut and changed their chant to "Open the gates!", wanting the moment of victory to be relived in their presence.

Scargill and Harper addressed the assembled thousands from the roof of that dilapidated toilet outside the gates and claimed the Saltley closure to be a historic victory for working class solidarity. They were right: despite TUC codes of conduct and declarations of abhorrence of mass pickets by trade union and Labour leaders, solidarity action and flying pickets were reaffirmed as the cornerstone of effective working-class action by the Saltley Gates closure.

Arthur Harper remained proud of that day and his role in it, for the rest of his life. And he didn't give a damn about having stood on a toilet

to witness it.

The early 1970s were great years for the British working

"Labour won the election in 1974 at a time of almost unprecedented class struggle and solely on the backs of the miners and other groups of workers who had made Heath's continuing rule untenable."

class. By every measure possible – numbers, duration and quality – the class struggle reached new heights. In 1972 there were more strike days than in any year in British history except 1919 (a year considered by

many to have been a pre-revolutionary situation).

Apart from the miners' successful strike, there was also the biggest building workers' strike ever (300,000 out over 2 weeks) the overtly political strike to free the five dockers jailed for defying Heath's Industrial Relations Act, and even strikers in support of old age pensioners.

There was a slight lull in struggle during 1973 (largely the result of the cowardice of official leaders, notably the "left" leaders of the TGWU and AUEW, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon), but by the start of 1974 things had picked up again.

The second miners' strike at the beginning of 1974 was entirely illegal as it was a call for nearly double the government's legally-binding pay norm. The Heath government had failed to impose the Industrial Relations Act in a series of key cases.

Because of the miners, the government was forced to impose a general lock-



Support from "left" trade union leaders like Jack Jones contributed to the "success" of the Social Contract

es did not last

and the rity



throughout industry - the three day week - to save electricity.

Finally, Heath took the desperate gamble of calling an election under the slogan "Who rules Britain?" Labour won the election at a time of almost unprecedented class struggle, and solely on the backs of the miners and other groups of workers who had made Heath's continuing rule untenable.

At first, the new Labour administration (under Harold Wilson) was obliged to tread carefully. It immediately repealed the Industrial Relations Act and scrapped statutory wage restraint.

However, by the end of 1974 the Wilson government had produced the Social Contract - an incomes policy that would keep down wage settlements in exchange for a vague and illusory set of commitments to control prices, help the low-paid and pensioners, and introduce planning agreements with major companies.

Central to the "success" of the Social Contract was the support it received from the TUC. And

central to TUC support was the backing of prestigious "left-wingers" like the Terrible Twins Hugh Scanlon of the AEUW and Jack Jones of the TGWU.

The Social Contract succeeded (in the short-term) where

"How could the rank and file militancy of the early '70s lead to four successive Tory general election victories? Because the labour movement never developed politics to match its economic militancy."

Heath had failed: in 1974 there were 14.8 million strike days. The following year it went down to 5.9 million and in 1976 it was 3.5 million.

Working-class living standards were attacked and the promises to the low-paid and pensioners were not fulfilled. Planning agreements were nothing short of a debacle: Chrysler simply broke its agreement with the government (after receiving generous hand-outs) by selling off all its British plants and the government stood by and let them get away with it: this was the reality of trying to control capitalism without challenging the foundations of capitalist power.

How was it that the fantastic rank and file power of the early '70s - the militancy that had brought down Heath - could be dissipated into the defeats, demoralisation, and betrayal of the Wilson/Healey/Callaghan years of the Social Contract?

How could it lead to a Labour Government so miserable that it would be followed by four successive General Election victories for the Tories? Because the labour movement never developed politics to match its economic militancy. The problem still remains.



Tony Cliff's IS made no attempt to offer militant workers political answers

The failures of 'pure' trade unionism

Between about 1971 and 1975 Arthur Harper was a member of the International Socialists - the forerunner of today's SWP.

In the late 1960s and early '70s IS had made a big "turn to the class" in an attempt to respond to the rising tide of class struggle by recruiting leading industrial militants. Arthur Harper was one of the jewels in the IS crown during this period: a former member of the CP, convenor of Leyland Tractors and Transmissions plant and a leading AEUW militant, Arthur was an important catch for IS.

Like many of the workers who took part in the great struggles of the early '70s, Arthur Harper's version of socialism was essentially based upon trade union "super-militancy": the appeal of IS to such people was that it supported militant action at shopfloor level more strongly than the CP and provided a vague perspective of achieving socialism (ultimately) via such means.

It was, at bottom, a syndicalist approach summed up in Tony Cliff's description "do-it-yourself reformism".

A friend of Arthur Harper's remembers his negotiating technique: "Arthur would stride into the office, sit down at the table in front of the gaffers and read out the claim. The gaffers would then start bleating about how they couldn't possibly meet such extreme demands, the company's profits wouldn't allow it, he'd have to come up with something more realistic, and so forth. Then Arthur would simply turn his chair round and stare out the window, saying nothing. He'd just wait and wait until the gaffers broke down and started negotiating on his terms."

This is, of course, great stuff and we could use a lot more of it in these days of "responsible", "moderate" trade unionism. But for IS in the early '70s, such militant trade unionism was seen almost as an end in itself. Little effort was made to take worker militants beyond the limits of trade union consciousness and the idea of raising demands (like nationalisation under workers' control) upon the incoming Labour government of 1974, was simply sneered at by the IS leadership.

The major political force behind the militancy of the early '70s, the Communist Party, was even worse: like IS they glorified "pure" trade unionism and disdained to intervene in the Labour Party. Unlike IS, they were obsessed with gaining official positions

within the unions and staying on good terms with "left" leaders like Jones and Scanlon.

Between them, the CP and the IS ensured that the best of the militants who had led the struggles against the Heath government, were left confused, disorientated and sidelined by the Wilson government. The CP couldn't even make up its mind to give full support to workers who fought the Social Contract (that would have meant making a break with Jones and Scanlon). The IS was at least clear on opposing the Social Contract and supporting all workers in struggle, but they had no answers to the new set of political problems posed by the Wilson government.

"Pure" militancy was no longer enough - if, indeed, it ever had been.

Instead, Tony Cliff and the IS leadership embarked upon a grandiose scheme to transform the IS into the Socialist Workers Party, which would eventually displace Labour as the main political party of the British working class(!). This new turn involved a dramatic change in IS's approach to trade union work: instead of

"IS let down a whole generation of worker militants by failing to provide a coherent political alternative to the Wilson government."

operating within the existing Broad Lefts, IS would strike out on its own under the banner of the National Rank and File Movement.

