


*socialist*

# REVIEW

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**Rebuilding the movement  
- a practical guide**

plus: Where now for the  
left; Chilean workers on  
the move; Marx and  
capital

PULL OUT  
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# Their side of the fence

**Dave Beecham** looks at the possibilities of an employers' offensive in the post-election period and points to the likelihood of small volatile disputes in some industries.

Events in the immediate aftermath of the election have lent support to the idea that employers, emboldened by the crushing Tory victory would launch a major shop floor offensive. Large-scale redundancies amounting to the loss of around 5,000 jobs have been declared in the food industry: Bird's Eye, Findus and most particularly, United Biscuits (a bastion of Conservative Party support) all clearly delayed their announcements till the Tories were safely back. At the same time, the NCB management has received a big boost to its programme of accelerated closures with the publication of the Monopolies Commission report on the mines. And there has been immediate approval from the CBI and others for a new round of union laws, in which it is proposed to limit severely the circumstances in which unions are protected from being sued for damages by employers.

It would be easy to conclude that we are entering a new phase of aggressive employer activity, with more victimisations and a direct attack on shop floor organisation. In fact the situation has not changed much. Compared to four or five years ago, management is much more confident. Compared to last year, if anything the employers have some doubts in their minds, especially after the explosion at Cowley and the long resistance to enforced redundancies at Greenings, two disputes which have been taken more seriously by sections of employers than perhaps we realise.

There is no room for complacency of course. Companies are resorting to

injunctions much more readily than they did in the past and they are also actively seeking to assert the right to manage before any sustained upturn in the economy begins to have an effect on shop floor resistance. Behind the assault on time-keeping at Cowley is BL's knowledge that, three years after their triumph in imposing new working practices with the connivance of the union leaders, the company has still not succeeded completely in eroding the last elements of local mutuality and custom and practice. The fight over clocking allowances, relaxation times etc (the 'moments of profit' as Marx called them) is not confined to BL. Over and over again in the last couple of months there have been cases of management offensives on time-keeping.

## A lever to move people

There is no 'employers' centre' co-ordinating this: it is not a conspiracy. The key factor in most cases, as at Cowley, is the feeling among managements that unless they get productivity and efficiency right now they will have to buy it in the future. For the time being most employers can get away with changing working practices either unilaterally, or more likely after consultation with shop stewards, in order to commit the factory leadership to the changes. After Cowley, most employers will opt for the 'consultative' approach because they see it as the most effective. And of course the help BL received from the union bureaucracy at national and local level reinforces this approach. Similarly the long dispute at Greenings over imposed change and enforced redundancy is encouraging the local engineering employers to emphasise the 'participative' approach with the emphasis on employee involvement.

This has little to do with the election result and a lot to do with the practicalities on the shop floor. It emphasises our policy of being

extremely rigorous about taking positions of shop floor 'leadership', because the end result at the moment is likely to be involvement in communicating management initiatives to workers rather than the other way round.

Continued emphasis on agitation from below is also extremely timely, because the issues arising from management offensives at the moment are often trivial in themselves but provide a lever to move people into action. For example, a management crack-down on people using one canteen rather than another because it takes them longer to get back to work is an issue which can push people into a limited form of action, which can be sustained over a period and which can be won. To quote another real example, where workers are made to wash up in their own time, with inadequate facilities causing a massive delay, there is the possibility of causing the maximum amount of disruption by rigidly adhering to management instructions.

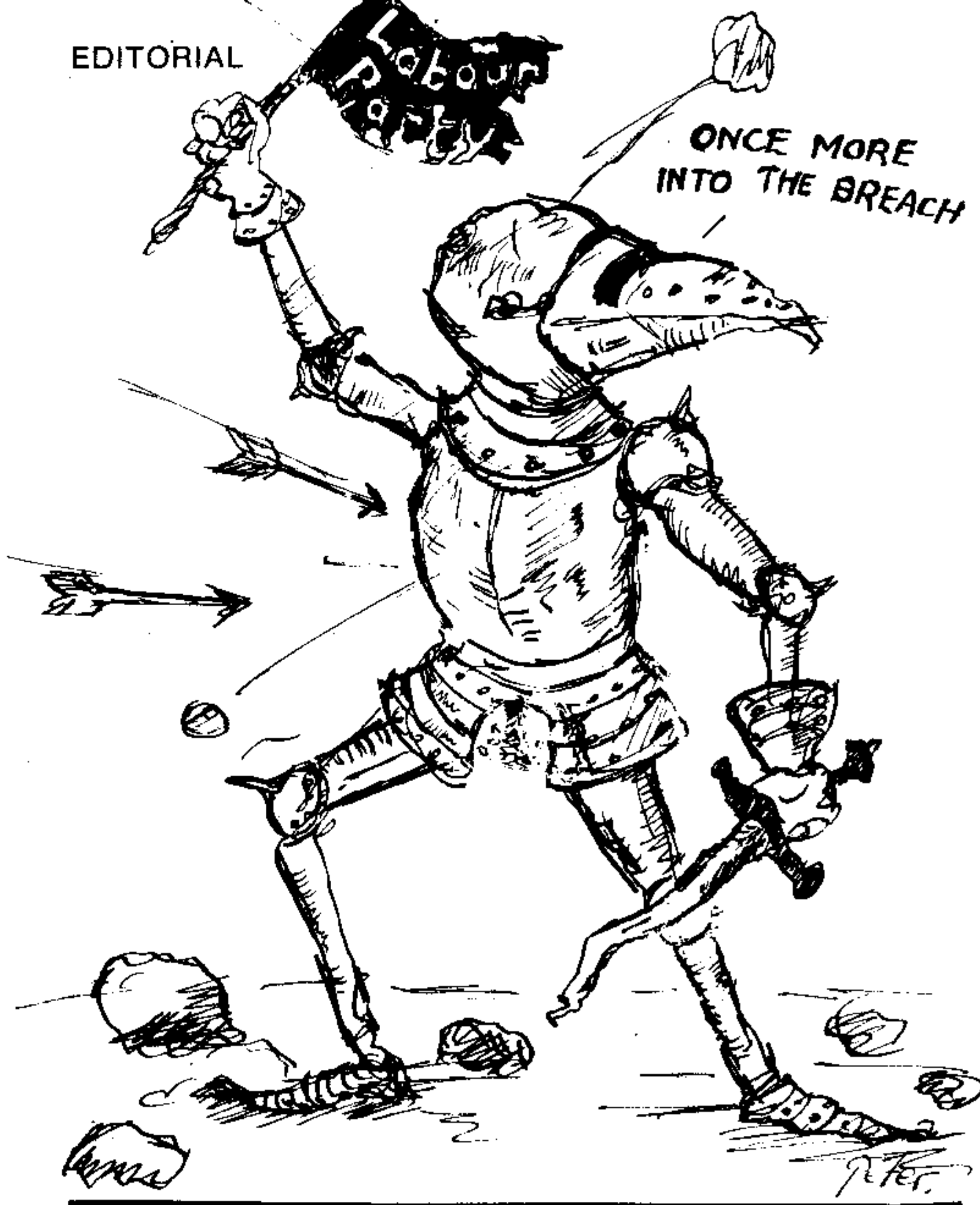
We have to guard against being too pessimistic, and above all against passivity. In private firms the employers are continuing to put the boot in — it is nothing new. In the public sector in many cases they have only recently started, but the lessons are the same.

The struggle is also extremely uneven at present. At one moment there is an outburst, at the next complete silence. At the same time, some parts of industry are in a totally different shape from others. For example, workers in GEC are having their faces ground down with pay freezes, 3½ per cent rises tied to productivity or merit, 'take it or leave it' offers etc. In the food industry on the other hand, workers have been rejecting 6 percent, throwing out offers with strings attached, resisting management demands on time-keeping and so on.

We are going through a period, at least till the autumn, where sudden, often very militant disputes are on the cards. Usually these will be very small and very volatile. We have to accept that the depth of resistance shown at Greenings is exceptional. But these disputes provide the vital opportunities to circulate collection sheets, test out the activists in the different workplaces, and find the minority that are prepared to fight.



**'Disputes provide vital opportunities to find the minority who are willing to fight'**



## Learning nothing

There is a saying that beaten armies learn fast. Last month the Labour Party took a real beating but there is little evidence that much has been learnt.

Neither the post mortem on the election nor the leadership race show any signs of serious socialist thinking. On the contrary, it looks as though the left in the party is about to collapse into ruins.

Explanations for the defeat follow a predictable pattern. The right argues that the Party was too left wing. The left argue that the Party was too right wing. The centre argue that the right and the left muddled the waters.

Austin Mitchell MP, writing in *Tribune* of 24 June stated the right wing case most clearly. He argued that the blame lay squarely with the left. The aftermath of 1979, political and organisational, ruined the chances of the Labour Party in 1983: 'Each change made the defeat of 9 June worse.' The

chief villain of the piece was Tony Benn: 'Tony Benn's three year campaign on policy then lumbered us with an ill-digested rag-bag instead of a clear simple manifesto. It set alarm bells ringing at a time when the electorate was afraid and doubtful because of depression.'

This must stand as a classic statement of the traditional right wing reformist position. When capitalism is expanding, the argument runs, we can win office and make a few changes. We can't get rid of capitalism because the mass of voters are relatively happy with the system and do not want to change it. When capitalism is contracting, they go on, the situation is much too serious to talk about anything that will rock the boat, especially socialism. Therefore we must move

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to the right in order to give potential voters the confidence that we don't intend to do anything too drastic if we get elected.

Mitchell draws exactly this conclusion:

'We must go back to the Wilson years of modernising the machine, broadening the appeal, trading up-market and working to the centre not the extremes ...'

There is one important way in which the right wing analysis is correct. It does contain the recognition that the general mood of workers is not combative and militant at present. Of course, it sees what is really only one aspect of the working class response to the crisis as its eternal essence and it draws the wrong conclusions, but at least it has something to say about the movement.

That is rather more than the centre and 'soft left' do. Robin Cook, Neil Kinnock's campaign manager, argues (*Guardian* 1 July) that the central problem was that Labour failed to project itself properly:

'The most obvious explanation, if we are honest, is that we did not tackle the challenge of mobilising electoral support with anything like the zeal which we brought to our internal debates. Too many on the left have suffered from the naive delusion that it is more important to obtain a commitment to a policy from the Labour Party than to build support for that policy in the electorate.'

'An associated reason is that despite obligatory rhetoric about building a campaigning party, the left has shown more interest in the politics of bureaucracy than in organising a mass movement.'

Once again, a classic statement of the centre reformist tradition. Policies are of secondary importance. So long as we can cobble together something on which we can all agree, then the main problem can be faced. We need to go out and argue for our case with the same sort of enthusiasm as the sellers of a soap powder.

And again, the analysis contains an important element of truth: it is undoubtedly the case that the left in the Labour Party have spent the last four years kidding themselves that if only they got hold of the apparatus then the voters would troop out and elect them.

### The left's response

But the analysis is also one shot in a battle to shift the party to the right. Although Callaghan takes a bit of stick in passing, the main fire is directed at the left of the party. The future for Labour must be to stop talking about policies and concentrate on something rather more vague:

'Essentially Labour's election tragedy was to present the electorate with a super-structure of radical policies without having established a bedrock of radical values.'

This, of course, suits Neil Kinnock to a tee. He is universally recognised as being something of a blatherer, even by his friends. Talking about values allows a great deal of flexibility on actual policies while retaining at least a veneer of radicalism.

Further to the left, the analyses are no more impressive. The prize for unreality

must go to Tony Benn, who claimed in *The Guardian* (12 June) that the election was a major victory:

'The General Election of 1983 has produced one important result ... for the first time since 1945 a political party with an openly socialist policy has received the support of over 8½ million people.'

The major villain for Benn was the parliamentary leadership which failed to fight the Tories hard enough in the House of Commons. The recipe is obvious: no policy



**Tony Benn: The prize for the most unreal assessment of the election result**

changes, change the leadership and work harder. Apparently nothing outside of the Labour Party had any effect on the result apart from the media, who take their predictable stick.

Benn's response, however, is not typical of the people who voted for him in the deputy leadership election and who might be termed the Bennite wing. Some of the prominent trade union bureaucrats who backed him then have, as we shall see, a rather different view of things, and sections of the constituency left have yet another explanation.

The most striking of the analyses is that put forward under the names of the editors (Ken Livingstone, Ted Knight, Matthew Warburton) in the post-election issues of *Labour Herald*. On 10 June they argued:

'Our worst election defeat for 50 years means the left must capture the Party for socialism or face the prospect of Labour in permanent opposition.'

A week later they were in a position to fill out their case:

'Labour's programme as it stands today proposes at root an alternative management strategy for capitalism.'

'It lacks the ability to confront Thatcherism or to galvanise the enthusiasm of Labour's lost voters.'

'No amount of blarney, or its Welsh equivalent, can disguise this fact.'

'The left's main task is to win the Party

to socialist policies.'

That is certainly fighting talk. It might sound as though at last we are about to see the emergence of a genuine left wing inside the Labour Party which is prepared to carry through the fight against the right wing.

It is indeed a left turn, but a left turn of the crudest and most opportunist kind. The most striking thing about it is its speed: the transformation of *Labour Herald* has no parallel since St Paul. On 20 May it carried a front page article by Tony Benn arguing:

'The main theme is how we can perform our historic function of defending the interests of working people and their families.'

There was not a whisper from the editors pointing out that the policies Benn was fighting on were: 'at root an alternative strategy for managing capitalism.'

On 3 June it went even further, carrying the following:

'Against (the Tories) we have to set the Labour Party and its programme ... While confident of victory at the polls we have to insist that a Labour government will carry out the basic principles on which the Party was founded — to place the means of production, distribution and exchange, including the brain-washing media, under common ownership.'

Again, not a hint of reservation.

The *Labour Herald* left turn must be seen for what it is: part of an extremely cynical strategy whose goal is undoubtedly personal advancement. Before the election that meant pushing the party policies as hard as possible so as not to rock the boat. After the election it means a sharp left turn in order to capitalise on the left audience discontented with Labour's failures.

### The Militant Tendency

The Militant Tendency is another kettle of fish. Their post-mortem on the election had rather a different tone since they were celebrating the election of two of their supporters to parliament. But overall they recognised that this was: 'a serious defeat for the Labour movement' (17 June).

They also have the merit in recognising that the Tories won the election because of the mood of the working class:

'The key element in the Tories' favour was without doubt the "Falklands Factor", in as much as the war allowed the Tories, but especially Margaret Thatcher herself, to bask in the aura of a "great national leadership".'

A little overstated perhaps, but undoubtedly containing a large element of truth. And better late than never. Last year Militant were very equivocal about the war and flatly refused to have anything to do with building an opposition.

Unfortunately Militant don't carry that argument any further. There is no hint that Thatcher could get away with the war because the working class is in general on the retreat. The reason they don't say this is because they don't believe it: to their way of thinking the crisis is producing a steady shift to the left in the labour movement, and they

have got Broad Left electoral victories to prove it.

And because they don't recognise reality their recipe for success does not differ from the rest of the Labour left. As we showed last month, the Militant parliamentary candidates fought the election on orthodox Labour policies. They got a lot of determined help from the supporters of that tendency. So Militant concludes:

'In many constituencies where the right wing of the Labour Party dominates there were no comparable campaigns — no meetings, sometimes not even leaflets or canvasses. If the Labour Party had fought nationally with the same degree of organisation, with the same policy, determination and resolve as was demonstrated in places like Bradford North, Liverpool Broadgreen, Coventry South East and Brighton Kemp Town, then it would have been swept into government.'

Despite the Falklands war, then, the real problem for Labour was that it did not fight hard enough. The masses wanted to flock to the banner of socialism but unfortunately the Labour Party did not give them the chance.

Next time round they will get the chance: 'The labour movement itself will be radically affected by the election, but there will be no major swing to the right inside the Party. On the contrary, it is likely that the rank and file will move further to the left, demanding the same energy and determination in pursuit of socialist policies as Thatcher has shown for her own reactionary policies.'

How is it that large numbers of presumably highly intelligent people, from widely different starting points, all seem to arrive at the same conclusion? They are all saying that if only the Labour Party had done things a little differently then the result would have been quite different.

### The parliamentary road

The reason is simple. There is undoubtedly a lot that divides Austin Mitchell, Robin Cook, Ken Livingstone and Peter Taaffe, but there is one thing that unites them: elections are the road to change and the Labour Party is the vehicle for that change.

That is why, for all of them, partial insights into what went wrong inevitably give way to poking around in the entrails of the Labour Party. They simply have no other conception of what might be important. The class war is secondary to elections and very very secondary to what happens inside the Labour Party. Unless your particular faction manages to get its grimy little paws on the levers of power in the Labour Party then there can be no possibility of changing society.

Let us fantasize for one glorious moment. Imagine that there was a sudden turn-around in the class struggle. There was a great wave of strikes which culminated in forcing the Tories out. And assume there was a general election. How would that look to all of the currents in the Labour Party?

They would all of course welcome it ... but. But Austin Mitchell would believe that its

current policies would lead to disaster. But Robin Cook would believe that the hard left would wreck the chances of useful change. But Tony Benn would believe that the leadership were not committed to the right policies. But Ken Livingstone would believe that it was only going to manage capitalism. But the Militant would believe that it was going to squander a great opportunity because it did not have Marxist policies.

So for all of these currents what really matters is to win the fight inside the Labour



**Ken Livingstone: The prize for the fastest turn to the left**

Party — otherwise, perdition. Election post-mortems are part of their factional battle.

It might seem from all of this that the Labour Party is set for another four years of exciting internal strife just like the period 1979-83. In fact, despite the different currents, it is quite clear that one tendency is

going to win and win quickly. Post mortems are one thing, the leadership election is another. And what is happening there is much less varied.

Writing in *The Times* (22 June), James Curran, editor of the *New Socialist* said:

'The soft left is now taking over the Labour Party. It is gaining ground at the expense of the so-called hard left in the constituencies: it is poised to take over the NEC; and it is certain to be well-represented in the new shadow cabinet.'

He is undoubtedly right, and the leadership race shows it very clearly. Although Kinnock must be anybody's firm favourite, we still do not know who will win. All we can do is to repeat what we said last month: that the trade union leaders might yet stitch up some different dirty deal. But, as it happens, we do not need to know the result. The progress of the campaign is evidence enough of the shift.

### The leadership election

The hard right have a problem in organising their campaign. They started off with two candidates: Shore and Hattersley. Duffy of the AUEW launched Shore on his way but this move was quickly torpedoed by Basnett's announcement that it was necessary 'to skip a generation'. Shore is now very much an outsider but the initial confusion is evidence that the right wing machine is not functioning too smoothly.

The hard right now seem to be devoting their efforts to coming to some sort of deal with the Kinnock camp. They, in turn, are only too willing to oblige. As early as 17 June Kinnock was ready to announce that he would work with Hattersley:

'I will naturally continue to work with whoever is chosen by the electoral college. It is already clear that this election will be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and genuine comradeship.'

There can be no doubt that he means that — as far as Hattersley is concerned. The combination Kinnock/Hattersley — the

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'Haddock' or 'Kinnersley' slate, depending on your preference — is already commanding widespread support.

If that is what wins the election then it will be a re-incarnation of the Foot Healey duo but very much nastier. Haddock is younger than Foot and Healey and capable of taking a much firmer grip on things. And it will be a deal between right and centre very firmly based on the exclusion of the left.

Kinnock's charity does not extend to those on his left. His first major speech after declaring his candidacy contained a long and savage attack on the hard left:

'Anyone who believes, or gives the impression that they believe, that a small, organised vanguard equipped with the right ten-point plan can use the anticipated despair of depressed masses to win power is suicidally foolish.

'In the disputes the various vanguards create, and in the way they conduct them, they weaken the Labour movement by dividing it ideologically, wasting its energies with unnecessary conflict ... They may hate Toryism, but not enough to harm it by politically defeating it. They prefer the comforts of indignation to the challenges of victory. They reduce politics to a hobby. And in so doing they become the benefactors of the enemies we have to defeat ...'

It is clear that 'mutual respect' and 'genuine comradeship' do not extend to the left. Kinnock the witchhunter is not going to make any concession to the left in order to become leader.

### Heffer and the hard left

The papers of the hard left have responded by backing Heffer. Usually there is a sentence like 'we do not entirely agree with comrade Heffer, but...', followed by completely uncritical support. And that support is not conditional on any policy commitments, even to some of the sacred pillars of left policies.

But there is something curious about the

campaign of the hard left. The backing for Heffer is usually in the small print. Attacks on Haddock and Kinnersley are the headlines. And usually, the small print also says that, if Heffer loses then Kinnock would not be too bad. The hard left have effectively abandoned any attempt to win the leadership. Their main concern is to stop the soft left doing a deal with the right.

To the extent that they have any hope of winning a position their money is on Michael Meacher for deputy. They are quite happy to live with the witchhunter Kinnock provided they can have their own token nonentity as deputy leader.

### Backing for Kinnock

Further down the hard left chain, things have gone even further. Consider the following statement from one Jerry Hughes:

'On the Labour Party leadership we have a problem that the parliamentary Labour Party is not as left wing as we hoped it would be. I don't think there's the slightest possibility that we could get anyone of the hard left elected in the present circumstances. My view is that it's obviously going to be between Shore and Hattersley and Kinnock, and I think it's in the interests of the whole left that we support Kinnock, although it may go against the grain with us because of his role on the National Executive.'

Kinnock's 'role on the National Executive', readers will recall, includes voting for the witch hunt. Jerry Hughes is secretary of 'Labour Against the Witchhunt'.

What is happening is quite clear. The hard left base in the constituencies is defecting quickly and massively to Kinnock. In the process they are quite happy to forget about little issues of principle like bans and proscriptions.

Among the trade union barons of the left an even more shady deal is going on. We do not know what the final voting positions of allegedly 'left' unions will be because there is much talk of balloting the membership. But

we do know the preferences of some of these same executives.

So TASS, strongly influenced by the CP, is going for Kinnock. The Bakers, with a Militant president, is going for Kinnock. The NUM, NUPE, TGWU and ASLEF leadership are backing Kinnock. Even the NUR, scene of a recent Broad Left 'victory', is going for Kinnock.

Strangely enough, a similar process seems to be going on among some right wing unions. Both USDAW and the UCW are backing Kinnock.

A significant proportion of the trade union leadership who two years ago were backing Benn are meeting a proportion of the trade union leadership who were then backing Healey. They are united around the respectable and moderate figure of Neil Kinnock. Bennite dreams of triumphs in the unions must be fading fast.

The Parliamentary Labour Party provides a similar if less important picture. According to all of the reports a majority of the new PLP are eligible for membership of the Tribune group. Yet nobody expects the hard left candidate Heffer to get a majority of MPs' votes.

Whatever the final outcome of the leadership it looks as though the Labour Party is going to be led by a younger, more vigorous and nastier version of the recently retired.

All but the most determined on the hard left will welcome their defeat. They will even be able to claim it as an advance. The composition of the PLP makes it likely that the new shadow cabinet will appear more 'left' than the retiring one.

It is also likely that the extreme right will be weakened on the NEC and that the new majority will be of the Kinnockite stamp. That again will be trumpeted as a left advance.


Just how much reality such claims will have can be illustrated by taking the case of a leading figure on the 'left list': Eddie McCluskie of the National Union of Seamen. He was a super jingo over the Falklands war, sending his members to a watery death with patriotic cheers. He voted for the witch hunt of Militant. He is a leader of a union which for years has run a sweetheart deal with the ship owners allowing them to employ Asian workers at cut rates in return for substantial donations to the union's funds. That is the sort of 'left' victory they will be celebrating.

The shift to the right in terms of personalities is being matched, perhaps rather more slowly, by a shift to the right in terms of policies. The one which has so far surfaced is the question of withdrawal from the Common Market.

