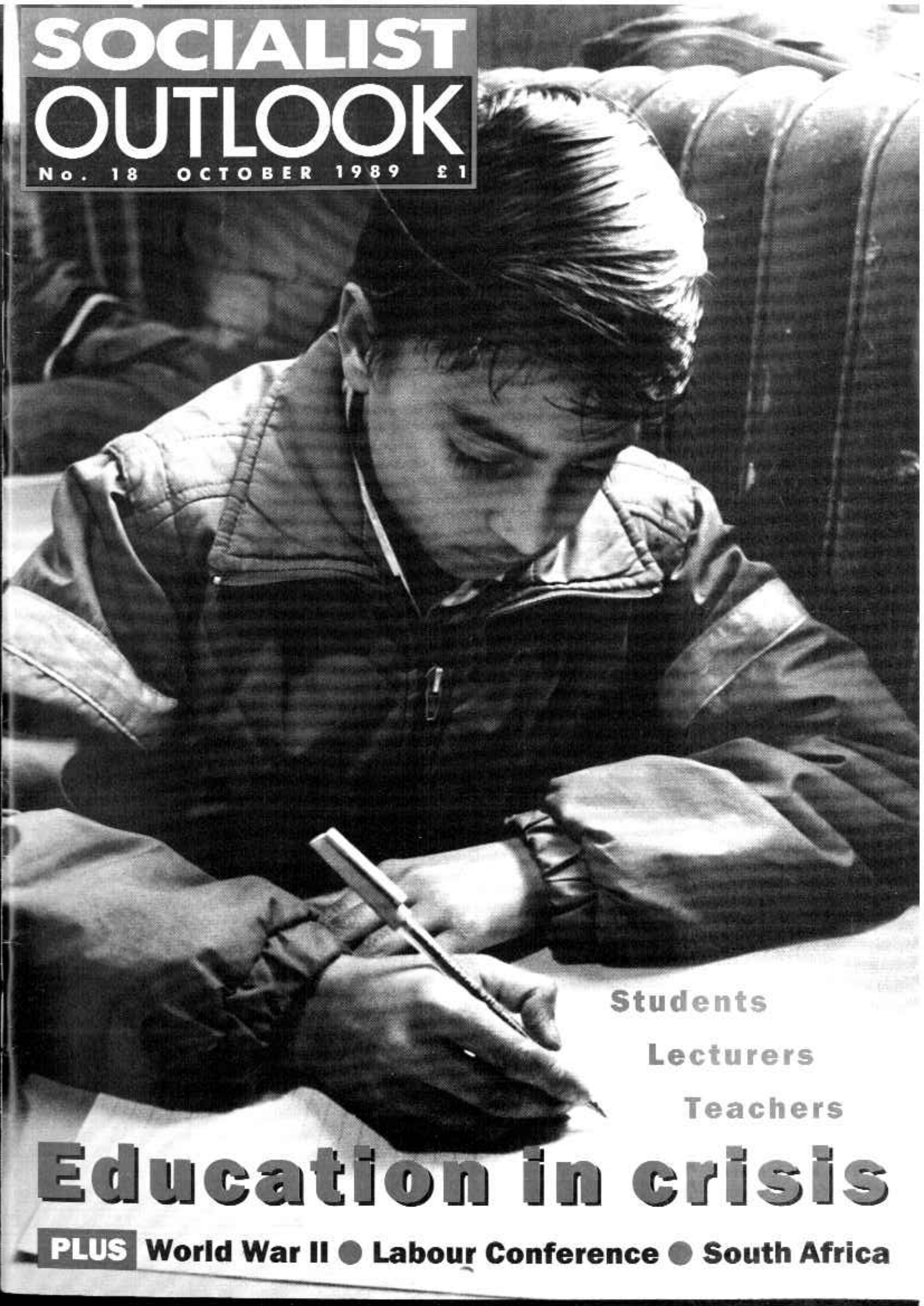


SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

No. 18 OCTOBER 1989 £1



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SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

No 18, October 1989

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'Another fine mess'? Labour Conference '89: see pages 1, 6, and 21-25. (PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni)

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While class struggle scores victories

Labour Conference stuck in a time warp

Any champagne corks sent flying in the *Marxism Today* offices to celebrate the defeat of the dockers' strike (and the consequent destruction of yet another traditional bastion of old-style male-dominated industrial trade unionism) were premature. Reports of the death of the working class and of militant trade unionism continue to be greatly exaggerated.

As an organised, combative force, the working class is not only moving back to centre stage, but in several sectors it has even begun winning limited victories against the Thatcher government, which now no longer seems so invincible.

To inflict a strategic defeat on the dockers through destruction of the National Dock Labour Scheme, the Tories felt obliged to focus their full attention on them, and avoid a widening of industrial action on other fronts. This meant taking a step back from all-out confrontation with the railworkers – who had staged six paralytically effective national strikes and even more stoppages on London Underground – ordering British Rail and the tube bosses to ease off and find a settlement.

And while the Tories cynically taunted Ron Todd's timid TGWU leadership, daring them to defy the savage battery of anti-union laws and escalate the dock strike into an all-out fight, they allowed the 8.8% no-strings pay offer to 500,000 mainly women local government white collar workers. The upshot has been that the defeat of the dockers was only bought at the price of effective victories for other groups of strikers.

Strike action that wins concessions does not fit easily into the 'new realist' schemas of the TUC right wing, Kinnock's Labour leadership, or their pet theoreticians on *Marxism Today*. 'New realism' – a trendy term for class collaboration – has drawn its main impetus from the defeats inflicted upon the working class, while in turn producing policies which guarantee more defeats to come.

It is no coincidence that the right wing counter-offensive in the Labour Party (which has brought us the Policy Review as well as the reversal of many left policies won in the early 1980s) gathered its main momentum in the aftermath of the miners' strike, and has exploited the subsequent defeats of the printworkers and seafarers. Yet in each of these cases it has been the political weakness of 'new realist' union leaders that has laid the basis for isolation and defeat.

Scargill's bold lead to the miners could not overcome the determination of the TUC right wing to see them isolated and avoid at all costs a generalised confrontation with the Tories: and the refusal of SOGAT leader Brenda Dean and other print union chiefs, and then of the Seamen's Union leaders, firmly to break the Tory anti-union laws led their members to defeat at Wapping and P&O.

The dockers faced exactly the same political impasse: it was not their weakness on the issue which led to defeat (70% voted in two ballots for all-out action to defend the Dock Labour Scheme): nor was it the alleged 'ineffectiveness' of the strike (which held up 75% of British trade, and was quickly blamed for a month's catastrophic trade figures).

It was Ron Todd's new realist politics; his dogged refusal to break

the anti-union laws – insisting instead on merely 'challenging' them in the courts – which eventually broke the dockers' confidence that they could win. Similar political weaknesses at unofficial level led to a breaking of ranks and a collapse of the strike in Southampton and Hull. The failure of the TGWU Executive to escalate the fight even after the sacking of all 16 shop stewards and 150 dockers at Tilbury spelled out the weaknesses at the top and the impending defeat of the strike.

The Tories believed that by defeating the dockers they could inflict a body blow on the unions as a whole – bloodying the nose of the biggest, ostensibly 'left wing', union, and pushing it more firmly into the new realist camp. Port employers lost no time in putting the boot in against stewards and announcing redundancies. Some other employers, too, seem to have drawn strength from this success: British Coal was quick off the mark, tearing up its own pit review procedures to close Betteshanger colliery and two Welsh pits with just *three days* notice! British Airways threatened to sack striking cabin crews and London Transport threatened victimisations.

But some employers are less influenced by the strategic defeat of 9,000 dockers than by the unprecedented strike action and victory of 500,000 NALGO members. The 8.8% offer to a million local authority manual workers (prompting squeals of anger from the government) will encourage even more low-paid women workers elsewhere to take up the fight on wages.

Now 19,000 ambulance staff have joined the fray with their overtime ban on pay, and it appears that Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke's arrogant refusal to go above a pitiful 6.5% pay offer could have been sadly miscalculated. Ambulance control officers in some areas are already beginning to take up a similar overtime ban, making the action much more effective, with a NALGO ballot 'virtually certain' to make this national.

The rail unions, too, have emerged strengthened from their 100% solid one-day strikes, obliging management to seek other ways of chipping away at their pay, conditions and union negotiating rights.

The lesson these large sections of workers have learned is that strike action can win important concessions which cannot be achieved through negotiation. This stabs deep at the heart of new realism.

But little if any of this, the real 'spirit of '89' is likely to percolate through to this year's Labour Party Conference, which meets in a bizarre time-warp, fashioned from resolutions drafted many months ago, and a Policy Review fashioned as a defeatist capitulation to Thatcherite 'market' ideology when it was at its flood tide, before the more recent ebb.

To ensure that this spectacle is not repeated, the class struggle forces now galvanised into trade union activity must also be organised and mobilised politically. The task of building a serious, fighting left in the unions that also fights for its policies in the Labour Party will be a central concern of the November conference on Trade Unions called by the Socialist Movement (with an impressively wide list of sponsors). A step forward here could lay the basis to turn the tide against Kinnockism in the battles to come. Be there!

TUC Congress '89 Spirit of muddle and defeat

TUC 1989 went under the snappy slogan of 'Spirit of 89'. But there was little evidence of the spirit of the recent summer of discontent though in Blackpool. Congress passed away peacefully instead in an early autumn seaside slumber.

Pulses did quicken from time to time though.

A proposal from the public sector white collar union NALGO to re-structure the General Council to the benefit of women and the bigger, generally more left-wing unions, was first ruled out of order and then, after threats of legal action, debated and defeated on the first day. Congress instead voted through changes proposed by Norman Willis.

These changes, like the NALGO proposal, increase the number of seats reserved for women to 12. The Willis proposals, however, are guaranteed to preserve the right's majority. On the new 53-seat General Council there are now 15 women - more than ever

before - and the right have a majority of around 7 (instead of 11 last year).

What might have been a real exercise in increasing women's representation was squandered in the usual depressing round of 'horse-trading' over which women would sit in the disputed seats. Since in the vast majority of unions women are not organised separately with any degree of authority or strength, it was always more a matter of which (mainly male) union leaders would call the shots - right or less right-wing. And, marginal though the difference may have been, the left as a whole lost out, too.

Under NALGO's proposal the current unrepresentative right-wing majority would have been removed and replaced by a more evenly balanced General Council. The opportunity was lost though, by a strategy which concentrated on selected deals at the top, to the exclusion of building a real momentum for progressive change across the unions, from below.

Conference

'Which Way for Socialists in the Unions?'

Sheffield Polytechnic Student Union,
Pond St Sheffield (opposite BR station)

November 11 & 12

11am-5pm Saturday; 10am-4pm Sunday

Workshops include:

Defiance not Compliance - anti union laws
Private Vices, Public virtues - fighting privatisation
Positive Action and Organising for Change - women and black people in the unions
and much more

**Delegates £10, individuals £6/£4. Credentials from
The Socialist Conference (TU), PO Box 118,
Chesterfield, Derbyshire**

John Harris/IF-L



Selling shares? or trading votes? Engineers leader Bill Jordan with yuppiphone

The decision on trade union legislation was probably the most significant of the week, with a call for 'immunity in tort for trade unions'. The meaning of this legalistic formula is disputed and there has been much speculation as to whether as a result the TUC demands are now to the left of Labour's policy review. The answer is probably yes.

Union and Labour leaders have played the significance of the TUC decision at once up - and down. Up, because when the same position is put at Labour's conference by the Transport workers (TGWU), and likely defeated (if the right-wing unions get their act together), it will look like a victory for Kinnock. Down, because that's a high-risk strategy and they don't want the left catching on to it as a way of denting the policy review!

The left did win an important, and clear, victory on nuclear power. A motion from the Miners, demanding that all nuclear reactors be phased out over fifteen years was passed by Congress, against the General Council's wishes. Which goes to show, amid much media speculation about Scargill's isolation, mental health and possible imminent political eclipse, that it is policies which count - and that clear left policies, when put and argued, can win the day.

The rest of the time Congress avoided clarity as much as pos-

sible and played dead, in the hope that nobody would notice them until after the next election. The defence debate was a classic in this respect. Kinnock double, or even triple-speak seems to have infected the movement, like some unpleasant digestive disorder which makes you come out with at least three words when one would have done. Last year Congress stuck with unilateralism. Now they've got a policy which embraces 'unilateral, multilateral and bilateral' initiatives for disarmament.

The white collar Manufacturing Science and Finance union, Ken Gill's MSF, which had originally tried to amend the 3-way resolution to a clear unilateralist policy, instead managed to just add on a reference to a 'non-nuclear defence policy' at the compositing stage. This fudge took nearly the whole week to concoct. So the TGWU voted against the composite, since it wasn't clearly unilateralist, and the AEU opposed it too, because it included calls for unilateral initiatives.

This MSF hailed as a victory. So did Kinnock's supporters in the TUC. In the TUC, as in the Labour Party, lack of clarity can serve both shoddy sides just as well, when they play the same bureaucratic games. Unity may be strength, but when the left lie low like this, they just get trampled over.

Jane Wells

NHS Tories turn screws on elderly

In a deliberate pincer movement, the Tory government is looking to ditch financial responsibility for the most costly group of NHS patients: the frail elderly.

The full scope of the Tory attack on this vulnerable but growing group of patients was revealed in July when Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke unveiled new government proposals for community care services, which would remove the lion's share of long-term care for the elderly from the NHS, and place the responsibility with local government.

The proposals, to be spelled out in more detail in a White Paper promised for the autumn, would have far-reaching effects on tens of thousands of people, and dovetail neatly with proposals in the White Paper *Working for Patients*, which also aims to squeeze the frail elderly out of acute hospital beds.

Clarke's proposals, based on the earlier report by Sainsbury's boss Sir Roy Griffiths, are summed up in a pamphlet by London Health Emergency as the following:

■ Local authorities will take responsibility for community care services, while central government holds the purse strings, imposing cash limits on both health authority and social service budgets.

■ Funding for community care will come from redirecting social security payments currently made to assist elderly patients pay for residential care.

■ As a result, tens of thousands of frail elderly people will be excluded from the free-at-point-of-use care of the NHS, and placed instead under the means-tested care of social services.

■ The combination of cash limits and new arrangements for

the 'assessment of needs' of each patient will ensure that only the bare minimum of public money is spent on any individual.

Many will be effectively denied the right to choose residential care unless they are rich enough to cover the whole cost themselves, or manage to satisfy social services that they are so severely disabled they are physically incapable of surviving at home.

■ In this way a considerable burden can be removed from the NHS budget, while further large sums can be extracted - through means-testing - from the life savings of the elderly, or from payments made on their behalf by relatives.

■ Any real expansion of social service departments will be held in check by forcing local authorities to shoulder the whole cost of each place they provide in their own residential homes, while central government will subsidise places bought from the private sector. Some council homes may well be run down, closed or sold off as a result.

■ Local authorities will be obliged to work extensively with the private sector at all levels: the Griffiths report even proposed competitive tendering and privatisation of domiciliary services, despite the lack of any evidence that cheapest is best in such labour-intensive services, or any stipulations on enforcement of standards. It is not yet clear how much of this will be incorporated into Mr Clarke's White Paper and enforced by law.

■ The Clarke statement leaves thousands of health workers in long-stay hospitals and geriatric wards uncertain whether the future would see them jobless, transferred to local

authorities, or forced to work for private employers. There are no words of reassurance on retraining, on pension and other entitlements or on the future of their patients'.

Clarke's statement makes clear that it is still government policy to foist most of the burden of care onto individual, largely unpaid carers. This means continuing to leave as many as 6 million mainly women 'informal carers' to shoulder the primary responsibility of looking after sick adult relatives in the home.

Research and estimates from the Family Policy Studies Centre suggest that so called 'informal' care in the home is worth anything up to £20 billion each year. This is one area where even larger financial savings - at the expense of domestic misery for thousands of women carers - are clearly the target of the Clarke-Griffiths proposals.

Meanwhile the campaign against the White Paper *Working for Patients* has still not received the necessary trade union and labour movement support to build on a national level: it has been left to ad-hoc efforts by local campaigners under the Hands Off Our NHS banner to seek to mobilise the mass base of opposition to the Tory plans.



Ambulance crews have learned that industrial action speaks louder than words

The London Hands Off Our NHS demonstration and rally on October 21 represents the most ambitious effort so far to break out of local isolation and link up campaigns in a common focus. A strong showing on that day can help pressurise health unions, the TUC and Labour Party to build the kind of resistance that can defeat this unpopular legislation. Socialists should be there - with their banners and contingents!

Harry Sloan

For a more detailed critique of the Clarke proposals, see the new London Health Emergency pamphlet *Cheap and Cheerless*, available now price £1.20 inc postage (single copies) or at discount prices for 5 copies or more - from LHE, 446, Uxbridge Rd, London W12 0NS.

Hands Off Our NHS can also be contacted c/o 446, Uxbridge Rd, London W12 0NS, tel 01-749-2525.

March ... Rally ... Cabaret
HANDS OFF OUR NHS!
Tear up the White Paper!
London
SATURDAY
OCTOBER 21

ASSEMBLE 4.30pm Belvedere Rd London SE1 (by County Hall, Waterloo or Westminster tube)

MARCH via central London to the Camden Centre, Bidborough St London WC1 (Kings Cross tube)

RALLY 6.30pm

CABARET 7.30pm, featuring Rip It Up, an entertainment on the NHS by Popular Productions (Sheffield)

Poland Will power split Solidarnosc?

For the first time since World War II, representatives of an anti-stalinist organisation, independent of the ruling bureaucracy, have been able to participate in the Polish government.

The bourgeois press has represented this in unequivocal terms – as a wonderful victory that signals a possibility of capitalist restoration. However, what do these developments mean for the Polish workers, and for the anti-stalinist struggle in Eastern Europe more generally?

Before looking at recent events, it is worthwhile to note one or two points concerning post-capitalist Poland:

First, there is an impressive history of independent mass activity in opposition to the regime: mass uprisings took place in the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s in particular, all of them in response to the catalyst of the pricing or availability of basic foodstuffs.

Second, through the martial law period, although Solidarnosc managed to maintain its central leadership around Lech Walesa as well as a clandestine network of activists and publications, of necessity the union federation lost the vast majority of its membership and had no democratic mechanisms for accountability or consultation. These latter points have not been rectified since – and thus Solidarnosc remains a relatively small federation (in comparison with 1981) with a leadership which has no democratic mandate from within the union (though Walesa's prestige and popularity is not in doubt).

Lastly we should note the situation in which the ruling stalinist Polish United Workers

Party (PZPR) found itself in the aftermath of martial law: the party had (and has) practically no base whatsoever outside the ranks of the bureaucracy. With the possible exception of Ceausescu's Romania, it has a smaller base of support than any other regime in Eastern Europe.

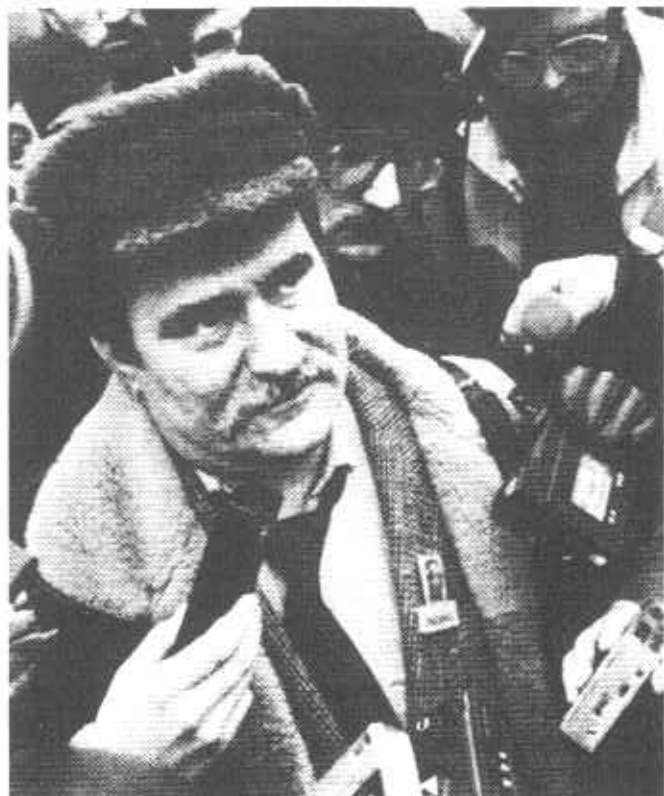
This has not been helped by a situation of absolute economic crisis – a foreign debt of \$39 billion – and the failure of Jaruzelski's post-martial law project. The latter can be summed up as a Polish version of perestroika, but with a far smaller base of support than Gorbachev. This forms the backdrop to recent events.

