

Workers' Liberty

Ireland: is there a solution?

A socialist symposium

Participants in the symposium

- Davey Adams
- Joe Austin
- Paul Bew
- Paddy Devlin
- Peter Hadden
- Joe Hendron
- Jim Kenney
- Christine Kinealy
- Rayner Lysaght
- John McNulty
- Eamonn McCann
- Matt Merrigan
- Henry Patterson
- Robin Wilson

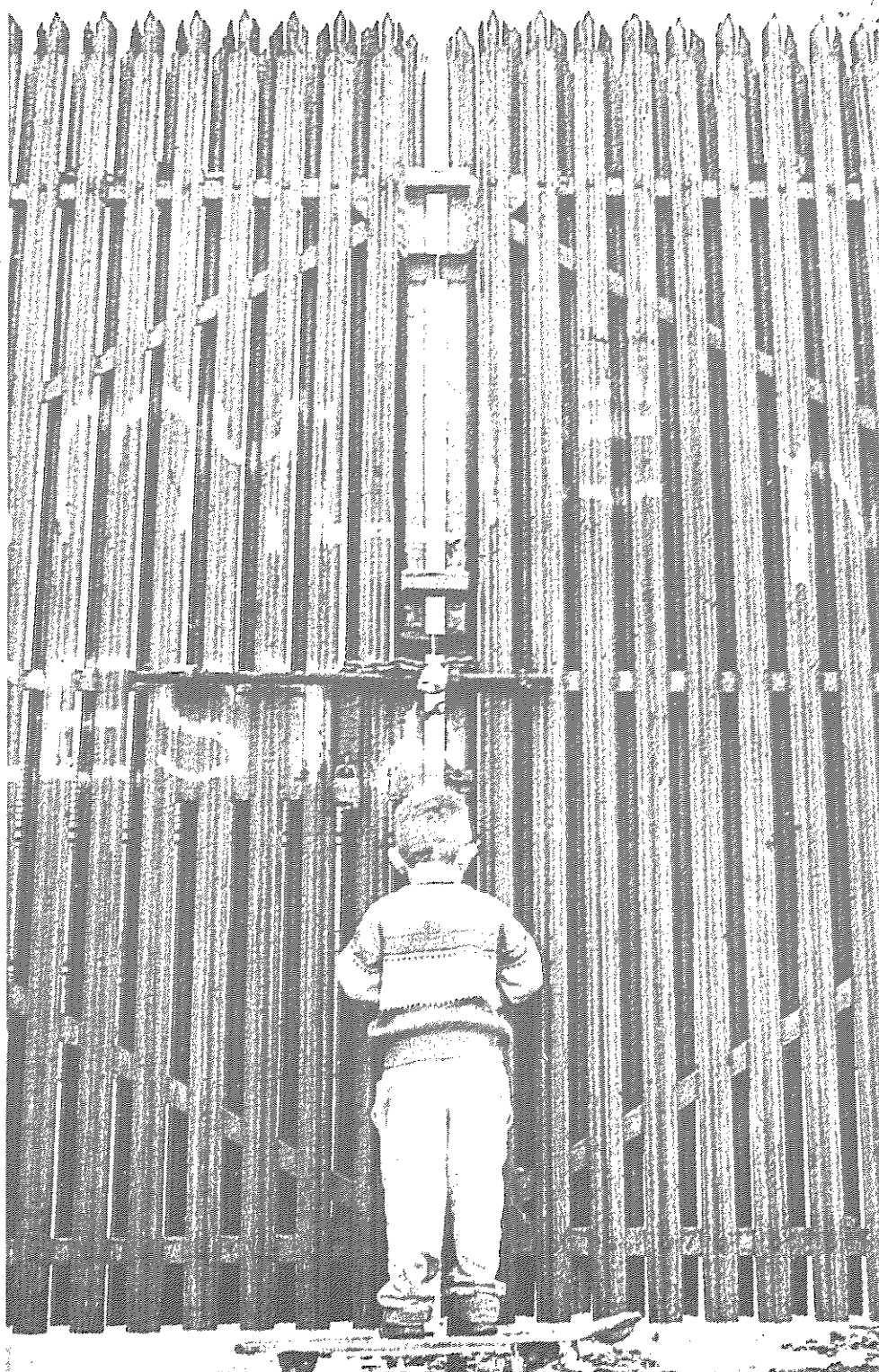
Plus

**Liverpool
Dockers**

Paris Commune

Trainspotting

**Quentin
Tarantino**



©
u
s
s
i
s
t
h
i
s
i
n

Contents



Editorial

There is no British solution, Mr Adams! page 3

The monthly survey

The way to peace is equal rights
By Michel Warshawsky page 4

Australia: Labor and the Accord swept away
By Janet Burstall and Tony Brown page 5

Ford workers stand by their man By Janine Booth page 6

The new workers' movement in South Korea page 7

Diary

Reclaiming our safe places By Jill Mountford page 8

Northern Ireland: A socialist symposium page 9

A hidden history of class politics By Henry Patterson

Contradictory reasons for the ceasefires By Eamonn McCann

Labour can build common ground By Jim Kemmy

The working class has been cannon fodder By Davey Adams

The solution has to come from within Ireland By Christine Kinealy

Forget about the border By Paddy Devlin

Deal with the remnants of imperialism By Matt Merrigan

A united Ireland is a united people By Joe Hendron

There is no capitalist solution By Peter Hadden

Create the right atmosphere for talks By Joe Austin

Call a congress of Republicans and socialists By Rayner Lysaght

Not peace, but an imperialist offensive By John McNulty

Conservatives confront conservatives By Robin Wilson

Build links, leave long-term politics open By Paul Bew

The class struggle

Dockers of the world, unite! By Mick Curran page 20

International

Blair's Australian teachers Interview with Julie Connolly page 22

The Paris Commune

The first workers' government By Tom Willis. page 23

The Commune and Marxist theory page 25

The next Paris Commune page 27

America

US trade unionists launch a labour party

Interview with Steve Zeltzer page 28

The Cultural Front

Surfaces with a sting Clive Bradley on the films of Quentin Tarantino page 29

US government shields Nazi scientists' experiments on aliens

Ruah Carlyle reviews "The X-files" page 30

Endlessly innovative Edward Ellis reviews "Trainspotting" page 31

Review

Why can't he find the Good Capitalist?

Colin Foster reviews "The State We're In" page 32

Forum

An open letter to Arthur Scargill

By officers of the Campaign Group Network. page 33

Unfair to Bernie Grant By Alan Thomas page 33

Against all immigration control? By Brad Cleveland page 34

The experience of the left

When IS went sour By Pete Keenlyside. page 35

Teach yourself socialism

Marxism and nationalism By Mark Sandell page 36

Things must be studied in their inter-relations By Edward Conze. page 37

Editor: Sean Matgamna; Assistant Editor: Cathy Nugent

Business Manager: Martin Thomas

Published by WL Publications, PO Box 823, London, SE15 4NA. Printed by RAP (TU)

Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Workers' Liberty.

Widening the circle

THE NETWORK of bookshops who take *Workers' Liberty* is expanding bit-by-bit, even though we are still frozen out by the big national chains and distribution firms. My reports from some local sales organisers is that posters advertising the magazine make a big difference here: a good display of them markedly increases sales in local bookshops.

There is little question that we can find more bookshops as the magazine becomes more established. The core of our circulation, however, remains hand-to-hand sales. Street sales have been successful outside public libraries (in Sheffield, for example) or on college campuses, and most activists find a few buyers at all their regular political and trade-union meetings.

These days, though, those meetings are fewer and worse-attended than they used to be, and the circle of people we meet regularly at political meetings is small. That does not mean that the socialists who have turned their energies elsewhere are no longer interested in the ideas we try to develop and debate in *Workers' Liberty*. I'm currently organising an effort to reach out to and canvass people whom we have worked with, or who have expressed an interest, in the past, but whose current activities do not overlap with the routines of *Workers' Liberty* sellers. My confident expectation — judging from first results — is that a good few of those people will want to subscribe to *Workers' Liberty*.

To help the subscription drive, we have temporarily introduced a bargain for subscribers — 12 issues for £12, or 20 per cent below cover price.

Regular sellers can contribute here. We'll be doing mailings to potential subscribers from the *Workers' Liberty* office, but most potential subscribers are people known not to us at the office but to our local activists. If you know a comrade whom you no longer come across regularly, but who you think might be interested in subscribing to *Workers' Liberty*, send his or her address to us at WL Publications, FREEPOST LON 7628, PO BOX 823, London SE15 4BR.

You need not stamp the envelope: we have arranged this Freepost address to make it easier for subscribers to respond.

One last point: the film *Land and Freedom*, whose impact made many people rethink the issues of the Spanish Civil War and the Popular Front, and made our issue no.26, with its dossier on the Spanish Revolution, our best-selling yet, is currently due for a second showing in many cities. Where it has already been back, *Workers' Liberty* sales at the cinema queues have been highly effective. We still have a few copies of no.26 left, and they can be taken along to sell with the current issue and subscription leaflets.

Martin Thomas

There is no British solution, Mr Adams!

'WHEN things are getting slow and boring, what you must do is have a man come into the room with a gun in his hand'. The advice of the great thriller writer Raymond Chandler on how to keep a crime novel moving along at an exciting pace might have been a comment on Irish politics this century. Only for Ireland you would have to amend it to read: "... with a gun or a bomb in his hand". The Provisional IRA's bomb in East London has certainly moved things along nicely. Where before the bomb there had been a year and a half of stalemate, stagnation and political immobility, now Britain and Dublin have set 10 June as a firm date for the opening of "all-party talks".

The Provisional IRA set off the Docklands bomb; but politically the responsibility for the breakdown of the 17-month Provisional IRA ceasefire must be laid squarely at the feet of John Major and the Tory Party. They negotiated a ceasefire — and then, instead of proceeding to all-party talks, raised the ante again and again. The Tories made the additional demand that, first, the Provisional IRA must "decommission" its arms. This demand was understood by the Provisional IRA as a demand for surrender. Stalemate followed.

In November 1995 a Commission under US Senator Mitchell was set up to ensure that President Clinton had a smooth, "triumphant" and electorally lucrative visit to Belfast. Mitchell took on the job of finding a formula to ending the stalemate. His commission's essential work was to adjudicate between the hostile positions of the Provisional IRA and its "pan-nationalist" allies on one side and the British government and the Unionists on the other: could all-party talks go ahead before the Provisional IRA "decommissioned" its arms? Mitchell proposed evading the issue, and advocated simultaneous talks and (token) decommissioning. It was an implicit rejection of the Tory line of the previous 17 months. Immediately, the Tories changed tack again.

Instead of Mitchell's main recommendation they opted for elections in the Six Counties — that is, to throw the entire "peace process" back into the bearpit where the majority and minority positions are fixed and have, for decades, proved immovable. They acted without consulting Dublin, although they were obliged to consult under the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, which is a binding international treaty. This appeared to be a jerky change of direction. The new departure in the last decade has been the creation of a much broader London/Dublin/European framework in which to try to adjust the Northern Ireland imbroglio.

The British government decision for Northern Ireland elections signalled to the Provisional IRA yet again that Britain would raise roadblock after roadblock to progress



Major, Bruton et al try to find an Anglo-Irish solution

in the way the Provisional IRA leaders had thought (and told their supporters) things were moving in August 1994. Ostentatiously the British government rode roughshod over the views of the Catholic-Irish constitutional-nationalists — the Dublin government and the Northern Ireland SDLP — on whose influence, as part of the "pan-nationalist alliance", the Provisionals counted for assistance.

The Provisionals went into the ceasefire not because they had been defeated in war, or because they thought they had already won the core of what they fought for, but because they bought the delusion that the "Pan-Nationalist Alliance" of Dublin, the SDLP and Irish-US politicians could force Britain to "persuade" — that is, coerce — the Unionists into accepting the essentials of what they wanted.

It was a delusion. The British government was unwilling to coerce the Protestants. It would probably be unable to coerce them even if wanted to. Nor, indeed, could it be desirable for the British government to coerce them into submitting to the core Provisional IRA demand for a united Ireland. A change from half a million alienated Catholics in the Six Counties to approximately one million alienated Protestants in a 32 county state would not be progress on any level.

Even if the Unionists could be got to all-party talks, the talks could not satisfy both sides. The longer the truce lasted without talks, the better — so the British government probably reasoned. That is why they disappointed, and were bound to disappoint, the Provisionals.

The Provisional IRA, who had made their ceasefire in the expectation of quick gains secured by the political pressure of Dublin and the Irish-Americans, were thus faced first with the demand for what they saw as surrender, and then with what looked like a lurch back to a new phase of Belfast self-rule, with an immovable built-in majority

against them.

The essence of the situation is that the Six Counties of Northern Ireland is an artificial, historically unviable entity. Catholics in the Six Counties number about 42%, and were never less than 35%, of the population. They are the majority in perhaps half the land area. They have always been a bigger minority in the Six Counties than that which the whole Protestant-Unionist population would be in a 32-county Ireland. In Northern Ireland, the historic all-Ireland Catholic-Protestant conflict is reproduced in vicious miniature, with the minority-majority roles artificially reversed. As a solution to the all-Ireland minority-majority problem, the Six-Counties entity is undemocratic nonsense. That is the underlying rationale for which the Provisional IRA is doing. That is why it is hypocritical rant and cant for Tories and Blairites to give them lectures on "democracy". The imprisoned nationalist minority can not win by head-counting with the Six Counties.

But the Provisionals cannot win by war, either. There is a tragic late remnant of a national war of liberation, fought by a fragment of the Catholic Irish people, locked within the Six-Counties bearpit state in murderous conflict with the Protestant-Unionist Irish minority. The only way to solve the bloody and destructive impasse in Northern Ireland is to unite substantial sections of the two communities around a programme which can be recognised as reasonable and democratic by both — and Provisional IRA bombs and bullets necessarily, inevitably, make that task more difficult.

In what they do, the Provisional IRA ignore the wishes of the overwhelming majority in Ireland, including the will of the Six Counties Catholic majority, which is mainly SDLP — constitutional nationalist — in its politics. The Provisional IRA is an enemy of all rational, democratic, working-class solutions.

Partition is now a 75-year old fact. The

Israel-Palestine

The way to peace is equal rights

By Michel Warshawsky

UNBEARABLE, THESE images of mutilated bodies, little girls covered with blood, and mutilated children, images which the television channels abuse and the politicians of all stripes abuse.

Deaths claimed by Hamas, but predictable too. You would have to be very short-sighted to believe that the assassination by the Israel secret service of the most famous of the military activists of Hamas, Yihya Ayash, would pass without a spectacular backlash.

This is not the end of the Israeli-Palestinian talks and cooperation. We are likely to see more of the same. The Israelis will put pressure on the Palestinian national authorities and on the Palestinian people in general.

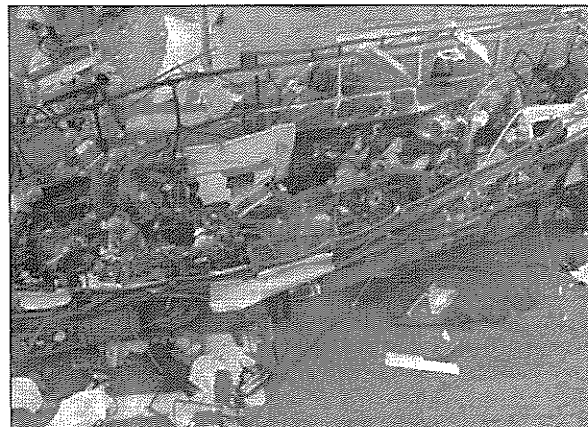
This will be futile pressure, with collective punishment and hostage-taking used against the Palestinians without any reference to whether or not this will work to stop the suicide bombings. There is no reason whatsoever why the Israeli army should need to re-enter Gaza permanently. The whole process will continue.

Arafat will do what the Israelis ask him to,

though he knows that he has a better alternative which has already been blocked by the Israeli government on three occasions, namely, to reach an agreement with Hamas. That is why so much of the responsibility for what has happened lies with the Israeli state.

We blame the Israeli government totally for the suicide operations. They have tried to use military methods to deal with what is essentially a political problem. Everything has gone as if the Israeli government were taken in by its own propaganda and believed naively that James Bond type operations could really put an end to the outrages — that peace could be imposed on the Palestinians by military methods and humiliating dictates.

The real way to protect the population is a genuine policy of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, which has got nothing to do with the present talks known as the "peace process".



Hamas bomb attack

What is needed is respect for the Palestinians, full equality, and reorientation towards total Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and the dismantling of the settlements.

● Michel Warshawsky is a leader of the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen) in Israel.

from page 3 Protestant minority will not be coerced into a united Ireland — neither by the Provisional IRA nor by the British. The Provisional IRA campaign has mainly had the effect of retarding conciliation of the two communities and driving them further apart than they were 25 years ago. Pursuing the mechanical state-level unification of Ireland with guns and bombs for 25 years, the Provisional IRA has worked great harm to the cause of uniting the people of Ireland. It is one of the most malignant causes of present Irish disunity.

Unless the Provisional IRA declares a new ceasefire, Sinn Fein will be excluded from the peace talks. That is ironic. In their 17-month agitation for "all-party talks" to proceed despite a Protestant boycott, and in their demand that the British be "persuaders" of the Protestants, the Provisionals were demanding in effect that the British should proceed without the Protestants and, at the next stage, coerce them.

The political and moral decadence of the Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein form of "republicanism" is proclaimed by this fact: when the conventional "republican" double-talk is stripped away, they are trying to unite "Ireland" by coercing the British government into using the British army to force one million Irish people to accept Irish Catholic majority rule!

It is fantasy — reactionary, anti-republican fantasy — and a throwback to the old Irish-Unionist position, "the British solution is the only solution". The old all-Ireland

Unionists were rational, however, aiming for a "British solution" within the UK; the Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein are fantasists looking for a British solution to intra-Irish division to be embodied in an independent Ireland!

But there is no British solution to the division in the Irish people. There can only be an intra-Irish solution, a solution made by the people of Ireland.

Therefore, we say that the Provisionals are reactionaries. They are not republicans. Real Irish republicanism is now what it was when Wolfe Tone defined it: "to unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions and to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter". For us, the whole question is the unity of the Irish working class, "Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter."

We are entirely against the Provisional IRA campaign. Socialists should support neither Provisional IRA militarism nor any of their multifarious political fronts ("peace", "release the prisoners", etc.)

Is there a way forward? The Northern Ireland statelet, created by a nonsensical and undemocratic partition of Ireland, is unviable as a political unit. It denies the right of self-determination to a Catholic community numbering over 40 per cent of its population. But coercing the Protestant community into a united Ireland under Catholic domination — as the Provisionals would — can bring no progress. The demo-

cratic rights of both communities must be accommodated. This can be done only in a free federal united Ireland, with local autonomy for the Protestant-majority area, and with confederal links with Britain.

The job of Marxists, therefore, is to work for workers from both communities to unite around a programme of social advance (public investment and shorter hours for full employment, levelling-up of social provision, etc.) and consistent democracy.

We should assist any moves to establish a Labour Party in Northern Ireland based on the trade unions and uniting workers from both communities. The only real solution to Irish workers' problems, the only Irish Republic that is other than a mockery of all the past struggles of the Irish majority, is the Workers' Republic; and that Workers' Republic can be created only by a united working class, led by revolutionary Marxists.

In the first place, then, we must seek to mend the fragmentation and marginalisation of the left in Ireland by dialogue and debate. By dialogue and debate, also, we must seek to wake up the British left, which in our view has settled back into flaccid reveries and fantasies about a largely imaginary Ireland and scarcely relates to the existing Ireland and its real problems. With these aims, we publish a symposium presenting a wide range of Irish socialist opinion on the new situation after the breakdown of the ceasefire. Our pages will be open for further contributions to the debate. ■

Australia: Labor and the Accord swept away

Janet Burstall and Tony Brown report on the Australian election.

THE AUSTRALIAN Labor Party (ALP)'s nine seat majority has been wiped out in one of its biggest electoral defeats this century.

Nine Ministers lost their seats and the new Parliament will have a Coalition [Liberal/National] majority of around 45 in the 148 seat House of Representatives. Not since the massive anti-Labor landslides of 1975 and 1977 has Labor been so decimated at the polls.

Labor recorded its lowest primary vote (35%) since World War II. In Queensland Labor now holds only one seat while in South Australia there are two. In New South Wales, an ALP stronghold, large swings were recorded everywhere. Even in ultra safe working class seats there were heavy swings against Labor. Paul Keating suffered a 9% swing in his western Sydney seat.

After Saturday 2 March Labor has been reduced to representing only parts of metropolitan Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. It has no regional or rural representation to speak of.

Why?

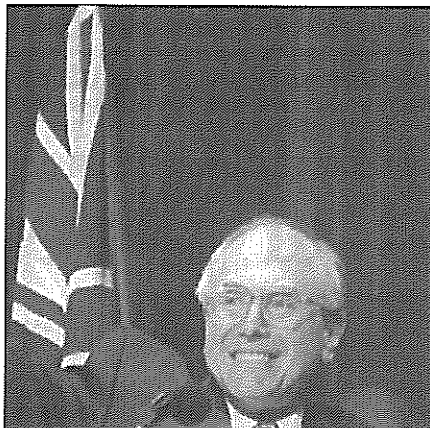
There are many young people who have grown up thinking that the ALP is the natural party of government. Some on the left have even encouraged this view. Yet Labor has only governed for thirty-three of the ninety-five years of this century. It has only won government thirteen times, including five since 1983.

Historically Labor in Australia has governed in times of national crisis — in both world wars, during the Depression, and again in 1983 following the deepest recession this century after the 1930s. Labor's role has been to restore social and economic calm in times of stress, to manage working class discontent, to put things back on an even keel.

During these last thirteen years Labor was once again the crisis manager, but it did more. Australia never had a bourgeois revolution, or industrial revolution. It had no feudal relations to overthrow and agriculture commenced on a capitalist basis. Indeed there was hardly any industrial development until between the first and second world wars. It had not developed a culture of innovative capitalist industrialisation. The industry that did develop was largely the result of state support through protection barriers and state supported arbitration.

A strong statist culture has developed in the absence of a strong modernising capitalist leadership.

Both the ALP and the ACTU (trade union) leaders proudly boasted in the mid



John Howard

1980s that as business and capital could not be relied on to provide economic leadership in the face of both a technological revolution and the dramatic realignment of production around the world, labour would step in and provide that leadership.

Labor deregulated the finance industry, cut tariffs, watered down the award system, eventually laying the foundations for enterprise bargaining to replace industry bargaining. It cut back social spending in order to produce budget surpluses. It privatised state owned businesses and introduced competition into telecommunications.

The leaders of the labour movement took the responsibility for being the best, most efficient of the capitalist managers.

In the process Labor managed three major economic recessions. The one it inherited in 1982/83 which led to hundreds of thousands of workers losing their jobs in manufacturing; in 1987 with the international stock market collapse; and, again in 1991, when interest rates hit 20%, more workers lost their jobs and many small businesses went bust.

Placing itself in the middle, trying to serve the interests of business while smoothing out the rough edges for workers caught in the restructuring of capitalism, Labor failed to satisfy either business or its working class constituency.

Labor opened up the economy by increasing its competitiveness, that is by enabling higher rates of profit for capital invested in Australia and for opening the way for Australian capital to invest overseas, and particularly in Asia, but business has wanted more.

Even though the profit share of GDP is at an historic high, and even though wages have been kept low, working conditions renegotiated everywhere and industrial action suppressed, inflation is low and taxation is the second lowest of all OECD countries, capital is not satisfied.

It now believes (although not unanimously, and not with overwhelming conviction in the Coalition's competence) that the Accord — the agreement between

Labor and the ACTU to keep wages down — has outlived its purpose. The Coalition's plans to extend industrial relations deregulation by emasculating the arbitration system, introducing individual contracts, further cutting social spending and privatising one third of Telstra will result in increased profit-taking.

The Coalition believes, and with some good reason, that it has little to fear from a weakened trade union movement. Union membership has fallen from 50% when Hawke won in 1983 to 35% today. In some new growth industries there is barely any union representation.

The ACTU's Accord has left the organised working class demobilised and out of practice at campaigning for their interests. Independent action has virtually ceased and there is little rank and file activity to speak of. It is a poor position to begin a fight against the attacks that are now being planned.

Falling wages and living standards

Workers have been hardest hit. Average wages for most categories of workers have fallen. Job security is rare and the average number of hours worked per week continues to rise.

Enterprise bargaining was introduced along with changes to the industrial law which were designed to foster a loyalty by workers to their employer. Increased productivity and improved international competitiveness were the goal, breaking down broader solidarity the means.

But there is large-scale suspicion on the shop and office floor to workplace reform. A government report by the Department of Industrial Relations, Enterprise Bargaining at Work, reported workers referring to a number of problems.

They included trading pay rises for changes in rosters, shift arrangements and the like. These deals might have increased pay but had also led to a downside such as a deteriorating sense of job security, higher stress levels, reduced input into decision making and waning employer-employee relations.

Many workers feel they are spending more time at work than they did before, placing more stress on their families.

So when Paul Keating said that "this is as good as it gets", or that growth, recovery and the good times are just around the corner, workers firstly stopped believing him, then switched off and finally began to wonder if Howard could do a better job.

Yet ironically Keating is probably right. In the context of Australian capitalism at the end of the twentieth century, this probably is as good as it gets.

Making wages dependent on industry profitability and national competitiveness makes it inevitable that living standards will decline.

For the past twelve months Labor has desperately tried to portray the Coalition as something equivalent to the vandals at the gates of national harmony. But Labor was compromised on so many issues.

It opposed Howard's plans to part privatise Telstra, yet it had privatised the Commonwealth Bank and QANTAS; it opposed the Coalition's deregulationist industrial relations policy, but it had introduced enterprise bargaining and effectively made awards (agreements processed through the public arbitration system) redundant for many workers. It claimed that the Liberals were working only in the interests of big business, but throughout the 1980s the ALP leaders went out of their way to demonstrate their commitment to the powerful such as Murdoch, Bond, Connell and Rivkin.

Labor should have heeded Joseph Schumpeter's old saying that "entrepreneurs generate gales of destruction." Instead they have reaped a bitter electoral harvest.