### The common market

This is a curious matter and requires some explanation. From a socialist point of view there is nothing left wing about being in favour of British withdrawal from the EEC as a central plank of policy. It is true that the EEC is a club run by and for big capitalists. It is an undemocratic organisation which exists only to favour the interests of capital. But the alternative of the Labour left is to fall back on the British national state. This, too, is a

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club run by and for big capitalists. This, too, is an undemocratic organisation which exists only to favour the interests of capital. Indeed, it is a rather more serious capitalist organisation since, unlike the EEC, it has police, jails, soldiers, etc lined up to defend capitalism.

Neither in nor out of the EEC would the fundamental interests of workers be better served. At the last election the Labour Party had the worst possible position: it proposed to withdraw from the weak, economic, capitalist club, the EEC, while remaining a member of the strong, military, capitalist club NATO.

Of course, a workers' government in Britain would get out of the EEC. It would probably be pushed out, like it or not, by the ranks of horrified capitalists. It would withdraw from NATO. But these would be the result of smashing the British capitalist state machine and the expropriation of big business, not a substitute for it.

The Labour left had a different view. Their objection to the EEC was always based on the narrowest of nationalist prejudices. The EEC, they argued was a foreign institution which tampered with their right to control the destiny of the British state. So withdrawal has always been one of their strongest points of policy.

In their mythology the 1975 referendum on the question of Britain's entry to the EEC always had a special place. This was undoubtedly a struggle between left and right in the labour movement — which was why we argued for a 'no' vote on entry — and it was a right wing victory. The Labour left argue it was the decisive point at which the fine policies developed in opposition between 1970 and 1974 were ditched by the monster Harold Wilson. After all, immediately after the referendum Tony Benn was shunted from the powerful industry ministry to the backwater of energy.

### Dropping EEC policy?

Now withdrawal has proved a vote-loser and the backtracking has started. The right has always been opposed to this policy so it faces no problems. Heffer, on the left, has more difficulty. In an interview in *Tribune* (24 June) he identifies himself as part of that tradition of socialism that 'believes we should accept that coming out of the Common Market is an absolute necessity for the country.'

So far, so orthodox. But one column later in the interview we read:

'We have to look at this and clearly the party intends to do that. I would say that we now have to examine in detail how we present the argument and whether we shouldn't now say that we need real serious changes in the Treaty of Rome rather than say that we are coming out.'

'I would think that rather than us getting bogged down in an argument about being in or out of the Market, what we really ought to be doing is building up connections with European socialists and developing a programme for a socialist Europe on a wider basis.'

'I wouldn't want to commit myself at this stage to saying that we should aban-

don our previous policies — that would be wrong, but we would be flying in the face of reality if we didn't examine that.'

The convoluted syntax reminds you of Michael Foot discussing unilateralism, and for the same reason. Eric is getting ready to eat an awful lot of words.

There is rather more at stake here than just ditching an isolated policy which does not win votes any more. One of the central planks of current Labour policy is their Alternative Economy Strategy. In all its versions this is a programme for *national* recovery in a capitalist world. In the Labour left version is a highly *nationalised* programme for a *seige economy*.



**Neil Kinnock: All things nice to everyone but the left**

Even to begin to try to carry out either version would mean a break with the EEC. So if the left ditch the EEC withdrawal policy, then sooner or later they are going to ditch their Alternative Economic Strategy and with it even their own crabbed, parochial and limited version of socialism.

Kinnock, the man the left all admit they are going to end up backing, made that clear on 18 June:

'Our policy must make the interests of the British people paramount.'

'We cannot accept anything less than Gaullist reformism as our policy towards the EEC.'

Gaullist reformism was the most naked and uninhibited pursuit of the interests of French imperialism.

In case the hard left have not yet thought through the consequences, Robin Cook spelt them out in his *Guardian* article:

'The Alternative Economic Strategy was originally forged as a means of maintaining full employment as an alternative to the Wilson government's drift into the clutches of the IMF in 1976. We now need to examine how we adapt that strategy to the post-industrial society with a large pool of permanent unemployed that will be the residue of Thatcherism in 1988.'

'What new concepts of employment

will be necessary in those circumstances? What will be the appropriate balance between central planning and local community enterprise? How do we build alliances with socialist parties abroad to smash the international dominance of monetarism?'

However much you strain your eyes, you can't find there any room for full employment, socialism, or even growth.

The hard left is at the end of the road. The Bennite base is shifting right. The 'left turn' of the likes of *Labour Herald* is a gesture and will be dropped pretty soon. There is not going to be a rerun of 1979-83. Whoever wins the leadership they will find a docile membership who have agreed to surrender any talk of socialism.

The consequences of that will be grim. Extra-parliamentary action is already being redefined out of existence. Robin Cook's version is based on the idea that:

'One — in some cases two — members of the PLP should be allocated ... to each of the 140 target seats we have to win in 1988.' (*Tribune*, 1 July).

Further left, Livingstone's version runs: 'We will first of all have a major advertising campaign, one that aims to target MPs and put pressure on them.'

On the far left, the major effect of the election seems to have been to draw them closer to parliament than the streets. All of the hard left press now have parliamentary columns.

### No short cuts

*The Militant* has gone furthest in this direction. Its 1 July issue is headlined: 'Workers' MP Lashes Tories'. Inside it has the complete text of Terry Fields 'maiden speech' and a parliamentary report. The latter informs us that:

'As Terry began, the Tories were momentarily stunned as expressions such as "the exploitation of the working class" hit them full in the face. (It wasn't in the speech — Ed). Then they began to laugh ... But their laughter was not a confident laugh.'

Unfortunately the result of all this posturing will be rather more serious than the renaming of *Militant* as *Hansard*. The shift to the right which is running right through the Labour Party will make it much more difficult to rebuild the movement and to resist the Tories.

All of the pressure on those Labour Party members who are also trade union militants will be to the right. As Kinnock comes to terms with Hattersley, and the hard left come to terms with Kinnock, the price will be moderation and respectability. Every proposal for action will be jumped on because it might endanger what will happen in 1988.

The number of people arguing for working class action against the Tories is going to be tiny and a lot of people are going to be arguing: 'Don't rock the boat.'

Two things are clear. There are no short cuts to rebuilding the movement. That movement cannot be rebuilt other than by revolutionary socialist politics. And that means 'rocking the boat.'

# Terminal decline

Last month saw a bitter struggle for control of the Communist Party daily, the *Morning Star*. Pete Goodwin looks at the politics behind it.

The bare facts of Communist Party membership over the last decade tell their own tale. In July 1973 there were 29,900 CP members. By July 1981 there were 18,458. When the 1983 figures are announced this month it looks as if there will be around 16,000.

But what the figures themselves don't tell is why the decline should be so irreversible. For that one has to turn to the politics.

From at least the time of the popular front in the mid-thirties the fundamental rationale for a separate Communist Party was gone. If the communist parties had explicitly abandoned revolutionary goals, and were now committed to a national parliamentary road to socialism, then what was the continued logic of them remaining separate from the other reformist parties?

The point was made by a number of observers, Trotsky included, at the time. But for another two decades it could be forgotten. Everywhere the communist parties grew massively out of the Second World War. Their two key assets were the popularity of the alliance with Stalinist Russia and their disciplined extra-parliamentary organisational abilities (whether it was organising the Resistance or organising in the unions).

In the period of the first cold war the Russian connection could still be an asset for

tinuing popular front politics, and the logic of 'why on earth have a separate CP' came back on the agenda of practical politics. The recent crisis and decline of the French and Spanish CPs are part of that process.

If the massive Spanish and French CPs cannot escape this political logic, then how much more does that go for the tiny British CP. It was one of the first CPs to enshrine popular frontism into its permanent programme with the *British Road to Socialism* in 1951. Ever since it's been open to the accusation that if the road to socialism was through a 'Labour government of a new type', then why not wind up the CP into the Labour Party? The answer that 'Communist MPs' were also needed looked pretty lame even then, when one looked at the CP's electoral performance.

If the CP could still continue to play an important part in left wing politics into the early seventies (regaining the members it lost over Hungary, between 1958 and '64, recruiting again out of the industrial battles against the Heath government 1970-74), it was because it had other assets than the *British Road*.

What were they?

First was the party focus on extra-parliamentary, particularly industrial, activity. Second was the party's monopoly of something that could pose as 'socialist' theory. Third was its discipline.

In all these respects the Communist Party could seem to have the edge over the Labour left. There was therefore a reason for joining it (as numerous industrial militants and CND activists must have done in the early

most importantly in the unions, but also in campaigns. It used its network of militants at the base simply as a pressure group for this. The end result is that that network has withered. The effective demise of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions is merely the most dramatic example of this.

The attraction of the CP's claim to embody 'socialist theory' always depended on the absence of anything else rather than the intrinsic intellectual merits of the turgid pap that it had inherited from Stalinism and popular frontism. The last fifteen years have seen an outpouring of 'socialist' theory from numerous other sources, much of which may indeed be just as reformist or just as superficial as anything the CP produces, but which pulls the rug from under the feet of the CP's claim to be the central source of theoretical rigour.

And the discipline of the party has collapsed under the impact of popular front politics minus Stalinism. Each position captured has meant another person who cannot be controlled. CP members of different union executives or different campaigns act in the way their particular position, not the party, dictates. And indeed the CP now makes a virtue of this. Any party member can do virtually anything without being seriously called to order because in the world of 'winning friends and influencing people', each is too important to lose.

## No point in joining

The net result is that though there are no doubt large numbers of people outside the CP who may agree with what individual CP members they are in contact with are doing, the CP can offer them no plausible reason for actually joining.

The sharpest and most recent example of that is CND. Here individual CP members had some significant positions, both nationally and locally, and were generally arguing an extremely right wing and apolitical line which certainly found an echo beyond their ranks. But they could not recruit out of it for the simple reason that they could offer nothing that those who agreed with them would get out of joining.

The problem is further compounded by the Labour left. For there now exists a Labour left which is not only bigger than the CP, but can organise union broad lefts without the CP, can participate in CND without the CP, can produce a deluge of its own 'theory' without the CP and can act at least as disciplined a way as the CP.

Nor can the CP even claim to be to the left of it. It was initially lukewarm about the Benn deputy leadership campaign, most of its trade union office holders are now supporting Kinnock rather than Heffer for the leadership, its 'broad democratic alliance' includes Liberals, SDP and even 'progressive' Tories who are an anathema to the Labour left.

That there is no way for the CP out of this impasse is demonstrated by the different wings within it. At the last CP congress at the end of 1981 three distinct tendencies were visible. There was a diminishing band of eurocommunists (perhaps a sixth of the delegates) who had clearly given up the attempt



Benn and Scargill at the CP rally 'Marx with Sparx'

an oppositional party. 'Our enemy's enemy must be our friend' is a plausible adage. And everywhere in the west during the fifties the CPs could find a significant pro-Russian constituency.

Suddenly, with the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the asset became a liability. Most European CPs chose not to go through the same trauma again with Czechoslovakia in 1968. That opened the road to eurocommunism, a break with Russia while con-

sistencies, and as a small but significant number of industrial militants and some refugees from the student movement must have done in the early seventies).

But each of the assets was a heritage from the past. Each has been wasted, above all by the popular front politics upon which everyone in the CP is agreed.

The party's extra-parliamentary activity was premised on capturing positions and 'winning friends and influencing people',



to transform the party in their own image. For them the only obstacle to joining the Labour Party is that it is too left wing and 'economistic'.

Their one asset is *Marxism Today*, whose brand of interviews with liberal chief constables and celebrations of the decline of the working class is likely to become increasingly popular on the left after the election defeat, but which can provide no serious argument why, if one agrees with it, one should join the Communist Party.

On the other side about a third of the delegates were explicitly pro-Russian. They were growing as proportion of party activists, but only because being pro-Russian at least gives a rationale for the separate existence of the party. But even that is not a very firm one. There are after all unashamed apologists for the Soviet Union in the Labour Party, some of them MPs or quite prominent union officials. The pro-Russians are overall no more left wing than their eurocommunist opponents. They accept absolutely popular front politics, in many cases with just as right wing practical conclusions as the euro-communists they despise.

Balancing in the middle, with just under half the delegates, were those who supported the leadership that at that time embraced both general secretary Gordon McLellan and *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater. For this centre grouping nothing was wrong with the party that 'try harder' could not cure.

Of course it hasn't, and so the centre group

has split. The situation is so desperate that the balancing act cannot continue. McLellan and his supporters have been unwilling to call *Marxism Today* to order for the simple reason that it is the only success story the CP has. This not only angers the growing proportion of pro-Russians, it also provides no returns in party membership. That is bad enough for the apparatus as a whole, but it is catastrophe for those involved in the *Morning Star*, who now face the prospect not just of tightening their belts but of going bust.

The Chater wing won the struggle for the *Morning Star* on the strength of the votes of the growing proportion of pro-Russians among the diminishing CP membership and because the McLellan wing could offer no other way of saving the paper from bankruptcy. And they may win at the party congress.

little reason to believe that the union leaders from whom Chater hopes for salvation can deliver the necessary subsidy to keep the paper afloat for much longer. And there is every reason to believe that its circulation will continue to wither, especially given that it will be made even more boring by its even closer links with the union bureaucracy and a more pro-Russian stance.

The Communist Party as a serious political force on the left has been so long in dying that we are always being ribbed about writing premature obituaries. The real one is, however, very close to being written.

but it all depends what you mean by 'supporter'. It is difficult not to have one's suspicions roused when Horrie reveals that that includes a well-known lover of peace from Northern Ireland, Enoch Powell.

More interesting, though, than this revolting absurdity is to see how Horrie's slippery definition allows him to make overtures to Liberal Party candidates who are for stopping cruise, despite official Alliance policy:

'If the Liberals had managed one or two more percentage points at the polls, then they might have won a whole string of election victories in southern England, replacing anti-CND Conservatives with pro-disarmament MPs.'

Pigs might fly, one is tempted to add. In any case, it seems lost on Horrie that if Liberal candidates can put loyalty to the Alliance above loyalty to their anti-cruise principles, they are hardly likely to make good allies.

This question-begging use of the term 'pro-disarmament' is typical of the bankrupt politics that makes CND chase after anything mildly critical of the Tories' full-blooded pro-nuclear policy.

### Hiding unilateralism

The implication of all this is that CND must now look to these soft and dubious elements, concentrate on what the 'majority' want, and build a new cosy consensus around stopping Trident and cruise *only*. The unpopular 'minority' position of unilateralism must be shoved out of sight.

Not entirely, of course. The effect would be too demoralising. Joan Ruddock is anxious to cover her left flank. She stresses the need to prevent any backsliding in the Labour Party and rebut any accusation that a commitment to nuclear disarmament lost Labour the election.

But the tendency to relegate unilateralism to the background is certainly there. According to Joan Ruddock, one reason for the electorate's 'confusion' (which allowed the Tories to win) was 'the division within the leadership of the Labour party'. This 'allowed attention to be focused on the less urgent issue of Polaris, and away from the more immediate dangers of Cruise and Trident'.

Presumably, then, a way must be found to unite the leadership. If Polaris really isn't very urgent, there are no prizes for guessing which wing of the party is being invited to give way most (as Foot and co. did during the election).

But if Ruddock is circumspect, and Horrie evasive, then EP Thomson, writing in *The New Statesman* (24 June 1983), at least has the merit of dragging the implications fully into the light of day.

Like them, he shares the same fantasy perspective on the peace vote, and pays close attention to the Liberals:

'Across the whole country, and most of all in Scotland and Wales, if one collects into one lump the votes for parties opposing Trident and supporting a "freeze"—Labour, Liberal, SDP, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Ecologist, etc—then there was a clear peace majority.'

## CND

# Dropping the Bomb

The election result has closed the parliamentary road the CND leadership were banking on. Gareth Jenkins analyses their response.

It is difficult to believe that CND leaders live in the same world as the rest of us.

The truth is brutally simple, of course. The party of cold war warriors won. The party of unilateralism lost. Indeed, its share of the vote sank to its lowest level since 1918. Given the prominence of defence as an issue during the campaign, there can be little doubt that, in purely electoral terms, the Tories got the massive endorsement for their nuclear policy that they were looking for.

This is an unpalatable reality. Yet the response from CND is a flight into fantasy. The wishful thinking started almost before the voting figures were cold. On the Sunday immediately following the general election, Joan Ruddock, chairperson of CND, declared at a rally held in the Wembley conference centre: 'The majority of votes were cast for the parties which at the very least opposed Trident.'

And in the latest, July edition of *Sanity* (whose cover stated with more optimism than sense, 'Election Result—no cruise

mandate'), she explained:

'Concerning Cruise and Trident, the General Election has settled nothing. A majority of people, no matter how they cast their votes, continue to oppose both the siting of American Cruise missiles in Britain and the purchase of the Trident missile system.'

This is pathetic self-delusion. The media may have been biased (they were), CND may not have had a fair hearing (they didn't), Callaghan and Healey may have intervened to weaken the nuclear disarmament case (they did). But should one expect any different?

The fact is that no amount of juggling with the figures to show that 'public opinion' is *really* on your side can disguise the truth that *power* is what counts—and the Tories have it.

But it is worse than self-delusion. This kind of explanation shows an alarming tendency to snuggle up to all and sundry and play down differences of position. This is particularly true of Chris Horrie's article in the same issue. His determination to prove there is a 'long-term trend to increasing parliamentary support for CND' is based on a profoundly dishonest analysis.

It may well be true that 'CND will have roughly the same number of supporters in the new House of Commons as in the old',

'The question of cruise missiles is more confused. The Liberal party conference in 1981 voted firmly against cruise, but this fact was carefully hidden from the British public during the election. But many Liberal candidates were loyal to the conference decision, and some campaigned actively for it. So far from this being a disadvantage, it appears to have given heart to Liberal activists and to have been welcomed by the electorate.'

This attempt at discrimination lands Thompson in considerable confusion. Typically, there is the popular frontism that makes potential disarmers of all anti-Tories. David Owen? Roy Jenkins? Since these two have sat in cabinets which *strengthened* Britain's nuclear capabilities, that idea is a bit hard to swallow.

There is also the colossally naive judgement about the anti-cruise decision of the Liberal Party conference. 'Carefully hidden from the British public'? Doesn't Thompson realise that it was 'hidden' (a curiously conspiratorial accusation) because there was never any danger that the Liberal leadership would *not* squash such a policy.

### Healey blameless

Worse follows. Thompson assumes that Yeovil and West Leeds went Liberal *because* the candidates were active peace campaigners. This really is wish-fulfillment. The Liberals won for the same reason that the overall Alliance vote was high: it represented a vote principally against Labour 'extremism' by people who wouldn't, for one reason or another, vote Tory. Labour 'extremism' included, of course, being tarred by the CND brush.

But it is when we get to his analysis of how the Tories won the defence argument that the conclusions for the future of CND come thumping through:

'"Defence" became a sensitive issue, which Labour at first muffed, and then from which it beat a hasty retreat. What happened?

'An expert axeman splitting a log looks first for the hairline cracks in the wood and strikes there. In the months before the election one crack was perfectly evident. Both national opinion polls and CND's own doorstep canvasses had shown a firm national majority against cruise and Trident, but a sharp fall to 30-odd percent when the question passed to Polaris or to total unilateral renunciation of all nuclear weapons and bases.

'The Tory axemen had studied this opinion profile with quite as much care as CND had done: and when the election commenced they took steady aim at the crack and struck. They struck again and again: "one-sided disarmers"; "leaving Britain defenceless"; "unilateralism"—and then, as the crack began to open, they cleft the log in two with a huge resounding wallop: *Polaris!*

'The resounding Polaris blow was struck between 22 and 25 May, and was supposedly (in some Left fundamentalist mythology) cunningly prepared for by an act of treachery by Denis Healey in an interview on Leicester local radio, when

he spoke of putting Polaris into START negotiations.'

A nice, folksy tale. Denis emerges as the innocent. What it ignores is that the Tories were able to deal such a sharp blow, not because Labour was ill-prepared or unprofessional, but because its *political fudge* made it thoroughly unconvincing. There will be no fudge on Thompson's part, just accommodation to the right wing. The defence of Denis is indecently open:

'If Denis Healey had an eye to these proposals (to Andropov's proposals to negotiate his SS20s downwards in relation to Polaris) in his Leicester broadcast, then he was not committing premeditated treason but simply making point that there is no original virtue in unilateralism for unilateralism's own pure sake.'

So there we have it. Drop the talk of unilateralism—that may offend the purists, but too bad, we have to be realists:

'The political crisis of Europe, at this moment, turns not even upon nuclear disarmament but upon checking the upwards rush of nuclear armament: and the issues are cruise, Trident and the freeze. These are all issues which could have been carried by a majority of the British public.'

Note the slogan of 'freeze'. It is the natural complement to dropping unilateralism. Although the tendency to multilateralism has been coming a long time ('a unilateralist is a multilateralist who means it' in the words of Bruce Kent), the scene is being set to make 'nuclear freeze', on North American lines, the leading campaign slogan by next CND conference this winter.

It will be wrapped up in a spurious internationalism (unilateralism being too parochial and inward-looking). The propaganda stress will be on doing what Thatcher 'fails' to do—get proper disarmament talks started. A multilateralist will become a unilateralist who means it.

### Moving right

Where does this leave the rank and file of CND? Many will probably drift in the same rightward direction, particularly when it becomes obvious in the Labour Party that the question of a non-nuclear defence policy has been relegated to some unspecified point in the future—ie never.

Altogether, CND will become an even more passive organisation, withering at the grass-roots, yet still able to pull the occasional large demonstration (like the linking of the American and Russian embassies on 16 July). But as the emphasis becomes increasingly put on lining up distinguished names behind 'real' multilateralism, so these demonstrations will become ever limper and more concerned to avoid any whiff of controversy.

In the unions, fighting for unilateralism will become more difficult, even if a fresh crop of affiliations results from the growing presence of the Broad Left. The commitment will be even more tokenistic than now.

In the field of direct action, the tactics of the Greenham Common women are likely to inhibit any further developments. Their

exclusiveness, lack of funds, and increasingly loony mysticism—to say nothing of greater police brutality now there is no election to worry about—will act as a barrier.

But among the disillusioned activists there will be some open to a revolutionary alternative. To them we must say two things. First, that chasing an elusive majority inevitably means a dilution of one's politics and an ever more rapid swing to the right. Second, that getting rid of the Bomb as a single-issue campaign is doomed to failure.

The reason why a 'peace majority' failed to win is not because the wrong package was put before the electorate. The case is the same as that which lost Labour the election. When workers lack the self-confidence to fight for themselves over the most immediate bread-and-butter issues, they are certainly not going to fight over more daunting issues.

### Rebuilding confidence

Furthermore, people may be deeply worried about nuclear weapons, as they are even more so over the closer threat of unemployment. But far from radicalising people, such worries can have the opposite effect. As Ivor Crewe, analysing the results of Gallup's BBC election survey, put it:

'Labour's majority as the party for jobs actually fell from 20 percent to 16 percent between 1979 and 1983. The lengthening dole queues made more people put unemployment at the top of the agenda; but fewer people were convinced that Labour could shorten them.

'Other issues, ranked lower in importance, actually made a bigger impact, compensating the Conservatives for what they lost on jobs. Defence is the prime example. In 1979 it was mentioned by just 2 percent; in 1983 by 38 percent. Among the latter the Conservatives were preferred by a huge 54 percent majority.' (*The Guardian*, 14 June 1983)

In other words, under conditions of low morale, a *general* retreat on *all* issues takes place, regardless of whether a minority is radicalised on a particular issue, and then finds itself cruelly isolated by the results of a general election. The Thompsons of this world naturally conclude that CND's isolation must be ended by getting rid of its 'negative' image and creating a 'positive' one that reflects the conditions of the retreat.