When, in 1975, the IS leadership decided to run a candidate against the Broad Left in the AEUW elections (after IS members had nominated the Broad Left candidate), it was the final straw for the majority of IS's industrial members. Arthur Harper was one of many who either resigned or were expelled over the AEUW affair. They attempted to form a new organisation, the Workers' League, but this soon collapsed. Most, like Arthur, remained active inside their unions and workplaces but their commitment to organised revolutionary politics was finished for ever.

IS let down a whole generation of militants like Arthur Harper - first by pandering to them and then by failing to provide a coherent political alternative to the Wilson government.

Lenin on how the state is a machine of class rule

Why the system is bi

Labour's leaders see politics as a level playing-field, giving equal chances to Labour and to the Tories. They assumed that, with the Tories making blunder after blunder, Labour would win as long as they avoided blunders themselves.

But in truth the entire structure of politics is biased in favour of the chosen parties of the ruling class – in Britain, the Tories. The State is not neutral; it is a class state. Labour can win elections – let alone change society – only by campaigning "against the grain" of existing society.

Lenin explained the class nature of the state clearly and concisely in his pamphlet *The State and Revolution*. This is the first of a series of extracts.

1. THE STATE AS A PRODUCT OF THE IRRECONCILABILITY OF CLASS CONTRADICTIONS

What is now happening to Marx's teaching has, in the course of history, happened repeatedly to the teachings of revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes struggling for emancipation.

During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes meted out to them constant persecution, received their teachings with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into

harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to surround their names with a certain halo for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and in order to dupe the latter, while at the same time emasculating the content of the revolutionary teaching, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the working-class movement concur in this "doctoring" of Marxism. They forget, obliterate and distort the revolutionary side of this teaching, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the social-chauvinists are now "Marxists" (don't laugh!). And more and more frequently, German bourgeois scholars, but yesterday specialists in the annihilation of Marxism, are speaking of the "national-German" Marx, who, they aver, educated the workers' unions which are so splendidly organised for the purpose of conducting a predatory war!

In such circumstances, in view of the unprecedentedly widespread distortions of Marxism, our prime task is to re-establish what Marx really taught on the subject of the state. For this purpose it will be necessary to quote at length from the works of Marx and Engels themselves. Of course, long quotations will render the text cumbersome and will not help to make it popular reading, but we cannot possibly do without them. All, or at any rate, all the decisive passages in the works of Marx and Engels on the subject of the state must without fail be quoted as fully as possible, in order that the reader may form an independent opinion of the totality of the views of the founders of scientific socialism and of the development of those views, and in order that their distortion by the now dominant "Kautskyism" may be documentarily proved and clearly demonstrated.

Let us begin with the most widely read of Engels' works, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the sixth edition of which was published in Stuttgart as far back as 1894. We shall have to translate the quotations from

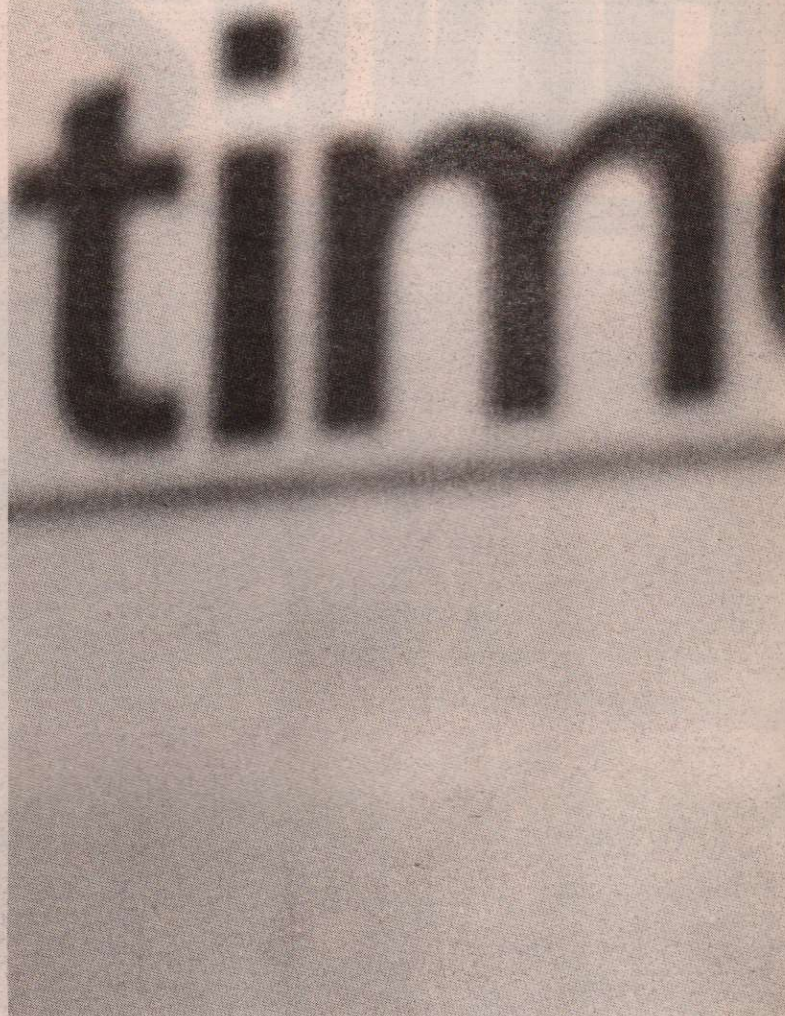
the German original, as the Russian translations, although very numerous, are for the most part either incomplete or very unsatisfactory. Summing up his historical analysis, Engels says:

"The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea,' 'the image and reality of reason,' as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable opposites which it is powerless to conjure away. But in order that these opposites, classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state."

This expresses with perfect clarity the basic idea of Marxism concerning the historical role and the significance of the state. The state is a product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class contradictions. The state arises where, when and to the extent that class contradictions objectively cannot be reconciled. and, conversely, the existence of the state proves that class contradictions are irreconcilable. It is precisely on this most important and fundamental point that the distortion of Marxism, proceeding along two main lines, begins.

On the one hand, bourgeois and particularly petty-bourgeois ideologists, compelled under the weight of indisputable historical facts to admit that the state only exists where there are class contradictions and the class struggle, "correct" Marx in such a way as to make it appear that the state is an organ for the reconciliation of classes. According to Marx, the state could neither arise nor maintain itself if it were possible to reconcile classes. According to the petty-bourgeois and philistine professors and publicists it appears that the state does reconcile classes (very frequently they benignly refer to Marx to prove this!). According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of "order," which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes. In the opinion of the petty-bourgeois politicians, order means precisely the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; moderating the conflict means reconciling classes, and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors.