Who will write the history?

This defeat has been coming for some time. Only the Coalition's ineptness stopped them winning in 1987, 1990 and 1993. Each ALP election win seemed a reprieve from the inevitable and this is probably one of the reasons for the size of this defeat. It represents a lot of pent up frustration all being let loose at once.

Now the race is on within the labour movement to write the reasons for the

loss. The right know better than anyone that those who write the history set the agenda for the next period.

The surviving core of ex-Ministers are saying that the policies were all OK, it was just a matter of Labor being in office too long, that defeat had to come some time. They argue that with some reflection and perhaps some tinkering Labor should take up where it left off.

There are others in the right who are saying that Labor needs to go back to its base. They are equally committed to Labor's managerialism and offer no alternatives to the Hawke and Keating economic policies.

"Howard will try to imply that public servants are privileged fat cats, who want to keep their jobs at the expense of much needed services."

Thousands of members who identified themselves with the left simply walked out through the 1980s and 1990s. They flirted with supposedly left-wing alternatives. Those "progressive" parties set

themselves up as electoral alternatives and judging them on that criteria have proved to be miserable failures.

The left within and without the party is seriously weakened. It is time to realise that the labour movement as it exists, warts and all, is the labour movement that must be taken seriously. It is a fantasy and a dead-end to believe that an alternative labour movement can be manufactured.

The next stage

For now the battle will be taken up by the trade unions. Howard's war will be first and foremost against the unions. Enterprise agreements, individual contracts and anti-union laws and a showdown with the waterfront unions will be the starting point of the Howard government's policies, even though they were barely mentioned during the campaign. This is how the more combative companies hope to wring out more profits.

Howard's other main goal will be privatisation and cuts to jobs and conditions in what remains of the public sector. He will try to imply that public servants are privileged fat cats, who want to keep their jobs at the expense of much needed services despite the report published on the eve of the election that it was only because public pay rises had been so low that overall wages growth had come within the government's budget target.

His social conservatism will be bad news for all people already oppressed in this society, especially if the unions fail to resist Howard's attacks. "The family is the greatest system of social welfare devised by any society" will be translated into welfare cuts.

The family, read women, will be pressured to meet the needs of the elderly, frail, disabled and pre-school children. Migrants will be denied support they are now entitled to, once more at the expense of their families.

And the strong seam of racism that was tapped during the campaign will encourage attempts to turn back the modest recognition of Aboriginal needs under Labor.

ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty appears to be throwing down the gauntlet. Two days after the election he said the Accord was finished and with it the wage restraint that endured for thirteen years.

"If they declare war we too will fight. There is no way that I will ever turn my back on the union movement. This is about as exciting as it's going to get, and I'm going to be there."

For thirteen years Labor assisted the ruling class through a crisis. What has taken place during that time has been nothing less than the renegotiation of the political economy of Australian capitalism. The new government will step up the pace.

Kelty's willingness to fight could be a starting point to remobilise the labour movement, and for the left to revitalise itself and build a militant rank and file movement. We can begin by campaigning to hold him to his promise. ■

Ford's workers stand by their man

By Janine Booth

WORKERS at Ford's car plant in Dagenham are prepared to strike in defence of a gay colleague. Tom Atherton was the victim of a homophobic assault by a foreman, but now faces the sack.

The foreman threw Atherton through a plate glass window after shouting at him "What the fuck do you want, you big fucking queer?"

The attack resulted in heavy blood loss, and a doctor was called to counsel other workers on the dangers of HIV transmission. Although the company claims that a doctor is always called in cases of blood spillage, assembly workers say this is not true, and protested over the "HIV panic reaction" in calling the doctor.

When a supervisor when to help him, Atherton — dazed through blood loss — lashed out. He now faces discipline and dismissal. The foreman who attacked him keeps his job, being reinstated after an investigative suspension.

This incident sees Ford completing

a hat-trick of hatred: within the last month, they have been caught out being both racist and sexist.

Black workers had their faces "air-brushed" white in a photograph in an advertising brochure: although black workers are good enough to make cares, Ford seems to think they are not good enough to advertise them.

Ford also published a sexist advert in their in-house magazine which was then pulped following complaints.

The car workers' union, TGWU is backing the victimised gay worker. Panel beaters and welders have said they will strike. Atherton has sworn he will take his case to tribunal.

Atherton claims never to have experience homophobic abuse previously in his ten years working at Ford. The homophobic assault by the foreman, and the subsequent victimisation by Ford, has prompted workers to unite in solidarity with their gay colleague.

They probably don't got to Pride every year or join Outrage! zapping closet clergy, but they won't stand for a fellow worker being attacked and victimised by his bosses.

The new workers' movement in South Korea

MINJU-MOCHONG, the new umbrella organisation of the democratic trade union movement in South Korea, was founded on 11 November 1995 and has more than 400,000 members.

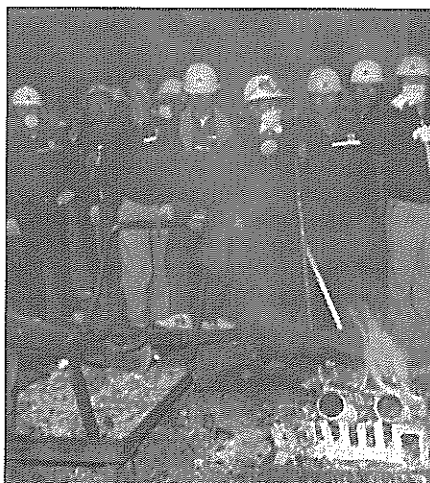
After the Korean war (of 1950-3), under the military regime, enterprise unions were introduced, under the control of the loyalist Federation of Korean Trade Unions. The trade union movement revived again after 1970. A symbol for this revival was a young textile worker, Chun Tae-il, who burned himself to death in 1972. Textiles were then the most important branch of the South Korean economy.

Chun Tae-il set fire to himself with the labour law on his knees. His declaration: "We are people, not machines" gave the orientation for the slowly-forming workers' movement. In the 1970s there were repeated strike movements, but they were defeated. Then came the social unrest of 1979-80.

The popular uprising in Kwangju in 1980 and its bloody suppression led to the transition to a further phase of dictatorship, which lasted until 1987. Set off by the death under torture of a student in a police station, the bourgeois-democratic movement developed. In the summer the movement spread to the factories and the workers. The strike waves lasted three months. In this struggle arose new, democratic trade unions in the workplaces, independent from the FKTU. In 1990 the National Council of democratic trade unions, Chon No Hyop, was founded. But a large section of the trade unions, especially in the big enterprises, remained outside it, because they feared that they would be illegalised if they joined the national federation. The industrial unions like those on the railways, the Underground, print, and hospitals, stayed outside one same grounds.

However, in 1994 a preparatory committee was set up to prepare the founding of an umbrella organisation for 1995. The state power tried to hinder this project. A string of activists were arrested and convicted. On the basis of the law on "Banning the Intervention of Third Parties", trade unionists active across or outside workplaces were persecuted.

On 11 November 1995 the new umbrella organisation, the KCTU (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions), was founded. The founding congress took place on the campus of Yonsei University. Trade union banners were put up all over the campus. The evening belonged to the masses: the university grounds were turned into a great people's festival, with 20,000 attending. As it was reported that the labour minister declared the new federation illegal, the speaker commented that the labour laws could not stop the movement. If all the workers stopped work for just one hour, the laws would become ineffective. More



Korean workers are becoming a powerful force

and more new groups came from workplace trade unions, some in work clothes, demonstrating their participation with huge trade union banners. Celebrations went on through the night. The next morning there was a big demonstration in Seoul, to which over 70,000 people came from across the country.

The police held back during the celebrations, although precisely in recent months strikes and demonstrations have been beaten down with great brutality. Obviously the Kim Young Sam regime wanted to maintain the appearance of its democratic legitimacy, and did not want to stir up too much dust through open action.

Because of the threatening criminalisation of the new trade union movement, international support and solidarity is especially important. IG Metall (the giant German metalworkers' union) has promised to support the new federation politically.

On 23 November the new president of the KCTU was arrested when he delivered the new federation's application for recognition to the labour ministry.

The struggle of the south Korean trade unions has firmly outlined immediate political goals: the abrogation of the "Ban on the Intervention of Third Parties", the recognition of the new trade unions, the liberation of all jailed trade unionists, the reinstatement of all workers sacked for trade union and strike activities.

In January three South Korean trade unionists, Kyu Hyung Zin, Sik Hwa Jung and Kwon Heon Kook, visited Germany and spoke to the socialist newspaper *Sozialistische Zeitung*. They are employed at Kefico, an electronics company in which the German firm Bosch has an interest.

"Since 1987", they said, "wages have clearly increased. However, even in the big enterprises the basic wage only covers minimal subsistence. The workers in small and middle-sized enterprises get much less.

"Working hours have repeatedly been

shortened since 1987.

"Korean workers work on average 50 hours a week, although the legal working week is 44 hours. In workplaces with bad conditions they work almost 60 hours a week. Besides, there is hardly any welfare system. About 2,700 workers died through accidents in the workplace in 1994, that is, about seven or eight a day.

"Our trade union at Kefico was founded in 1987. The process of democratisation in South Korea was very helpful for us. Our trade union has fought very actively and successfully for the improvement of work conditions and increases in wages. Of course we have also fought politically for a better system of society.

"There are three important laws against the workers' movement in South Korea. The first is the "Ban on the Intervention of Third Parties in Labour Disputes"; the second is the ban on political activity by trade unions; and finally there is the ban on dual trade unions, that is, if the FKTU is present, no other trade union can be established.

"Since 1987 we have fought successfully for wage increases. Therefore we have a relatively high level of wages. So South Korean businesses want to bring in foreign workers because they do not want such high wages as we do. Foreign workers are supposed to come to Korea only as probationers on industrial training programmes, where they get low wages. About 100,000 foreign workers are in South Korea. They mostly work in small enterprises under very bad conditions. Their wages are only 40 per cent of Korean workers. Various social groups campaign for the foreign employees to have equal rights... Up to now the trade unions have not yet bothered very much with this. But in future we will stand up for equal rights for these people."

Sozialistische Zeitung asked about Korean capital moving to other countries with lower wage rates.

"Up to now we did not think about this. Our work conditions were very bad. But in future we will practise international solidarity." *SoZ* also asked about the Korean trade unionists' impressions of the German labour movement.

"On the one hand we were very satisfied, but on the other somewhat disappointed. We have seen that IG Metall is really very strong and thus confirms our idea that it signifies a great power for the workers against capital. On the other hand we have an impression of the big German trade unions being bureaucratised. There is only a defensive strategy against Lean Production and Team Working."

● Translated, abridged and adapted from *Sozialistische Zeitung* of 25 January 1996 and 8 February 1996. Contact *SoZ* at Daselstrasse 75-77, 5064 Köln, Germany.

Reclaiming our safe spaces



Jill Mountford, Secretary of the Welfare State Network, described her work as an organiser of WSN's conference in Manchester on 23 March.

I'VE worked for the WSN for 18 months now, teaching for a few hours each week to provide some income to live on. Since the inaugural meeting, on a mid-September Sunday afternoon in 1994 where Tony Benn was the main speaker, we've pulled off some reasonably impressive stuff.

We now have an organisation with over 200 affiliates, the majority of them trade unions, Labour Parties, Trades Councils, students' unions, and campaigns such as Fight Against Cuts in Education, disability and pensioners' rights groups.

The campaign struck a chord with many people. It is already understood by large numbers of workers that the Tory project of tearing down the post-1945 welfare state is designed to create a working class with little or no safe places in a landscape of relentless exploitation of labour under the vicious, anarchic rule of the market.

The hard-won post-1945 safe places, made up of a network of benefits, rights and institutions, represented elements of the political economy of the working class within capitalism. Capital was still able to ruin individual lives, even communities, but not, as before the Second World War, the lives of a whole working class generation.

17 years of sustained Tory assault have changed that; but the WSN has been able to capture the anger and frustration of many activists with a desire to put an end to this assault on the working class.

The second reason for our growth was our fast response to labour movement events. Labour Party conference 1994 came just three weeks after our inaugural meeting. We produced a four-page broadsheet to highlight the cuts and attacks on the welfare state and to call for Labour Party support for building a mass rank and file campaign. The broadsheet developed into a 12 page tabloid size newspaper, called *Action for Health and Welfare*.

We've just completed issue number 12, which is 16 pages. We had enough reports, articles and letters to fill another four pages!

We organised daily sales at Labour Party Conference, and toted it around all the fringe meetings, as well as collecting signatures on a petition. We advocated Labour Party action against the Tories' attacks on the working class. We called a lobby of Parliament on Budget Day (29 November 1994). We have no illusions in what such a lobby can achieve, but we knew we could use it as a focus for activists to come together and feel their strength.

Over 500 people, from pensioners to school students, and all sorts of groups in between, came together to protest against the Tories' cuts in welfare spending.

Tony Benn, Diane Abbott and Jack Jones spoke for us. But it was the speakers from the floor that inspired many of us: pensioners recalling what life was like before the introduction of free healthcare at the point of need.

From the lobby we called for a national petition against the Jobseeker's Allowance [JSA]. Incapacity Action, a group of disabled people fighting the introduction of the new Incapacity Benefit (now in operation, replacing Invalidity and Sickness Benefit) told us how Incapacity Benefit was a forerunner for the JSA and pledged their support for fighting it. We also called a national campaigning conference on the JSA and how to fight it. The conference took place in February 1995, with over 250 activists from trade unions, Labour Parties, unemployed groups, disability campaigns and students' unions.

How do you measure the success of such a conference? Attendance: the make-up of the activists was a good representation of the labour movement. And you measure it also by the practical decisions that come out of it: the setting up of local groups against the JSA, organising local action such as protests and petitioning outside Job Centres and dole offices, getting out and talking to working class people who will be affected by the JSA, explaining why it should be fought. Birmingham Against JSA is organising a demonstration on Saturday 18 April 1996; there's a London demonstration on 9 April.

In April 1995 we pulled off another campaigning conference, "From the Cradle to the Grave." Again, over 250 people came along. We elected a steering committee and made a number of decisions about future actions and campaigns. We voted to back a march on Tory Party Conference in defence of the welfare state. Welfare State Network supporters marched the 58 miles through 10 towns from Bury to Blackpool.

We organised town centre meetings in places like Burnley and Blackburn. With megaphone and a bench to stand on, you

can quite quickly get a couple of hundred people around you. Plainly the march inspired other people to get involved. And it inspired me and other marchers, underlining once more the truth on which the WSN is based: the possibility of building a mass rank and file working-class movement on welfare.

Next came Lobby of Parliament for Budget Day 1995. The lobby ended with us being thrown out of Parliament after occupying the Committee Room in which Kenneth Clarke was hoping to hold a meeting! We sang the *Internationale*.

In December, the French working class showed us all what can be done when they took mass strike action against welfare cuts. Health and welfare is about militant working class politics. They never *gave* us welfare: we had to organise to take it from them.

Supporters of the Welfare State Network, me included, couldn't resist the chance of getting over to Paris for one of the big demonstrations. Hundreds of thousands of people on the streets demanding what is rightfully ours is a beautiful and inspiring scene! French workers were not only interested in their own battle to save pensions, healthcare and education, but showed great interest in what was happening to the working class and the welfare state in Britain. We sold out of copies of *Action*.

By May 1997 at latest Britain should have a new government. Labour leads in the polls by a huge amount at present. But even under a Labour government, headed by Blair and his friends, I believe the Welfare State Network is going to have an important role to play in defending the welfare state. The Labour leadership seem unable to offer anything other than pale pink Tory policies.

The Tories want to remake the working class in the image of the US where a huge underclass rots in Third World style slums inside the cities of the richest country on earth. Where 35 million people have no medical insurance benefits. Where the middle classes build very high fences around their private estates and use thugs to keep the proles out.

The Welfare State Network intends to play a part in the remaking of our class into a strong, confident force that will one day remake society and put an end to the capitalist war of all against all. We will build new society, in which there will be no safe place for exploitation, for poverty or for those who thrive off of exploitation and poverty.

So has it been a good 18 months? Is it worth all the hard work? Without a shadow of doubt! And then there are better things to come.

● Contact the WSN on 0171-639 5068 or c/o STUSU, 42 Braganza St, London SE17.

A socialist symposium

Ireland: is there a solution?

A hidden history of class politics

Henry Patterson

THE end of the ceasefire was brought about by a shift in the balance of forces inside the Republican movement against the Adams leadership. That change has been coming during the past few months because of the lack of progress towards all-party talks.

There was always a section of the Republican movement who were not keen on the new direction in which Adams is leading them, and who do not really believe that their objectives can be won in this way.

Nevertheless the opponents of Adams's policy shift had to accept that by the end of the 1980s their strategy had run up against a brick wall. The IRA had not been defeated, but neither had the British, nor were there any signs that the British could be forced to leave.

Sinn Féin had become a relatively successful political force in the North, but there they were not dominant, and they had not made inroads in the South.

The Republican movement had reached the limits of its strategy.

So inside the movement the Adams group managed to persuade people to try a new policy: shelving the military campaign in return for political support from Dublin and Washington. Those who were sceptical were at least persuaded to tolerate it. For example, I do not think that Martin McGuinness has ever really believed that the Adams strategy would work, but he was prepared to see it tested.

One of the problems has been that Adams oversold what could be expected from the British. His group encouraged the belief that all-party talks would be arranged quickly. But I do not believe that there actu-



Hope and joy at the time of the ceasefire

ally ever was a deal with the British to get into talks within three months, which is the period Adams has mentioned.

And the British government have not helped. There were areas that the British could have moved on relatively easily — for example, on the question of the prisoners. But they did not.

On other issues the British government were always going to have difficulties. The fundamental constitutional reforms the Republicans want are going to be very hard to arrange.

It is also going to be hard for the British to fix all-party talks. I do not know if Adams ever really believed that the British would act in this way. But he at least hoped they would, and led others to expect they would.

I think that Adams had become persuaded that the Anglo-Irish Agreement indicated that some sort of accommodation might be reached with a section of the British political elite for a gradual process of extrication. In other words Adams now accepts that the British are not going to say that they will leave in five or ten years. However he believes that it is pos-

sible to create "interim structures" which will amount in effect to joint British-Southern authority over the North leading up to British withdrawal in — perhaps — two decades time.

That was the new strategy. It is a move away from the idea that the British can be forced out, and it represents a recognition by Adams's group that Britain has no real interest in being in Northern Ireland. That is why the parts of the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Document which say that Britain has no selfish economic or strategic interests in the North were so important for the Republican movement.

One of the ideas behind the Anglo-Irish Agreement was that the conflict could best be "managed" at an inter-governmental level, rather than trying to get the local politicians to agree. However the present process — if it has not totally fallen apart — does involve giving a bigger role to internal political forces. The Framework Document envisaged quite developed political structures in Northern Ireland. The idea here is to make agreement easier for the main Unionist parties.

Adams believes that the Protestants can not be forced into a united Ireland. On the other hand both he and John Hume are looking to the British to pressurise and educate the Protestants.

At the core of Adams's strategy is the idea that the British must take up this active role. And this itself is a major problem with the Adams strategy.

It is possible to imagine a bourgeois interim-solution: some sort of regional

Glossary

DUP: Democratic Unionist Party, led by Ian Paisley.

Framework Document: joint document published by governments of Britain and Irish Republic in February 1995. Proposes new Belfast government, linked with Dublin government in a common structure to mediate Ireland's connections with the European Union and a "standing intergovernmental conference" of both governments to oversee Northern Ireland.

Paisley: Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party.

PUP: Progressive Unionist Party. Splinter Unionist party, linked to the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force.

SDLP: Social Democratic and Labour Party, led

by John Hume. Constitutional nationalist, it commands about two-thirds of the Catholic vote in Northern Ireland. Formed in 1970 by middle-class civil-rights activists and "Republican Labour" people, it swallowed up the old Nationalist party.

Shankill Road: a Protestant working-class area in west Belfast.

Six Counties: Northern Ireland.

Twenty-six Counties: the Irish Republic.

Trimble: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (also called "Official Unionists").

UDP: Ulster Democratic Party. Splinter Unionist party, linked to the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association.

Workers' Party: descendant (with Stalinistic, anti-nationalist politics) of the Official IRA, from which the Provisional IRA split in 1969-70.

A Workers' Guide to Ireland

20 page broadsheet on the history of Ireland from the 11th century to the present day. Told in pictures and words.

95p plus 12p postage. From PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

government in Northern Ireland based on power-sharing; North-South institutions as envisaged in the Framework Document. I would not have a problem with this if it could actually be made to work. However, my basic doubt about the feasibility of such an arrangement is that it is difficult to see the Unionists accepting any solution with a strong North-South dimension.

Over the past decade the rift between communities has actually deepened. This makes the internal basis for this type of agreement very difficult to construct.

There is a hidden history of class politics in the north of Ireland manifested in both communities. It was embodied in the Northern Irish Labour Party (NILP) during the post-war period up until the early 1960s. That tradition was essentially destroyed by the Troubles.

Organisations like the PUP and the DUP look back to that type of politics, but they are different in important respects. In theory, if not in practice, the NILP tried to transcend the sectarian divide. But the PUP and DUP should really be seen as a reflection of class politics within the Protestant bloc. They do not really look to go beyond their community. They are strongly influenced by community politics, which almost necessarily in Northern Ireland means communal politics.

Nevertheless these organisations do at least talk a language of compromise and may be, for some people, a step away from sectarianism.

The emergence of the PUP comes — to some degree — from the crisis of the Workers' Party. After the demise of the NILP the Workers' Party represented the re-birth of social democratic politics, albeit on a largely Catholic basis. Since the Workers' Party split across Ireland the Party in the North has lost influence and retreated into its traditional, most-easily mobilised, Catholic, old-Official heartlands.

The other half of the split, the Democratic Left, continues to have considerable support in the Irish Republic, but has failed to take off significantly in Northern Ireland.

So the non-sectarian alternatives in the North are currently weak — outside some very small socialist groups.

● **Henry Patterson is a professor of politics at the University of Ulster.**

Contradictory reasons for the ceasefires

Eamonn McCann

THERE was always a fragility about the ceasefire. The breaking point came with the Canary Wharf bombing. As everyone knows John Major's seeming rejection of the Mitchell Report's main recommendations and adoption of what is perceived to be the Official Unionist Party's policy of

elections to a negotiating body, triggered the bombing. That may have been the final straw. But behind that the contradictions had begun to sharpen.

The ceasefire was sold to the Republican rank and file on what some of us recognised at the time as an unrealistic basis: that the pan-nationalist alliance with the SDLP, Dublin and the Irish-American lobby would provide speedier progress towards a united Ireland than the armed struggle.

Of course the Protestant ceasefire was sold to the paramilitaries on the basis that the Union was safe. So the reasons for the two sides' ceasefires were obviously contradictory.

Add to this the fact that over the last 18 months there has been footdragging and bad faith on the British side.

Major — right up until the ceasefire began — had refused to believe Albert Reynolds' assurances that there would actually be a ceasefire. And when it took place he regarded it as a sign of weakness.

So, there were a series of misunderstandings and contradictions underlying the ceasefire.

Northern Irish politics are constructed around communal identity. But from my point of view, as a socialist, this is something I fight against. I deny, absolutely, that this is the only way of understanding Northern Irish politics. The peace process was always inherently sectarian. It is based on the assumption that the only possible way that people can identify themselves is by reference to the religious community that they were born into. That is precisely the type of politics that socialists should be concerned to fight against.

To be specific: one of the suggestions in the Framework Document is that an all-Ireland body might begin to run the health service north and south of the border. The peace process argument is that this will signify some sort of move towards a united Ireland.

However left entirely out of the account

is that the nurses in the South voted overwhelmingly last week for strike action — for the first time in their history. There has been a wave of strike action in the Southern health service and massive popular resistance to the closure of hospital units.

Simultaneously, the television news in Northern Ireland is reporting the great anger that has followed the announcement of hospital cuts. This reporting has overshadowed the peace process.

The argument about whether the health service should be run on an all-Ireland or partition basis is meaningless from a working-class point of view, unless the content of the health care is discussed.

It is just not true that everyone sees themselves as either Protestant or Catholic. The political history of Ireland shows this is not true. The Unionist party was not the main party for many years in Belfast. A lot of people who discuss the issues now seem to believe that the fringe parties like the PUP are a new phenomenon. Anything but. The Shankill Road has never, ever, been a stronghold of official, mainstream Unionism. The people there voted — in the 1930s for instance — for people who, by contemporary standards, could be considered radical or left wing. So there are not just two traditions in Northern Ireland.

Nevertheless, if parties like the PUP are serious about fighting for workers' interests, even just Protestant workers' interests — and I have yet to be convinced that they are — they must break away from the all-class Orange political bloc which has dominated the Protestant workers for 100 years. And they can not do that if they collude with Trimble and Paisley in denying their Catholic neighbours the right to express their identity.

It is true there are differences between the people. But we must recognise the rights of the nationalist people. The people who must be the arbiters about what is an adequate representation of the nationalist identity are the nationalist people them-

"The Troubles"

1968-72: Catholic revolt for civil rights in the North. Northern Ireland state lurches towards civil war. British troops go on the streets (August 1969). Provisional IRA emerges and starts military campaign (1970-71); Ulster Defence Association formed, as a mass-based Protestant paramilitary group (1971-2). Britain abolishes Northern Ireland's "Home Rule" parliament at Stormont (March 1972), introducing "direct rule" from London. **1972-6:** Britain seeks a solution through reform (Sunningdale Agreement, December 1973), but is beaten back by Protestant militancy (Ulster General Strike, May 1974). Further British efforts at reform (1975-6) get nowhere. **1976-82:** Britain tries to hold the ring and "sweat out" the Catholic revolt. Britain found guilty of "inhuman and degrading treatment" of prisoners by

European Commission for Human Rights (1977). Ten Republican hunger strikers die (1981).

1981-83: Sinn Féin makes a "political" turn.

1984: "New Ireland Forum" of southern Irish political parties proposes options for a solution.

1985, November: Anglo-Irish Agreement signed, institutionalising London-Dublin co-operation over Northern Ireland. Major Protestant revolt follows in 1986, but dwindles thereafter as it fails to break the Agreement.