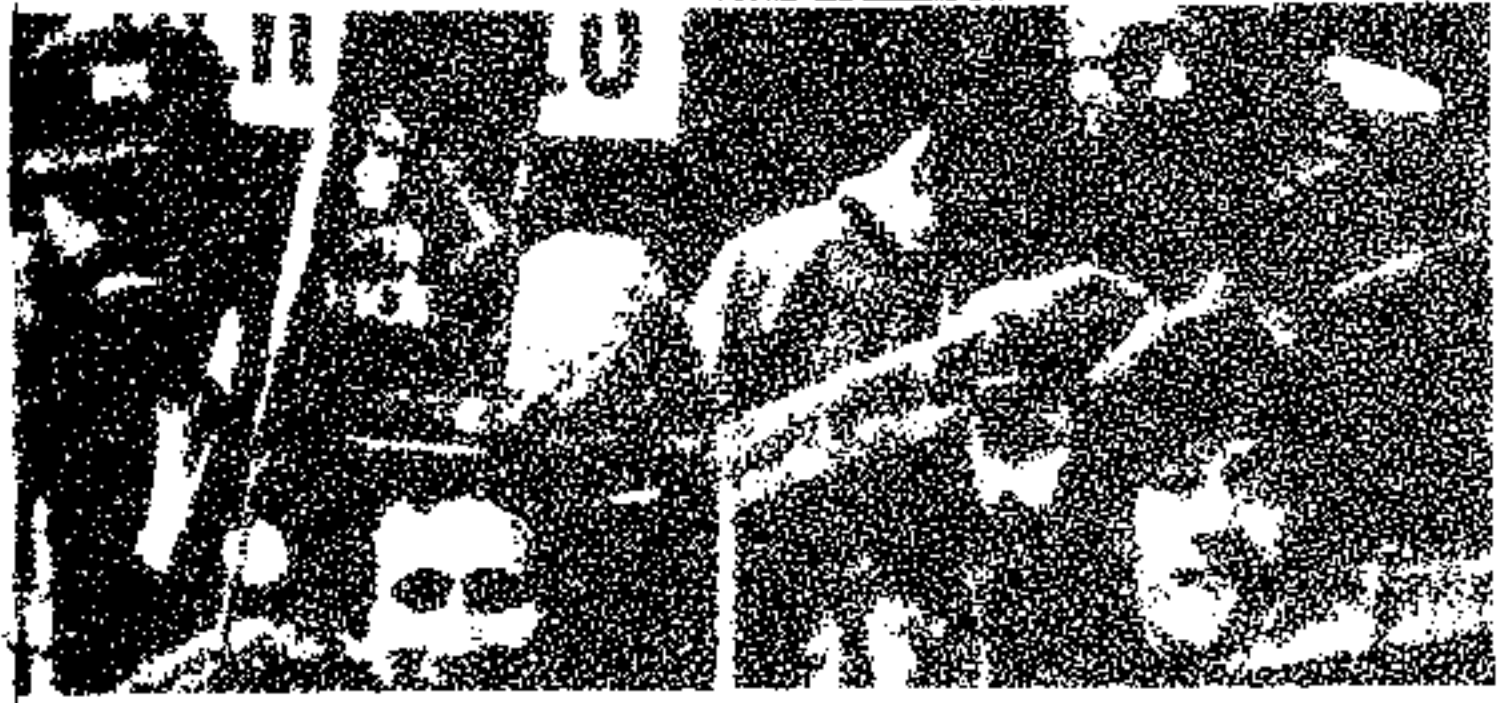
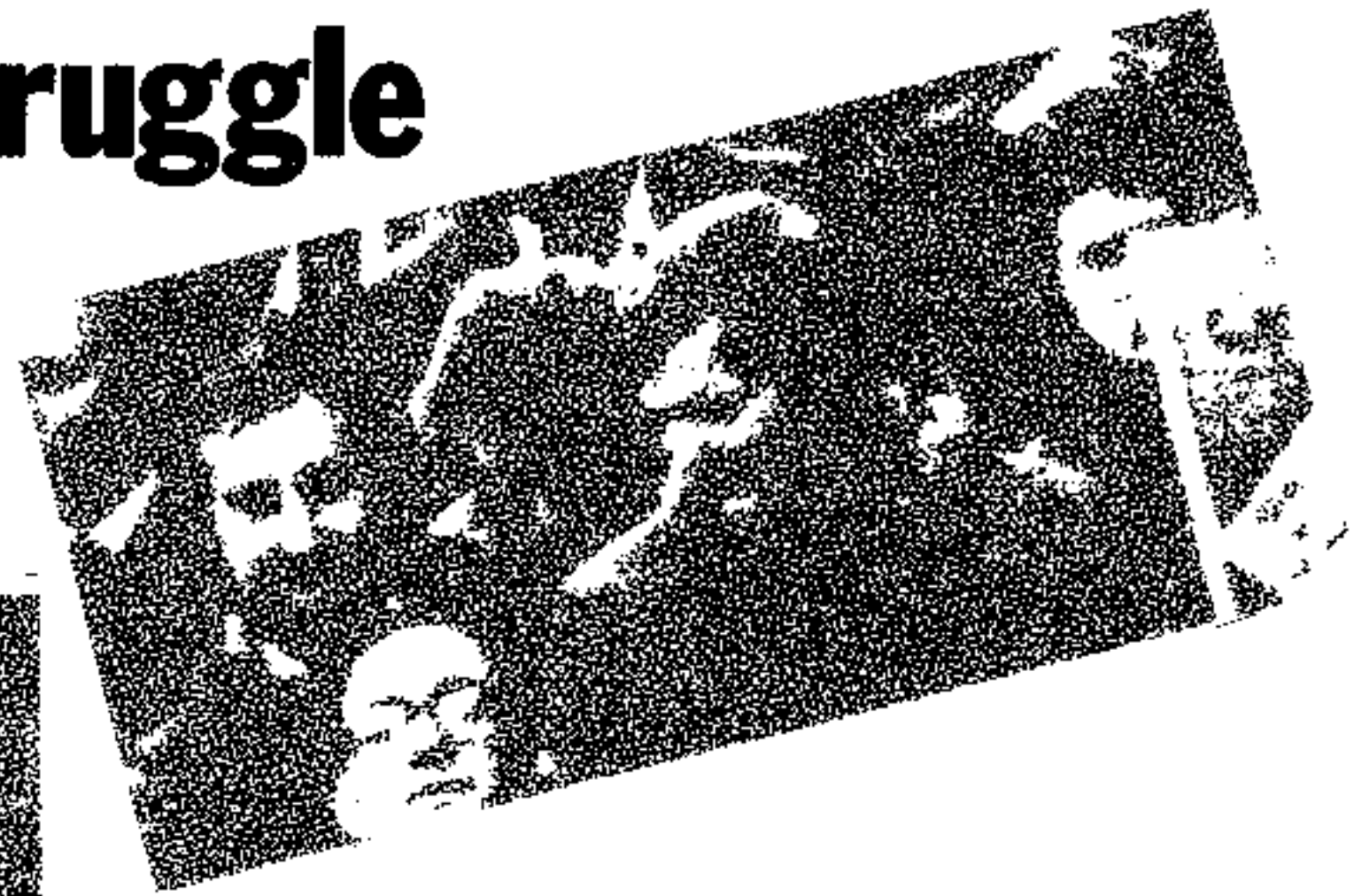
Our conclusion is quite different. The capacity to force governments to renounce nuclear weapons depends on the capacity of workers to regain their confidence to fight back against all the assaults made on them by the employers and the employers' state. The question of the Bomb is inseparable from the question of rebuilding confidence at the shopfloor level where that power to fight back lies.

That is a much longer haul, and we may be sneered at as purist fundamentalists. But the current CND thinking for all its apparent realism, smells of panic and despair. Dropping principles in order to gain the support of all sorts of dubious 'respectable' figures is not realism. Nor is it realistic to expect them—or kindly disposed generals—to cleanse the globe of nuclear obscenity. It is a dangerous fantasy we must decisively reject.

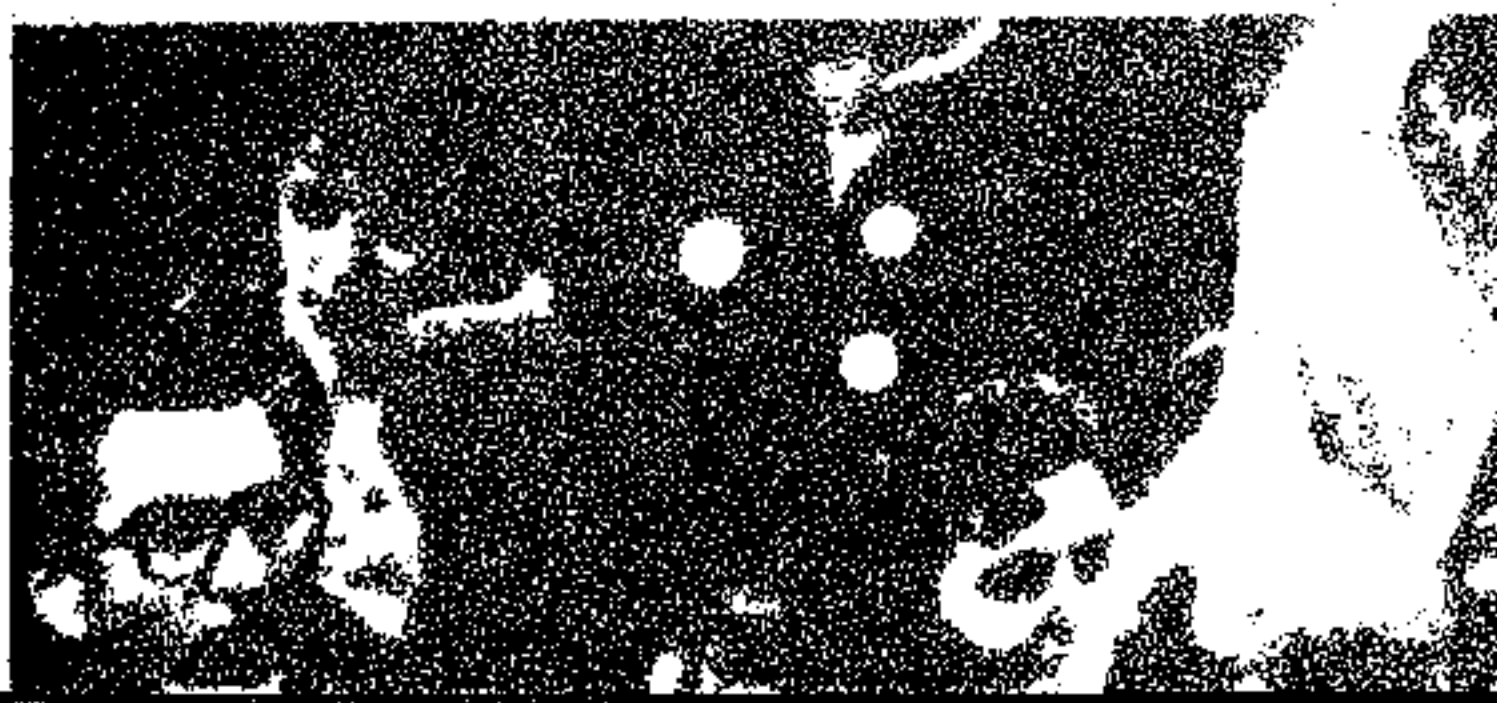
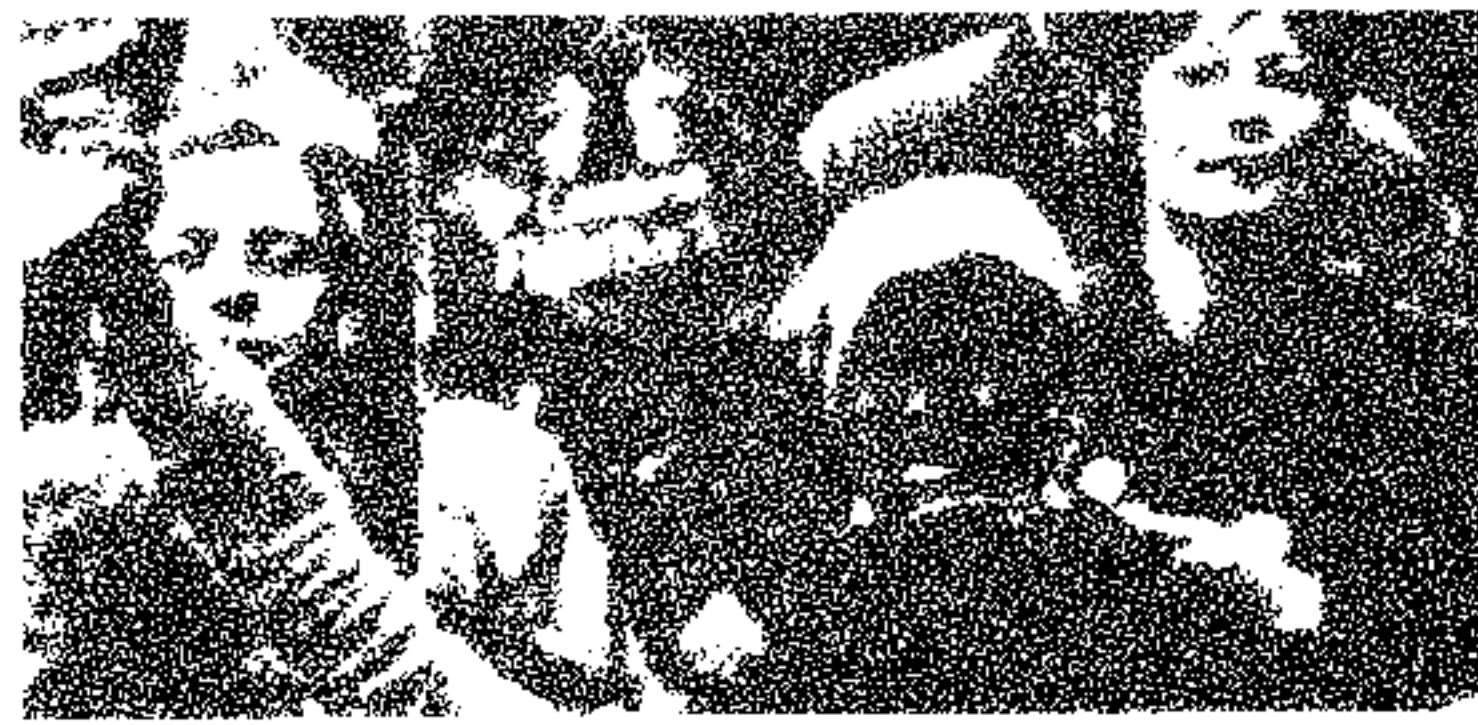
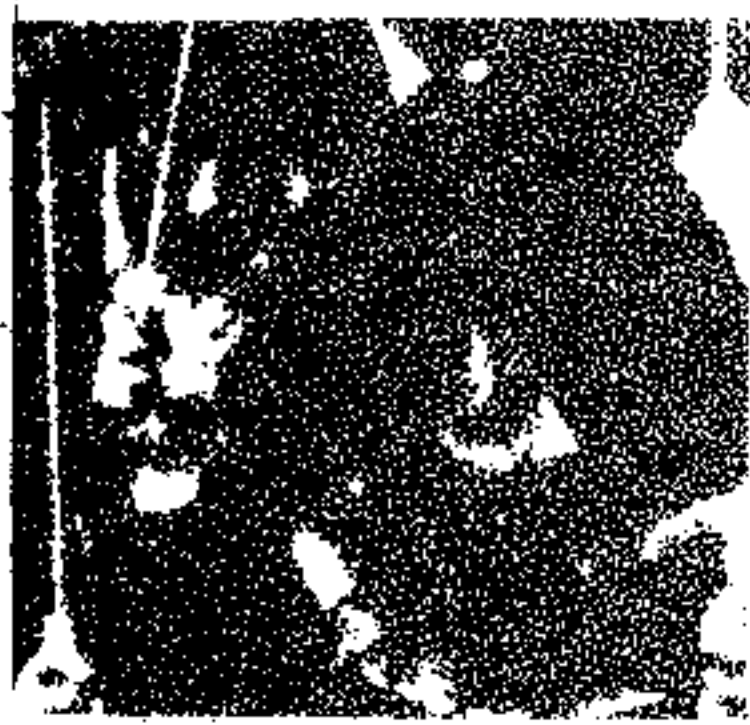
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# POLITICS IN THE WORKPLACE

**- the long hard struggle  
to rebuild  
confidence**



*Socialist Review* has often written of the need to rebuild the movement from the bottom up. We talked to Roger Cox about what can be done in the workplace today.



If you want to understand anything about the present period, and what exactly it means to operate in a downturn, you must look back to the fifties, sixties and early seventies.

The most obvious difference between then and now was the amazing confidence which existed in the workplace. Workers had high expectations which they expected to be met. And if they weren't met there was trouble.

People took the level of organisation necessary to deliver the goods as a right. There was never any question that workers had the right to try and screw as much out of management as possible. There was rarely any need to have arguments about this. Workers just assumed it.

The long post-war boom meant that workers were very much in the driving seat. It wasn't just trade union organisation. In most factories workers would regularly make things for home. If the foreman asked them what they were doing, they would just lie. That's an example of having the confidence that because there was such a labour shortage the boss wouldn't sack you.

That was especially true in the engineering industry. Engineers were absolutely essential to the postwar economy. The bosses would give them almost anything they wanted, and the workers knew it.

The boom produced a situation in which a lot of the workforce remembered being kicked around in the thirties, and where there was a long period of full employment. So there was an incredible bitterness and a determination not to return to the pre-war days. And the knowledge that at the moment the workers had the whip hand.

If you had a collection for a strike and someone refused to give, it was looked upon as dreadful. That person would be seen as a real scab and be given a really hard time by the rest of the workforce.

There were dozens of instances where groups of militants quite ruthlessly went after a particular manager who had treated them like shit in the thirties.

Workers would compete to see who could give the foreman the hardest time, who could drive him to a nervous breakdown, or at least out of the factory first.

When workers went into negotiations with management their main aim was just to occupy management's time until they gave in. Workers' representatives would just sit there all day arguing and arguing, about anything. It didn't matter as long as you occupied the management, and made them waste time over some little point. They had so many things going on the last thing they wanted to do was argue about one little section of the factory.

Management really had to be careful. They needed production to go smoothly and this meant treating the workforce very carefully indeed.

There was a constant competition to make

## WINNING THE ARGUMENT IS'NT EVERYTHING!



sure that your section was keeping up with the section next door. If you found out that you had fallen behind, you just went to management and demanded that you were given the same. There was never any hesitation about this, never any doubt that if management refused to budge that you could bring the section out on strike.

The role of the fulltime bureaucracy was totally different. The only function they had really was to get the rank and file workers out of trouble. If militants had cocked up a strike for example, they would call in the officials to call off the strike. But they wouldn't play any role while things were going well. In those situations they were more or less irrelevant.

### **Terribly sectionalised**

They realised that if they tried to put the brakes on when things were going well the rank and file would just refuse to listen to them. So often they would say one thing to try to cool things on the shop floor down, but make it clear that they didn't really expect the rank and file to take any notice.

Although it was very easy to build strong shop organisation it was almost impossible to argue socialist politics at work. The reason for this was simply that workers were getting a lot out of the system as it was. It appeared that what affected your wages was the wage rates of the section next door, not the world economy.

Everything was terribly sectionalised. What happened in the next town or even the next factory didn't seem to matter, let alone

what happened in the rest of the world.

So you couldn't argue about politics the way it's possible to do now. Socialists used to try in the upturn but it didn't really mean anything. It didn't connect with their audiences' lives at all.

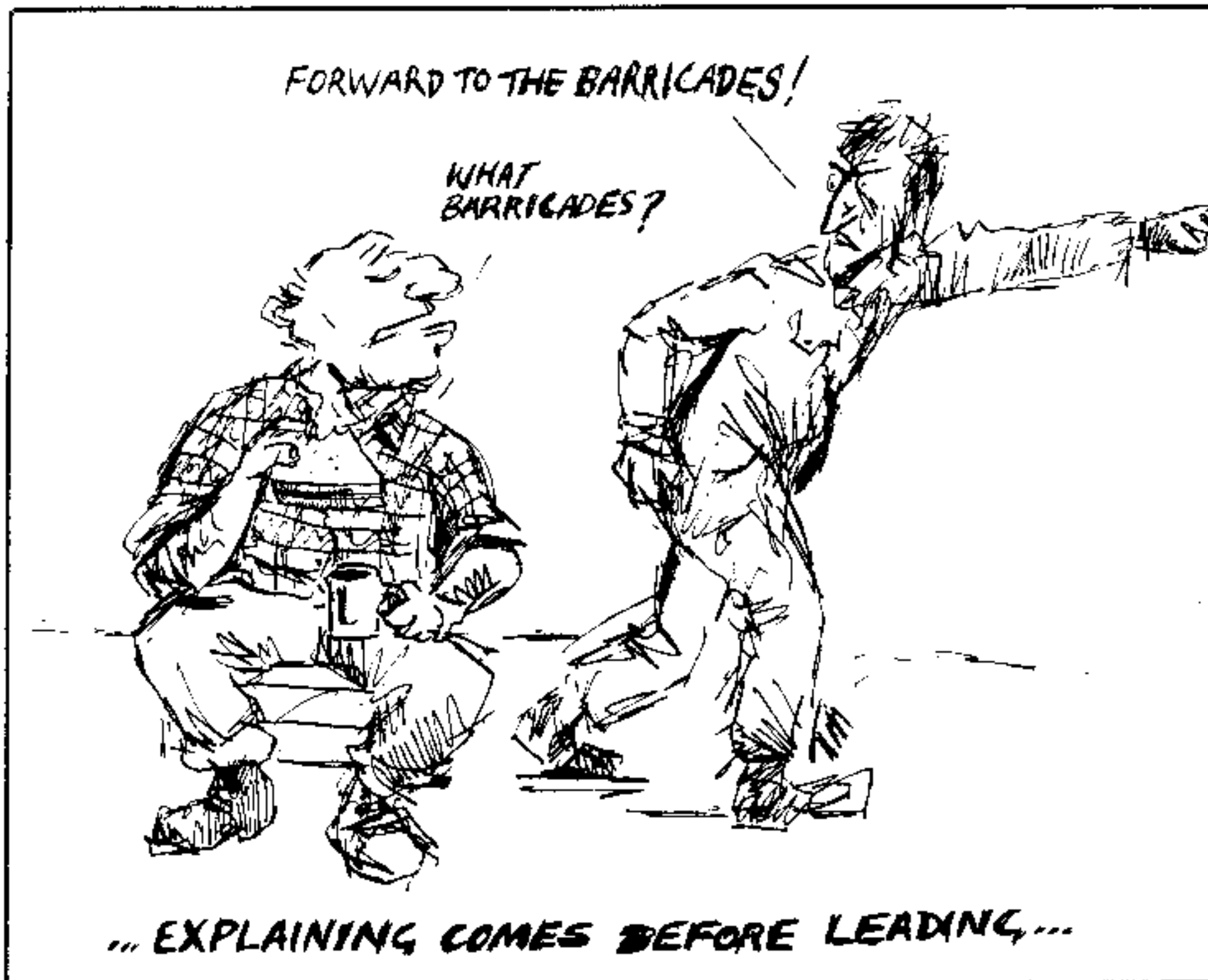
The older workers had seen enormous changes and enormous improvements in their lives. They were buying houses and cars without socialism. Most had no reason to believe that things wouldn't go on getting better and better.

Politics could only be raised where it impinged on the workshop—so you would always be discussing things like incomes policy and wage controls, but you could never broaden out from there.