From confrontation to collaboration

The first sign that Jaruzelski's regime was moving towards a strategy of compromise with Solidarnosc was the round table talks (which we have discussed in previous issues). It also provided the first indications of the lengths to which the Walesa group were prepared to go, when Walesa himself declared that he would stop any strike that occurred.

This provided the beginnings of the strategic split within the opposition, with fairly widespread strikes and demonstrations in opposition to the negotiations (though Walesa was generally successful in persuading workers to call off their action, albeit reluctantly in many cases). The opposition to Walesa's line remained generally spontaneous, with organised forces a small minority. This remains the case today.

But opposition to Walesa's conciliatory line was not entirely ineffectual. Significant numbers boycotted the undemocratic 'partial elections', where only 35% of



Walesa: Is taking office Solidarnosc's "biggest mistake"?

seats were up for election, leaving the PZPR in control despite Solidarnosc's overwhelming victory in the seats that they contested.

Pressure from below also meant that in the aftermath of the elections an open coalition between Solidarnosc and the PZPR was ruled out. However, in this seemingly intractable situation, the immense tactical flexibility of the stalinist bureaucracy came into play.

Realising that such an open coalition was not an option, in a bizarre turn of events the United Peasants Party (UPP) was produced from justifiable obscurity to take the place of the PZPR. The latter event is remarkable in the sense that the UPP has for decades been nothing more than a passive appendage of the PZPR, and has now been wheeled out as a political alternative to them!

Solidarnosc carrying the can

Unfortunately, this stalinist tactic worked, and a de facto coalition between Solidarnosc and the regime has been established through the back door. Any such compromise with the bureaucracy would be an extremely dangerous move; but the terms on which the government is

being established make the situation potentially disastrous for Solidarnosc and the Polish working class.

Essentially, these terms mean that the stalinist bureaucracy maintain direct control over some of the key arms of the state – the army and the police and various others as well, through the ministries of defence and interior, taken along with those ministries controlled by the UPP, they represent a majority.

Solidarnosc's Prime Minister Mazowiecki and the Walesa group have been landed with the disastrous economic situation and denied control over most of the other main areas of state policy. The PZPR have handed over control of the economy knowing two very important facts:

■ The Walesa group share their views on economic policy, seeking 'marketisation' along with more loans and joint projects from the western imperialists.

■ The practical effects of these policies are likely to be extremely unpopular.

An indicator of the latter is the removal of subsidies on basic foodstuffs, causing price rises of up to 200%, in the same week as Mazowiecki's installation as Prime Minister. Unemployment

and other austerity measures are sure to follow.

Though recent pro-capitalist remarks by Solidarnosc ministers are worrying, it would be premature to suppose that any real restoration is yet on the cards. The creation of a smallish private sector and the partial introduction of market mechanisms would seem more on the immediate agenda. However, the latter certainly imply economic attacks on the working class.

Here lies the potential disaster in the current situation: the leaders of Solidarnosc are likely to be forced to betray their own base. The demoralisation that could be caused by the spectacle of Walesa being seen to be responsible for this should not be underestimated.

Walesa has in fact recognised that 'entering the government was the biggest mistake we ever made'; but goes on to claim that there was no choice. We can agree with the former remark, but not the latter. The Polish working class is as a result faced with the possibility of its own mass organisation being split from top to bottom.

This is not to say that there are no positive facets to the current situation at all. The situation will legitimise the principle of political pluralism; and a small, but politically clarified opposition may emerge. Revolutionary socialists should do all that they can to support such an outcome - which means, in practice, supporting the fledgling Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the only clearly revolutionary socialist force in Poland today.

The PPS may be able to make some headway through such demands as their forthright opposition to any collaboration with the bureaucracy, their defence of working class living standards, and their call for a democratic congress of Solidarnosc. However, we should be clear that such positive possibilities are clearly outweighed by the potentially disastrous consequences of this compromise with the bureaucracy. These are dark days indeed for the Polish working class.

Patrick Baker

Irish solidarity Build on gains from Year of Action

At the end of the 'Year of Action' to mark the twentieth anniversary of British troops being sent to Ireland, the solidarity movement is in a healthier state than it was 18 months ago.

Many of us were rather too optimistic in the early stages, with talk of an enormous march culminating in a carnival with the Pogues and Christy Moore playing to an enthusiastic audience of 30,000 or more. In the event little more than 5,000 attended the carnival in London on August 12, to listen to a series of remarkably similar third-rate groups.

This was the climax of a year of unpleasant wrangling and splits, generally as a consequence of attempts by elements within the Time To Go campaign to retain almost total control of activities throughout the year. (A more detailed explanation of these problems was given in issue No.17 of *Socialist Outlook*).

But though none of the solidarity organisations have made large numbers of new members, meetings have been organised throughout Scotland, England and Wales by Year of Action and Time To Go groups, which have sometimes attracted more than 500 people. A core of dedicated activists has been built up, which has gained the invaluable practical experience of working together on the most simple and the best common denominator - support for Irish self-determination. Now the question they are all asking is 'what are we going to do after August?'

Supporters of *Socialist Out-*



Peter Hain saying 'Time to Go': now it is time to unite solidarity forces

look have consistently argued for the broadest possible unity of all those who support the demand for Irish self-determination. Frequently in the past year this has led us to disagree strongly with those who try to dominate the withdrawal movement and declare themselves 'the mainstream'. The fact that the 1989 demonstration, despite the much more favourable political circumstances and the arrival of more than 200,000 young immigrants from Ireland in the past eight years, was smaller than that in 1979, leaves no room for complacency in the solidarity movement.

This should hammer home the point that unity is essential, and that it can be achieved without each organisation being forced to abandon its own orientation and projects. A good beginning would be a conference of activists at which a number of basic tasks could be agreed to sustain the momentum that has been built up over the last year, and which would preserve the important concept of a national movement, as opposed to a series of uncoordinated local groups. The only one thing on which these activists need to agree is their support for the right of the Irish people to self-determina-

tion: it is difficult to see how one can be an activist without supporting this.

During October of this year there will be a number of activities to protest against the first anniversary of TV and radio censorship of Irish organisations. This issue, with its opportunities for public activity on Ireland, explaining to British workers how their rights are being taken from them by an imperialist government, and attracting the attention of people who are wary of Irish politics, is the perfect model for uniting the strands of the withdrawal movement.

Also over the coming months there must be more work done to draw in the Irish immigrant population, the vast majority of whom are under 30 and mostly sympathetic to our message.

Finally, much more work still has to be done in the Labour Party. A number of Labour councils cancelled or refused bookings for meetings with members of Sinn Fein: this is simply collaborating with the Tories, and must be fought through every structure in the Party. This job, rather neglected by the Labour Committee on Ireland, must not be forgotten in the months ahead.

Liam Mac Uaid

Preview of Brighton Conference flashpoints

Backwards with Labour!

This year's Labour Party Conference promises little excitement and even less prospect of progressive policies to am Labour to fight the next election being adopted.

Conference's main job, as seen by the party managers, is to endorse the Policy Review, to give a show of unity and a standing ovation to the Leader for the television cameras, and to forget about the policy-making role of the party.

Two key debates coming up at conference, and the positions taken on them by the leadership, make this clear.

First, on the new restrictions imposed on members, and the new powers assumed by the leadership in policy-making. Conference resolutions which conflict with the policy review will not be treated as amendments to it, nor will they override it. Any conflicting resolutions, say the NEC, will simply be 'taken into account' by the special joint NEC/PLP meeting after conference, which will produce a 'synthesis' of positions from the policy review and agreed resolutions.

This 'synthesis' (read stitch-up) will provide the party's campaigning platform between now and the next election. Whilst two leadership-friendly constituencies have tabled resolutions giving an uncritical welcome to the policy review, this centralising move is opposed by 31 CLPs in 23 resolutions submitted so far. They call instead for conference resolutions to be treated as amendments to the policy review, where the two conflict. Success of these procedural resolutions is a precondition to the rest of the left's intervention having any consequence at all.

Second - more fundamental and even more sinister - is the behind-the-scenes plotting to strip Conference permanently of its policy-making role. Last year's conference agreed a consultation

process to review the future organisation and role of annual conference. The NEC, eager to give Walworth Road officials time to line up the trusty union votes, want their report to be held over to next year. But the advocates of this change, encouraged by the new 'consensus' (mainly concentrated in Fleet Street) that the block vote, along with defence, must go, are pushing for a decisive move this year.

In a motion which tellingly argues that 'there are valuable lessons to be learned from the way in which other European socialist parties develop policy', the GMB call for the 1990 report to consider four important options. These are: reform of the NEC (to marginalise and dilute the already tiny influence of the left); an expanded role for the NEC in formulating and directing policy downwards through new policy commissions; National Conference to be restricted to amending policy commission proposals; reduction of the union block vote to around 50%.

If these two slip through the net, the dangers are clear: a weakening of Labour's base in the organised working class; more concentration of power at the top, less say for members and less chance of progressive policies being adopted.

Whatever mechanism for processing policy decisions is used, there will be policy clashes at this year's conference at least. The opportunity to mobilise constituency and trade union support around clear, left policy options must be maximised - not least because it may be a last chance under what remains of the party's democratic decision-making structures.

Defence will be the major debate at conference, and the vote will provide a measure of how far, in the run-up to the next election at least, Kinnock has per-



Remember when NUPE chiefs like Bickerstaffe (right) backed unilateralism?

sued the constituencies and trade unions of his 'lie-low' strategy. The left is aware of the significance of the debate. 55 CLPs and one trade union (MSF) have submitted a total of 51 unilateralist resolutions. 11 CLPs and one union (USDAW) have expressed support for the switch to multilateralism. But with most of the union votes safely with Kinnock's camp (following determined efforts to pull key unions into line on defence in their recent round of conferences), the prospects of victory are slim. The TGWU and MSF are the only major unions prepared to defend unilateralism.

The return of key utilities (water, electricity and communications etc) to public ownership will also be controversial. Press reports have already indicated that Kinnock is poised to shift policy control away from the NEC to the PLP in the run-up to the next election, with a retreat on water a major aim.

Following the TUC decision to call for the phasing-out of all nuclear reactors within fifteen years, and the NEC and front-bench split on the issue, the debate at conference will be heated and close - and offers the possibility of a left victory.

Again following the TUC's decision, the debate on trade union legislation will be closely watched. The TGWU call at TUC and again at Labour Conference for legislation to protect union immunities must be supported as a first step in challenging Kinnock's collapse in front of the Tory laws.

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights have or-

ganised effectively against the NEC's ditching of Labour's 1985 commitment to equalise the age of consent for gay men with that for heterosexuals. 6 resolutions submitted to this year's conference demand that a positive framework of lesbian and gay rights and specifically the equal age of consent be included in the policy review. The right, who have already exerted behind the scenes pressure during the policy review process to delete any such proposals, will no doubt be keen to keep the lid on the debate at conference too. It doesn't look like they will get away with it, however.

Electoral reform has attracted more resolutions than any other issue bar defence. 28 CLPs have submitted resolutions arguing for some kind of electoral reform, with 8 specifically calling for PR. Although it is not an issue on which right and left reliably align for or against, it is certainly the case that the right has organised, with some success, to promote this issue, trying to channel it into their framework of pro-consensus, pro-centre and ultimately pro-pact politics.

However the left should not allow a (normally healthy) knee-jerk opposition to such right wing pressure to divert away from the fight for a more democratic system. The notion that 'PR equals pacts' is an invention of the right wing and the media; the left should clearly mobilise to oppose any composite proposals favouring electoral pacts, while where possible supporting the principle of proportional representation.

Jane Wells

South Africa A new phase in the fight

THE WHITES-ONLY elections in South Africa took place as a general strike ripped across factories, transport and even the mines, where the defeat of 1987 seems to have been overcome. Though De Klerk's Nationalist Party managed to hold on to a majority, it has lost ground to its political rivals, and been unable to prevent a major escalation in the struggle of the black masses.

Much has been made of the new 'liberalism' of the De Klerk regime compared with that of the recently ousted P.W. Botha: but the apartheid regime is by no means ready to commit suicide, reports PAUL SMITH.

De Klerk's amiable chops smiled at us from the latest capital city he had visited. Remarkably friendly communiqués were jointly issued with the appropriate heads of state, as the 'presentable apartheid' show moved on through the summer 'silly season'.

In contrast, a scowling Mr Botha tried to steal a march on his rival by visting Nelson Mandela (thereby probably lengthening Mandela's imprisonment): but it does seem that the Nationalists are running on a 'dismantle apartheid' platform. Everybody (including in South Africa) is talking about the coming negotiations – not whether, but when. Apartheid must surely be collapsing – if only under the weight of newsprint!

In fact, nine-tenths of the fashionable speculation about a 'breakthrough' in South Africa was always pure guff. While the balance of forces is moving in favour of Pretoria in international diplomatic circles, it is steadily moving against Pretoria inside South Africa itself, despite the serious defeats which the mass movement suffered in the mid 1980s. De Klerk is simply trying to use international pressure to provide leverage at home.

The new international alignment over South Africa is dramatic. The two most powerful governments in the world are each seeking some sort of accommodation (not the same) with the ruling class in Pretoria. De Klerk is using this for all he is worth, firstly with the Front Line states, and also inside South Africa.

Leaving aside the politics of the Front Line states, in South Africa there are two obstacles to any quick, cosmetic solution: both have genuine mass support. One is the African National Congress (ANC) and the

other is the growing trade union movement, especially the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Both show the pressure of the new international situation, but the flurry of diplomatic movement over a possible 'solution' is if anything serving to strengthen the mass opposition movement in South Africa once more.

The mass defiance campaign over education, the hospitals, transport and the beaches is the most public campaigning that the mass movement has been able to organise since the first States of Emergency in 1986 and 1987. The emergence of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) as the sponsor of this campaign is also a startling development.

A debate is developing in the trade unions on the issue of alliances and most recently – stimulated by the ANC's presentation of proposed Constitutional Guidelines – on the sort of society that will replace apartheid. We do not have space here to discuss the Guidelines except to say that they are perfectly consistent with the 'mixed economy' approach of the ANC's Freedom Charter, which Mandela at his trial correctly denied was a socialist document. From the point of view of their effect on the struggle in South Africa, at least as it is reflected in the unions, the most significant point within them is their continued insistence on 'one person one vote in a unified South Africa'. Metalworkers' union leader Moses Mayekiso has this to say about the debate on alliances and the Guidelines:

'The national civic organisation and COSATU should have a permanent struc-



Moses Mayekiso on the rostrum at this year's TUC Congress

tured alliance. What we envisage is a national student body, a national youth body, a national civic body, a national trade union movement, in alliance with other political organisations. ... We are thinking of organisations that are close to the working class organisations, and organisations which believe in non-racialism. ... Those are good structures for the future society. We don't want a society where there is no accountability of the leadership to the masses. ... There should be structures that can really give mandates to the leadership and control the leadership. ... NUMSA (metalworkers' union, COSATU's second largest affiliate) wants a working class alliance, which I think is what is happening between COSATU and the UDF (United Democratic Front)'.
(*South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol 14 No1)

The COSATU resolution passed nem con at its third Congress in June spells out the 'new look' UDF that will from now on form part of the MDM:

'Every street having a street committee democratically elected, every area an area committee, every town a local general committee ... building a centralised national civic structure from elected representatives of regional committees. The structures should be open to any oppressed and exploited resident who is elected to a street committee irrespective of political persuasion, ideology or affiliation. ... Encouraging sector organisations such as youth, women, students and so

on, to consolidate and develop national structures which have effective and democratic structures ...

'COSATU rejects any strategic alliance with representatives of big capital and participants in apartheid's state structures'.

(Resolution from COSATU Congress, June 1989). (Malan's Democrats participate in the Tri-Cameral Parliament, and this section of the resolution is a direct reference).

In other words, both Mayekiso and COSATU as a whole propose to reconstitute and reorganise the UDF around the workers' movement on a new democratic basis to carry out a new political project: the first results can be seen in the defiance campaign and the general strike against the White elections.

The COSATU resolution on the Guidelines focusses on the accepted proposal for a workers' charter contained within them:

'The CEC is instructed to call a special National Congress to draft a workers' charter when we have discussed our demands in all our structures and with our allies in the working class'.

The workers' charter is not meant to be a socialist programme. Its framework is the 'democratic' framework of the Guidelines, as Mayekiso says: 'The Workers' Charter can answer things that trouble workers - like the right to strike. ... Then the working class political programme must answer the question what is the future society? ... So there are two different things'.

Meanwhile the trade unions are experiencing real difficulties. South Africa's economic crisis seems insoluble, and millions of blacks are now unemployed or semi-employed. The gap between employed and unemployed is growing, creating a real challenge. Repression continued - even heightened - before the White elections: the level of self-sacrifice involved in simply keeping the labour movement going is a permanent drag; nevertheless the movement, taken as a whole, is still growing, and the process of workers' unity still unfolding. In March this year 15 COSATU unions, 11 NACTU unions and 17 independent unions met at a 'workers' summit' against the new Labour Laws.

This is the context to the current discussion about negotiations in South Africa. Only a few left groups are opposed to negotiations in principle (seeing such a course as necessarily counterposed to revolutionary struggle to overthrow apartheid). But even Moses Mayekiso, who is some way from the views of the ANC and South African Communist Party, summed up his view on negotiations this way:

'Firstly, I believe that the solutions to our country's problems will finally come through negotiations. I don't believe we will be able to get to Pretoria and oust [then President] Botha from those buildings. But I also don't

believe that negotiations are near. There will be a negotiated settlement at some stage, but at the moment those chances are nil. ... We must build our organisations so as to have power and control. The political initiative towards negotiations, the concept of negotiations, must come from us. We must control the initiative so as to dictate the conditions. We must not be dictated to by the Americans, the Europeans or the De Klerks.'

COSATU General Secretary Jay Naidoo said:

'We are acutely aware of the designs of the imperialists and big business to manoeuvre a reformist settlement in this country. We will have nothing to do with this. Our resolution also stresses that no negotiations can take place without the democratic participation of the people in this process. It also clearly states that only a sovereign body mandated by the people and accountable to them can have the authority to develop a new constitution. ... Our bottom line on negotiation is that it must lead to the transfer of power to the people'.

(Interview, August 1989)

Serious negotiations are not as likely as the world seems to think. The conditions for negotiations inside the country are further from being met today than three months ago; and all sections of the mass anti-apartheid movement share the basic conditions for opening negotiations: release the political prisoners, end the State of Emergency, unban the banned organisations, free speech and assembly. It is not the ANC's support for armed actions, nor its 'secret communism' that frightens South Africa's rulers: it is the fact that the apartheid state is most vulnerable on the democratic question, and the ANC remains a potent enemy while it promotes unity on that issue.

Though theory does not rule out a Zimbabwe-style 'democratic' transition ... and capitalist entrenchment, followed by the destruction of democratic rights, South Africa's rulers have wisely excluded that option - and not only because of their relatively huge white population. The dynamics of the struggle for democracy and the level of maturity and self-organisation of the forces involved would make a peaceful 'democratic' transition infinitely more risky than in Zimbabwe.