1993: Hume/Adams initiative seeks all-party all-Ireland talks with a British commitment to back the results, and indicates that Provisional IRA will then call ceasefire and seek Protestant consent for Irish unity.

1994, August: Provisionals call ceasefire.



Men of arms. Provisional IRA funeral procession

selves. Therefore, there must be a united Ireland.

● **Eamonn McCann, a journalist, is a long-time socialist activist. He is affiliated with the Socialist Workers' Movement, sister group of the British SWP.**

Labour can build common ground

Jim Kemmy

THE ceasefire broke down because of a combination of factors. The IRA felt that they were getting nowhere with peaceful dialogue and they had to take up arms again, or in this case set off bombs. They felt that the Unionist parties had gone back into their bunkers, adopted a siege mentality of delaying and procrastinating, and also that the British government had not been as forthcoming as it should have been in entering talks with Sinn Féin. The background factor is that John Major was on a knife-edge in terms of his majority in the Commons, and he was trying to hold as much Unionist support as possible.

I don't think setting off bombs in London, killing innocent men and women, is ever justified. It's a form of intimidation. In a democracy you must accept frustrations. The labour and socialist movement has had to accept frustrations over decades, indeed over centuries, and time and again has had to come back after defeats and build up the movement again. The IRA doesn't understand that democracy has drawbacks and frustrations as well as positive aspects.

We have to be optimistic and hopeful. There is enough room on the island of Ireland for the Unionist community and the nationalist community to live together. The answer to the problems in Northern Ireland will not be found in a triumph of one community over the other. It will be found in compromise — not in extreme Unionism or extreme nationalism, but in a middle way based on democracy and justice for the ordinary people, both Catholic and Protestant.

It will not be found in a military victory of one community over the other and the

subjugation of one community over the other — that went on for too long. It would be a mistake to think that the bomb and the gun is the only way forward. In fact, a step back into sectarian civil war would be a disaster for all parts of Ireland and for Britain too.

At present we have too many inflexible attitudes on all sides. The Unionists must come forward out of their bunkers, into dialogue; they must get rid of the siege mentality. The British government must do all it can to encourage dialogue and communication between the two communities, and encourage compromise and agreement.

And we must let go as well. We must understand the Unionist position. They have been in Northern Ireland for 400 years, as long as the white man has been in America and twice as long as the white man has been in Australia. Whatever faults they have had in the past, whatever undemocratic attitudes they took up to the Catholics, we must go forward. We can learn from the past; we can't live in the past. It is important for us to hold out the hand of friendship to the Unionists.

The Labour Party here is a non-sectarian party. It has an open approach to the Unionists in Northern Ireland. We have got to put forward a broad socialist, democratic position.

The trade union movement in Northern Ireland has been on the whole a good influence against sectarianism and violence. It hasn't succeeding in eliminating it from the society up there, but there are strands in the labour movement in Northern Ireland which are progressive.

Unfortunately, when it comes to election times, too many workers, Unionist and nationalist, retreat into entrenched positions, voting extreme Unionist or extreme nationalist. That's no good. What you have got to do is build a common ground, and the labour movement is ideally suited to do that. We haven't done so in the past, but we must keep trying. Our movement is based on hope.

● **Jim Kemmy is a Limerick TD and Chair of the Irish Labour Party.**

The working class has been cannon fodder

Davey Adams

THE Protestant community, I think, was very angry about the breaking of the ceasefire. It must be said that people in the Nationalist community are angry too. Even the letters page of *An Phoblacht* [Sinn Féin's weekly paper] is full of criticism of the IRA's decision to end the ceasefire. The weight of opinion within their community

Who's for peace? The view from Northern Ireland and the Republic

Which of these possible solutions would you prefer for Northern Ireland?

	Northern Ireland		Republic
	Protestant	Catholic	
It should remain part of UK	81	18	11
Become part of a United Ireland	2	27	30
Linked both to UK and Irish Republic	11	42	29
Become an independent country	4	8	22

How important do you think the border is between Northern Ireland and the Republic?

	Northern Ireland		Republic
	Protestant	Catholic	
The border matters and people should be prepared to fight for it if necessary	26	5	7
The border matters, but is not worth risking any lives for	46	35	47
The border does not matter and is not worth arguing about	26	57	42

Source: *Guardian*, 28 February 1996

and the opinion that they have always cared about internationally will push them in the direction of the resumption of the ceasefire.

The IRA seemingly broke the ceasefire because there was no substantial movement within the peace process towards all-party negotiations. Whether that was the actual reason remains to be seen. I have a notion that there might have been a combination of factors involved.

I believe John Major made a mistake in the House of Commons but not for the reason that the IRA would give — ignoring the Mitchell report's main recommendations. Even though Sinn Féin had given some sort of nod of approval towards the Mitchell report, I believe the Republicans would have found Mitchell very hard to accept. But John Major let them off the hook, by giving them an excuse to concentrate on attacking the proposals for elections.

The UDP was never enamoured of the proposal to hold elections and made that quite plain and public. We don't feel that they are necessary at this stage in the process of conflict resolution. I can give you reasons.

- One, they run the risk of excluding key players from the process.
- Secondly there is the time factor.
- Thirdly we are concerned that they may be used as a stalling device.

But having said this, we are realistic and pragmatic enough to realise that everyone else seems to be on board, and we'll have to live with it.

What the two Prime Ministers produced the other day was a collection of proposals which they had extracted from all the different parties. It was an amalgam of different parties' ideas about the best way forward.

At times, we were as frustrated and as angry as anyone about the slow progress of the whole peace process. We had always said, let's get into all-party negotiations straight away, and deal with the issues.

The role of the working class in Northern Ireland is vital. We have provided, for both sections of the community, almost without exception, the cannon fodder in this conflict for the past twenty-five years and longer.

We want to get towards class-based parties. That has to be our objective. All class politics here has been overwhelmed, swamped for years, by the constitutional issues. If we can reach a position where there is some form of consensus on the constitutional issue then we can concentrate on the bread and butter issues that effect everyone, everyday of their lives.

I hope we will reach an agreed settlement, of whatever description, so that real politics will break out in Northern Ireland. There will then be a realignment towards left, right and centre politics as happens in all other normal societies.

"The principle of consent has been accepted almost universally. It is possible that we can move to a position where compromise rooted in realities dictates the form of a settlement."

There have been subtle changes taking place within the broad, Unionist, bloc these last few years. And also within the broad, Republican and Nationalist bloc. Nationalism now fully admits that any sort of imposed united Ireland just wouldn't work; Unionism and Loyalism admit privately —

and in many cases publicly — that there has to be a recognition of the nationalist aspirations of the people that share Northern Ireland with us. Somewhere in the middle there is common ground where agreement can be reached. The principle of consent has been accepted almost universally. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that we can all move to a position where compromise rooted in realities dictates the form of a settlement — as opposed to everyone's extreme idea of how they would like things to be. We all have to deal with what is possible as opposed to what is desirable.

To some extent the peace process is taking place over the heads of the people in Northern Ireland. We have to reach a position where people are comfortable with the fact that there cannot be a change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority. There has to be recognition that not only are we neighbours with the Irish Republic, but we also have links through the EC. We can be at least as friendly towards each other as other neighbouring countries are within the EC.

● Davey Adams is a Senior Officer of the UDP.

The solution has to come from within Ireland

Christine Kinealy

THE ceasefire broke down because people on the Republican side are impatient. Nothing had happened. They were frustrated.

I hope there will be another ceasefire and genuine all-party talks, and I hope the British government expedites matters — by actually listening to the recommendations when they bring in people like Mitchell to make recommendations, and by talking to all parties.

It appears that Gerry Adams is having a very hard time to keep the various groups together in the Republican movement. The British government must realise that, and they must help him. I think Adams was sincere in what he was doing with the ceasefire.

I don't know that there is any one way out from the impasse in Northern Ireland. I find it very hard to see one. I think it has to be a solution that comes from within Ireland, and from the communities in Ireland, but that's not easy.

From having lived in Dublin and Belfast, I see there is such a strong class element to it, and if people could recognise that dimension to it, and build on that, on common interests, that could help.

But the situation is very polarised. Trimble is a hard-liner. Paisley is a hard-liner. People on the nationalist side have never really tried to understand the Protestants' situation. The British, too, if you look right

From Famine to De Valera

1845-9: Famine in Ireland. Millions die or flee for their lives. Decades of revolt follow.

1870: Liberal Government in London passes first of a series of Land Acts which, by the 1920s, will transfer the land from Anglo-Irish Protestant landlords to small farmers.

1886: Liberals come out for Home Rule for Ireland. The Tories, linked to the Anglo-Irish landlord class, oppose Home Rule.

1890s on: rise of a new militant nationalism, and of Irish socialism and trade unionism.

1912-14: Third Home Rule Bill has majority in Parliament. Protestant Ulster organises for violent resistance to Home Rule, encouraged by British Tories and on officers' revolt in British Army. The Home Rule Act is passed in 1914, but suspended on pretext of outbreak of World War 1.

1916: The "Easter Rising" in Dublin is crushed.

1918: UK General Election. Sinn Féin win 73 out of 105 seats in Ireland. Sinn Féin MPs set up an independent Irish parliament, Dail Eireann. War follows; Irish nationalists and Britain fight for control of southern Ireland.

1921 July: Truce.

December: Anglo-Irish Treaty. Ireland is partitioned into two "Home Rule" states. Northern Ireland becomes a Protestant sectarian state, entrapping a one-third Catholic minority.

1922-23: Civil war in south between supporters and opponents of the Treaty.

1926: De Valera founds Fianna Fáil, brings anti-Treaty IRA into Irish parliamentary politics. Fianna Fáil wins power in 1932; embarks on nationalist economic policy. 1937 constitution is "a Republic in all but name" — and Catholic.

back to Gladstone, have always underestimated the Protestants.

A federal framework? It does make sense. If you look within the wider context of Europe, it makes perfect sense. But, once again, the solution has to come from within Ireland.

● **Christine Kinealy** is author of a study of the Irish Famine of the 1840s, *This Great Calamity* [Gill and Macmillan]. It was reviewed in *Workers' Liberty*, October 1995.

Forget about the border

Paddy Devlin

WE now have enormous support for the reinstatement of the ceasefire.

Although it is a hard thing for me to say, it is the truth that John Major has worked hard for the ceasefire and to get the IRA to stop their campaign. Major and the southern Taoiseach, John Bruton, have actually done quite well.

Bruton has used the right language and has managed to get a dialogue with the Provos.

The Provos are difficult people to deal with. Although they have only 10% of the votes here they continued their counter-productive military campaign for a long time.

However I firmly believe that politics must not be conducted in this way. People must be persuaded to change their ideas. It is utterly wrong — as well as being impossible and counterproductive — to try to change people's ideas by threatening them with guns and by planting bombs. We must operate through the parliamentary system.

The Protestant people are beginning to turn towards the working class movement. And some of the Catholic people are becoming a little better off. It is only in the ghettos that the Sinn Feiners have any real support.

The changes that were fought for years ago have gone through and a lot of the anti-British feelings have gone.

The majority of people in both communities want to stay in the North. They are looking for a solution *within* Northern Ireland, not outside that framework. Of those who vote, 80% vote for an internal solution to our problems.

It is now the case that many Catholics and Nationalists are thinking of voting for Unionists; certainly those on higher incomes are. It is a big change and it has come very quickly.

People can see what economic life is like in the South and they do not like the look of it. There is not the same standard of living in the south and most people in Northern Ireland would not exchange a drop in their quality of life for a united Ireland.

In fact a lot of the barriers to the South

have already gone down and we are united through Europe.

We must forget about the question of the border and accept that Northern Ireland is here to stay. We must concentrate on class questions not the border.

● **Paddy Devlin** was a founder of the SDLP and later attempted to set up a new Labour Party in Northern Ireland. He was a Minister in the power-sharing Northern Irish government (January-May 1974)

Deal with the remnants of imperialism

Matt Merrigan

THERE were undertakings given before the IRA ceasefire took effect that there would be all-party talks within three months of an ending of the military campaign. After the ceasefire took effect the British government began to raise all sorts of questions that they had not previously mentioned. Is the ceasefire "permanent"? Well, how permanent is permanent?

Then they demanded the decommissioning of weapons. But there had been no mention of such a demand in the Downing Street declaration or the Framework Document. It was made quite clear by Adams that the IRA were not going to deliver before there was a movement towards all-party talks or a settlement in the offing.

So the ceasefire broke down because of an act of bad faith by the British government.

Now they are punishing Sinn Fein for their association with the IRA. Sinn Fein has been excluded from all talks prior to 10 June. This is no way to solve the problem. Sinn Fein represent about 40% of the nationalist population of the North. That is not an insignificant mandate.

North and South

IN 1911 the contrast was stark between the industrialised north-east and the underdeveloped, mostly rural, south. Ulster had 48% of all Ireland's industrial workers and Belfast alone, 21%. Only 14% of the workforce in the 26 counties was in industry or commerce.

By 1961 40% of the 26 Counties workforce was in industry and commerce, and 25% in industry alone. The South had become a predominantly urban, industrial economy. Since the 1960s manufacturing for export has increased sharply in the South. The 26 Counties are now more

We should not view Sinn Fein and the IRA as one organisation. The IRA have the same republican objectives as Sinn Fein, but they have a predilection to use the gun rather than negotiations.

The big bomb in London has completely changed the attitude of the British government towards dealing with Sinn Fein/IRA. And how has this miraculous change of heart and date for all-party talks been brought about? By the bombing in London. The British government does not care about bombs going off in Ireland, but it certainly does care about bombs going off in London. Is this not always the way? The British have been stampeded again by violence: they were like that over the fall of Stormont [1972], and they responded in the same way to the violence of the guerrilla war of the IRA.

Northern Ireland was always a political slum. The Nationalist community always faced political inequality: constituencies were gerrymandered on the basis of sectarian headcounting; they were repressed. The degree of discrimination and repression was such that it was impossible to make political progress in a constitutional way.

The IRA are engaged in a revolutionary nationalist struggle. It is impossible to separate the liberation of the Irish working class from the task of dealing with the remnants of imperialism.

It seems as if some of the fringe unionist parties have some roots in the working class — but for all that they are still unionists. They are still prepared to defend the union with Britain.

What is the way forward? Well, joint sovereignty of Britain and Ireland over Northern Ireland is not an ideal solution but it would — immediately — help to guarantee the rights of the nationalist community. The germ of this concept is in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, where it was stated that the Irish government could become the guarantor of the rights of the Northern minority.

The left in the North is all but extirpated. I do not see any other choice than to back the SDLP-Sinn Fein-Irish government ▀

industrial than the Six Counties: 37% of value added in the South comes from industry, as against only 27% in the North. And the South's industries are generally more advanced.

In 1960 Northern Ireland had 10,000 more manufacturing jobs than the South. It now has half as many. Since Protestants had more jobs to start with they have been worse hit, but still male unemployment is 2.6 times as high for Catholics as for Protestants and overall unemployment, male and female, twice as high.

35 years ago living standards in the South were on average scarcely half those in the North: now EU figures reckon the purchasing-power of income per head in the South at only 8% less than in the North.

moves to secure some movement. There is no other practical alternative.

Immediately we need to demand space for the Nationalist community. That means release of prisoners, and end to discrimination and the removal of armed RUC and British soldiers from the streets in the North.

The problem is that the working class is divided. There are large sections which do not support basic socialist concepts. The most central feature of socialism is that there must be the democratic right to decide for yourself what to do. On this basis the population of the whole of Ireland should decide the political status of the North. However the unionists would not allow an all-Ireland plebiscite to determine whether or not they should leave the union.

● **Matt Merrigan was for many years a Dublin official of the AT&GWU. In the '40s he was a member of the Irish section of the Fourth International, finally backing the current of post-Trotsky Trotskyism identified with the name of Max Shachtman.**

A united Ireland is a united people

Joe Hendron

THE blame for the breakdown of the ceasefire lies, firstly, with the Provisional IRA. There can be no equivocation of any kind on that question: they carried out the Canary Wharf bombing and killed two totally innocent people.

Having said that I also believe that the British government have grossly mishandled the situation over the past few months. We had 17 months of peace. To maintain that peace, the government should have convened all-party talks long ago.

In addition the Prime Minister presented an unbalanced view of the Mitchell Report's recommendations to parliament. Senator Mitchell's main stress was on decommissioning of weapons *alongside* all-party talks. There was vague mention of elections in the Report, but this was the point that John Major chose to stress. Although the bombing had been under preparation for some time, this speech seemed to trigger the Provos into action.

John Major has had an eye on the voting arithmetic in parliament, he has been under pressure from the Tory right and the peace process has, consequently, been allowed to drift. So I am pleased that John Major and John Bruton have announced a date for all-party negotiations: 10 June. Major has said this date is sacrosanct and will not be moved for anyone.

Proximity talks are now starting at Stormont. The SDLP is willing to talk to anyone in the search for peace.

The details of the forthcoming elections will have to be sorted out. Perhaps the parties will be able to come to an agreement

acceptable to the government. If not the government will have to decide the form of the elections. But, in any event, there will be elections before 10 June.

The question therefore is: where do we go after 10 June?

My party is a nationalist party, but we are much more concerned about the question of peace than that of a united Ireland. We do not talk of a united Ireland, what interests us right now is reconciliation between two peoples divided by history.

Such a reconciliation can only come about by agreement and respect for the different traditions.

Perhaps, one day, there will be a united Ireland — but if so it will be brought about by consent. By a united Ireland we mean a united people, and people can not be united by guns and bombs.

There are three areas we need to examine: the relations between the two communities in the North; the relations between North and South; the relations between Britain and Ireland.

There could be a local administration in the North, but only with the other two sets of relationships agreed and in place at the same time. There is no question of having a power-sharing administration in the North and then, *after that* is in place, allowing such a body to deal with North-South relations. That is not on. Nationalists would not accept this. All such relations must be agreed as part of one package.

● **Joe Hendron is SDLP MP for West Belfast.**

There is no capitalist solution

Peter Hadden

CLEARLY the IRA were responsible for the physical breakdown of the ceasefire. But the underlying reason for the collapse of the peace process was the intransigence of the British government — their refusal to move on the question of talks while continually shifting the goal posts.

The on-going sectarian obstinacy of local politicians also continued unabated.

This led to genuine frustrations within the Republican movement. Republicans felt the talks were being deliberately stalled and that the process was going nowhere. However, these frustrations in no way justified the IRA's resumption of the military campaign. The bombings can achieve nothing positive for working-class people.

John Major's mission has been to string things out for as long as possible. He wanted to let the paramilitary activity recede as far as possible into the past, to create a different atmosphere for discussions. He felt that in this way he could get more of his own way in the talks. So he has been playing for time. However, the policy of continually pushing the Republican movement to the wire came apart when they pushed them too far.

Traditionally the only two choices which are presented to the people are: either the status quo — which is unacceptable to a large section of the working-class of the Catholic minority — or the idea of a Catholic united Ireland, which is unacceptable to Protestants.

There is no long-term, lasting capitalist solution to the conflict in Ireland.

I think it is possible that the various political groupings might reach an agreement. But such a deal would not resolve the underlying problems of poverty and the built-in injustices of the six county state.

I think that the problem the Republican movement faced was that they were in a dead end with their military strategy — it simply could not deliver a united Ireland, or progress towards it. So in the place of the military campaign they took up the strategy of Adams: of linking up with the right-wing political establishment in the South, with the US administration and with the SDLP in Northern Ireland. This is also a dead end because it doesn't offer anything to Catholic working-class people of the North. The common interests of Catholic and Protestant workers must be put to the forefront in a common struggle for socialism.

The Protestant people are not a distinct nationality separate from Catholics. The day-to-day living conditions of Protestants and working-class Catholic people are very largely the same. These people have much more in common than they have to divide them. On the basis of putting the struggle for a decent, socialist society to the forefront, it will be possible to achieve unity and agreement on a solution to the national question. Militant Labour advocates a socialist Ireland. Our preference would be for a single state, but the precise relationships could be discussed within the working class; we believe any disagreements could be resolved amicably.

We argue for a united, socialist Ireland within a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland. We have never advocated a federal solution in Ireland. But in order to overcome the doubts and reservations of Protestant workers we have to guarantee that there would be no coercion. If they maintain their opposition to one Irish state, we must make it clear that we respect their wishes. At this moment in time we think that it is better from all points of view to maintain our position and argue for a single state, not a federation.

In fact a federation would not mean a federation of northern Ireland and southern Ireland — the Catholics wouldn't accept

● The Northern Ireland conflict caused some 3,100 deaths and 34,000 injuries between 1969 and 1994.

● Jobs in externally owned plants in Northern Ireland declined by 53% (46,000 jobs) in 1973-90, compared with a 27% increase in the Republic.

● The Northern Ireland economy depends heavily on the British subsidy, now £3 billion a year.

**Orange men on the march**

that. It would mean the re-partition of Ireland. While this could be accomplished on the basis of socialism, on a capitalist basis it would mean bloodbath.

During the last two weeks of February, the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire in the face of British government intransigence has stimulated one of the biggest mass movements in our history. People have come out onto the streets in opposition to the resumption of violence. They have stopped the IRA in their tracks. The lesson for socialists is that the future doesn't lie with the traditional politicians or the government. The future lies with building on the mass movement of working-class people, and out of this creating a new politics based on class, not religion.

● **Peter Hadden** is a leading member of the Northern Ireland "Militant Labour" group.

Create the right atmosphere for talks

Joe Austin

EIGHTEEN months Sinn Fein were able to go with others to the IRA with a package which we believed was an agreement for a ceasefire, and would create conditions whereby the British government would enter into full and meaningful negotiations, which they promised would be held within three months. They broke that promise, and went on to break a series of promises, and I think the resulting frustration, the sense of getting nowhere, were factors that contributed to the breakdown of the ceasefire.

We remain committed to a peace process, however difficult that is going to be. We have been attempting to encourage the British government to come on board this process, to enter into all-party negoti-

ations, to end all preconditions. I must say that to date that we have had very limited success.

There are only two ways that wars end. Either one side has victory over the other, or negotiations break out. What we have offered very clearly, and what the IRA offered throughout the last seventeen and a half months, was negotiations. The British government's current policy — or renewal of its old policy — of excluding Sinn Fein does not move the process forward.

By all effective barometers, a majority of working-class people on the island of Ireland, and indeed in Britain, wish to see all-party talks. That pressure has got to be brought to bear on those who prevent those talks, whether it is the Conservative Party government in Britain or the Unionist parties here. That message has to be brought home.

The only way forward is through negotiations, and those negotiations should already have happened, but let's all work for them to take place.

Negotiations could produce a number of things which would be of mutual benefit to all sections of our community. We need demilitarisation. We need an end to legislation which is politically repressive. We need the question of prisoners to be addressed; we need the question of policing to be addressed.

These are things which are perhaps limited, but at least there is some common ground. They can create an atmosphere where the more complicated and the more difficult questions can begin to be looked at. Everything should be on the table — both the Sinn Fein position, and that of the British Government, and others. We still, of course, believe that unification is the most effective long-term solution to the conflict, but we need to create an environment where people who are not Republicans and not nationalists can feel that they can at least have some allegiance to the structures that can be formed. That's more difficult, but it has to be addressed.

● **Joe Austin** is a spokesperson for Sinn Fein in Belfast.

Call a congress of Republicans and socialists

Rayner Lysaght

THERE was always a probability that the ceasefire would break down. The British went too far and the Irish government could not provide sufficient reassurances for the IRA. It is understandable that the British want to keep the Unionists on side.

The statement clarified matters but the ceasefire will be hard to restore.

The resumption of the military campaign won the restoration of talks. Generally it is not going to work. My position is much the same as Bernadette McAliskey's, who has called for a ceasefire, and a congress of Republicans, socialists and anti-imperialists to work out what to do next.

I do not think that many people in the Republican movement really believe that they can bomb their way to an united Ireland. Right now they are trying to bomb their way to the negotiating table. What happens at the negotiating table is an open question. I think there is a very large element among the Republicans — I don't know if it includes the leaders, Adams or McGuinness — who would be prepared to see a settlement leaving the six counties intact but with guarantees of Catholic equality, in short a genuine settlement such as was negotiated in 1973 at Sunningdale, a proper Bill of Rights, a situation where the field in Northern Ireland was level. That would allow discussion about the pros and cons of a united Ireland without the interests being balanced on the other side.

If the British pulled out, they would probably leave plenty of arms in the hands of the Protestants. Whether the Protestants would use them is an interesting question — whether they want to be British more than they want to have ascendancy. Up to now, since the union with Britain, the two have gone hand in hand and intermingled.

There are two sides to this. There is the British withdrawal and there is the issue of a united Ireland. At the moment the one thing that is clear is that the Southern bourgeoisie do not want the north. They are the people who will decide — not Sinn Fein, or the SDLP.

A united Ireland is not really part of the perspective of the southern national bourgeoisie. It's something that they would like. In the same way, in the dusty corners of Whitehall there are aging people who would like to restore the full parliamentary union with Ireland. The bourgeoisie in the south is not strong. The only way it sees uniting Ireland is through Europe. But it is more interested in Europe than in a united Ireland.

The left in Ireland is arguing that there has to be discussions between the left and the Republicans in a congress. The pressure of years has forced the dichotomy — the

separation of Republicanism and socialism — to develop, even more so than in Connolly's time. I'm not immediately optimistic that we can re-establish a revolutionary perspective. If there is an outbreak of industrial militancy in the Republic maybe it will be different.

The industrial militancy will create circumstances in which people will look suspiciously at the state. At the moment, unfortunately, the main force holding to a critique of both states in Ireland is the Republican movement.

We have spoken with the real leaders of conscious Protestant workers in the north — we don't mean Billy Hutchinson either, but various groups that have come out of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. There are people who have an idea that you can still have a fully democratic society within Northern Ireland framework. I don't agree with them, but they are socialists.

A way to relate to the Protestants? Well, the Bolsheviks weren't very keen on federalism in Ireland. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics wasn't conceived as a federation, except of nations. The question is, are the Protestants a nation? They've always identified themselves as a pressure group for Britain. And Britain has been subsidising, defending and keeping the place going. It's possible if Britain went away there could be — as a number of socialists think — an independent Six County state. That would imply there was a national characteristic to the Protestants. But we don't know. One-off mobilisations — against for instance the Anglo-Irish deal — are not

proof of Protestant-Unionist national identity.