It's different now because unemployment affects everyone. It's a fear in the back of workers' minds which is always there. Even fairly backward workers have the idea that unemployment is produced by a world-wide economic system which is in crisis. And this opens them up to arguments about the nature of this system.

So it's a hundred times easier to talk about Chile for example. The links are already there. Workers realise that it's another part of a crisis-ridden system. In an upturn the only thing which really affects workers' consciousness is the wage rate of the section next door.

It's important to realise that we are talking about an uphill struggle when we talk about rebuilding shop floor organisation. It's very much a slow longterm process. People should set themselves a target every week; to have one good argument with someone; to



have one good long talk with someone; really finding out everything about their background and ideas.

No-one should think that this is a soft option. They are very difficult things to do. Any militant in a workplace has to begin by winning the confidence of one other person and this cannot be done overnight. It's a long and difficult process.

Collections by themselves don't mean anything. They only make sense as part of this process.

### Having the arguments

Firstly they are the way in which we identify that minority which is always present around us. Once you've identified the minority you have to organise it. You have to make the small group around you aware that other workers who share the same ideas exist. It's essential to break down the isolation of that minority.

But collections are only half the battle—you must convince people and win their confidence and trust. This comes down very largely to having self-confidence. You've got to have the confidence in your politics before you can convince anyone else. And you've got to have the self-confidence to lead people.

The only way this can actually be done is by *politics*—it's useless being an isolated militant in a period like this. There is no way you can have the politics to explain the present period, and therefore no way you can survive it.

In an upturn you can be absolutely awful

and lead thousands. In a downturn you've got to be good to get one or two listening to you.

Being that good doesn't come overnight. People have really got to work at it. Both in terms of being consistent about politics in the workplace, and really taking the sorts of arguments and discussions which come up seriously. You need to take in the politics in the party because if you're doing your job in the workplace properly you're going to need all those arguments.

The arguments which come up in the workplace now are incredibly wide ranging. There are all the arguments about the current political situation. But there are also the arguments that the world can't be changed. That Russia is socialist. That human nature is greedy. So in order to be a consistent socialist at work, to be always arguing socialist politics, you do have to have a very thorough understanding of socialist politics.

That's not to say that every socialist is suddenly going to start winning every argument they have. The opposite is actually the

case. Even the most experienced militants lose arguments.

The implantation of bourgeois ideas is really deep, and you are not going to overcome them all at once. But it's not winning the arguments that is most important. It's getting the people around you to start questioning what they are told.

The way people will put reactionary arguments always changes, and it's only by having the arguments that *you* learn exactly how the people around you are thinking. Once you know this you can go back to the party and discuss better ways of tackling certain ideas. This is always an ongoing process.

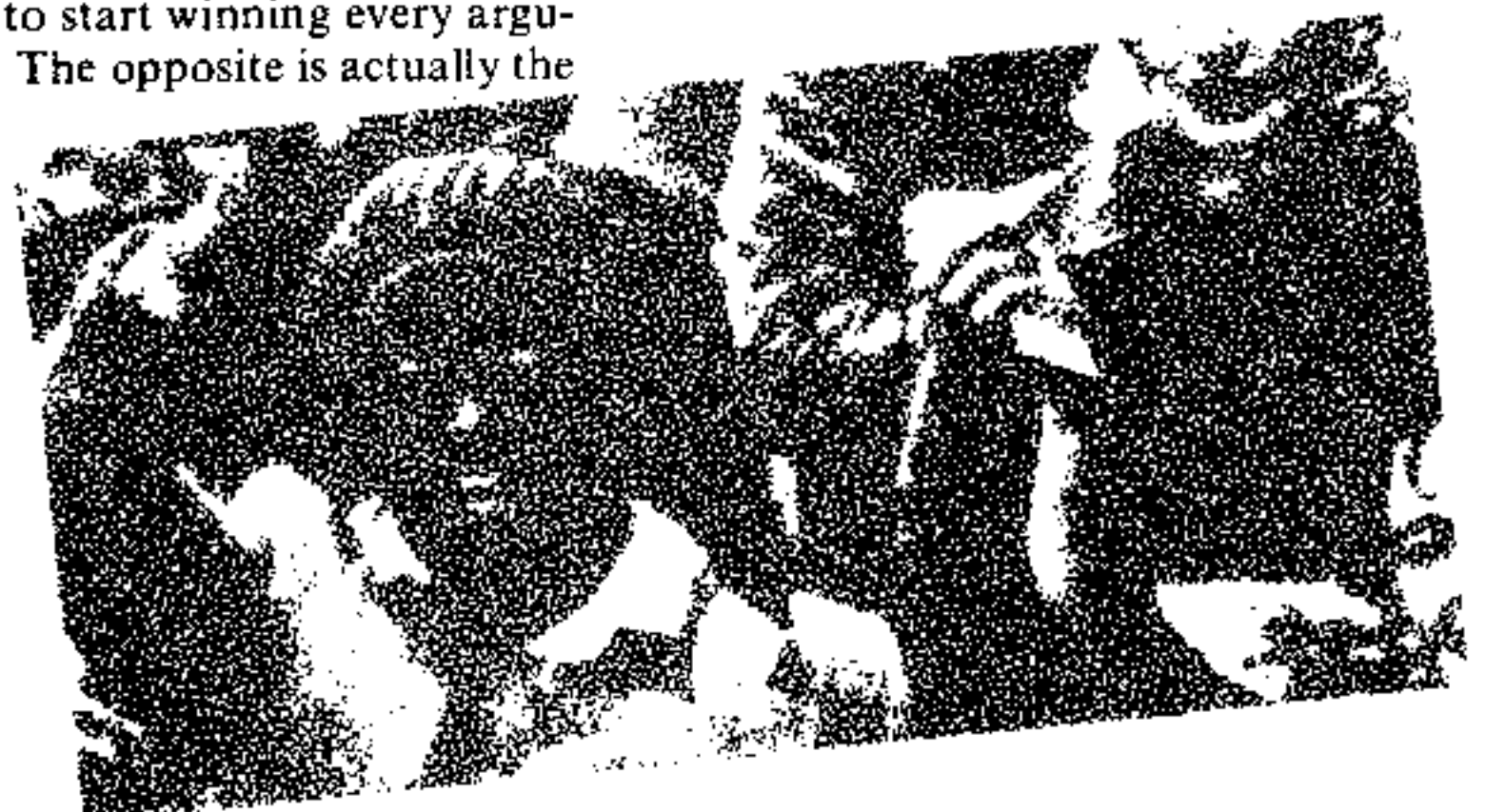
The thing is, the working class are an intensely ideological class. The ruling class fill our heads up with an enormous quantity of absolute rubbish. Workers constantly sift through what they are told to see what is useful to them and what isn't. What workers arguing against you are trying to do is rationalise all the rubbish that they have taken in and present it as an argument. Sometimes they will do it in a way which makes it very difficult to answer.

It's not just knowing the arguments. It's also how to present them. If you're dealing with someone who is a potential militant, a potential workplace leader, the last thing you want to do is humiliate them. That's no good for winning their confidence. So it's knowing how to present arguments in a way which is convincing without being patronising.

### Day to day contact

Having regular arguments enables a socialist in a workplace to centre the sorts of discussions which go on around socialist politics. Talking to individuals, and learning to explain socialist politics to them, is the foundation of political work. Giving people the confidence to argue their ideas is a necessary step to getting them to change those ideas. The art of leadership is getting the best out of people. It adds colour and texture to a shop organisation, as it creates a political atmosphere.

Ultimately the socialist in a workplace must be able to lead people, but explaining



comes before leading. Before you can lead a strike, or even get a collection going, you have to actually go around and explain the issues involved to people.

You can't go round to the majority, you have to go to the key people, the people who will potentially support you. It's important to have the debate with them. Then they will feel that they are in control of the situation. If the network around you support you they will take the arguments into the other layers.

So, by the time there is a meeting called the groundwork has been done already, the decision has really already been taken. Different points of view may come out at the meeting, but the arguments should have been discussed beforehand. The whole thing should be pre-digested.

To get to that stage, involves the whole art of getting around and talking to people, of convincing people, of arguing politics.

To do this you have to be in day-to-day contact with those key people around you. You have to be seen as the same as them, as a worker like them, amid the same discipline and conditions. And you have to know them very well, so you can really build up a relationship with them. Getting into a position where you get facility time can be dangerous.

Facility time is a bit like owning a motor car—it's a private solution for a public ill. All facility time actually does is to isolate any representative from their base. It doesn't matter how good the representative is. The pressure is always to rush through the business and be off to the bar.

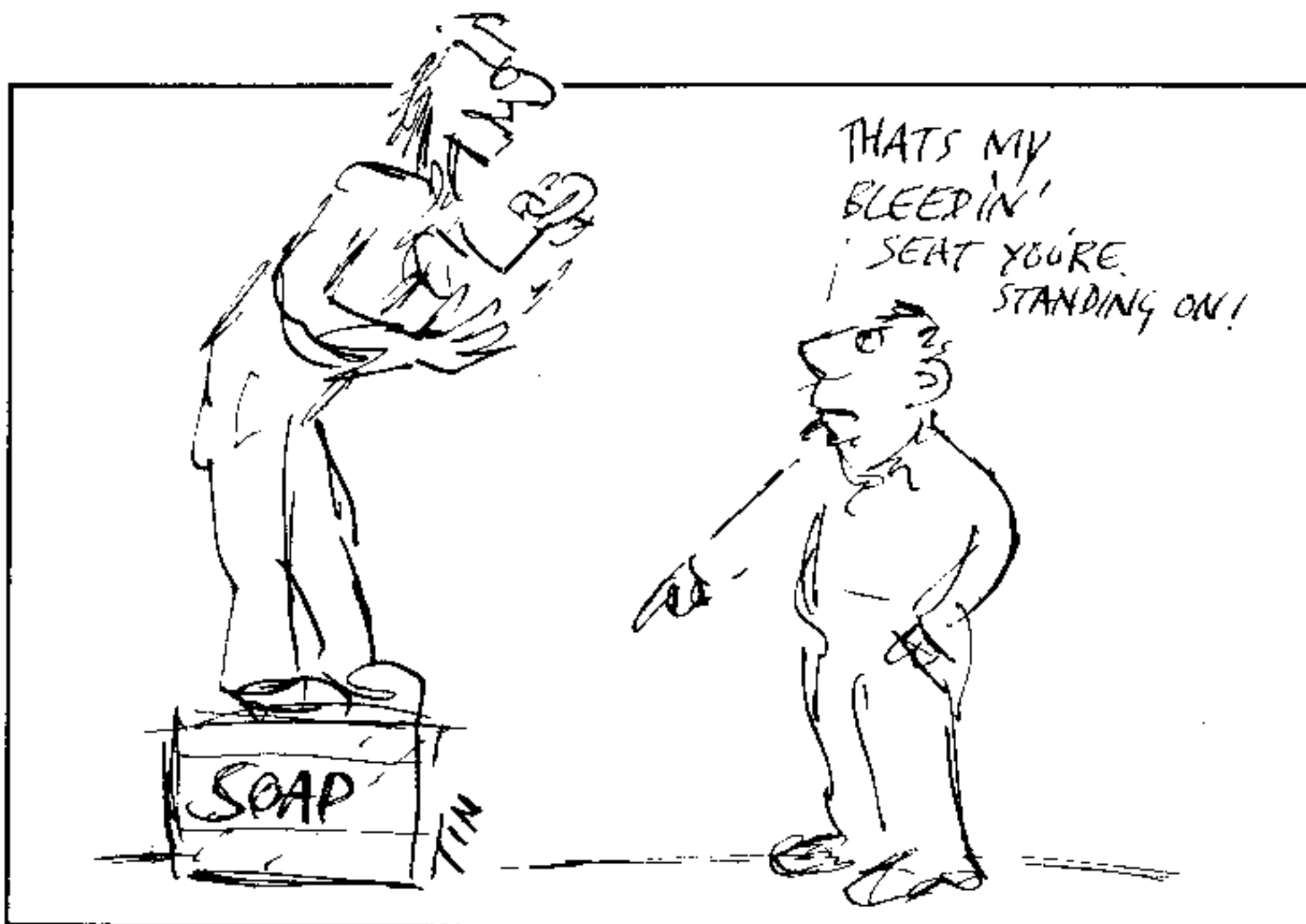
Facility time means that you are released from work discipline. But once you are released from that discipline you cannot really represent the workers still under that discipline. You are a whole world away from them.

### Shop stewards' role

If we're going to begin to rebuild in the workplace it's important to fight very hard against this trend. Shop stewards' meetings shouldn't be conducted in worktime, unless the stewards are willing to lose the wages for that period. Stewards should be committed enough to either lose money or to meet after work, in their own time.

It's the only way stewards can keep on the same level as the workers they represent. As soon as you're seen to be sitting in meetings rather than working, you've isolated yourself.

If we look at the role of shop stewards during the Second World War and throughout the '50s and '60s we find that this separation between workers and their stewards simply did not exist. You got what you wanted by leading people, not by relying on signed agreements. Actually things were very rarely written down.



Management knew how far they could go. They knew that if they overstepped the mark the stewards could bring the workforce down on them like a ton of bricks.

You had convenors who would clock off of the job to do union business, and be paid for that time by the shop stewards' committee.

In a factory like Napier's, at the outbreak of the war, they had shop stewards' committees which weren't recognised by the management. The stewards operated on the local foreman. That was who they put the pressure on and they drew their strength from the workers who they represented being willing to fight on the section.

Because they weren't recognised by the management all the work they did was pretty much undercover. When the war broke out management announced that there was going to be a meeting in the canteen to discuss war production, and how all the workers had to put their backs into it.

So the chairman of the shop stewards' committee walked into their office and said: 'If there are going to be any meetings called in this factory, which affect workers, it is going to be us, not the management who call them.' Management went ahead and called the meeting, but the only people who turned up to it were the shop stewards' committee.

Then and there they forced the management to accept that if there were going to be any meetings called only they would call them. They didn't have full time convenors. They met in pubs after work. But they had an organisation which was immensely strong, which was supported by all of the workers.

They said to the workers: 'Don't go to the meeting', and no worker went to the meeting. The workers knew what they were doing. They knew what the plan was. The workers trusted the leadership because they

were the same as them. There was no separation between the workers and the stewards.

Loads of factories were like that. Every little concession had to be fought for. There was a very strong belief in not having that separation between stewards and workers. The idea of trade union offices would have appalled those old workers.

They just didn't operate that way. You won by leading people, by having strength in your section, not by writing things down. They never signed agreements and things like that. You got what you wanted by leading people.

We can't recreate that atmosphere of confidence. Only an improvement in the economy can do that. It doesn't need to be another boom, just enough of a shift so workers don't feel frightened of their jobs, like at Cowley and Tilbury. But what we must do is lay the groundwork so we can take the maximum advantage when the mood changes.

### The minority

This has to be understood as part of a political perspective, as part of a process. If it's not seen as part of a process it sounds absolutely awful because what we are doing is so small, and the pressure to move into the bureaucracy or sink into apathy is enormous.

What we've got to do is re-establish a leadership within workplaces, and what we do now will affect how we, as a workers' party, operate when things look up.

How successful we can be in an upturn depends upon a number of things. If we can successfully adapt to what the downturn actually means then we are in a potentially very strong position. What that means is making ourselves the *real* leaders inside the

workplace.

Even if we can't be stewards we should still aim to be at the centre of that minority of workers who are willing to fight, so we are in the business of leading the real militants when the opportunities arise. If we can establish that sort of network then we are in an excellent position.

There are dangers for us. It's one thing identifying that minority, but there is the possibility that in identifying it you actually isolate it from the majority of the workers. Socialists and their periphery must be equipped to pull the vacillating people behind us.

On the one hand this means having the arguments about politics, on the other looking out for every little thing that can be organised around. If we're to keep the people around us looking outward we must always have some sort of activity going which will enable them to relate to the rest of the membership.

### Winning confidence

*Socialist Worker* is one of the most important ways to start creating the arguments in the workplace. There are always two sorts of people who buy *Socialist Worker* at work.

There's a small group who are really loyal to the paper; who buy it every week; who always give you the correct money and never disagree with the politics.

Then there is a much larger group who are always coming out with anti-socialist arguments; who are always denouncing and disagreeing with the paper. Often you can't understand why these people actually bother to buy the paper, because they argue with you about everything in it.

But then you realise that although they may argue with *you* they are actually using the arguments in the paper to argue with other people. There are loads of examples of this.

In one factory a group of blokes used to buy the paper who were racialists. They were very good militants but they were racialists. The comrade selling to them even had doubts about whether he should continue selling them the paper, until one day he overheard one of them arguing with another racialist in the factory, and using all our arguments right down the line.

We can only be successful to the degree to which we can convince people like this to be socialists. That means that every time they buy the paper they will voice their doubts about the politics. And we will have to have the arguments again and again.

The people who buy the paper are only going to learn if they test out the politics in argument with us. Before people are confident about our politics they will go through this period of doubt and

questioning.

The important thing in winning the confidence of these people is not so much winning every argument as being consistent. You must always stand your ground, and never waver on our politics if you are ever going to give other people the confidence that we are right. If people around us are bothering to argue with us then at some level they really *want* to be convinced that we are right.

It's a matter of creating chances for ourselves when the upturn does come. Then the sort of people who are arguing with us now will be faced with a choice between us and the trade union bureaucracy. In the majority of cases they will choose the trade union bureaucracy—but we can gain the best of those people if we start arguing now.

We've got to always concentrate on changing the atmosphere in our own shop, in our own office or wherever. In the midst of a downturn it is possible to shift the level of argument, to move it up a notch or two. But it is a longterm thing.

Ideas change very slowly at the moment. It's essential to be part of a political organisation if you are to resist the pressures of co-option into the trade union bureaucracy or just slump into passivity.

We are not going to see a rerun of the sort of upturn of the '50s and '60s. There is no prospect of the conditions which produced the long boom reappearing.

When we talk about an upturn in the economy this time around we mean some improvement in the midst of a generally very miserable situation.

### Different atmosphere

We would be in a situation where unemployment dropped slightly, say to three million, we would not be in a situation of full, or anything like full employment.

It would be a small and short expansion in midst of the general trend of recession. The government will still have to attempt to cut the level of social spending. They will see strikes as a major threat to a recovery in the economy.

A worker in a company which is suddenly taking orders may feel that his or her job is secure, but that same worker is more than likely to have family, friends and neighbours

who are still unemployed. They are still likely to be faced with the closure of the local hospital or school.

This will create a very different atmosphere for workplace militants than that which existed in the post-war boom. It will not be possible to make huge gains by just relying on the section.

The general situation will still affect workers' consciousness. So we are going to have to be able to explain the world *in toto*, not just a particular little patch of it.

### Sowing the seeds

This means we have the opportunity to build a large socialist party. People will have the confidence to fight and they will need a political explanation of the world. It will be easy to talk about politics, and relatively easy to recruit to the party as growing confidence gives workers the feeling that they can change the world.

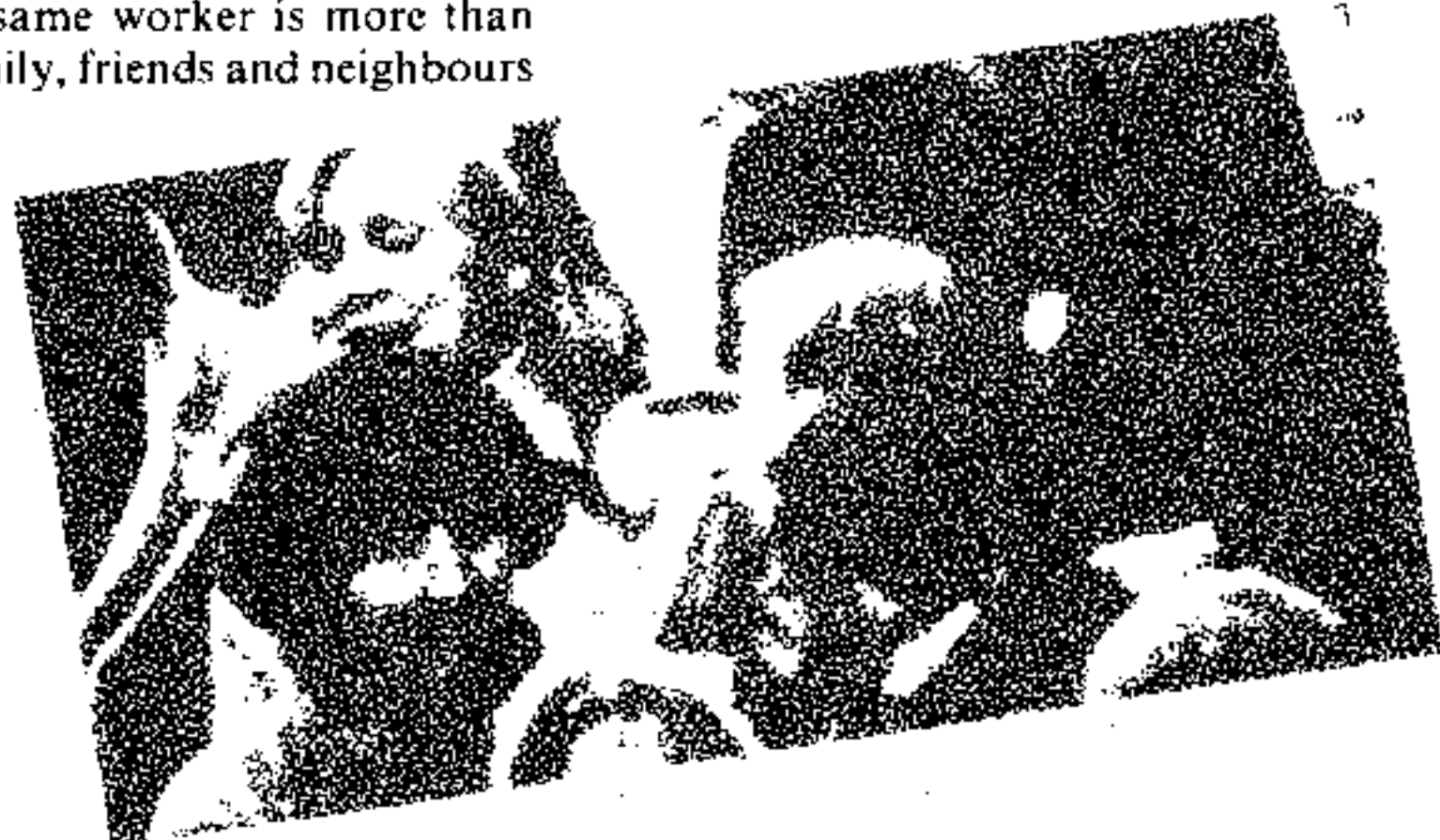
The workers who will be absolutely key to bringing about this shift are those who will argue with us now. We've got to start sowing the seeds if we are to take advantage of the explosion of bitterness which is bound to come.

We cannot rebuild the shop stewards movement immediately. It's just not possible on any sizeable scale in the present period, it will only become possible as the upturn develops and workers confidence returns.

It could also encourage a separation of trade union militancy and politics, as if shop floor organisation could be rebuilt in isolation from politics.

The goal can lead us to relate to the wrong audience. Cowley revealed how weak and isolated the existing stewards are. It is not they who will rebuild workplace organisation—the impulse will come from below, from new layers of militants. The slogan 'rebuild the shop stewards organisation' can lead us to orientate on existing shop stewards to the exclusion of other rank and file militants.

The situation of the '50s and '60s, impregnated with sectionalism and reformism has gone for good. Now, rebuilding workplace organisation cannot be separated from building the revolutionary party.



# Tories' Belfast headaches

The victory of Gerry Adams in West Belfast was one of the few bright spots of the election.

**Kieran Allen**, of our Irish fraternal organisation the Socialist Workers Movement, looks at its origins and consequences.