For instance, when, in the



Kinnock couldn't beat the Tories at their own game

revolution of 1917, the question of the significance and the role of the state actually arose in all its magnitude as a practical question demanding immediate action and, what is more, action on a mass scale, all the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks immediately and completely sank to the

stand. Their attitude towards the state is one of the most striking manifestations of the fact that our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are not socialists at all (a point we Bolsheviks have always maintained) but petty-bourgeois democrats with near-socialist phraseology.

On the other hand, the "Kautskyite" distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. "Theoretically," it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule, or that class contradictions are irreconcilable. But what is lost sight of or glossed over is this: If the state is a product of the irreconcilability of class contradictions, if it is a power standing above society and "alienating itself more and more from it," then it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this "alienation." As we shall see later, Marx very definitely drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion as a result of a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution. And – as we shall show in detail further on – it is precisely this conclusion which Kautsky has "forgotten" and distorted.

"According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of 'order' which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes."

petty-bourgeois theory that the "state" "reconciles" classes. Innumerable resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly saturated with this petty-bourgeois and philistine "reconciliation" theory. That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which cannot be reconciled with its antipodes (the class opposite to it) is something the petty-bourgeois democrats will never be able to under-



Marx: the state is the product of irreconcilable class contradictions

Used against Labour

e for



2. SPECIAL BODIES OF ARMED MEN, PRISONS, ETC.

Engels continues: "In contradistinction to the old gentile [tribal or clan] organisation, the state, first, divides its subjects according to territory.

"Such a division seems "natural" to us, but it cost a prolonged struggle against the old organisation according to clans or tribes.

"The second distinguishing feature is the establishment of a public power which no longer directly coincides with the population organising itself as an armed force. This special public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible since the split into classes.... This public power exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds, of which gentile [clan] society knew nothing."

Engels further elucidates the concept of the "power" which is termed the state, a power which arose from society, but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it. What does this power mainly consist in? It consists in special bodies of armed men which have pris-

ons, etc., at their command.

We are justified in speaking of special bodies of armed men, because the public power which is an attribute of every state "no longer directly coincides" with the armed population, with its "self-acting armed organisation."

"Every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, clearly demonstrates to us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve it, and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organisation of this kind, capable of serving not the exploiters but the exploited."

Like all great revolutionary thinkers, Engels tries to draw the attention of the class-conscious workers precisely to that which the predominant philistinism regards as least worthy of attention, as most habitual and sanctified by prejudices that are not only firmly rooted but, one might say, petrified. A standing army and police are the chief instruments of force of the state

power. But can things, indeed, be otherwise?

From the viewpoint of the vast majority of Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century whom Engels was addressing, and who had not lived through or observed at close quarters a single great revolution, things could not be otherwise. They completely failed to understand what a "self-acting armed organisation of the population" was. To the question of why there arose the need for special bodies of armed men, placing themselves above society and alienating themselves from it (police and standing army), the West European and Russian philistines are inclined to answer with a few phrases borrowed from Spencer or Mikhailovsky, by referring to the growing complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions, and so forth.

Such a reference seems "scientific," and splendidly lulls the man in the street to sleep by obscuring the most important and basic fact, namely, the split of society into irreconcilably antagonistic classes.

Were it not for this split, the "self-acting armed organisation of the population" would differ from the primitive organisation of a stick-wielding herd of monkeys, or of primitive man, or of men united in clans, by its complexity, its higher technique, and

so forth; but such an organisation would still be possible.

It is impossible, because civilised society is split into antagonistic and, moreover, irreconcilably antagonistic classes, the "self-acting" arming of which would lead to an armed struggle between them. The state arises, a special power is created - special bodies of armed men; and every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, clearly demonstrates to us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve it, and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organisation of this kind, capable of serving not the exploiters but the exploited.

In the above argument, Engels raises theoretically the very same question which every great revolution raises before us in practice, palpably and, what is more, on a scale of mass action, namely, the question of the relation between "special" bodies of armed men and the "self-acting armed organisation of the population." We shall see how this question is concretely illustrated by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions. But let us return to Engels' exposition.

He points out that sometimes, for example, in certain parts of North America, this public power is weak (he has in mind a rare exception in capitalist society, and those parts of North America in its pre-imperialist period where the free colonist predominated), but that, generally speaking, it grows stronger:

"It [the public power] grows stronger, however, in proportion as class contradictions within the state become more acute, and as adjacent states become larger and more populous. We have only to look at our

present-day Europe, where class struggle and rivalry in conquest have tuned up the public power to such a pitch that it threatens to devour the whole of society and even the state."

This was written not later than the early nineties of the last century. Engels' last preface is dated June 16, 1891.

The turn towards imperialism - meaning the complete domination of the trusts, meaning the omnipotence of the big banks, meaning a grand-scale colonial policy, and so forth - was only just beginning in France, and was even weaker in North America and in Germany. Since then "rivalry in conquest" has made gigantic strides-especially as, by the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, the whole globe had been completely divided up among these "rivals in conquest," i.e., among the great predatory powers.

Since then, military and naval armaments have grown incredibly and the predatory war of 1914-17 for the domination of the world by England or Germany, for the division of the spoils, has brought the "devouring" of all the forces of society by the rapacious state power close to complete catastrophe.

As early as 1891 Engels was able to point to "rivalry in conquest" as one of the most important distinguishing features of the foreign policy of the Great Powers, but in 1917, when this rivalry, many times intensified, has given rise to an imperialist war, the social-chauvinist scoundrels cover up the defence of the predatory interests of "their own" bourgeoisie with phrases about "defence of the fatherland," "defence of the republic and the revolution," etc.

Glossary

Kautskyism: Karl Kautsky was known as the "Pope of Marxism". He was the leading thinker in the Second International 1889-1914 [the first international organisation of mass working class parties]. Author of numerous works of Marxist theory including *The Foundations of Christianity* and *The economic doctrines of Karl Marx*. He edited Marx's *Theories of Surplus Value*.

Despite his valuable work in presenting and popularising Marx's ideas, Kautsky also helped introduce distortions into the theories he championed. He advocated a radical reformist notion of "war of attrition" rather than revolution, and pointed to the existing state as a vehicle for socialist transformation.

Kautsky opposed the Bolsheviks and pioneered a version of the "state capitalist" analysis of the USSR.

Social Chauvinism: Label for those in the workers' movement who rallied to their own ruling class during the slaughter of World War One.

Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs): Radical populists [advocates of "people's" as opposed to workers' revolution], with mass support amongst the Russian peasantry. Split under the impact of the Russian revolution with a section of the left going over to the Bolsheviks and the right to the counter-revolution.

Mensheviks: Right wing of the Russian Socialist movement. They argued that the coming anti-Tsarist revolution was to be led by the bourgeoisie. The role of the Marxists was to defend working-class rights in a revolution that *must not* challenge capitalist property. Only after a lengthy period of capitalist development could the struggle for workers' power be placed on the agenda.