● **Rayner Lysaght, author of *The Republic of Ireland* and other works, is a Welsh socialist long domiciled in Dublin, and a supporter of the Mandeliste "Fourth International."**

Not peace, but an imperialist offensive

John McAnulty

ANY impartial assessment of the 18-month IRA ceasefire in Ireland would register not surprise that it has ended, but wonderment that it lasted so long. Initial British concessions — withdrawal of the troops from the urban areas, the opening of border roads, withdrawal of the radio and TV ban on Sinn Féin — gave place to the "spoiling" demands that IRA weapons be "decommissioned" before the promised all-party talks could begin. This had little military significance. The IRA could have lied about its weaponry and easily replaced "decommissioned" weapons with new supplies. The Canary Wharf bomb was made from widely available fertiliser. Decommissioning was essentially a political demand for the unconditional surrender of the republican forces.

Demand for surrender was accompanied

by a series of provocations. The only step taken towards the release of prisoners was the restoration of remission rates that the British had earlier removed. Only a few republican prisoners were returned from England, and for those that remained, conditions were made harsher and more punitive. Private Lee Clegg of the parachute regiment, convicted of the murder of a Belfast teenager, was released in circumstances which essentially endorsed the right of members of the state forces to kill with impunity.

Sectarian Orange marches were forced through Catholic areas by state forces while republicans were batoned off the streets. Even the much heralded economic "peace dividend" faded away in a welter of "investment conferences", while cuts were made in funding for community projects.

The peace process was founded on a gigantic illusion — the illusion that Britain was leaving Ireland. In the run-up to the ceasefire British ministers repeatedly said that they had no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Ireland. The British were lying. Britain remains an imperial power with major economic and strategic interests in her oldest colony.

The formula of British disinterest was supposed to be contained in the Downing Street Declaration, jointly signed by London and Dublin just before the ceasefire. In the Declaration, for the first time ever, Britain used the term self-determination in relation to Ireland. But the term was immediately negated by enshrining a veto for the Unionist minority in the occupied area to continue the partition of the country.

Following the ceasefire, London and Dublin negotiated the February 1995 "Framework" document as the concrete expression of the Downing Street declaration. This made it clear that partition would remain, but by advocating a few cross-border talking shops it allowed the illusion

The British left

IN the last twenty years of stalemate in Northern Ireland, the British left has given less and less attention to analysing Irish reality, and fallen back more and more on varying combinations of two stock general ideas: support Ireland against Britain; unite the workers.

Socialist Worker's four-page feature on the breakdown of the Northern Ireland ceasefire (17 February), for example, combined crude Irish-nationalist "packaging" with ultra-economistic "workers' unity" content, without any attempt to make the two fit together.

It explained the roots of the Troubles as follows: "In 1918, in the last general election to take place across the whole of Ireland, Sinn Féin won almost 80 per cent of the vote for independence for Britain". In fact:

- Sinn Féin won 48% of the vote in the 1918 election, not "almost 80%".
- Even then there was a compact majority against Irish independence among the Irish-minority (Protestant) workers of the north-east.
- The nearest direct continuation today of 1918's Sinn Féin is... the Fine Gael party of Dublin prime minister John Bruton!
- Today's Sinn Féin has the electoral support of maybe five or six per cent of the people of Ireland.

The main theme of Socialist Worker's coverage was "The Blame Lies With The Tories" and that the Unionists are "completely sectarian". Yet Socialist Worker did

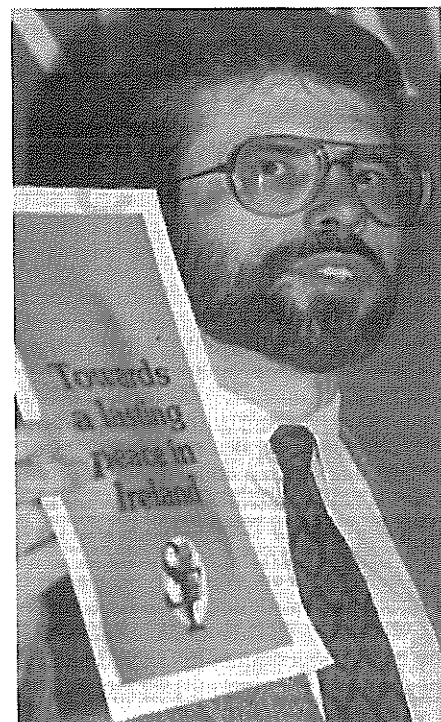
not conclude by calling for British troops out or an immediate united Ireland.

Socialist Worker's conclusion was that the workers, Catholic and Protestant, should unite on bread-and-butter issues and round socialist ideas — in other words, they should do exactly what workers should do wherever no national question figures in politics. And the national -communal-conflict question? Every time it comes into your head, try to think about strikes instead... This is not politically serious.

Socialist Outlook (17 February) argued, in contrast "There will be only one channel through which the course of Irish peace will flow. That is by the occupying colonial power leaving and a process of Irish reunification in train".

In train? In what train? With what engine and what driver? Outlook suggests that "a 32 county political campaign... on... democratic questions — such as the release of political prisoners", or "a strategy based on mass mobilisation of the nationalist community" [emphasis added] is the necessary engine, and the Provos the driver.

But how can any mass mobilisation of the Northern Catholics, ten per cent of Ireland's people, unify Ireland? How can any campaign, aimed narrowly at "the nationalist community" unify the people, or the workers, of Ireland? Outlook's editors write as if the Protestants do not exist and Britain is a classic colonial power in Northern Ireland.



that the proposals were a stepping-stone to a united Ireland. Tellingly, the British accompanied the publication of these woolly proposals in the occupied North with very detailed and specific proposals on the creation of a new Belfast local assembly. Just how seriously the British took the Framework document, essentially the maximum programme for bourgeois nationalism, was shown when, a week after publication, Political Development Minister Michael Ancram announced that the British would welcome fresh ideas to solve the crisis!

An insight into British strategy was given by a throwaway remark by foreign secretary Douglas Hurd after the signing of the Downing Street declaration. Asked if he thought that the republicans would buy the ceasefire he replied: "I hardly think it matters."

The reality for the British was that their "peace process" was in fact a major imperialist offensive designed to forge a new capitalist stability and roll back all the gains of the anti-imperialist struggle. They had won from Dublin agreement in principle to support the establishment of a reinvigorated partition and, in addition, to rescind the historic aspiration of the majority of the Irish working class for unity by removing all claims to a united national territory from the constitution.

In addition they had greatly constrained the effects of the republican armed campaign. The IRA's difficulty in attacking state forces had led to broadening the number of "soft targets" considered legitimate and a new concentration on military adventurism in England. The main effect was to demoralise republican supporters.

Further, the British had built up the Loyalist death squads, and these were able to strike at will in nationalist areas, carrying out a number of sectarian atrocities. The IRA had no credible defensive strategy, and when they attempted to carry the fight into loyalist areas the result was civilian casualties which further weakened their support.

The British were willing to make minor concessions that would help the republican leadership come in from the cold — but the price would be republican surrender. That was the only measure that would allow the imperialist offensive to roll on.

As the peace process ground to a halt, the Clinton administration stepped in. A visit by the President helped reinforce the British line and served as a platform for the "Mitchell Commission." Its report in February was linked to a "target date" for all-party talks.

In the event the commission's report was overshadowed by the British decision to sideline the report, scrap the target date, and propose elections which would have the effect of fixing in stone the outcome of the process — the return of a modified local assembly with a built-in sectarian majority.

In fact its proposals simply moved the date for an IRA surrender from before the talks to during the talks. The proposals, if put into effect, would have forced the disbandment of the IRA. It dismissed utterly



The American connection

any attempt to bring state weaponry into the equation, despite the many atrocities by these forces, and their associations with the right-wing death squads. Above all the report ignores all the issues in the all-Ireland dimension. It too makes clear that a revamped partition is what is on offer.

So the ceasefire ended with two proposals on the table — one from the Mitchell commission and one from the British government. Both demanded the surrender of the IRA and both signposted a return to a modified Stormont — the old regime that ruled a web of sectarian discrimination and privilege.

The whole sorry process was helped by

"The republican leadership had to close its eyes to the role of the US as the main force for the suppression of democratic rights on a world stage and its constant invasion and manipulation of small countries."

a sharp move to the right by the Republican leadership. They wanted out of the cul-de-sac of the militarist strategy, but their new political strategy rested on a whole series of illusions.

The first illusion was in British imperialism itself. It is quite clear that the republicans believed that Britain was preparing to withdraw from Ireland. After all, the British themselves said that they had no "selfish or strategic" interest in Ireland! Yet Sinn Féin found itself unable to

sign up to any of the proposals on which the "peace process" was based.

Alongside the illusions in British imperialism ran more general illusions in the US and the EC. In internal documents it was consistently argued that these forces would support a democratic solution in Ireland and force Britain to toe the line. In order to believe this, the republic leadership had to close its eyes to the role of the US as the main force for the suppression of democratic rights on a world stage, its constant invasion and manipulation of small countries and the key role that Britain has always played as American imperialism's most dependable ally.

An even more worrying indication of the republic leadership's political evolution has been their tendency to praise and look to as a model the "Peace Process" in the middle East and the role of Yasser Arafat. This praise was being repeated by Martin McGuinness only days before the ceasefire broke down.

The fact that the republicans held on as long as they did is a tribute to the greatest illusion of all — the illusion of the "nationalist family." Both publicly and in internal documents the Adams leadership put forward an alliance with bourgeois nationalism as representing an alternative weapon to the traditional militarist strategy. Unfortunately republican illusions in the Irish bourgeoisie are just as traditional and just as incorrect as their faith in militarism, with the disadvantage that this alliance immediately puts them on the same side of the barricades as the direct oppressors of the majority of the Irish working class. In fact the whole peace process was a process of watching the "nationalist family" crumble to dust. As the ceasefire drew to an end the bourgeois parties were all entering negotiations with the British proposals for a Unionist assembly at the top of the agenda. The formal expression of the family — a forum meeting in Dublin over the past 18 months — produced a final report which trashed the demand for self-determination

and left Sinn Fein out in the cold, unable to sign up.

Even now the leadership cling to the Irish bourgeoisie. Their latest analysis indicates that the family would have survived if it had continued to be led by the populist Fianna Fail party rather than the slightly more openly pro-imperialist Fine Gael party!

The end of the ceasefire in now way resolves the problems for republicans or ends the confusions and illusions. The bombing campaign is itself based on the assumption that Britain is willing to leave Ireland. If it is in Britain's interest as an imperialist power to stay then lost trade and tourism and bills of £150 million for bomb damage will make no difference.

At the same time the Sinn Fein leadership peddle the foolish idea that the difficulties they face are due to a British Tory government with a tiny majority being dependent on Unionist support. They don't explain why the Labour Party and the British establishment as a whole would support such irresponsible behaviour or why the Unionist party would vote against the government in a crucial vote. In fact, leading establishment figures warned Prime Minister Major not to play party politics with the Irish question. They have remained silent since, indicating that the government's stance is essentially based on the interests of British imperialism. Sinn Fein continue to make their main call for all-party talks. Again, if Britain is leaving then Sinn Fein can fight their corner within all-party talks as a minor party. If they are not then the talks will achieve nothing.

Even more worrying is the question mark over the military campaign itself. As Ruairi O'Bradaigh of the breakaway Republican Sinn Fein has indicated, the statement ending the ceasefire makes no mention of the traditional troops out demand and instead calls for negotiations.

All the recent remarks by the republican leadership indicate that the link between military and political action is the demand for talks. Now London and Dublin have provided a fixed date for all-party talks on 10 June — in the context of a partitionist election, with the "nationalist family" lined up with the British and Unionists in ruling out any democratic solution and with the Mitchell proposals at hand to turn the screw on the republicans at every turn.

In a familiar tactic, Gerry Adams has welcomed the talk dates while looking for "clarity." For many militants the outcome of the "peace process" has become all too clear. So also is the symbolism of the leader of Sinn Fein sitting with John Hume, the northern representative of bourgeois nationalism, across the table from the IRA and calling for a ceasefire.

Veteran campaigner Bernadette McAliskey has called for a Republican congress to map a new way forward. This would be an important step forward but could only be supported by the present republican leadership if they withdrew from alliances with bourgeois nationalism. Without such a U-turn Sinn Fein's position will continue to weaken — applying two

contradictory and failed strategies in the face of the most determined offensive by imperialism since the outbreak of the present troubles.

There is yet much to play for. There have been massive peace demonstrations but many have lacked the harsh pro-imperialist edge of the past. Opinion polls indicate that a majority of the population in both Ireland and Britain blame the British government for the breakdown of the ceasefire. Opposition to the return of a Stormont regime or direct Dublin support

*"There have been
massive peace
demonstrations but
many have lacked the
harsh pro-imperialist
edge of the past."*

for partition is not confined to the ranks of Sinn Fein. Even to secure the reactionary settlement they propose now the British would need to force the Unionists to make some concessions to the Catholic middle class. At the moment the Unionists are essentially demanding the return of "a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people" and there is little sign of any real British pressure to amend this.

Marxists should continue to stand as irreconcilable opponents to the imperialist offensive, while calling for the self-organisation of the working class as the one immutable barrier to that offensive.

● **John McNulty is a member of the Irish Committee for a Marxist Programme, and a long-time leader of the People's Democracy.**

Conservatives confont conservatives

Robin Wilson

STANDING back from the conflict: one of the most Conservative governments in Europe is facing one of the most conservative opposition moments. There is a strong degree of fundamentalism in the Republican movement which is utterly detached from modern left wing thinking and re-thinking.

The issue really, given these poles, is how can the left inject some different thinking into the situation? The question is: what should the left advocate?

The problem is similar, in a way, to the

problem faced in the British Labour Party: either side with Traditionalists who seem to exist in a time warp and fail to relate to the modern world, or side with the Modernisers who appear to have lost all their connections with the left. It seems to me that we need a radical modernisation of politics which avoids these two alternatives. That applies to politics in Ireland too.

There has been some modernisation in the Republic during the last twenty — and particularly the last ten — years. The changed attitude towards the North we now find on the left in the South is support for a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society. People are arguing for the maximum effort to develop links between the two parts of Ireland and an island-wide economy. Such an entity would be highly autonomous from Britain.

Of course, as I readily accept, the problem is that there is no significant political force arguing for this solution in the North, where impacted conditions have tended to stunt political debate. There is no forum here where people can get together and discuss.

The left must talk a language of democracy and human rights that has some sort of universal basis. On this ground it can hope to appeal to a wide range of people.

● **Robin Wilson is a member of the editorial board of the Belfast magazine *Fortnight*, and works for the "Democratic Dialogue" group.**

Build links, leave long-term politics open

Paul Bew

THE basic reason that the ceasefire broke down was Republican disappointment with the pace and results of the peace process.

The question however was precisely why they were disappointed.

I do not think that the Sinn Fein leadership were as shocked as they claimed to be that the issue of disarmament of the IRA has proved to be such a stumbling block. If we examine Mr Adams's interview in the Irish News of 8 January 1994, or at his speech to Sinn Fein in February of that year, it is clear that he knew that this was going to be a big issue.

I think they knew that there would be no easy, automatic admission into inter-party talks. So although a lot of ordinary nationalists regard the lack of all-party talks as a defeat, I do not think that the Republican elite were surprised that it has proved so difficult to arrange.

The basic problem was this: when the international commission on arms was set up it was clear that whatever it decided it was not going to rule in favour of the Republican movement, whose view was

that arms would only be handed over at the end of satisfactory negotiations. So I believe that the ceasefire was doomed from the moment that this commission was in place.

All the signs are that long before Major's speech on the Mitchell report the decision had been made to end the ceasefire. Every indication points to that.

Clearly the Republican leadership had no hope of getting a united Ireland. I believe they have been looking for something like an imposed joint British-Southern authority over Northern Ireland. Some of the more realistic people thought that the Framework Document — which falls short of joint authority — contained enough all-Ireland institutions in order to be presented as something which is transitional to a united Ireland. So the leaders were looking for either joint authority or a particular version of the Framework Document which could definitely be regarded as progress towards a united Ireland.

The leaders knew this. Ordinary people on the ground generally believed something entirely different. And that is one of the big tensions at the moment inside the Republican movement.

It is a bit hard to calculate, but I think it is probably true that Adams believed that he was swimming with the flow.

He believed the British had imposed the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 and perhaps they would impose a deal again on the Protestants. However, broadly speaking, the British government's view is that the lesson of 1985 is that it is much better to have a settlement for which there is genuine consent. So the British have been very reluctant to act as enforcers against the Protestants. And they would have been reluctant even if the parliamentary balance of forces had not favoured the Unionists.

From one point of view the British government defeated the Protestant mobilisations against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. They calculated correctly.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was a big success internationally for Britain. But it remains the case that many of the effects inside Northern Ireland are negative. It actually made a long-term accommodation between Catholics and Protestants much harder. And the British government are aware of this.

The whole thinking behind the Framework Document [February 1995] is that consent is essential — from *both* communities. This is quite different from an imposed settlement.

There may be lots of things that Unionists don't like about the Framework proposals: they think that they are being asked to go more than half-way to meet a minority (and they are actually right — it is also the case that there is no choice, they must go more than half way). However the principle is that agreement should be reached which is based on consent — of agreement of the parties followed by a referendum.

Many Nationalists in Ireland believed that there is some intention of imposing



SDLP leader John Hume

institutions on the Protestants. Some even interpret Article 47 of the Framework Document in this way. But Article 47 only commits the British government to maintaining cross-border institutions if, after all-party agreement, ratified by a referendum, one side wishes on the agreement. That is totally different from *imposing* cross-border institutions before that process has occurred.

One of the tragedies is that one of the reasons why the Republicans re-started the military campaign is that some of them believe that continuation of the campaign will lead to imposition of Article 47. They just do not understand this clause or, indeed, the general thinking behind the Framework Document.

It is Irish governmental strategy to work for a resolution within Europe. They would have liked the European Section, which is quite significant in the Framework Document, to have been even more extensive. However, the broad view of Europe now found in many European countries is not really the view of the current British government.

My own view is that cross-border institutions could be brought into existence which were simply designed to bring about better relations between North and South, together with some economic and social advantages, while leaving long-term political meanings open. I think that some people on the British side view the Framework Document in this way; perhaps others share the Irish government's view.

The British government's policy is the big question. 85% of the play lies with them.

The fundamental policy of the British is to calm the situation. They do not think they can make progress without the co-

operation of the Unionists. They are, therefore, not as keen as the Irish government to try to push the Unionists around.

So, because the Unionists have to be taken into account, the Framework Document is not necessarily a model for a united Ireland. In fact with the commitment to consent, the stress, more than ever, is a two state solution.

But we are now looking at a much more unified economic and social culture in Ireland. Only the Unionists can actually deliver that. The British can not act as surrogates to bring Belfast and Dublin closer together.

I am very pleased that we now have a date for talks. The most important thing that everybody should be calling for is *peace*, and a commitment of all parties to democratic and peaceful means. That is the first priority.

If we get peace, the history of Northern Ireland shows that the conflict between Nationalism and Unionism can then be lessened. One example is from the 1960's. In the Stormont elections in 1962, in 15 Belfast seats, the Northern Irish Labour Party (NILP) got just under 60,000 votes, the Unionists 70,000.

At that time the Unionist government's record was so poor on welfare measures that there was a lot of Protestant working-class protest. The possibility for Catholics and Protestants coming together in the NILP and really achieving something was created. I think that kind of politics can re-emerge if we can switch off the main antagonism.

Of course that occurred partly because the Republicans were in disarray because of the collapse of their military campaign [1952-62] on the Border. But the history of the early '60s still does indicate what may be possible.

If these talks are successful we will see a re-negotiation of basis of the union and of fusing a new relationship with Dublin into it. If this process has the effect of switching off the conflict, it will open up possibilities for working-class politics to develop.

There is no question that there are progressive voices in Northern Ireland and they will be heard more once the conflict dies down. There is no guarantee that such politics will become a hegemonic force. I can offer no guarantee that they will win the day. But I am sure that they could win substantial support around Belfast.

Is this the best that can be hoped for? At various points I have preferred other options. Other solutions would have been easier and cleaner.

But now the choice is either the status quo or some settlement based on: a) local power sharing; b) a revised Anglo-Irish Agreement; c) new North-South bodies; d) the dropping of the Irish territorial claim. I think that this model is clearly preferable to the current situation. Right now this is the only possible, available alternative.

● Paul Bew is a professor of politics at Queen's University, Belfast.

Dockers of the world

Locked-out Liverpool docker Mick Curran explains why and how the dockers have linked up internationally in their fight for trade union rights.

WE were sacked after we refused to cross a picket line on 28 September 1995. To understand why this happened you have to go back to 1989, when an Act of Parliament abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme.

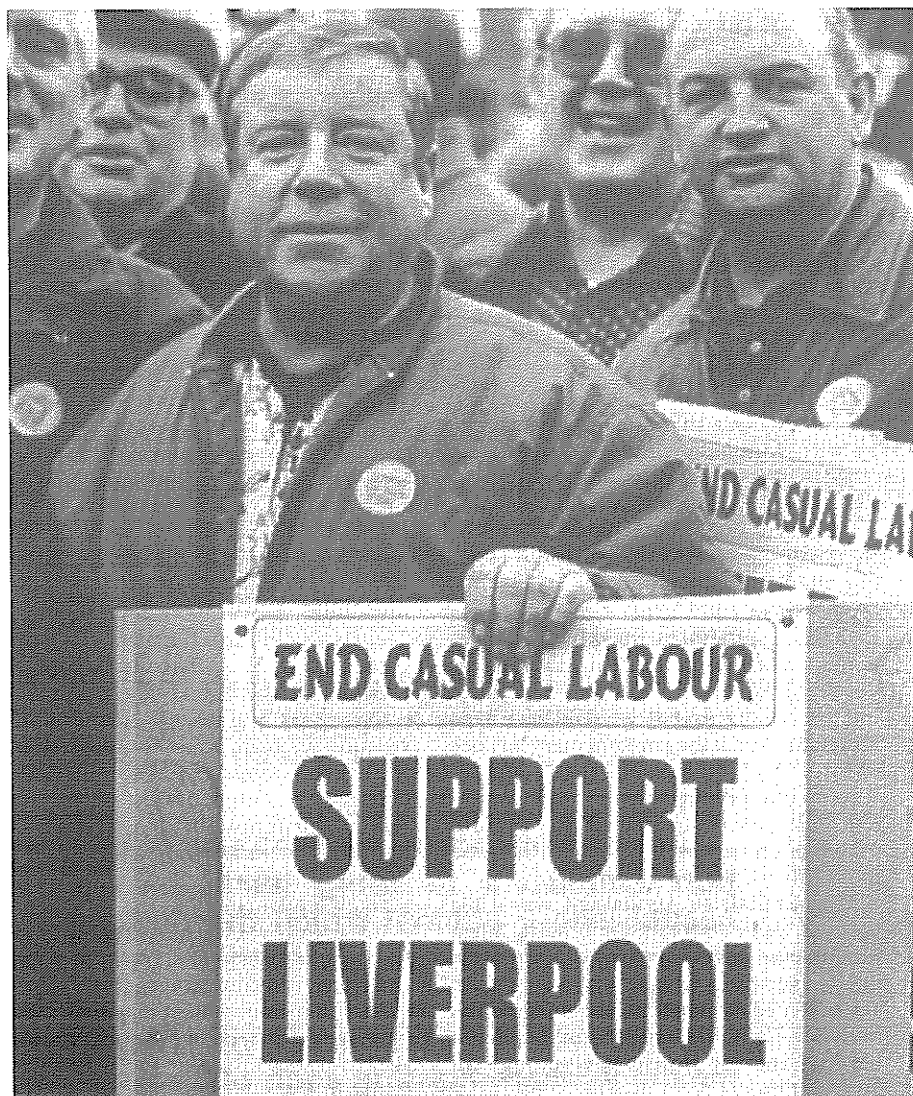
The labour force in all the other major ports was made redundant in 1989 with payments of £35,000 each. Some of the money came from tax-payers. A new labour force was employed, and it was unorganised.

After 1989 Liverpool was the only port in the country with trade union labour and former registered dock workers. The average age of dockers in Liverpool is 53. No one has worked there for less than 20 years.

In 1990 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company realised they had made a mistake in not making the Liverpool dockers redundant: we were still organised. But in 1991 they also realised they had shed too many men from the industry — they needed more men for the general cargo area of the port. Because of unemployment in the area, the TGWU agreed to 30 young men being taken on. MDHC set up a new company, called Torside, to employ the men.

Some of us knew these developments signalled the gradual introduction of casual labour. Within eighteen months, 80 lads had been taken on.

Later Torside said they didn't have work for 80 men and wanted to make 20 redundant, who would then be employed on a casual basis. The Torside lads said they



Liverpool dockers: fighting so that younger men will not have to accept casual labour

weren't having this and they requested an official trade union ballot for industrial action.

Three days before the end of the period of 28 days notice for action the company withdrew the redundancies. But a week after the 28 days notice was up, an incident occurred. A shift was going to go three-quarters of an hour over time (we have to work on a job until it is finished). Payment is made in a 2 hour block, so the men were expecting 2 hours' pay. But management said "there's 40 minutes' work there and you'll get paid an hour's pay for it". All the lads refused to do the work. The

next day — Tuesday 26th September — all 80 men were sacked.

Some of these lads had fathers working at the Seaforth Container Terminal 3 miles away. They put a picket on the Seaforth gate on morning of the 28th. Naturally the Seaforth men didn't cross the picket line.

On the evening of the 28th the Dock Company dispatched motor cycle couriers to the entire labour force, with letters saying that if we didn't return to work by 12 o'clock on the 29th we would be sacked, because we were "in breach of contract".

Less than 24 hours later, on the 29th, 200 of the 350 — now sacked — workers

unite!

at Seaforth received individual contracts. They were told if they signed these and returned to work no later than 2 October, their terms and conditions would be honoured. Of course, terms and conditions would from then on be decided without collective arrangements with the union. They wanted 200 men to cross a picket line, leaving 150 of their comrades outside the gate! They wanted them to accept that there would be no union recognition!