The struggle over the future course of the South African revolution is already underway. In some senses this discussion is very advanced, but it is clearly unfinished, and on some fronts barely started. In many ways the South African example and some of the conclusions the workers' movement has come to may end up having a bigger impact on the rest of the world than Moscow and imperialism are having on the liberation forces in South Africa today.

Open season against US abortion rights

With the help of Ronald Reagan's controversial appointees, the US Supreme Court has been handing down one reactionary ruling after another.

They have been overturning positive action principles; okaying the death penalty for the mentally incompetent and for teenagers; and rounded off their session by upholding the Missouri statute which prohibits abortion in public hospitals, harasses women seeking late abortion, and declares that life begins at 'conception'. The political implications of these rulings underscore the cynicism of Bush's promise of a 'kinder, gentler nation'.

Initially those who oppose legal abortion vowed they would overturn the historic 1973 *Roe v. Wade* judgement which permitted it; but as Justice Scalia explained: 'It appears that the mansion of constitutionalised abortion law, constructed overnight in *Roe v. Wade*, must be disassembled door-jamb by door-jamb, and never entirely brought down, no matter how wrong it may be'.

The anti-abortion lobby have therefore been forced to alter their strategy, instead placing as many obstacles as they can devise in the path of women seeking abortion. The Supreme Court's ruling on *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* is a measure of their success, opening the gates to a flood of reactionary legislation.

Opinion polls show that support for legalised abortion has never been stronger, and especially strong among the young, who grew up thinking that their reproductive rights were secure. According to a national survey in the *Los Angeles Times*, 74 per cent believe that 'abortion is a decision that has to be made by every woman for herself'.

A majority of people opposed the Supreme Court ruling, and in hundreds of towns around the country supporters of women's rights to control their own bodies demonstrated opposition to the *Webster* decision. The National Organisation for Women (NOW) reports its fastest-ever growth rate, with 40,000 joining in the last six months, and coalitions to defend women's reproductive rights are springing up everywhere.

The *Webster* decision undermines the right to legal abortion in four fundamental ways:



Fundamentalism US-style – as crowds of bigots mobilise to blockade abortion clinics like this one in Atlanta

■ The Court found that the declaration that life begins at conception imposed no substantive restriction, that it was no more than a value judgement favouring childbirth over abortion.

But the reality is that the declaration sets up a political judgement equating the life of a foetus at conception with the life of the pregnant woman, suggesting that the state impose its judgement whenever the interests of one 'life' conflict with another.

This declaration is potentially far reaching. It could be utilised as the basis for outlawing forms of birth control which prevent a fertilised egg from developing; for restricting almost all abortion; or even for raising criminal charges against pregnant women who fail to alter their diet habits or refuse specific medical procedures.

■ The Court found that states are free to prefer childbirth over abortion, and to implement that policy by prohibiting public funding for abortion as well as by prohibiting public hospitals and their staff from performing abortions.

This ruling is so broad that even a private doctor whose admission privileges are at a hospital which received public funding or has contractual arrangements with a state or local government would be affected.

Much of health care in the United States is at least in some way connected to public funding or public entities. For instance in Missouri 97 per cent of all abortions in months 3-6 of pregnancy were performed at the Truman Medical Centre, a private hospital in St Louis. But they can no longer perform abortions because they lease the land from a public body!

Only one woman in every ten who choose abortion undergoes the procedure in a hospital: but those who have severe or life-threatening medical conditions are at greater

risk; others depend upon hospitals as their only source of health care (particularly poor or rural women) or discover foetal disease or deformity only later in their pregnancy.

Poor women and women of colour suffer disproportionately from a variety of serious health conditions which may be exacerbated by pregnancy. The few hospitals which may still be able to meet the criteria of being 'private' will not be able to service all the women who need hospitalisation – and these hospitals are also the ones most vulnerable to anti-abortion boycott campaigns.

If hospital abortions are effectively outlawed, medical personnel will no longer receive training in abortion procedures, and knowledge of the procedure will effectively disappear from medical schools. This in turn would drive abortion underground even if legal, making it potentially less safe.

■ The Court upheld viability-testing procedures for women 20 weeks pregnant, despite medical testimony that foetal viability begins only around the 24th week.

Such testing adds between 125-450 dollars to the cost of an abortion, and one such test, amniocentesis, itself has a one per cent risk of inducing a miscarriage or causing haemorrhage or infection. Such tests could delay an already late abortion by one or two more weeks, make it still more difficult and costly.

Less than one per cent of all abortions take place after 20 weeks, but this provision is extremely important: it is often very young women who have late abortions because they did not realise they were pregnant (or denied the fact), or were unable to scrape together the money to obtain an abortion. Other late abortions take place because of the discovery of severe foetal abnormalities or because of the woman's health.

■ The Court, by its decision, issued an in-

itation to anti-abortion activists and legislators to pass new laws restricting abortion. Everything is up for grabs. At a minimum, additional restrictions will result in increasing the cost of an abortion, or bring delays, increasing the risk to a woman's health, and ensuring that those with the least resources are the hardest hit – the poor, the young, and women of colour.

Even if abortion remains legal, if women believe access is cut off, illegal abortions may resurface. Shortly after the Hyde amendment cut off funding for women under Medicaid, hospitals saw women appearing suffering from infections and other complications of self-induced or illegal abortions.

The Supreme Court also agreed to review three more abortion cases this autumn. One challenges early abortions by forcing outpatient abortion clinics and doctors' surgeries to become mini-hospitals: this would affect 94 per cent of all abortions, and would probably double the price (currently averaging 230 dollars).

The other two cases deal with parental consent before a minor can obtain an abortion. The rate of teenage sexual activity is similar through the various industrialised countries, but the USA has the highest rate of pregnancy – clearly Europeans have more effective sex education programmes. Despite the fact that fertility is at its peak during these years, half of all teenagers are sexually active a year before they obtain birth control. Consequently 40 per cent of all US teenage women become pregnant by their twentieth birthday. More than a million US teenagers become pregnant every year, and almost half choose to have abortions.

Given the high rate of pregnancy, it is not surprising that 25 per cent of all abortions are performed on teenage women. Approximately 50-65 per cent of those who have abortions confide in one or both of their parents. However legislation in more than half of all states (some not enforced at present due to court orders) demands parental consent before abortion is legal.

Though public support for legal abortion is higher than ever in the US, still opinion polls show 61 per cent believe it is morally wrong, and 57 per cent believe it is murder. The Supreme Court has indicated it is willing to restrict women's right to legal abortion in several fundamental ways. It is in this new context that supporters of women's rights must discuss possible strategies to fight back.

Dianne Feeley

Life's not so grand in the Rio Grande ... for victims of US immigration control

'Corpses of Nicaraguans slowly appear. The cadavers of a group of Nicaraguans who were forced to throw themselves into the river by the criminal 'pateros' (river-crossing smugglers) slowly appeared floating in the waters of the Rio Grande ... the pateros who saw the police coming shouted to the Nicaraguans 'throw yourselves into the water, here comes the police ... only a few saved themselves; the majority went down in the Rio Grande'.

'The body of a woman ... was found dead and recovered from the waters of the Rio Grande near a place called Las Piedras ... at first sight she did not present signs of violence, nonetheless the coroner established that she had bled from her private parts, indicating that she could well have been attacked with some object'.

It is perhaps irrelevant from the point of view of those on the immediate receiving end of immigration controls to argue that restrictions in some countries are worse than in others. However the enforcement of controls on the USA/Mexican border, particularly in the Rio Grande valley, is a shocking indictment of immigration laws generally. It is also a salutary warning of the extremes to which controls in the UK are also rapidly heading.

The above quotations, taken from border newspapers, show how refugees and migrants from central America are confronted with the twentieth century equivalent of a shark-filled moat, namely the Rio Grande, infested both by gangsters and 'la migra' (the colloquial name for the US Immigration and Nationality Services, the INS).

In the Rio Grande there is a powerful racist lobby supporting controls - the rhetoric of which finds strong echoes in the UK. In November 1988 the elected officials of Cameron County, which includes Brownsville, the border crossing town closest to Mexico, passed a resolution against undocumented aliens on the grounds that they



Fighting a tide of state racism: anti-racist demonstration in Georgia

put a strain on social services, diminished the quality of life, and increased crime. It requested the state legislature of Texas to purge aliens from the voter rolls.

One official proclaimed: 'We don't know what diseases these people are bringing in ... all they are here for is to get on relief'. County Judge D.J. Lerma announced that 'The words on the Statue of Liberty don't tell people to run across the Rio Grande illegally'. The Statue of Liberty in fact speaks of the USA welcoming the 'poor and huddled masses', but of course it was erected at a time when the US as an immigrant country was actively encouraging more immigrant labour.

Projecto Libertad

The main source of legal help for refugees and migrants in the area is Projecto Libertad (PL). This is an immigration law centre based at Harlingen, just outside Brownsville, where the INS also has its local headquarters. PL's October 1988 newsletter gives vivid examples of the operation of immigration laws in the Rio Grande.

It shows how difficult it is for refugees to obtain asylum at all, describing one successful case this way: 'Joe Guerra, a Salvadoran student who had distributed leaflets for the Movimiento Estudiantil Revolucionario Salvadoreño (MERS) fled the country after a friend disappeared, he was granted asylum by Judge Vomacka, making him only the fourth Salvadoran asylum granted in the valley to a PL client in 7 years'.

PL is fighting cases alleging INS violence. One case is being fought under the Federal Tort Claims Act on behalf of Jose and Josefina

Ruiz, a Mexican couple who were taken off a freight train by Border patrol agents near Harlingen. Josefina, who was pregnant, was yanked down from the boxcar by agents, and fell five feet. Afterwards she felt pain, bled, and had difficulties with her pregnancy. When they got to the Border Patrol station, Jose was beaten by agents.

PL also highlights the undercover world of bogus, parasitic immigration 'advisors' generated by immigration controls. The PL newsletter explains that 'what is happening is that the rip-off artists, notary publics, including a number of Nicaraguan hustlers ('freedom fighters'), are charging refugees exorbitant prices for what basically amounts to translating asylum forms. Since the INS won't allow refugees to apply in Spanish, the hucksters crowd people into motels and rip them off for thousands of dollars for 'permisos' (permits). They do not explain the asylum process, and in fact often fill out the forms in such a way as to undermine a person's claim'.

Chronology of victimisation

The history of the Rio Grande valley in the last five years has been one of the INS and its Border Control Agents constantly tightening the screw, with only occasional and temporary legal restraints. Indeed in 1984 the Harlingen INS office declared that it would not even lodge 'affirmative' asylum applications - that is from central American refugees simply turning up and making applications.

This policy was in breach of both the United Nations Convention on Refugees, and the United States' own 1980 Refugees Act. The consequence of the policy was that



Bush courting votes from the law and order enforcement community: now the Rio Grande has been turned into a concentration camp

refugees had to wait to be arrested and go to court to ask for asylum: the only exception was for Nicaraguans. In July 1987, then Attorney general, Edward Meese, issued a directive that Nicaragua should be given favourable treatment in asylum applications. This in itself is a clear indication of the political motivation behind the USA's treatment of refugees: no asylum for those fleeing US-backed military dictatorships in El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras, but a welcome for those leaving Nicaragua, whose economy has been devastated by US-backed Contras. As late as February 1988 a Guatemalan woman assisted by PL in filling out an asylum form was told to leave the INS office because 'Guatemalans can't apply: only Nicaraguans'. She was later arrested walking down the street.

As a result of pressure and campaigning by PL and the local refugee Rights Coalition, the INS was forced in May 1988 to start accepting affirmative applications from other central Americans. Between May and December 1988 there were over 27,000 asylum requests at the INS Harlingen office.

In response to this, the INS decided to launch its own 'alien invasion' scare campaign. Omer Sewell, its local director, claimed that the INS was like 'the Dutch boy with his finger in the dam, except we don't have our finger in the dam ... the asylees are just pouring through here'. According to the *San Antonio Express*: 'Border patrol agents said the new policy has hampered their efforts to control the border'. Backed up by this propaganda, the INS in southern Texas announced a new policy in December 1988: all people applying for asylum had to stay physically in the

Rio Grande valley while their applications were being considered.

Refugee applicants resorted to living in trees, under bushes, in primitive camps, abandoned buildings and church shelters. Even the local Senator, Lloyd Bentsen, failed Democratic candidate for Vice President and not known for any advocacy of the rights of refugees, said that 'They are turning south Texas into a massive detention centre with this policy'.

In addition to this, the INS declared that work authorisation would be refused to applicants. This is similar to the little-publicised provision, hidden away in the Schedule, of the latest 1988 UK Immigration Act, whereby denial of work authorisation can for the first time be made a condition of temporary entry. Such laws are in contravention of Article 17 of the UN Convention, which obliges governments to protect refugees' rights to engage in gainful employment.

The 'legal massacre' of February 1989

On February 20, the head of the INS, Commissioner Alan Nelson, flew personally to Brownsville to publicise a new 'action plan' for south Texas. This read like a declaration of war on refugees. It called for an 'expedited adjudication' on asylum claims, and immediate detention of those who do apply and are refused.

The 'action plan' involved an increase of at least 500 new INS personnel just for the Harlingen district - comprising 269 more Border Patrol agents; 74 INS 'adjudicators' and support staff; 30 more detention and deporta-

tion workers; 16 special agents; and 141 INS, State Department and immigration court personnel. Parallel to all this would be a massive prison allocation programme.

To house the expected number of detainees, the INS was to erect a tent city at its Port Isabel Service Processing Centre (PISPC), near Bayview in Texas. There was to be provision for 5,000 people. There were to be 200 additional places at Webb County detention facility and several hundred detainees would be sent to El Paso. In addition there would be 'soft-detention', sub-contracted private facilities, mainly for families with children, where detainees could theoretically go out, but would be subject to daily roll-calls: one such centre was to be the Red Cross Shelter in Brownsville.

Nelson 'justified' this quite incredible plan by saying that the new measures would 'send a strong signal to those people who have the mistaken idea that by merely filling a frivolous asylum claim they may stay in the United States. This wilful manipulation of America's generosity must stop.'

On February 21, a day described by PL as 'a legal massacre', Nelson's scenario became a reality. Of the 233 applications processed on that day, only two were granted - both Nicaraguans. 215 were refused and immediately imprisoned in Port Isabel. 16 were given two weeks to produce further documentation. Interviews lasted only 30 or 40 minutes, and lawyers from PL were forcibly ejected when they attempted to advise refugees in the Port Isabel prison tent city. This denial of legal help to refugees was contrary to a recent US District Court decision

which condemned the refusal of such help. Catholic bishops in Texas denounced Port Isabel as the 'creation of the largest concentration camp on US soil since the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War 2'.

The visible public implementation of this 'legal massacre' prompted the INS into making even more cynical justifications for its actions. At a House of Representatives Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, Alan Nelson argued that all detentions were 'voluntary', since refugees always had the option of abandoning their asylum claims and returning home! The INS portrayed Port Isabel as some kind of holiday camp: spokesperson Virginia Kice said 'some people say it is inhumane to keep people here. But they are clothed, fed, sheltered, and receive medical care. I think that in some situations they're living in better conditions than in their home countries.' Similar cynicism has been displayed by the British Home Office, notably when in 1987 Tamils were incarcerated on the prison hulk the Earl William, and the Home Office said 'We think the accommodation is really very comfortable'.

Detention of Children

The detention of minors by the INS has been a long-standing scandal. An estimated 5,500 young central Americans were apprehended in 1986, and it is estimated that at any one time between 150 and 200 children are detained by the agency, frequently being used as 'bait' to capture their undocumented parents who come looking for them.

Who are these young people? One was a 16-year old wounded veteran of two years combat who had been press-ganged into the Salvadoran army at 13. Another Salvadoran boy detainee, also press-ganged, described how he had seen 'subversives' decapitated at the military base.

With the legal massacre of February, the detention of minors increased. Some were held in an already existing centre for refugee children in Los Fresnos. In addition the INS planned to construct a new centre at Brownsville to house 58 children.

The treatment of detained minors in the Rio Grande appears to have reached the level of legally sanctioned torture. Here is one news report: 'Servando Betancourt, convicted of criminally negligent homicide for snapping the neck of a Cameron County juvenile detainee, received a one-year probated sen-



In Britain, desperate families like this, faced with the threat of deportation under racist laws, have sought sanctuary - here in a mosque in central Birmingham

John Harris/FL

tence and no fine ... the 15 year old Mexican detainee, estimated to be five feet tall and weigh 100 pounds, died June 2nd ...'

Getting out of the valley

Getting out of the Rio Grande valley is not easy for the undocumented. INS officers raid Greyhound buses in the valley demanding every hispanic-looking person shows identification. Refugees are compelled once again to put their lives at risk, this time trying to escape further north. Two newspaper reports help illustrate the problem:

'Thirty five dehydrated Salvadorans were found inside a sweltering boxcar during temperatures nearing 130 degrees, authorities said ... The Salvadorans, including three women and two 14-year old boys had been locked inside the car for five hours. Some were trying to get air through holes in the boxcar. ... the aliens told Border Patrol that an unidentified man in Brownsville offered to get them to Houston for 300 600 dollars'.

'A 31-year old Guatemalan was shot and robbed during negotiations with professional illegal smugglers. ... Odilio de Jesus Ceron Lima was shot at least five times with a shot-

gun ... the victim was to pay the smugglers to take him and at least 12 other Guatemalans from the Rio Grande valley to Houston'.

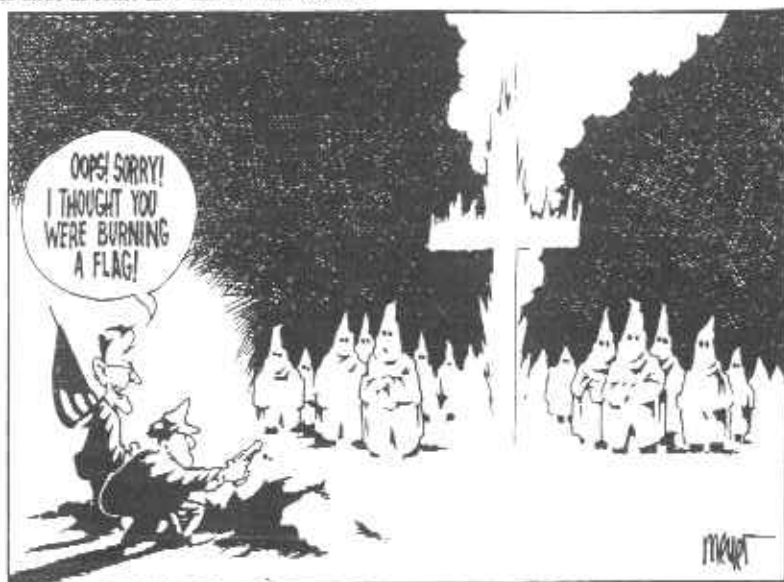
The Rio Grande as a war zone

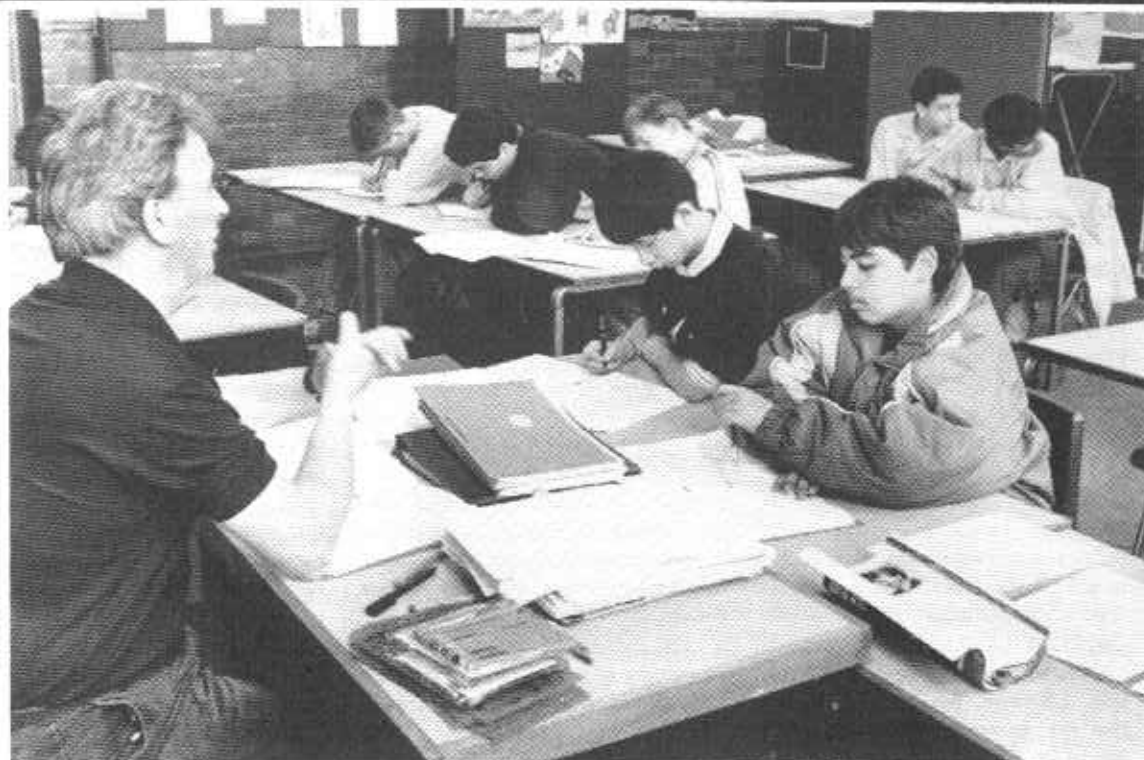
For at least the last five years the Rio Grande valley has been both a detention centre and a militarized zone in respect to migrants and refugees. There are regular INS reconnaissance flights over the border; miniature transmitters for audio surveillance have been scattered throughout the area to detect movement of vehicles and people. Added to this are compact television cameras, night-vision cameras and a growing array of computer-based surveillance techniques.