AWL launches campaign for socialist renewal

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is launching a campaign to renew and spread the ideas of socialism. The whole labour movement desperately needs such a campaign. Labour has been living off "inherited capital" for decades. The official labour movement has done nothing to argue for and educate people in the basic ideas of socialism. For workers even to vote Labour - to vote for a labour-based alternative to parties backed by the ruling class and attuned to the capitalist system - they must be convinced in some way, to some extent, of a socialistic "political

economy" of the working class" in opposition to the profit-first political economy of capital. There is nothing automatic or effortless about workers coming to be convinced of that. Bread and butter rebellion against capitalist exploitation is built into the system, and it generates the germs of socialism; but much more is needed to create an effective socialist movement. It took some 150 years of argument, education and struggle for the British working class to move from its first trade union battles to a majority working class vote for even a pale-pink Labour Party. The American working class has not even made that step yet. In

Eastern Europe, workers who struck and came on to the streets to overthrow their rulers are now supporting capitalist-oriented governments. The ruling ideas are normally the ideas of the ruling class. The people who own and control the factories, the offices and the media have hundreds of tricks and gambits to hook working class people to accepting the system. Even today, in Britain, more people say they want "socialism" (however that is understood) than want capitalism. That body of support for the basic idea of changing society was built up over decades, through hundreds of pamphlets, newspapers, meetings,

leaflets and arguments. For a long time now, the only people who have done anything to boost and expand that body of support - to maintain, update and spread the arguments for socialism - have been the far left, through newspapers like Socialist Organiser. Official Labour has been parasitic on what we have done; it relies on a body of support for socialism, but does not promote or arouse it. The far left has been weak. A lot of the work done to spread socialist ideas has been compromised or discredited by the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, because the socialists doing that work had illusions, to one degree or another, in the "socialist" pretensions of the East European systems. The "inherited capital" of the labour movement is decaying. We have to go back to basics. All that the labour movement has built and achieved over decades stands on sand unless we have clear basic ideas. The AWL is contributing to socialist renewal by:

- our pamphlet, *Socialists Answer the New Right*;
- the debates on socialism with Tories and right-wingers which we have been running across the country;
- our summer school, *Ideas for Freedom*, on 3-5 July.

Terry Fields election campaign:

Vote "Labour"?

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Anne Field

Terry Fields' campaign in the Liverpool Broadgreen constituency in the General Election was based on the same mixture of political dishonesty and political incoherence which Lesley Mahmood and her managers concocted so unsuccessfully in last year's Walton by-election.

Fields had originally been democratically re-elected by Broadgreen CLP to start again as its candidate. In the run-up to the General Election, however, the Labour Party NEC expelled him. He therefore ended up standing as a "Socialist Labour" candidate.

But this fact did not come across in his election material at all. His leaflets either ignored the fact that he was an independent candidate - or gave the impression that he was actually the Labour candidate!

The front cover of his introductory leaflet, for example, claimed to be "Introducing your Labour candidate Terry Fields". Another of his leaflets claimed: "Stay with Terry Fields and we will keep Broadgreen Labour... When re-elected to Parliament, Terry will vote with a Labour government".

A similar political sleight of hand was evident in Fields' election posters. These combined "Terry Fields" with "Labour" or "Vote Labour", whilst "Socialist Labour" was printed vertically down one side of the poster in much smaller lettering.

In an interview with the *Militant* newspaper, Fields claimed: "...We held a rally. The rank and file of the labour movement in Liverpool and Broadgreen decided we should stand and that I should be the candidate." In fact, the "rally" of the "rank and file of the labour movement" was a

meeting consisting of *Militant* supporters and members of the Socialist Workers Party.

So much for the political dishonesty. Now for the political incoherence. And of that there was no shortage.

"We need a Labour government. Everything is there to be won but each seat will count... We won this seat for Labour in 1983 and 1987. Let's keep it like that... We need unity to defeat the Tories", stated one of his leaflets.

But keeping Broadgreen a Labour-held constituency meant voting for Jane Kennedy (the official Labour candidate), not Terry Fields! And stressing the importance of every seat and the need for unity was ill at odds with Fields' decision to stand in the first place.

"Forwards to a Socialist Labour Government!" was a recurrent slogan in Fields' election material. But where was this "Socialist Labour Government" going to come from? The only Labour government on offer was a Kinnock-led right-wing Labour government.

Field's election pitch was that he was the hard-working, hard done-by, Nice Bloke (all of which is true) who was standing as some kind of Labour candidate (which was not true). Who supported Fields (apart from *Militant*)? Certainly, there were areas in Broadgreen where Fields enjoyed solid support. The Socialist Workers Party also supported Fields - but only because they hoped to recruit some of his canvassers!

The Liberal Democrats sought to boost Fields in the hope that he would take enough votes away from Labour to allow their own candidate to come up through the middle.

The decision of *Militant* to support the candidatures of Fields, Nellist and Sheridan also marks a new stage in their sectarian degeneration. *Militant* could have been part of the fight to return a Labour government. Instead, they chose to isolate themselves from that fight by focussing their attention on three independent candidates.

After the election - what next for the left?

Tuesday 16 April
AWL meeting, 7.30,
SCCAU

Wednesday 22 April
London AWL Forum,
7.30, Calthorpe Arms,
Grays Inn Road

Thursday 23 April

Brighton AWL meeting,
8.00, Unemployed Centre

Manchester AWL
meeting: 8.00,
Manchester Town
Hall. Speaker: John
O'Mahony
Nottingham LPS meeting:
7.30, International

Community Centre
Thursday 30 April

Newcastle LPS
meeting. 7.30, Friends
Meeting House

Northampton AWL
meeting: 7.30, Royal Mail
Club

Alliance for Workers' Liberty Marxist dayschools

Saturday 25 April: BRIGHTON,
11.00-5.00,
Unemployed Centre
LONDON,
11.00-5.00.
For details,
'phone Mark on:
071-639 7967

Saturday 9 May:
SHEFFIELD, details
from 071-639 7967

£8,000 for Socialist Organiser

Thanks this week to supporters in York, £50; Sheffield, £69.53; Nottingham, £15.13; and North London, £15.00 in fundraising. Members of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and friends of Socialist Organiser are raising money and sending in donations towards our fund target. We aim to raise £8,000 by the start of July. We need the extra money to:

- pay an extra worker for AWL;
- improve our international links;
- improve the quality of the paper by buying further new technology to help the production of Socialist

Organiser. How our readers can help... Socialist Organiser offers a unique combination of revolutionary socialism from below with a serious orientation to the mass organisations of the working class - the trade unions and the Labour Party. There must be no retreat. Socialist Organiser will play an important role in the coming months, holding the Labour left and union activists together against the pressure from the right. Why not help us? Make a donation by sending cheques/Postal Orders (payable to "Workers' Liberty") to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Organising the left

Socialists in the unions

SMTUC conference
Saturday/Sunday 18/19
July, Manchester Poly.
Details from 53a Geere
Road, London E15

London Labour Left
Wednesday 15 April,
7.30.
Quaker Centre, Euston

Campaign Group
conference
20 June, 11.00-5.00,
Leeds.
For more details,
contact 071-263
9540

The politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

We live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private.

Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private". Those who own the means of production buy the labour power of those who own nothing but their labour-power and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, it very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decrees the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship of productivity and profitability.

From that come such things as the savage exploitation of Brazilian goldminers, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years; the working to death - it

is officially admitted by the government! - of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism; and also the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" areas like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

From that comes the cultural blight and barbarism of a society force-fed on profitable pap.

From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" and a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions.

From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by the its ruling classes around the principles of anarchy and the

barbarous worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides; two times this century capitalist gangs possessing worldwide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it comes racism, imperialism, and fascism.

The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produces societies like Britain now where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil, where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes our society in which the rich who with their servants and agents hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and to prevent real democratic self-control developing with the forms of what they call

democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or - as in the 1984-85 miners' strike - savage and illegal police violence, as they need to. They have used fascist gangs when they need to, and will use them again, if necessary.

Against this system we seek to convince the working class - the wage slaves of the capitalist system - to fight for socialism.

Socialism means the abolition of wage slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common cooperative ownership. It means the realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can win

reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power - that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence - now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system - a workers' democracy, with elected representative recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggles of workers and oppressed nationalities in the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and in still-Stalinist China.

What are the alternatives now? We may face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confronts the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are

growing. Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all - we will be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is socialism or barbarism.

Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth.

To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to
PO Box 823,
London SE15 4NA



Melanie Griffith, Liam Neeson and Michael Douglas

The worst film of '92?

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews

Shining Through

If it had wings and gobbled, "Shining Through" couldn't be more of a turkey. We're not even half-way through 1992, but "Shining Through" must be the bumper of the year.

Remember the name David Seltzer. He adapted and directed this dud, so he's the one to blame.

"Shining Through" could have made a good film. Set in America and Berlin during World War 2, the novel by Susan Isaacs had pace and wit, and an appealing heroine, Linda Voss. Linda, a half-Jewish working class girl, has a giant inferiority

complex, but through her dangerous work spying for the OSS (forerunner of the CIA) in Berlin, she comes to feel she's as good as anybody else. She also finds love.

Though the novel was a best-seller, Seltzer junks most of it, and replaces it with his own rubbishy plot. Characters are randomly altered, events changed, the plot made to depend of two far-fetched coincidences - reducing the story to ludicrousness.

The finale, where Linda and Ed, her OSS boss, escape from Germany should be a rousing scene. But Seltzer, obviously reared on TV, drops the book's neat climax, and goes for a shoot-out. By this stage, you're ready to shoot him.

The character of Linda is utterly trashed. She has one bristling feminist moment early on, then it's downhill all the way. Seltzer

must hate his star, Melanie Griffith. He presents her, in turn, as a whiner, a dimwit and a dishrag. She's not even con-

"Shining Through is a joke, not a serious film. With Linda fleeing the Nazis in evening gown and stiletto heels, a more apt title would be Bimbo in Berlin."

scious at the end!

Seltzer never lets Linda show the faintest trace of the brains and competence she has in the book. In Berlin, she's so slow on

the uptake that she endangers everyone she meets. In scene after scene she's dopey, paralysed, the last person to catch on. The role is unplayable, so it's no surprise that Griffith is appalling. Not only does the camera not love her, it's actively seeking divorce.

The film is so bad it's almost funny. No-one looks happy to be in it. John Gielgud keeps waving Linda away in horror, and Michael Douglas, who plays Ed, looks strained whenever Linda is around.

What I can't grasp is the mentality behind it. One queer change in Seltzer's placing of Linda in the home of a nice, soulful Nazi instead of the grubby little bureaucrat she was supposed to spy on. Seltzer uses Nazi Germany (*Nazi Germany*) as a kind of neutral backdrop for Linda to emote in front of, and he doesn't seem to realise that he's doing it. It's all uncritical, valueless: the Nazi parades are just an excuse for dressing up.

In one of Seltzer's invented bits, Linda squeezes out a tear in the wrecked basement where captured Jewish relatives had hidden, and the scene has no weight to it, no emotional force at all. You can tell Seltzer's just shoved it in for a quick tug at the audience's feelings, but it's so cheap and hackneyed you feel turned off.

Most films about the Nazis present them as bad. In "Shining Through" the Nazi's chief sin seems to be that they scare Linda.

"Shining Through" is a joke, not a serious film. With Linda fleeing the Nazis in evening gown and stiletto heels, a more apt title would be "Bimbo in Berlin".

If little green men came to earth and made a film about a woman finding herself by fighting the Nazis, it might be like "Shining Through". You could excuse them; they don't know the history. What's Seltzer's excuse?

Backlash against feminism

Books

Rebecca van Homan reviews *Backlash* by Susan Faludi (Chatto and Windus, £9.99)

In her book, "Backlash", Susan Faludi asserts that women's equality is a myth, and feminism's demand for it has provoked a 'cultural backlash'.

She points out that the Right's adoption of words such as 'choice' and 'opportunity' have had no effect on the lives of the majority of women. Women still only earn around 70% of men's pay, with hourly rates as a percentage of men's at 73.8%.

Of the 10 million workers in the UK who earn less than the Council of Europe's 'decency' threshold 6.5 million are women. Married women report 20% more depression than single women and three times the rate of severe neurosis. Married women at home run a higher risk than single women of developing physical ailments, from high blood pressure to colitis.

Faludi exposes the corruption behind, for example, the widespread belief that for women over thirty the biological clock is ticking out. She quotes Dr Glatt of London's Infertility Advisory Centre, who states quite clearly that not until a woman is around 36 is there any significant decline in fertility. In fact in 1990, the fertility rate for women aged 30-39 years was higher than 1980.

Faludi also pokes her finger at the media quoting the changed

plot of 'Fatal Attraction' - from a psychological drama about a man recognizing his responsibilities in a casual affair to a portrait of an embittered career woman - as proof that even the film industry is manipulated to be more sympathetic to men.

But, with her bourgeois feminist view of patriarchy, Faludi misses the point. It is not 'men' who are to blame but capitalism. It is capitalism that requires women to be a reserve army of labour, to stay at home and feed and clothe the workforce; it is not in the interests of capitalism to provide childcare, or pay women the same amount as men.

The book contains some useful comments and is worth reading, but the viewpoint of a middle class journalist inevitably shines through.