The Tories may have won the British general election with a landslide, but one area stands out as a very black spot. In Northern Ireland a significant minority of the Catholic population have voted for Sinn Fein—the political wing of the IRA.

They did so despite the repeated warnings from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. They did so in a manner that left the British media with no explanation of this strange aberration in a Western European democracy.

They cannot claim that the emotional aftermath of the hunger strike led otherwise moderate people to take leave of their senses. The issues in the election were elegantly simple—a choice between the constitutional nationalism of the SDLP or the armed struggle of the IRA.

A few figures will bear out the extent of the Provos' achievement. Last year in the Assembly election they polled 35 percent of the nationalist vote compared to the SDLP's 65 percent. This time they set a target of 90,000 votes. They surpassed their target by 13,000 and got 43 percent of the nationalist vote, to the SDLP's 57 percent.

## The power broker

The Catholic population constitute one third of Northern Ireland's population. The SDLP polled 18½ percent of the total vote. The Provos received 13½ percent. In the mid-seventies the SDLP were getting 25 percent of the total vote. The decline of the SDLP can clearly be seen from such figures.

The vote for the Provos was won without any diminution of the armed struggle. The shooting of soldiers and the bombing of RUC barracks continued right up to polling day. It would be difficult to point to other examples of guerrilla armies who have managed so successfully to combine the 'ballot paper and the Armalite'.

Why do the mass of ordinary Catholics disregard all advice from the Pope downwards and vote for 'the men of violence'? The answer is relatively simple.

The Northern state is and always was a prison of sectarianism and unemployment. It is totally unreformable and moreover everyone is aware of that fact.

The deaths of the hunger strikers brought that home in a direct and vivid way. The whole of the Catholic community demanded

their release. The British strategy of isolating republican militants by labelling them criminals has totally backfired as had every British attempt to reform or impose a solution on the North. Yet there was not the slightest concession from Thatcher. It became clear that it wasn't just the Provos who were being criminalised but the whole nationalist population.

Something else had developed during the hunger strike. Ever since the SDLP's emergence from the civil rights movement in the early seventies, the British ruling class looked to it as the power broker inside the Catholic community.

In return for various concessions, the SDLP was in a position to call for an end to militancy. Thus, during the period of the power-sharing régime the SDLP managed to get the mass rent and rate strike called off and in fact opened the way for the Payments of Debts Act. However during the hunger strike the SDLP was in no position to deliver any moderation.

Bourgeois parties, particularly those that function in an oppressed ghetto, need a set of open institutions wherein they can parade their bargaining skills. Without such institutions they wither at the roots. Their leaders no longer peer out from the news media with statements. They lose confidence

in their own ability. That is what happened to the SDLP.

Having proved next to useless for the British ruling class during the hunger strike, they have since been pushed out to the political wilderness. Thatcher and Prior made no concessions to them when it came to establishing an Assembly in the North. This in turn left them without a base to bargain from. The constitutional nationalism of the SDLP is being eroded because the British ruling class no longer see their use and because the mass of nationalists have become increasingly militant.

The significance of the election is that it shows the possibility of the long term decline of the SDLP. It offers the prospect that in the coming years the British state will directly be facing the Provos without any intermediaries. Paradoxically, the British ruling class are not half as worried by such a scenario as are their Southern Irish counterparts.

## Southern state worried

Ever since 'the troubles' began, the Southern governments have combined a soft nationalist condemnation of British excesses with full scale repression against republicans. Their ideology has rested on the notion that the republicans were a tiny minority intent on mindless violence. By and large, they have been able to convince the majority in the South of this view.

They have also openly admitted that they regard the Provos as as much a threat to their state as to the Northern state. They have given a lead to the British on some aspects of



**Jim Prior and Garrett Fitzgerald, both worried about the growth of support for the Provos**



repression. Republicans are banned from television and radio. They can be sentenced in juryless courts on the word of senior policemen. Political status has never been tolerated in Southern jails. This battery of repression was combined under Fianna Fail governments with a strong dose of nationalist rhetoric.

The decline of the SDLP destroys this neat conjuror's trick. It is no longer possible to claim the Provos are an isolated minority. The Southern state's alliance with Britain in maintaining partition must become clearer. Whether or not the Provos have a strategy for taking advantage of this political opening in the South is a different matter.

For the moment the Southern ruling class are doing everything to save the neck of the SDLP. They have established a 'New Ireland' forum, open to all those who oppose violence. (State violence is not included.) The forum has all the reputation of a pompous nonentity. It will continue to have such a reputation unless Fitzgerald or Haughey can persuade Thatcher that they should be trusted with a share in the running of Northern Ireland.

The electoral success has sent shock waves throughout the British and Irish establishment. That is a good reason why socialists in both countries should also celebrate. But neither should we be under any illusions. The manner in which Sinn Fein campaigned showed how superficial the 'left turn' in the organisation has been in recent years.

The campaign stressed that the key issue was whether Sinn Fein or the SDLP should provide the leadership of 'the nationalist people'. Not surprisingly, there was little appeal to the Protestant working class. But neither was there the slightest mention of what even nationalist workers should be fighting for. The campaign offered no strategy on how to fight unemployment—currently running at over 50 percent in areas like West Belfast. It was a straightforward nationalist campaign directed to all classes in that community.

### Substitutionism

Sinn Fein set out to win support beyond those who agreed with the armed struggle. Instead of concrete policies which could connect up, it offered as its trump card its advice centres.

One of the three central slogans of the campaign was 'for an active constituency service'. It argued that its advice centres were run 'by full time voluntary workers rather than the old careerist politicians'. Quite simply that Sinn Fein provided the better social work service, that they could do more for the people—not just through the armed struggle but also through operating the conventional political system.

There is nothing surprising in all this. Republicans have always stressed that the activities of the few could substitute for the passivity of the many. That substitutionism has simply been extended into the electoral sphere. The invitation was to vote for new 'principled leadership' that could do the job. There was therefore no need to spell out the strategy whereby the Assembly could be opposed and unemployment fought.



**Community politics provo style. Gerry Adams and Margaret Keenan of the Moyard Housing Action Committee show Ken Livingstone around West Belfast**

There is a problem in all this for Sinn Fein. Electoral victories have developed a momentum of their own. They have now the same propaganda effect as a successful military operation. There will be plenty of opportunities to pull off further coups—in the European election, in the local council elections, and in the elections in the South.

New victories will be seen as further morale boosters. But there are limits to the achievements, just as there are limits to the armed struggle itself. Thatcher may have got a headache, as the Sinn Fein posters suggested, because Gerry Adams got the seat in West Belfast, but it will not force her to withdraw a single soldier from the North.

The troops won't be pulled out because the nationalist community passively vote for Sinn Fein. It needs a 32-county workers' movement to force her and her troops out. And that is the area which Sinn Fein and the whole republican tradition cannot address. As the victories at the polls accumulate and still the troops remain, then the old argument of the Armalite or the ballot box will rage inside Sinn Fein.

Socialists in Ireland have to be clearer now on the nature of republicanism because of its relative success. Unfortunately, such clarity has not always come easy. The dominant notion in recent years has been that the increased political sophistication in Sinn Fein has represented a turn left. The task of socialists was to encourage further left developments until the movement was transformed.

But the only turn left has been an attempt to tack mild social democratic politics onto a greater tactical flexibility when it comes to elections. Gerry Adams, the leading figure of the left, has stated recently that Sinn Fein needs to combine a 'correct attitude to the national question with the groundwork the Workers Party have been doing'.

That particular groundwork has been the establishing of apolitical advice centres, abstention from militant strikes, capturing union positions and crawling opportunism when it comes to policies at election time.

### An all-class alliance

Republicanism cannot be transformed because it is an all-class alliance. It can tack to a mild left position to extend the base of support for the armed struggle. It can even sympathise with the growing struggles of workers. But it can never offer concrete leadership to those struggles. And it is precisely because it cannot that it will veer between an emphasis on the ballot or the Armalite.

Socialists in Ireland have to organise and build independently of the republican movement. They have to argue openly their differences with that movement, rather than simply offer it advice from the sidelines. For socialists in Britain, the electoral victories of Sinn Fein make more possible the Troops Out argument. □

# Crisis in the PLO

In February the PLO announced that it had achieved a new and unprecedented degree of unity in the wake of last year's war in Lebanon. Today the movement's largest group—Al Fatah—is split by conflict that threatens to remove figures who have led the PLO for a generation.

The international battles point up the present sorry position of the PLO. Its military organisation is confined to a few square miles of territory in north and east Lebanon. From here it has conducted a not unsuccessful guerrilla campaign against the Israeli occupation forces. But the Palestinian raids and ambushes are permitted only on license from the Syrian army which controls almost the whole area. The PLO is a prisoner of Syria's President Assad.

In this small pocket of military activity are the fighters who have regrouped since the evacuation of Beirut and the scattering of the guerrilla forces. Most have been growing frustrated and resentful at the behaviour of the PLO leadership and particularly at the policy of PLO leader Arafat, who has spent the last twelve months shuttling between the world's capitals to try and pull together a 'peace' deal that most Palestinians believed was never likely to come off. In the process, they argue, he has wasted away the credit that accrued to the PLO as victim of the Israeli offensive.

## American deal

Arafat's travels have coincided with American attempts to implement the Reagan plan. This scheme was to settle the Middle East problem by providing a semi-autonomous Palestinian area of the West Bank, federated with Jordan and policed by some combination of Jordanian, Israeli and perhaps United Nations forces.

Many Palestinians rejected the plan from the beginning, and even though the Palestinian 'parliament'—the National Council—accepted the idea of a 'ministate' solution, it rejected the American plan at its meeting in February. Arafat continued his meetings with Jordan's King Hussein and indirectly with the Americans.

In reality the Reagan plan was never on. The Begin government in Israel would never countenance abandoning the territory occupied in 1967—indeed since the announcement of the plan the Israelis have pressed ahead with the 'Judaisation' of the West Bank. Thousands of acres of land have been seized from Arab owners and scores of new settlements established.

The Israeli policy has given weight to the argument that the Lebanon invasion itself was an attempt to destroy the PLO and buy time to push through full annexation of the West Bank.

Many Palestinians believe that the Reagan plan was never even seen as a serious option in Washington. Diplomatic activity has now

The Palestine Liberation Organisation is undergoing a major crisis. Michael Davis looks at the background.

almost ceased and after the difficulties caused by the invasion and the massacres in Beirut relations between the United States and Israel are again publicly close.

Large supplies of American weaponry are en route to Israel and in Lebanon—where the withdrawal of Israeli troops was to be a 'pre-condition' for movement on the plan—the occupation forces still control half the country over a year after the invasion began.



President Assad of Syria

Over the past two months Arafat's personal position has weakened rapidly. Conscious of growing opposition he moved to replace key commanders in Lebanon with his own loyalists. Any such changes would have been resented but many fighters were incensed that Arafat chose to introduce two officers believed to have disgraced themselves during last year's battles with Israel.

A number of Fatah units refused to accept the appointments, denouncing Arafat as a 'revisionist'. After a series of press conferences at which the dissidents presented a long list of complaints about Arafat and the Fatah leadership open conflict erupted in the Beqaa Valley and in Palestinian bases in Syria.

There is a suggestion in the western press that the dissidents are 'radicals' who reject Arafat's political approach and are looking for a new strategy for the PLO. In fact while they have expressed the real anxieties of many activists over Arafat's conduct and the

nature of the Fatah leadership, they have offered no new ideas.

In this sense the present crisis—the most serious threat to the PLO leadership for twenty years—expresses the real weakness of the PLO in the post-invasion period and the fatal flaws in the whole perspective advanced by the national movement.

The core of the dissident leaders have occupied important posts within the Fatah structure, while not holding the senior positions reserved for Arafat and the 'loyalists'.

Prominent amongst them are Abu Saleh (Nimr Saleh) one of the founders of Fatah and its military wing Al Assifa, Qadri (Samih Quwaiq) head of the PLO 'Office of Jordanian Affairs' until its closure in 1980, Abu Musa (Said Musa) deputy commander of the PLO operations room and Abu Akram (Musa Awad) head of Fatah operations in Lebanon.

The dissidents are not members of any formal political grouping but they are linked by a common sympathy for the Soviet Union. For several years they acted as the pro-Soviet faction on the Fatah Central Committee.

## Diplomatic activities

Their links with Arab governments are unclear but it is reported that in May Libya donated \$7.5m to the dissident cause and when fighting began in mid-June they were openly supported by the Syrians, who first pointedly allowed supplies and ammunition to reach the 'rebels'—denying Arafat's units—and later reinforced the dissident units with their own tanks and artillery. It was after the open displays of Syrian support and Arafat's violent criticism of President Assad for preparing a 'massacre' of Palestinians in Lebanon that the Syrians expelled the PLO leader.

The dissidents have objected to Arafat's diplomatic activities, especially those linked to the Reagan plan, and to his cooperation with King Hussein. They are critical of the decision to leave Beirut last year and have demanded that the fighters who dispersed to nine Arab states should be brought back to Lebanon. They oppose any PLO withdrawal from Lebanon. Much criticism has been directed at the Fatah leadership—accused of being bureaucratic and corrupt. The dissidents have called for an emergency congress to discuss their criticisms.

Many Palestinians are sympathetic to the dissidents' demands. Though there are suggestions that a deal with King Hussein might still receive some support on the West Bank, amongst the activists in Lebanon and Syria patience has run out.

Criticism of the Fatah leadership is especially widespread. From the early 1970s, when it became established in Lebanon, the PLO leadership became more and more central-

ised and bureaucratic—often scathingly described by the rank and file as 'having more cars than fighters'.

Fatah, with its huge income from Saudi Arabia, built up the apparatus of a small state—an administration, welfare system and an army, as well as guerrilla units. Many Palestinians made a living from the movement but also resented the power structure that came to dominate it.

On 22 June the *Guardian* reported a guerrilla supporter of Abu Musa—one of the dissident leaders—as saying that Arafat represented only 'Fatah corruption, money, positions, cars and aeroplanes'. Arafat, he argued, travelled the world saying that the PLO was the vital factor in the Middle East equation, 'but this—he patted his gun—is what makes it so'.

The comment captures the feeling of resentment which the dissident leaders have tapped. It also expresses the poverty of their alternative. The dissidents have no new strategy to counterpose the compromises of Arafat. Their approach is to argue for a continuation of the military struggle, to be con-

ducted by more able and determined commanders—presumably themselves—in association with the most intransigent of the Arab states. This necessarily places them in the Syrian camp.

Ever since the expulsion of 1948 the Palestinians have been dependent upon forces in the Arab countries. At an early stage the leaders of Fatah and the Arab National Movement (from which developed the Popular and Democratic Fronts and various splinters) explicitly rejected the socialist strategy of looking to the potential of the Arab working class.

Instead they cultivated relationships with the Arab rulers—Fatah with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states—the leftists with the 'progressive' régimes of Libya, Syria, Algeria, Yemen and, sometimes, Iraq. Inevitably they became dependent upon the Arab régimes—and more and more vulnerable to them.

Some of the Arab régimes exploited the situation by directly sponsoring their 'own' Palestinian groups—Syria's *Saiqa*, Iraq's Arab Liberation Front—or financing their

own groups and individuals. This gave them leverage inside the PLO and increased credibility at home on the basis that governments could claim to be 'active' on the Palestinian issue.

The PLO leadership—in reality the Fatah leadership—managed to keep some room for manoeuvre by maintaining a close relationship with Saudi Arabia—the dominant power in the region and the movement's main source of funds—and by balancing the demands of the other Arab leaders.

As the pressure from Israel and these same Arab régimes forced the PLO into a corner it became more dependent on the Arab leaders and more exposed to them. Since the movement has been limited to a tiny area of Lebanon it has come to rely on the Syrians for its day to day survival and has become increasingly vulnerable to the possibility that Damascus might choose to impose its own policy on the PLO.

The Syrian-sponsored *Saiqa* was quick to support the Fatah dissidents. While the extent of direct links between the Syrians and the dissidents is unclear, it does seem that President Assad has used the dispute to marshal his supporters and sympathisers in the PLO, deepen the conflict inside the movement and finally use his physical domination of the Palestinians to precipitate a full crisis.

The Syrians may not want to get rid of Arafat for good. It is rumoured that they approached both Farouk Kadoumi and Khaled Fahoum—members of the Fatah inner circle—to take Arafat's place. But President Assad may be trying to administer a severe shock to the PLO leader, proving that his control of eastern Lebanon and political influence in the movement are now sufficient to act as a brake on Arafat's diplomatic activities, pulling him away from the western camp, and into the Syrian and thus the Russian orbit.

### Russian interest

The Russians may be worried at the lengths to which Assad has now gone but in recent months they have certainly been encouraging the Syrians to rein in Arafat. Moscow wants to see the Palestine question 'internationalised'—discussed at an international conference at which the USSR is a leading participant. They have been frustrated that the United States has been making all the running and that they have been unable to establish a firm relationship with a leading Arab régime since their military advisers were expelled from Egypt in 1973.

The Russians believe that in the last nine months they have pulled off a coup. During the Lebanon invasion their Syrian allies were overwhelmed by the Israelis and their standing in the region took another nose-dive.

Now the Russians have rearmed Syrian forces with some \$1.5bn of top weaponry. This includes SAM 5 long-range missiles and a variety of medium and short-range weapons, ground attack helicopters with counter measures and counter-counter



Just north of Tripoli PLO leader Yasser Arafat talks to reporters about the recent splits in his Fatah movement



**Black September 1970. If there is not to be a repeat of King Hussein's assault on the PLO his régime will have to be overthrown**

measures, 80 improved MIG 23 fighters, artillery and several hundred T72 tanks. An integrated air-defence system links missile batteries and radar and satellite surveillance is coordinated via Moscow. An estimated 5,000 Russian advisers are based in Syria.

Moscow seems to believe that it has benefited by regaining some of the prestige it lost when Russian weapons failed during the invasion and that for the first time in ten years it has opened up a close working relationship with a 'frontline' Arab state, providing a basis for further openings in the region.

Syria's Assad now feels confident that he will be able to inflict far heavier casualties on Israel. Israeli public opinion has moved sharply against the occupation of Lebanon as Lebanese and Palestinian guerrilla attacks have picked off Israeli patrols. The mood in Israel is for a period of 'peace'—or at least no war—and Assad believes that with his newly-armed forces he can adopt a far tougher bargaining position in any deal for a withdrawal from Lebanon. If necessary, he believes, he can remain in Lebanon indefinitely.

Never can the slogan 'Neither Washington nor Moscow' have been more appropriate than for the Palestinians in their present situation. The American relationship with Israel has moved back to its usual level of close cooperation and is likely to get closer as the US election approaches. In addition the US maintains the closest relationship with Saudi Arabi—the PLO banker. Moscow has developed a warm relationship with Syria and while they may feel that President Assad is running a little out of control, the Russians will not abandon their biggest investment in Arab politics for many years.

### A subversive force

Under this pressure—plus that of President Assad's own ambition—the PLO leadership may crack. It is possible that Arafat will be replaced by an individual or a group of leaders acceptable to the dissidents and to Syria. More likely he will survive—kept afloat by continued if more reluctant support from ordinary Palestinians, especially on the West Bank—but

compelled to work within the limits placed on the organisation by Syrian and Soviet policy.

From the socialist point of view only a radical break with existing strategy can lead the PLO out of its difficulties. This means shedding many of the assumptions that have guided the movement for a generation.

It means accepting that military struggle alone leads to dependence on the Arab régimes and that if there is not to be a repetition of King Hussein's 'Black September' assault on the PLO in 1970, or Assad's 1976 offensive, these régimes will have to be brought down.

Such a change means accepting that the PLO cannot afford to choose between 'reactionary' and 'progressive' local régimes. All the Arab ruling classes are preoccupied with maintaining their positions at home and for all of them the Palestinians represent a subversive force. All are also connected with the superpowers who have their own ambitions in the area.

This also means accepting that the interests of the Palestinians are not different from the interests of workers in Egypt, Iraq or Syria, that workers can bring about revolutionary change and that indeed, only the power of the Arab workers movement has the potential to match that of the Israeli state.

The policies of today's Fatah dissidents have little in common with such a view. After twenty years of domination by nationalist and Stalinist ideas it is almost unimaginable that a current can develop in the upper layers of the movement that can turn towards the working class as the agency of change and the task of building revolutionary parties in the Arab countries.

On the PLO 'left', the Popular and Democratic Fronts are equally bogged down in nationalist politics. The two organisations have so far taken an abstentionist line on the Fatah split, though both are known to be close to the Syrians, with the Democratic Front almost uncritically pro-Moscow. Despite years of radical rhetoric the organisations have shown no sign of breaking out of the ideological impasse of the PLO as a whole.

Amongst the rank and file of the PLO there is as yet no sign of any serious revolutionary socialist ideas taking root. 'We are not in a revolutionary period—there is nothing we can do', said a PLO leftist recently.

There is a danger that there will be no more 'revolutions' like the mass movement which produced the PLO in the 60s. The mass activity that can produce real change in the region is likely to occur in Cairo, Baghdad or even Damascus. Will the PLO then be mere onlookers?

There is just a hint that some Palestinians—probably outside the PLO—have begun to move towards a Marxist approach to their problem. On 21 June the Egyptian News Agency reported that police had uncovered a 'clandestine communist Palestinian organisation' of 20 members after it had attempted to 'infiltrate sectors of the Egyptian masses'. We will have to wait to learn a little more about their real identity.



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Santiago June 1983 Students demonstrating their support for the strike called by the Chilean Truck Owners Union

# The workers fight back

The first reaction to the tremendous upturn that has taken place in Chile is one of elation at the resilience of the working class and its ability to rebuild under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty.

The second is one of depression that the ten years since the coup of 1973 have been wasted by the Chilean left. Had an organisation, even one of modest size, been built in that period, which was rooted in the day-to-day experience of workers, which understood the twists and turns of the struggle, which developed a network of militants around it—had this happened we could look forward to developments with considerable optimism, because a potentially revolutionary situation does exist in Chile now and for the immediate future.

The fact is, however, that there is no sign of such an organisation having been built. The politics of the main protagonists are depressingly familiar. The Communist Party has largely achieved a hegemony of the left working class current, but is pushing a policy of pure class collaboration. The MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) remains an organisation trying to substitute itself for class activity and has wasted many of its bravest militants by an isolated guerrilla strategy.

Of course we may be painting too depressing a picture. The fact that Christian Democrat workers have been leading the

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After ten years of repression Chile's military rulers now face increasing working class opposition. **Dave Beecham** looks at the background.

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struggle does not mean that the rank and file is 'right wing'. The Chilean Christian Democracy contains almost as many currents as *Solidarnosc*, and some of the same factors are in play as in Poland, notably the fact that the church in Chile does provide activists with some sort of protection.

## Economic crisis

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It is also true that the rank and file of the Chilean CP inside the country has taken up different positions on occasion compared with the comfortable exiles in Europe, and that the MIR may have once again acquired a genuine base in the shanty towns of Santiago, among the unemployed and the petty bourgeoisie.

What is more the roots of working class resistance to the Pinochet dictatorship have been established over a five year period. While the first five years after the coup saw workers' organisation completely suppressed, in the period since 1978 there

have been several strikes by copper miners, led by the El Teniente workers who were vilified by almost the entire left for going on strike against the Allende government.

There has been a revival of activity among skilled workers, who were in a better position to resist the constant threat of unemployment and victimisation. There has also been a sustained pressure from the rank and file which has forced right wing stooge leaders into opposition to the very regime which installed them.

Although the economic policy of the regime has resulted in a real deindustrialisation in engineering, with whole sectors virtually wiped out, key groups of workers have rebuilt their organisations.