The war-zone has been extended to other areas having a land border with Mexico. In January 1989 the INS announced a huge scheme to construct a ditch running though San Ysidro in California: it will be 14 feet wide, 5 feet deep and 4 miles long. Even this is insufficient for the anti-immigrant lobby. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) has recently issued a document *Ten steps to securing America's borders*. These include such 'deterrent' measures as the construction of metal and concrete fencing along the entire land border, the greater use of 'imaging devices' such as low light television and infra-red scopes; and the increased use of seismic, magnetic and infra-red sensors along the border.

This truly is the technology and enthusiasm of the Vietnam War being brought to bear on the control of immigration of people from the 'third world' into the hinterland of the USA - 'land of the free'.

By Steve Cohen





Graeme Cookson

Tory classroom offensive: will Labour pass the test?

Any assessment of the weaknesses in Tory education policy in England and Wales must begin with a recognition of the Tories' considerable political achievements.

In ten years, with accelerating pace, they have demolished much of the framework and ideology of post-war education, and broken up the system of political alliances which underpinned it. The doctrine that underlay post-war reform held that economic progress depended upon a more general provision of a higher-quality education, and upon equalising the opportunities available to students from different social classes. Although the opportunities offered were for the most part seized by the less 'disadvantaged' members of society, this understanding of the nature of reform had real effects. It suggested that the 'needs of the economy' could be met by an undifferentiated expansion of education — one which was not formally and deliberately targeted on particular

manpower needs and particular social groups.

It is this position which the Conservatives are now dismantling. They reject the idea that a universal expansion of education is necessary to meet the needs they identify. They favour a much higher degree of targeting and selection: selection within schools, so as to maintain academic streams, and to develop technical ones; selection between schools, so as to build up centres of scholarly excellence or colleges of technology. In each case, it is implicit that there are groups who are not targeted for special treatment, for whom lower levels of education and different conceptions of relevance are proposed.

Selectiveness of this kind has a political, as well as an economic rationale. Selection in the past benefited relatively small groups; the system that the right-wing Black Papers advocated in the 1970s, for instance, comprised only five to eight per cent of the state school population. Conservative policy now proposes several different types of selection, in a sys-

tem which would involve a large segment of the student population in schools for which their parents had opted, and which had, in turn, decided to select them. Traditional isn't the right word for this system.

It's not simply a return to models of the past. It incorporates, of course, elements of older selective systems: the grammar school will survive. But overall it is new, and in its newness corresponds to other developing features of the economy, and of class and political relations, in Mrs Thatcher's Britain. In this wider arena, too, groups once fairly homogeneous in their exclusion from wealth and their opposition to Conservatism begin to disintegrate. In education, as in society as a whole, the Tories hope to draw some of these groupings into the orbit of Conservatism, by giving them a stake in the existence of selection and (relative) privilege.

The Tories make two major claims for their programme. The first is that it is a modernisation of the school system: the curriculum is

As the new term starts, teachers, pupils, lecturers and students are up against the effects of the Tory assault on education. The Queen's Speech will contain proposals on student loans, while Kenneth Baker's onslaught on the schools is still working through. The articles in this supplement look at aspects of the Tory plans, and discuss ways of fighting back.

"For many years, the Tories were thought of as the stupid party in education: their policy was nostalgic, concerned more to preserve the past than to restructure it. The description is no longer adequate"

being updated; the 'needs of industry' are being more effectively served. In several respects, the claim is a credible one. For many years, the Tories were thought of as the stupid party in education: their policy was nostalgic, concerned more to preserve the past than to restructure it. The description is no longer adequate. Certainly, the Tories have utilised an appeal to 'tradition' against what they have characterised as 'loony' reforms; that is one of the bases from which they have attacked programmes of race equality. But in other respects, they have been keen to embrace the new.

The 'Technical and Vocational Education Initiative', for instance, promoted a student-centred, activity-based curriculum, proud of its 'relevance' and blazoning its opposition to the academic and book-based models of the grammar-school tradition. Likewise, the working parties that the government has set up to devise a National Curriculum are reporting in terms that reflect the progressive opinion of education professionals, rather than the Tory right. Roger Scruton may think of education as 'an extended war against relevance'; not so, the DES.

The think-tanks of the right – the Centre for Policy Studies, for instance – see this as a betrayal. It is better seen as a compromise, made from a position of strength, that is based both on a realisation of the poverty of the right's own ideas about teaching and learning, and on a desire to convert progressive potential critics of change into functionaries of reform. In this last respect, the government has been successful.

Many of those at the higher levels of education – teacher trainers, local authority advisors and so on – who hold personal beliefs favourable to progressive education now see their role as working within the framework of the National Curriculum. It does not, after all, seem to be the embodiment of reaction, and it is possible for professionals, through their involvement, to limit the influence of the right. There is a price, though, for this strategy. The Tories have set clear rules for joining their game: curriculum reform will from now on be implemented from the top, with none of that scope for egalitarian impulses that marked earlier periods of change.

The second claim the Tories make – and again, this is one which has some popular appeal – is that they have made the system more democratic, and more accountable.

They have increased parent representation on school governing bodies and strengthened their powers. 'Parental choice' of school has been widened, and schools – through the publication of annual reports and exam results – have been forced into greater accountability. In this way, Tories claim, the old system, based on town hall bureaucracy and teachers who believed that they knew best, has been replaced.

Such, then, are the outlines of the Tory system, and the political strengths they claim for it. But will the system work? Can it deliver the skilled, work-orientated students that industry, in certain numbers, requires? Can it command the loyalties of large numbers of parents, students and teachers? There are many reasons for doubt.

The first is the continued under-resourcing of education, and the lack of planning to deal with key issues. The National Curriculum may itself be a model of careful planning, but it is an isolated example of purposeful activity in a landscape shaped by a principle of neglect. Over the last year, a series of reports from establishment quarters – the CBI, the School Inspectorate, Parliamentary Select Committees – have complained about fundamental weaknesses in the system.

Nursery education is inadequate, with serious effects on students' later performance. Post-16 education is a mess. Too few students stay on in education. Training schemes – such as YTS – develop 'skills' at too low a level for industrial need. Spending on all sectors of education is insufficient, most notably in the case of teachers' pay, whose inadequacies have given rise to acute problems of teacher shortage.

There is a second difficulty that arises from the way change is being pushed through. The Tory programme is one of top-down reform. It doesn't rest upon the involvement of teachers. Quite the opposite: it aims to direct a transformation of the workforce. As Martin Allen's article shows, it wants to see a teaching force that is more closely managed, less unionised, harder-working, cheaper. Such changes are paralleled by a loss of educational initiative: teachers will play a great part in the implementation of change, but virtually none in its original devising.

The overall effect of these new pressures on teachers, now that the moment of militancy has, for the time being passed, is a strong sense of

alienation. It makes the work of many teachers a depressing experience. But it is also a problem for the government. Its curriculum reforms envisage an active role for the teacher, who is meant to encourage the enquiries of the student and devise new schemes of work, based on the nationally-set 'programmes of study'. Yet, outside the urgings of the curriculum working parties, government policy – on pay, conditions and teacher involvement – works against such a role. It is thus guaranteed to produce negative responses – from a quiet with-holding of commitment, to a possible resurgence of teacher militancy.

But it is not only among teachers that problems will grow. Parents have been promised a greater say in the running of schools. The hope is that in taking on managerial responsibilities, they will develop a sense of 'self-help' and 'making do'. Faced with shortages of cash, they will organise a jumble sale, or sack a cleaner, rather than make a protest. From a Tory point of view, this is an optimistic assumption. The government's underfunding of education runs the danger of creating a parents' movement that is less interested in 'choice' than in overall levels of resources. In the right circumstances, particularly in the inner cities, it could be a real force.

Finally, there are the students who will experience the new education and all the testing that goes with it. Tory policy has put a stop to most radical experiment, intended to develop an education relevant to the needs of working class and black students. Instead, the National Curriculum claims to deliver an education which will be 'relevant' to all, whatever their 'race, gender, or background'. This is a dubious claim. Although they apply some progressive principles, the proposals of the national curriculum working parties embody values and cultures remote from the experience of many students. They are thus unlikely to solve historic problems of under-achievement. Testing students at 7, 11, 14 and 16 – producing in many a strong sense of failure – is also unlikely to increase the commitment of students from oppressed groups.

There are several reasons, then, for doubting whether Tory policy is capable of carrying out its project of right-wing modernisation. It has, though, achieved some notable successes. Most significant has been a general shift to the right in the terms of educational debate and policy.

"The government's underfunding of education runs the danger of creating a parents' movement that is less interested in 'choice' than in overall levels of resources"

making. Many of the priorities and much of the language of the Conservative programme now find an echo in the Labour Party: the stress on 'standards', choice, and consumer rights, for instance. Modified versions of the Tories' central projects – the national curriculum, local management of schools, education for industry – are now enshrined in Labour's Policy Review, and awarded socialist credentials. They do not deserve them. As the Socialist Teachers' Alliance's *Charter for Education* says:

'The curriculum should be attentive to the real cultures of the people who live in Britain. It should not transmit the versions of the national culture promoted by the dominant class ... The culture which students bring to school with them should neither be disregarded, nor patronised, but should be at the centre of many aspects of the curriculum. At the same time, schools should aim to develop in all students the conceptual and linguistic advantages that the dominant group has long enjoyed.'

These are not the values of the National Curriculum. Nor does the 'Local Management of Schools' system endorsed by Labour amount to a programme for democracy in education. It offers parents a role in managing resources, not in discussions of teaching and learning. It is accompanied by measures which reduce the job security and trade union strength of those who work in schools.

With its present policies, Labour is well placed to take advantage of some major weaknesses in the Tory programme: on issues of training, resources, nursery education and



Gravene Cookson

teacher shortage. But with its new realist distaste for trade unionism, and its refusal to make any promises about conditions of service, it will not be able to win the active support of teachers and other school-workers. Nor will it be able to encourage radical curriculum initiative, based on a dialogue with those who use education.

Socialists have other priorities. One of the most important is to rebuild effective trade unionism. But trade unionism alone is not enough. It is also necessary to establish the links between schools and communities the absence of which allowed the Tories much of their opportunity. In some cases it will be possible to use the institutions set up or reinforced by the Tories – the governing bodies, the annual parents' meetings – to organise activity against cuts, and to take up wider

educational issues.

This final, difficult point is vital to constructing an alternative programme to that established by the Tories, and modified by Labour. So long as activity remains limited to trade union and 'anti-cuts' activity it will not challenge important aspects of the Tory achievement. That's why, after a long – 60-year – absence, issues of education content and control, of curriculum and democracy must be put back on the socialist agenda.

The STA's *Charter* is a first attempt to do this. Further efforts are currently being made by a working group of the Socialist Movement. They deserve wide attention, from all who are committed to developing popular, detailed, convincing alternatives to acquiescence in much of the Thatcher achievement.

Ken Jones

“...after a long – 60-year – absence, issues of education content and control, of curriculum and democracy must be put back on the socialist agenda”

Fighting the Education Reform Act in schools

A successful fightback against the Tory attacks in education depends on rebuilding confidence amongst the workforce.

The ERA has meant a huge increase in workload for classroom teachers and therefore the question of building grassroots resistance is crucial. Further than this, however, trade unionists must build new alliances with others involved to challenge some of the assumptions involved in education and develop a new

'popular' education programme in the interests of the working class and the oppressed.

We should remember the situation in which Baker initially introduced the legislation. Between 1984 and 1986, the teaching unions were involved in a prolonged period of industrial action in pursuit of improved levels of pay. While this action was always of a limited nature, teachers were able to keep the Tory education offensive at bay. Keith Joseph, the

one-time guru of the 'New Right', resigned as Secretary of State for Education and the dispute, unfolding in the shadow of the miners' strike, saw the increased politicisation of teachers, many of whom had traditionally voted Conservative at elections.

The defeat of the pay campaign was followed by the imposition of a strict 'contract' of employment. Duties which had for a long time constituted 'professional good will' –



Carl Taylor

such as after-school meetings and 'cover' for absences – now became contractual. Trade union negotiating rights were abolished, and pay settlements imposed. At the same time, particularly in the rate-capped

the union came under attack. The leadership attempted to abolish annual conference as part of a policy of centralisation of control. A witchhunt took place against leaders of the Inner London Teachers Association, who

authorities, education cuts became regular events. The ILEA, already lined up for abolition by the Tories, pursued an extensive redeployment programme, with many trade union activists being moved from their schools.

The leadership of the NUT moved quickly to the right. Under the increased influence of Doug McAvoy, soon to be the new general secretary, democracy within

organised strikes and demonstrations against Baker – on the coldest day of 1987, six thousand ILTA members struck and took to the streets.

After being suspended for a year, the ILTA leadership was reinstated: yet morale amongst union activists has remained low. Baker and the Tories need a generally passive and compliant teacher force if their long-term plans for education are to be successful.

Despite these attacks, the left within the NUT has remained strong. At this year's Conference, large numbers of delegates opposed the direction in which the Executive were taking the union. Resolutions backed by the Socialist Teachers Alliance had the leadership – made up of a block between the Labour right and Communists (of all varieties) – on the rack. Campaigns on salaries, where the STA called for a £2,500 flat rate increase for all teachers, defence of conditions of service and opposition to proposals for national testing, will continue this academic year.

No profit for lecturers in 'business-style' Polys

Determined to transform Polytechnics and Institutes of Higher Education from places of education into profit making, Thatcherite enterprises, the Polytechnic and Colleges Employers Forum have offered lecturers a miserable pay increase of 5.75% from April '88 – '89, tied to the acceptance of the new-style contract.

Talk of 'competing in the market for undergraduates' and 'paying lecturers more than university staff' are just pie in the sky. What the deal is really about is a massive worsening of conditions for lecturers (and as a result for all who work in this sector). A 38 week year will be extended to 46, a 30 hour attendance week will become 'at least 37 hours'; and all work,

whether it is research, guest lectures outside the home institution, writing books, will have to be agreed with the 'manager' – an all-out attack on academic freedom. A fourth term will almost certainly be introduced so that 'revenue generation' can take place – fleecing rich American students by running courses on 'Culture'.

This delightful offer was rejected at the beginning of September by the lecturers' union NATFHE, and no new talks are planned. At the same time talks with local authorities have also broken down, with the employers refusing to improve an offer of 5.3% for lecturers in Further Education also linked to flexible working. A strike ballot is being held for this group to take action of October 17.

Unfortunately NATFHE has so far only

called for 'the tightening of sanctions, ballots on exam sanctions and local action' in Higher Education. There is some disquiet among lecturers about the exam sanctions which was the tactic used by the AUT (Association of University Teachers) in their fight for better pay. In the event there was a rapid resolution between the AUT and the University authorities before exams started, and the lecturers didn't get a lot more than the original offer.

But there are more problems with it than its past history, for it hits students at their most vulnerable time. In most cases it will affect students in their last year when they are at their least militant and when collective action is least likely.

What is much more likely to be a successful tactic is a series of national one and two day strikes.

These can be organised in conjunction with students, who will anyhow be organising action against loans this year.

NATFHE will probably argue that they will be taken to court for secondary action if they call national stoppages in Higher Education as each institution is now a 'ple'. But the question is – how can we win? Confining action to the localities immediately affected – like Kingston Polytechnic where new-style contracts have been issued to new staff this summer – will only isolate separate institutions. We have to argue that whatever the legal status of Polytechnics and Institutes of Higher Education, this is a national dispute over conditions with a national negotiating body. National action is the way this will be won.

"A fourth term will almost certainly be introduced so that 'revenue generation' can take place – fleecing rich American students by running courses on 'Culture'"

It is around Local Management of Schools (LMS) that there will be most opportunity to campaign for popular models of the local control of schools and the development of alliances with local community groups. The Tory claims that LMS 'opens up' schools to greater influence by the 'users' of the education service must be exposed. Kenneth Baker's statement about there being 'winners and losers' under LMS is clearly correct. The losers will be schools with largely working class pupils, progressive Labour authorities, and the school workforce.

Teachers returned to work this new academic year with vacancy levels at their highest ever, workloads on the up and up and having seen their NALGO colleagues win a 'no strings' agreement well above the miserly 5.9% imposed on teachers in April. Action by teachers with other school workers could be a catalyst for a campaign against the Tories in which the ERA is challenged. The fight will be a long one.

Martin Allen



Local Management of Schools (LMS)

- an issue for the labour movement

Education is by far the largest sector of local government. It accounts for a half or more of local council spending.

Local authorities have had the power to make use of that money to implement distinctive local priorities. The ability to implement policies, particularly on 'race' and gender, that reflected different educational priorities from those of the Tory government was one of the most important gains of the left Labour authorities of the last decade.

That period is now over. Not simply because of the political defeat of 'municipal socialism', but because the Tories have now completely changed the rules of the game. Starting next April control of 90% of the education budget (increasing to 93% by 1996) is being taken away from Local Education Authorities and placed in the hands of the governing bodies of all but some of the smallest primary schools. (It's a year later in Inner London).

LMS gives school governors

power in two important respects. Firstly, it gives them the power to decide what the schools's educational priorities and policies are to be. They have to operate within the framework of the national curriculum and national testing, of course, but that still leaves leeway for the governors to decide if the school is going to be a flagship of Thatcherite education or to attempt as far as possible to adhere to more radical and egalitarian principles. Secondly, LMS gives governors the power to decide how the school budget is spent. By far the largest item of expenditure is the salaries of teachers (about two thirds of the total budget) and non-teaching staff: cleaners, secretaries, caretakers, school meals workers etc. When money is tight the obvious way to balance the books is to reduce labour costs.

At stake then under LMS are two vital issues for the working class in education: one is what is taught and how it's taught. The other is the jobs and conditions of school workers. Battles that have been fought at local

council level on these issues will now often have to be fought again in each school.

