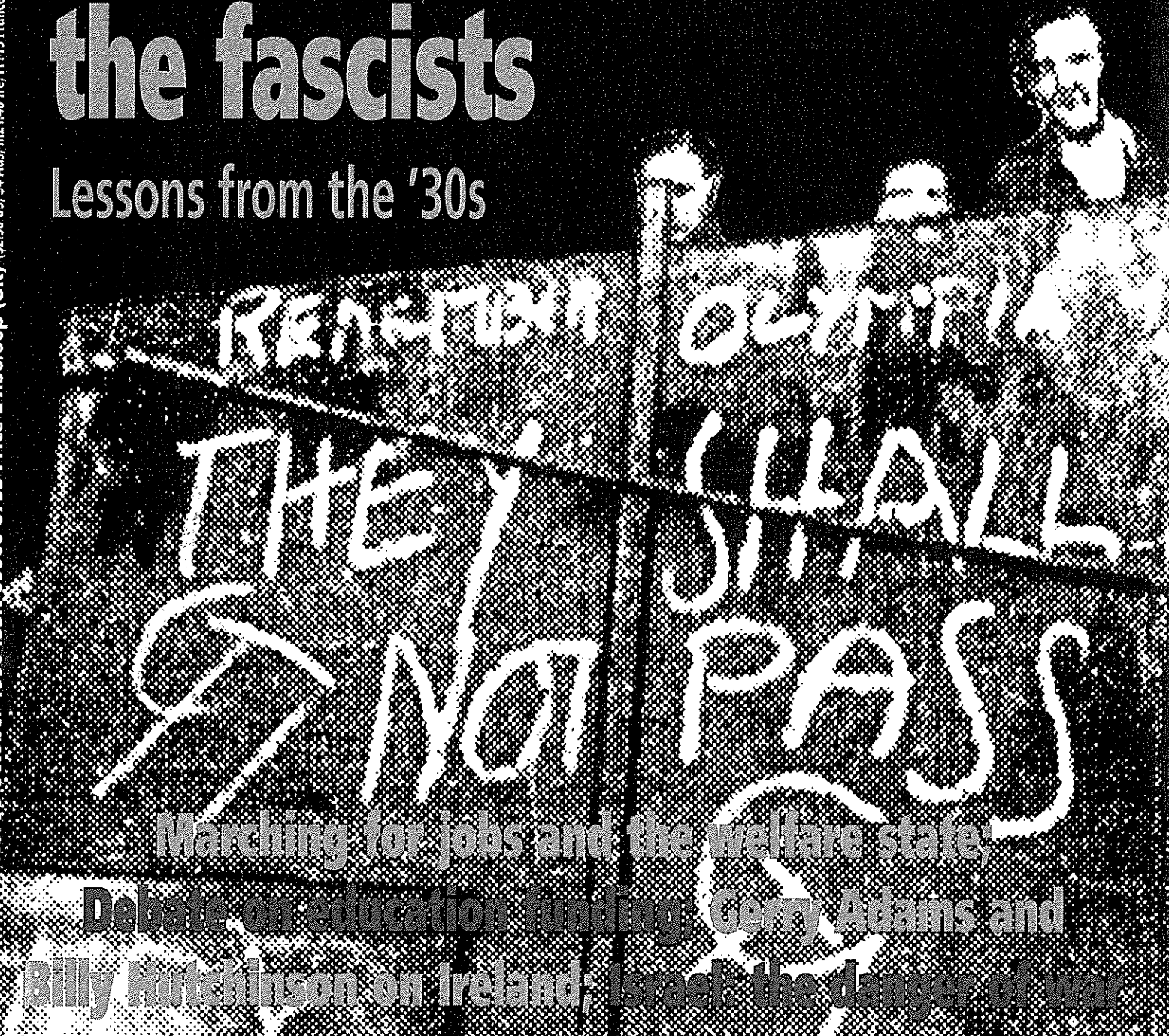


Workers' Liberty

The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself

When workers beat the fascists

Lessons from the '30s



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Debate on education funding; Gerry Adams and Billy Hutchinson on Ireland; Israel: the danger of war

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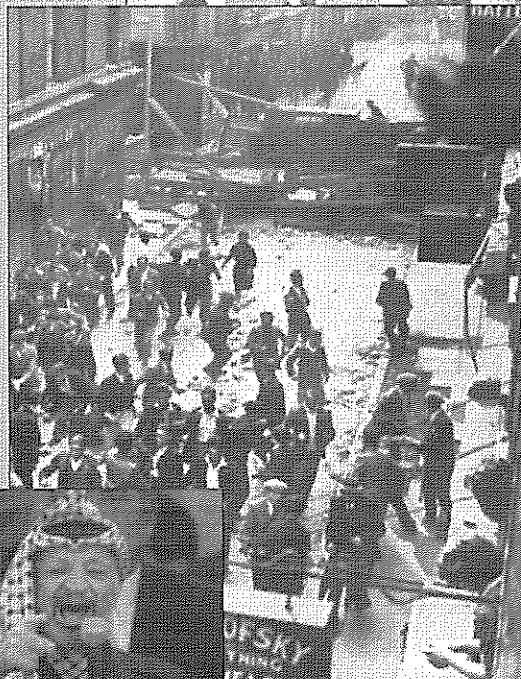
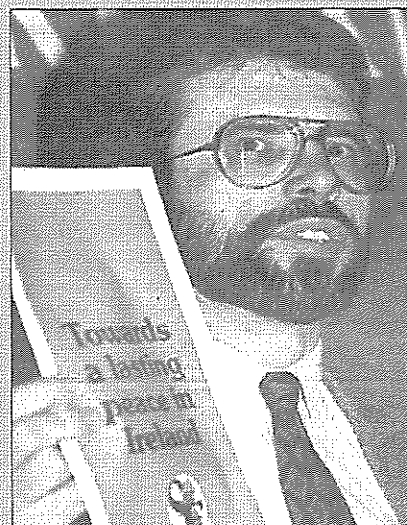
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Stop Blair, stay with the unions, fight for a workers' government!

ANTI-TORYISM is not enough! That is the lesson Tony Blair is now offering to a labour movement unlikely to heed it before a General Election after which, if Labour wins, an enormous price — the destruction of the Labour Party as it has so far been known — may have to be paid in the course of learning it.

Of course, Tony Blair made the necessary mollifying remarks at Labour Party conference. Yet there is no good ground for believing that the Labour front-bencher Stephen Byers was not telling the truth about what Blair and his clique intend, when, at the TUC conference, he told journalists that the Blairites plan to cut off trade union participation in the Labour Party. Blair's scenario, according to Byers, is to win the election, introduce state funding to replace Labour's £6 million of trade-union finance, and then appeal by plebiscitary vote to newly-recruited individual members of the Party for a break with the unions: expelling the unions from the Labour Party, the Blairites will split the Labour Party as it is now, and has been for 96 years, right down the middle.

State funding will cut the shrivelled but still live roots of mass participation in politics, and shorten British democracy by a head. Politicians will become state-financed bureaucrats, manipulating a passive electorate through the media. The ridiculous personality cult around Blair, and Blair's autocratic style, alien to the democratic traditions of the British labour movement, already anticipate and prefigure that development.

Blair and his group set their course long ago. They will not voluntarily change it. That they have come out into the open is one of the best things that has happened for a long time. Labour and trade union activists face an old dilemma in very sharp focus. On the one hand, they want the Tories out and will be deeply reluctant to make a fuss now for fear of helping the Tories in the prolonged election campaign that is already under way. That was a big factor in Tony Blair's favour at the Blackpool Labour Party conference. On the other hand, if labour activists get Blair to Downing Street, they are going to be faced with a "Labour" prime minister intent on using his position to smash up the existing labour movement.

The plain implication of what Blair and his friends say and do is that a Labour government, as that term has been understood even by the right wing, is not on offer now. What is on offer is a quasi-Tory Blair government. And the price of a Blair-Labour government — one that will not be a Labour government in any meaningful sense — may well be the destruction of the Labour Party. Everyone who wants to keep the labour movement in politics — even those who

are not politically left-wing — will start to fight back now, while there is time. If, for fear of a Tory general election victory, the bedrock labour movement does not now launch an open fight against Blair, then it faces disaster. Even if Blair wins the general election the result will not be a Labour government in any meaningful sense — and we will also have lost the Labour Party.

YOU hate the Tories? So do we. But bland anti-Toryism is now a noose around the neck of the labour movement. At the point where, after two decades, the movement achieves its anti-Tory goals, the Blairite rope will tighten murderously. As the Royalists of old cried, "The King is dead, long live the King!" simple-minded anti-Tories will find that they have to cry, "The Tories are dead, long live the (Blairite) Tories!" The leaders of the Labour Party, the party founded and still financed by the trade unions, are openly committed to maintaining Tory laws that outlaw effective trade unionism — and publicly threaten to add their own instalment of authoritarian labour laws, with a ban or restriction on public sector strikes!

"Blair will, if he can, throw us a full century backwards in terms of working-class political representation."

Blair will, if he can, turn "New Labour" into a "New Social Democratic Party", throwing us a full century backwards in terms of working-class political representation. It must be made clear to the Blairites that they cannot carry through their policy without splitting the Parliamentary Labour Party.

After the election, the balance of power in the PLP will shift massively in favour

of the Blairites and their programme. According to a *Mirror* poll of Labour's prospective candidates in key seats, 90% are committed to a break with the unions. No one who is serious will believe their public denials, or want to let them go peacefully towards an election on their terms, after which, if Labour wins, they will be in the strongest position to smash up the existing labour movement. After the election Blair will be in the same dictatorial position in relation to the labour movement as Thatcher was to society.

If the left were now properly organised, it would, even at this late stage, launch an offensive to replace Labour candidates who are committed to the Blair project: don't let your enemies get in a position to cut your throat!

Most likely the showdown will come after the election when the Blair government takes on the unions, maintains the pay freeze and attacks the union link. But we must start now: move emergency resolutions at Labour Party and trade union branches; commit the trade unions actively to oppose ditching the link; boycott Blair's phoney ballot on his draft manifesto; demand of Labour MPs that they publicly pledge themselves to maintain the existing Labour

Party, and not to go with a Blairite split, an SDP Mark 2, but will remain with the trade unions;

We need to proudly put class back into politics. Labour activists should measure all formations in politics not by "anti-Toryism" or anti-anythingism, but by the measuring-rod of working-class interests. The left organised a "Keep the Link" campaign with some success in 1993. We can do it again.

In 1931 Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour prime minister, went over to the Tories. He figureheaded their election campaign in October 1931. Labour's seats in the House of Commons were reduced from 288 to 52, fewer than the 1918 figure. Nevertheless, having shed the MacDonaldites, Labour began to revive. *It was that Labour Party that created the modern welfare state, after 1945.* Nobody would choose to repeat the experience of 1931. But think what would have happened if the whole Parliamentary Labour Party had gone with MacDonald and the trade unions had docilely accepted their own exclusion from politics. If they had not broken with MacDonald, despite what looked immediately like disastrous consequences, there would have been no "1945" for Labour or for the working class, no National Health Service, no or very little welfare state. An all-out fight with the Blairites and a split — if they force it on us — is better for the labour movement than the realisation of the project being pursued by Mr Ramsay MacBlair and his friends.

THAT the labour movement should prefer "its own" government is as natural and proper as that it should hate the Tories. Yet for fifteen years now, since the failure of Labour's attempts at reconstruction after 1979, the labour movement has let de-politicised anti-Toryism rule it. After losing the 1987 election, Labour set in earnest to understudying the Tories. Backed by the trade union leaders and by most of what had once been the Labour left, Labour's leaders dragged the party to the right, drawing it more and more on to Tory ground. Increasingly, the Labour Party became the anti-Tory Tories. Nietzsche said it: if you fight dragons, you turn into one. If you fight pigs on your knees, on their own terrain, you begin to look, sound and smell like one. The generation that founded the Labour Party would have recalled the passage from the Bible: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his own soul?"