The other effect of the economic crisis of 1982 has been to shift certain other groups closer to the proletariat. The political shift into opposition to Pinochet among the lorry drivers and lorry owners, who formed the spearhead of the right wing assault on the Popular Unity government in 1972/73, has been followed by an economic whirlwind created by the coincidence of internal economic chaos and the worst international crisis since the 1930s. From being one of the international bankers' favoured nations, Chile has moved dramatically to become a millstone round their necks.

It is worth recalling that for the first five years or so, the Pinochet regime was hailed

as an economic miracle, a success story like Japan after World War Two or Brazil in the 1960s. In 1978 the Chilean government and the American Chamber of Commerce produced a brochure with testimonials from all the major Chilean banks, subsidiaries of multinationals, industrial conglomerates explaining how the country had succeeded after the disasters of the Allende years.

The CRAV sugar conglomerate was prominent: it collapsed at the end of 1981. The major banks made statements on the wonders of private enterprise. On 16 January 1983 Pinochet was forced to nationalise them (and their \$4 billion debt) in the most spectacular U-turn in modern economic history.

### Financial collapse

By mid-1982 Chile's foreign debt had climbed to around \$17 or 18 billion, most of it in the private sector, making it the most indebted country in the world in relation to its population. Chile's gross domestic product fell by 14.1 percent in 1982—'probably a record for any major country since the 1930s' commented the *Financial Times*.

The exchange rate collapsed, the savings of the new, expanded and prosperous middle class were in many cases halved and in other cases hurriedly sent abroad. A series of the most prominent conglomerate firms, which had grown enormously in importance during the 'boom' years, went into liquidation, owing vast sums to the banks which were themselves broke.

This was the same society lauded by Milton Friedman, and presided over by his pupils, which was said to show the way forward for less developed countries, even if the political means to achieve it were 'somewhat harsh'.

Inflation had been reduced from perhaps

500 percent in 1974 to 10 percent in 1981 and 0.4 percent in the first six months of 1982. Unemployment, which had soared to 20 percent plus (official figure) after the coup was brought back to about 9 or 10 percent. Economic growth averaged between 5 and 10 percent from 1976 to 1981—and foreign capital flooded into the country, rising from \$572 million in 1977 to \$4,800 million in 1981.

We need not go too deeply into the causes of the sudden collapse of this house of cards in 1981/82—what was really significant was the effect it had on the regime's social base. However, there were several points about the rise and decline of the Chilean economy that have considerable political importance in understanding recent events. One problem for the junta was the wage system.

Real wages fell dramatically in 1973, with the combination of hyperinflation and wage cuts. For example, in the large copper mines, wages were 35.7 percent above 1969 levels in real terms in 1972. In 1973 they fell to just 50 percent of their 1969 value.

Similar massive cuts in real wages occurred right across industry. But in subsequent years a wage indexation system helped keep workers' heads above water. In the mines, for example, the state-owned copper company CODELCO limited wage rises only by trading off productivity bonuses against basic pay. This trick provoked the first all-out stoppages in the mines since the coup in January 1980 at El Teniente.

So serious has this problem become for the government that it was the issue over which Pinochet's finance minister, Sergio de Castro, was dismissed in April 1982.

Of course the fact that certain categories of workers got inflation-linked rises does not mean that the workers as a whole were protected. The years after the coup saw a

massive shift from wages to profits. But it became politically very dangerous for the Pinochet government to tamper with long-standing pay arrangements. It was after all the Allende government's refusal to pay the copper miners their special cost-of-living rise that led to the revolt at El Teniente in the spring of 1973.

A second important feature of the developing economic and political crisis was the flood of imports and consumer goods in particular which created a new middle class in the mid-1970s and provided the regime with a much wider social base than could have been expected. 'All the credits went on toys and French cheeses' the *Financial Times* quoted a Chilean housewife in March this year. 'We thought an economic miracle was happening because we could afford French cheeses.'

The vast flood of foreign capital that came into Chile was accompanied by a flood of consumer goods. The level of fixed investment (which the foreign capital was in theory supposed to support) was actually one of the lowest in the developing world. This middle class boom transformed the face of Santiago for a time. But when the economic situation changed the backlash from the new middle class was enormous.

### Debt crisis

The third factor was that the unregulated banking system allowed an incredible amount of 'hidden' debt to accumulate. When the dam broke the collapse of confidence was very sudden indeed. In mid-1982, for example, the agricultural sector (a pillar of Christian Democracy and the National Party) owed the equivalent of 90 percent of its yearly output. The building industry owed 150 percent. The growth of conglomerate industry and finance in Chile



Chuquibambilla open cast copper mine. The Chilean economy is dependent on the export of copper

meant that single big over-extended corporations owed a very high proportion to their group bank. The biggest, Cruzat-Larrain, accounted for half the loans of the Bank of Santiago. Once the bank went down, so did Cruzat-Larrain.

The collapse of the internal economy, coinciding with the international debt crisis and the fall in the price of copper because of worldwide recession produced a crash a little like 1929 in the past 12 months. Pinochet's petty bourgeois, middle class and capitalist supporters shifted very rapidly into neutrality and then outright opposition. Whatever happens in the short-term the regime's support has largely evaporated.

The crisis in the regime is fairly easy to understand. The emergence of a new workers' movement less so. Though some rank and file activists managed to keep their heads down in the years following the coup, the scale of repression and exile was still devastating. There was not a significant dispute for four years.

### Workers resistance

The first strikes of any size were only in 1979. But even in 1977 and 1978 there were some indications of working class resistance in traditional areas. The rigged plebiscite of January 1978 is an example. The ballot, however fraudulent, showed significant numbers voting against Pinochet or spoiling their ballots in workers' districts—despite the fact that those who voted 'no' could be identified and that there was widespread intimidation and the vote was called at two weeks' notice.

In the Pedro Aguirre Cerda industrial suburb of Santiago, an area where the factory councils—'cordones'—of 1972/73 were particularly strong, there was a 30 percent no vote, with up to 8 percent spoiled votes. Other big working class districts like La Florida and Puente Alto were the same. The mining districts—copper and coal—showed the same pattern. The right wing daily *El Mercurio* commented in an editorial on 22 January 1978:

'In Calama (copper workers), La Calera (cement), Machali (copper), Coronel and Lota (coal), Penco and Tome, Morro Chico and Bahía Inutil we see the survival of the most organised nuclei of the communist working masses or of the old socialist party forces in the extreme south.'

Even under conditions of extreme difficulty, there was a strong base of resistance.

The first notable strike since the coup (as opposed to the canteen boycotts organised in the copper mines) was in a factory which had opposed nationalisation under Allende, where workers had bought shares in the firm in the past, and which had remained neutral at the time of the coup.

This was the Puente Alto paper factory, with 1,500 workers the largest in Chile, which struck and then banned overtime in May 1979 in defence of conditions which had been massively eroded since 1973. The workers of Puente Alto were skilled, a large number of them with long service. The dispute was an example of the failure of Pinochet's strategy in calling snap union

elections in October 1978.

This move was designed to break up any growing militancy after the success of the canteen boycott at Chuquicamata in August 1978. Existing officials and representatives had to stand down, no one with a political past or with less than five years' service could stand for a position.

The effect was different from that intended. A new generation of representatives was created. A number of them were pushed fairly rapidly into the firing line and put under pressure from below.

### **'The government has little room to manoeuvre. Concessions which could have been made in the past are now almost impossible'**

The critical disputes, however, occurred in the copper mines, above all El Teniente. Teniente miners, like those at the other three of the big mines—Andina, Salvador and Chuquicamata—had been a base for the left for years. In 1973 the Teniente miners had gone on strike in defence of a special copper workers' pay agreement which the Allende government said was covered by the general increase awarded to all employees.

Most of the manual workers went back to work early on, grudgingly, in response to appeals for loyalty and some threats. Technicians stayed out and became a pole of attraction for the right wing who used their case to argue that the government no longer represented the copper workers.

True or not, the right wing campaign (including a march on Santiago) had a very damaging effect. It certainly confused the left.

After the coup the Teniente miners were not spared repression, but the leader imposed on them by the military, Guillermo Medina, was the right wing's hero because of the 1973 strike. Medina remained as nominal head of the Teniente miners right up to 1981, pushed into opposition from below on several occasions, as was his counterpart, Bernardino Castillo, at Chuquicamata.

Both Castillo's and Medina's influence waned sharply from 1978 onwards. The Chuqui workers booed him off the stage when they began their canteen boycott in protest against victimisations in August 1978. Medina was shouted down when the Teniente workers began the first copper miners' strike for nearly eight years in January 1980.

In April 1981 the Teniente miners began the most significant strike since the coup. It lasted 40 days and saw the first appearance of the new leaders of the Copper Workers' Confederation (CTC) notably Rodolfo Seguel, the union's president arrested after the 14 June day of action this year.

The strike had the slogan 'El Teniente united will never be defeated' (a variation on the old Popular Unity slogan 'the people united ...') and saw the emergence of a genuine militant group. When the union

leadership got a return to work by forcing votes through different sections, the smelter workers of Caletones, led by Seguel, stayed out. Buses ferrying workers into the mine were stoned. There was a hunger strike in the union office. This was the key dispute in the development of the CTC from a union potentially capable of being bought off into the spearhead of this year's revolt.

We have yet to see how the different factions in the left and in the Christian Democracy react to the re-emergence of the class struggle. The Communist Party certainly has a base in certain sections of the working class, but its leaders have devoted most of their efforts to the most craven political compromise with Christian Democrat figures, supporting calls for bourgeois democracy, social peace, a truce between classes, national consensus, the lot.

The old Socialist Party has broken into a dozen fragments, its best elements (who were the best elements on the left under Popular Unity) dispersed. The MIR so far seems wedded to the policy of armed action as the way forward.

In fact it is within the ranks of Christian Democracy that we may see the most important developments. The CD is not the straightforward right wing party many assume it to be. It was founded as an alternative pole of attraction to the left, it is true, but it also spawned early on, three leftist parties, the MAPU, the Christian Left and originally the MIR itself.

### The church

Since the coup the church has played a critical role as an organiser. It has worked with the left among the unemployed and shanty town dwellers. It was the sole organisation capable of organising on behalf of political prisoners in the darkest years following 1973. It has produced a whole series of educational, political and theoretical publications, pamphlets, analyses of the workers' movement, social policy, economics etc since the mid-1970s.

Most of the hierarchy undoubtedly remains wedded to moderate 'social democratic' policies. At the grass roots things are different, however. Its documents are far less mealy-mouthed about political action and the working class than, for example, the statements produced by CP-dominated unions.

The events of the next few months in Chile are certainly not easy to predict. The upturn may be followed by depression for a time, as a major breakthrough has still to be achieved. If the copper workers are beaten it will take time for them to repair their organisation. The economic situation and the number of factory closures is so dire that we cannot count on any wages' offensive to sustain the movement forward.

But the government has little room for manoeuvre. Concessions which could have been made in the past to divide the opposition are now almost impossible. The most likely development remains some sort of coup within the armed forces on behalf of the Christian Democrats. Keeping the lid on things after that could be very hard for the ruling class.

## 'A curious socialist'

Workers in Greece have been resisting the Papandreou government's anti-strike law. Chris Stephenson reports.

At the beginning of June, thousands of Greek workers took strike action and demonstrated against the socialist government's new anti-strike law. Three days of action culminated in a demonstration of more than 100,000 workers in Athens on the day the bill was voted into law.

The law—entitled the 'Socialisation Law'—was presented by Papandreou and the Greek Socialist Party (PASOK) as a measure to increase participation by workers and consumers in the running of the public sector. But Article 4 is the real point of the law, which was pushed through parliament in an emergency three day debate.

This clause severely limits the right of public sector unions to strike, by making it illegal to do so unless an absolute majority of members vote to strike in a secret ballot. Even then, if the strike is called by a federation of unions, the executive of any one union, or a tenth of the members of a union, can demand a general meeting. Until that takes place, none of the union's members can join the strike.

### Tough pay policy

The reason for the rushing of this law through parliament lies in the militant action of public sector workers in resisting the government's austerity measures. The recession in Greece has hit private sector manufacturing very hard. Factory closures and bankruptcies have meant little fight back from that section of workers.

The public sector has been less severely affected. In Greece it is a very large employer, accounting for over half of Greek national product.

Last year saw a six week strike by bank

workers, strikes by workers at Olympic Airways (which is nationalised) and a three month strike of trolley bus drivers. The government had already broken its promises on full wage indexation.

In December it announced a tough pay policy for the public sector to bring down inflation. This amounted to a wage freeze, at a time when inflation was running at over 20 percent.

The General Confederation of Greek Labour—their TUC—called a four-hour general strike in protest against the freeze. More strikes followed throughout the spring, by public transport workers and taxi drivers in Athens, and by hospital doctors and private school teachers.

The government tried to use nationalism against the Turks and the Americans to get the strikes called off. Then it threatened to conscript the strikers. Finally it resorted to the courts.

### General fight back

The PASOK government—whose slogan in the election was 'change'—has resorted to anti-union legislation to replace the repressive laws which it earlier repealed.

The government's record—on foreign policy as well as attacks on the workers who voted it into power—is every bit as appalling as the record of Mitterrand in France. But in Greece, while there is certainly disillusionment, there has also been a more general fight back.

The reason for this lies both in the nature of the unions and in the role of the KKE—the Greek Communist Party (Exterior).

Because the unions have really only existed for a few years, after decades of state control, they are not yet heavily bureaucratized.

The Greek TUC is a battleground between PASOK and the KKE, but allegiances have not become rigidified. For example, the KKE quickly gained influence in most of the unions, but the bank workers and dock

workers were PASOK dominated. Following the 1982 bank strike the union's leadership was overturned and the union passed out of PASOK control.

The unions are still pretty informally organised especially in factories, where they may be only in one workplace, but linked to others through informal networks of militants.

Union organisation in the banks can both relate upwards to other employees of the same bank and sideways to bank workers in the local area.

The other important factor is the role of the KKE. Unlike the French CP, it is not part of the government and therefore feels free to use its industrial muscle. It did fairly badly in the 1981 election, getting only 13 percent of the vote. But in last autumn's local elections it took 20 percent in Athens.

It seems set to get further support through its opposition to the government's economic policy, and attacking Papandreou's broken promises on NATO, American bases and the EEC.

Unfortunately, it sees the working class as a stage army to be used to further its parliamentary ambitions. The strikes against the socialisation law are a classic case of this. The movement was under almost total CP domination, which meant that the strikes and demonstrations were timed to coincide exactly with the parliamentary debate, with the biggest actions on the day of the vote itself.

Following the passing of the law, things have gone quiet. There is bound to be a test of the law later this year, and the CP is saying that it will call on workers to defy it. The problem is that it is likely that the CP will determine the timing and extent of that defiance, and it could turn out to be the familiar token action beloved of Stalinists and reformists.

### Possible confrontation

That there will be a confrontation seems certain, as the government appears set to break its promise to round wages up to the level of inflation at the end of this year. And while the CP is making every effort to consolidate its bureaucratic hold on the unions, the situation is still very fluid. PASOK's attempts to do the same have recently been centred on the courts and behind-the-scenes manoeuvres.

Forces to the left of PASOK and the KKE are unfortunately weak and fragmented. With the exception of a tiny number of revolutionaries, they have failed to grasp the importance of the strike wave and have let valuable opportunities slip past.

Many Maoists supported Papandreou in the election, because his nationalist rhetoric matched their own. Others have a conception of politics as something which should be unsullied by contact with real workers' struggles.

Despite this, there is a note of hope when ever we see workers fighting back. Those who hailed Papandreou's election as a victory for socialism should surely now reconsider their support for a man whom even *The Economist* refers to as 'a curious sort of socialist'.

**'Socialism is a new society of freedom—or it is nothing.'**



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*A failure to challenge the real structures of power within capitalist society*

## The women's movement slides to the right

Lindsey German looks at the women's movement's failure to come to terms with the crisis, and argues that this failure lies in its lack of a class analysis.

Today in Britain there are more women's reserved places on union executives than ten years ago. There are more union women's committees and equality committees than ten years ago. There are more policies of positive discrimination among councils than ten years ago. There are more women's studies courses in colleges than ten years ago. And there are more feminist publishers than ten years ago. All of which gives credence to the idea expressed, for example in the recent feminist publication *Sweet Freedom*, that 'there is more interest in feminist ideas' than there was ten years ago.

The general impression given is that feminism is growing and gaining in influence, and that the position of women is improving as a result. Such statements give some indication of the degree to which the ground has shifted within the feminist argument. One only has to look back over those ten years to see the size of the change. The women's movement started in this country some fifteen years ago. It was by and large a movement for radical change. Its demands and aspirations came from two features of British postwar society; women's massive entry into the workforce, and the entry of a sizeable minority of them into the area of expanded higher education. The discrepancy between the opportunities open to these



*Women workers are now largely ignored by the women's movement*

women and the discrimination they suffered led some towards challenging the structures of society. And they saw change as coming through a fight for women's rights.

They were also affected by the student militancy of the late sixties, and by the small but growing number of workers' struggles. So a movement emerged as one which talked about individual change for women, but very much in the context of *social* change. The demands of the movement, passed at the 1970 conference, reflect this. They were for equal pay; equal education and opportunity; 24 hour nurseries; and free contraception and abortion on demand. All were demands which if successful would benefit working women.

Not only that, but both the activity, some of it around strikes and union organisation—and the theory tended to be loosely around a Marxist framework. Sheila Rowbotham in a recent *Observer* interview, admitted she finds 'the revolutionary euphoria of her early 1970s writing a bit embarrassing'. Which isn't surprising—the woman who now edits a GLC paper, *Jobs for a Change*, has come a long way from the writer of *Women Resistance and Revolution*. There she describes women's role as active participants in history.

And she makes it very clear that women's liberation and socialism are not separate goals. Similarly, Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* dealt with many problems she felt existed with Marxist theory about women—but did so in a Marxist (if soft Marxist) tradition.

The contrast with today could not be greater. Firstly, virtually all the feminists today refuse to look at reality. They refuse to see that the last decade has not been one of unbounded feminist advance.

### Accommodation to system

The effect of seven years of cuts in public spending, under both Callaghan and Thatcher, has had an effect both on social services and on jobs. Both have affected women particularly hard. Nurseries, hospitals, and schools are closed. School dinners are cut back. The aim is to make the family the centre of caring for the young, the old and the sick—which of course places a much heavier burden on the woman. At the other end, women's paid employment in these areas is cut, meaning less financial independence.

Against this background women begin to view themselves not as workers outside the home, but as caring for the family in the home. The fact that for most women this conflicts with reality, since they have no alternative but to go out to work doesn't alter this consciousness.

Such a situation requires an analysis which explains why things haven't got better for women. Why it is that in a crisis the capitalist system places more and more emphasis on production, and pushes so much of the costs of reproduction onto the family, and how can that system be changed?

Because the feminists do not have such an analysis they are led in another direction. That direction means accepting more and more the existing framework of society, and

trying simply to improve things for women within it. That is why the ground of argument about feminist achievement always shifts to the right, and why today feminists will claim that, for example, women's studies courses are a great step forward for women, while for most working women conditions are stagnating or even getting worse.

In order to understand the change in the women's movement it is worth looking at the major spheres of feminist activity over the last couple of years. In practice the accommodation to the system takes two major forms. The first is what can loosely be termed mysticism. Such a development is not a new phenomenon. In past periods in history, when movements for social change are on the retreat, people who once looked to them have turned to forms of mysticism such as religion, to changing the ideas in one's head in order to change the world.

The last few years of what we in the SWP call downturn—the unwillingness and lack of confidence of workers to fight—has had a similar effect on a whole number of people,

### The women's movement started as the answer to real objective problems. This inspired much of the hope and radicalism of the early movement.

including many feminists. For some the mysticism means going off and living feminism in practice—finding 'space' for individual women. Many feminists see lesbianism as an inherent part of this practice.

The best known example of this mysticism is the Greenham Common women. Their action started as a movement to draw attention to the siting of cruise missiles—and has attracted widespread support for that issue—but rapidly became something different. The more extreme views saw the camp as a commune with nature, a way of reaching a relationship with the earth. But even the women who wouldn't accept those views still saw the camp as an end in itself, something which *in itself* would challenge the weapons of the superpowers.

In practice this meant a failure to challenge the real structures of power within capitalist society, and has encouraged a mystical belief that holding hands against the missiles will suffice—a belief which looks increasingly less tenable as their siting approaches. For many feminists attracted by the campaign, its failure will mean an even greater retreat into lifestyle politics and away from collective action. Symbolic of such a retreat is, for example, the call to sew a patchwork dragon at Greenham!

However, a much greater number of women have turned, not to that individual mysticism, but to a brand of feminist reformism which has flourished inside the Labour Party in the last four years. Feminism is seen as an integral part of the left strategy for winning reforms inside the party. Thus a number of the demands put forward by the left have been ones which relate to women's issues. For example there are the demands for positive discrimination

inside the party at all levels, including women being automatically included on shortlists for the selection of MPs.

All this has been accompanied by a great deal of feminist rhetoric. This centres mainly on the male chauvinism of the old party and its leadership, and argues that women will refuse to put up with it any more. Current examples include a fairly preposterous article in *Socialist Action* by Sarah Roelofs on why Jo Richardson is not standing for deputy leader.

We are subjected to a great deal of hot air about the 'masculine ego' and we are told that 'feminists in the party fought a desperate rearguard action against the weight of brotherly advice'. The one thing that is *not* considered worthy of comment is the politics behind it all.

The rhetoric hides the unpalatable fact that for feminists advance in this arena has also been pitifully slow. Reselection made virtually no change in existing Labour MPs. It certainly didn't alter the position of women inside the parliamentary party—they constitute about 5 percent. True, some of the London Labour councils can point to improvements. In a number of them, including the GLC, there are women's committees. But the structure and function of these committees is in itself very revealing as to the limitations of reformist feminism.

Several people involved in the committees were interviewed in a recent *Spare Rib*. They pointed to a number of proposals or achievements. But the remarks of the head of the GLC women's unit gave the game away. Yes, she said, they had made many advances. But they were unable to come to terms with the wage grading structure at County Hall. So while there was no real hierarchy in the women's unit (employing fifteen women) there was a large discrepancy in the wages. In other words, the women's unit had great plans for moves towards equality in the GLC area—but it couldn't challenge the GLC's own policy of unequal pay.

### Growth of idealism

This has been a recurrent problem for feminism on the rates. It can appear very radical—until it has to face up to reality. That reality usually takes the form of—where is the money coming from and how are we going to spend it? When that happens, the committees are shown up for what they are—full of good intentions, but incapable of delivering very much. The fact is that there is not a Labour council in the country which is prepared to defy Tory public spending cuts in order to spend sufficient to really solve women's problems.

This would require a programme of housebuilding, the opening of new nurseries the creation of new and better paid jobs. These demands, limited though they are, go far beyond what the Labour councils would dream of taking on. So instead they prefer to tinker with the system, creating jobs for equality officers, positively discriminating in favour of women and so on, but doing nothing to alter the conditions in which the mass of working women and men live.

They could only alter it by understanding that what needs changing is not who runs the



**There has not been a national women's conference since 1978**

local council, or even the national government, but the capitalist system itself, and the recession and crisis it produces. Such an understanding might lead some of those inside the Labour Party to an understanding of the need to fight on a class basis, and not a feminist one. Unfortunately, the reformist feminists are not, by and large, moving in that direction. Instead of assessing the realities of class power, they retreat into vague mutterings about the problem of lack of money being the 'patriarchy', or of the 'need to organise autonomously'. Such ideas are completely compatible with membership of the Labour Party, which is prepared to go along with autonomous organisation, as long as it never threatens what the party itself does. What the experience of feminists inside the Labour party shows is that again and again, the problem for the women's movement is politics. Here there are a number of elements.