Television and democracy

Television

Mick Ackersley looks at the election coverage

Ancient Greek city-state democracy was direct democracy. The citizens would assemble, orate, and vote directly on every big issue (with slaves, foreigners, and women excluded).

We, of course, elect representatives. They meet, orate, and vote. How they vote bears no direct relationship to how their constituents might vote on that issue at that moment. A whole literature exists to laud, expound, and justify the idea that the MP is not a direct representative, but a free agent subject only to possible reprisals at the next election.

And yet it cannot be long now before it is technically feasible to have a system of direct democracy in which the people, even of a country the size of Britain, could, so to speak, "assemble" through TV electronics, listen to arguments, and vote on each major issue as it arises.

That might be a better use for TV than the way it is used now! Endless chatter and speculation around selective "mock elections" (opinion polls) and their interpretation, investigation, and extrapolation, occupied a vast amount of TV time during the election campaign. The fact that they mostly got it all wrong emphasises how useless it all was, but it would still be a wasteland even if they had managed to predict accurately the real vote on 9 April.

What the chatter, and the chatter about chatter, does to the "democratic process" I do not know; but there is something feverish and unreal about politics on TV, as the "experts" chatter, something hysterical even.

One of the few refreshing things I saw on TV during the election was Sir Peregrine Worsthorne on *Newsnight* laying into the other pundits and accusing them of setting hares running just to be able to chase after them. He pointed out that two months ago they said that Labour had no chance and now, because Labour had won only 40 extra seats, they go on that it is "finished".

TV, which could provide the technical means to extend democracy, has become a means for smothering and numbing all real political debate.

Scottish nationalism is here to stay

On 9 April the Scottish National Party failed to win seats, but did gain votes. Now we face another five years of a Tory government refusing the Scottish home rule demanded by a big and stable majority in Scotland. How should socialists respond? Jim Kearns discusses the issues.

On the face of it, the lines of political demarcation are clearly drawn. The Tories defend the Union and offer no change to the present constitutional arrangement. The Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats promise a Scottish Parliament, with tax raising powers, in line with the proposals of the Constitutional Convention.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) stands for full political independence within the EC.

Although the national question has had a long and chequered history in Scottish politics, this is unprecedented. In one recent poll, 50 per cent preferred independence in Europe and a further 26 per cent supported a devolved Scottish Assembly.

Consistently, over the last three years, over 80 per cent of the Scottish people have supported some form of constitutional change.

This represents a sea-change in attitude, particularly among the working class.

The thirteen years of Tory rule have taken their toll on the lives of working class people in Scotland, as they have on the working class in the rest of Britain. The traditional industries of shipbuilding, coal, car-making and steel have been decimated. Whole areas have been devastated by consistent unemployment levels of 20 per cent and above.

The introduction of the Poll Tax in April 1988, one year



Alex Salmond

earlier than in England and Wales, reinforced working class discontent. The economic upturn of the mid-1980s largely by-passed Scotland.

There has been some development of new technology and service sector industries, but they have brought few jobs.

This picture of economic decline is not peculiar to Scotland. It has been replicated in Tyneside, Liverpool, etc. What is peculiar has been the effect on the political consciousness of a very large majority of the Scottish working class.

The rise of nationalism is the end product of a process of accumulation over a decade long.

The Tory vote in Scotland has remained at around 20-25 per cent since 1979. The general view of the Tories as an English-based party inflicting devastation on Scotland has generated a political crisis of popular representation.

There has been a lot of flatulence talked about what constitutes Scotland as a nation, oppressed or otherwise. However, the overwhelming majority of Scottish people regard Scotland as a nation. They genuinely see themselves as politically disenfranchised.

Whether this represents a form of national oppression is largely irrelevant: it is a fact to be reckoned with.

Since the mid-1980s the Scottish Labour Party has completely swung behind the demand for a Scottish Assembly. The reasons for this have been varied, some less "honourable" than others, but one has been the dissatisfaction of a large section of the Scottish labour bureaucracy at being denied any real political power. The Labour Party has consistently won a large majority of seats in Scotland, only to be denied power at Westminster.

And the Labour leadership has been forced to respond to the groundswell of nationalist feeling.

Labour's proposal, formulated within the cross-class Constitutional Convention, is for a Scottish Assembly with tax-raising powers and control over the separate Scottish educational and legal systems.

What was once a powerful left in the Scottish Labour Party, organised in the LCC, has now disintegrated, sharing a consensus with the right on the Scottish Assembly but with more emphasis on women's representation in the new Parliament.

A section of the old LCC formed Scottish Labour Action (SLA). SLA was to the left of LCC in their initial response to the Anti-Poll Tax campaign; but what most distinguishes them now is a more nationalist bent in political thinking and orientation.

The old anti-devolutionist current in the Scottish Labour



The introduction of the poll tax in Scotland one year earlier than in England and Wales reinforced working-class discontent

Party, which had been quite powerful, has now completely disappeared.

This overall picture has been replicated in the Scottish trade union movement.

Even *Militant*, not known for their political sensitivity, have undertaken a "Scottish turn". *Scottish Militant Labour's* demands include an elected Scottish Assembly with the peculiar proviso that it should have the power to nationalise

"The leadership of the Scottish labour movement must bear a hefty part of the responsibility for the resurgence of nationalism. Its craven capitulation to the Tories for over a decade has led directly to a situation in which the SNP is now a serious contender in Scottish working-class politics."

the economy. They also call for Scotland to be made "ungovernable" if the Assembly is not granted.

Within the SNP there has been marked change over the last decade. The old "Tartan Tory" party of Donald Stewart is a thing of the past. On paper the SNP is by far the most radical of

the major parties, well to the left of the Scottish Labour Party on a whole number of issues, including Ravenscraig, the Poll Tax and disarmament.

The SNP has targeted the working-class communities that are the basis of Labour's support. Their two-pronged strategy of independence in Europe and radical populism is proving increasingly attractive to working class youth, in particular.

How should Marxists respond? There is a national question in Scotland. Nationalism has reshaped Scottish politics. There is absolutely no point in ignoring its existence and hoping that it will go away. It won't.

The leadership of the Scottish labour movement must bear a hefty part of the responsibility for the resurgence of nationalism. Its craven capitulation to the Tories for over a decade, in local government, the miners' strike, Caterpillar, the Poll Tax, Ravenscraig, etc. has led directly to a situation in which the SNP is now a serious contender in Scottish working class politics. All this accepted, it is not sufficient merely "to expose the leadership", or say "we told you so".

The Marxist response must be to advocate consistent democracy. What this means in practice is support for some form of Scottish Parliament. The powers of that Parliament must be decided by Parliament itself. It should be elected on the basis of proportional representation, preferably a variant of the Additional Member system.