The Tories in power have been central to this process. Illegalising effective trade unionism, fighting the class struggle in earnest, the Tories have beaten down the labour movement, and the Blairites have played political jackal, in the wake of the Tory anti-working-class juggernaut. Now, at the end, on the eve of a likely but by no means certain Labour government, labour movement activists are faced with a kamikaze victory at best — a victory that can turn into the worst defeat since 1931.

To appeal to the middle-class voter and to the ultra-rich — vainly, for the most part, in both categories — the Labour leaders heap abuse on the labour movement, on its day-to-day purposes, on

its traditions, on its hopes and aspirations. They think that they have the labour movement captive, that it has no alternative to the Tories. The Blackpool Labour conference shows that, for now, the labour movement feels that too. Not only the active members of the Constituency Labour Parties, increasingly middle-class, but also the active members of the trade unions, have let Blair get his way. The majority of the trade union and CLP delegates let Blair win all the votes at Blackpool, even on pensions, education and Trident.

Yet, in wider circles of the working class, Blair's puffery and arrogance are increasingly resented. Even if they are not organised or confident enough to make their views felt through the labour movement, millions of workers despise Blairism. Many who now stay quiet and let the Blairites say anything they like, in the hope of dislodging the Tories, in fact have high expectations that a Labour government will serve the labour movement. When they are disappointed or outraged, as they will be, they will cut up rough. That is the immediate contradiction at the heart of the rootless political bureaucrats who control the Labour Party. They know it, which is why they talk of banning strikes in the public sector when they form a government. (And their traitorous talk has set the Tories to begin to do it.) Under the screwed-down lid tightly pressing on the British working-class movement, there is much anger and energy. The job for socialists is to develop the anger and energy into effective politics, rather than see it dissipate in frustration and demoralisation.

MORE is needed than just to stop Blair. The root cause of the progressive degeneration of the Labour Party, that is, the British labour movement in politics, is *political*. The point of it all has been forgotten. Means have displaced ends, and the means have become correspondingly sordid and aimless.

What is the purpose of labour movement participation in politics? To serve working-class goals. If it does not do that, then the politics becomes a means by which the labour movement ties itself to the political machinery of its exploiters and enemies. That is what it is with the Blairites?

The old aim of the labour movement in politics must be proclaimed anew: to achieve a workers' government, a government prepared to serve the working class. Right now such a government would, minimally, work to ensure trade union rights, an adequate minimum wage, free education, a rebuilt Health Service and a restored welfare system. From that to the seizure of state power and the suppression of the bourgeoisie, a range of possible "workers' governments" are possible — from 1945 Labour to the Russian Soviet government of October 1917.

Socialists agitate and organise for the trade unions to rouse themselves, to make political demands, to table, for example, an emergency plan for rebuilding the welfare state and a workers' charter of trade union rights. We argue for them to judge all politicians by those demands, to insist that their political representatives pursue those demands, to remove and replace any representatives who obstruct those demands. We call for the labour movement to press ahead for these measures despite all ruling-class resistance — flights of capital, bankers' sabotage, legal obstruction, and more — and to deal with that resistance as necessary. We seek the broadest working-class united front at each stage, while at the same time explaining and clarifying our Marxist perspectives.

Apart from the daft illusions of those who believe that an adjustment of the Maastricht treaty criteria, or a nifty windfall tax on dividends, would somehow solve the crisis of capitalism, there is no alternative to Blairism, that is, to *the extinction of labour politics* which Blair and his gang now openly prepare.

The socialists must organise. For ourselves we believe that unless socialists organise and direct their work, in the first place though not exclusively, at the existing labour movement, then they are building sects, and not an organisation that is fused with the labour movement, working to transform the broad movement and bring the

Workers' Liberty

Incorporating Socialist Organiser

THE WORKING CLASS WILL RISE AGAIN!

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

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working class towards socialism. We will stay in the Labour Party.

The Labour Party remains the bourgeois workers' party it always was, but now with a radical shift towards the bourgeois pole of the dialectical, contradictory, formation. General formulas demand concretisation. Concretely, now, a Blair-Labour government will be anti-working-class according to even the most minimal criteria.

The reason for nevertheless wanting a Labour government is calculation that the roadblock can be broken and the working class begin to raise itself. The Labour leaders, whose party is still based on the working class, may not have things entirely their own way in power. The act of taking office will break, or begin to break, their hold on the labour movement. Much will depend on the socialists organising the labour movement to fight for its own needs against a Labour government pursuing Tory policies. For example, tremendous scope exists for self-renovating trade-union and working-class action in defence of the welfare state, and especially the National Health Service.

THE Blairites imagine themselves becoming the natural party of government, replacing the Tories. Little Mr Blair has his paid publicists present him as a strong leader, "in the Thatcher mould". The difference is that Thatcher, most of the time, satisfied most of her party and its bedrock supporters. Blair

can only disappoint and outrage his. For the Blairites to replace the Tories as the chosen party of the bourgeoisie they would have to cut their roots. They plan to cut their roots. They forget that there is another precondition: that the Tories, who have been the main party of the bourgeoisie since the 1870s, fall apart and disappear. Despite the Tories' faction-fighting over Europe, they are a long way from doing that.

The Blairites would do well to remember what John Major said when he succeeded Thatcher as leader of a Tory party facing seemingly certain defeat in the 1992 election: the Tory party is one of the great political fighting machines. The Tories went on to win the 1992 General Election.

The most likely consequence of the Blairite project is for the Labour Party, with its roots in the trade unions cut, to be reduced to the untenable position of the Liberal Party before 1914. One of the reasons why the Labour Party was able to supplant the Liberals was that it had the solid trade-union base to parallel the ruling-class base of the Tory Party. If the labour movement continues to roll over and play dead for the Blairites in the hope that they will win for us, it may lose everything. Today we can only beat the Tory enemy without if, in the Labour Party and trade unions alike, we simultaneously fight the Tory enemy within. Help us organise that fight!

Crisis in Israel

OBSCENITY does not normally lend itself to expression in numbers and statistics. In Hebron now it does; and Hebron says a great deal about the essential relationship of the Palestinian Arabs and the colonising Israelis, a relationship that, in late September, erupted into a brief civil war between Israeli occupation troops and Palestinian police and civilians.

So that a couple of hundred Israeli Jews can go about their business and live their lives as they choose in Hebron, over a hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs are forced to live under Israeli military rule, facing routine curfews and frequent brutality. In a democratic world, the Jews in Hebron would not need protection; but since they do need it, the idea that the right of this little group of religious zealots to live and pray in Hebron can override the rights and freedoms of the entire Arab population of the city — that is a palpable obscenity. It is predatory chauvinism, reinforced by religious paranoia and served by a state power run by people who are chauvinists of the worst sort.

These chauvinists narrowly won the recent Israeli election and have since been busy derailing the peace process, which gave some Palestinian Arabs an all-too-limited autonomy. The benefit to the Palestinians of even that limited autonomy was seen during the fighting. It was not stone-throwing youth against a savagely ruthless army, as the intifada had been; the state personnel of the Palestinian state-in-process-of-formation joined them and defended them. It was an intifada with guns. That is progress!

This crisis may yet force even the chauvinists of the Israeli government to reconsider; or force the US to force them to. But it will not be easy. The Israeli right can point to the role of the Palestinian police as an argument against a Palestinian state, and for their policy of "revising" — that

is, essentially scrapping — the PLO-Israeli agreement under which limited autonomy devolved on some Palestinian areas.

Behind this Israeli government is an electorate that is genuinely frightened of Palestinian terrorism such as the devastating car bombs that exploded in Israel six months ago and, together with the assassination of Rabin, probably gave Likud its election victory.

Workers' Liberty took the attitude to the PLO-Israeli agreement that it was miserably inadequate, but nevertheless the best step forward in 50 years, and possibly the basis for an evolution towards Palestinian self-determination in the areas where they are the majority. This provoked disloyal critics to accuse us of supporting the limitations of the agreement (and Zionism and "racism" etc, etc,) and more loyal ones to argue that no good could come of such a limited and circumscribed Palestinian self-rule. We responded that this, in the circumstances, was the only way forward for the Palestinian Arabs, and thus that this first step was tremendously positive. The present danger of the destruction of the progress the Palestinians have made in the last three years throws all those arguments into sharp relief. If Likud's election victory leads to the destruction of the agreement, then the Palestinians will be pushed backwards; the deal will be replaced not by something better but by something a great deal worse.

The Israeli right fear the agreement, because even weak Palestinian self-rule has the possibility of evolving towards effective self-determination and self-rule. Not to want that is to be an enemy of the Palestinian people. It remains true that the only right, equitable and achievable resolution of the Arab-Jewish conflict is two independent and possibly federated states for two peoples. That means: Israel out of the West Bank! Self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs!



Leaders scared of opposition

IT was a pretty frustrating week; but it also showed how terrified the leadership are of opposition. If they are still afraid of us, then we can still fight and win, so now is not the time to give up but to organise!

Saturday: Compositing meetings, where the resolutions from trade unions and local Labour Parties are put together into composites to go before conference. They are a great opportunity for the leadership to bully and intimidate delegates into conveniently "losing" awkward parts of resolutions, such as setting a figure for the minimum wage.

Sunday: A new addition to the conference timetable — regional delegates' briefings, where delegates were told by regional officials how to vote when they got into conference. The leadership must be really worried about the pensions issue because they sent Harriet Harman round to all the delegates' briefings to persuade people to vote with the leadership. She told at least one delegates' briefing that it was all right to break their mandate from their local Labour Parties.

Monday: A number of delegates moved "reference back" to allow resolutions which had been ruled out of order to be debated. Nine emergency resolutions on the trade union link had been ruled out because apparently media reports do not constitute an "event". Unfortunately the "references back" were voted down, mainly because the ruled out resolutions were not printed on the order paper and many delegates did not have a clue what was going on.

Debate was very bland and uneventful. A few years ago you could get to speak just by putting your hand up, and even last year a few delegates got in unscripted. This year speakers were hand picked and in many cases had their speeches written for them by party officials. The chair wouldn't take anyone who opposes the NEC line. Parliamentary candidates were given priority over delegates who were actually here representing people.

It was especially a shame that there

was no debate on Monday, because on the agenda were health, the economy and rights at work. The vote on re-nationalisation of the public utilities was very close, but unfortunately went narrowly for the leadership.

The day ended with the announcement of the NEC ballot results. All the Socialist Campaign Group Candidates increased their votes on last year, and a great cheer was heard for Dennis Skinner when his vote was announced. Harriet Harman's vote was down significantly on last year, surely a reaction against her decision to send her son to an opt-out grammar school.

Tuesday: The debates this morning were deathly dull: Europe and women's representation. The only discussion of interest centred on whether a Labour Government should repeal the Tories' Disability Discrimination Act. This debate saw the first signs of the conference being disgruntled at how few ordinary delegates were taken to speak, and the vote on this resolution was very close.

In the afternoon it was the leader's speech. Unlike some other left wing delegates I stayed in the hall. It was very noticeable that what got the most applause in Blair's speech was things like housing the homeless, comprehensive education, trade union rights at GCHQ and a minimum wage. The nationalist stuff at the end of his speech was received much more ambivalently, and his references to "Labour's coming home" (like the English football team) certainly antagonised some Scottish delegates.