Under a progressive Labour government, with a different national policy framework and a substantial increase in educational expenditure, LMS could represent a real step forward for popular democracy in education. Under the Tories, it represents something very different. Their intention is that LMS will decimate the powers of Labour LEAs and the strength of the unions in education by creating an education market-place in which schools will compete against each other like private businesses for pupils and hence funding. Each school is to be run by a chief executive, the head, now armed with the latest in business management techniques, and a board of directors, the governors. The expression of a collective alternative will be impossible: LEAs will be powerless to impose their policies on the schools, and the unions will be atomised by the laws on secondary industrial action into 28,000 separate workplaces. The

Women for Socialism Dayschool: 'Women and Education' (speakers Caroline Benn and Martha Osamor) October 7, 10am-4pm, Wesley House, 4, Wild Court, London WC2. Cost £5/£3/£2

"The Labour Party leadership should be organising a national campaign now to arm its supporters in the schools with the arguments and the tactics to resist the Tory offensive in education. Of course it will do no such thing"

"Every Labour LEA should be setting up a Governors Support Unit to provide not just initial training but ongoing coordination, briefing and back-up on a socialist basis"

Tories' gamble is that school governors – including those tens of thousands who are Labour supporters – will be compelled by the irresistible combination of national education policies and the laws of the education market to act as the transmission agents, however reluctant, of the Tories' educational aims.

The spearhead of the LMS offensive is the threat that governors will try to solve their financial dilemmas at the expense of jobs and conditions. Already one teacher union is talking of 30,000 teaching jobs at risk, resulting in larger classes. How many of these will be redundancies and how many natural wastage remains to be seen. In addition, conditions of service will worsen: temporary contracts will become the norm, workloads will increase, equal opportunities will be undermined.

But LMS is a gamble. The Tories can undoubtedly base themselves on a certain popular dissatisfaction with education, and try to claim the banner of parental power against town hall bureaucracy and teacher dominance. Essentially this is the legacy of the last thirty years of social-democratic educational reformism, and a key task for the left is to develop a convincing radical alternative to that tradition. But it is also true that there is real popular support for many of the gains of progressive primary and comprehensive education, and certainly a belief that the Tories are not spending enough on the schools. The question is, can that potential opposition be turned into an effective alliance for resistance?

LMS, while gravely weakening the ability of the labour movement to oppose Tory policies at the LEA level, paradoxically opens the door to grassroots action at school level. For the unions, defending their members will entail stronger and more autonomous workplace organisation, with a consequent undermining of the hold of their new realist leaderships. The increased powers of school governors means more power to parents, to community activists (as coopted governors) and to Labour Party supporters, of whom there must be at least a hundred thousand, maybe twice or three times that number, on governing bodies, not just as Labour Party nominees. If they can unite with teachers and other school workers around common objectives, they can make of LMS a Trojan horse for the Tories.

The Labour Party leadership should be organising a national cam-

paign now to arm its supporters in the schools with the arguments and the tactics to resist the Tory offensive in education. Of course it will do no such thing. It is symptomatic that the motion from the Socialist Education Association to this year's Party conference, which is invariably passed, is concerned only with education policy after a Labour government is elected, and makes no mention of the need for resistance now to the most reactionary onslaught on education for sixty years.

Fortunately we don't have to wait for the Labour leadership. Local Labour Party branches can begin now to get organised for LMS. Up till now, though being a school governor is probably the largest single area of involvement by labour movement representatives in the state apparatus, it has hardly featured on the agenda of the left. Being a school governor is seen as something worthy but peripheral to the mainstream of Labour Party politics. The Tories have changed that. Every CLP, every branch, has school governors in it, whether as Party nominees, or parents, or teachers, or coopted members. The first step is to identify them, and then to bring them together on a constituency and a city-wide basis. Governors' support groups can overcome isolation and help give ordinary working people on governing bodies the arguments and the confidence to stand up to Tory sympathisers and manipulative heads. Without that Labour governors will end up rubber-stamping the Tory agenda, and at worst sacking trade unionists to balance the Tories' books.

The only way governors can begin to resist Tory policies is by basing themselves on the collective strength of teachers and other school workers on the one hand, and parents and the community on the other. This is the strategic alliance that will have to be built in the bitter local struggles that will occur at school level as LMS is introduced and the national curriculum and national testing get under way. The alternative is teachers and parents trying to solve their problems at each others' expense. The bottom line of such alliances has to be support by parents – and school students – for industrial action by school staff, but that can't be taken for granted: teachers have to reach out beyond their sectoral interests and actively seek to construct common understandings and objectives.

Governors are well placed to play a key role in building that coalition of

interests, but their ability to do so depends upon the stance they take over cuts in jobs and conditions and educational attacks. It is impossible to build an alliance with people if you are at the same time cutting their jobs or overriding their educational concerns. Instead of being the reluctant agents of Tory attacks, Labour governors should be aiming to build a coalition of support for their *refusing to implement them*. There are analogies here with the position of Labour councillors. *In particular, Labour governors must refuse to attack the jobs and conditions of teachers and other school workers.* That means running the school into the red and campaigning for more money from the LEA and the government. It means demanding that Labour councillors then *refuse to carry out their legal obligation to step in and take over the management of the school from the governors in order to make the cuts needed to balance the school budget.*

Finally, there still remain two important political roles for Labour councils after LMS. First, they still have the responsibility of allocating the education budget. We need to demand that no school suffers a cut in its budget as a result of LMS; that maximum advantage is taken of the 25% of the delegated budget that is not decided simply by pupil numbers to discriminate as much as possible in favour of working class schools; and that insofar as possible essential services are retained centrally and not delegated.

Secondly, they have to recognise the new situation, and realise that Labour councils have to respond to the shift of power to governors by putting big resources into politically and technically supporting them. Every Labour LEA should be setting up a Governors Support Unit to provide not just initial training but ongoing coordination, briefing and back-up on a socialist basis. Every district Labour Party should be setting up procedures for coordination between Labour governors and Labour councillors on the Education Committee.

Popular campaigns uniting parents, school workers and local Labour Parties can be built. LMS *could* stimulate the sort of direct working class involvement in the politics of education that has been almost entirely absent for the past decades.

Richard Hatcher

Tories give students the third degree



As the new academic year begins, students are facing the next round in the Tory onslaught. Kenneth Baker, in one of his last major performances as Education Minister, announced that after long hours of negotiations agreement had been reached between the government and the clearing banks about administering the proposed 'Top-Up Loans' scheme for students. Legislation on this will be forthcoming in the next Parliamentary session.

The term 'Top-Up' is a convenient misnomer. After being removed from the benefit system and having their already completely inadequate grants frozen, students will be substantially worse off, even if they take up the Government's generous offer of an index-linked loan of about £400 per year. This effective abolition of the full grant (one of the main factors in enabling any working class people to enter higher education), and the further impoverishment of students as a whole will serve only to restrict access to higher education to an even narrower section of the population.

The Tories claim to be intent on increasing access to higher education, but fail to even address the main issue in this context – the funding of 16-19 year olds. The vast majority of working class youth, women and people from the black communities who are so chronically under-represented in higher education drop out of the system at 16, without even getting anywhere near a grant or a loan. Until living grants are available to everybody from 16 this situation will continue, and schemes which ignore this reality will be at best play-

ing with fractions of the real problem.

All this comes fast on the heels of the massive restructuring of all sectors of education contained in the 'Great' Education Reform Act. This included the privatisation of the Polytechnic sector and some colleges of Higher Education, the imposition of business community representation on Further Education governing bodies, and general moves towards marketisation and an orientation to industry in the whole of post-16 education. Meanwhile, the cuts in public spending grind relentlessly on, biting deeper and deeper into the fabric of the education system. Even Oxford University, that bastion of elitism and playground of the young bourgeoisie, is in financial crisis, suffering from chronic underfunding. It seems that no ivory tower is immune.

It is clear from this litany of horrors that the refashioning of Britain's education system in her own image is a central plank of Thatcher's third term, smashing up the post-war consensus around liberal education and replacing it with something that is driven by the market, subordinated to the immediate needs of industry and designed to narrow the mind. The project is both coherent and thorough, operating at economic and ideological levels. It is also riven with contradictions.

The Tory dream of producing a well trained, compliant workforce on the cheap is simply unrealisable. Introducing loans and increasing fees will not persuade even the most talented to go to college, while many institutions are on the verge of bankruptcy. Even more galling is the fact that given any choice at all, stu-

dents consistently and overwhelmingly choose arts and social sciences courses rather than business studies and computer science. Despite the eighties phenomenon of graduate unemployment, postgraduate courses in English literature remain massively oversubscribed while the places for civil engineering are unfilled.

In line with the government's general strategy of destroying trade unions in the sectors they wish to attack to minimise resistance, they have decided it is also necessary to take on the National Union of Students. This is an organisation with no economic weight but disproportionate political influence, owing to the historical role of students in periods of social unrest and their structural position in society today.

The vast majority of Britain's students are members of the NUS and their membership of over 2 million is the most powerful weapon they have in the battle for education. The Government has rejected the sledgehammer approach to this problem, advocated by rabid right wingers such as Essex MP Tim Janman, of simply making it illegal for a local student union to affiliate to any national student organisation, and is currently considering more sophisticated options such as outlawing 'political' activity by the NUS while leaving its services intact or ending the arrangement by which students automatically become members of their college student union.

In the face of these assaults on its membership and on its very existence NUS has gone into crisis. The big political monoliths that have dominated student politics for the last

OCTOBER 18:
Manchester
Area 'Fight for
the right to
study' demo

NOVEMBER 11:
'Black struggle
and the fight
against racism'
– a conference
for the student
movement, at
LSE in London

NOVEMBER 16:
NUS National
Shutdown of
Education and
regional demos

NOVEMBER 29:
Anti-loans demo
called by NUS
London area



Carl Taylor

period are cracking and crumbling, with as yet nothing clearly coming forward to replace them. This crisis of leadership has permeated every level of the student movement. Local student unions are retreating into efficient service provision, demoralised by the violence of Thatcher's attacks and disillusioned by the failure of the NUS leadership to stand up to them. Politics is out, and 'student unionism' is in.

The force which has provided the leadership of NUS for the last five years – the 'Democratic Left' (a soft left grouping in the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS)) is more than ever revealed as politically bankrupt. The last year has witnessed a sharp fall in the number of functioning Labour Clubs, dramatic internal schisms and poor election performances. The DL now relies on alliances with forces to its right, such as the eurocommunists and various 'independents' to keep control.

Its strategy to combat the Tory offensive has proved woefully inadequate, more and more pursuing a line of tactical retreat. This year's proposed loans campaign represents the nadir of this line of capitulation, the central slogan being 'Ridiculous ideas No.1 – Student Loans!', accompanied by a Heath Robinson illustration. Loans are not ridiculous, they deliberately alter the concept of higher education, excluding still wider layers of people from its already narrow corridors. It is the NUS leadership who are ridiculous.

However, the main opposition in NUS – the *Socialist Organisation*-dominated Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), is in no better state. Having thrown away its opportunity to take control of NUS with a series of strategic blunders – such as the 'femocracy' debate, where SSiN suc-

cessfully alienated whole layers of its supporters in the liberation campaigns with its opportunistic opposition to women's autonomy and reactionary accusations of women activists using sexism and heterosexism to further their careers – the trend is clearly downwards. An orientation to capturing the bureaucracy while ignoring the base will always be fatal, however well you manoeuvre, and recent efforts to revitalise and reunite SSiN such as 'Left Unity' have failed to draw in any new activists or rise above being an SO front. The decline seems terminal.

The history of these two opposing groups is inextricably linked. They both came to prominence on the backs of Bennism in the Labour Party and have at times been defined more by the fact that they are opposed to the other rather than any positive programme. This is particularly true of the DL which has been very internally heterogeneous, held together only by a hatred of Trotskyists. It is thus not surprising that their downward trajectories are roughly parallel – indicating the dim view of Kinnock's Labour Party prevalent in the student movement, and that you can only fool people for so long.

The only growing force in NUS are the 'independents' (in which category the Greens currently fall as they have as yet no organisation or clearly defined political identity). As the name suggests, this covers a broad spectrum of political views, but they are on the whole part of an apolitical drift in the student movement, working hard to serve students' immediate needs within the parameters set down by the Government – cheap beer, welfare services etc, and shunning politics and especially political organisations as part of what they see as wrong with NUS. They consistently find themselves allied with NOLS against mass action.

The internal decay and political barrenness of much of NUS can be clearly seen in the development of the liberation campaigns. Previously one of the most dynamic sectors of the movement, forging ahead with new ideas, new debates and new structures, it was the strength of these campaigns that ensured that NUS had such progressive and radical policies on, for instance lesbian and gay liberation and a woman's right to choose, long before other national organisations.

However, the internal culture of these campaigns has become stifling and the women's and lesbian and gay

campaigns in particular are sinking into the mire of identity politics. Though activists on the ground continue to work hard and enthusiastically in their colleges and areas the amount of support and back-up they receive from the national organisation is minimal and largely directionless. Now the liberation campaigns are used and abused at Conference as pawns in what has become a battle for survival, with scant attention paid to the autonomy we have fought so long and hard for.

However, the severity of the government's attacks not only on students' immediate standards of living but on the education system as a whole has a very deep radicalising potential, some of which was demonstrated during the last year. The old Robbins principles – that higher education should be available to all those who can benefit from it – have such strong support that even those students who will have left education by the proposed date of introduction of the loans system will fight strongly to defend them. Despite the efforts of the NUS bureaucracy to defuse action and dampen the anger, last year saw a wave of action and radicalisation in the colleges, the most obvious point of which was the police charge on the November 24 demonstration. This anger will return with a vengeance as actual legislation on the proposals begins to be discussed in Parliament.

The Socialist Movement can play an important role in these developments, as an exciting, dynamic left force in the labour movement, through which students can build links with other socialists in practical activity. The open structures the Socialist Movement is developing can also enable students to participate in a range of discussions on wider issues which are so often absent from student politics.

Mass action against loans, linking with the labour movement, is the only strategy that will defeat the Tory attack. It is a strategy that must be fought for against the present NUS leadership; but the structures of NUS must not be ignored, for what we are working for is the largest possible mobilisations, the greatest and widest number of people involved. That could best be achieved with the support of the leadership. The signs are that the bureaucracy's grip on the situation is slipping: things are moving in the right direction.

Rebecca Flemming.

"Loans are not ridiculous, they deliberately alter the concept of higher education, excluding still wider layers of people from its already narrow corridors. It is the NUS leadership who are ridiculous"

The downhill road to Brighton '89

TURNING FULL CIRCLE

Ten years in the life of the Labour Party

As the Left at this year's Labour Party Conference contemplate yet 'another fine mess', while Kinnock's careerist team revel in the latest poll figures, PETE FIRMIN chronicles the political changes since Labour was last in office – and the role of the Left.

The Last Labour Governments

The Labour governments of 1974-79 under Wilson and Callaghan were a disaster for the working class. The IMF, NATO and multinationals dictated policies – cuts in social spending, three years of wage-cutting 'social contract', and vigorous support for NATO (and Polaris). To prop up his majority Callaghan made pacts with explicitly anti-working class forces: first the Liberals and then a deal with the Ulster Unionists.

The final collapse came with the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978-79, when section after section of workers went into battle against the government's 5 percent limit on pay rises (which Labour Party conference and the TUC had both rejected in 1978).

Left organisation

From 1966 until the mid-70s, the Tribune group of MPs was the main opposition grouping in the party. It called for the whole party to elect the leader and for the NEC to have greater control of the manifesto. While most of its members were critical of the Callaghan government and voted against many of its policies in parliament, whenever this was followed by a motion of confidence they buckled and supported the leadership.

Frustration with the Tribune Group's purely parliamentary role and dissatisfaction with its holding back in its attacks on the leadership were factors leading to the founding and growth of new groupings in the 1970s.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) held its first meeting at 1973 Labour Conference. Its statement of aims said that conference policy decisions should be binding on the Parliamentary Labour Party and urged the National Executive Committee to ensure that Labour's election manifesto accurately reflected policy as expressed by conference decisions. CLPD grew rapidly in the late 1970s.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee, formed in 1978 by former co-workers of Tony Benn's in the Department of Industry, grew quickly to a membership of 1,000.

Democratic reforms

Pressure developed around three important areas of constitutional change even before Labour lost the 1979 election. These were the right of CLPs to select their parliamentary candidate, whether or not they had a sitting Labour MP; the election of the Leader and Deputy Leader by the party as a whole; and control of the manifesto by the NEC.

Mandatory reselection was passed in 1979. 1979 conference also set up a Commission of Enquiry to report not only on constitutional changes but on the general functioning of the Party.

In response to the threat from this Commission of Enquiry, the left set up the Rank and File Mobilising Committee (RFMC) to continue the fight for the changes. On the initiative of *Socialist Organiser* (at that time the paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory) this included nearly all the left organisations in the Party – CLPD, LCC,

ILP, NOLS, IWC, Clause 4, Labour Action for Peace, *Militant*, and the LPYS. The Tribune Group refused to join.

In May 1980, on the initiative of the TGWU, the NEC called a special conference to discuss Labour's programme, 'Peace, Jobs and Freedom'. This left programme was adopted by all sections of the party, including Callaghan. Yet the most significant event of the conference was probably the lunch-time launch meeting of the RFMC. Over half the conference delegates attended to hear Tony Benn. The RFMC held 20 meetings around the country between the end of August and conference, building support for the constitutional changes and produced several bulletins.

Benn himself became radicalised by his experience as a Minister, seeing Labour's programme blocked by a combination of senior civil servants and Labour's leadership. It wasn't until 1980 that Benn actually joined the Tribune group and lent his support to CLPD's demands; he remained a member of Labour Cabinets, accepting collective responsibility, right up until the defeat in 1979. In 1981 he was not even a member of the LCC, widely seen as the 'Bennite' grouping.

The Commission report in June 1980 first raised the idea of the leader being elected by an electoral college, even though until then it had always been posed as election by conference. The left, organised in the RFMC, took a tactical decision to support it as the only realistically winnable option.

The January 1981 special conference saw the left eventually win out with its proposal of 40 percent for the trade unions; 30 percent for the PLP and 30 percent for the CLPs – against alternatives giving a virtual veto to MPs. The key to this victory was the unity around limited aims achieved by the RFMC.

Control of the manifesto by the NEC was never won, despite being passed in principle in 1980 and 1981; the necessary constitutional amendments were narrowly defeated.

The Right desert – and fight back

Shortly after the special conference of January 1981, the 'Gang of Four' Labour renegades issued their 'Limehouse Declaration' and in March the Social Democratic Party was formed. During the course of 1981, 28 Labour MPs defected. The introduction of accountability to their CLPs and removal of their sole right to elect the leader was too much.

Shortly after annual conference in 1980 had adopted the principle of the election of the leader by the party as a whole, but not decided how, Callaghan resigned as leader. The left fought for Michael Foot, the deputy leader, to become acting leader pending the implementation of the electoral college, but the PLP voted 2-1 to proceed with a full election. As a holding operation those left MPs who supported the constitutional changes voted for Foot to keep out Healey.

Denis Healey, most associated with the 1974-79 governments, was still deputy leader. In April 1981, Tony Benn announced he was standing against him. Most groups in the RFMC threw themselves into this campaign, with fringe meetings at every union conference and mass rallies around the country. So much was this campaign around policies rather than personalities that the campaign was maintained at the same high level even when Benn was ill and unable to participate.

Healey scraped home by 50.426 percent to 49.574 percent on the second ballot. The votes of 4 more MPs in the second ballot would

have secured the deputy leadership for Benn. 16 Tribunites (led by Neil Kinnock) abstained in the second round, while 4 voted for Healey.

But the right was far from finished. Not all of them had left with the SDP. The left had been making gains on the NEC ever since 1972, controlling it since 1974. In 1981 the right were triumphant: 5 right wingers replaced 5 left wingers creating a fragile balance of power on the NEC. Foot and his allies on the 'soft left' (Kinnock and Lester) were able to frustrate many left wing moves.