The company would have us believe these contracts were drawn up in the space of twelve hours. I know we're living in a computer age — but that's ridiculous. The contracts were already in place. They planned it like that.

The background to this issue goes back to 1994. The company derecognised TGWU stewards for 10 months. Then they came to dockers on the Seaforth Terminal with new contracts. We could not get agreement on these. After a while the company said they would implement the contracts anyway. They put the final contracts into an envelope along with our 90 days' notice! It was like putting a gun to our heads — we felt we had no choice but to sign these contracts.

Our conditions got worse. You had to work 117 hours over three weeks. Over-time was only paid if you worked more than 117 hours. If there were no ships in one week you would only work perhaps 20 hours. The next week you could be working 60 hours. Plus we had to work Saturday and Sunday. They've been trying to make our job more "casual" for a while.

Ten days after we were sacked MDHC brought in a strike-breaking firm called Drake Port Services. These people go round a lot of industries, bringing in scabs, and they're spreading like a cancer.

We then got another letter from the Dock Company, saying they had hired Drake, and we could apply to them for our job back. At £3000 a year less!

Because of the anti-trade union laws we haven't had a lot of physical support from docks around the country. We've had to go outside of Britain for any physical support. We've sent delegates to Canada, New Zealand, Australia and America. The first positive result we got was in the United States. One of the biggest shipping companies to use the port of Liverpool is the American ATL line, based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Baltimore and New York. An ATL

ship had been diverted to Norfolk, Virginia, so we went there. Norfolk is a naval base and the security is quite tight. We weren't exactly greeted by the police; they said they had no problem with our picket but would tell us what gate to picket and showed us to a gate round the back that nobody used! After an hour the chief of police came up to them and said "you may have friends up north, but it's a different ball game down south. If you're not off this picket line in half an hour, you'll be locked up." So they had to get out of town!

They went to Baltimore where they had success. The stevedores crossed the picket line but the checkers didn't. They held up an ATL vessel for 12 hours. That cost the company a lot of money.

They went to the ATL terminal in New Jersey, and had a meeting with the American longshoremen's union. They addressed a meeting of their members. It is illegal for workers to collectively decide to cross a picket line. However, they can refuse to cross as individuals. Out of 97 men, not one crossed our picket line.

The American dockers went to the ATL office and said "we want you to get in touch with the Mersey Dock Company and tell them to get this problem sorted out." The ATL gave the Dock Company an ultimatum — if the problem wasn't sorted out by January 22 they would take their ships elsewhere.

The TGWU had been silent up to this point. When they saw us getting a bit of support they decided to get on board. Bill Morris had a meeting with the Dock Company and they came up with an offer. The package was £10,000 each and 100 of us could apply for our jobs back. Those not picked out could go into the casual pool. Plus anyone going to an industrial tribunal had to drop their case. We rejected this offer out of hand.

After talking behind the scenes, the union got another offer. This time it was £25,000 each and 40 jobs back. The jobs were not at the Seaforth Terminal. We had a postal ballot on the offer. We were quite prepared to have a postal ballot because we knew our members would reject the offer. You couldn't have blamed

the men over 55 from walking away with £25,000. But it speaks volumes for the calibre of the men that they didn't do this. The offer was rejected by 271 to 50.

These lads are not fighting for themselves, but are fighting to keep trade union recognition in the port of Liverpool so that we can protect the pay and conditions of the younger lads.

Both John Major and Michael Heseltine have come out in support of the Dock Company. But then the government owns 20% of the company and is bankrolling it.

The silence from the Labour Party has been deafening. Michael Meacher did get off the fence and spoke out for us, but then Tony Blair gagged him. We've heard no more from the Labour Party.

There has been an early day motion in Parliament by Eddie Loyden and Bob Parry and we've had the support of most of the Liverpool Labour MPs except that guy who represents me in Birkenhead, Frank Field. He didn't want to know. We've had support from all the churches of all denominations across the country and from Wirral borough council, Merseyside council and Sefton council.

On 17 February we had an international dockers' conference in Liverpool comprising 34 delegates from 17 countries across the world. The company got frightened by this: they have just spent £10,000 on full page adverts in the *Liverpool Echo* and the *Daily Post*.

Bernard Thripp — the Chief Executive of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company — has been on the local radio several times. He has said that Torside has nothing to do with the MDHC and therefore he couldn't reemploy the sacked Torside men. But then he turns round and says he'd be willing to employ the men brought in by Drake Services at Torside!

This is what it is all about — ending unionised labour in the port of Liverpool. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company thought they could beat us, but they are wrong. They won't beat us.

● Mick Curran was speaking about the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's industrial school on 24 February. ■



1989: Tilbury dockers fighting abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme.

Student funding

Blair's Australian teachers

Julie Connolly, Education Vice-President at the University of Queensland Students' Union, told us about the Australian system of student income support, and student contributions to university fees, which has been presented as a model by right-wingers in the British student movement and the Labour Party.

THE HECS system, under which students pay partial fees, was based on the argument that students must contribute to their education. But we have a progressive taxation system in Australia. People who earn more, pay more tax. If people have benefitted from a university education through increased earnings, then they pay more tax.

Instead of introducing what are effectively discriminatory measures, which militate against the entry of a range of students from different backgrounds into higher education, the government should use the progressive taxation system to fund the increase of higher education.

At the time when HECS was introduced, some people argued that industry should be taxed, rather than students. That fell by the wayside, but it was interesting that corporate tax was reduced from 40% to 33% at the same time that fees were introduced for students. There are alternatives to charging students fees.

During the 1980s the population at universities broadened considerably, because university education was free. We haven't yet seen it narrow, except that the rates of female participation have started to decrease where there are fee-paying courses; but the numbers of students from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, or lower socio-economic backgrounds, are still very low. University education is still very much the bastion of the middle class.

HECS [the Higher Education Contribution System] was introduced by Labor in 1989. The year before, an administration fee for higher education of \$250, paid up-front, had been introduced; prior to that, tertiary education had been free.

Under HECS, the federal government would subsidise higher education, but students would contribute, on average, 15% — it has now increased to about 25%

— of the cost. The contribution is a flat rate for all colleges and all courses, regardless of actual cost.

Students can choose to pay their HECS up-front, and then they get a 25% discount; if not it becomes a debt to be paid through the taxation system once the students are employed. Repayments are graduated according to income, so someone earning \$25,000 (about £12,500) might only be paying one per cent of their income, but once you get up to \$30,000 you are paying three or four per cent.

The debt is indexed to inflation, and this discriminates against people who are unemployed or drop in and out of the workforce, for example women having children. The debt hangs over their heads a lot longer, and it accumulates.

HECS is only available for a first degree. The situation with postgraduate degrees is a bit fuzzy. The federal government has deregulated fee-paying for course-work degrees, but research degrees are still HECS-liable.

Austudy — income support for students — is contingent on parental income unless the student is over 22. On this campus only about 30% of students get any Austudy at all. The percentage is higher at other universities, but the limit of parental income above which you get no Austudy is not very high. And with each Budget the system becomes available to fewer and fewer people.

Austudy is not a loan — it's a grant. But there are Austudy loans, too. If you receive, say, \$80 [£40] a week Austudy, and you want more money, you can trade in \$40 of the grant and receive \$80 loan in its place, making a total of \$120. Again, the loan is paid back through the taxation system once you start earning above the threshold, and is indexed to inflation.

One of the problems about Austudy which the student movement has been campaigning on is that there is no rent assistance. On other benefits such as dole or Jobstart, if you pay rent in excess of \$35 a week you receive rent assistance.

Full Austudy is \$120 a week. People do get by on it, but in Brisbane, for example, rents average between \$60 and \$75 a week, so it's really very difficult. Very, very few students get the full \$120. Also, Austudy decreases once you get over \$50 a fortnight from part-time work. About half the students on this campus have to work part-time to support themselves.

Public funding for higher education has been capped, so the proportion of funding for universities which comes from public sources will diminish in years to come. We have seen a proliferation of postgraduate fees, universities investigat-

ing corporate wings and centres for research which are privately funded. This campus has recently purchased the Bond University, which is Australia's main private university — there have been three, and none of them have done very well at all — as a means to subsidise what is generally unprofitable mass undergraduate teaching.

There is an increasing tendency to introduce broad undergraduate degrees and have professional education made postgraduate. Just recently, medicine at a few universities, including this one, has gone postgraduate, which sets a precedent for law and perhaps engineering to require students to complete an undergraduate degree before going ahead. The university has struck a deal whereby the medical courses will still be HECS-liable, but the future of that is uncertain.

The Coalition [the Liberal-National alliance which won power on 2 March] wants to introduce voluntary student unionism and undermine the power of student unions to be political representatives, and to diminish public funding and support the creation of private educational alternatives. The Liberal governments in Victoria and Western Australia have attempted to introduce voluntary student unionism. This has been mitigated somewhat by Labor federal government legislation which has continued funding to the student unions. I think the Coalition will continue the HECS system, since it has proven very popular electorally, but provide universities with greater scope to charge fees for degrees — for example, full fee-paying places for extra students on top of the HECS-funded places.

The National Union of Students was formed in response to the introduction of HECS in 1989. There had been previous national bodies, but they folded in the early '80s. The student campaign against the loan system, with limited support from the National Union of Students, was run by a range of campuses and spearheaded by the left groups on campus like the International Socialists and Resistance.

NUS is factionalised in a very similar way to the Australian Labor Party. There's the Labor right — "Labor Unity." The National Organisation of Labor Students has both a left and a right component; then there's the Left Alliance, which is a separate group, and a few Liberals and independents. It maintains opposition to increases in HECS, the Austudy loans scheme, and so on, but whether it puts any money or active work into campaigning depends very much on the politics of the National Executive. ■

The first workers' government

The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first workers' government. Tom Willis looks at its significance 125 years on.

Collapse of the old order

OUR story starts with the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870.

The war was caused by the territorial rivalry between the French Second Empire and the Prussian-dominated North German Federation. The immediate spark was a dispute over Prussian support for the candidature of a Hohenzollern (member of the Prussian royal family) for the Spanish throne. The French overestimated their strength, and took the initiative in attacking, but were defeated at Sedan in September 1870. France lost Alsace and most of Lorraine. The Emperor was a prisoner of war.

The necessary consequence of military defeat was the Paris Revolution of 4 September 1870.

The Second Empire collapsed. Thus the undemocratic rule of Napoleon III which was built on the defeat of the democratic revolution of 1848 and which had ushered in the archetypal "Bonapartist Regime" — serving big capital but resting on the peasants and petit-bourgeois — passed into history to be replaced by the proclamation of the republic.

This republic was extremely weak and unstable. The Prussian Army was at the gates of Paris while the army of the Second Empire had been defeated or captured.

In these circumstances the people of Paris allowed the deputies in Napoleon's former tame legislature (a rag bag of monarchists and fake liberals) to declare themselves a "government of national defence." This "government's" powers were very weak because the defence of Paris was actually in the hands of the armed people.

All Parisians capable of bearing arms had been enrolled in the National Guard. The majority in this armed force was composed of workers.

A capitalist government and an armed working class cannot co-exist for long. One power or another must triumph. Conflict between the two is inevitable.

This antagonism broke out in open conflict on **31 October**. Workers' battalions of the National Guard stormed the Town Hall and captured some members of the government. But through double talk and false promises plus the armed intervention of some middle-class detachments of the

National Guard they managed to get free.

Faced with the alternative of unleashing a full-scale civil war inside a besieged city the majority of the National Guard left the former government in office.

Then on **28 January 1871** the government of National Defence surrendered to the Prussians. Engels takes up the story:

"...starved Paris capitulated. But with honours unprecedented in the history of the war. The forts were surrendered, the city wall stripped of guns, the weapons of the regiments of the line, and of the Mobile Guard were handed over, and they themselves considered prisoners of war. But the National Guard kept its weapons and guns, and only entered into an armistice with the victors. And these did not dare enter Paris in triumph. They only dared to occupy a tiny corner of Paris, which, into the bargain, consisted partly of public parks, and even this they only occupied for a few days! And during this time they, who had maintained their encirclement of Paris for 131 days, were themselves encircled by the armed workers of Paris, who kept a sharp watch that no "Prussian" should overstep the narrow bounds of the corner ceded to the foreign conqueror. Such was the respect which the Paris workers inspired in the army before which all the armies of the Empire had laid down their arms; the Prussian Junkers, who had come to take revenge at the home of the revolution, were compelled to stand by respectfully, and salute precisely this armed revolution!"

The emergence of the Commune

THE end of the war brought out into the open the conflicts that had been suppressed by the need to defend Paris.

Engels again:

"During the war the Paris workers had confined themselves to demanding the vigorous prosecution of the fight. But now, when peace had come after the capitulation of Paris, now Thiers, the new supreme head of the government, was compelled to realise that the rule of the propertied classes — big landowners and capitalists — was in constant danger so long as the workers of Paris had arms in their hands. His first action was an attempt to disarm them."



Communards at the barricade

On **18 March**, Thiers sent regular troops to attempt to seize the artillery belonging to the National Guard. Those weapons had been built during the siege of Paris and paid for through taxes on the workers and middle class of the capital. The regular troops failed. Paris mobilised for resistance and war was declared between Paris and Thiers government sitting at Versailles.

On **26 March** the Paris Commune was elected and on **28 March** it was officially proclaimed. The central committee of the National Guard which until then had carried out all the functions of government in Paris handed in its resignation to the Commune.

The first decree of the Commune, to be replaced by the armed people, was the abolition of the standing army and conscription on **30 March**.

The Commune was a local council, but of a new revolutionary type. As Marx explained in his classic 'The Civil War in France':

"The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class... Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the Administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workmen's wages. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves..."

The Commune in action

THE abolition of the standing army was followed by the cancellation of all housing

rents for the period of the siege of Paris. If the rent had already been paid then the money was to be deducted from future rent payments.

Also on the **30 March**, the Commune confirmed in office all foreigners who had been elected to it announcing that "The flag of the Commune is the flag of the world republic." There then followed a month of revolutionary decrees.

On **1 April** wages for any member or employee of the Commune were pegged at a maximum of 6,000 francs (the average for a skilled worker).

On **2 April** the Commune decreed the separation of church from state and the abolition of all payments by the tax payer to the Catholic church. All church property was nationalised.

On **5 April** in response to the shooting of captured Communards by the Versailles troops an order was made allowing the imprisonment of hostages, but it was never carried out.

On **6 April** the guillotine was brought out by armed workers and publicly burnt to great rejoicing.

On **8 April** all religious symbols and practices were removed from the schools.

On **12 April** it was decided to demolish the Victory Column in the Place Vendôme, which celebrated Napoleon's wars because it was a symbol of chauvinism and nationalism. This was carried out on **16 May**.

On **16 April** the Commune began to drive forward a more revolutionary economic programme. It ordered a workers' enquiry into all factories that had been closed down by the bosses. Workers' plans were to be drawn up for their reopening.

The workers in such places were to be organised into co-operative societies to run the enterprise and it was projected that all the co-operatives should be brought together in one great union.

On **20 April** night work was abolished for bakers. Employment offices were taken out of private hands and put under local control. On **30 April** the pawnshops were closed down.

This programme was ambitious but limited. As Marx put it: "The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence." It was a workers' government even though it had not gone far down the road to directly socialist measures.

On **5 May** the Commune proudly asserted the revolutionary heritage of the Parisian working class and its allies by ordering the destruction of the Chapel of Atonement built as a public apology (to god?) for the execution of Louis XVI.

End of the Commune

FROM the beginning of May onwards the Commune was placed entirely on the defensive. The Versailles government started its moves against Paris in early April, capturing the Seine crossing at Neuilly to the west of Paris on **7 April**. But on **11 April** an attack on the southern front was successfully repulsed. The response of the Versailles

government was to let lose their artillery in an indiscriminate bombardment of the Parisian workers.

Engels described the situation.

"Paris was continually bombarded and, moreover, by the very people who had stigmatised as a sacrilege the bombardment of the same city by the Prussians. These same people now begged the Prussian government for the hasty return of the French soldiers taken prisoner at Sedan and Metz in order that they might recapture Paris for them. From the beginning of May the gradual arrival of these troops gave the Versailles forces a decided superiority."

On **23 April** Thiers broke off the negotiations for the exchange of the Archbishop of Paris and a number of other priests for just one man: Louis Auguste Blanqui — the revolutionary leader of the left wing of the 1848 revolution — who at the time was imprisoned by the Versailles government.

The Versailles government made slow progress against the Communards and required the active collaboration of their real "mortal" enemies: the Prussians.

Engels tells the story:

"The Prussians, who held the northern and eastern forts, allowed the Versailles troops to advance across the land north of the city, which was forbidden ground to them under the armistice and thus to march forward, attacking on a wide front, which the Parisians naturally thought covered by the armistice and therefore held only weakly. As a result of this, only a weak resistance was put up in the western half of Paris, in the luxury city proper; it grew stronger and more tenacious the nearer the incoming troops approached the eastern half, the working-class city proper. It was only after eight days' fighting that the last defenders of the Commune succumbed on the heights of Belleville and Menilmontant; and then the massacre of defenceless men, women and children, which had been raging all through the week on an increasing scale, reached its zenith. The breechloader could no longer kill fast enough; the vanquished were shot down in hundreds by *mitrailleuse* fire. The "Wall of the Federals" at the Père Lachaise cemetery, where the mass murder was consummated, is still standing today, a mute but eloquent testimony to the frenzy of which the ruling class is capable as soon as the working class dares to stand up for its rights."

The Commune in retrospect

IN their audacious will to fight even in highly unfavourable circumstances the Parisian workers had set an example for the whole international socialist movement, argued Karl Marx in letters to his friend Kugelmann.

Marx's comments on the bravery of the Communards taking on a struggle in unfavourable circumstances sheds light on how he would have replied to those socialists who in the name of "Marxism" argue that the Russian revolution of 1917 was "premature."

"What elasticity, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisians! After six months of hunger and ruin, caused by internal treachery more even than by the external enemy, they rise, beneath Prussian bayonets, as if there had never been a war between France and Germany and the enemy were not still at the gates of Paris! History has no like of greatness! If they are defeated only their 'good nature' will be to blame. They should have marched at once on Versailles after first Vinoy and then the reactionary section of the Paris National Guard had themselves retreated. They missed their opportunity because of conscientious scruples. They did not want to start a civil war, as if that mischievous abortion Thiers had not already started the civil war with his attempt to disarm Paris! Second mistake: The Central Committee surrendered its power too soon, to make way for the Commune. Again from a too "honourable" scrupulosity! However that may be, the present rising in Paris — even if it be crushed by the wolves, swine, and vile curs of the old society — is the most glorious deed of our Party since the June insurrection in Paris [1848]. Compare these Parisians, storming heaven, with the slaves to heaven of the German-Prussian Holy Roman Empire, with its posthumous masquerades reeking of the barracks, the Church, cabbage-junk and, above all, of the philistine..."

It was ridiculous, argued Marx, to criticise the Communards for not holding back and waiting for more "favourable" circumstances. On the contrary, it was better to fight and lose than to be defeated without a fight.

"World history would indeed be very easy to make if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallible favourable chances. It would on the other hand be of a very mystical nature, if "accidents" played no part. These accidents naturally form part of the general course of development and are compensated by other accidents. But acceleration and delay are very much dependent upon such "accidents", including the "accident" of the character of the people who first head the movement.

"The decisively unfavourable "accident" this time is by no means to be sought in the general conditions of French society, but in the presence of the Prussians in France and their position right before Paris. Of this the Parisians were well aware. But of this, the bourgeois rabble of Versailles were also aware. Precisely for that reason they presented the Parisians with the alternative of either taking up the fight or succumbing without a struggle. The demoralisation of the working class in the latter case would have been a far greater misfortune than the succumbing of any number of "leaders." With the struggle in Paris the struggle of the working class against the capitalist class and its state has entered upon a new phase. Whatever the immediate outcome may be, a new point of departure of world-wide importance has been gained."

The Commune and Marxist theory

THE Commune, like many previous revolutions, was the product of defeat in war; but it was also a new, far deeper and more thoroughgoing, kind of revolution.

It provided, in the words of Karl Marx, "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour."

This political form was not "discovered" by some act of pure philosophic abstraction. Nor was it deduced from the concepts "democracy", "working class" and "representation." It was discovered through the self-conscious, self-controlling activity of the working class itself.

A democratic revolution

IN setting up the Commune the workers of Paris and their allies carried out an heroic act of self-determination. Their revolution was first and foremost a democratic one.

The Commune was based on:

- Election of all Commune members by unlimited universal suffrage.
- All officials to be recallable at all times.
- All officials to be paid the equivalent of a worker's wage.
- Separation of church and state.
- The clearing out and purging of the police.
- All judges to be elected, recallable and removable at any time.
- Local municipal freedom.
- Abolition of the standing army and state bureaucracy.
- The abolition of the distinction between legislature (the law makers) and executive (those who carry out the laws) with both functions to be carried out simultaneously by the Commune.

The practical purpose of these revolutionary democratic measures was to shatter and destroy the existing state removing the diaphragm separating the working class from power. In doing so, the Commune broke out of the barriers and limits imposed on democracy by the bourgeois state.

Engels spelled this out very clearly:

"Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society — an inevitable transformation in all previous states — the Commune made use of two infallible means.

"In the first place, it filled all posts — administrative, judicial and educational — by election on the basis of universal suffrage, subject to the right of recall at any time. And, in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers... In this way an effective barrier to place hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding mandates to delegates to representative bodies which were added besides."

Smashing the state

WHAT is essential for the workers' revolu-

tion is the removal of all barriers separating the majority from real self-government. Marx put this brilliantly. The Commune, he argued, had proved that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the existing state machine and wield it for its own purposes."

On the contrary, as Marx wrote to his friend Kugelmann at the time of the Commune:

"If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire*, you will find that I declare that the next attempt at the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it [Marx's italics] and this is the preliminary condition for every real people's revolution on the continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting."

The beginning of the end of the state

MARX believed that the Commune was "the positive form" of "a republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical forms of class rule, but class rule itself."

As the state is a product of and form of class rule then the Commune was a new and peculiar form of state: it was a republic whose basic purpose was the overcoming of the conditions that make the state itself necessary. It represented the beginning of the end of the state as a separate and special institution standing above society. It was a state and simultaneously an anti-state.

It was a state to the extent that it functioned as a lever to hold down the capitalist class in the interests of the working class. It was an anti-state to the extent that it functioned as an organ of the collective administration of society by the freely associated producers and consumers themselves.

What smashing the state means

LENIN discussed the significance of this new type of state in his classic *The State and Revolution*.

"The Commune appears to have replaced the smashed state machine "only" by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this "only" signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different order. This is exactly a case of 'quantity becoming transformed into quality': democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer, properly speaking, the state.

"It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and its resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune;

and one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination. But the organ of suppression is here the majority of the population, and not a minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom and wage slavery. And since the majority of the people itself suppresses its oppressors, a "special force" for suppression is no longer necessary! In this sense the state begins to wither away. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfil all these functions, and the more the functions of state power devolve upon the people as a whole the less need there is for the existence of this power."

Theory and practice

THE revolutionary significance of the Commune was soon forgotten. As it receded in time and capitalism developed through a new wave of expansion, theory decayed.

Before the Commune Marx had only been able to sketch a rough outline of Communist revolution. For instance he had this to say in the *Poverty of Philosophy*:

"The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil [capitalist] society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so-called."

But after the Commune the theoretical level of the movement receded in the main below that set by Marx before the Commune.

In the years after 1871 many people in the socialist movement returned to earlier, more elitist, pre-Commune notions of socialist transformation.

They believed that the existing state machine — or a reformed version of the existing state machine — could be used to introduce socialism from above.

Engels carried out a rearguard struggle against all this nonsense.

In 1890 he managed to get Marx's *"Critique of the Gotha Programme"* published — 15 years after it was first written.

The *Critique* was originally a circular letter — not a piece of private correspondence or a public article, but a discussion paper for a restricted audience. In it, Marx attacked the leaders of the "Marxist" faction in the German workers' movement for making impermissible intellectual concessions to the supporters of Ferdinand Lassalle in the party programme in order to create a united organisation. Engels used the fact that the party programme was once more up for discussion in order to get Marx's original views on the Gotha programme published.

Amongst many things that rattled Marx's cage was the nonsense the Gotha programme talked about the state and in particular the establishment of Lassalle's dream of a "Free State." No, said Marx. We

do not want to make the state free, but to put it under democratic control:

"Freedom consists in transforming the state from an organ set above society into one thoroughly subordinated to it, and today too the state forms are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the 'freedom of the state'."

Marx then went on to spell out an alternative:

"Between the capitalist and the communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. To this corresponds a political transition period whose state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

This talk of "revolutionary dictatorship" caused great concern in the parliamentary caucus of the German Party. One leader of the caucus actually repudiated Marx on the floor of the Reichstag, whereas the Caucus as a whole wrote a reply to Marx — eight years after his death — and the *entire* party leadership boycotted Engels personally for daring to make Marx's views known to the party rank and file and to the public.

It is interesting to note that the parliamentary careerists and opportunists of the German Party showed exactly the same misunderstanding of the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" as the Stalinists. For both, dictatorship had to mean the opposite of democracy — but while the reformists opposed it, the Stalinists supported it!

Engels spelt out the rational meaning of the phrase:

"Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the phrase: dictatorship of the proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat."

In other words for Engels as for Marx the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" was synonymous with working class self-rule. Engels drove this point home in his critique of the new party programme.

"If anything is established, it is that our party and the working class can come to power only under the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the great French Revolution (Paris Commune) has already shown."

But despite Engels best efforts it seems that all official "Marxists" were determined to misunderstand.

Karl Kautsky, the "Pope of Marxism", who asserted himself as the leading "theoretician" after Engels' death, could even write such stupid rubbish as:

"Only one who is politically blind can still maintain today that the representative system even under the sway of universal suffrage ensures the rule of the bourgeoisie, and that in order to overthrow the later one must get rid of the representative system. Now it is already beginning to become obvious that a truly parliamentary system can be just as good as instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat as it is an

instrument of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie."

Confusing representation in general and the Reichstag in particular, Kautsky failed to see that the essential point was to extend democracy beyond the limits imposed by the bourgeois state, to smash it.