Wednesday: The first debate was transport. My own union general secretary, Jimmy Knapp, tried to get the RMT's resolution on re-nationalisation of the railways debated in conference. The vote was very close, but the chair ruled it lost, so we got a resolution on the railways which was a lot more wishy-washy and accepted that a Labour government will allow the franchises to run to their ends and won't immediately re-nationalise Railtrack.

There were two other debates of interest: education and pensions. Well, that's if you could call them debates. In the "open debate" sections, after the resolutions had been moved and seconded it was a great rarity to hear a speaker against the platform, although of course Barbara Castle made a much better speech than Harriet Harman on pensions. There were lots of people with party staff badges at the back of the hall clapping Harriet Harman when no-one else did.

Thursday: It's strange how the result of the card vote on the pensions resolution was known and publicised in the media before it was announced to conference this morning. The main controversy today was on defence. The resolution to scrap Trident, traditionally an area where the leadership don't always get their way, was voted down — but only narrowly.

The draft manifesto document was voted on without being moved or discussed at all. When challenged on this, the chair said that conference had been debating sections of it all week, and so it did not need to be debated separately.

Friday: We got the result of the card vote on the manifesto document and it was over 90% in favour. Now the members will be asked, in an OMOV ballot, to endorse something that they will not even see in full, never mind get the chance to amend.

This morning's resolutions were all very important ones on party structures and the sovereignty of conference and local democratic bodies. They were deliberately placed on Friday morning so that many delegates would have gone home. The chair was struggling to find speakers from the floor in the open debates, but even so there was no chance she would take anybody she knew to be left wing. General secretary Tom Sawyer gave bland assurances about keeping conference sovereignty and the trade unions' 50% voting weight, and Stevie Stevenson of the TGWU-EPIU agreed to remit the motion.

A CLP delegate



Strikers' banners read "we are learning French"

German workers "learn French"

ON 30 September and 1 October, over 100,000 German car and truck workers walked out in protest at cuts in sick pay.

As the weekly *Der Spiegel* put it, "The dispute over social provision has reached the factories." Strikers carried banners that declared "Wir lernen französisch" — "we are learning French" — with reference to the great strike wave of November-December 1995 which partly stalled the French government's plans for cuts.

Sick pay has been cut from 100% of wages to 80% as part of the conservative government's £30 billion budget cuts. The new law came into effect on 1 October. Many workers, however, have industrial agreements on 100% sick pay, over and above the law. The bosses say that the change in the law automatically cancels those agreements; the unions say no. A day of protest across the metal-working industries is planned for 24 October, and a big demonstration for 26 October, in Kiel.

Some employers have backed down. Siemens, after saying it would cut sick pay to 80%, has agreed to keep it at 100%, "for now". Audi says it will keep 100% sick pay, but chalk up a "time debt" for each worker of 20% of any hours off sick, to be made good later.

The process of pushing the cuts through parliament, and protesting against them in the streets, has been rumbling on since April. It is a slow, spluttering mobilisation of the German

working class, but nevertheless a major breach in Germany's political culture of consensus, a major move towards class struggle in response to what *Der Spiegel* calls the change, "from welfare state to competition state."

It would be wrong to see Kohl's cuts — or the similar sweeping cuts being pushed by the French and Italian governments — as imposed on the German, French and Italian capitalists by a mystical overbearing force called "Maastricht".

Europe's capitalist governments wrote strict budgetary policies into the Maastricht treaty, and are implementing

those budget restrictions by social spending cuts, because *they want to in their own class interests*. To beat those cuts, workers all across Europe need to fight their own bosses, not a disembodied outside power. The French workers recognised this in November-December 1995 and it seems that the German workers recognise it too. The preparations for the all-European march against unemployment and for welfare, scheduled for June 1997, will be a good opportunity to make the necessary working-class links across Europe.

Rhodri Evans

Will Italy break up?

INDEPENDENCE FOR Padania! In a comic-opera demonstration on 15 September, Northern Leagues leader Umberto Bossi announced that he would soon separate northern Italy from the rest of the country, and make it an independent state inside the European Union, with a new name chosen by himself. Only 20,000 people came to his rally, while the neo-fascists gathered 150,000 for a demonstration in favour of Italian unity in the northern city of Milan.

The Northern Leagues' populist denunciation of "the thieves in Rome" has nonetheless won a lot of support since the break-up of Italy's old political order, and Bossi's campaign may be able to push Italy towards some federal

arrangement: talk is of a German model.

Lombardy, in northern Italy, has twice the income per head of the south and Sicily. Lombardy's income per head is similar to that of the richer areas of Germany, the south's to Ireland's. This economic gap is bigger than within any other European state, and it is based on a long history.

Yet there is no "national oppression" of the north by the south. If the justified grievances of northern workers are channelled into "nationalist" rather than class struggle, they become a mean-spirited and divisive, — or even semi-racist siding with the "European" north against the "African" south.

Chris Reynolds

The big dipper

THE Royal Mail dispute is starting to look like a big dipper — one where the ups are pretty tame, but the downs are spectacular. First the CWU union executive, on 4 September, declared a period of “consultation and reflection”. Then, having worked itself up to calling new strikes on 20-21 and 22-23 September, on 19 September it cancelled them and said it would ballot union members, not on the deal — offered by Royal Mail at the end of July, and not improved since then — but on whether to continue industrial action. Ballot papers are due to go out on 11 October, and be counted by 29 October. Over September and October, Royal Mail — and the Tory press, and, scandalously, the Labour Party leadership — have been able to pile the pressure on postal workers while all the pressure is taken off them.

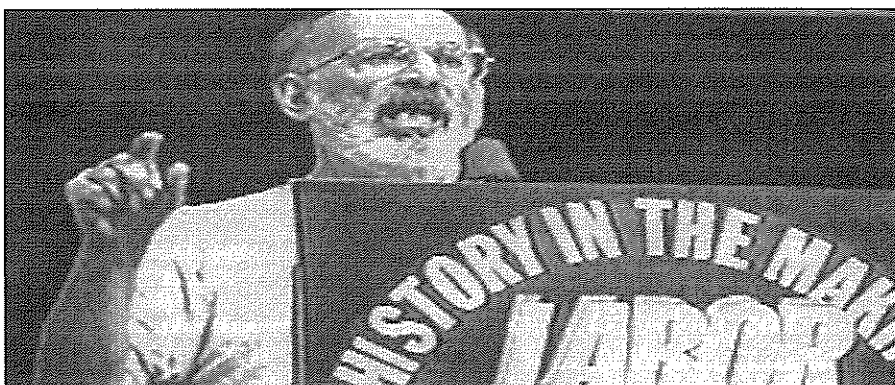
Tony Blair and his friends wanted to be sure that their carefully-planned “New Labour” soundbites, at their Blackpool conference starting on 30 September, were not “spoiled” by reports of postal strikes coming straight afterwards on the TV news.

The Labour leadership threw its weight against the dispute — demanding a new ballot, warning that they would publicly oppose the union if it refused, speculating about new laws to impose rebalancing on employers’ offers and binding arbitration in the public sector — in order to clear the postal workers out of the way of their media show. Union general secretary Alan Johnson went along with them, and he outmanoeuvred the union’s Executive Council because of its lack of a coherent strategy and a collective will.

CWU activists will work for a massive yes vote in the new ballot on strike action. They will argue to convince their more wobbly comrades, and those who have grown tired and cynical about the union because of the actions of their leaders, that the issues at stake are still worth fighting for: a shorter working week for everyone, a decent weekly wage without robbing Peter to pay Paul, refusal of teamworking and part-time jobs in delivery.

But the September setbacks show that the rank and file must take control. They need a body where Executive Council and rank and file members can exchange information, arrive at agreed decisions, and act on them. They need a leadership that can understand the Labour Party leadership’s manoeuvres, and use the weight which the union still has in Labour Party structures to counter them.

A postal worker



Labor Party leader Tony Mazzocchi addresses delegates

The Republican victory

IF the polls are to be believed, Clinton stands a good chance of being swept back into the White House. He would then have the distinction of being the first two term Democratic president since Franklin Roosevelt — that is, in over two generations. The meteoric rise and impending collapse of the the radical Republicans, under the guidance of Newt Gingrich, nevertheless masks a rather menacing reality. For no matter how the election plays itself out, it is the Republicans who set the agenda and whose world view now informs both parties.

The abolition of the federal income supports — the welfare system — and their replacement by short-term, individually administered state “work programs” which now exclude legal noncitizen residents, including the aged and infirm, bulldozes one of the central props undergirding the edifice of pro-working class concessions that had long been considered an immutable heritage of the New Deal. Despite the very palpable fear that the lives of millions of children will

be devastated, only one standing Democratic senator could muster the principle to vote in defiance of the mainstream. To place this moral and political collapse of the Clintonites into perspective, it is worthwhile recalling that Richard Nixon, once pilloried as the virtual antichrist of the liberal pantheon, proposed a guaranteed minimal income for all and universal health coverage.

Social vision under the new Democrats consists in having reduced the deficit, trimmed the federal employment rolls, scapegoated the indigent and broadened the scope of the death penalty. This may not quite be the intersection of Wall Street and the gutter, but neither is it very far from this all too familiar Republican thoroughfare.

It is therefore truly remarkable that as the political center hurtles to the right, pro-Democratic lesser evilism is being successfully sold to the progressive community not as a painful moral dilemma, but as a fundamental and inescapable moral imperative. Career paths in establishment liberalism

Dockers stop ships in solidarity

AUSTRALIAN dockers have declared “rolling bans” on Indonesian cargoes and ships to support demands for the release of independent trade union leaders Muchtar Pakpahan and Dita Sari. The Maritime Union of Australia announced on 18 September that all Indonesian cargoes and ships would be delayed by 24 hours.

In the 1940s Australian dockers stopped military cargoes in order to aid Indonesia’s independence struggle against Dutch rule. Now they have taken up the same cause of international solidarity, this time against the independent Indonesian capitalist class.

Muchtar Pakpahan, leader of an independent trade-union movement called the SBSI, was arrested on 29 July, in the clam-

pdown which followed street-fighting on 27 July in Indonesia’s capital, Jakarta. Dita Sari, president of the other main independent union group, the PPBI, had already been jailed on 8 July. Both face charges of “subversion”, which can carry the death penalty.

The military regime has ordered the arrest of all members of the PRD [People’s Democratic Party], a new radical party linked to the PPBI. About 25 members are in jail, including PRD chair Budiman Sudjatmiko. Some have been tortured.

Contact TAPOL, the Indonesian human rights campaign, at 0181-771 2904 (phone), 0181-653 0322 (fax), or tapol@gn.apc.org (e-mail).

Martin Thomas

have always been paved with self-debasement. But for the AFL-CIO tops to have invested such prodigious sums — over \$35 million — into the election of a so blatant anti-working-class, anti-union alliance demonstrates a breathtakingly reckless disregard for even their own narrow, bureaucratic self-interest. In this case, an infinite capacity for betrayal is always combined with an equal aptitude for avoiding any practical conclusions from the experience.

Tragically, as the case for independent politics all but makes itself, the nascent progressive movements have all but abandoned the only real expression of organized opposition on the national scene — the Ralph Nader campaign. For all its deficiencies, the Nader movement has as its heart a solid anti-corporate, pro-worker — if not quite class struggle — agenda. Were it to hand the Democrats a real setback, if only in a few strategic election districts, it could introduce a radicalizing dynamic to mass politics.

Yet the New Party, now acting as the respectable rearguard of progressivism, has-tened to maintain its respectable image as the voice of the “viable, pro-Clinton left,” while the newly established Labor Party, embracing inertia as a political virtue, promptly sat on its hands for fear of prematurely disrupting its relations with the trade union leadership. Mired in lesser-evilmism, the would-be future bureaucrats of the left forget that it is not the certainty of immediate victory, but experience of deepening grassroots involvement, of acting and learning, that holds the promise of a new left.