The next Labour

Government should carry out its commitment to initiate the elections for a Scottish Parliament as a matter of priority. It should also hold a referendum on the national question, the options being independence, a Scottish Assembly or the status quo.

Against the nationalists, we must argue for the maximum unity between Scottish and English workers.

The SNP solution, stripped of its radical pretensions, is a reactionary nationalist pipe-dream of cross-class unity on the basis of oil revenues. It is fundamentally a project for Scottish capitalism in which they attempt to tie in the working class on the basis of hostility to the English. The first victim of an attempted restructuring of Scottish capitalism would be the Scottish working class itself.

With the ongoing integration of European capitalism, it is absolutely imperative that the British labour movement defends what unity it has, and attempts to forge new links across the whole of Europe. A victory for nationalism would seriously weaken the power of the labour movement both in Scotland and in the rest of Britain.

A Scottish Parliament may be merely the first stage in the nationalist logic towards independence. However, to oppose the democratic demand here and now for a Scottish Parliament would merely fuel nationalism. The future is fought out on the terrain of the class struggle, and Marxists must continually assess and reassess that terrain if we are to address ourselves to political reality.

Two fights that must be won

Tube workers: fight now or go under

By a Central Line guard

The Tories had a lot to celebrate on Thursday night and so did their cronies, the Tube bosses.

Even before the election management had come up with the Company Plan - a blueprint for massive job cuts, huge "productivity" changes and virtual derecognition of the Underground unions. The Tory victory will give an already arrogant management a big boost in confidence while Tube workers are going to feel gutted.

Management will expect us to roll over and let them walk all over us. Well maybe we can still teach them a lesson.

The strategy of both the RMT and ASLEF head offices so far has been to sit back, "not

rock the boat" and wait for a Labour government, when John Prescott would lead us into the promised land - it was never going to happen and it is definitely not happening now.

This election has really shown the uselessness of "New Realism" in the Labour Party and unions. The only way to defend the interests of working people is by us, the working class, mobilising ourselves to do so - no saviour is going to come down from on high at Walworth Road or Unity House to do it for us.

So where do we go from here?

The RMT ballot is starting on the 20th April. We're going to have an uphill battle now, however. The first step in the fightback is to pull out all the

stop between now and then to push for the biggest "yes" vote we can get. The mood of the Tubeworkers is not simply one of demoralisation - it is one of anger. We have to key into that.

ASLEF and TSSA members must force their leaderships to

"Management will expect us to roll over and let them walk all over us. Well, maybe we can still teach them a lesson."

call ballots now - anything less will be as good as giving in. Our strength lies in our unity and our challenge to the national union leaderships and Tube bosses.

Armthorpe: test case for NUM

If Labour don't win this election, then we will all be outside private contractors". That's what Yorkshire miners' leader Ken Homer told a packed meeting of Armthorpe NUM the weekend before the election.

He was explaining why he and the rest of the Yorkshire leadership wanted to wait until after the election before proceeding with an area-wide ballot in support of the Armthorpe men.

The issue is opposition to the use of outside contractors at Armthorpe.

Obviously, the area leaders hoped that the election of a Labour government would strengthen the ability of miners to resist British Coal's attacks.

That has not happened. Now miners must either fight back or surrender to a final crazed Tory offensive. Remember, Major's maniacs at British Coal are prepared to see the number of pits fall to 10!

The NUM branch at Armthorpe has already leafleted the majority of pits in Yorkshire, calling for support in the ballot for selective industrial action.

What's needed now is a little more activity and drive from the area leadership along the same

lines.

If this doesn't materialise, then some activists fear that local management will do everything they can to break the action at Markham Main before the area ballot for selective industrial action.

Jones the genes



LES HEARN'S

SCIENCE COLUMN

human genetic code, and task that Jones describes as "stupefyingly tedious". The DNA in the average human would reach to the Moon and back 8000 times. The sequencers only have to analyse the DNA in one cell though. This amounts to about 6 feet of a code written in four letters. The result will be a book consisting of 3000 million letters, each being either A, G, T or C. With luck, these may be organised into three letter words and, with a bit more luck, may be related to the specific proteins coded for. In any event, the code book will amount to what Jones calls the "most boring book every written: the equivalent of around a dozen copies of the collected works of Sigmund Freud - which itself fills 24 solid volumes."

Genetics has taught us that we are more different than previously thought possible. On average, two people differ by one eDNA letter per thousand. The incredible number of DNA letters per cell means that there are about 3 million differences between these people. And yet we are far more similar than thought possible - 99.9%! On the other hand, were are only 98% similar to chimpanzees.

Studying the pattern of distribution of various genes can tell us a lot about our origins. Different variants of the sickle cell gene in black American populations tell us that slaves in South Carolina came from Gambia while those in Virginia came from Biafra. In

"Evolution has resulted in the existence of billions of differences between ourselves and other organisms, such as the whale, the tomato and the flea, that share a common ancestor."

addition, modern black American populations contain a significant proportion of blood cell genes of European origin. Similarly, genetic analysis shows that virtually all white South Africans have some black ancestors.

The distribution of certain genes inherited only from the mother shows that in the past women have tended to stay near where they were born while men tended to move around more.

Jones also shares with us the secret of maleness - it is a gene starting "GAT AGA GTG AGG CGA..." and so on for 240 letters! It doesn't seem that important.

Defend Ian Murch! Resist the cuts! Throw out SATs!

Issues at NUT conference

By Liam Conway, Notts NUT

The Tory election victory gives the left plenty to think about going into this year's NUT conference.

Education faces further cuts and staff redundancies. Local Authorities all over the country are being forced to make budget cuts as a result of grant reductions and Tory poll tax capping.

Press reports suggest that sackings will result, and conditions of service will be further undermined. Class sizes are already rising, and will rise further if this year's cuts are not resisted. Teacher non-contact time will be reduced at a time when teachers are under increasing pressure from the Tory National Curriculum, Appraisal and implementing SATs.

The Tory election victory will undoubtedly make it difficult to raise the morale of the members. But, given the scale of cuts this year, and given that the Tories now threaten to dismantle the whole state education service through their opt-out proposals, nothing short

of a crusade is now needed to defend a free and adequately resourced education system.

Annual Conference is the first opportunity to raise the temperature. The old "wait for Labour" line of the Broad Left has a hollow ring when set against five more years of the Tory axe. But with a majority of only 21, neither will they be able to claim that the government is too strong to gain concessions from.

Our ability to resist the whole Tory privatisation programme will depend a great deal on the level of resistance to the more immediate threats of cuts and redundancies, and the further imposition of SATs.