Plekhanov, the pioneer Russian Marxist and, another leading figure in the pre-world war one international socialist movement, fared little better. Avoiding the worst excesses of Kautsky's rationalisations of parliamentary cretinism, he nevertheless maintained a lot of the pre-Marxist Jacobin notion of dictatorship meaning rule by an enlightened revolutionary elite. This is understandable given the backwardness of Russia, the ruthlessness of the Tsarist state and the fact that the working class was a tiny minority in society, but it was still a mistake. Before 1914 only Rosa Luxemburg kept Marx's original conception alive.

It took world war and the reappearance of mass working class self-activity in the form of the Russian revolution of 1917 for it to be once more possible to re-unite theory and practice at the level achieved at the time of the Commune.

Lenin's *State and Revolution* played a vital role in this. Written in 1917, it was part of his attempt to orientate the Bolshevik Party towards the seizure of power by the workers. In order to do this he had to rescue Marx and Engels' original assessment of the Commune from those official "Marxists" like Plekhanov and Kautsky who had gutted "Marxism" of its revolutionary communist content.

In July, 1917 at the height of the reactionary wave between the February and October revolutions, Lenin wrote this short note to his comrade Kamenev. It shows Lenin's growing awareness of how deep seated the misunderstanding of the Commune had been.

"Comrade Kamenev, in strict confidence, if I should be bumped off I beg you to publish a notebook with the title 'Marxism and the state.' (It has been left in safekeeping in Stockholm). Bound with a blue cover. There are collected all the quotations from Marx and Engels, as well as those of Kautsky's controversy with Pannekoek. Also a series of remarks and reviews. It has only to be edited. I think this work could be published within a week. I think it is very important, because it isn't only Kautsky and Plekhanov who have gone off the rails."

Lenin was obviously talking about himself and the other Bolshevik comrades. His writing of *State and Revolution* and with it his rediscovery of Marx's attitude to the state, went hand in hand with the practical reappearance of the Commune-type of state: the Russian soviets.

If you too want to avoid going "off the rails" or simply want to discover for the first time the real history of the Paris Commune, then there is no better place to start than where Lenin did, with a study of Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*, which tells the heroic story of the Commune and explains its place in the struggle of the working class for a higher social order.

The ne

LAST December millions of French workers took to the streets in defence of welfare benefits, full health services and pensions. The workers used marches, protests and strike action to resist the plans of France's Tory government led by Jacques Chirac and Alain Juppé. The government was forced to back down on a number of issues but not completely defeated. Chirac has simply backed down for now, but further attacks are inevitable.

On the marches one slogan dominated: "Ouais, ouais, tous ensemble, tous ensemble" — All together, all together.

The workers were celebrating the re-discovery of working class solidarity.

And on the victory march some placards, like the one pictured on this page, even linked the mass mobilisations of 1995 with the Paris Commune of 1871 — when the workers took over the running of the capital and founded the first working class government in human history.

The fight for a workers' government

IT'S quite right to link the two.

The Commune — a state in which the majority of the population, the working class, are in the saddle — is not just a great, inspiring, historic event to be celebrated; it also provides a practical model for socialists today.

Quite simply there is no way to defend working class living standards, welfare services and free trade unions other than through a new commune.

The alternative not just in Britain, or France, but internationally, to the working

The Scholars

Bald heads forgetful of their sins,
Old, learned, respectable bald heads
Edit and annotate the lines
That young men, tossing on their
beds,
Rhymed out in love's despair
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.

All shuffle there; all cough in ink;
All wear the carpet with their shoes;
All think what other people think;
All know the man their neighbour
knows.

Lord, what would they say
Did their Catullus walk that way?

W.B. Yeats

xt Paris Commune

class taking over and reorganising society according to the dictates of human need, not capitalist profit, is a further collapse in the general level of human culture and a regression towards barbarism.

That's why *Workers' Liberty* advocates and fights for a workers' government. We want a government based on the working class and its organisation and accountable to them, a government which is prepared to take on the power of the bosses and their state.

Right now, the cutting edge of such a fight is the reassertion of what Marx called "the political economy of the working class" i.e. the struggle to assert the basic needs of human beings for free time, education, health services and decent housing against the profit-making, people-degrading rule of capital.

Today it is out of a battle for reforms — rebuilding the health service, a decent minimum wage, full employment, a shorter working week, free trade unions — that the revolutionary movement will be built.

That revolutionary movement will have exactly the same aim as the Paris Commune — the formation of a workers' government.

The Commune in the 20th century

THE soviets of 1905 and 1917 in Russia; the workers' councils of 1918 in Germany; the factory councils of 1919-20 in Italy; the juntas of the Spanish revolution in 1936; the central workers' council in Hungary in 1956; the Nantes/St Nazaire central strike committee in France, May 1968; the cordones in Chile, 1973; the neighbourhood commissions and workers' commissions in Portugal in 1975; the inter-factory strike committees in Poland in 1980-1, and the Alexandria Action Committee in South Africa in the mid-1980s: all to one extent or another represented developments of the basic form of working class self-government established first in Paris in 1871.

This is not to say that there are no differences within the Commune type.

In the majority of cases these 20th century organs of workers power developed as workplace-centred structures based on delegates from different factories, offices, depots, mines, railway stations etc. — rather as strictly territorially-based forms of organisation as the Commune was.

The experience of revolutionary movements in the 20th century also reveals a great flexibility of form.

In some cases entirely new improvised structures had to be built — and, in the case of the soviets, rebuilt — from the ground up in competition with the pre-existing organisation of the working class. In other cases existing structures were either trans-

formed for new purposes (the factory councils in Italy) or new structures built out of re-organising the elements of the existing movement (the Spanish juntas).

The common thread is provided by the fact that working class organisation develops in order to answer particular immediate needs dictated by the actually existing conditions of struggle. The working class has to use whatever weapons are at hand. Thus differences within the Commune type usually reflect the different conditions out of which the emerging organs of workers' power developed.

This throws some light on the question of the relationship between Parliament and independent organs of workers' power in a socialist revolution in Britain, an issue that has been discussed in *Workers' Liberty*.

Parliament will play a bigger or lesser role dependent on what the situation is. Let's take two examples to illustrate the point. If a Tory or a Labour government viciously attacks the workers and provokes resistance on the scale of the General Strike of 1926 or the strike movement that freed the Pentonville dockers in 1972 then the development of organs of workers' power will necessarily run absolutely counter to the rule of Parliament. Elections would only be called in order to derail the movement.

Conversely, should a left-wing parliamentary majority find itself under threat from a conspiracy by the bosses, bankers, civil service and military chiefs, then the workers would undoubtedly rally to the defence of Parliament.

The decisive point is not to speculate about which scenario is most likely, but rather to understand that even if a revolution started off with the defence of a left-wing parliamentary majority it would have to break out of the limits imposed on democracy by the bourgeois state if it were not to be defeated. In all cases the power of the existing state machine — bureaucracy, army, police — would have to be destroyed by the armed people — a force that couldn't possibly be channelled through the narrow confines of the Palace of Westminster.

The Commune will return

IT is absolutely certain that there will be new versions of the Paris Commune in the future.

The working class knows no other way of struggling to re-order society, and while capitalism continues to exist that struggle is inevitable.

The basis for a new Paris Commune is being laid by the developing crisis of capitalism itself.

What Marx said of the original Commune and the International Working Men's Association which supported it is still true today.



Banner of the recent French strikes

"The soil out of which it grows is modern society itself. It cannot be stamped out by any amount of carnage. To stamp it out, the Generals would have to stamp out the despotism of capital over labour — the conditions of their own parasitical existence.

"Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that external pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."

The modern priests of the ruling class who pray that we have now reached the "end of history" are engaged in an equally fruitless task.

History has not ended — in fact, as the malign influence that Stalinism has exercised for most of this century fades, it is bound to accelerate through a new period of storm and stress.

The only question is not whether there will be another Commune, but where and when?

That's why *Workers' Liberty* celebrates the Paris Commune.

US trade unionists launch a labour party

Steve Zeltzer, an activist from Labor Party Advocates in the United States, was in Britain recently and talked to Martin Thomas and Paul Hampton

IN 1990, Tony Mazzochi, who was secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union, formed an organisation called Labor Party Advocates [LPA]. After some pressure from myself and others, LPA has committed itself to calling a convention to found a labour party on 6-9 June 1996 in Cleveland, Ohio. It is the first labour party movement in our lifetime which has some important support in the trade unions.

Labor Party Advocates has grown to about five to ten thousand members across the United States. At this point, there is union support from the International Longshore and Warehousemen's Union, which organises about 60,000 West Coast dockers; Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, which is about 70,000 strong; the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, workers who repair railroads; and United Electrical Workers, a small electrical workers' union which was witch-hunted in the 1950s in the AFL-CIO. We also expect delegates from maybe fifty, sixty, a hundred union locals [branches] at the convention in June. There should be over a thousand delegates in all.

I am from the San Francisco chapter of LPA, which has about 350 members. In San Francisco, the LPA offices are in the Labor Council headquarters; most of the Bay Area Labor Councils have endorsed LPA, and the California Federation of Labor secretary, John Henning, speaks at its meetings. We have had meeting of six or seven hundred trade unionists supporting the idea of a labour party.

In Decatur, Illinois, the so-called War Zone, Bridgestone Firestone workers have been on strike, and now gone back to work without a contract. The Caterpillar workers were on strike, and have gone back to work without a contract. The Staley workers — Staley is a sugar manufacturer owned by Tate and Lyle — were locked out for over two years, and all in this one town, Decatur, Illinois. Of the 70,000 people in the town, there were seven thousand workers on strike or locked out. The workers formed a United Labor Front of the three unions and ran some labour people as candidates in elections. An electrical worker got elected to the city council.

Although most of the trade unions are still with the Democrats, things are becoming more fluid in the trade union movement. At

the AFL-CIO convention last October, for the first time in the movement's history, an opposition slate defeated the incumbent leadership.

Richard Trumka, who was the president of the mineworkers and is now secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, said: "If we get elected, this is going to be corporate America's worst nightmare. We're going to go out there on the picket lines and get those scabs." John Sweeney, the new president of the AFL-CIO, is a social-democrat. He's a member of the Democratic Socialists of America [a social-democratic grouping inside the Democratic Party]. All the top AFL-CIO leaders were saying that they had to get more women, ethnic-minority and immigrant workers into the unions — that their survival depended on it.

"We don't yet have a mass mobilisation of the working class of the sort that would force the capitalists to do deals with the unions."

The capitalists aren't giving the trade-union leadership much room to negotiate. We don't yet have a mass mobilisation of the working class in the United States, of the sort that would force the capitalists to do deals with the unions. There are exceptions, but by and large the unions are being defeated all over the country. There are more and more angry workers, and it is a very volatile situation.

Union membership is going up again. The AFL-CIO has said it will spend \$20 million on a national organising drive this summer. These organising drives are more than the glossy-leaflet flops organised by some unions in Britain. The SEIU, for example, has hired college students and sent them out to talk to workers and organise demonstrations — it produces results.

Working people are being politicised in the United States. The workers who went through the Decatur struggle, for example, have become *class-conscious*. They understand that there is a class struggle, and in the United States that is something!

There is a lot of less-defined *class hatred* in the United States. Unfortunately, because there is no labour party, it is reflected mostly through Buchanan, through a right-wing turn in the Republican Party — but it is the first time I can remember that a section of the Republican Party has attacked Wall Street and the bankers.

Buchanan is a racist, an anti-semitic, and a hypocrite, but when he attacks Wall Street and NAFTA he strikes a chord. They have to be attacked — only we have to put for-

ward a working-class solution, rather than Buchanan's racist solution.

Isn't there a danger that this could be a premature start, a blank shot, producing no more than another left group? I think not. After a while, it's difficult recruiting people to a non-existent party without a platform. And there's a volatile and dangerous situation in the United States.

I don't think the labour party will be no more than another left group. For one thing it will have some trade-union base; and it will be more democratic. Most of the left groups are undemocratic. In fact, I think one reason why the left groups don't want to be involved in the labour party is that their members would be drawn into discussion and debate.

The LPA steering committee, the LPA conference call says that the labour party is not going to run candidates. Tony Mazzochi put that out unilaterally without getting the approval of the steering committee. That issue will have to be decided at the convention, but I think the labour party will probably start off by running candidates locally.

The work done by Ron Daniels [a former organiser for Jesse Jackson who is now campaigning for a new, left-wing, third party] is more of a broad popular thing: it doesn't have a base in the unions. I don't really know what has happened with his constituency. I don't think it represents a lot. But in the Bay Area, anyway, the unions which are supporting a labour party are the unions which endorsed Jesse Jackson.

The black community support which Jackson had is not in Labor Party Advocates as yet. But a labour party has the possibility of winning that support. I think it is a weakness of Labor Party Advocates so far that it is too narrowly union-based — mostly union activists.

Tony Mazzochi thinks the labour party should be like the British Labour Party and the New Democratic Party in Canada. We have won a struggle to open up Labor Party Advocates to women's, minority, and environmental groups, so that they can endorse LPA and send delegates.

Mazzochi, I guess, is a social democrat. He comes out of a left tradition, around Trotskyism; he appoints people from Solidarity [a loose left-wing group, broadly Trotskyist/Shachtmanite] to organising jobs. The ILWU and the UE both have a strong Communist Party influence, historically, though the Communist Party is not such a force now and it supports the Democratic Party anyway.

For the most part, the left groups have pretty much boycotted Labor Party Advocates. Most of the people who are joining are union activists and people who used to be in left organisations but are not affiliated now.

How the relations between the sponsor
♦ bottom of facing page.

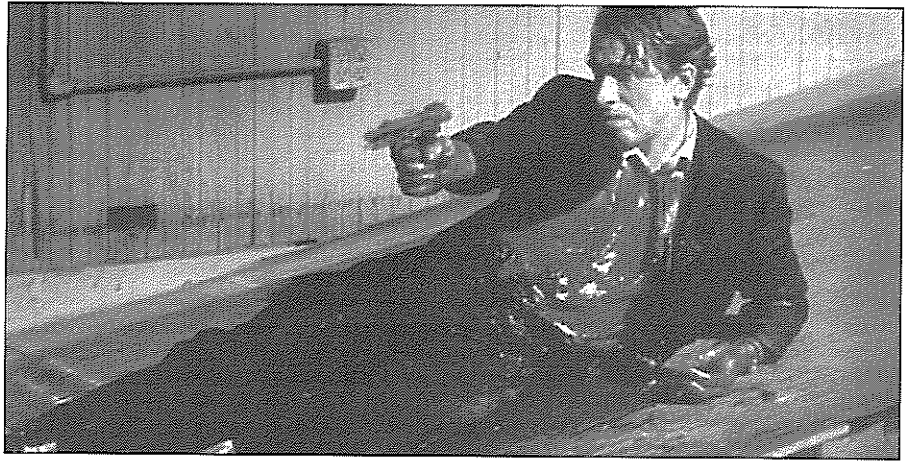
The work of Quentin Tarantino

Surfaces with a sting

By Clive Bradley

FOUR ROOMS bombed with the critics, but Quentin Tarantino remains hot property. According to Paul Schrader, writer of such Martin Scorsese movies as *Taxi Driver* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and director of — among others — *American Gigolo*, and *Mishima*, Hollywood is desperately trying to remould its output on Tarantino-esque lines, but can't work out what they are. Schrader sees Tarantino as a watershed in American film, ending the tradition of what he calls 'the existential hero'. Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* is seeking to shape a place for himself in the world, however warped; Tarantino's characters simply exist, with nothing beneath the surface.

Tarantino is responsible for four and a quarter films, aside from productions he has lent his name to. The quarter is his bit of *Four Rooms*; the others are *True Romance*, for which he wrote the script, *Natural Born Killers*, for which he wrote the original script, so altered in Oliver Stone's film that Tarantino took his name

More blood than violence: *Reservoir Dogs*

off the credits; and the two movies he has directed, *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*. On the strength of this alone he has already had more written about him than most other directors ever have.

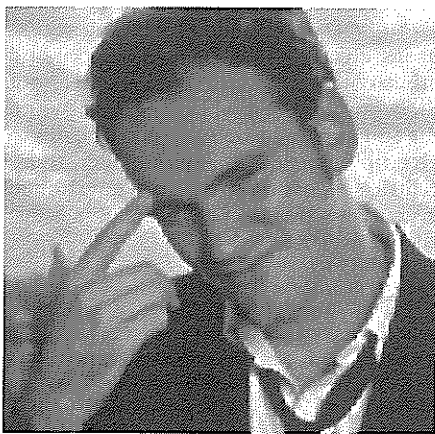
There is no doubt that Tarantino's work is radically different from most American movies. For one thing there is a great deal more dialogue, and hardly any of it is the 'functional' dialogue long typical of Hollywood. The opening scene of *Reservoir Dogs*, focused around the hidden meaning of a Madonna song and whether to tip waitresses, is longer than the average action sequence, never mind the average movie conversation, and it has almost nothing to do with the story. Most Hollywood script analysts would have cut it. Indeed, the whole film bears an unusual similarity to a stage play. Commentators have suggested that this has helped the recent revival of Shakespeare in the cinema — audiences have got used to more talking.

Structurally, too, Tarantino's films bear no relationship to the standard 'three act' format of most movies. Rather than the

usual pattern — disruption of equilibrium, development, equilibrium restored — both *Reservoir Dogs* and (especially) *Pulp Fiction* shoot off in all directions. Action does not take place in sequence.

And again, both these films are 'ensemble' pieces, without a single central character, without a single (or clear) antagonist. They are 'character', rather than 'plot' driven. This is less true of his earlier screenplays, *True Romance* or *Natural Born Killers* (which was written before *Reservoir Dogs*), although here too there are departures from convention: consider the scene building up to Dennis Hopper's death at Christopher Walken's hands in *True Romance*, which includes a lengthy dissertation on the ethnic origins of Sicilians unlikely to be found in any standard Hollywood movie.

Yet these features alone do not mark Tarantino out. Dialogue-heavy American films are rare, but not unheard of (*Moonstruck* springs to mind), and it is anything but unusual for European film to be heavily verbal and character-driven; the average scene in a European film is



Quentin Tarantino

from facing page

ing unions and the activists in the labour party will go, I don't know. It's a process. It could happen that the unions say "no further with the politics, or we walk out". Probably the labour party will have a structure like the British Labour Party, with local chapters and union affiliations.

Mazzochi proposed that if unions gave \$25,000 or more to LPA, they would be able to get voting rights at the convention, even if they did not endorse LPA. We argued that this was undemocratic. The Teamsters' Union in Pennsylvania gave LPA \$100,000 to print brochures; the Mineworkers have given \$25,000; but they don't want

to take a public position in favour of LPA. It does show that there is a growing sentiment in the unions for the idea of a labour party.

Part of the thinking of the union leaderships, and maybe of Tony Mazzochi, is to be a lever on the Democrats. What Clinton and the Democrats tell the trade unions is: "we're the only thing you've got." The union leaders want some leverage. At some point, with the formation of a labour party, they are going to have to start running independent labour candidates and make a break with the Democrats. That will be a test of how serious they are.

If the labour party is going to be successful it has got to broaden out and deal with

issues like health care, labour laws, housing, minority rights, and women's rights. Tony Mazzochi says he does not want to get involved in issues like immigration or affirmative action. They're too touchy, too controversial. My view is that a labour party has to have a position on issues like that, particularly with a person like Buchanan appealing to workers.

Unions in particular sectors, and women's and minority groups, should work out platforms for their areas of concern and take them into the labour party. For the labour party to be successful, a debate has to go on in the rank and file about the programme we need. ■

Government shields Nazi scientists' experiments on aliens

Ruah Carlyle reviews *The X-files*

THIS could be a headline in the *Daily Sport* or, quite plausibly, a plot for *The X-files*, the hugely popular imported American sci-fi TV series on BBC1. Slickly made and entertaining, it plays on every paranoid conspiracy theory and on every wildest wet dream. It is total bilge!

For those three people who haven't seen the show, it depicts two FBI agents who investigate paranormal events and invariably discover that they are caused by aliens, government conspiracies, a cult, or all three. Or have some other bizarre cause. Recent plots, for instance, have included vampires, alien bounty hunters and — weirdest of all — Southern US cannibals running a chicken factory.

The show is a success because it taps into a rich seam of paranoia in American (and now it seems British) society. Millions of American people have asserted in surveys that they have been abducted by, or seen, aliens. A large number also believe that the government has know of the existence of aliens for years but keep it secret. (There is never any explanation for why they'd bother to keep this secret).

This paranoia is an indication of how little control people feel in their lives; there must be a conspiracy working behind the scenes. It is the psychology of a small child who really doesn't control his or her life.

The X-Files translate this paranoia into pseudo-factual TV, adding a bit of New Age, Mother-earth, peace, more herbal tea, vicar? bullshit. I suppose this is an attempt to give a purpose to all these conspiracy theories.

As such things do, *The X-Files*, has generated a *Star Trek*-type cult fan club. Why do naff sci-fi shows always have such massive nerdy fan clubs? I suppose it's vaguely more interesting than trainspotting.

To any *X-file* fans out there, I say this: look, you with the *X-file* t-shirt, *X-file* mug of tea, *X-file* video and tin foil wrapped around your head to stop aliens invading your brain, grow up! Get a life! Read a book instead!



The cast of *Pulp Fiction*

twice as long as in an American one. Hollywood may go for visual stimulation above character and dialogue, but American independent film (think of Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth* or Stephen Soderbergh's *sex, lies and videotape*, or John Sayles' magnificent *Matewan*) can often manage both. There are plenty of structurally-innovative films — Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanours*, for example.

What does mark Tarantino out is that he is an independent film-maker who has managed to be vastly more successful; he is therefore 'independent' no longer.

The uniqueness of Tarantino — and what is controversial — is his amoral humour, and in particular his use of violence as a way of getting a laugh. Post-modernists like to speak of reality as merely 'surfaces', and that sums up Tarantino's work very accurately. His films could be taken as satires on the collapse of all life into its media-saturated surfaces. The hero of *True Romance* is a comic-book obsessed ingenue who falls in love on a first date because that's how love is supposed to be, and murders his new wife's pimp because that's how heroes are supposed to act (She agrees: 'That's so... romantic,' she declares, upon hearing of the pimp's dispatch). They embark on an adventure because the only mode of existence they can imagine is one borrowed from trash-culture.

Tarantino's original script of *Natural*

Born Killers is focused much more than the eventual film around the character of the sleazeball TV presenter who runs a show about serial killers. A long sequence concerns a 'documentary' about Micky and Mallory which includes scenes from a movie made about them (departing drastically from 'fact', naturally). Tarantino's script is about the media which makes heroes of psychotic murderers, turning morality on its head. (The inferences, in Stone's film, that people are naturally violent, and the bizarre section with the insightful native Americans, are entirely absent from Tarantino's script).

Pulp Fiction is famous for the obsession of its characters with hamburgers and other commercial trivia as they go about their business of shooting people. When the Samuel L. Jackson character decides to give up being a professional killer, there is little suggestion that he has questioned his career morally; even his religion is just another surface.

"His films could be taken as satires on the collapse of all life into its media-saturated surfaces."

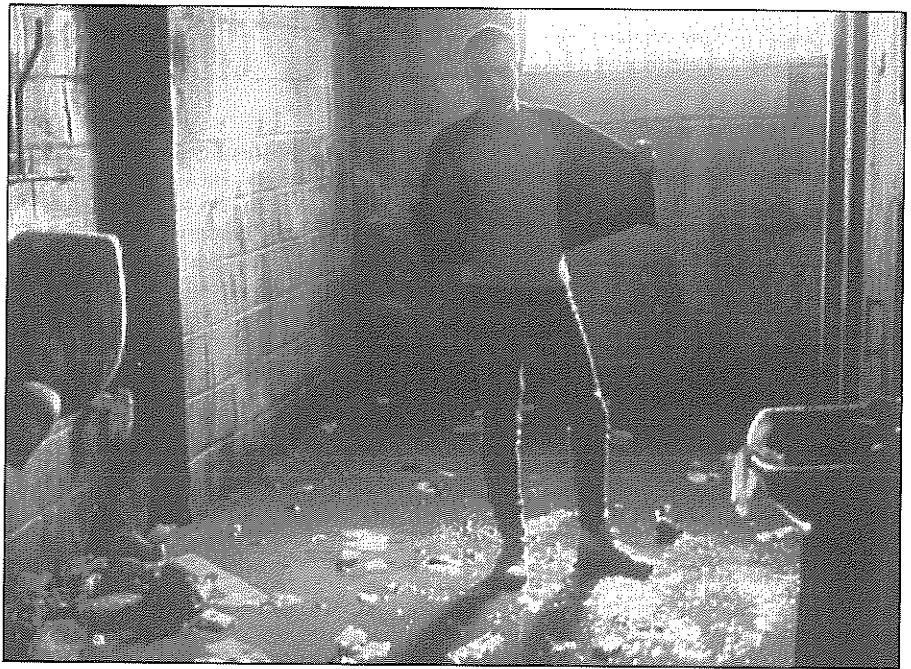
Yet in fact, Tarantino's concerns are less satirical, less political, than this interpretation suggests. This is not to say that the interpretation isn't valid — film like any other art form doesn't necessarily work only on its intended level. But Tarantino's concerns are much more 'self-referential' than that. *True Romance* is self-consciously an 'homage' to Terence Mallick's *Badlands*. *Pulp Fiction* is stuffed full of movie references: the sequence in which Harvey Keitel is brought in to clean up the hitmen's brain-spattered car is less about the dehumanisation of violence than a joke about Mafia 'cleaners' in films.

The episode of *ER* he directed for TV even has visual references to *Reservoir Dogs*.

Rather than satires on the superficiality of contemporary culture, the films are tongue-in-cheek celebrations of it. They are not about 'surfaces'; they are designed to be, so to speak, just another surface, one product of popular culture cross-referencing others. They are, in other words, thoroughly post-modern in their whole conception. Tarantino is not criticising trivialisation, moral inversion and the rest: he is saying, this is how reality is, and isn't it funny?