Barry Finger

Class war in the USA

"PREDATORY corporations and their politician allies have declared class war on America's working people", according to the USA's newly-formed Labor Party, in a statement on the new "Welfare Reform" Bill signed by President Clinton "Workfare" will allow for replacing regular jobs that pay wages and provide benefits with slots filled by recipients of public assistance who will work in exchange for their meagre grants instead of wages.

In June, nearly 1,400 delegates representing more than 1.2 million organized workers at the Labor Party's Founding Convention adopted a "A Call For Economic Justice", centred on a demand for a Constitutional Amendment Guaranteeing Everyone a Job at a Living Wage (\$10 per hour, adjusted for inflation).

The Labor Party can be contacted by e-mail at lpa@labornet.org, by phone at 00 1 202 234 5190, or by fax at 00 1 202 234 5266.

Israel: the danger of war

Adam Keller reports from Tel-Aviv

THE situation now is really very dangerous. We are living with the possibility of war in the near future. Such a war could involve Syria and even Egypt. The situation is inherently unstable. The armed Palestinian enclaves are surrounded by the Israeli army and Israeli settlements. Either we will go forward towards a Palestinian state or backwards to total occupation. To go back to total occupation would mean the Israeli army reconquering the Palestinians. That would mean hundreds of Israeli casualties, as well as thousands of Palestinians.

The current tension has been building up for quite some time, even under the previous Labour government.

Netanyahu began by making the start of real negotiations dependent on the closure of three Palestinian offices in Jerusalem. Arafat was willing to make this concession to the Israelis on the understanding that there would be goodwill gestures in return, but after the offices were closed the Jerusalem municipality demolished a Palestinian club for youth and handicapped people. It was a slap in the face for Arafat.

There were other provocations. The Israeli government resumed settlement activity. At first Egypt's president Mubarak was inclined to give Netanyahu some credit. Netanyahu had gone out of his way to be friendly to Mubarak, and the Egyptians had put pressure on the Syrians to allow the new government a period of grace. However, Netanyahu had promised Mubarak the release of the Palestinian women prisoners, which he then reneged upon.

Netanyahu has some basic underlying problems. To be elected he rested on a coalition of essentially incompatible forces. Some, perhaps the majority, of his support comes from people not so different from the Labour hawks. These people are found at every level of Likud — from the grass roots to the government. They believe that the Oslo

process should continue, but that the old government was giving the Palestinians too much too quickly.

But Likud also depends on the extreme right, the settlers, the religious fanatics, who are all against the agreement.

And Netanyahu himself holds incompatible sets of views. He wants a strong Israel, a greater Israel. He wants to keep as much of the Territories as possible and to continue the settlement.

However, he also favours privatisation, deregulation and free trade. And in the Israeli context these views are incompatible. Free trade implies open borders, peace, stability and good relationships with neighbouring states. Nationalism implies national mobilisation, isolation and war.

The Israeli bourgeoisie is solidly behind Labour and the peace process. The character of the Labour Party is similar to that of the US Democratic Party. However, paradoxically, the Israeli equivalents of the US's WASPs vote Labour and the minority coalitions associated with the US Democrats vote Likud in Israel.

During the last two weeks there have been many demonstrations for peace, including two big rallies of 20-30,000 people. The Jewish people on these marches are almost all European Jews. The slogan for an independent Palestinian state is now almost universally accepted amongst these people, though there is some spectrum of opinion about what rights such a state would have.

Netanyahu does not deserve workers' support, and he is not their true representative. Nevertheless, he does have some base in the working class. However these working class supporters of Netanyahu are not the people who normally demonstrate on the streets for the right. When a terrorist bomb exploded in central Tel Aviv, the people of the slums of southern Tel Aviv did demonstrate — very violently — against Arabs. But they are not generally mobilised for nationalism. If it does come to a Palestinian state, these people will not be among the active opponents.

Labour at the crossroads



"Genuine democracy has to be collective"
Jeremy Corbyn MP

THERE has been a concerted campaign to distance the Labour Party leadership from the trade unions. They have got it into their heads that public sector strikes are unpopular, though from my experience as a London MP I would say that people understand why the postal workers, rail workers and tube drivers were on strike, and a clear majority supported them.

The Labour leadership recognise that, come the election of a Labour government, there are going to be enormous demands on them. They don't want to see a Labour conference, where half the votes are controlled by trade unions, making decisions critical of that government. They will have an immense battle on their hands to force through the public spending cuts demanded by the Maastricht convergence criteria. Although they got through this week by stage-managing conference, they won't have the same kind of control over events once they are in office.

I don't, however, think that the leadership *have* to break the union link completely. There are a number of possibilities. In Tony Blair's speech he made it clear that a Labour government would

review the question of political party funding. This could mean democratic controls over company donations, which would be welcome, but it's more likely to mean state funding for political parties. The idea is obviously to reduce the reliance on the trade unions.

I don't think that we will see an exact replay of the MacDonald experience, but there are similarities. For instance, the Maastricht criteria are the equivalent of the Gold Standard in 1931. But it could be that the opposition across Europe to more welfare cuts is so great that the governments will have to back off. Things depend on what people do to fight back now.

There are enormous tensions in the labour movement between the leadership's idea, which is essentially an expanding free-market economy which *might* then throw a few crumbs to the workers, and the idea that many ordinary party members and trade unionists have, of a welfare society geared to improving people's living standards and services.

Now we are in a situation similar to that before 1918, but in reverse. We are in a transitional stage, moving away from working-class political representation. Blair sees the unions in the same way as the leaders of the US Democrats do. He wants a situation where there are no formal ties with the unions — just the unions giving the party some financial backing, and the party giving trade union leaders the chance to meet with important politicians.

I think what many in the leadership

see as their goal is a sort of combination of the European Social Democrats and the US Democrats — state funding, and a free-market party in which the unions are just a lobby and big business provides much of the funds.

Of course, state funding is profoundly anti-democratic. The public will say: "Why should I pay taxes to maintain a political party that I don't support enough to give money to?" It is part of the bureaucratisation of politics, in which a self-perpetuating oligarchy of the parliamentary caucus receive all the funds, and thus get more and more control. A state-funded parliamentary caucus does not need an active party based on collective decision-making, so they will try to get rid of it.

The twin to the attack on the unions is the de-collectivisation of the Labour Party. Wasn't it Thatcher who developed the idea that there is no such thing as society? What we are seeing now is an attempt to individualise or atomise the Labour Party. Genuine democracy has to be collective.



"The plan to kill the Labour Party"
Ken Livingstone MP

IT'S not my job to send people away with a warm glow about what is possible and what can be achieved. My job is to send people away with a cold chill in their hearts about the dangers we face in the next twelve months.

I believe that we're about to see a campaign to permanently neuter the labour movement in Britain. No-one can underestimate the scale of the forces being mobilised to completely and utterly transform the labour movement so that it can never again be a platform for ordinary people to combine together to transform the society in which they live.

Proposals have been published very recently in the Labour Coordinating Committee's document, "New Labour: A Stakeholders' Party," and you know with that title you're not going to enjoy it. They say that the principle of One Member One Vote by postal ballot should be extended to elections of Constituency Labour Party officers, delegates to confer-



"A leadership challenge is inevitable"
Ken Coates MEP

ASSUMING purely rational responses from those whose dreams of a better society, whose commitments and interests, are threatened by New Labour, a leadership election is inevitable not too long after the General Election is out of the way...

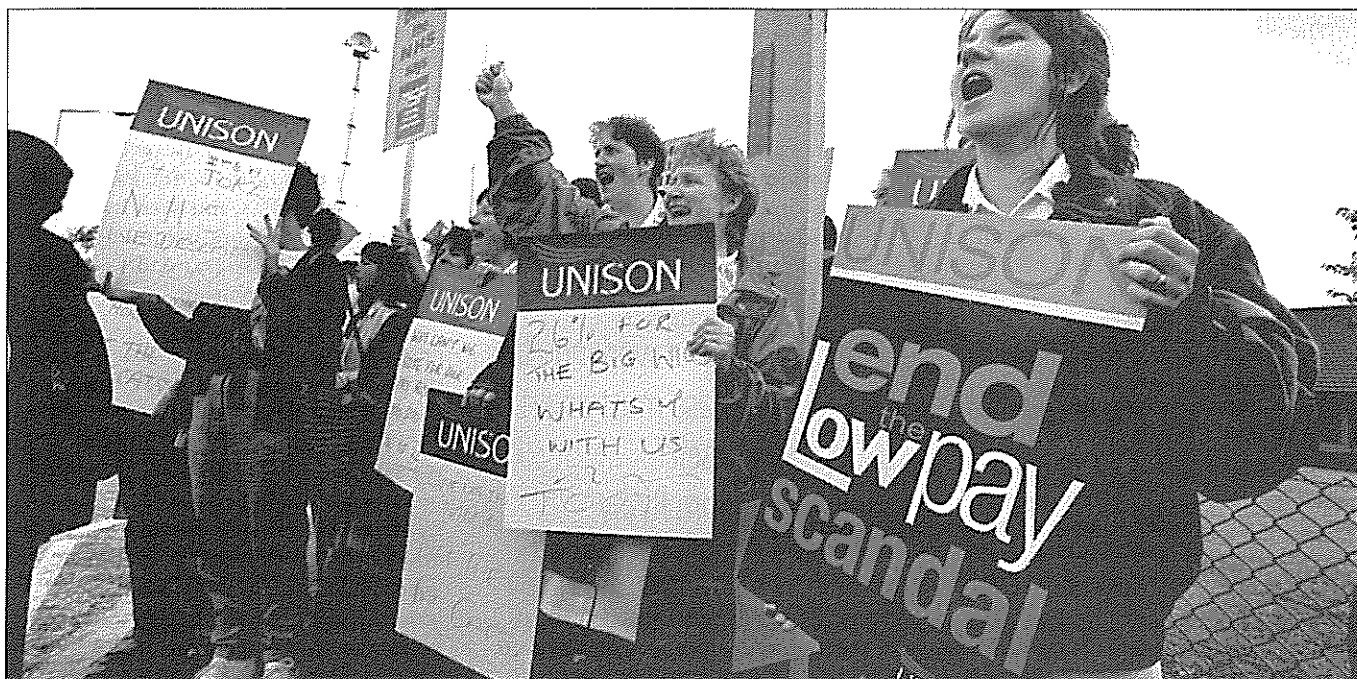
It is only necessary to look back a couple of years to recall that, under John Smith's leadership, Labour was strongly committed to the priority of full employment, to modestly redistributive taxation, and to limited but significant

improvement in labour law and workpeople's rights...

There are people right up to the top level of the Party who lived with the Smith prescription...

A leadership challenge, once the election is out of the way, is the most rational method within a democratic framework to resolve the question of whether the Labour Party should be transformed into an alternative capitalist party... If a challenge were made, it would almost certainly succeed...

But, of course, it is just possible that such a bid may not succeed. If not, a new Party or new Association of Socialist Groups or a new Labour Representation Committee might come to be feasible. New agencies will be formed by people coming together on big issues and working out for themselves how to create a better society... *The Blair Revolution, Deliverance for Whom?* by Michael Barratt Brown & Ken Coates MEP, Spokesman Books



Blair-Labour intends to keep the pay freeze on health and other public service workers. Photo: Paul Herrmann

ence, and local government candidates. The traditional structure, in which ward branches elect delegates to run the constituency party by a monthly meeting should be abandoned. A small steering group of five or six, elected by OMOV, would coordinate the running of the CLP, with local ward branches, task forces and informal networks.