The witch-hunt takes off

Reg (later Lord) Underhill, national secretary of the Labour Party, had been agitating for the NEC to publish his documents on the 'infiltration' of the party by Militant. At first refusing, the NEC eventually succumbed when Underhill, on retiring, released his report to the press anyway. In December 1981 the NEC commissioned Ron Hayward, the new general secretary, and David Hughes, the national agent, to investigate the activities of Militant.

In January 1982 the NEC and Trades Unionists for a Labour Victory held a meeting at the ASTMS educational school in Bishops Stortford. A deal was done to present an appearance of unity in the face of the Tory government. The left on the NEC felt relieved at the outcome – not a single constitutional change had been agreed, no specific move against Militant or parliamentary candidates had been agreed and expulsions seemed a long way off. Reality showed that it was the left that was prepared to 'mark time', not the right.

Within a week of the Bishops Stortford meeting the organisation sub-committee of the NEC ordered Sunderland North CLP to rerun its selection of Bob Clay and, shortly after, the NEC rejected Pat Wall's selection for Bradford North.

The Hayward-Hughes report, presented in June 1982, asserted that Militant was 'a party within a party', but avoided proposing simple expulsion, calculating that such an obvious witch-hunt would be unacceptable to conference. Instead they proposed that the party set up a register of recognised groups within the party, and made clear from the start that Militant would not be eligible – and therefore Militant supporters could not be members of the party. The decision to establish the register was opposed by most CLPs and regional conferences, but carried with the support of the unions.

The issue of the register certainly had one of the desired effects of confusing the left, which failed to organise either for a united fight against the register or for the crucial NEC elections in 1982. Labour Liaison '82 – an attempt to unite those prepared to continue the fight against the right's offensive – collapsed in disarray. By this time Tribune and the LCC were effectively calling for a witch-hunt of 'some of the more secretive sectarian organisations'.

The right won a clear majority in the NEC elections, and then used its majority to remove the left from all important NEC committees, with Foot abstaining.

Disarray on the left accelerated after the passing of the register (by 5 million to 1.5 million votes at 1982 conference). CLPD was caught in the trap of its own policy of the sovereignty of conference decisions, and was never to be the same force again. The LCC described the register as a shambles, but still decided to register.

The Tribune Group voted 39-27 (with 6 abstentions) to register, resulting in the resignation of its chair and secretary and the eventual formation of the Campaign Group of MPs in December 1982, backed by 23 MPs. Tribune newspaper became for a period a paper of the far left.

Despite this, the fight to prevent a witch-hunt continued. Militant itself held a rally of 3,000 in September 1982: but the 'Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-hunt', despite non-Militant figureheads, was a Militant front. Militant's chosen method of fighting the witch-hunt, as in later years, was through court action. The only other thing they were interested in was self-advertisement.

Because Militant's failure to organise seriously with all those opposed to the witch-hunt, 'Labour against the Witch-hunt' was formed. Its founding meeting in October 1982 had 300 delegates from CLPs and unions. It adopted a policy of non-co operation with the register

and a refusal to expel, a policy implemented by, for instance Islington South., which to this day considers Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe to be members.

Because of Militant's legal actions, the Labour bureaucracy's legal advisers told it to restrict expulsions to the 5 members of the Militant editorial board: but the witch-hunt was by no means restricted to Militant supporters. Bermondsey CLP selected Peter Tatchell as its parliamentary candidate. Provoked by an SDP MP, quoting from an article by Tatchell in *London Labour Briefing* which argued for extra-parliamentary action against the Tories, Michael Foot declared in December 1981 that Tatchell would never be endorsed as a Labour candidate.

After a long and bitter campaign, Tatchell eventually won selection a second time and was endorsed by the NEC. But the damage was done. The media was given 'open house' to attack Tatchell, not only as an extremist, but also for his homosexuality. Disowned by the leadership, slandered in the press and undermined by the Party NEC, Tatchell lost heavily to the Liberals in early 1983.

Foot's disasters – then Kinnock arrives

Foot's eventual endorsement of Tatchell meant that he was then pilloried for backing down. The press began to speculate about Foot resigning.

Foot's political concessions to the Tories were shown most around the Falklands/Malvinas war in April 1982. Foot encouraged the government to send the Task Force, and Labour competed with the Tories for jingoism. Nor was there a left campaign against the war. The first vote in the Commons on 20th May was after 6 debates: only 33 Labour MPs voted against the government.

When Labour lost the general election in 1983 with 27.6 percent of the vote to the Alliance's 25.4 percent (Labour's lowest share of the vote since 1918) it was hardly surprising. The media had spent its time promoting the SDP/Liberal Alliance, the party had been riven by a witch-hunt under an apparently lame-duck leader. On top of all this Callaghan, the ex-leader, attacked Labour's policies on disarmament.

Foot resigned soon after the election. Orchestrated by Clive Jenkins and Moss Evans, the TGWU & ASTMS executives – which 'just happened' to be meeting on the same day as Foot announced his resignation – immediately declared their support for the 'dream ticket' of Kinnock and Hattersley, even before they declared they were standing! Coincidentally, Benn, the most credible left candidate, was unable to stand for election having lost his seat after boundary changes.

Eric Heffer stood as leader and Michael Meacher (then a member of the Campaign Group) as deputy. Some on the left had their doubts about supporting Heffer because of his poor record on abortion rights, others disputed whether Kinnock should be supported on a later round (against the right's Peter Shore) if Heffer was eliminated, because they felt, rightly, that Kinnock was a 'stalking horse' for the right. Kinnock won easily on the first round, with Meacher, the candidate of the left for deputy, voting for him! A sign of the shift that had already taken place was that Kinnock got 91.5 percent of CLP votes, despite the fact that he had been generally despised only a couple of years before.

Kinnock's election widens Left split

The split in the left – between 'hard' and 'soft' – widened after Kinnock's election. The 'soft' left – led at constituency level by the LCC and with Ken Livingstone as its most prominent national proponent – argued that the left needed to 'cuddle up' to Kinnock to keep him out of the arms of the right, ignoring the fact that he was actually leading the right's counter-attack.

'New Realism' had been growing in the unions – having sold out struggles against the Tories the union leaders declared that struggle was futile and the unions needed to rescind their policy of boycotting bipartisan bodies and begin talking to the government. In the Labour Party it meant they gave full support to Kinnock and his 'moderation' of policies.

The advance of 'new realism' was held up somewhat by the miners' strike and the support given to it by union and constituency activists as well as the left on the NEC. Kinnock gave as little support to

the strike as he could get away with - being 'unable' to speak at miners' rallies on more than one occasion and denouncing 'picket line violence'.

No better example exists of the educative nature of struggle than the changes brought about in the miners' Labour conference delegation by their strike. In 1983 a woman delegate had complained from the rostrum of sexual harassment by the miners' delegation. In 1984 the NUM supported demands for democracy put forward by women and black sections, and British withdrawal from Ireland.

1984 conference passed radical resolutions, often against the advice of the NEC, condemning police behaviour during the miners' strike, against local authority cuts, and opposing the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the use of no-jury courts, plastic bullets and supergrasses in the North of Ireland. Yet although the latter was passed by 3 million to 2.5 million against NEC advice, only 450,000 votes were cast for British withdrawal.

The first serious attempt to introduce a form of 'one member one vote' for parliamentary selection was, to the surprise of many, defeated. Not only would political levy-paying trade unionists have been disenfranchised at a stroke, but the utter hypocrisy of the move was shown in that it was only to apply to sitting MPs!

The Miners lose and Kinnock hits back

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the left had operated as a cohesive block on the NEC. The break-up of this unity and the policy gains of the right accelerated from the end of 1984 and during 1985, with Sawyer, Blunkett and Meacher (still a member of the Campaign Group) increasingly voting with the right. Kinnock began to dismantle the policy-making role of the NEC, handing it over more and more to the Shadow Cabinet.

In early 1985, after a call by *Labour Briefing*, Labour Left Co-ordination was formed involving Briefing, CLPD, Black Sections, LCLGR, Labour Women for Ireland, Labour Committee for Ireland, *Socialist Viewpoint*, *Socialist Organiser* and *Unite & Fight*. Only *Militant* and *Labour Herald* of the left papers ignored this call. LLC took important small steps around support for particular issues.

With the miners' strike over, Kinnock used his platform at 1985 conference to attack the NUM and Liverpool Council, one of only two Labour Councils which had attempted to carry out conference policy on resisting rate-capping. Kinnock's speech dominated, yet *Tribune* declared after the conference that 'the left has never been stronger and the prospect of a radical left wing Labour government has never been greater', and even *Militant* wrote 'conference remained fully behind radical socialist policies'. Livingstone, the darling of the LCC after his sell-out of the rate-capping struggle, was describing Kinnock and



Graeme Cookson

Peter Tatchell: a 1983 victim of Foot's attempts to pander to bigots and the media

Whitty as 'a new partnership that will form an effective leadership'.

The left did win on the indemnification of unions, lesbian and gay rights and removing MP's conscience clause on abortion, but the programme 'A New Partnership, A New Britain' put forward at 1985 conference contained no mention of socialism: instead there were phrases like 'partnership not confrontation' and 'a new sense of common purpose'.

Back in 1983 a resolution calling for positive action in favour of black members had been referred to the executive. A majority favoured Black Sections on the same basis as the YS and women's sections, but instead a 'Black and Asian Advisory Committee' was set up which was to be unelected and have a purely advisory role on 'organisational' matters only. The

BAAC was boycotted by Black Sections and the left, and collapsed.

A renewed witch-hunt

Kinnock's attack on Liverpool Council was the clarion call for the next major stage of the witch-hunt. Liverpool District Party was suspended by the NEC in November 1985, and 9 members (all supporters of *Militant*) eventually expelled between May and October 1986. This time the LCC on Merseyside led the witch-hunt, while others on the soft left allowed themselves to be blinded by the accusations of 'intimidation'.

Labour Against the Witch-hunt '86 was formed to fight the spreading purge, but met problems from two quarters. *Militant*, having given up even a show of fighting the witch-hunt other than by court action, was willing to do no more than send speakers to meetings and conferences. The new factor was that sections of the 'hard left' disputed the need to defend *Militant*, claiming that, because of its reactionary positions on women's liberation, the Irish struggle and black and lesbian and gay politics, it was not really on the left. Insidiously, the defence of Amir Khan and Kevin Scally who had been expelled from Hattersley's Sparkbrook constituency was counterposed to the defence of *Militant* supporters.

This went alongside the smashing up of LLC, and its replacement in May 1986 with Labour Left Liaison, by those intending to form an alliance with the 'soft left' (or, at best, its 'hard' end), *Socialist Action* and CLPD.

In 1986, Kinnock concentrated on his programme for a right wing Labour government. The shift to the right continued with Eric Heffer losing his NEC place. The CLPs now voted 2-1 in favour of expulsions.

The left did win some important victories – the demand for a future Labour government to set up a Ministry for women was passed against the NEC's recommendation, and the lesbian and gay rights resolution achieved 79 percent of the vote. Unilateralism was reaffirmed, together with yet another call for a 'real' campaign around it, but conference fudged the issue of nuclear power.

By this time Livingstone was bemoaning the fact that his 'realignment of the left' (around Kinnock) had failed, and was openly expressing the unsaid desire of the LLL for a new alliance of sections of the hard left with the LCC.

1986 conference saw another new development. Labour Women's Action Committee (formerly part of CLPD), which had been in the forefront of the campaign for democratic women's structures, switched to providing the most vocal support for a review of women's organisation to be carried out by the NEC/LWAC either had to build links with women in struggle and take up the fight within the unions or it could wheel and deal with union leaders to get 'the best possible' from the consultation. Its leaders chose the latter course.

By this time the witch-hunt was so rampant, with CLPs and regions being given the green light to expel whoever they wanted, that the poor NEC claimed it was not able to cope with the workload of dealing with the cases and appeals and a National Constitutional Committee was set up.

The 'review' of the LPYS saw *Socialist Youth* dropped, regional YS conferences and committees closed down and national conference cancelled. The age limit was reduced from 26 to 23, thus excluding half the membership. Militant and much of the left put up no real fight against what has virtually meant the death of the YS.

One of the major successes of this period was the drive by Black Sections, supported by the left, to get black candidates selected for the general election. Eventually 4 Black MPs were elected, a major advance which was somewhat soured by the witch-hunt by the leadership of Sharon Atkin, who was removed as a candidate by the NEC for the 'crime' of stating the truth that the Labour Party is a racist party.

Defeat in 1987 – enter the Policy Review

After 4 years of pushing the party to the right and the witch-hunt, Kinnock only managed to increase Labour's vote in the 1987 election by 3 percent compared to 1983, 11 percent behind the Tories. He proceeded to blame the defeat on the hard left, gays and blacks, and now felt it opportune to go for the long-expected frontal attack on policies: the two year Policy Review was initiated to by-pass the normal policy-making process.

In 1985 Hattersley had called for, and got, unanimous support for a resolution committing the party to extending 'social ownership'. By 1987 an NUM resolution calling for privatised companies to be renationalised was defeated by 3.9 million to 2.4 million and conference only pledged itself to taking back Telecom and Gas. 1987 conference also adopted the constituency electoral college for parliamentary selection, introducing one member one vote for individual party members.

Yet, even in this period policy gains were made by the left. Vigorous campaigning by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights meant that conference had its first ever debate on the issue in 1985, passing a resolution against the advice of the NEC on ending discrimination and unjust laws by 3.2m to 2.8m with the support of the TGWU and NUM (the latter influenced by their strike and the support given by 'Lesbians and Gays support the Miners'). 1986 conference reaffirmed the same policy with unanimous NEC backing and achieving 79 percent of the vote, well over the two-thirds needed for inclusion in the manifesto. In 1988, a resolution reaffirming existing policy, calling for the repeal of Clause 28 and a commitment to positive images of lesbians and gays by Labour councils, 84 percent support was won with only the electricians (EETPU) and engineers (AEU) opposing.

Prior to 1987 conference a 14-point statement for 'left unity' was

produced by some members of the LCC steering committee and LLL reaffirming left policies, to the outrage of the right of the LCC and *Marxism Today*. But again this consisted only of demands on a future Labour government, and despite holding one of the largest fringe meetings, nothing more came of it.

Phase I of the Policy Review, passed at 1988 conference, was bland, laying out Kinnock's basic principles in support of market socialism, 'helping companies to meet the challenge of the next decade'. But it was accompanied by constitutional changes which hadn't been discussed throughout the Party in advance, which removed important democratic rights. All party membership applications were to be centralised, the support of 20 percent of the PLP (increased from 10 percent) was to be necessary to nominate for a leadership challenge, and the NEC was given the right to impose by-election candidates (the rule change used to remove Martha Osamor as a candidate for selection in Vauxhall in the search for a 'safe', white candidate who supported the leadership's policies).

A 'National Youth Campaigns Committee' was set up on which the LPYS was to be a minority and which would elect the YS representative on the NEC. The Black Sections resolution was yet again defeated, although it won the support of NUPE. Victories were won against the leadership – a commitment to one woman on every shortlist (which the NEC opposed); a national minimum wage and a 35-hour week; opposition to the government's Employment Training; and unilateralism was reaffirmed.

Everyone knew that Phase II of the Policy Review was to be the crunch. Kinnock signalled well in advance that it would be ditching Labour's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament. The debate at 1988 conference, though Kinnock would have liked to have won, merely tested the water.

The Benn/Heffer campaign for the leadership in 1988 was a welcome opportunity to organise opposition to the Policy Review and rampant new realism. Meetings around the country drew large audiences and breathed new life into left groupings. Yet the result was dismal. Partly, this was inevitable in that due to the defeats in struggles against the Tories the left was weak. But there were other factors over which there was more direct control. The candidacy was declared late, so that although there were fringe meetings at many TU conferences, there was not time or the campaign to get the policies discussed throughout the TU branches in advance. The Campaign Group itself was divided on fighting the election, with many preferring to try and build an alliance with the soft left.

1989 has seen the Policy Review with its acceptance of 'market forces' launched with a fanfare as if it were already conference policy, while existing conference policy (on lesbian and gay rights and unilateral nuclear disarmament) has been ignored.

Kinnock and most of the Party see Labour's success in the Euro-elections and higher standing in the opinion polls as a result of the Policy Review. Yet it coincides with the Tories' problems with the economy and the unpopularity of their next round of privatisation – water and electricity – together with their attack on the NHS, and the impending implementation of the Poll Tax. Labour would almost inevitably have risen in the polls in this situation.

The decline of the Alliance (and its component parts since it fell apart) is down to Labour stealing its 'moderation' and the media feeling it no longer has a need to promote it against Labour's 'extremism'. The other aspect of the unpopularity of the Tories, the upsurge in the class struggle, has produced no support from Kinnock, who told the railworkers to call off their strike, and has refused to support even the 'safest' and most popular of industrial action such as the nurses.

Some Conclusions

The watch-word in the Labour Party during most of the 1980s has been that the left shouldn't 'rock the boat', that we have to maintain Party unity in order to win elections. The right only accept Party unity on their terms – the 'unity of the graveyard' where the membership are

"The upturn in the class struggle should now be utilised by the left to bring in new forces to break the circle and enable us to fight and defeat the right wing"

content with their role as canvassers and the right get on with making policy.

In the PLP and NEC there have been those 'lefts' prepared to criticise so long as this criticism could remain within safe limits – as soon as it threatened their own position, involved organising wider forces or they were accused of 'rocking the boat', they beat a hasty retreat.

One of the weaknesses has been the failure to use the democratic changes won. Only 8 deselections of sitting MPs took place by the general election of 1983. No elections at all for leader and deputy leader took place between 1984 and 1987, despite this being the period of the most rapid moves to the right. When democratic machinery falls into disuse it is easier for the right to attack it.

Kinnock's drive to remove all vestiges of left policies and left influence has been in line with the interests of the ruling class. They prefer a Tory government: but if the Tories are unpopular they are prepared to have what they consider a 'safe' Labour government, especially as such governments have in the past proved more successful in disciplining the working class than the Tories during periods of heightened class struggle.

The strength of the left in the Labour Party cannot be separated from the strength of the left in the unions. While many union leaders supported the democratic changes in 1979/80 and Tony Benn's deputy leadership challenge (many only under pressure from their member-



You ain't seen nothin' yet! The dream duo of Kinnock-Hattersley still have more plans

John Hattersley

ship) this was closely connected to their rejection of Labour's pay policy and intention to bring in anti-union laws. But as this faded into the past and the reality of a class-struggle Tory government emerged, these leaderships rapidly retreated. Democracy threatened to spill over into the unions, putting their own privileges in danger: and the alternative to supporting the Labour leadership's moves to the right was to organise serious resistance to the Tories, something they were not prepared to do.

Kinnock hasn't finished. Having sanitized policy through the Policy Review he wants to make sure that the left can never again attain the strength it did in 1979-81.

The past ten years have shown, above all, how much the fate of the left in the Labour Party is linked to developments in the class struggle. The impetus for the post-

'79 changes came from disillusionment with Labour's policies in government. But defeats and sell-outs in the struggle against the Tories and employers reduced the confidence of the working class and removed the pressure on Labour and trade union leaders for adequate policies.

The upturn in the class struggle should now be utilised by the left – notably the newly launched Socialist Movement that has emerged from the Chesterfield conferences – to bring in new forces to break the circle and enable us really to fight and defeat the right wing.

Back to Basics: Don't mention the War!

Readers of *Socialist Outlook* can scarcely have avoided the huge barrage of media hype commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the outbreak of World War 2.

A deluge of more and less serious material on the War has offered old patriots fresh opportunities for flag-waving, and the British capitalist class, now the authors of some of the most repressive anti-union and anti-immigration laws in the world, a chance to posture in the fraudulent role of historic defenders of democracy.

Though it is still not fashionable to oppose the general line that World War Two was a 'war for democracy', it is relatively easy 50 years later to make correct points exposing the imperialist lies and the positions of the Labour and Communist Party leaders who threw themselves into promoting the war effort.