It seems to me that what makes Tarantino's work nevertheless of considerable value is that by highlighting how funny it is, he does, whatever his intentions, indict it. You might watch John Travolta accidentally blow someone's head off and laugh (I did), and you might think, a la Beavis and Butthead, that it's 'cool' to be like John Travolta. There is no doubt that lots of people do think so. But it isn't cool at all, in reality, and by depicting the 'surface' so vividly, Tarantino exposes it to anyone who wants to see the truth. Doubtless, many viewers of *Reservoir Dogs* find the violence merely entertaining (although in truth there is more blood than actual violence). But buried in the story is an old-fashioned Hollywood tale of 'crime doesn't pay', if you want to see it (even if that's just another movie-buff joke).

Quentin Tarantino is a writer and director of outstanding talent: his dialogue alone is breathtakingly virtuosic. (If Hollywood does start churning out movies full of assassins blithely discussing French hamburgers I think this point will be proven). If he has shaken up the lame formulas of mainstream American film, that can only be good. He is the ultimate post-modernist in film, and suffers from everything that is bad about post-modernism - flippant, soulless, form and style over content. But the end result rises above these limitations, puts the soullessness under scrutiny and exposes it. The joke has a sting in its tail whether it was meant to or not. ■



Renton checks out the worst toilet in Scotland

Endlessly innovative

Edward Ellis reviews

Trainspotting

POSSIBLY the most hyped British movie ever, *Trainspotting* is also one of the best British movies of recent years. From the team who made the unusual thriller *Shallow Grave*, and based on Irving Welsh's cult novel, the film follows a group of Edinburgh skag-heads, and in particular Renton (Ewan McGregor), who wants to kick the habit. After a couple of false starts, he moves to London and is doing okay until two of his mates turn up, one of them on the run following an armed robbery. They drag him back down, until he gets involved in a big heroin sale which, if they get caught, would mean a long jail sentence.

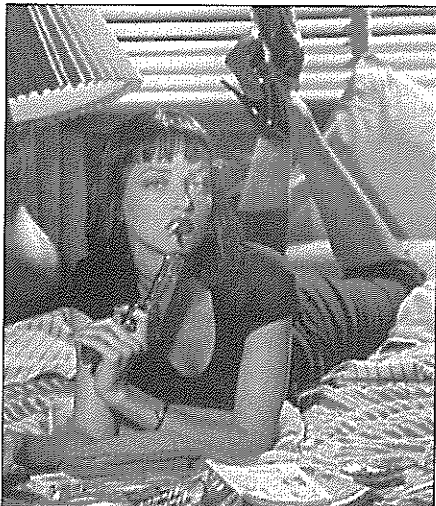
The film has been criticised for glamorising drugs, social irresponsibility, et cetera; I find this is a puzzling judgement. It is certainly not as grim as anti-drugs films like *Christiane F*, but it has hard to see how anyone could conclude from it that drugs (or at least heroin) are great. What it does is explain why people take heroin. *Christiane F* and its kind show how terrible heroin is, but it leave it somewhat mysterious why anyone should take it, except for stupidity. *Trainspotting* con-

trasts the partial joys of being 'out of it' with the grinding misery and pointlessness of 'normal' life. It shows how people take drugs because life is mind-numbingly dull without them, and because the experience itself can be pleasurable.

But it doesn't stop there. One character dies of AIDS — in utter squalor; another loses her baby due to neglect. The life of the addict is hardly portrayed as one of happiness and hope. When Renton gets his lucky break — the chance of really getting clean — it's because of a windfall, and even then his alternative is just as mindnumbingly dull; the difference is that now he can afford a slightly better mindnumbingly dull life.

The film is endlessly innovative, from surreal sequences (such as Renton's celebrated disappearance into the bowl of the worst toilet in Scotland, or his cold turkey hallucinations) to its use of dialogue and its camera angles. It is visually a million miles from the frequent 'British movie' syndrome of looking like an episode of *EastEnders* done on the cheap. It is also very funny.

It cost £1.5 million to make, a tiny fraction of what is spent on most Hollywood blockbusters (*Waterworld* cost \$180 million). An original, compelling movie, showing how vibrant British cinema can be.



Urma Thurman plays "gangster's

Why can't he find the Good Capitalist?

Colin Foster reviews
Will Hutton's book "The
State We're In."

GLIB HOPE is difficult these days. Stalinist "socialism" is defunct. The louder the claims of free-market ideologues, the less capitalism delivers other than unemployment, insecurity, inequality and squalor. Social democracy has abandoned any pretence of seriously transforming capitalism.

Anyone who thinks about the future of society has two basic choices. They can fight for working-class socialism — which, uniting common ownership and control of wealth with thorough economic democracy, contrasts as starkly with Stalinism as with market capitalism — but that means, for the present, fighting against the odds, battling against demoralisation in a bruised and cowed working class. Or they can give up.

Will Hutton's book, now out in paperback after being a best-seller in hardback, owes its success to its spirited and energetic attempt to present a third alternative, a prospect of dramatic improvement within and through the agencies of the established system.

"Britain, the first country to establish parliamentary democracy and modern industry, could become the first country to transform itself peacefully without the spur of some national disaster." Tory Britain is decaying. A Labour-Liberal alliance could "reprise" the "constitutional reforms of the Liberal government at the turn of the century, and the economic and social reshaping of British capitalism by the 1945-51 Labour government."

Hutton's diagnosis is that Britain is blighted by a "governing class" of rentiers — capitalists who live off dividends and financial returns without being directly involved in organising production. Their *economic* dominance, through the City, forces British industry to orient itself to big dividend pay-outs and quick profits. Long-term investment suffers. The obsession with immediate financial results also, argues Hutton, makes it hard for bosses to build up the sort of stable "partnership" with workers which he considers desirable. The *political* dominance of the rentiers, through the Tory party and the scarcely-trammelled "winner takes all" British parliamentary system, with its lack of formal checks and balances on central state power, leads to a system of arrogance at the top, pauperism and demoralisation at the bottom.

Hutton's answer is to link political reform — cutting the power of the Crown, proportional representation, devolution — with the establishment of a network of restraints, negotiations, and institutions to drive finance into a closer partnership with

industry and bosses into a closer partnership with workers. He wants the welfare state restored, but, he says explicitly, on two tiers with the better-off able to get better health and education provision within the state system. "The aim is to imbue the middle class with a sense of their common citizenship, whilst recognising their impulse for self-advancement."

Hutton wants to make British capitalism more of a "moral economy", to lessen its "fundamental amorality." He takes it for granted that capitalism, of one sort or another, is the only possibility; he pleads that morality and long-term profit go together, because market economies never are, nor can be, pure market economies — they always rely on some social and moral framework of co-operation.

Hutton's model for his rather priggish, paternalistic "capitalism-by-committee" is Germany, with its dense web of local autonomies and consultative procedures, and its close long-term links between banks and industry.

The same Germany that has a higher jobless rate than Britain, a more drastic rise of racism and fascism? Hardly. Hutton believes that Germany is suffering only temporary difficulties from reunification. "The new world of 'lean production'... will emphasise its strengths." "The social market is adapting to changed conditions in a unique way."

Generally, Hutton focuses so much on the specific (or allegedly specific) ailments of Britain that he scarcely registers the general, world-wide troubles of capitalism. Unemployment, insecurity, inequality, and eroded welfare are not special to Britain, but, in essence, universal, from Sydney to Stockholm, from Frisco to Frankfurt.

However: surely, between now and socialist revolution, capitalism comes in different variants? And British capitalism is especially marked by its large internationally-oriented finance sector and its lack of formal, legal guarantees for workers and the trade unions. Should we not rally round Hutton's ideas at least as a basis for immediate demands on the next Labour government?

No. He is very far from rousing the British labour movement to struggle even for the most limited aims. He welcomes Tony Blair's "modernising" of the Labour Party, and the fact that "the pressure of the recent Conservative governments" has changed the "culture" of the trade unions. "Rather than see themselves as the embodiment of a Labour movement dedicated to the transformation of capitalism, they have started to redefine themselves as social partners in the management of capitalism." All this he sees not as what it has been in reality — an inseparable part of the Tory drive, which he deplores, to a more brutal capitalism — but as a welcome move away from old utopianism and a reorientation to more realistic projects of change.

And Hutton's key agency for change is not the labour movement — but the age-old mythical figure, the Good Capitalist. In a diagnosis out of date by well over 100 years, he repeatedly describes the Tories as "the party of land and finance" — i.e. not of the industrial and commercial bosses. He is thrilled by the fact that "one or two major companies are considering donations to Labour... in industry and commerce there is growing support for a focus on the values of production rather than finance."

He misses the whole point of capitalism, British or German, regulated or deregulated! Capitalism means production for profit. The time-horizon for calculations of profit may be longer or shorter, but profit is always the aim. Volkswagen, Daimler-Benz, Hoechst and Siemens do not make profits in order to make goods; they make cars, trucks, chemicals and electronic equipment in order to make profits. If you want an economy oriented to production for need, and not the "values of finance", then you must have working-class socialism, not any kind of capitalism.

While Hutton frequently mentions "the governing class" and the "middle class", the working class is absent from his picture of the world. Instead he sees society as divided "30-30-40" — 30% jobless and more or less pauperised; 30% in insecure or marginal employment; and 40% "privileged", in secure full-time employment. "The 31% of the workforce still represented by trade unions generally fall into this category" of the "privileged."

To lump in low-paid postal workers or railworkers — because they still have full-time and relatively secure jobs — with the millionaire class makes no sense. To lump in all pensioners and students and temporarily jobless with the pauper class is equally false.

It is true that inequalities within the working class have increased greatly since 1979. The trade unions are mainly based among workers who have better job security and often better conditions and wages. Yet between the school teacher or white-collar public-service worker, on the one hand, and the cleaner or building worker, on the other, there is a difference of degree; between all these workers and the top one per cent, there is something much greater, a conflict of class interest. The "affluent worker" — the car worker in the 1970s, or the miner in the 1980s, or the French train drivers and school teachers in 1995 — can often lead the whole working class in struggle.

That Hutton's book has been a best-seller shows, at least, that there is a large body of people angry at the destruction of the welfare state and ready to do some serious reading and thinking in order to find an answer. Socialists need to find these people — and convince them that Hutton's is the wrong answer. ■

An open letter to Arthur Scargill

By Kate Ahrens, Pete Firmin, Steve French and Dorothy Macedo, officers of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network

DEAR COMRADE Scargill,

It was agreed at the Annual Conference of the Socialist Campaign Group to write to you, giving our response to the idea of a new "Socialist Labour Party". Following the Hemsworth by-election result, it has become even more important that you consider the opinion of those on the left of the Labour Party who have fought alongside you for socialism over many years.

We consider it vital that, in a discussion about an issue this important, every voice on the left has an opportunity to be heard. It would be folly in the extreme to think that one section of the left could decide to launch a new party, and hope for it to succeed.

We believe the place for socialists in Britain today is inside the Labour Party, fighting for socialism against the Blairite anti-socialist project. We believe that this is still the case despite the removal of Clause Four, despite the refusal to endorse Liz Davies and despite the acceptance of Alan Howarth into the Parliamentary Labour Party.

It is clear that the mass of working people in the country are absolutely desperate to get rid of the Tory government. In the past seventeen years, we have seen brutal attacks on all sections of the working class and there is an overwhelming feeling of despair and defeat. It is crucial in this climate, that those who would be at the forefront of any struggle for socialism help the class as a whole take the first necessary step in regaining their strength. We must help in kicking the Tory government out of office. Without this first step, we can nothing.

In the document *Future Strategy for the Left* you say: "Labour is now almost indistinguishable from the Democratic Party in the United States, Germany's Social Democrats, or, nearer home, the Liberal Democrats. It has changed its policies on all the fundamental issues which have been determined by the Party Conference over many years."

Well, looking at the policies of all the parties mentioned, you would appear to be correct: indeed there is no longer much to choose between the Labour Party's poli-



cies and those of the Tory government. But by looking only a little further back in history, we can see that this is hardly a new situation. All the policies you mention in your document — 'Privatisation, National Minimum Wage, Unemployment, Pensions, Health, Education, Europe, Anti-trade Union Laws' — are all issues which have always been bitterly contested between right and left. The idea that they have been cast in stone since time immemorial and are only now being crushed by Blair is a nonsense.

The fundamental difference between the Labour Party, however right wing its policies are, and the Tories, or the Liberal Democrats, is its link with the working class. And that link was not forged by, nor is it dependent on, the party passing some good policies, or even having Clause Four in its constitution. It is true that the link with the trade unions has been under serious attack over recent years but it is not yet broken, and while that fact remains true, we would be conceding defeat before the battle is over if we left the Party.

In such a situation, the launching of a new party is both premature and a distraction. As was shown by the result in the Hemsworth by-election, such an approach will not reach out to the mass of working people. If a Socialist Labour candidate cannot gain more votes than the Tory or Liberal Democrat candidate even in a place like Hemsworth, surely you must see the folly of standing candidates against the Labour Party in less favourable places.

You say: "Today radical opposition in Britain is symbolised not by the labour and trade union movement but by the groupings such as those which defeated the poll tax, the anti-motorway and animal rights bodies, Greenpeace and other anti-nuclear campaigners and those fighting against opencast mining."

What about the dock dispute in Liverpool? The Scottish postal workers' strike? The JJ Food campaign? Trade union disputes may be at a low ebb, that is only to be expected given seventeen years of continual defeats, but it is not extinct. You also appear to forget the fact that large numbers of Labour Party members, and trade unionists, are involved in, and central to, the campaigns that you cite. You seem to be forgetting the history of struggle in this country when you imply that these campaigns are somehow separate from the

labour and trade union movement.

Ordinary trade unionists and Labour Party members have always been at the forefront of struggles, but other parts of the movement — the leadership — have always sought to hold back, and to check such struggles. The situation today is not different to that faced throughout the history of the labour movement. We face, not the end of struggle inside the Labour Party, but only another stage in the continuing battle between those of us who genuinely want to see socialism and those who mislead the working class through their bureaucratic manoeuvring.

If you truly wish to improve the lives of working class people, then you must agree that the first and most necessary steps to take right now are to get rid of the Tory government and to put concerted and united pressure on the incoming Labour government to implement real change.

In the first instance, that means uniting together people from all through the labour and trade union movement and fighting for those issues where we already have mass support: for a minimum wage — determined by the workers themselves; for renationalisation of the railways; for extra spending to rebuild the Welfare State. These are the areas where we can win, if only we can stick together in the fight for them.

Comrade Scargill, you say that the case for a Socialist Labour Party is overwhelming. But it is the case for socialism that is overwhelming. We are deluding ourselves if we think we can achieve it without the organised political activity of the working class themselves. That will come, and the next stages of it will come with the dispatching of the rotten and corrupt Tory government and their replacement with a Labour government, a government at least partially linked to our class. Please don't distance yourself from the tentative step forward, by pursuing a path away from the Labour Party and the fight which will continue inside it. It is not too late for you and your supporters in the Socialist Labour Party to pull back from this mistaken venture and join with us in our fight inside the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Oppose the Blairite project for the labour movement, of course, but don't oppose the labour movement itself.

Unfair to Bernie Grant

By Alan Thomas

I WAS interested to read your articles "Separate or equal" and "Segregate and repatriate?" in the January issue of *Workers' Liberty*. Of course it's true that black nationalism is a ludicrous and inadequate solution to racial ↯

problems in today's society. I would, of course, accept the vast majority of your arguments on this subject as, indeed, would most socialists.

However, your personal attacks on Bernie Grant were both childish and unnecessary. His ideas about repatriation are daft and totally unrealistic, as you state. But to equate him with those black leaders who have sought pacts with fascists is ridiculous. I know it can be hard at times to distinguish the two, but Michael Howard and the Klan are not quite the same thing! For one thing, Howard is the Home Secretary and therefore someone with whom an MP should argue points regarding social problems. For another, both the Klan and black nationalists would probably be willing to barbecue Howard, who is himself a Jew! Thus, Grant talking to Howard is not the same as Garvey meeting the Klan or Elijah Muhammed meeting the US Nazi Party.

Grant's message, erroneous though it is, is not "in effect... what the Powellite Tories, the National Front and the British National Party have been saying all along." A naive and unrealistic scheme for voluntary, free repatriation of black people to some mythical motherland is not the same as posting shit to them in order to force them out of neighbourhoods! The AWL should get this in perspective: Grant's politics are naive and misdirected, not racist or evil.

Finally, surely Grant's willingness to work on a regular basis with the white-dominated Parliamentary Labour Party, shows that he is far from being an "inverted racist." Someone who considered whites to be somehow evil or inferior would hardly have accepted a joint ticket with (white) Ken Livingstone in the post-1992 Labour leadership contest! Such insults just make your argument look shallow and juvenile.

Overall, you've got it right — unlike the matter of the AWL's sympathy for Billy Hutchinson's UVF front organisation, the PUP. However, childish insults and slurs against those who are merely misguided, are not the way to further an adult, socialist debate on such an important issue.

Against all immigration control?

By Brad Cleveland

THE REVOLUTIONARY left has always called for the abolition of all immigration controls; it was, for example, one of the issues which distinguished the far left from reformists and liberals in the Anti-Nazi League in the late 1970s. I'm not sure, however, that it is the right demand to raise.

Socialists are, of course, against nations and borders, and in favour of uniting people across the world. We are in favour of people's right to live and work wherever they wish. The problem with the political culture which the left has created around 'no to immigration controls' is that it has defined anything less than the complete abolition of such controls as reformist at best, and racist at worst.

"Abstract demands for open borders and a failure to address specific issues equally play into the hands of racists."

Thus the only real campaigns around immigration issues are either responses to specific new attacks (like the Asylum and Immigration Bill), or over specific deportations, or small campaigns involving just the revolutionary left (or, more accurately, whichever left group has set up the campaign in question). Campaigns to amend or reform the existing immigration legislation are treated with suspicion, or condemned as 'capitulating to racism.'

For example, the Stonewall Immigration Group has been campaigning for a couple of years or more for equality in the immigration rules' treatment of the partners of British

lesbians and gay men. Currently, the rules explicitly discriminate against 'same-sex' relationships. Of course, equality would leave the immigration laws as a whole intact, and some on the left have concluded either explicitly, or in unstated general attitudes, that the campaign is misguided, accepts the racist assumptions of the law, and so on. The trouble is that lesbian and gay couples threatened with forcible separation can't wait until the socialist revolution and the abolition of borders; their relationships are under immediate threat.

I think this 'maximalist' attitude applies to a wide range of issues. There are innumerable areas in the law which could be vigorously campaigned against. For example: improving people's rights of appeal; giving greater powers to tribunals (which currently can only make recommendations, unless the person has been in the UK legally for seven years, and whose recommendations are invariably then ignored by the Home Office); creating reciprocal agreements with specific countries (as apply to the EC); specifying countries which have an urgent 'refugee problem' and speeding up asylum processing in precisely the opposite sense to the government's current Bill, i.e. making it easier, not more difficult, to get asylum; improving people's rights to be joined by their families (and widening the definition of family); abolishing the visa system; ending the discriminatory nature of 'work permits' (at present you have to prove you are not taking a job for which a British citizen is equally qualified); and so on.

These would constitute important reforms, and would vastly improve the lives of thousands of people. (I am not dogmatic about these proposals in particular; I'm trying to make a general case for fighting around specific demands.) Yet the Left would tend to be deeply uncomfortable with a campaign around any or all of these demands, on the grounds that they appear to accept the legitimacy of immigration controls.

The central argument for putting opposition to all controls centre stage is that anything less, by capitulating to racist assumptions, will end up feeding racism, and by implication, fascism. This can be true, if the argument is presented as an alternative to 'unreasonable demands' for unlimited immigration. But it need not be; and it could also be that abstract demands for open borders and a failure to address specific issues — and therefore a failure to campaign, instead relying entirely on abstract propaganda — equally play into the hands of racists.

I am not advocating that socialists make propaganda in favour of immigration controls; and we should make propaganda for 'freedom of movement', the right of anyone to work in Britain regardless of nationality, the need to provide sanctuary for refugees — in other words, break the issue of immigration down into concrete areas, and campaign vigorously around them. 'End all immigration controls' seems to me too abstract, and carries too much emotional and political baggage, and so militates against a serious campaign.

Revolutionary History

Latest issue just out!

Trotskyism in Poland

Repression of the Left in 'People's Poland'
Solidarity, the Church and the State

£3.95 + 80p p&p, cheques to Socialist Platform Ltd
BCM 7646, London WC1N 3XX

The "IS-SWP tradition" 9

The experience of the left

To help traumatised ex-members of the IS-SWP get their political bearings and to establish before younger readers its real history, we continue our symposium on the "IS/SWP tradition."

Some of those who participate in this symposium have moved a long way

from the politics they had in the IS/SWP, and from the politics of *Workers' Liberty* now. Nonetheless, at the end of this discussion we — and the thinking left in general — will be better equipped to formulate the lessons of the IS-SWP experience.

When IS went sour

By Pete Keenlyside*

I JOINED International Socialists (IS) in April 1972 and was expelled in August 1975.

I joined in Cardiff where at the start we had three members. For about a year the local organisation had a shaky, middle-class existence. In the months before the February '74 election, we began to grow quickly, on a diet of anti-Toryism. The general mood in the movement at that time was virulently anti-Tory. IS swam with the tide. A lot of workers joined up.

By mid-1974 IS had set up perhaps 40 or 50 factory groups. Nevertheless, IS had no idea how to relate to a Labour government. What we built soon fell to bits. A year into a Labour government, not one of the jerry-built factory groups existed.

The character of the organisation changed radically over this period. At the first conference I attended, in 1972 or 1973, there was one delegate for every five members. Conference was open to all members. By 1974 the delegates came from District organisations and the effect of this change was to make it nearly impossible for dissidents to attend. In 1975 the members were not even told where the conference was to be held!

In 1972 members still received National Committee minutes with records of votes and what was said. People with differing views were, at that time, still elected to the NC — although even then there was some messing about. The joke was that the centre always had a "worker of the year" elected. Whoever had led a particular strike was pushed as the "worker of the year" to go on to the National Committee.

Now, there is nothing wrong in principle with pushing workers forward for NC places — but merely having led a strike is not necessarily a qualification for political leadership.

This procedure was a piece of sand-in-the-eyes tokenism by the leadership. The

"worker of the year" only lasted a year, was replaced by the next star worker, and — usually — never seen or heard of again.

Even so, at that time the national leadership still felt it necessary to go to meetings and argue their case with the members.

The cult of Cliff was in its early stages. But gradually things changed.

There were a few real or concocted security scares, with the police. They were used to justify stopping the circulation of NC minutes to the members. One day we got a circular telling us to burn all our internal documents — dutifully we went down to the bottom of our gardens and set fire to the stuff — real shades of Healy and the Socialist Labour League.

My expulsion took place in August 1975 for "factional activity". I was a member of the Left Faction, who were expelled as a group two months later.

I was given a sort of trial by the local District Committee and was suspended. I then got a letter from the National Secretary, Jim Nichol, telling me that I had been expelled. I had no hearing or any sort of right to defend myself.

My expulsion, and that of another Cardiff Left Faction member, had been secretly prepared, in advance, by the national centre. I had some glimpse of how they were working: I was the paper sales organiser and I turned up at a comrade's house to deliver his papers, and there discovered a Central Committee member in the front room; I went to a local union fraction meeting with the papers and found Duncan Hallas in attendance, preparing.

I think they got rid of the two of us first because we had a lot of contact with the working-class members whom we had just helped to recruit — and they needed to get rid of us quickly.

Then, in October 1975 the Left Faction were asked to dissolve and stop fighting for their politics. They refused and were booted out. I had originally joined the Left Faction in 1972. I thought that the problem with IS was not just that they had the wrong politics

— which they did on a lot of issues — but that for IS, politics was always an optional extra.

A lot of the previous contributions to the *Workers' Liberty* symposium on the IS-SWP tradition just simply miss this point. They have said: IS did this wrong and that wrong, but basically they were OK. I do not accept that.

The root problem is that politics for IS were always after-the-decision justifications for pragmatic, opportunistic twisting and turning. Politics was invoked to preach 'good' reasons; the real reasons were not political apart from the politics of "building the party", on any basis.

The most striking example, initially, was over the Irish question. I was aware of the discussion in 1969. IS continued to manoeuvre on the issue, and this was the issue that the Left Faction was initially most concerned with.

Later, in the run up to the 1975 EEC referendum — and I distinctly remember this — we received a bundle of leaflets which said something like "No to price rises, Yes to a socialist united states of Europe" — not perfect, but at least the germ of internationalism was there. The next week we received another bundle which said "No to price rises, No to the EEC", with instructions to throw away the first lot of leaflets. There was no political accounting, and the explanation was simply that the IS leadership wanted to sail with the nationalist tide which was running against Europe. Even if they were right — and they weren't! — on the issue, this was no way to proceed.

After the 1973 conference the first Left Faction dissolved. I think the faction leadership at that time were closer to the IS leadership's positions than some of the rest of us. I voted not to dissolve the faction.

Later the Left Faction — very much under *Workers' Fight's* influence [*Workers' Fight* was a forerunner of *Workers' Liberty*] — developed much deeper, broader criticisms of IS and became a tendency rather than a faction. By the end we realised that it was not just necessary to oppose particular IS positions, but that winning votes at conference meant nothing in an organisation where the leadership would ignore any conference decisions it did not agree with.

The Left Faction did not actually advocate membership of the Labour Party. But by the time of my expulsion I was certainly of the opinion that IS should send members in. Even if it had sent in half its 4,000 members it could have made a radical impact on the Labour Party as it was then. Perhaps the Labour left would have won all the battles of the late '70s and early '80s — instead of going down to eventual defeat. Things could have been very different for the class as a whole. And for that alone the IS leaders bear a great responsibility. ■

* Pete Keenlyside is an activist in the Communication Workers' Union.

The ABCs: 1

Marxism and nationalism

By Mark Sandell

MARXISTS are internationalists not only because we have a personal commitment to fight for the liberation of all people regardless of race, sex, or creed, but also because we understand the need for international working-class solidarity.

The world market enslaves all workers. Capital, factories and financial investment can be moved rapidly to those countries with cheaper workers or weaker trade unions. Capitalism is a world economic system. To replace it with socialism we will have to build a world-wide workers' movement, to form the basis of an alternative world-wide economic system.