Only individual membership would confer voting rights. If this is agreed at next October's conference, no trade union member would ever again have a vote in the Labour Party at any level in the selection of candidates or in determining policy to hold MPs to account.

It is the biggest threat to the trade union movement which we have seen in our lifetime. In one sense it is more damaging than Thatcher's anti-union laws. We always knew we would mobilise our own class to defeat those laws. These proposals seek to prevent the trade union movement having a political wing in which it can organise and mobilise to defeat those anti-union laws.

What it means is a party in which a leadership, with state funding of political parties and a media centre at Millbank, communicates directly with a disembodied party structure in a series of referenda, with every vote turned into a loyalty test.

The proposals say that the Labour conference should be a mixture of plenary sessions and seminar briefs. The plenary sessions will allow the front bench, "to present their policy themes and so shape the news events of the day." Over 150 years of trade union and Labour struggle to create an instrument for social

change should not be turned into a platform for media exercises! It will be a major defeat for democracy in Britain.

They say that Labour should operate a list system for prospective Parliamentary candidates so that all potential candidates have to be interviewed and approved by the NEC before they can be selected by a CLP. This panel of approved candidates should receive "thorough training and extensive briefing on Party policy and management."

Further: "The NEC should not be a policy-making body. Policy should be the preserve of individual members and Labour's parliamentary committee". That's the Shadow Cabinet, or in government the Cabinet. Not even the 350 MPs will have a say in policy. The Cabinet lays down all policy and has it endorsed by mass ballots of members who can't go to a meeting to discuss it.

We are going to spend the next eight months fighting to get a Labour government. While we're out there knocking on doors, these creatures are planning the neutering of the party and its transformation into something that makes David Owen's SDP look like a Marxist front organisation. At least he had a conference, a debate, and local people selecting their candidates.

I reckon that within four weeks of the general election, these will emerge as the constitutional proposals for change. They will be tabled without prior warning. They'll be turned into a loyalty test, and the leadership will squeeze and crunch individual trade union representatives on the NEC to vote for them. Then we'll have about three months to organ-

ise and mobilise to defeat them.

If they go through, the Labour Party is dead. It isn't just a shift in the balance of power, it's the elimination of the Labour Party as a political force of any consequence.

They also intend to come up with state funding of political parties in those first few months of a Labour government. The party that is saying now that we can't make a commitment to the pensioners, or give any commitment to spending on the Health Service, will say that £20 million should be paid to the leadership of the Labour Party, and £20 million to the Tories, and then they can dispense with us totally.

Ken Livingstone MP was speaking at the Campaign Group fringe meeting.



"CLPs and unions must make a stand"
Vladimir Derer

Nothing that has happened at conference so far has been wholly unexpected. It is disappointing that the trade unions, who are normally very keen on rules, allowed the leadership to get away with an unconstitutional manoeuvre to prevent conference from voting on the question of conference sovereignty and the trade union link. The unions supported the leadership and did not back the reference back from Bolsover CLP which would have allowed a debate to take place.

The other important development was the defeat of the motion on returning the utilities to public ownership. The unions voted with us on this, and so the vote shows that we lost in the CLPs. We have to win back the CLPs.

The key to this — apart from defending the Labour/union link — is to push the issue of democratic rights for the CLPs.

In the past the CLPs tended to support the unions against the leadership, but now the CLPs are being used as a counter against the unions. We need to change this.

"Keep the Party Labour" is a campaign to re-establish unity between the unions and the CLPs. This is the main task today.

One should not exaggerate. The party has not actually changed that much. The influx of members who are supposed to be changing the party are mainly people who are in no sense active. I'm not sure they even vote in the postal ballots. What is more worrying is that many people are discontinuing their membership.

Whether or not Blair has to break the link depends on how the unions react. It depends on how far the unions are prepared to go with him. What we can say is that the attempt, originally pushed by John Edmonds, to create a third category of members, levy-paying trade unionists, was a complete failure.

It is not possible to say how quickly things will move. It is said every year that next year's conference will be the most important in the party's history. It is not a necessary watershed. It could be. But we are in the business of organising, not prophesying. It all depends on the effort the left can muster.

The key task for the left is to win both the CLPs and the unions to make a stand. That has to go through the trade union conferences. If policies are adopted at the trade union conferences, general

secretaries cannot change them.

This stand should include defending the 50/50 split in the vote at party conference and the range of policies — minimum wage, union rights, full employment — which the trade unions seem to have given up.

Vladimir Derer is the honorary secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy



"The working-class base must assert itself"
Tom Rigby

THIS YEAR'S LABOUR Party conference was the most stage-managed yet. The leadership got their way on everything. But there is dissent just below the surface.

The first indication was the extremely wide support for Keep the Link's petition on Party-union links. GMB general sSecretary John Edmonds joined with Party chair Diana Jeuda of USDAW, Roger Lyons of MSE, Alan Johnson and Tony Young of the CWU, Jimmy Knapp from RMT, Lew Adams of ASLEF, Tribune editor Mark Seddon and the FBU's Ken Cameron in signing a statement which read:

"The Labour Party was set up as a collective voice for organised labour in parliament. Since that purpose is now under threat we give notice of our intention to defend it. To break the organisational links between the Party and the affiliated trade unions would destroy any prospect of the Party acting as a force to realise the labour movement's values of equality and solidarity. It would dash the hopes of all those who look to a Labour Government to change society in the interests of the great

majority and to act against poverty, insecurity and injustice. We will oppose any moves to drive the trade unions out of the Party they created."

The general secretaries were joined by hundreds of rank and file Party members, MPs and PPCs, and even by Tony Booth from the actors' union Equity, revealing that the splits on this issue go into the Blair family itself.

It would be wrong to be complacent. The unions will fight Blair. Whether they do so soon enough and hard enough depends on what we do.

That Labour's New Right kept off the issue of the link at the Labour Party conference does not mean that they have backed down. They had no need to court trouble prematurely, especially when the trade union leaders were ignoring their own union policies and voting for the leadership on virtually everything.

And, besides the link, Labour's New Right has targeted the remaining collective democracy in the CLPs and the potential countervailing power of the NEC under a Labour government. Their "project" is the abolition of the Party as a labour movement-based party in any sense, not just the mechanisms of the union link. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee, who played the role of Blair's praetorian guard in the Clause Four battle, have already declared their programme for exterminating the Labour Party, and are boasting that the attack will come in the first weeks of the new government. Deputy leader John Prescott has been only too keen to say that the trade unions' role is "not set in concrete," and that the party will continue to evolve through the process of OMOV ballots.

Labour's New Right have made their intentions plain. It is up to the working-class base of the Party to organise itself into a force to defeat Blair's programme and reassert the need for working class political representation.

One unified campaign is required. Keep the Link, which organised the resistance to John Smith's attack on trade union involvement in parliamentary selections, has already succeeded in mobilising forces well beyond the traditional left. It should be able to work together with the Keep the Party Labour Campaign, which is at present confined to the hard left. Our object should be to create an open mobilising committee on the model of the campaign for democratic changes in the early 1980s.

Tom Rigby is the Trade Union Officer of the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups

Magnet strikers sacked

350 WORKERS from Magnet Kitchens are running a 24 hour picket of their factory in Darlington, County Durham, after being sacked for continuing an official strike.

The workers, members of TGWU, GMB, AEEU and UCATT, struck for a pay rise and improved conditions after a three year pay freeze. In early September the company issued a "return to work or be sacked" ultimatum, and when the 350 refused to return,

attempted to recruit scabs to replace the workforce. So far, very few scabs have been recruited. The strikers are targeting Magnet showrooms as well as holding regular mass pickets and a 1,500 strong demonstration in Darlington on 21 September. The employers are refusing to negotiate or recognise the unions. Contact the picket line on 0402-072676.

Nick Brereton

The Campaign for Free Education debates New Solutions

How to fund education

“A realistic policy”

By New Solutions

NEW Solutions is a group of student movement independents campaigning for change and a solution to student hardship. It is not dictated to by any faction.

Higher Education is facing cut after cut, and student hardship needs alleviating now. Sixteen years of hot air and rhetoric gave students nothing. Now we have the opportunity to lobby for solutions to the financial problems that students face.

During 17 years of Conservative government, cuts in education spending have left students suffering the consequences of ever increasing hardship, and a fall in the quality of education they receive is evident.

The last 12 months have seen the student movement debate education funding and given students a credible voice at the negotiating table.

The New Solutions principles that have helped shape the debate on education funding play a vital part in creating a fair and effective funding policy. New Solutions believes that any new method of education funding should help expand opportunity for all, provide quality education and training, end hardship and be free at the point of entry.

Any new funding system should:

- Involve increased government expenditure on education
- Be income related
- Be government run and not privately operated.

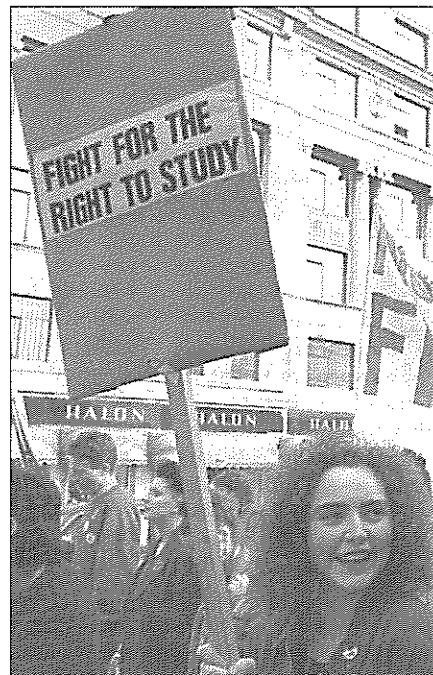
There are three main beneficiaries of Further and Higher Education: society, business and the individual. It is only when these groups contribute to the costs of education that expansion will be fully funded and quality maintained. Any future funding system must be based on such a partnership.

Progressive taxation must play an integral part in the funding of education. Students and staff in post-16 education want to see an improvement in the quality of educational experience. Further efficiency gains and an increase in public-private partnership

schemes need to be matched by increased investment in institutions.

The Business Education Tax would ensure that medium and large scale business contributed to the costs of post-16 education. The money raised would help fund Further Education and part-time students (in both HE and FE). The revenue gained from an education business tax can be used to educate and train the next generation of employees.

The New Solutions group are firmly opposed to top-up fees, or indeed any student paying any kind of fees at all. Top-up fees, tuition fees and the privatisation of the student loans company must be stopped, as they would create a multi-tier elitist education system. In order to create an education system that is open for all, we must relieve student hardship and ensure institutions have the funding to guarantee students a high quality education.



Realistic for whom?

By Rosie Woods*

GOOD! New Solutions are against students paying tuition fees, for increased government spending on education, for progressive taxation, and for taxing profits more.

So they're for free education — education as a right, education accessible to all? Oh no! They told us a year ago that to demand a living grant for students was “revolutionary and unrealistic.” They claim that the March 1996 National Union of Students conference decision to abandon grants and support student loans instead ended “sixteen years of hot air and rhetoric”, and gave “students a credible voice at the negotiating table.”

The credibility of the policy among impoverished and debt-burdened students seems not to matter to New Solutions. And, far from leading to “negotiations” about taxing the rich to spend more on education, New Solutions’ policy victory has opened the door for university

bosses to press for students to pay tuition fees. Once the principle is conceded that education is an “investment” for which students should pay, then they will be pressed to pay more and more.