For Marxists, the stress is always on activity—not in a mindless sense, but because it is in the process of activity that people change. The women's movement is

based on exactly the opposite. It is based on passive agreement, without any commitment to having to do anything. So feminists (and many male socialists) say they support the Greenham Common women, without it actually meaning anything at all—because it requires nothing of them. Similarly, many in the Labour Party will claim to support feminism. Again, nothing is required of them. They don't for example have to argue at work for abortion on demand, because to the Labour Party, which 'supports feminism' that is an 'issue of conscience'. So there is a complete gap between theory and practice, between what people say and what they do.

This passivity in turn leads to a form of moralism—an idea that you cannot attack other groups of oppressed unless you yourself experience that oppression. This allows a blurring of politics, because in practice it means supporting people if they are women, or if they are black, regardless of their political positions.

But the main weakness of feminist theory is an extremely basic one. Marx described as idealists people who believed that ideas

could be changed regardless of, and in isolation from, the economic conditions in which people lived. Such idealism is something which is rife among feminists today. The analysis starts always from the fact that men are sexist, men oppress women, men think women are inferior. It never starts from *why* these things happen. It never starts from the economic basis of society. Therefore it is incapable of understanding that women's oppression is a result of the division of society into classes.

It doesn't therefore understand that only a fight against class society can end the oppression of women—and it doesn't see class as the major division within capitalist society. Because the feminist theories don't come to terms with class divisions between the exploiters and exploited they peddle the idea that all that is required is to construct utopias, in which feminist ideas can predominate. Except even there the construction of utopias comes up against a very real constraint—who owns and controls the money inside class society.

### **Crisis of politics**

As this idealism leads away from a class analysis, so the theoretical assumptions have changed as well. The ideas of the early Sheila Rowbotham or of Juliet Mitchell are not the ones which dominate the ideas of the movement today. Instead, the dominant analysis over the past few years has become that of 'male power'. So whereas the early socialist feminists portrayed a society where men dominated because of the constraints of class society, the writings of Dale Spender or Mary Daly claim that men dominate in order to obtain and hold power.

'Men rob women of their labour, *all* their labour, their physical emotional and intellectual labour...women do not *own* the ideas they produce...men can take the creative and intellectual energy of women and use it to their own ends.'

These writers are very hostile to socialist ideas, particularly those of Marx and Engels. Unfortunately, even the socialist feminists today accept many of their ideas. Ideological hegemony in the women's movement today clearly rests with the radical feminists. The 'male power' analysis has a number of consequences. Firstly, it lets ruling class women *and men* off the hook. Everything is blamed on men, and there is little distinction between men of different classes. Conversely women of the upper classes are simply in Elizabeth Sarah's words 'the property of upper middle class men'. In practice it is even worse.

The feminist fire is directed much more at working class men than anyone else. This is true whether they are discussing the male dominated craft unions, or the sexism of readers of page three of the *Sun*. To most feminists, the worst aspects of male chauvinism manifest themselves among male workers. It is male workers too, who receive much of the blame for women's low wages and bad working conditions.

The theory also justifies the shift to the right, because it allows feminists to see male workers as part of the enemy, rather than an essential part of the fight for women's liber-

ation, as part of the fight for socialism.

This is why feminist theories today are just as compatible with the politics of the SDP or even some Tories. As they become more passive and less connected with struggle, this tendency can only increase. As the theory becomes more hostile to men, so the practice becomes less radical as well, because most feminists can't see a way out of the system and so are forced to accept it. An extreme example of this was former socialist feminist Eileen Fairweather justifying use of the police to 'protect law and order' in Kings Cross.

The crisis of politics inside the movement shows itself in a number of ways. Those inside the Labour Party must be suffering an element of demoralisation. For them they will go along with the rest of the left in pretending to turn defeats or stalemates into victories and turning instead to campaigning over the most trivial issues. They also feel compelled to attack those feminists who didn't join the party. Valerie Coultas writing in *Socialist Action* bemoans the feminists who didn't back Labour in the election.

The feminist legal rights organisation Rights of Women refused to call for a Labour vote against Thatcher, perhaps because a number of their members support the SDP. *Spare Rib*, the women's monthly said nothing at all about the way its fairly extensive readership should vote. This may have been because they have been in the depths of a crisis for some months now. Their controversy revolves round an article they themselves published last year giving support to the cause of Palestinian liberation—an issue which infuriated many Zionist readers. The *Spare Rib* collective spent months agonising over whether they should print these critical letters.

### Crisis of ideas

This month they have been forced to ditch their scheduled articles and to bring the argument unexpectedly into the open. There is obvious bitterness, with cries of racism on one hand, and the plea to listen to all points of view on the other. The *Spare Rib* crisis may seem isolated but it is symptomatic of the crisis of ideas inside the women's movement, which is dominated by the belief that there is something in sisterhood which binds all women together. So they are unable to come to terms with a situation where sisterhood is not the dominant feeling.

And even those who support the Palestinians are caught in the trap of moralism. They believe the rest of the collective has no right to criticise because they have not experienced being black or whatever—without understanding that political analysis is the basis of argument—not moral superiority.

The women's movement has found the last few years of crisis a severe test of its politics, and has usually been found wanting. A simple final example of this is the lack of any national event or conference since 1977 or 78. Some people deduce from this that the movement is finished. But such a judgement would be premature. Although its politics are increasingly affected by passivity, and often appear as moribund, it can still rely on a number of life support systems to keep it

going.

The first of these is state funding. Whether you talk about women's refuges, women's theatre groups or local high street women's centres, most depend, at least in part, on funding from central or local government. This funding is hard to assess because it doesn't all come from one source, but adds up to a considerable subsidy. This allows groups to continue to a certain extent regardless of whether or not they are making any gains in the outside world, and regardless of whether their ideas are relevant to any

**The movement has tragically become another wing of reformism. Settling for winning things for a minority of women, leaving the position of the majority as it always was.**

section of ordinary working women. Funding can allow the feminists to become more removed, not less, from the people they aim to want to win.

The second support system is the Labour Party. Here again, there can be a lot of talk of socialism without any achievement. So it can keep the feminists happy and at the same time give the illusion that something is being done. And unlike their male counterparts, the feminist reformists aren't even tested in elections every five years.

The third means for keeping the feminist

milieu going is the academic and literary world. For a sizeable number of feminists, teaching and writing about feminism is a job of work—and a fairly profitable one at that. In fact when feminists point to the success of their ideas over the past years, this is probably the area they point to most.

These three reasons mean that feminism can continue to exist, even though feminist ideas have less contact with reality and with class politics. The tragedy is that the women's movement started as the answer to real objective problems which existed for women. This is what inspired much of the hope and radicalism of the early movement. But the movement was never able to see things as a totality. It always saw things in terms of women versus men.

In its early years it was facing a system still able to concede (or pretend to concede) many of its demands. Equal pay, abortion, equal access to education all seemed winnable. But the recession brought the sectionalism of the movement to the fore. Because it only looked at women's rights, it was in reality unable to confront the structures of oppression—unable to explain why the family still exists, or why women get paid less, except in terms of male benefit. This in its turn only increased the sectionalism and divisions of the movement.

And it has meant, tragically, that a movement which began with such high hopes has now become just another wing of reformism—something which will settle for winning things for a minority of women while leaving the position of the majority of women workers the same as it always was.

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# Marx on Capital

Marx spent much of his life studying 'political economy' in writers like Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Rod Hudson shows how he was able to go beyond their ideas and explain how capitalism works.

Marx's study of Hegel's idealist philosophy together with his early experiences as a political journalist, had by the mid-1840s, brought him around to a materialist view of history. In 1859 he wrote:

'My inquiry led me to the conclusion that neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended by themselves or on the basis of a so-called development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life ... in "civil society", that the anatomy of this civil society, however, has to be sought in political economy.'

So Marx began studying political economy in Paris in 1844. These studies, were however, abruptly halted by his direct political involvement in the revolutions of 1848. When, in 1850, he finally realised that the revolutionary tide had ebbed in Europe, he once again took up the subject and kept it up more or less for the rest of his life.

Seven years passed with very little to show for Marx's labours, except piles. Then, in 1857, discerning the imminent onset of a new economic crisis and a little later, the revival of the working class movement, Marx changed gear. The next decade, judged in terms of its theoretical developments, was the most productive of his life. During it he wrote the *Grundrisse* (1857/8), *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), as well as the three volumes of *Theories of Surplus Value* (1862/3) and the three volumes of *Capital* (1863/7).

The crowning achievement of all this was his masterpiece, *Capital* the first volume of which he saw published in 1867. In the *Preface* he described his aim as being 'to reveal the economic law of motion of modern society.'

Marx adopted a rigorous scientific method of analysis to this end, but not for its own sake. He did so to get beneath the deceptive surface appearances of capitalism, in which political economy was inescapably trapped, to analyse it as a historically specific mode of production, riven with internal contradictions, that would ultimately lead to its dissolution.

Marx wrote in his youth:

'Criticism has torn the imaginary flowers

from the chain, not so that man will wear the chain that is without fantasy or consolation, but so that he will throw it off, and pluck the living flowers.'

What follows is a brief introduction to some of the key ideas developed in *Capital*. It begins with the foundation stone of Marx's analysis, the labour theory of value.

All human societies have to produce in order to survive. 'Production is a nature-imposed necessity'. Further, every society has, on pain of extinction, to distribute the total amount of human effort available to it so as to produce the things human beings require to satisfy their needs of whatever kind. That is, these things, by virtue of the physical properties, have to be useful to someone. Marx terms such useful things *use-values*.

In former times the things which people used were by and large produced by them themselves for their immediate consumption. In capitalist society, however, this is rarely so. Overwhelmingly, we have to buy the things we need. In this society the products of labour are not merely use-values, they are *commodities*. Commodities are use-values produced not for direct con-

sumption, but to be sold on the market, to be exchanged. Under capitalism, then, wealth, use-values, takes the form of *exchange-values*.

Exchange-value is defined by Marx as 'the quantitative relation, the proportion in which use-values of one kind exchange for use-values of another kind.' For example, the exchange-value of this *Socialist Review* might be one hundred smarties, one pint of beer, or one-millionth of a Chieftan Tank.

Obviously use-values and exchange-values are not at all the same thing. Considered as use-values *Socialist Review* and Chieftan Tanks are utterly dissimilar. It is their specific physical properties which makes them qualitatively distinct use-values.

But, considered as exchange-values they possess an element in common with each other and with the whole world of commodities. And it is only because they have this common element which is neither *Socialist Review* nor Chieftan Tank that they can exchange with one another.

So what is it that all commodities have in common? It is not their size, colour, taste, or any other *physical* property. Rather, according to Marx, it is a *social* property. They all required part of the total labour available to society for their production. All, therefore, are products of labour. As such they are *values*, the visible form of which is



Spot the similarity.

their exchange-values.

But just as the commodity can be considered in its concrete material aspect and its social aspect, so can the labour which produced it. Clearly no concrete labour, for example, that of a cobbler, can be the measure of part of the total social labour. The measure of value must itself have social validity.

In other words, it must express something common to qualitatively distinct productive activities, namely, that they are all the result of a 'production expenditure of human brains, muscles, nerves, hands, etc'. This measure is termed by Marx as simple average labour, or *abstract labour*.

The value of a commodity is thus determined by the amount of abstract labour embodied in it. Marx is careful to point out that this only includes *socially-necessary* labour time. You do not add to the value of a commodity by dawdling at the work bench.

Marx uses this theory of value to account for capitalist exploitation in the process of production.

The capitalist comes to the market with a given quantity of money capital (M), which is then exchanged for commodities (C). These are of two sorts. The first are means of production, raw materials, machines, etc. The other is *labour-power* which, in capitalist society is a commodity bought, sold, and consumed like any other. Together these two sorts of commodities contain all the elements necessary in the course of the production process (P) to produce a new commodity (C<sup>1</sup>).

Because all the elements of production belong to the capitalist so does C<sup>1</sup>. And if the value embodied in it can be realised back in the market, the capitalist converts it into its money form (M<sup>1</sup>). The difference in value between M and M<sup>1</sup> is *surplus-value*, the source of the capitalist's profit.

### Surplus value

Since this is a purely quantitative difference part of this surplus-value (but never all of it) can be turned into an additional source of surplus-value, it can be accumulated, with the whole process repeating itself, only on an expanded scale.

The process of capitalist production can be represented as follows:

$$M - C \dots P \dots C^1 - M^1$$

The question which necessarily arises here is where does the surplus-value come from? Can it be formed in circulation, in the movements M — C and C<sup>1</sup> — M<sup>1</sup>, that is by the capitalist buying cheap and/or selling dear? It cannot. For, in this unlikely event, the capitalists increase the value at their personal disposal, but only by diminishing that available to others and so no surplus-value has been formed in a social sense.

If the sphere of circulation provides no answer, then we must search for the origin of surplus-value in production, in the movement C... P... C<sup>1</sup>. We can now rephrase our question. Where does the difference in the magnitude of value of C and C<sup>1</sup> come from?

It must be that one or both elements of C, which it will be remembered are means of production and labour-power, are able



'Too many commodities have been produced to realise an adequate rate of profit'

during the production process to reproduce their value equivalent as well as creating additional value.

Machines, and raw materials are commodities whose values are determined, as for any other commodity, by the amount of socially-necessary labour embodied in their production. As they are used up during the production process, what becomes of their value? Does it simply dissipate, or is it transferred into the new product, with or without augmentation?

It does not disappear. This is because if the production of the means of production is an essential stage in the production of C<sup>1</sup>, then the past labour (or 'dead labour') congealed in those means of production forms part of the socially necessary labour that is embodied in the value of C<sup>1</sup>. (The remainder of the value of C<sup>1</sup> derives from the direct labour performed on it by the worker.)

So the value of the means of production is transferred to C<sup>1</sup> in proportion to its productive consumption.

Secondly, machines and raw materials do not create any new value. Even the most sophisticated of modern technologies are mere scrap without the ingredient of living labour. By themselves, they produce absolutely nothing.

With regard to machines and raw materials consumed in the productive process, the total amount of value in existence remains constant. Capital invested in the means of production is therefore termed *constant capital*.

This only leaves living labour as the possible source of surplus-value. But how?

The greatest classical political economist, David Ricardo, had attempted to solve this problem long before Marx provided the answer in *Capital*. He had failed because he

simply took the surface appearance of the capital/wage labour relationship for granted and assumed that what the worker sells the capitalist in exchange for a wage, its value equivalent, is his or her labour.

Marx's great unravelling of the riddle of capitalist exploitation depended upon his overthrowing this assumption. What the worker sells for a wage is not labour, Marx argued, but *labour-power*, the capacity to work for a determinate time:

'He must constantly treat his labour-power as his own property, his own commodity, and he can only do this by placing it at the disposal of the buyer ... temporarily. In this way he manages both to alienate his labour-power and to avoid renouncing his rights of ownership over it.'

As a commodity labour-power is both a value and a use-value. Its value is determined before it enters circulation by the amount of socially necessary labour needed to keep its owner alive and capable of rearing children to replace him or her.

But the use value of labour-power 'consists in the subsequent exercise of that power' in production. Its unique quality for the capitalist is its ability to produce value whilst being consumed, indeed more than its own value. Capital invested in living labour is consequently referred to as *variable capital*.

That the workers might, for example, be able to replace the value of their labour-power (which the capitalist has purchased at its value) in four hours, in no way prevents the capitalist from screwing the value of another four (or five, six, etc) hours surplus labour out of them and pocketing the difference. The difference between the value created by the worker and the value of their

labour-power (which is also the difference between  $C$  and  $C'$  and  $M$  and  $M'$ ) is surplus-value.

Thus Marx shows how though not cheated, workers are nonetheless exploited by capital. This last key concept can now be defined. Capital is value continually augmented by surplus-value that is created by labour-power in the production process and appropriated by the capitalist.

The ratio between surplus-value and variable capital, between 'unpaid' surplus-labour and 'paid' *necessary labour*, gives us the *rate of surplus-value*, which is a measure of the degree of exploitation of wage-labour by capital. This, in turn, provides the objective basis for the class struggle between the capitalist class and the working class.

For all those who own capital have an interest in maximising the return on this capital, which can only be achieved at the expense of the working class. Conversely, the sellers of labour-power have an interest in increasing their share of the total social product and this they can do only at the bosses' expense.

However, this class struggle is anything

but a gentlemanly fight according to the Queensbury Rules. On the contrary, it is rigged so that the capitalists always win as long as capitalist production prevails. Though they may suffer minor setbacks from time to time, the movement of capital ensures that the capitalists' drive to increase surplus-value predominates.

The rate of surplus-value can be increased in one of two ways, absolutely and relatively. *Absolute surplus-value* is the surplus-value produced by a prolongation of the working day, assuming necessary labour-time remains constant. The production of absolute surplus-value was especially common during the Industrial Revolution. It can still be found in some Third World economies.

However, it is constrained by the fixed length of the day, by the need of capital for labour-power, the source of all value, to reproduce itself and not least, by the organised resistance of the workers who have the life sucked out of them.

There is nothing specific to capitalism about the production of absolute surplus-value, which can be found in the commodity

producing sectors of pre-capitalist modes of production. Not so with the production of *relative surplus-value*. This is particular to capitalism since it results in the transformation of the labour-processes into a specifically capitalist form of production. It results in modern large-scale industry.

This is because relative surplus-value is produced when a technical innovation increases the productivity of labour and thereby, leads to a reduction in the value of the commodities which comprise the workers' means of subsistence. The value of labour-power has thus fallen. So therefore has that part of the working day given over to necessary labour. And assuming that the length of the working day remains constant, a greater proportion of it will now be devoted to 'unpaid' surplus-labour.

In this exposition we have up to this point followed Marx's practice in volume one of *Capital* and abstracted from competition between capitals in order to map out the main features of the relations of production within capitalism. So that we can consider how a general rate of profit is formed and also why capitalism has an inbuilt tendency towards economic crises, we must now change this simplifying assumption.

## Rate of profit

The anarchy of competition between capitals is an absolutely essential feature of capitalism. Without it capitals would have no need to behave as capitals. The capitalists could simply wind up shop and sit back enjoying their lives of luxury till the end of their days. But they cannot.

'Capitalism subjects every individual capitalist to the immanent laws of capitalist production as external coercive laws. Competition forces him continually to extend his capital for the sake of maintaining it.'

Competitiveness with its rivals is the condition of survival for each individual capital in the market. Only the fittest survive in this Darwinian environment. And they each attempt to ensure their survival by maximising the return on their investment, by getting the highest possible *rate of profit*.

The rate of profit is different to the rate of surplus-value. The latter, it will be recalled is the ratio between surplus-value and necessary-value. The rate of profit, however, is the ratio between surplus-value and the total capital investment, constant capital *and* variable capital. This rate of profit is what really interests the capitalists. By maximising it the capitalist can raise productivity by investing in new labour-saving technology and thus keep up with, or even outstrip rival capitals.

But there is a problem. It would seem on the basis of the analysis presented so far that such an accumulation of capital, reducing as it does the specific gravity of the value-creating component (labour-power) in productive investment, must immediately lead to a fall in the rate of profit. Moreover, we know that this accumulation process differs from one sector of industry to another. The ratio of constant capital to variable capital, as Marx calls it, the *organic composition of capital*, is greater in aerospace



'Although tens of millions may be starving'

than textiles.

This would appear to mean that the aerospace industry would have a lower rate of profit than textiles. And if that were true, no one would invest there. Technological innovation would be self-defeating and the system would stagnate.

This is obviously not the case. Further, there is a powerful tendency for profit rates to equalise between sectors of industry. Marx offers a brilliant but controversial explanation.

Let us assume, he says, that different sectors accumulate at different rates. If that leads to a different organic composition of capital in each sector and hence to different profit rates, capital will flow to the high-profit sectors and out of the low-profit ones.

This will lead to an increase of supply relative to demand in the high-profit areas and a decline of supply in the low-profit ones. Prices will rise in the former and fall in the latter and so diverge from the labour values of the products until profits are equalised. Thus a *general rate of profit* has been formed.

In real life the process is more direct. A pattern is established among the bosses as to what sort of profit can be expected and this is maintained by a standard 'mark-up' on top of costs.

Marx had solved a problem that worried him ever since he first studied Adam Smith and Ricardo: the divergence of value and price. He shows *on the very basis of the labour theory of value itself* that not only do prices diverge from value, but they must do so — and do so systematically — if capitalism is to work at all.

The Law of Value, according to which values are determined by labour-time, as ultimately are prices, asserts itself in the form of a systematic divergence of price and value. Value, in other words, asserts itself through its own negation.

We have referred already to capitals' drive to accumulate to turn surplus-value into an additional source of surplus-value, so as to be able to outsell their rivals. Each capitalist is forced constantly to invest in more and more costly new technology, requiring fewer workers to operate it.

Although this results in a substitution of dead constant capital for living surplus value creating variable capital, it is still a rational course for each individual capitalist to pursue. This is because to the extent that they are in the forefront of this technological innovation, they will (for a while at least) be able to boost their individual rates of profit above the general rate by reducing the individual value of the commodities they get produced below their social value.

### Economic crises

But what is rational for individual capitals is irrational from the point of view of capitalist production as a whole. Some competitors will, perhaps, be unable to match the new innovation and will cease to be capitals. The rest, however, will gradually follow suit and introduce the new technology themselves, or something comparable. The net result will be that the initial increase in the organic composition of capital will tend to be generalised within production and social value will fall.

It can be shown that this will lead to a tendency of the general rate of profit to fall. When that happens the capitalist system is convulsed by an *economic crisis of overproduction*. Though tens of millions may be starving and in need, too many commodities have been produced to realise an adequate rate of profit for the capitalists.

Marx explains the tendency of the rate of profit to fall mathematically as follows. Let the letter 'r' represent the rate of profit. We shall take 'c' for constant capital and 'v' for

variable capital, representing the investment in means of production and the investment in labour-power respectively. And we shall take 's' for surplus-value. The formula for the rate of profit now looks like this:

$$r = \frac{s}{c + v}$$

Assuming the wage bill remains constant and the cost of each item of machinery also does not change, and assuming that most industries become more capital-intensive with time, 'c' will rise while the other factors do not change. This will necessarily lead to a decline in 'r', the rate of profit.

Of course, that is a whole lot of assumptions. But Marx is careful to explore all the 'countervailing tendencies' at work, including ways in which the wage bill can decline or the price of machinery go down, thus offsetting the rise in the mass of constant capital. Nevertheless, over time, this tendency does assert itself. Profit rates do fall.

And it does appear that the great crises of the system, that of the late 1800s, that of the thirties and also the crisis of the present day, have all been associated with pressures on profit rates.