However, nationalism is still important and popular in the working classes of many countries around the world. Despite the international nature of capitalism, national divisions and nationalist politics continue to have deep roots in modern society.

Nationalism, as a political movement, developed alongside capitalism from the seventeenth century onwards. In country after country the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie, in an effort to create unified national markets which they could exploit, drew workers and small farmers into political movements to smash up the feudal order of the kings and barons. They consolidated their fight for power by stirring up national sentiments and using nationalist ideology.

The nationalism of the upcoming bourgeoisie was progressive in as much as it opposed the "nation" or the "people" to the narrower authority of the king and the aristocracy. This was a revolutionary nationalism but it also laid the foundations for justifying colonialism, racism and xenophobia. Nationalism is as dangerous as a razor blade which cuts both ways.

Socialists need to deal with the national question because of such strong historical roots but also because nationality and national identity can be the source of oppression for many workers.

In Kurdistan, in former Yugoslavia, in East Timor, in Palestine, people have been denied political and social rights — even the right to speak their own language — or murdered because of their nationality. In short, they have been denied the right to decide how to rule themselves, as a nation, by larger and stronger nations.

Socialists cannot tell Kurdish workers that only their class matters, not their nationality. They face death precisely because of their nationality. To ignore this would show a lack of human compassion and cut socialists off from the workers suffering oppression. Socialists have to champion the national rights of every nation.

The Bolshevik Party developed a policy of "the right of all nations to self-determination". They worked in a Russian Empire where many nations were trapped and oppressed by an tyrannical state ruled by the Tsar. Trotsky summarised the policy like this: "...recognition of the right to secession and independent existence for each national portion of the state.

"In so far as the various nationalities voluntarily or through force of necessity, coexist within the borders of one state their cultural interests must find the highest possible satisfaction within the framework of the broadest regional (and consequently territorial) autonomy, including statutory guarantees of the rights of each minority."

"The Bolsheviks argued that if socialists combined class struggle politics with support for self-determination they could build trust between workers of oppressed and oppressor nation."

The point of such an approach is not to boost nationalism but to undermine it. Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued that if Russian socialists combined class struggle politics with support for self-determination they could build trust between workers of oppressed and oppressor nation. They could also provide an alternative focus to the bourgeois nationalists in the oppressed nations.

To achieve such a combined policy socialists need to build working-class organisations independent of the bourgeois parties with a programme integrating the fight for national rights with the working-class socialist revolution.

After his death Lenin's ideas were distorted by Stalin to justify giving up the fight for socialist revolution and linking up instead with bourgeois nationalists in oppressed countries. Sadly this Stalinist version of self-determination lives on today, including among many groups who call themselves "Trotskyist". Trotsky vigorously opposed the Stalinist policy on the national question.

According to the Stalinists and the pseudo-Trotskyists the world is divided into

"good" (oppressed) and "bad" (oppressing) nations and which is good, which is bad, is set in stone, it does not change over time. History shows us that an oppressor nation can become a minor power, and sometimes an oppressed nation. For instance the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) once ruled over vast parts of the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Turkey is now a minor power, a relatively backward capitalist country. It is however an oppressor of the Kurds. The Tamils were an advantaged minority in Sri Lanka, then became an oppressed group. The Jews were the most oppressed group in Europe, then became oppressors of the Arabs in Israel.

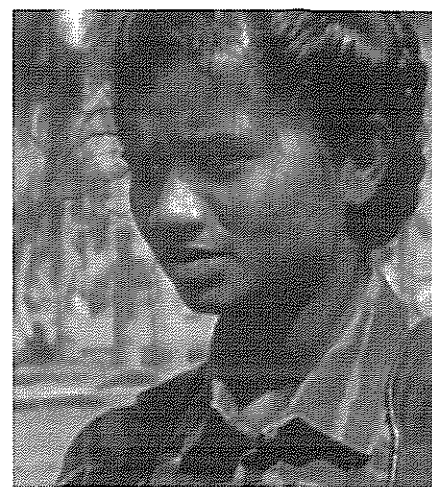
Lenin argued socialists should fight for consistent democracy on the national question: "A struggle against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation, and no toleration of the striving for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation".

By adopting a scheme of good nations and bad nations many left groups have abandoned Lenin's idea of consistent democracy. They champion Palestinian nationalism and support the destruction of the Israeli nation state by the surrounding Arab states.

They champion the "Catholic" nationalism of Sinn Féin/IRA, and ignore the legitimate fears of the Protestant working class of being oppressed within a united Ireland.

In the last analysis the good nation/bad nation scheme writes off the working class of the so-called bad nation — the Israeli working class or the Irish Protestant working class.

In the last decade the Alliance for Workers' Liberty has tried to resurrect the Bolsheviks' ideas on the national question, in particular their notion of consistent democracy. ■



A Tamil Tiger.

We must study the inter-relations

And explanation of
dialectical materialism by
Edward Conze
(continued from WL28)

SCIENTIFIC method demands that we should study things in their inter-relation with one another, and with the purpose we have in mind when studying them. Lenin called this the "spirit and essence of the dialectic", and few men have practised it better than he did. In itself, this demand is rather meaningless. It gains life only by being applied. The capacity to think adequately cannot be learned by heart. It is acquired only by much exercise and practice in tackling concrete problems. A knowledge of the scientific method is no substitute for this exercise, just as reading a book on golf will never in itself make a man a golfer.

Generally speaking, we understand something only by seeing it in relation to or in connection with other things. Take a chair, for example. As long as we merely repeat the word "chair", we learn nothing about it. Whatever we may know about the chair, we can express in sentences about it. In these sentences we relate this chair to other objects. We say: "This chair is hard or black or ugly." This means that our mind connects this chair with other hard (or soft), black (or not black), ugly (or beautiful) objects. Each thing stands in some relation to everything else in the world. It is thus fully understood only if all its relations are known. Therefore it has been said that to know one thing completely is to know everything.

In the case of this chair, the reader need strain his fancy only a little in order to see the point. Its temperature is influenced by a depression thousands of miles away. Its molecules are hit by radio waves from Milan and Tokyo and continually broken up by cosmic rays from the stratosphere. Its weight depends on the earth and the latter's position among the stars. The light which falls upon it connects it with the sun. We might go on indefinitely with this enumeration.

The philosopher sums up — everything is inter-related with everything else. The poet expresses the same idea by saying:

"Thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star."

But actually, we never worry about all these properties of our chair. We are satisfied when we know those of its qualities which are of practical importance for us, like stability, size or beauty. We normally try to understand things, because we want to handle or control them better. There are, of course, people who want to know a lot of things which are of no conceivable

*"We think inadequately
about British
democracy if we
overlook the actual
form that democracy
takes and the actual
social circumstances
under which it operates
and may cease to
operate."*



use to anybody in the world. There are many theoreticians who imagine that their dignity is bound up with the uselessness of their results. The ruling class often deliberately feeds the minds of the working class with a knowledge which is entirely useless for the working people, in order to lead them away from the class struggle. But these exceptions show only that intelligence, like everything else, can be put to a wrong use.

Reason, rightly used, guides us in our practical control of things. Guided by the practical purpose we have in mind, we are satisfied with knowing one section out of the infinite number of relations, qualities and properties of an object. We know of something if our knowledge of that thing contains everything we need for our practical purposes. The owner of a bicycle knows his bicycle when he knows enough about it to be able to ride and occasionally repair it. The amount of things which the producer of bicycles must know about them, in order to have a successful knowledge, is of course much greater. The wealth of our knowledge of a subject is relative to our practical purposes.

Our knowledge reflects or copies reality. We have a correct idea of a thing if we know those of its properties and relations which are important for our practical control of the thing.

Scientific method lays special stress upon this aspect of correct thinking, because it is so very common to look at things and events apart from their inter-relations with one another, and apart from our purpose.

A man would think quite wrongly if he considered the question of building a bridge or a road or a house without regard to the peculiar circumstances in which this bridge or road or house is to be built. Again, when a man is riding a bicycle, the peculiar circumstances are, for example,

the state of the road, the other vehicles and the traffic signs on the road. A person would not ride a bicycle well if (being inattentive or drunk) he were to ignore all these special circumstances and overlook these important factors in the concrete situation. The result would be that he soon would be knocked down; practical defeat always follows wrong thinking.

The reader will think that there is nobody foolish enough to behave in such a way. And yet, in social questions people do behave in that way daily. We can distinguish three principal violations of the first law of scientific method.

Wrong thinking

OUR attitude to something is faulty if we do not look at the thing as we meet it in our practical life, but in a general way. We can, for example, discuss democracy as pure democracy, and dwell on its merits. But this is quite valueless, because in our everyday life and struggle we have nothing to do with pure democracy or the idea of democracy. "Democracy" is an empty word. The only thing which exists and can interest us practically is "parliamentary bourgeois democracy in contemporary Britain." We think inadequately about British democracy if we overlook the actual form that democracy takes and the actual social circumstances under which it operates and may cease to operate. The practical consequence of speaking thus about democracy is to make a fetish of it and to sacrifice everything in order to keep it, even things which are far more valuable. The German social democrats conceded wage cuts between 1930 and 1933 in order to save democracy; they lost both wages and democracy, since the workers could scarcely be expected to fight very ardently for trade unions which had consented to numerous wage cuts "in the interest of democracy." The practical

Teach yourself socialism

consequence of seeing democracy as it actually is — is to regard it as a special form of capitalist control which gives certain facilities to the working class, but only on condition that the workers behave, or are strong enough to compel the granting of these facilities.

When we think about democracy we should do so for the practical purpose of finding out what it means for the emancipation of the working class. Whenever we look at any social question, we must see it its bearing upon the practical emancipation of the working class. The real function of British democracy in the class struggle is of supreme importance in this respect. To leave that out of consideration leads to theoretical error and practical impotence.

Generally speaking, thinking that violates the first law of scientific method neglects parts of a question or factors in a situation which are important for our practical attitude to this question or situation.

By remaining in the sphere of vague and merely verbal abstractions, and by stressing the similarities between all democracies, we take no notice of the fundamental differences between them. It is wrong to state that "democracy is — democracy." For all practical purposes, there is all the difference in the world between bourgeois parliamentary democracy and working class democracy. It is equally wrong to say that "war is — war" and to treat all wars alike. We then overlook just those differences between the different types of war which should be decisive in forming the attitude of members of the working class to those wars in which their ruling class involves them.

Lenin showed in 1920 how foolish it is to decide for or against compromises quite generally or in the abstract, without basing the decision in each case on "the concrete conditions of each compromise." His *'Left Wing' Communism — an Infantile Disorder* fully illustrates this point of the scientific method.

Many fascist and orthodox theoreticians regard imperialism as simply the vague desire to extend one's power and territory. Imperialism, as a historical reality, is always more than a policy of conquest in general. Imperialism, defined abstractly, is the "desire for expansion." But this abstract definition becomes a false definition, if it is used to explain some actually existing form of imperialism. In saying, for example, that Britain, like Rome, etc., is expanding its influence over the world because it is the natural desire of all societies to expand, the differences between Roman and British imperialism are glossed over. The economic circumstances in which this policy of expansion takes place are left out of account. A correct idea of imperialism is the desire for expansion plus some economic motive for this expansion. This motive can be settlement of surplus population, trade, plunder, etc. The special form of imperialism will depend on the economic and class structure of the society which expands.

The peculiarities of modern imper-

alism — on which imperialism our practical interest naturally centres — are brought out only if we see its roots in the very structure of a developed capitalist country. Modern imperialism is the necessity for finance capital to expand, owing to the pressure not of some vague "will to power", but of its very real surplus products. This correct definition of imperialism is indispensable for all practical purposes, e.g. for an efficient fight against imperialism. We can thus abolish imperialism, which demands so many sacrifices from workers all over the world, not by the moral reform of ambitious statesmen or by passing pious resolutions against it. We must destroy its roots by abolishing the economic system of capitalism which makes imperialist exploitation a necessity.

*"Scientific method
carefully studies the
mistakes of the past,
in order to avoid
them in the future,
and from the past it
takes the lessons for
the present struggle."*

Things do not exist in "purity"

WE never meet with pure social phenomena. Pure capitalist countries, for instance, do not exist. In Germany, to take an example, the capitalist system is blended with feudal elements (the Junkers and the military caste) and small producers (peasant farmers, artisans). The non-capitalist elements got a strong political influence in Nazism and partly account for the anti-capitalist character of the Nazi movement. Their influence gives to the anti-capitalist propaganda of the Nazis a reality which we never can understand if we regard Germany as a purely capitalist country.

But is Britain a pure capitalist country? The feudal lords have almost entirely merged into the business world. The military caste is small and enjoys little respect. Few peasants have survived the vicissitudes of the industrial revolution. The percentage of persons engaged in agriculture has steadily declined from 12.5% in 1881 to 5.6% in 1931. And yet, Britain can appear as an almost pure capitalist country only if we look at the geographical unit and not at the British economic system as a whole.

A pure capitalist country cannot exist. Capitalism needs as its complement vast non-capitalist agricultural districts. Events in these agricultural districts deeply affect

the industrial areas of the world. We shall never be able to understand what happens in Britain if we keep our eyes fixed on events at home. Since about 1900, we have entered into the stage of a world economy in which each capitalist country is inter-related with the rest of the world. What happens, for instance, to the farmers in Asia is as important for us as what happens at home. A concrete study of British capitalism must give serious attention to the peasant revolt in Asia, which is far away geographically, but very near home economically. In Russia, the peasant revolt put the Bolsheviks into power and, in consequence, a very large country ceased to be available for capitalist investment on a large scale. In China and India the hunger of the peasants undermines the power of British imperialism. The Lancashire worker goes hungry because the Indian peasant does. And last, but not least, the ruin of the Japanese peasant has brought about that frantic industrialisation of Japan which drives British goods from the markets of the Pacific, Southern Asia and Africa. Pure capitalism does not exist even in England, because the peasants that are scattered over the vast spaces of the world form a part of British capitalism.

Lenin, in 1921, gave a scientific analysis of the different economic systems which coexist under the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia. He found five of them — (1) patriarchal peasant economy; (2) simple commodity production; (3) private capitalism; (4) state capitalism; (5) socialism. This analysis has remained the key for the understanding of Soviet Russia. In the meantime, private capitalism has been destroyed almost completely, but bureaucratic state capitalism has grown immensely. It is very unscientific to talk about the "gigantic steps towards socialism" in the USSR and to forget the other factors in the situation, especially 4.

Danger of isolating facts

IN another way we think unscientifically if we isolate one fact or event from all other facts or events with which it is connected and which account for its changes.

Biology studies man not in isolation, but as one of a number of related species. In psychology we can study our "mind" only in its close connection with our bodily and social activities, which to a great extent build it up. Without constantly referring to them, we are unable to give a scientific explanation of what happens in our mind.

Each social fact or event must be considered in connection with the economic system on which it stands. We have already demonstrated this in the case of democracy. It is impossible to get the right view about fascism by looking only at fascist shirts, violence and spectacular nonsense. We must understand fascism as a manifestation of the economic system under which we live. No social events at which we may look at the present time in Europe will appear to us in the true light unless we see how they grow out of finance capital-

ism planning for war. All of them fulfil some function in this economic system. When seen in isolation, Nazism, wars and tariffs appear as the unintelligible outcome of sheer stupidity and madness.

Looking ahead

SCIENTIFIC method is interested not only in the thing as it is now, but as it was yesterday. It is interested in the past history of the thing. Scientific method carefully studies the mistakes of the past, in order to avoid them in the future, and from the past it takes the lessons for the present struggle. Science is especially interested in what the thing will be tomorrow, for science is greatly concerned with the "tendencies" of a thing's movement and development. No scientific understanding is possible without the capacity for looking ahead. We regard an astronomer as a scientist, because he can foresee years ahead an eclipse of the sun. Lack of foresight is one of the main causes of the subjection of the working class. Because the ordinary person so often sees only what is directly before his eyes, he can be easily duped. Scientific method sees in peace the coming war and in war the coming peace. Most people "foresee" events only a fortnight after they have happened. Many people whose eyes are fixed on what just now is, will believe in the coming war only when they smell the poison gas in their nostrils. Scientific method foresees in prosperity the coming depression and expects in depressions the coming prosperity. The scientific mind saw in the rise of the British Empire the germs of its decay, as Napoleon did 120 years ago. It sees in the victory of German social democracy in 1918 the germ of its destruction through fascism. It sees in fascism already the forces which drive it to its own destruction in a new war.

Social events, however, can never be predicted with absolute certainty. Why could we be quite sure years ago that the sun would be partially eclipsed in 1935 on June 30th? Because this event depends only on three factors which we know well, that is the movements of the earth, sun and moon. These three bodies move in fairly regular paths. They form an almost isolated system in which new factors very rarely interfere. If another, now distant, star suddenly moved into the neighbourhood of sun, moon or earth, our prediction, of course, would break down.

Why could nobody be sure, years ahead, that in 1934, on June 30th, Hitler would murder his pals? Because this event depended on thousands and thousands of factors, factors so numerous that it was impossible to survey them all.

Apart from that, it is a fundamental rule of scientific method that we can foresee only "tendencies." What do we mean by this word "tendency"? Marx defined a "tendency" as a "law, the operation of which is checked, retarded or weakened by counteracting influences."

In the social sciences, the emergence of new, unforeseen circumstances is rather

frequent. To take an example: Ricardo assumed that agricultural rents in Britain would rise with the growth of the population. His reasoning was quite correct. But later on a new factor arose. The virgin land of America was thrown open to agriculture and cheap wheat from America drove agricultural rents down. Ricardo correctly foresaw the "tendency" for agricultural rents to rise; but a counteracting force checked this tendency.

Marx in 1867 predicted that the growth of capitalism would be accompanied by the increasing misery of the working class and increasing unemployment. In actual fact, the situation of the working class improved in the capitalist countries during the following 50 years, the real wages went up and unemployment did not grow perceptibly. The revisionists and reformists regarded Marx as refuted and based their case mainly on this rise in the standard of the working class.

Marx, however, had only maintained that the growth of capitalism created a "tendency" to impoverish the masses more and more. He says of the law of the increasing misery of the masses: "Like all other laws, it is modified in its actual working by numerous considerations, with the analysis of which we are not here concerned."

What was the counteracting force in this case? Two factors need special emphasis: (1) Emigration to America and Australia absorbed a great part of the European surplus population, at the rate of about one million a year; (2) imperialist expansion opened up markets which for a long time appeared inexhaustible.

Labour is more and more displaced by machines and consequently more and more workers will be unemployed, but emigration and imperialism as counteracting forces reduce the number of unemployed for a time. In other words, the new factors delay the operation of Marx's law. But in the long run their counteraction exhausted itself. Emigration has practically ceased and the colonial markets are shrinking steadily. Mass unemployment is therefore visible to everybody.

Our political activities will gain in precision if we see that we can predict tendencies only and keep in mind that something new may happen of which we did not think beforehand. Whenever capitalism was in difficulty, Marxists predicted its speedy collapse. The futility of these prophecies should warn us that scientific method does not furnish us with the omniscience theologians attribute to God.

To sum up the first law of scientific method. Whenever we think or have thought about a question, we should ask ourselves — (1) Did I, in studying it, consider everything relevant for the purpose which the working class and I should pursue? (2) Did I see it in the context in which it stands? (3) Did I consider its tendencies? Nobody who repeatedly and consistently applies these tests to the results of his thinking can fail to experience a widening of his understanding of the world. ■

Workers' Liberty publications

How to save the Welfare State	95p
New problems, new struggles: a handbook for trade unionists	90p
We stand for Workers' Liberty	£1.50
A workers' guide to Ireland	95p
The lies against socialism answered	50p
How to beat the racists	95p
Socialism and democracy	£1.95
1917: how the workers made a revolution	60p
Israel/Palestine: two nations, two states!	30p
Magnificent miners: the 1984-5 strike	75p
The case for socialist feminism	£1.50
Socialists answer the New Right	£1.50

Issues for socialists

Socialists and the Labour Party: the case of the Walton by-election	£1
Why Labour lost	80p
Arabs, Jews and socialism	£3
Ireland: the socialist answer	£2
Why Yugoslavia collapsed	75p
East Europe: towards capitalism or workers' liberty?	60p
Solidarity with the South	
African socialists	£1

The AWL and the left

Is the SWP an alternative?	75p
Open letter to a supporter of <i>Militant</i>	20p
Why the SWP beats up its socialist critics	80p
A tragedy of the left: <i>Socialist Worker</i> and its splits	£2
Seedbed of the left: the origins of today's far-left groups	£1.50
Their polemics and ours: excerpts from <i>Socialist Organiser</i> and <i>Socialist Outlook</i>	90p

Education bulletins

Marxism and black nationalism	£1.50
Study notes on <i>Capital</i>	£2.50

Cheques payable to "WL Publications" to: Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Please add 20% to cover postage and packing. Orders over £10 post free.

Overseas prices on request, or in Australia, from WL, PO Box 313, Leichhardt 2040; in USA, from Barry Finger, 153 Henderson Place, East Windsor, NJ 08520.

Rebuild the Welfare State!

OVER £600 billions of money are in circulation in Britain. Total incomes are about £13 to £14 billion a week. To rebuild the Welfare State would take maybe £40 billion a year. That would be enough to pay for all the demands of the current welfare-state campaigns — free education, restored health service, reduced class sizes, renovations to school and hospital buildings, nursery provision, new housing, increased pensions and benefits — yet it is less than £1 billion a week.

Whatever the obstacles to such demands, lack of cash certainly isn't one. Is it a lack of real resources?

Not that, either. The number of hospital beds in the Health Service has gone down by one third since 1979. Yet the number of beds in private hospitals and nursing homes has gone up by the same number. There are not fewer beds. Equally, one-third of the health-care staff in Britain now are in the private sector. The resources are there — they're just in different hands.

The 10% or so of school teachers who work in private schools are not enough to make up the shortfall in education. Yet there are tens of thousands of qualified teachers jobless or in work outside teaching which does not use their qualifications. Schools are sacking teachers. Again, the resources are available — but squandered.

Hundreds of thousands of people qualified and willing to do ancillary work in the Health Service and education are on the dole. Nearly half a million building workers are jobless, and there are vast stockpiles of bricks.

If the welfare state were restored, and a decent minimum wage introduced, then the previously poor — jobless, low-paid, pensioners, students... — would eat better and dress better. Would that strain the available real resources?

No. The European Union pays farmers *not* to produce. Whereas for thousands of years virtually all the labour power of society, applied to the land, could not reliably produce enough to feed everyone, today about 2% of the workforce in Britain can do it. It is hard to disentangle exactly how much of society's labour time goes to producing the basics of life — food, clothing, housing, education, health-care, transport, and, of course, the equipment and raw materials used as inputs for all these — but it is probably no more than 25% in Britain. Some of the "overhead" labour — wholesale and retail, banking and book-keeping — would be necessary in any society, but not most of it.

Price £1.20/60p (UK)

(\$2.50 US; \$4 Australia)

IR£1.40 Ireland, FFr15 France,

DM4 Germany, R4 South Africa)

ISSN 0960-8753



We can afford free education. Photo: Mark Salmon

The world's natural resources, the existing technology, and the available labour force, are not sufficient — and perhaps fortunately so — to enable everyone to live like Princess Di. They are amply sufficient for everyone to have a comfortable life, a good education, and adequate health care.

That, however, is not how it works. Resources, technology and labour are deployed differently. They are allocated by the ebbs and flows and signals of those coloured bits of paper called "money" — diverted to wasteful or harmful "manufactured needs", to the luxuries of the rich, or held idle by the rich.

The demand to tax the rich is highly justified as against Tony Blair's promises to bosses that Labour will increase no taxes, and could certainly yield improvements. Successive Tory tax cuts now put £10 billion a year extra into the pockets of the top 10%, while the majority pay *higher* taxes. Dividend, rent and interest payments to individuals currently total £73 billion a year.

At least £30 billion a year (after current taxes) goes in over-the-top salaries to managers and professionals. Of the money collected by the state, £22 billion a year is spent on the military.

Yet we should go further than these figures, for two reasons. The first is that £10 billion is less than £40 billion: the proper rebuilding of the welfare state requires more than can be got from easy immediate tax increases. The second is that to focus attention on £10 billion, or even £40 billion, to be taxed or not taxed, is to leave the course of the other £600 billion of national income unexamined. It is to accept the market as the basic, "natural", economic regulator, and confine ourselves to nibbling at the edges.

Because we have never lived under any other regime, the capitalist market may look like an eternal fact of nature. It is not. It was created, and is reproduced, by particular human actions; it can be replaced by different human choices.

Our economic world is one of *social relations between things* — goods, services, money, all exchanging with each other in ways apparently prescribed by their objective nature, outside the scope of human choice — with human relations subordinate. As long as capitalism is the framework, that seems natural. Yet in a longer view, all those goods and services, and the relations between them, are no more than the products of human activity.

Karl Marx argued that commodities can be equated, and measured as higher or lower on a single linear scale (10p to £10 billion) only because they all represent more or less of a single social substance, social labour-time. The market relations of commodities are a "fetishised" way of forcing the labour of each individual into line with social-average labour and allocating to each commodity a value corresponding to the social-average labour it represents.

The value of commodity *labour-power* is determined by the social labour-time it represents, that is, the social labour-time embodied in an average "living wage" for the whole working class (costs of children, etc., included). But the exchange in which labour-power is bought and sold has a special character. The workers sell not this or that item, but their *productive life-activity*; the capitalists buy the *whole creative power of society*. The capitalists "consume" the labour-power they have bought by making the workers work — by turning labour-power into labour. Profits come from the difference between the new value produced by that labour and the "living wage."

However fair and properly-conducted the exchange may be by the criteria of the market, in human terms it is grossly unequal. The capitalist market shapes production so as to make the expansion of the wealth of the rich its central goal, and the maintenance of the working class a mere "overhead expense." Health-care, education and other services for the working class are also only "overhead costs", with the capitalists always on the look-out to reduce them.

To force them to pay more for overheads is worthwhile. It is also possible. One conclusion from Marx's theory is that the division between profits and our "overheads" (wages and welfare) is not fixed, but flexible and elastic, open to being changed by class struggle. But our aim should be something more — to change the organisation of production, through common ownership, so that people's basic needs, and not expanding the wealth of the rich, become the central priority of production. That is the political economy of the working class. ■