And, whatever New Solutions say about *opposing the privatisation of student loans*, the loans will be run by the banks (with government guarantees). If it is “unrealistic” for the government to provide money for grants, it will be equally “unrealistic” for them to provide up-front cash for loans.

The basic argument of New Solutions is that each of three “groups” must contribute to the costs of education, “society, business and the individual.” How can “society” or “business” exist as “groups” separate from “individuals”? This is a roundabout way of saying that students from working-class families should pay for education by having to take out loans to live on. Education

INSIDE THE UNIONS



Bureaucrats against Blair?

AS Tony Blair and his Christian Democrat centrist group prepare for an open break with the unions, there are signs that even the TUC leadership has finally woken up to what's going on. It takes a lot to make John Monks angry, but the Blairites' calculated "hijacking" of this year's TUC conference provoked an unprecedented public rebuke from the mild-mannered General Secretary.

Behind the scenes, the union bureaucracy is incandescent with rage against the bossy middle-class clique who are (for the moment) only too happy to take the unions' money and repay them with a regular kick in the balls.

Until very recently, for instance, Alan Johnson was the only signed-up Blairite to lead a union. Even he now appears to be thoroughly alienated. As well as telling the Great Leader to keep his nose out of the postal dispute, Johnson (together with sidekick Tony Young) has signed the 'Keep the Link' statement. At the Labour Party NEC Johnson had the temerity to suggest that the Great Leader was excessively keen on even the most unpopular aspects of the Tories' union legislation. The Great Helmsman did not deign to reply.

Ken Jackson of the AEEU is another alienated right-winger. Until recently his union was unique in positively supporting a break

between the Party and the unions. After the TUC, that policy was abruptly reversed and Jackson went public against Blair. Not, perhaps, very democratic, but then we are talking about the AEEU.

The most interesting case-study is John Edmonds of the GMB. Edmonds can legitimately claim to be a bit of an intellectual, and was coming out with heretical stuff about "disengagement" between the unions and Labour long before Peter Mandelson created Tony Blair. At the Labour Party conference Edmonds made a speech that openly sneered at the Helmsman's sucking up to the CBI. The GMB was the only big union delegation to back Red Barbara's pensions rebellion.

At a fringe meeting, in front of TV cameras, Edmonds described Gordon Brown's training policies as "a load of old bollocks." He has signed the 'Keep the Link' statement.

Rodney "£4.26 per hour" Bickerstaffe and Bill "I'm prepared to die for the union link" Morris both declined to sign the statement. Their reasons were identical: "Everyone knows where I stand, and to sign a statement would look like a sign of weakness." These two firebrands, coincidentally, both came up with a further brilliant argument: "Give them [the Blairites] enough rope, and they'll

hang themselves", which presumably means don't do anything to rock the boat before the General Election.

Given that Bickerstaffe is privately predicting that a Blair government will provoke an early showdown with the public sector unions in order to prove his anti-union credentials, this reasoning is clearly just too subtle for simple intellects like ours to appreciate.

Asked to account for the different approaches of Edmonds (on the one hand) and Bickerstaffe and Morris (on the other), one 'Keep the Link' campaigner said simply, "he (Edmonds) is brighter, isn't he?"

Perhaps the most telling evidence of a change in the bureaucrats' approach to the Labour Party is the reaction to threats from the Great Leader's minions of a witchhunt against Jeremy Corbyn (over that Gerry Adams business). Corbyn received just five pledges of support from MPs: Skinner, Simpson, Livingstone, Benn, and that inveterate right-wing democrat Tam Dalyell. He did, however, get a public hug from John Monks and unsolicited pledges of full support to him personally and the Campaign Group as a whole from Morris and Bickerstaffe.

It looks like the old cart-horse might just hitch up with the left.

By Sleeper

should be debated — so the right-wing argument implies — into a "good investment", its value to be measured by increased pay rather than enlarged awareness.

Research by the National Union of Students in the 1980s showed conclusively that "negative attitudes to loans have adversely affected working-class and low-income participation in further and higher education."

Those students from working-class families who do go to university will end their courses with tens of thousands of pounds of debts, to be repaid from incomes which for many of them will be no more than average. They strive to minimise debt by doing part-time work alongside their studies. This leads to underachievement and undermines the wages and conditions of other workers.

New Solutions say they want expanded education, just the same as the left does. The difference is not that New Solutions have found some special cheap way to provide expanded education, but that they say it is "realistic" for students to pay, and "unrealistic" for the state to pay.

Excuse me! In September the government announced that it would spend at least £15 billion, probably more, in the coming years, on the new Eurofighter plane. Did New Solutions say that was "unrealistic"?

The Tories have given the rich tax cuts totalling £10 billion a year. We've not heard New Solutions condemning this as "revolutionary" and "unaffordable."

Just 500 people in this country own £71 billion between them, yielding at least £3 billion a year in interest and dividends. Is that "realistic"?

The basic arithmetic is as follows. At least £30 billion a year is taken in interest and dividends by the rich, another £30 billion in over-the-top salaries, £70 billion in profits, and over £20 billion in military spending. To provide for free education and the rebuilding of the Welfare State a government based on the labour movement would have to take about £40 billion of that £150 billion. Revolutionary, perhaps, but not unrealistic.

* Rosie Woods is a member of the Campaign for Free Education.

Selling hope for hard times

By Tony Brown

An old woman falls and breaks her hip. She is admitted to a major teaching hospital and her daughter is told she will require an operation within 12-15 hours to prevent the bone being irreparably damaged.

For 60 hours the woman is left waiting on a bed in a corridor. Because of the delay the daughter is informed that if her mother is operated on she will most likely not survive the anaesthetic, if she is not operated on she will die within 24 hours. She is asked to make a decision.

The woman dies two days later. During that time the old woman suffers as she continuously relives her fall and suffers involuntary spasms. Her daughter sits by her side watching, able only to comfort her, waiting for her to die.

The senior doctors explain that there were insufficient beds and resources to treat the woman.

same battlers and suffering middle class found out, to their surprise and cost, that they had indeed been the recipients of middle class welfare all that time.

As part of the Coalition's strategy of further restricting state spending by cutting away areas of social provision and by re-commodifying as much as possible of what had previously been de-commodified it became crucial to sell the idea that "we" can no longer afford the "luxuries" of the (modest by international comparisons) welfare state.

Labor began the campaign to convince working people that "the economy" couldn't afford such spending. The groundwork for the Coalition's policies was laid by Labor policies such as Susan Ryan's reintroduction of university fees, Brian Howe's and Graham Richardson's claims that Medicare could not survive without cuts to its services and

So we find ourselves in the midst of a large-scale public education campaign designed to condition people to expect less from capitalism.

In the 1950s and 1960s conservative politicians, the media and the mainstream economics profession were trumpeting the fact that capitalism was the best, most successful economic system of all time, capable of delivering comfortable living standards for all. They had overcome the boom/bust cycles which had always been associated with the capitalist mode of production. Their modern day heirs are now selling a quite different message.

In the midst of a dramatic reduction in living standards for the majority of Australians (the "disappearing middle"), falling household income, mass unemployment in some areas, a rate of economic growth which can't even absorb all the new

entrants into the labour market, and plummeting levels of funding for public services, Paul Keating was able to declare that "this is as good as it gets". He was probably quite right. *A 33 year old man has a brain haemorrhage on the south coast of NSW. He needs an emergency operation. There is not a single hospital in NSW with a vacant intensive care bed able to admit him. An emergency helicopter carrying the critically ill man circles Sydney hoping a suitable bed will become available. He subsequently dies.*

It is now clear that the post Second World War "long boom" was an aberration in the history of capitalism.

Angus Maddison's important survey of long-term growth rates makes this very plain. (*Monitoring the world economy 1820-1992*, OECD.) The Australian economy grew at a rate of 2.4% between 1951-73 but slowed down to 1.7% between 1974-89. A decline of 0.7% in the annual growth rate seems small, but it can have large consequences as it accumulates the way that compound interest does in a savings account. Workers have been hardest hit. Since the 1970s, average wages for most categories of workers have fallen and income inequality, measured by either individual wages or household income, is greater now than at any other time since the 1930s. In the past, when incomes were

"We are in the midst of a large scale public education campaign designed to condition people to expect less from capitalism"

increases in charges, and the wave of privatisations in banking, telecommunications, and airlines.

Keating's 1986 "Banana Republic" message said, "we're living beyond our means." The Coalition government is intensifying the campaign.

State governments have played their part in promoting this idea as they have had to implement the spending cuts in areas such as education, health, public transport and housing.

School teachers in New South Wales struggle to win a pay rise which enables them to recover lost ground in their wage relativities.

The Minister for Education and the Premier say that the government simply can't afford to pay the rise even though it's warranted. The increase, when finally achieved, is largely paid for by reducing spending on teaching resources, facilities for the children and further whittling away of teachers' conditions.

A PROFESSOR of Medicine at the University of Western Sydney tells ABC's Four Corners, matter-of-factly, that the public's expectations of the health system are unrealistic and that they will have to readjust.

We are told that 'we' will have to lower our expectations of the health services for the future. The message is that the public expects too much, the public is greedy, that people expect the government or state to pay for everything. Cuts in many areas of public spending, and the attacks on the concept of "universal" benefits, such as health care, are sold as being cuts to "middle class welfare".

Higher education fees are introduced and study assistance reduced because, we are told, only the well off receive the benefits of publicly funded higher education.

During the election campaign Howard went out of his way to assure the electorate that under Labor the battlers and the middle class had lost out and that the Coalition would restore their economic position. As soon as the Coalition got elected those

growing, most Australians accepted a progressive taxation system to pay for welfare as well as other public expenditure. When growth was steady the majority were open to the idea of including everyone in a higher standard of living. In response to the demands of trade unions, women, students and a higher level of political activism, the ALP in the early 1970s felt comfortable in advocating measures to limit poverty, in supporting anti-discrimination and affirmative action programs, free vocational and higher education, an expanded immigration program, Aboriginal rights and a universal health care system such as Medicare.

But today these same programs are denounced as unaffordable luxuries and the work of a conspiracy of at best soft-headed, economic illiterates, at worst antiquated socialists. Instead of addressing the end of the illusion of continuous economic growth directly, politicians deflect attention to its symptoms, as if everything, from welfare to broken families to violence, youth "gangs" and youth culture is the cause and not the consequence of poverty.

For nearly two decades the right has been systematically educating the electorate in the principles of free market economics, which in Australia goes under the name of economic rationalism. They have used the media and think tanks to equip their political representatives and they have convinced the majority of ALP politicians that there are no other feasible alternatives.

The labour movement, both within the trade unions and the parties of the left have failed to offer a political and economic alternative. Instead they argue that the economy is merely going through a difficult period and that with the right policies, mutually agreed to by capital and labour, a new internationally competitive dawn is achievable.

But this downturn is neither short term nor one that can be resolved in the common interests of capital and labour. To turn that understanding around will require an education effort at least as concerted as that undertaken by the right over the past two decades. And like the right it will need to be based on a coherent view of the world which can be broadly articulated.

It will most of all have to recognise that Australian society is not moving towards being a more egalitarian society but rather over the past twenty years has become more unequal with class division becoming more evident and entrenched. The working class, in all its diversity, can ill afford to accept Paul Keating's view that this is as good as it gets.

Gambling: the pathology of hope

THE end of affluence has brought with it a rapid increase in the promotion and incidence of gambling — the pathology of hope. Australian gamblers gave \$8.26 billion to racing and gambling operators in the 1994/95 financial year. At \$617 a person, that was \$74 (12%) in real terms more than in 1993-94, and nearly twice the losses of a decade ago. And these figures were collected the year before the Sydney Casino began operating. The \$8.26 billion compares with the \$11.8 billion spent nationally on age pensions and \$14.6 billion export income from mining products.