Already there is not enough money in local authority budgets to meet even the standstill needs of schools. We should argue for a programme of action to resist redundancies, increases in class size and reductions in non-contact time. This action should be co-ordinated on a national basis to defend current conditions of service, and not simply school or LEA-based resistance. The union already has fine policies on all these issues - it's time they were implemented.

The boycott of SATs was rejected by members last year; not surprisingly, given that the leadership campaigned for a "no" vote. But the old argument that doing SATs will prove how bad they are has been a disastrous failure. It has allowed

"Our ability to resist the whole Tory education privatisation programme will depend on the level of resistance."

the Tories to use the SATs' results to peddle a whole range of other reactionary ideas, including making the SATs even more educationally unsound and publishing the results. The Tories will now think they have a mandate to rush ahead with SATs at all levels of schooling.

Boycotting SATs is the only way to stop these Tory plans. The evidence suggests that members would have supported a boycott last year if it had been

organised in advance and had the full backing of the union.

We should call on the government to abolish SATs and warn them that a boycott will follow if this is not done by January 1993. This strategy gives plenty of time to mobilise the members for action and demonstrates to the government the strength of feeling amongst teachers about the damaging nature of these tests.

Sadly, it looks as if the leadership will continue its "do nothing" strategy. In fact, two recent events confirm that they are currently seeking to entrench their hold on the union and block any attempts to mount a serious campaign of resistance to the Tories.

Firstly, they have stitched up this year's conference business. Motions containing any hint of action have been split so that the action part appears in a separate section tucked away at the back end of conference. This has been done without the knowledge of the local associations who submitted the motions. Last week the High Court ruled that this is against the rules of the union, but the leadership will still try to force the changes through conference.

Now, breaking rules should normally lead to disciplinary action. Bizarrely, the right wing are now seeking to discipline the left-wing Treasurer-elect Ian Murch for using a TV programme to restate the platform that won him the election - namely that the union faces financial bankruptcy, and McAvoy et al are to blame.

The action could lead to his suspension from office, or even expulsion from the union. These charges must be dropped, and all the left must be in the forefront of ensuring that they are.

So there is plenty for the left to unite around going into this conference. Fight the cuts, boycott the SATs, restore conference business, and defend Ian Murch. Recent evidence shows that we can win on all four counts.

CPSA pay: time to fight

By a London civil servant

The reaction of civil servants to the re-election of the Tories must be to fight, fight, fight! Not to do so would give the Tories the green light to push through their plans to privatise 90% of the Civil Service.

The introduction of Agencies laid the foundations. Now the Tories are threatening to break up national pay bargaining by devolving pay to individual

Agencies and Departments. Such a move will not only threaten the jobs, wages and conditions of civil servants. It will mean the break up and consequent weakening of our unions.

Pay negotiations for 1992 will begin again now the election is over. The leaderships of the two main civil service unions, CPSA and NUCPS, who for most of the last 13 years have argued "we can win nothing from the Tories", look set to continue this tradition.

In particular, the right-wing so-called "Moderate" CPSA Executive have made it clear

they will not lead a fight to secure a decent rise and protect nationally negotiated pay.

Activists may feel disheartened by the election result, but must fight even harder to force our leaderships to ballot for strike action over pay. We need to build the existing joint union Pay Action Committees and launch them in areas where they do not yet exist.

We need to reject any shoddy pay deal and argue for the only way to beat a confident Tory government on pay - strike action across the Civil Service.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Top-up tuition fees and voluntary membership threatened:

Students must resist Tory attacks

Attend Workers' Liberty '92!

Socialist ideas for freedom!

Workers' Liberty '92 – three days of socialist debate – is set for Friday 3-Sunday 5 July at Caxton House, Archway, North London.

The discussions at Workers' Liberty '92 will cover every major issue facing socialists – including our attitude to the Tory election victory.

● Three courses will introduce various aspects of Marxism: Marxist economics, classic Marxist writings, everyday questions which Marxism can answer.

● A fourth series of discussions will focus on



We discuss the politics needed to defeat the neo-Nazis



the lessons of the rise of fascism during the 1930s in Germany, Italy and Spain. We must learn from our defeats in the 1930s in order to stop the current rise of Euro-fascism.

● Socialists from France and Germany will talk about the policies which are needed to defeat the neo-Nazis.

● The Israeli socialist Michel Warshawsky will be speaking about the crisis in the Middle East.

● The Alliance for Workers' Liberty will host a debate about the nature of Stalinist states which will include a contribution from Hillel Ticktin.

● Robert Service will debate the Alliance for Workers' Liberty on the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism.

● Other head-to-head debates will take place on: Scottish

nationalism, pornography, the way to solve the environmental crisis.

For more details, 'phone Mark on 071-639 7965.

Workers' Liberty '92 ticket offer

During April, tickets are cheaper.

This month, the three day event costs: £14 (waged); £10 (students and low-waged); £6 (unwaged). (Saturday-Sunday only: £12; £8; £5).

For your ticket, send

cheque/Postal Order (payable: "Workers' Liberty") to: Workers' Liberty '92, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Tickets are also available from your local AWL branch.

By Janine Booth

"Don't mourn, organise!" is an often used slogan in the labour movement. That should be our approach now in the student movement. The Tories are set to carry on with their counter-revolution in education, but we can beat them back!

The occupations and rent strikes last year, and the national demonstration in February showed that there are tens of thousands of students willing to take action to defend education. We must organise them to resist the new Tory offensive.

In their manifesto the Tories gave few pointers to future plans. The five paragraphs on higher education boasted that students received 30% more money from government under the loans package. They forgot to mention that students can't claim the dole or housing benefit during the summer! In fact, the Tories plan to pile on the financial burden.

"In the difficult period ahead, NUS will need a leadership that can organise a fightback."

Students are likely to face the immediate threat of "top up" tuition fees, where students are expected to pay a portion of their course fees. If higher education colleges or the government say they are going to introduce top up fees, NUS should call a wave of rent strikes and occupations.

The break up of NUS is also back on the agenda as "voluntary membership" becomes an issue. A large number of back-bench Tories have long supported the end of what see as the last closed shop. (When a college affiliates to NUS, all its students automatically become members).

This week (13-16 April), the National Union of Students is holding its main conference of the year. Left Unity is looking to wrest control away from the Kinnockite National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS). Headed by current Women's Officer Janine Booth for President, Left Unity is running a full slate for the National Executive Committee.

In the difficult period ahead, NUS will need a leadership that can organise a fightback. The "wait for Labour" strategy now no longer holds. The choice is a clear one: either resist or comply.

Left Unity is proposing a third term mass lobby of parliament, backed up with other actions, to force the Tories to reintroduce benefits over the summer holidays. We will be arguing for an orientation to the labour movement and to fight the Tories within the student movement and for the building of a rank and file organisation that can beat the Tories.

Don't mourn, organise!

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