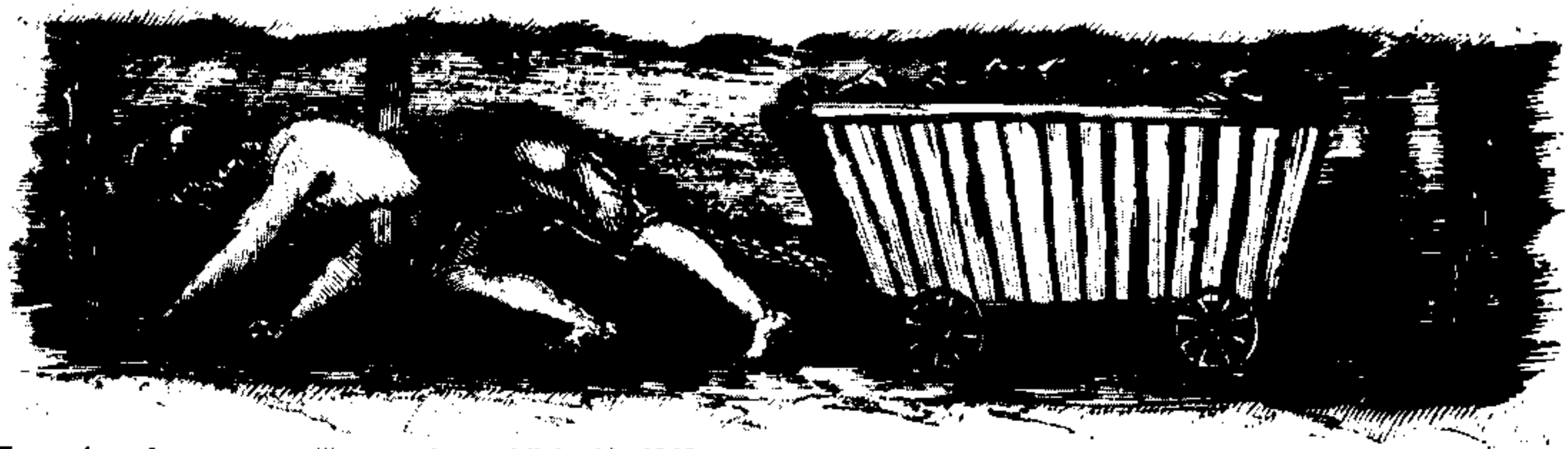
Marx argues that this shows how capitalism reaches its limits as a progressive force. The accumulation of capital becomes an obstacle to further growth. 'The final barrier to capital is capital itself.'

As Marx put it:

'The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.'







Engraving of a woman colliery worker published in 1842

## Utopian feminism

**Ray Challinor reviews Barbara Taylor's book *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, and argues a controversial case about women workers in the nineteenth century.**

Barbara Taylor has written a good book, the first serious study of socialism and feminism in the nineteenth century. She has rescued from obscure oblivion a clutch of courageous women—Margaret Chapell-smith, Emma Martin and others—who were prepared to defy all persecution in order to state their message. They denounced emerging capitalism. The industrial revolution left in its wake countless dead and maimed workers, but even those lucky enough to survive had been compelled to endure degradation, exploitation, the denial of freedom. Moreover, they went on to point out that, while this was the lot of the majority of men, women suffered a far worse fate. The answer, they argued, both for men and women, was the creation of a socialist society, based upon freedom and equality. This entailed a complete transformation, not only in economic and social, but equally in sexual relations. For them, socialism was a doctrine of total human liberation.

### Fatal weakness

The positive side of these Owenite feminists is explained exceedingly well in this book. Where Barbara Taylor's work is less satisfactory is when she needs to take the scalpel of criticism in hand, revealing the deficiencies in their political standpoint. Perhaps because she belongs to the Stanislawski school of historians—so engrossed in her study that she has almost become a latter-day Owenite feminist herself—she fails to see the fatal weakness: Eve might have a glorious vision of the new Jerusalem; she had not the faintest notion how to take the first step towards getting there. Barbara Taylor conveys the impression the movement just fizzled out after the collapse of the

Queenwood community experiment. This however, is not correct.

The causes lay much deeper. Like Robert Owen himself, these women believed in the all-powerful qualities of human reason. The same principles applied in the social sciences as in the pure sciences. Just as in physics, for example, any individual, irrespective of class, colour or nationality, will accept, say, Boyle's law, similarly the Owenites believed, by patient explanation, everybody could be got to see the evils of present-day society and the need for socialism. But I do not accept this view: I do not consider, even if I could put the most powerful arguments in the world, I would be able to persuade the likes of Sir Campbell Fraser, head of the CBI, to become a revolutionary socialist.

**These women believed that human reason was all powerful... that by patient explanation everybody could be got to see the need for socialism**

Thinking of his big, fat salary, not to mention his recent increase, he is likely to conclude capitalism was not too bad. In other words, golden ties of economic self-interest link this kind of person to the established order. By the same token the worker, enduring deprivation and suffering under the present system, will be more receptive to calls for capitalism's overthrow.

Yet, the utopian socialists rejected this conclusion. Robert Owen always hankered after the rich and powerful, urging them to come in and build the new society. Co-operation to him meant class collaboration, as the title of an organisation he formed—Association of All Classes of All Nations—implies. He did not regard the working class as the essential ingredient for change. For this reason, he remained aloof from the developing trade union movement. Barbara Taylor, relying upon the old studies of GDH Cole and the Webbs disputes this contention; however more recent historical

research has made it abundantly obvious that the Grand National Consolidated and the other unions of the 1829-34 period were only Owenite in name. As Professor AE Musson remarks: 'Robert Owen was never really interested in trade unions as such; he regarded them as futile and hoped to convert them to his schemes of co-operative socialism.' While this approach was wrong in the 1830s, it became disastrous in the 1840s and 1850s, when trade unions had achieved more strength and stability.

One mistake leads to another. The failure of the Owenites to realise the paramount importance of the class struggle, their failure to become involved in the bread-and-butter struggles of the working class, helped to give them an erroneous understanding of the role of the state. They did not see it as the bosses' state, constantly striving to assist the employers against the workers, and consequently the overwhelming majority of Owenites did not join the Chartist movement. One looks in vain for the involvement of Owenites in the revolutionary struggles of those times—the Newport uprising, the 1842 general strike, the attempted insurrection of Chartists and Irish Confederates in 1848. Yet, as state papers amply show, it was these events that alarmed the ruling class, not the setting up of co-operative communities in Hampshire.

### Distinctly different

In his classic, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (vol. 1, p. 183), Hal Draper refers to the very great indebtedness owed by the author of *Das Kapital* to the Chartist experience. He writes: 'In general, the influence of left Chartism, then the most advanced proletarian revolutionary tendency in the world, on the maturation of Marx and Engels has been undervalued.' Of course, it did not end there. Julian Harney's Chartist journal, *The Red Republican*, first published *The Communist Manifesto* in English. Its translator was Helen MacFarlane, of Burnley, a remarkable woman, who wrote articles herself under the nom-de-plume Howard Morton. But she does not even merit a mention from Barbara Taylor, whose book concentrates upon utopian socialism rather than scientific socialism.

The two schools of thought are distinctly different. The approach of one is static, the other dialectical; the one argues in terms of abstract principles, the other regards truth as concrete; the one sees education as the

driving force of change, the other sees education as merely a part, albeit an essential part, in the class struggle. People who hold the latter position are exceedingly reluctant to make general propositions, claiming them to be true at all times and in all places. However, Barbara Taylor does err in this direction. She maintains that women today should have the same employment prospects as men; to deny them this, she quite rightly says, helps to perpetuate their subordinate position in society. Ergo, she argues, the same proposition was equally valid in the nineteenth century. But, surely, may not a move that can be progressive in one context be reactionary in another?

### Conditions for women

In my opinion, there was nothing inherently progressive about women working down the mines in early Victorian Britain. Typically, at the Wigan collieries of Lord Balcarras—incidentally, his great grandson is now a Tory MP—women laboured 12 to

14 hours dragging coal to the surface. Belted round the waist, with chains running between the legs—an unpleasant business if you happened to be pregnant—they received a penny for every three tons of coal they hauled out. In the same way Engels, in his book on 1844, did not comment favourably on the fact that only 96,599 out of a total of 419,590 operatives in the British textile industry, less than quarter, happened to be adult males. Nor did Marx refer kindly to the gangs of agricultural labourers, many of them women, who wandered around Lincolnshire and East Anglia: 'women and children, when once set to work, tend to work till they drop (as Fourier well knew), whereas the adult male labourer is usually shrewd enough to economise in his labour power.' Later in *Capital*, he writes the gangs are 'making the adult male labourer superfluous'.

The first effective measure to restrict women's work was the 1842 Mines Act. This was generally welcomed by miners. William Cloughan, leader of the Scottish miners, told

a national union conference at Newcastle how much more civilised conditions were in the North East coalfields, where female labour was not used, compared to Lanarkshire, where it was. Both Marx and Engels appear to have endorsed this view. Clearly, they could well have been wrong. Perhaps they should have organised protest demonstrations, carrying banners that read: 'Repeal the 1842 Act—let Mrs Marx work down the pits'. But somehow I think they were wise not to do so.

It must be remembered the position of women was rather different then. To produce two children there had to be six conceptions. Most wives had more than two children, however, so they were regularly having children, still-births or miscarriages. Add to this the drudgery of housework: Monday was washday, the whole day would be spent over the mangle. Another day would be devoted to baking. And so on. It is in this context that Engels' remarks must be considered: 'The employment of women at once breaks up the family; for when the wife spends 12 or 13 hours every day in the mill, and the husband works the same length of time there, what becomes of the children? They grow up like wild weeds...' As for women in the pits, Engels wrote: 'The women seem to suffer especially from this work, and are seldom, if ever, as straight as other women. There is testimony here, too, to the fact that deformities of the pelvis and consequent difficult, even fatal, child-bearing arise from the work of women in the mines'.

### Altered attitude

It is worthwhile mentioning the changes that have occurred since the 1840s in the position of women, significant differences in life-situation that justify an altered attitude to the question of female employment. These include the shortening of the working day, the less physically arduous nature of most work, the much wider use of contraception, the smaller size of families, the installation of labour-saving devices in the home, and the involvement of males—admittedly still on a grossly inadequate scale—in household chores, hitherto regarded as an essentially female preserve. All these factors (and many others) create the material pre-requisites for the call for sex equality to be made on a firmer foundation.

It is helpful to visualise these changes as part of a wider process. Throughout its entire existence, capitalism has relentlessly developed the means of production. In doing this, ironically it establishes the material pre-requisites for its own destruction. For whereas in a primitive society, unable to produce sufficient food and clothing to go round, there has to be a division into haves and have-nots—the necessary basis for socialism not existing—this is no longer true today. The poverty, poor housing and malnutrition in Britain now result from a failure to harness the country's productive resources satisfactorily rather than their inadequacy. Yet, so long as these evils exist, women will bear an unfair share of this misery. This means that the struggle for socialism and sex equality are inextricably intertwined.

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## Few laughs...No answers

### Ireland for beginners

Phil Evans and Eileen Pollock  
Writers and Readers £2.95

There are some rare Irish jokes. Just recall some of the best. 'Lord Mountbatten had dandruff, how do we know? They found his head and shoulders on the beach,' or: 'Airey Neave escaped from Colditz but couldn't even get out of the House of Commons car park.'

So a cartoon history of Ireland seems right. Think of all the jokes—every one at our rulers' expense. A history of Ireland written by a socialist is a great idea, and something that's badly needed.

So the arrival of *Ireland for Beginners* by sometimes *Socialist Worker* cartoonist Phil Evans *should* have been something to look forward to. Unfortunately it's one big disappointment.

First of all it's only rarely funny. Secondly and more importantly it's not really a socialist history. Instead it's a fairly predictable republican history—of which there's no great shortage—which centres on Irish nationalism. Starting with the arrival of the Normans it charts one long, indivisible struggle against the conquerors.

In that fight some queer people earn praise from Phil. Among them that great parliamentarian Charles Parnell, who put the boot into the Land League (whose agitation against the landlords is not even mentioned), the Irish Language movement, and the Gaelic League. The greatest achievement of the latter is to guarantee you get higher marks in maths if you're a Gaelic speaker—having made sure only middle class kids are taught to write their names in Irish as required at the top of their exam paper!

Phil's acceptance of nationalist mythology leads to some howlers. Take this one 'despite its faults the 26 counties is non-sectarian'. That must come as news to our comrades currently marching on the Dublin streets against plans to enshrine the outlawing of abortion in the Republic's constitution.

Partition, Phil tells us, came about because the British could 'out-wit the Irish' in negotiations. Stupid Irish. Actually it was agreed to by the middle class republican leadership who were all too keen to stop any struggle before it went too far.

Similarly Phil seems confused about why Britain is stuck in Northern Ireland. He claims firstly that 'potentially Northern Ireland is a good investment' and secondly that Britain is 'frightened of a united Ireland'.

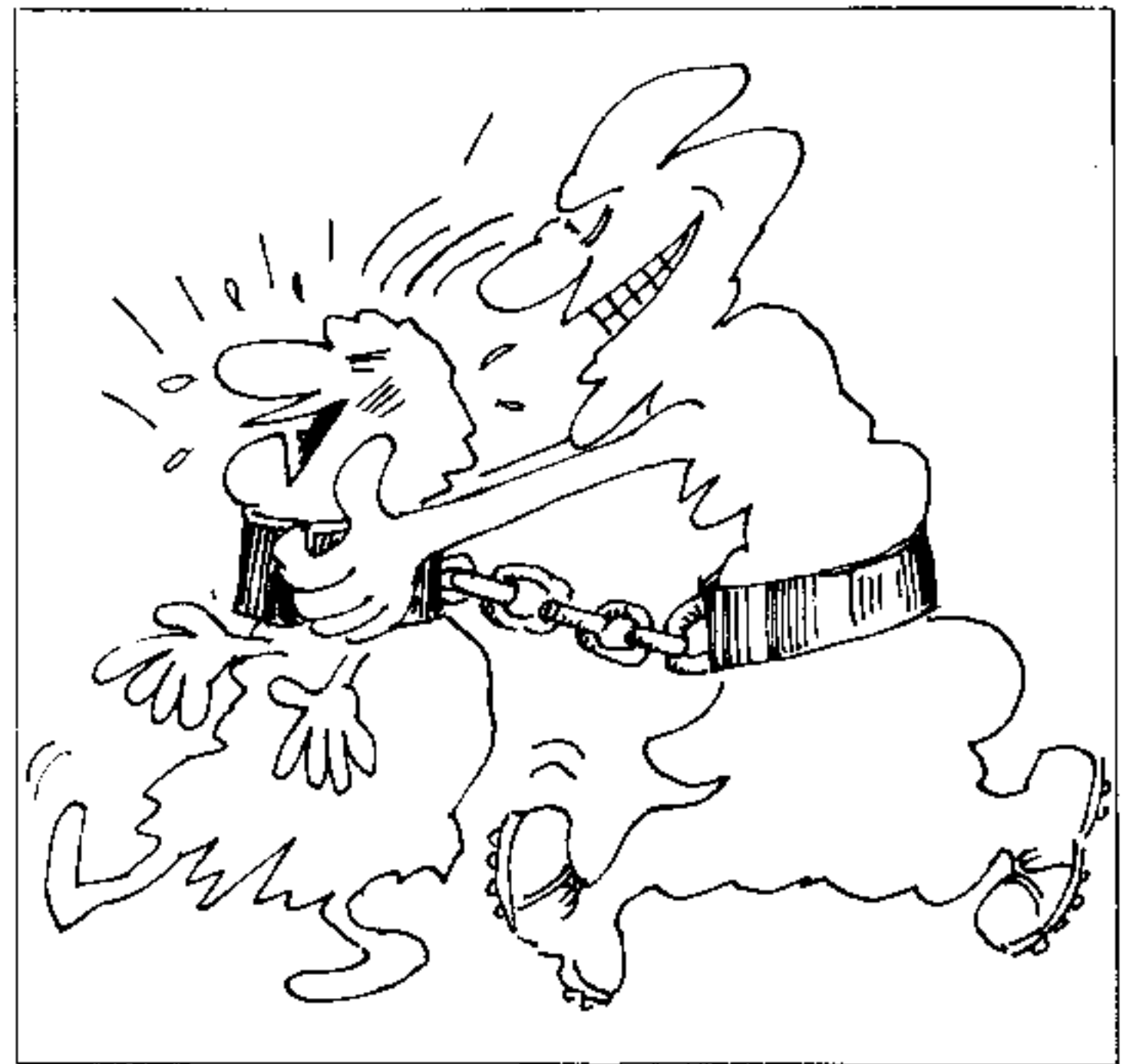
The only good investment in Northern Ireland today is

Woolworths in Central Belfast. The rest of the place is an economic disaster area. In the 1960s Britain wanted to give it to the Republic. Partly because it was such an economic drain and partly the existence of partition was an obstacle to British investment in a flourishing Southern economy.

It's difficult to imagine the likes of Garret Fitzgerald in charge of a united Ireland sending fear through the hearts of British capitalism.

What's missing is any mention of *class* struggle. Phil does call for a socialist republic but these days every republican is for a 'democratic socialist republic'. Reading the book you'd be forgiven for not knowing Ireland, North and South, has a higher level of union organisation than Britain and currently a higher level of strikes. You'd be forgiven for not knowing about minor things like the Belfast general strike of 1919 over the 40 hour week because that escapes mention. The date of the earlier strike in Belfast led by Jim Larkin is given as 1908 not as 1907 when it took place.

Such mistakes are annoying especially when they're accompanied by greater boobies. John Redmond—the man who led the ultra conservative home rule party at the beginning of the century—is named as



the leader of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the then equivalent of the Provos. The 1939-40 English bombing campaign by the IRA is moved by Phil to the mid 1950s!

To give the book its due, Lenin, Trotsky and Connolly are trotted out to criticise the Provos. Their quotations show military conspiracies and gephinte won't break capitalism. But Phil seems to doubt that what's needed in Ireland is anything as 'orthodox' as a revolutionary party.

Instead the organisation which gets his vote is the Irish Republican Socialist Party. It's *their* criticism of

the Provos he quotes. Personally if I *had* to choose between two republican organisations, one big and one tiny, who both believe in military conspiracies, I'd rather choose the bigger one. But being such an 'orthodox' Marxist I've always thought a revolutionary party was necessary to create socialism. But maybe Ireland's the exception in the world!

So unfortunately Phil, its back to the drawing board, or perhaps back to dear old Lenin. *Ireland for Beginners* has unfortunately no answers and precious few laughs.

Chris Bamberg

## The coming death of Pakistan

### Can Pakistan Survive?

Tariq Ali  
Pelican £2.95

This book is essential reading for socialists. It is also a brave book, since Tariq has grasped a nettle which most socialists in Britain quietly avoid, for obvious reasons. In answering his question, 'No—it shouldn't', he meets the issue square on.

It is an immensely readable book, packed full of essential information, both historical and contemporary, which is indispensable for all socialists in Britain. You get a concise demolition of the concept of the Muslim nation, a good analysis of British imperialism in India, a description of the weaknesses of the Pakistani state, a historical survey of the various régimes since independence, a run-down of the Pakistani left, and a description of workers' struggles under Bhutto. But whenever the reader is enthralled by the sweep of Tariq's narrative, the dream is rudely broken as he lurches into one of those bewildering deviations which forcibly remind you that his politics

were formed in the Fourth International.

Sometimes they are merely irritating, such as the references to Russia, China et al as 'non-capitalist states'. Occasionally they are just plain daff, as in chapter one where he suggests that British imperialism could have been held at bay by 'state-sponsored feudalism'. But you gradually realise that Tariq is writing more about ideology than and the structure of the state than class, and more about the ruling class than the working class or the peasants. So you never get a detailed analysis of the working class and its organisations, or of class relations in the countryside.

In fact, towards the end, the book totters on the edge of the orthodox Trotskyist abyss when the final chapter, instead of talking about the prospects of workers' struggle, deals with the geopolitics of the region. It is the national question which effectively becomes central, as he appears to regard the left wing Baluchi nationalists as the vanguard of the struggle against the régime. Genuine revolutionaries though most of them undoubtedly

are, an interview reproduced in an appendix reveals them to be heavily influenced by the legacy of Stalinism, much given to running down the Eritrean revolutionaries for not capitulating to that unspeakable thug Mengistu Haile Mariam.

It is the tragedy of this book and of his whole life that Tariq Ali has not been able to throw off the shackles of his political past and place the working class at the centre of the struggle. Because of the complex nature of South Asian societies it is even more essential for revolutionaries to argue for the absolute centrality of the working class there than it is in Britain. Because he does not do this, Tariq's book can only be a source of reference and a catalyst, not a weapon. But it remains a book that all socialists should read. I hope that it will be widely read, and the issues discussed, by members of the SWP, because the issue is one that cannot be dodged indefinitely. The ultimate tragedy of Tariq Ali is that I would be prepared to lay money that it won't be discussed in Hornsey Labour Party.

Barry Pavier

# The myth of scarce resources

From the days of Malthus to the Ecology Party of today, there are those who argue that socialism is both impossible and unattractive because of natural limits. As socialism is a society where everyone, not just the privileged few, would live in luxury and affluence, they argue that it is impossible because of 'limited scarce resources', and unattractive because of the damage it would do to the ecology. Where, they ask, would all the oil, coal, tin, iron etc come from to make it all possible?

Such views have led the Greens in Germany and the Ecology Party here to advocate a return to small-scale production. A return to a semi-rural existence, and to low productivity, in touch with nature, will replace today's exploitation of the ecosystem.

These views are based on wrong assumptions and a limited understanding of the workings of capitalism.

Let's take the most fundamental error first and look at the idea of 'limited scarce resources'. This assumes that the industrial needs of both capitalism and socialism are the same and are dependent on, or rather limited by the fixed amount of energy and wealth that can be created, and this limit rules out socialism.

But a resource is only a resource if knowledge of it exists and there is technology to use it and a social system which can plan and regulate it. A resource is not a constant over time or from society to society. For example oil was not a 'resource' till the 19th century and not an important energy source till the 20th. That is, until there was a technology able to transform crude oil into a useable fuel and there was a society and industry geared to and organised on the basis of oil-powered machines. You simply cannot look at oil or even energy as a separate and independent section of society or even a determinant of the structure of society.

What limits production is not x million oil or coal units in the earth's crust but the limits of knowledge and technology. In other words the limits to production are not natural but social and political. Even with all the limitations and handicaps that capitalism creates through its education system and hierarchically organised industry, it has developed a vast expansion of human knowledge and capacity. With socialism that knowledge would not be used for the making of profit but for the benefit of people.

Most of the world's population live in conditions not far removed from the European technology levels of the 17th century. Though firmly locked into the world system they are excluded from the use of the system's technology and benefits. A vast increase of wealth and happiness could be created simply by putting today's knowledge into practice.

Even today the most used energy resource in the world is not oil, coal or electricity but wood and dried animal dung. It is not a question of trying to return to small scale production, the blight of the third world, but of

spreading modern techniques and harnessing this to human need. And this is only considering the very limited knowledge of today. With the abolition of both exploitation and class oppression there would be a vast explosion of knowledge and useful invention as men and women were freed from the fetters of capital, the limitations of profit, and the mental cages created by class society.

The other major error in the ecologists' view is their misunderstanding of the workings of capital in general and the effect of market forces in particular. This has been demonstrated quite dramatically with the scare stories of the 70s about the world running out of energy by the late 80s, being replaced by the 'oil-glut' of the past few years. The ecologists assume that the capitalist system is normal and the only way that industrial production can be organised. Under capital the market system is based on satisfying demand (determined in terms of money, not need) with supply.

In other words the system is based on there being a scarcity. Where a scarcity doesn't exist then one is created. So America burns millions of tons of wheat each year to keep the price steady, the EEC stores and destroys 'surplus' foodstuffs (the famous butter, cheese, wine mountains and lakes) etc. The 'scarcity' of limited resources pointed to by

the ecologist is not the result of a limited nature but a product of the capitalist mode of production.

Finally a word about the destruction and exploitation of the ecology. The one valid point that ecologists have is that under capitalism the environment is mismanaged and damaged. It is not that 'nature' is being spoilt and we should return to the 'natural system'. That would be a return to a system tied to and handicapped by its dependence on the weather and nature. The myth of the 'natural system' is extraordinarily widespread. In Britain there are no 'natural' ecosystems in existence, even the wild moors of the Lake District were the creation of neolithic man's burnings and agriculture and are today maintained by sheep grazing. But capital is only concerned with short-term profit, not long-term or even medium-term considerations. So ecology is damaged and 'spoilt' for long-term exploitation, in favour of short-term gain. Again this is an inevitable consequence of capitalism and fundamental to the system, only to be got rid of by ending the rule of capital once and for all. When that happens we will be able to manage the ecosystem for the long-term benefit of people and to fully develop the potential of people and nature.

Noel Halifax