Whereas once the most popular forms of gambling were shared experiences such as a day at the races or buying lottery tickets, today's growth areas are in the least sociable forms of gambling-poker, slot machines and the computer generated lotteries such as Keno and Lotto with their phenomenally low chances of success and guaranteed superprofits to their private owners.

In the 1980s Australian governments generated about 9-10% of their revenue from gambling. Now it's up to 13%. However, the big winners have been in the private sector. Australia is following a trend established in the USA. As recently as 1988, casino gambling was legal in only two American states, Nevada and New Jersey. By 1994 casinos were operating legally in 23 states and were proposed in many others. Total yearly casino revenues doubled from about US\$8 billion to about US\$15 billion, and by the early 1990s revenues in the gambling industry were climbing about two and a half times faster than those in the manufacturing industries.

By the beginning of 1995, legal gambling in the US (including lotteries) was generating over US\$37 billion in yearly revenues — more than the total amount Bill Clinton promised to use during each of his first four years in office to rebuild America's transportation system, create a national information network, develop the technology to clean up the environment, and convert the defence industry to a peacetime economy.

Governments compete to reduce the level of tax paid by casino operators. When the Queensland Government halved its "junket tax" rate on Jupiters Ltd's operations to 10 percent earlier this year it intensified

the pressure on other state governments to follow suit by cutting tax rates on the lucrative premium high rollers' market. The comparable rates around the country are Crown (Victoria) 9%, Burswood (Perth) 15% — though legislation to cut it to 10% is in train — Adelaide (13.7%) and Sydney Harbour (21%). The Queensland cut will help the Sydney Harbour Casino pressure the NSW government, which recently rejected pleas for a cut.

By legalising casino gambling and promoting more diverse lotteries, state governments are encouraging what one author calls, "the pathology of hope. One consequence has been the collapse in confidence in the utility of work. In an American survey in the 1960s nearly 60% believed "hard work pays off." By the 1980s only one in three considered this to be true. People with money to spare gamble for entertainment, but the poor gamble to change their lives. For many the only chance of relief from poverty is the dream of fantastic luck.

The problem with the gambling industry is that it doesn't create anything; and it corrupts, as has been spectacularly demonstrated in recent years, in Italy, in Belgium — and in Victoria, with the Crown Casino and the massive wealth being accumulated by the three developers, the possible corruption of government in the letting of the contracts, and the close connections between the Premier and the successful bidders. Victorian premier Jeff Kennett also won the Albert Park Grand Prix from Adelaide by alienating public land and devoting millions of public dollars on a speculative venture with little if any public economic benefit. A few years earlier Victoria had won back the motorbike Grand Prix from NSW.

To score these coups, the Victorian government has enacted repressive legislation which John Pilger claims to be unprecedented anywhere in the "democratic world": "The Act exempts the Grand Prix from the Freedom of Information Act and from laws governing environmental studies, pollution and planning controls. It allowed the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to fence or cordon off any area it wanted... No resident whose home was damaged by construction of the race track could claim compensation."

"Unionism in turmoil, republicans vindicated"

Gerry Adams
interviewed

IN Washington last week John Bruton indicated some optimism that a new IRA cessation was on the cards. Do you feel that his optimism is justified?

I think that his comments were probably over-hyped by a few journalists, but nevertheless they certainly came as a surprise to me.

The IRA has, of course, stated its willingness to enhance a democratic peace process. No one, in the other political parties, or the two governments, believes that the Stormont talks are a democratic peace process. So it follows that the best prospect for a renewed IRA cessation lies in creating such a democratic peace process. I have already described how I believe this can best be done. Mr Bruton knows as well as I do that this is where we should be directing our energies and our public comments.

Speculation [about a new IRA ceasefire] is without foundation.

Its purpose is to cause confusion and division within republican ranks. I am quite sure that republicans will not fall for this nonsense. In fact we should probably be prepared for much more British-intelligence inspired stories, leaks and spins.

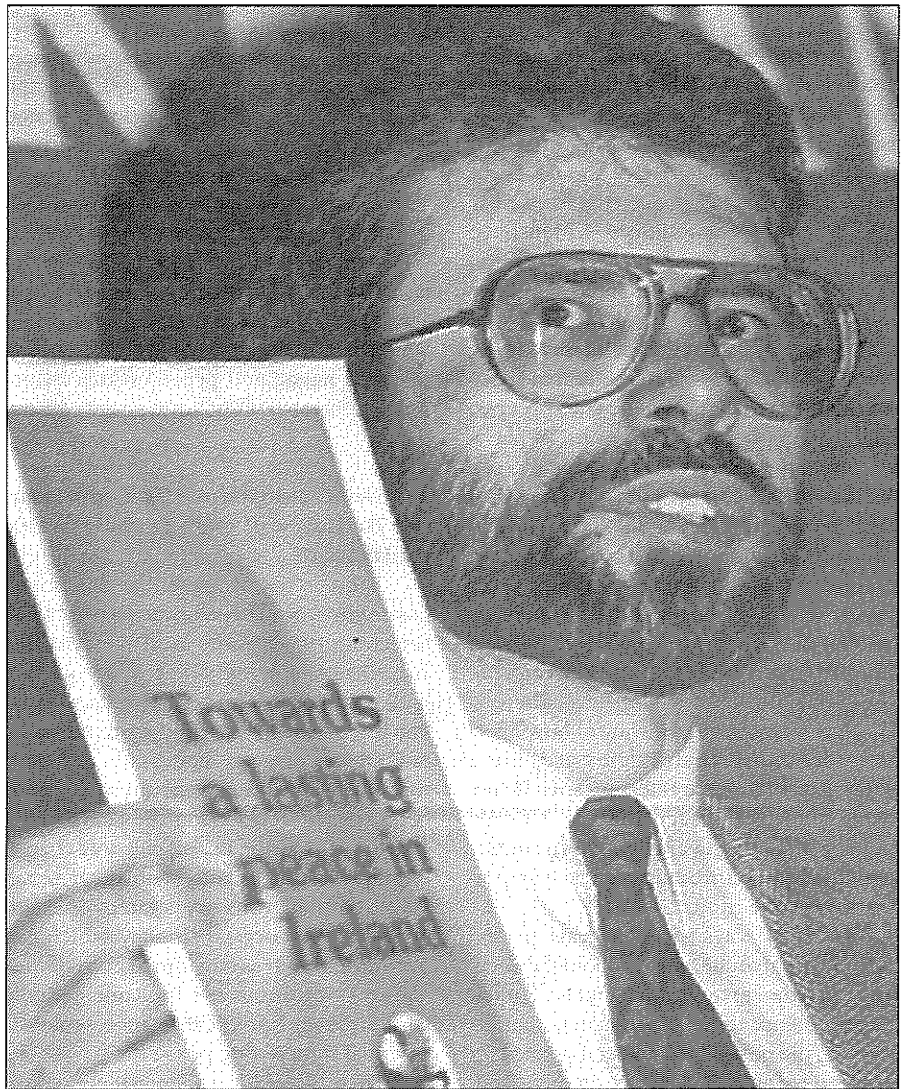
I believe that we can reconstruct the peace process if all sides play their part, particularly the British government which has primary responsibility in this situation. Sinn Féin continues to engage with a wide range of opinions in our efforts to rebuild the peace process.

In any negotiations we will be guided by our objective. We are Irish republicans, after all, and we want an end to British rule in our country: that position will guide our negotiations.

Ultimately, whatever comes out of a negotiated settlement has to be the product of collective agreement of all the people involved.

Turning to the events of the summer, how have they affected the political climate?

The events of the summer, both at Drumcree and Derry, and the marches else-



where, hold out many lessons for the present and the future. The British government's surrender to the use of violence and the threat of greater violence by unionists; the murder of Michael McGoldrick by loyalists and the campaign of mass intimidation against Catholics; the sectarian behaviour of the RUC and the British army and the killing of Dermot McShane, and the many injuries which resulted; and the absence of any sense of equality for all citizens; all collectively exposed the real nature, the irreformable nature, of the northern state.

Born in violence 75 years ago, in the absence of consent and lacking any demo-

cratic foundation, it has been sustained since then by force. British governments have always known this and have refused to act on it. Drumcree and subsequent events exposed the British government as duplicitous and the unionist leaderships as intransigent and backward looking.

But one big difference between now and other times is that nationalists did not acquiesce to this behaviour. On the contrary Drumcree had the opposite effect. Many nationalist communities reject the triumphalist coat-trailing marches which they had reluctantly and begrudgingly tolerated for generations. In the face of severe sectarian provocation and abuse many of

these isolated communities declared "enough is enough" and demanded treatment as equals. Their message is simple — there is no going back to the bad old days.

One result of this was that suddenly the word "consent" became unpalatable for the unionist leaders.

Is there significance then in the continued presence of the fringe loyalist parties at the Stormont talks despite the obvious breaking of their cease-fires?

It is clear that agreement can only be achieved through a truly inclusive process of negotiations. This means that all parties with a democratic mandate must be involved in the talks. There should be no preconditions to dialogue. But it is clear also that the preconditions which have been created by the British are applied selectively to Sinn Fein to keep our party out of the talks.

It would be easy for Sinn Fein to play games with this issue, to argue that these parties be excluded from the talks process. But where would that leave us? What is required if we are to move towards an agreed peace settlement is inclusive talks, the removal of all preconditions to dialogue and a time-frame to create and maintain momentum within the negotiations.

Is there now a renewed debate about Sinn Fein's peace strategy?

Certainly at leadership level there is an almost perpetual reviewing of how effective our political strategies are. But I suppose that you are referring specifically to the Sinn Fein peace strategy. I firmly believe that the events of this summer underline how correct and crucially important our peace project is.

In many ways the upheavals around the Orange marches were unionism's negative response to our peace strategy. For the first time since the Anglo-Irish negotiations in 1921, the possibility had been opened up of an agreed and lasting peace on this island. The leaderships of unionism feel threatened by this and the prospect of a negotiated settlement. They realise that a negotiated settlement means change, means an end to their sectarian state, to the politics of inequality, domination and exclusion. They know that change cannot strengthen the union, only weaken it.

Garvaghy Road demonstrated the irreformability of this statelet, the intransigence and belligerence of unionism and the hypocrisy of the unionist parties' declared commitment to democratic methods. It provided the most compelling argument for fundamental change since the loyalist pogroms of 1969. The victory of unionism in walking down the Garvaghy

Road could not have been more temporary or illusory. It has left unionism in turmoil and the republican analysis of this state completely vindicated.

At a wider level the Sinn Fein peace strategy has also achieved a measure of success. It has demonstrated clearly our commitment to peace and a negotiated peace settlement. It also exposed the unionist parties and the British government as the intransigent parties in this conflict, it has led to the involvement of the international community in building a process of conflict resolution — something which never happened before and which the British and the unionists vehemently opposed — and it has brought a wide range of democratic forces into play.

Two years ago I said, having studied the example of the ANC, that negotiations do not signal an end to political struggle but an extension of it. Negotiations are a new area of struggle for republicans. The Sinn Fein peace strategy, with its clear objective of a negotiated peace on this island, remains the obvious political priority for our party.

What confidence is there that the British will change their policy on Ireland?

There is no evidence that this British government wants to change its policy. On the contrary, all of the available evidence supports the widely-held view among nationalists that John Major wants to maintain the existing status quo with perhaps a few minor cosmetic modifications. Unfortunately that has been the pattern of British behaviour in Ireland over the centuries.

In my view the British will only change their policy on Ireland with great reluctance. Sinn Fein's peace strategy seeks to develop a democratic strategy which can maximise the dynamic for them to do this and to bring about the fundamental constitutional and political change which is essential for a lasting peace.