What tends to be overlooked is that a small but committed minority of marxist class fighters, mostly around the political banner of Trotskyism and the young Fourth International (founded 1938) took up the fight on many of these issues *at the time* and upheld the line of socialist principle throughout the war years.

As a tribute to their fight, we reproduce here the marxist answers to some of the key questions that arise: what caused the war? what was the correct line for socialists in relation to it? what was the development of class struggle during and after the war? and what were the lasting consequences?

Behind the patriotic ballyhoo Whose war was it, anyway?

The immediate causes

As early as 1931 Trotsky had predicted: if Hitler takes power, he will unleash a war against the Soviet Union. With hindsight, the British historian Trevor-Roper wrote in 1964: 'in order to realise his ultimate aim, the restoration and extension of the lost German empire in the East, Hitler had always recognised that diplomacy

could not be enough. Ultimately there must be war: war against Russia.'

A large mass of historical evidence confirms that judgement. Practically from the moment of becoming Chancellor, Hitler started to rearm Germany. From the beginning, his programme had a double objective: to make possible the immediate pump-priming of a crisis-ridden German industry, under conditions of a sharp

upward rush of profits (both of the mass of profit and of the rate of profit); and to prepare at some point in the future – not later than within ten years – an onslaught against the Soviet Union, in order to conquer for German imperialism in Eastern Europe the equivalent of Britain's Indian empire.

The *Lebensraum* in question was by and large already mapped out by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the general annexationist trends of radical German imperialists and big business interests at the time of World War One. The greater knowledge which the German bourgeoisie had acquired since then about Russia's natural resources, and the very progress of industrialisation in the USSR, could only make these objectives both broader and more tantalising.

Of course a war of imperialist conquest and plunder against the USSR did not automatically imply a full-scale European war, let alone a world war, at least not from the point of view of the particular economic logic of German imperialism, or even within the framework of the particular political logic of the Nazis. The latter would certainly have preferred to maintain their various adversaries divided, and knock them out or neutralise them one by one. To coax Czechoslovakia and Poland into becoming reluctant allies of the Hungarian type in a war against Russia would have been less costly for German imperialism than to have to subdue them militarily first.

But that was only possible if important changes of bourgeois leading personnel occurred in these countries, and if they ceased to be client states of French (and to a lesser extent British) imperialism. This in turn was possible only through the consent or passive resignation of Paris or London to German hegemony on the continent.

Hitler tried to achieve that objective step by step between 1935 and 1939, through a pragmatic combination of threats and enticements, of blackmail and military pressure. These manoeuvres scored a series of successes between 1934 and 1938 (remilitarisation of the Rhineland, *Anschluss* with Austria, annexation of the Sudetenland). But their failure was ensured once the German army occupied Prague in March 1939.

From that point onwards, British imperialism (taking a reluctant French ally into tow) was determined to resist by force any further German expansion in Eastern Europe. Hitler knew this. But he did not want to forego the advance in modern weapons he still enjoyed for a couple of years. He deliberately risked war with Britain by attacking Poland on 1 September 1939. From 3 September 1939 onwards, he found himself at war with Britain and France, as a result of that conscious decision. ...

British imperialism was committed to the long-term objective of preventing a hostile

power from completely dominating the continent of Europe, because it understood – and correctly so from the point of view of its own interests – that such a domination would only be an interlude before an all-out onslaught by German imperialism against the British Empire as such. Had not Hitler claimed that he would guarantee Czechoslovakia independence, once the question of the German minority was resolved? London knew what had become of that pledge. Any promise Hitler made to respect the British Empire was not worth the paper it was written on. ...

Likewise, Hitler quite deliberately chose to launch an attack on the USSR even before Britain was eliminated, i.e., to spread the war geographically and militarily on a qualitatively new scale. This decision was taken as early as July 1940. It was his. No outside force was accountable for it, although other powers influenced and facilitated these decisions through their own actions and reactions.

The responsibility of German imperialism in the outbreak and extension of the Second World War was overwhelming – in contrast to the situation in July-August 1914, when all the major powers more or less blundered into a world war without really knowing what they were doing.

German imperialism's option in favour of open and large-scale aggression can only be understood against the background of the profound economic, social, political and moral crisis which shook German bourgeois society from 1914 on. There is no need to recount that history here. For our purposes, it is sufficient to recall that the upturn of the German economy engineered by the Nazi-led cabinet was from the start decisively weighted in favour of heavy industry, machine tools and road-building. All available foreign exchange was used to amass stocks of raw material for the eventuality of war. At the same time chemical industries were developed with the aim of substituting man-made for war materials.

Such measures unambiguously pointed to the growing probability, if not inevitability of war. As early as 1935 they were combined with a step-by-step liquidation of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty – in a build-up of military power technically much in advance of that of the Western powers (al-



Hitler: "quite deliberately chose to attack USSR"

though less ahead of the USSR than Hitler could realise). ...

But the race towards an all-out rearmament was not only reckless from a diplomatic and military point of view. It also represented a desperate gamble with the German economy itself. In 1938-39, the economy slid into a grave financial crisis. A huge budgetary deficit emerged: public expenditure of 55 billion RM in 1938-39 (which was to become 63 billion in 1939-40) was offset by tax and customs receipts of only 18 billion RM that year and 25 billion the next. A colossal build-up of public debt ensued. Inflation could less and less be contained.

Timothy Mason suggests that there was a direct link between this crisis and the option in favour of *Blitzkrieg* in 1938-39. For as interest payments on the national debt became a grave problem, and exports stagnated in spite of increased recourse to barter, the laws of reproduction of capital reasserted themselves. A severe contraction of the economy threatened unless a new and massive stream of material goods was brought into circulation. But German output capacities were already stretched to the utmost. No more could easily be extorted from the working class, the lower middle classes or the Jews within the Third Reich. The only solution was to extend the scale of physical production through massive plunder outside of Germany's frontiers. This meant war of conquest. And that type of war was unleashed.

Ernest Mandel

(from his book *The Meaning of the Second World War*, Verso 1986, £6.95: this is also the source of the following extract)

The legacy of World War Two

The legacy of destruction left by World War Two is staggering. Eighty million people were killed, if one includes those who died of starvation and illness as a direct result of the war – eight times as many as during World War One. Dozens of cities were virtually totally destroyed, especially in Japan and Germany. Material resources capable of feeding, clothing, housing, equipping all the poor of this world were wasted for purely destructive purposes. Forests were torn down and agricultural land converted into wasteland on a scale not witnessed since the Thirty Years War or the Mongol invasion of the Islamic Empire.

(...)

Was all the destruction pointless? Has international capitalism emerged from World War Two with all the fundamental contradictions which led to the conflict unresolved – not only structurally, but even conjuncturally? Many observers would have categorically denied such a statement ten years ago, when it seemed that in contrast to the inter-war period, the international capitalist economy had experienced two decades (in the Anglo-Saxon countries, nearly three) of unprecedented growth, interrupted only by minor recessions, and long historical period of high levels of employment and impressive rises in the material standard of living of the toiling masses in the imperialist countries.

Today it is obvious that the twenty to twenty five years of the postwar boom were only an interlude, a 'long expansive wave' of the capitalist economy following the 'long depression' of the inter-war period, which will itself be followed by a 'long depression' of even longer duration than the 1913-1939 period.

To be sure, that interlude witnessed a new leap forward of the productive forces – the third technological revolution – and a great increase in the material wealth and average skill and knowledge of the international working class, not to mention a big expansion in the number of wage-earners. Even if the material and intellectual progress was very unevenly divided as between the more and less developed capitalist countries, it enlarged the base from which world socialism can be built. The material preconditions for a socialist world of plenty and a global withering away of the social division of labour between 'bosses' and 'bossed' were much more considerable in 1970 than in 1939, let alone 1914. They are even more so in 1985.

At the same time, however, the price humankind must pay for the delay of world socialism, for the survival of decaying capitalism, becomes more and more frightening. The tendency for the productive forces to be transformed into forces of destruction not only asserts itself periodically in crises of over-production and world wars. More and more it asserts itself unrelentingly in the fields of production, consumption, social relations, health (including mental health) and above all in the uninterrupted succession of 'local' wars. This global price in human suffering, death and threats to the very physical survival of humankind is again staggering. It outstrips anything seen during the First or Second World Wars. ...

"The perversion of human consumption and human wants through profit-oriented standardised mass production is imposing a growing burden of illness and death upon humankind. ... And the threat which poisoned



Was all the destruction pointless?

air, seas, water and forests pose to the very physical survival of humanity is similar to the threat of nuclear world war.

In that sense, the Second World War indeed solved nothing, i.e. removed none of the basic causes of the intensifying crisis of survival of human civilisation and humankind itself. Hitler has disappeared, but the tide of destructiveness and barbarism keeps rising, albeit in more variegated forms and a less concentrated way (if World War III can be avoided).

For the underlying cause of that destructiveness remains. It is the expansionist dynamic of competition, capital accumulation and imperialism increasingly turned against itself, i.e. boomeranging from the 'periphery' into the 'centre', with all the destructive potential this expansion and self-assertion harbours in the face of growing resistance and defiance from millions, if not hundreds of millions, of human beings.

Ernest Mandel

Trotskyists and the War

At the start of the war, political adherents of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International, who insisted on continuing the class struggle and opposing the class collaboration of the 'war effort' in the Allied imperialist countries, were a small, persecuted minority.

Their rejection of the skin-deep 'democratic' credentials of the imperialists, and their insistence that only a mobilised working class could, through revolutionary action, establish genuine peace and democracy in Europe, clashed head on with the reformism of the social democratic parties and Stalin's total opposition to revolutionary struggle in

Europe which, if successful, could swiftly destabilise his own bureaucratic grip on the Soviet working class. Stalin was also at pains to demonstrate his 'respectability' to his imperialist allies: as a gesture in this direction, and as a symptom of his hostility to the spread of revolutionary struggle, he dissolved the Third International (Comintern) in 1943.

As the war progressed, however, the imposition of draconian attacks on trade unions and other democratic rights, and the reemergence of class struggle – in battles over wages and conditions – soon vindicated the Trotskyist analysis. And, as German imperialism began to suffer military defeats across Europe, and capitalist state power

weakened its grip, the instinctive response of the working class was to reorganise independently and take local power into its own hands – only to be fiercely opposed by the Stalinist and social democratic parties.

The class line of the Trotskyist view is perhaps best summed up in the following extracts from two FI Manifestoes:

"A Bandit War"

"All the ruling classes of the capitalist countries are bandits. Their war, whatever the pretensions and hypocritical slogans, will be a war between bandits. It will not be a workers' war, but on the contrary the workers, and the exploited in general, will be its victims. *It will not be a war for democracy, since true*

democracy for the masses can be won only in the struggle against capitalist domination. Even the democratic rights which the masses still enjoy cannot be preserved or extended, as the example of the Spanish Civil War has shown, except by methods of militant, revolutionary class struggle for socialism.

It will not be a war in the interests of the workers, since the attacks on the social conquests of the French workers of June 1936, especially the 40-hour week, show that defence of the most elementary economic and social interests of the masses – their daily bread and their freedom – is incompatible with the defence of the fatherland of the bourgeoisie.

Hitler, who destroyed all social gains of the German and Austrian working class, is leading the struggle in the name of capitalism against the interests of the peoples of Europe. In the midst of war threats we emphasise once again that the main enemy is in one's own country. The working class has no fatherland to defend except where it conquers and rules. No support to the war makers and to imperialist war – we say – but the continuation of the class struggle in every situation and the utilisation of the war crisis for the overthrow of capitalist rule, i.e., the overthrow of the war and of capitalism itself!"

(Manifesto: *Against Imperialist War!*, adopted at founding conference of Fourth International, 1938)

"... We do not forget for a moment that this war is not our war. In contradistinction to the Second and Third Internationals, the Fourth International builds its policy not on the military fortunes of the capitalist states, but on the transformation of the imperialist war into a war of the workers against the capitalists, on the overthrow of the ruling classes of all countries, on the world socialist revolution.

The shifts in the battle lines at the front, the destruction of national capitals, the occupation of territories, the downfall of individual states, represent from this standpoint only tragic episodes on the road to the reconstruction of modern society.

Independently of the course of the war, we fulfill our basic task: we explain to the workers the irreconcilability between their interests and the interests of bloodthirsty capitalism; we mobilise the toilers against imperialism; we propagate the unity of the workers in all warring and neutral countries; we call for the fraternisation of workers and soldiers within



United in opposing revolution: Churchill with Molotov as the 'alles' begin to divide up the territorial spoils

each country, and of soldiers with soldiers on the opposite side of the battle front; we mobilise the women and the youth against the war; we carry on constant, persistent, tireless preparation for the revolution – in the factories, in the mills, in the villages, in the barracks, at the front, and in the fleet..."

(Leon Trotsky, *Manifesto of the Fourth International on the imperialist war and the proletarian world revolution*, May 1940)

Carrying such a line into practice meant rejecting pacifism and sectarianism and recognising the need to fight with and alongside the working class – in the army in war as the marxist fights in the workplaces in peacetime. Trotsky, in conjunction with leaders of the US Socialist Workers Party boldly set out the basic line for the small forces of revolutionary marxism in what became known as the "proletarian military policy":

"Militarisation now goes on on a tremendous scale. We cannot oppose it with pacifist phrases. This militarisation has wide support among the workers. They bear a sentimental hatred against Hitler mixed with confused class sentiments. They have a hatred against the victorious brigands.

The bureaucracy utilises this to say help the defeated gangster. Our conclusions are completely different. ... We must oppose sending untrained boys into battle. The trade unions must protect the workers in peaceful times and protect their industrial skill, but they must now demand the possibility of learning the military art from the state.

For instance in the trade union we can argue like this: I am a socialist and you are a patriot. Good. We will discuss this difference between us. But we should agree that the workers be trained at government expense to become military experts. Schools should be set up in connection with the trade unions – at government expense but under the control of

the trade unions. This kind of approach would give us access to the workers, who are 95 to 98 percent patriotic even at the present time. ...

"... We can say to the workers; We are ready for revolution. But you aren't ready. But both of us want our own workers' officers in this situation. We want special workers' schools which will train us to be officers. ..."

(Leon Trotsky *Discussions with Trotsky*, June 1940)

Trotsky elaborated further on this approach in several articles and interviews, including the following explanation, directed specifically at the situation in the USA:

"Now the national feeling is for a tremendous army, navy and air force. ... To some extent this will also be true of the workers.

That's why we must try to separate the workers from the others by a programme of education, of workers' schools, of workers' officers, devoted to the welfare of the worker army, etc. We cannot escape from the militarisation, but inside the machine we can observe the class line.

The American workers do not want to be conquered by Hitler, and to those who say 'Let us have a peace programme,' the worker will reply 'But Hitler does not want a peace programme.' Therefore we say: We will defend the United States with a workers' army, with workers' officers, with a workers' government, etc. If we are not pacifists, who wait for a better future, and if we are active revolutionists, our job is to penetrate into the whole military machine. ...

Furthermore our comrades should be the best soldiers and the best officers and at the same time the best class militants. They should provoke in the workers a mistrust of the old tradition, of the military plans of the bourgeois class and officers ... In this epoch, every great question, national or international, will be resolved with arms – not by peaceful means.

... That is why it is the duty of every worker and revolutionist to learn how to manipulate arms skilfully."

(Leon Trotsky, *American Problems*, August 1940)

In the final stages of the war, the political situation became increasingly dominated by the renewed strength and combativity of the working class, not only in the defeated axis powers (Germany, Japan, Italy) but also notably in the USA and Britain, and in the areas liberated by the advancing Red Army in Eastern Europe. For the post-war Fourth International, Ernest Germain wrote the following analysis:

"In Czechoslovakia the approach of the Red Army launched a general revolutionary upsurge: occupation of the factories, establishment of plant committees to run the factories, creation of Councils (a kind of Soviet) which gathered into their hands all political authority, concentration of all arms in the hands of the workers' militia ...

In Yugoslavia and Albania the civil war (the struggle between the Chetniks and Partisans) raged from 1942 on. From its very beginning the civil war gave birth to committees of workers and peasants as organisations of power and to a workers' and peasants' militia ...

In Poland, the approach of the Red Army was marked by a succession of clearly revolutionary movements on the part of the working class, while the peasantry, sharply differentiated, maintained a waiting attitude. The workers began by seizing the factories, setting up Councils, introducing workers' control, and here or there running the plant themselves. ...

In Romania and Bulgaria the approach of the Red Army started a real revolutionary upsurge. August 23 1944 in Romania and September 9 1944 in Bulgaria were marked by gigantic demonstrations of workers followed by an uninterrupted succession of strikes, mass demonstrations, etc., until the Red Army arrived in Bucharest and Sofia. ...

Finally in East Germany and Austria, the

approach of the Red Army unleashed revolutionary movements wherever there was a concentrated proletariat. In Saxony, in the regions of Halle and Magdebourg, in Vienna and even in certain sectors of Berlin, the first reaction of the workers was to occupy the factories, set

up plant committees and establish workers' control. Red flags were hoisted over most of the factories and in working class housing estates."

As we now know, Stalin's response, and that of the Red Army, was wherever possible to repress and destroy these independent mobilisations of the working class: when eventually Moscow decided to proceed with the expropriation of capitalism in much of the East European 'buffer zone', the overturns took place not from such grass roots level, but from *above*, by bureaucratic and military action designed to exclude any possibility of genuine workers' democracy or workers' control.

While Stalinism demobilised the workers of the East and created only a bureaucratised parody of the potential workers' states, mass Communist Parties also played a key role in demobilising armed working class resistance fighters who potentially threatened capitalist rule in post-war Italy and France. In Britain, in a much less radicalised situation, amid gloomy capitalist expectations of a wave of working class militancy, it was the Labour Party that



US and Soviet troops meet up on the River Elbe

undertook the task of channelling discontent into relatively 'safe' road of reforms legislated through Parliament. In the USA, a massive strike wave convulsed almost the whole of basic industry, and trade union membership reached a new peak, only to see union leaders settle for minimal concessions.

The class struggle had not ceased during the war: the capitalists had continued to pile up profits, the workers to be exploited economically and as cannon-fodder, and many of them had drawn revolutionary conclusions from their bitter experiences. The commitment of the social democrats to reforming (and preserving) capitalism had not changed any more than the counter-revolutionary treachery of the Communist Parties: the task remained one of seeking to build a new, revolutionary leadership with genuine and mass roots in the workers' movement of each country. This aspect of the Trotskyist analysis was vindicated after the war - and remains sadly still true today.

John Lister

Britain's growing Greens pose challenge to the left

Britain's Greens have rewritten the political agenda. The environmental issue is now set to dominate the perspectives of the major parties for the foreseeable future. The Tory Party has launched an all-out attack on the Greens, describing them as an 'extreme socialist party', 'deliberately misinforming the public'. Labour has declared that it will be a red-green party by the next election.

But the far left remains stolidly unconvinced. As with its initial reaction to the

peace movement and the Greenham Common women, it is suspicious and even hostile to an issue that can politically mobilise the centre ground of British politics.

Many on the left theorised that while the environmental movement would be an important factor, its political impact would be negligible. The political factors which fuelled the growth of the German Grunen would pass through the Labour Party, many thought. But the Greens' results in the Euro-elections, capturing two and a quarter million votes in Britain - the highest proportion of votes ever

gained by a Green Party in Europe, have confounded the analysis.

The overwhelming majority of the Greens' support came from disillusioned supporters of the Social and Liberal Democrats (SLD) and David Owen's rump Social Democratic Party, joined by ex-Tories exercised by issues such as water privatisation or the Channel Tunnel rail link. It is true also that the Greens' largest support came from the more prosperous south. But to use these factors to belittle the Greens' breakthrough is the height of sectarianism.

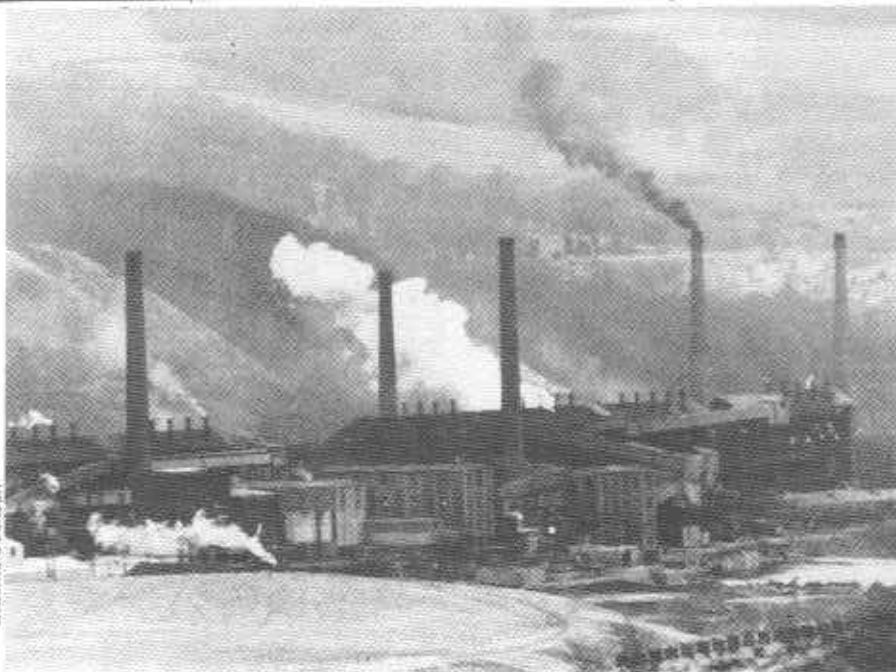
While the Greens' largest support came from the south, to record electoral scores of 12 per cent and 8 per cent in the north and Scotland respectively was no mean achievement for a new party with no national apparatus to speak of. Thatcher has done much on the public relations front to present herself as a champion of the ecosphere. And yet all the evidence suggests that the environmental vote totally escaped the Tories: hence the furious attack on the Greens by Conservative Central Office. Labour's programme on the environment shares the same philosophy of environmental protection as the Tories: far from attracting Green support, Labour is if anything losing left wing forces to the Greens.

But the most important factor is that of the state of the environment itself. The warmest five years of this century have all fallen in the present decade. Even the previously most sceptical now conclude that this is the result of global warming caused by the 'greenhouse effect'. The greenhouse gases, methane, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and carbon dioxide, gather in the lower atmosphere, trapping heat with catastrophic effect.

A temperature increase of one degree Celsius leads to a 60-100 mile shift in vegetation zones. Trees will die in large numbers and not be replaced rapidly enough to prevent deforestation, and the consequent side-effects of flash flooding and soil erosion. The predicted rise of three degrees Celsius by 2050 would, through the melting of the ice caps, raise sea-levels by up to a metre, leading to the swamping of delta cultures such as Bangladesh. An increased incidence of hurricanes, droughts and flooding producing the devastation seen last year by Hurricane Joan is another consequence of the global warming.

The 1987 agreement limiting the release of CFCs into the atmosphere will only have a very limited effect. Carbon emissions as a by-product of burning fossil fuels are the greatest and most lethal contributor. The 'greenhouse effect' poses point-blank the relation between the ecology and conventional economic growth.

It is on this point that those who declare themselves in agreement with the Greens environmental platform, on the left and right, part company with them. Like the nineteenth century romantic movement, some Greens mourn the advent of industrial society. They see the beginning of the large scale damage to



Graeme Cookson

After one hot summer, discharges from factories could make things hotter still!

the the earth beginning with the industrial revolution.

Yet the advance of technology, which has been part of the industrial revolution and particularly of its acceleration in the twentieth century, enables the development of forms of economic development which are not ecologically harmful. The problem is not industrial society, but that the application of technology is not controlled in the interests of the many, but is subordinate to the blind pursuit of profit.

Marxists, with a few honourable exceptions, have mistakenly adopted the Keynesian view of growth as the means to solve unemployment. Much of the left therefore react antagonistically to any proposal to restrict growth. This is despite the fact that Marxists would see much of what counts towards growth as being unproductive; financial dealings in the world stock exchanges; advertising and wasteful packaging.

Countries like Britain long ago achieved that level of economic development at which the divisions between classes ceased to become inevitable and necessary. It is not further economic growth which will liberate and resolve the problems of British society, but the abolition of the capitalist system itself.

But, responds the Marxist, what of the underdeveloped world? Surely any inhibition of economic growth is a reactionary move from the point of view of those which have not attained the level of growth of the advanced capitalist world?

But a critical view of such growth is essential. The 'success' story of Indonesia, for example, with an annual rate of growth of 8 per cent, must be set against the cost of that growth. Gross pollution and depletion of natural resources, when taken into account, reduce that rate of growth to barely 1 per cent.

Another source of hostility on the left towards the ecologists is that they point to the major post-capitalist countries like the Soviet Union and China as those countries in which, for example, emissions of greenhouse gases are still rapidly increasing.

Those who defend the policies of the ruling bureaucracies in these countries are sensitive to the fact that their industries are contributing heavily towards global ecological disaster. Backwardness

of technique in these countries has meant heavy reliance on fossil fuels for power and the lack of systematic controls on waste. But, like the marxists, ecologists have also correctly pointed out that this is not the whole story. Ecologically disastrous planning decisions have been carried through in bureaucratic closed session: if the people directly affected by them had been consulted, there would have been mass opposition.

Marxists must develop a socialist programme which does put production ceilings on ecologically damaging industries, and points to non-damaging alternatives, particularly in the spheres of energy production and transport. This also means examining critically the pattern of foreign trade to examine the extent to which industrially advanced nations despoil and plunder the natural resources of the third world.

Nor should our response stop at the level of economic programme. Friends of the Earth are developing with interested trade unions a 'shop-stewards' charter' which would lead to monitoring of firms' activities by rank and file trade unionists, both in terms of the health of the workers in the workplace, and the effects of the firms' activity on the local, national and international community and ecology.

The starting point for a red-green alliance as far as the Marxist left is concerned, should be a critical acceptance of the major points of the Green programme, while explaining that the fundamental problem is not industrial society, but the way in which that society is controlled and organised.

Coupled with this should be the adoption of a practical programme of work within the labour movement to convert the present antagonism between our movement and the Greens into an alliance for Eco-socialism.

By Steve Roberts

Tory class war plans dissected

Right turn: the Conservative revolution in education

By Ken Jones
(1989) published by Hutchinson Radius

Debbie Epstein

Ken Jones has written an important book, which should be read not only by those involved in education, but by all of the left who wish to understand the nature and method of the Tory's ideological attack on the working class.

In *Right turn* he traces in detail the history of Conservative thinking about education and examines the reasons for its success in changing the face and nature of the British education system. In doing so, he engages in argument with the ideologues of the Tory right — Scruton, Palmer, Honeyford, the Centre for Policy Studies and others. It is important to know your enemy, and, in order to do so, to present their arguments — not as paper tigers, but clearly and recognising their strength and appeal. As Jones himself says:

"At a time when the ideas of the right are so ascendant in public debate, this can be a dangerous method of presentation: perhaps the evocation of opponents' ideas will prove more alluring than one's own. ... In certain ways, Conservatism in education has made contact with popular discontents, and has been decisive in linking education to overall strategy. The

power of its arguments has to be registered, or a strategy for its defeat will not develop."

Right turn does register the power of right-wing arguments, but at the same time shows the contradictory strands within them and their fundamental intellectual weaknesses: At the same time he offers an explanation of the material basis for the success of these writers in gaining political support, with the result that the Education Reform Act (ERA) bears the clear imprint of their thinking.

This section of the book occupies its first four chapters. In them, Ken Jones analyses the tensions between the modernising and traditionalist strands of Tory thinking about education, which he touches on in his article in this journal, and which provide an explanation for the apparent distance between the rhetoric of Tory politicians and the reports of the National Curriculum Working Parties — which have, by and large, endorsed 'progressive' methods of teaching. Again, this is discussed

briefly in his article.

Ken Jones also examines the failure of the Labour Party and the teachers' unions to oppose effectively the ERA and the effect of "new realism" on education policy. He points to the essential weakness which reformers in the 1960s and 70s displayed in understanding the need for alliances:

"Progressivism ... expressed in a heightened way all that was sectoral about education reform. It was adroit in establishing an influence at certain points within the education system, but less attentive to seeking support outside it. In popular terms it was more likely to be the butt of criticism, rather than a rallying point of campaigns for change."

It is depressing that certain sections of the left in teaching have not yet understood this, and see their struggle purely in sectoral terms, and that so many discussions about education fail even to mention students or parents — apart from a ritualistic nod in the direction of "community" or "black parents".

Nevertheless, the book is not depressing, since it outlines the alliances which can be built to resist the Tory attack, and offers ideas, in the form of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance *Charter for Education*, for the line a genuinely democratic and progressive education would take. However, it could be strengthened by a fuller discussion of the place of union action in opposing the Tory attack and of how the necessary alliances can be developed.

Another limitation of *Right turn* is one which Ken Jones acknowledges in his introduction. This is that it concentrates on English secondary schools. As he points out, post-16 education has already been well dealt with by others, the changes in primary schooling remain to be investigated from a left perspective.

In spite of being an undoubtedly 'intellectual' book, which grapples with ideas of the right as well as the left, Ken Jones has succeeded in writing clearly and interestingly. Read it!



Carl Taylor

Education: now the playground of the Tory think tanks

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

No laughing matter?

It's not often that *Socialist Outlook* makes me laugh. It's not that sort of journal is it? But I couldn't help raising a chortle at Tony Benn's interview in No.17.

Asked whether he didn't see problems with making the *Morning Star* the paper of the Socialist Movement, he told us what a good idea it was, and how we really should 'get over all this Trotsky-Stalin argument'!

But seriously, it's not just the way he tells them: the intervention of the Communist Party of Britain into the Socialist Movement, and the enthusiasm of some left MPs for it is a crucial development worthy of more attention.

Hilary Wainwright's balance-sheet on the Sheffield conference left me with puzzlement rather than amusement: but it was interesting nevertheless.

Most important, however, the two interviews begged the question: 'where is the *Socialist Outlook* view on it all?' Participant or commentator? ... An interview with Davy Jones, perhaps?

Simon Kennedy
Swansea

Don't forget the block vote!

There has been debate for many months if not years over the role of trade unions in the Labour Party. Yet the political left has failed to grasp the full significance of what is going on. Certainly the lack of concerted response is a big problem.

To understand the importance of the issue we must appreciate certain facts:

1) The Tories do not have a guaranteed electoral majority - they win as a result of our two-and-a-half-party system.

2) Centre party politics have probably collapsed - leaving Labour as the governmental alternative.

3) Kinnock is moving to the right to make Labour acceptable to the bosses as a political party.

With full-scale attacks on trade unions and workers' pay and conditions at the very heart of the bourgeois strategy, how can they tolerate these same unions and workers having a direct structural say in the decision-making process of the alternative government party?

This might sound a bit simplistic, and I accept that there are many complex factors I have not mentioned: nonetheless we have to see beyond the media pressure using the al-



Challenging the platform at Labour Conference: this year LCLGR will try

leged electoral unpopularity of the block vote as a cover for the real motivation.

This year the key debate for Labour's conference will be on unilateralism. Next year it could well be the block vote. I believe the latter might even be the more important.

We need to develop a response throughout the movement. Union lefts must address the issue and take a collective lead. Events like the Socialist Movement's Trade Union Conference must place the block vote issue at the centre of their concerns.

Chris Jones
Manchester

What men stand to lose

It is a feminist cliché that men are conditioned to worry about themselves, while women are conditioned to worry about other people.

I hope Valerie Coultas's article (*Socialist Outlook* No.17) was not implying that we are going to bring that attitude into the arguments for women's liberation. All we can do is formulate our own demands; we can't be expected to worry about how men will deal with them - that's their problem, not ours!

On a more serious level, I feel Valerie seriously underestimates the practical value to men in general, and working class men in particular, of the subordinate position of women.

Having your children looked after, your house cleaned, shopping done, clothes washed and meals cooked is very liberating.

It allows men the sort of free time most women have to fight for. And the less money you have, the greater the real value of these services (rich people can employ others to perform them).

It is all very well for us as feminists to say that men will be better off emotionally when they lose these privileges, but most men would see that as an abstract gain for a concrete loss.

Surely women's oppression will end when women organise to achieve it, not when men realise that it will be in their own interest?

Dorothy Macedo
London NW4

LCLGR: off the shopping list, onto the lobby!

Socialist Outlook No.16 carried a letter from Rebecca Flemming rightly complaining of the 'disappearance' of lesbians from your coverage of Women for Socialism.

In that same issue you carried a thousand words from Pete Firmin on the betrayals of the Labour Party's Policy review. Lo and behold, the decision of the National Executive to abandon the conference commitment to full equality for lesbians and gay men, and the decision of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights to wage a vigorous campaign for its reinstatement, were both notable for their absence.

Lesbian and gay socialists have been fighting an uphill struggle to make our oppression, and the fight against it, as important an issue for the labour movement as it is for the right.

Repeatedly our efforts to convince lesbians and gay men that socialists understand that fighting our oppression is an integral part of socialist strategy come unstuck through the betrayals of the Labour right and the regular failure of the left to treat us as anything apart from a name on a shopping list of worthy causes.

In the case of the Labour Party Policy Review, this is doubly unfortunate, because we are currently organising a major campaign to reverse the capitulation of the NEC to Roy Hattersley's bigotry. Such a campaign can only succeed with the assistance of straight socialists; if we are to make it to the agenda of party conference. Once there, we can be more confident than any other socialist campaign that we can swing the balance of forces sufficiently to actually win the vote.

LCLGR will be organising a demonstration to lobby the conference. We trust that *Socialist Outlook* will help us in publicising this and building a substantial mobilisation.

Peter Purton
LCLGR
Southall

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Danger of political defeat for Irish anti-imperialism

I feel I must criticise your report of the local elections in the north of Ireland. If you consider both the local and the European elections in the north, there is obviously a malaise in the ranks of republican support, leaving the SDLP as the dominant party of the northern nationalists.

In the general and European elections in the south, the 'left' (which is only 20 percent of the total vote) is dominated by the reformist Labour Party and the stalinist, pro-imperialist Workers Party. Even the extremely vague Irish Greens elected a T.D.

Whether we like it or not, the whole question of building a viable anti-imperialist alternative in both parts of the country has to be reassessed in terms of strategy.

Sinn Fein has failed to come up with a meaningful programme that combines the democratic demand for Irish unity with demands which have appeal for the workers and small farmers, especially of the south.

Careful with term 'schizophrenic'!

While reading David Grant's review of *Paris by Night* in *Socialist Outlook* No.17, I was rather taken aback when in describing the character of Claire Paige he uses a word which is totally wrong: 'Hare decides to invest Claire Paige with an almost schizophrenic longing to uncover a tender, loving side to her personality'.

I have not seen the film, but Grant uses the term 'schizophrenic' in a way which suggests she has a split personality: if this is what he meant then I must point out he is wrong.

Schizophrenia is definitely not a split personality: though the word is derived from Greek terms meaning 'split' and 'mind', it really means a disintegration of personality.

The medical term is ambiguous, and it must be said that there are many disagreements in psychiatry over whether schizophrenia exists: the argument doesn't end at schizophrenia but should also include many other depressions.

I believe as marxists we must understand these problems and enter the debate, because so far we have failed to understand this area at all.

Louise Whittle
Brighton

To illustrate the necessity of this, I would point out that unemployment in most parts of Dublin is the same as that of republican west Belfast in terms of numbers - even without sectarian discrimination.

The republican movement seems to think that a reversion to a 1970s-style bombing campaign, and a political militarism, combined with an electoral programme which mimics that of the Workers Party, is the solution.

The anti-imperialist movement is at an impasse. If it does not analyse the reasons for this it will fail the Irish working class, leaving them to follow the reformists. The way is being left open for a generational defeat; time is not on our side. The need for this analysis has to be stressed to Sinn Fein as the dominant anti-imperialist party.

On a separate issue, I would also like to express my surprise at the lack of mention of Eastern Europe and China in the debates and coverage of the Socialist Conference in your June issue.

The question of solidarity with the workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities in Eastern Europe and China does not seem to be important as a plank of your tendency at the conference. This is in stark contrast to the rest of your excellent magazine and its coverage.

Unity of the left must be based on principle, not on ignoring differences and allowing Stalinists of all hues to make excuses for massacre and murder. National independence is a right of Latvians as well as Nicaraguans. To refuse to defend the struggles in the degenerated and deformed workers' states is similar to ignoring the fact that a friend, colleague or comrade beats his wife. Both positions are indefensible.

James B. Monaghan
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

OCTOBER 19 Lift the Ban!

A year ago the Home Secretary imposed the ban on broadcasting interviews with members of Sinn Fein and other organisations in the north of Ireland.

This censorship means people cannot be told the whole truth about what is going on in the six counties.

March and rally against the Ban
12 noon: Assemble outside BBC, Portland Place, London W1 (Oxford Circus tube) March to rally

1pm Rally at Dominion Theatre (Tottenham Court Rd tube)
2.30pm Lobby of Parliament
Organised by NUJ

Plight of prisoners under Thatcherism

I have just been released from Brixton prison after two and a half months on remand. I am Irish and have lived in London a few years. I am in my twenties.

As inmates in Brixton, we noticed a few serious failures within the prison system: prisoners and prison officers alike are feeling the pinch of Thatcherism's cruel, inhumane policies.

The 'screws' are under severe mental stress and strain from under-staffing, and are taking out their misfortunes on the prisoners. This takes the form of brutalisation, mistreatment, and mass cuts in exercise.

The prisoner is the one who feels the flashback from Thatcherite policies - for example being locked up for 96 hours at a stretch (myself), which is detrimental to mental health; and cuts made in food, giving us only the barest amount, so we are hungry and malnourished. Is the public taking any notice?

Prisoners in F wing hospital in Brixton as a last resort have had to start their own union in order to gain some recognition. Their efforts were made public by Wandsworth prison after unsuccessful attempts were made to set up a peaceful strike.

We prisoners who have attempted to organise, and many of us who have been illegally held, robbed, and locked up for months on remand, have been going on *hunger strikes* on and off for our political beliefs, but publicity was usually banned - hence my letter.

I myself was brutally attacked (I would describe this as attempted castration) and inhumanely *refused water* while on hunger strike, and not allowed to stop out.

I know one prisoner who was left to die after suffering continuous epileptic fits.

We, the union for prisoners' rights feel it just to fight for our cause. We oppose being locked up 23 hours a day; we oppose our money being stolen; and we oppose the removal of patients who are 'ill' from the work rota which grants them some exercise and socialisation outside their cell.

John
London NW6

Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby
and demonstration
Labour Party Conference
BRIGHTON, Monday
October 2

Assemble 12 noon outside
Conference centre on the sea
front



**outlook
for socialism**

**1st-3rd December
1989**

**Venue: Kingsway
College, Sidmouth
Street
(near Kings Crosstube)**

THE SOCIALIST OUTLOOK FOR EUROPE

**MAJOR FORUMS
AND DEBATES
INCLUDE:**

- The crisis of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and China
- A socialist approach to 1992
- Socialist democracy and proportional representation
- Women's struggles in Europe
- Lesbian & Gay Liberation

WITH:

Ernest Mandel
Zbigniew Kowalewski
Oliver MacDonald
John Palmer*
Bernadette McAliskey*
Tariq Ali
Alice Mahon MP*
Peter Tatchell
Branka Magas
Ken Livingstone MP
Ai Meun Lim
and others

*(invited)

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Rates (whole weekend): Waged: £12; Students: £8; Unwaged: £6 (£1 off if you register by 13 November)

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