There is already evidence that political pressure and public opinion can move the British to new positions, whether in agreeing to ministerial meetings which they sought to delay or avoid, or in the u-turn over providing clarification to Sinn Fein on the Downing Street Declaration.

Sinn Fein continues to seek entry into the Stormont talks. Given that public opinion is dismissive of these why is Sinn Fein continuing to demand entry?

Sinn Fein has a significant democratic mandate. Those who vote for our party have the right to be represented in any negotiations or political talks. The British government has no right to exclude Sinn

Fein from any talks.

It is regrettable that the 26-County government has chosen to support the British government's exclusion of Sinn Fein.

Despite this, and other differences between us in the search for peace, it is true that the 26-County government has come to this situation in a good faith way, seeking to make it work. There is clearly a better focus in more recent months, but the reality is that we will never get anywhere in terms of a peace process unless the British government is faced up to by a 26-County government, which acts decisively in the Irish national interest, and which understands that that is what the British government does. It always acts in the British national interest.

Sinn Fein is the only party which does not accept the unionist veto. Is it not the case that Sinn Fein would be isolated on this crucial issue should it enter negotiations?

The current talks process is deeply flawed and not just because Sinn Fein is excluded. It is essential that a proper process of negotiations ensures a level playing pitch in which all sides are equal and no one holds a veto nor is the outcome predetermined or any particular outcome is precluded. Sinn Fein has no problem with the issue of consent. We certainly have a major problem with the unionists being given a veto.

On the one hand you have to argue, you have to fight for, you have to seek, you have to negotiate for their consent, along with our consent and the consent of all sections of the people. And you have to keep pushing for that all the time, reaching out to unionists, trying to open a dialogue which is meaningful, and can make a difference.

At the same time we have to make clear that nobody has a veto. I don't look to a veto, neither does the 26-County government or John Hume. The unionist leaderships should not be given a veto.

Naturally, the fact that there are others who interpret the "veto" as "consent" makes the process of negotiation more problematic.

What is your view of an electoral pact with the SDLP for the next elections?

The SDLP has consistently rejected an electoral pact. Sinn Fein is certainly willing to discuss the possibility positively. However, in the absence of any agreement with the SDLP, Sinn Fein will obviously be contesting all the seats.

* Abridged from *An Phoblacht*, 19 September 1996



“We are the British presence in Ireland”

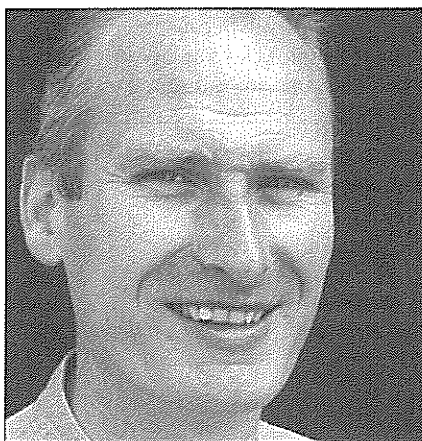
Billy Hutchinson interviewed

THE most positive thing that came out of the Apprentice Boys events was that people recognised that there had to be a dialogue. For the very first time the Apprentice Boys met with residents' groups which had former IRA prisoners and people who could have been perceived as Sinn Féin members on their committee. They spoke to them, and that was a positive move. But there was never going to be an agreed settlement to the march. The Apprentice Boys felt that they had entered into negotiations to resolve the problem, but the Bogside [Catholic area] residents were asking for more than they could deliver.

I hope in future people don't think back and believe that there's no point meeting because they're going to give you demands that you can't deliver on.

This march in particular, the Appren-

* Billy Hutchinson, a leader of the Progressive Unionist Party in Northern Ireland, talked to Pete Radcliff and Ivan Wels from *Workers' Liberty* on the weekend of the Catholic/Protestant confrontation over the Apprentice Boys' march in Derry.



tice Boys', was hyped up into some sort of Armageddon. But the cease-fires don't rest on one parade or another. They rest on the wider political situation.

If the Loyalists go back to war, it will be on the basis that democracy has broken down in this country and that the IRA have refused to take part in a democratic process. As yet we are a long way off that. What we need to do now is to create the conditions where the IRA will call another cease-fire and Sinn Féin will get involved in

talks.

We have been brought under great pressures during the marching season. We come from the Loyalist tradition. People expect us to be very hard-line on the defence of our own culture. We have been saying that we have reached a stage where the people in working-class communities have to look for what is best for those communities.

We want people to enter into dialogue. Some people may want to march down a road. Others shouldn't say: "No, you can't march down this road." But if we sit down and talk we can make agreements about how many times you can march down a road, or how many people, or whatever.

There has to be a resolution which can suit both sides, that allows one side to march without the other side being frightened. We've said that both this summer and last summer. We'll continue to say it. Some people have been saying that we should force these marches through. We have been saying that won't work well for the future. We all live here, and we are going to have to share this island. We have to find ways for people to recognise and

respect each others' cultures. The start has to be through dialogue.

The problem with the dialogue is that everyone has been concentrating on the political talks at Stormont. They're all expecting them to be a panacea and to deliver everything. But I don't believe that is where what we want will be delivered.

Other institutions within our society — statutory institutions, educational, churches, universities, etc. — need to be involved in dialogue. They need to look at how they can change things within their organisations and for the people who use their services.

Within the community there are all sorts of people, including paramilitaries. There is a role for community workers trying to get them to address the problems in their own communities, not just the problems of sectarianism, but also the serious socio-economic issues. We want them to look at what happens between the two communities.

More needs to be done with the governments and the political parties as well, insofar as we move those things forward. It has to happen from the ground up and the government initiative or the political parties' initiative has to be only one part of it.

Sinn Fein supporters have welcomed the formation of parties such as yours. How do you feel about Sinn Fein's response to your party?

I would be satisfied with Sinn Fein's responses to our party to a certain degree but I wouldn't be happy with Sinn Fein's response to the Unionist community at large. I don't think they understand the Unionist community. They have not even

tried to understand the Unionist community until relatively recently, I think in the last year, when they understood that they were going to get all-party talks, and they tried to engage the Unionist community.

Sinn Fein needs to recognise the Unionist community as the British presence in Ireland. They need to deal with the Unionist community, and not John Major or any other British Government. They need to deal with the people who live here. No matter what solution any government comes up with, it is not necessarily going to be accepted. My argument with Sinn Fein would be that I can accept any democratic agreement that is reached by the people, but I couldn't accept an agreement that is reached by two governments and then imposed.

We should all talk and find agreement, rather than getting someone else to impose something. Even if it suited me for John Major to impose British rule upon the Irish people, I still wouldn't be satisfied, because I know that we are going to have 600,000 people who are going to be disquieted, and that's not what we need. We need to ensure that we have the majority of the minority community here satisfied. Maybe we will have 2% of those people dissatisfied, but then we will have to find ways of dealing with those people within the rule of the law.

We believe that people need to be developing dialogue within their own communities, and I think there has to be a positive view given to the talks. Unfortunately Sinn Fein has been very negative about the talks, not because Sinn Fein don't believe in the talks but because the IRA know the talks are not going to lead to a

united Ireland.

I would say to Sinn Fein that I know it's going to be hard. The talks are there. You have to get involved and shape them in the way you feel they need to be shaped.

We have taken nothing but abuse from the very beginning, going back to December 1994, when we were involved with British civil servants. We had to fight them the whole way through, saying we had a point of view that had to be heard. We've believed in ourselves and we've continued to do that.

For us the important thing is that all parties in Ireland, including Sinn Fein with an IRA cease-fire, should sit down and talk. Irrespective of whether we know the outcome will suit us, we still need to get involved. At the end of the day if the outcome doesn't suit us, it goes to a vote. Sinn Fein and the SDLP have a sizeable vote, over 30%. If you have a referendum where 75% of the people need to vote to pass something then they have safeguards.

The IRA are being disingenuous. They are carrying out a campaign on the mainland, although they've cut back on it. They are not allowing Sinn Fein into the talks because they're not going to get a united Ireland within the next 5, 10 or 15 years. But they are going to have to wait. They must allow Sinn Fein into the talks, and those talks must take place with a peaceful background.

What are your views of the Labour Coalition, which did reasonably well in the May elections?

There's got to be some sort of settlement worked out before you get a labour coalition and the guns are all buried. There are possibilities in the council elections due in May 1997. If the Progressive Unionist Party get maybe five or six people elected, we could hold the balance of power in Belfast City Hall. We would judge everything in terms of class. We would look at how everything affects working-class people right across the board, and we would make decisions on that basis which would be different from those of other Unionist parties.

None of us have been involved in local government at any level, so we would want to feel our way around. We would certainly be wanting to form alliances with other people on the left on the City Council. One of the big issues is competitive tendering. We're totally opposed to putting contracts out for competitive tendering and laying off workers. We would prefer the council to keep control of the workforce. That is the sort of issue we would want to take up.

The PUP has a good relationship with the trade union movement. But the trade union movement only gives lip-service to

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the PUP because they see us as the people who brokered the cease-fire, which means that workers are not being killed, and also because they see that we are the people who would be arguing the issues that affect them most, such as competitive tendering.

Once they see us in power, and they see what we are going to do, I think there are all sort of opportunities, on trades councils for example. We have been arguing that the trades councils in Northern Ireland today, like in Belfast and Derry, are a bit of a joke. They don't really do anything for working-class people. We would like to see them given a good shake up and people put into them who are going to do something to enhance the lives of working-class people in those areas.

Have things gone back to what they were before the cease-fire? Or have they moved on?

The nationalists will use Drumcree in a sensationalist manner, and the republicans will use it, saying that Drumcree was 1969 all over again. One of the things you have to understand is that, although this isn't my view, traditional Unionists believe that democracy has been unbalanced in this country for the last 27 years. Republicans have been holding a gun to the Unionists' heads; they can kill and bomb people to get their own way. The Unionists see Drumcree as some sort of balancing act to make things symmetrical. They want to show nationalists that we can bring things to a standstill too. We can stretch the security forces. We can do it, and we can do it without firing a shot. That is how it is seen.

It's a question of who has the biggest gang and who's the best fighter, and that's always going to be the problem in this country where there's always a threat of violence. But one of the things about the traditional Unionists is that they see themselves as very law-abiding. Some people in the traditional Unionist camp won't speak to me because I have been involved in Loyalist paramilitary activities and because I've been to prison.

The Apprentice Boys, for example, won't talk to me, and they expel people like me from their organisation because we've been to prison. If we have moved back to 1969 it would be a lot worse. The guns would have been brought out and the killings would have started again. But they haven't.

I believe that people like Trimble don't want a return to anything like 1969. If you go up the Falls Road, which is a nationalist/republican area, you will see on the walls, "No Return To Stormont." I don't want a return to Stormont, and I'm a Unionist. The UVF are on record as saying that if

there is a return to Stormont the way it was, before it was prorogued, they would take up arms against it. That's coming from a Loyalist paramilitary organisation.

The Stormont regime discriminated against me. I lived in a hovel. It discriminated against me as a working class Prod. My father had to go to England to get work, and then he came back and got casual labour over here. So it didn't just work against Catholics, it worked against Prods.

I take heart that neither Republicans nor Loyalists are taking up guns in Northern Ireland at the moment. We all learnt quite a lot from Drumcree and we are certainly not back at 1969. We are a good bit on. We all take three steps forwards and two steps back. As long as we don't take two steps forwards and three back, we're moving forward. It will take quite a long time to get the sort of society we want to live in. But we'll get there eventually. I think that the way forward is through left politics.

It's easy to say that people should talk. But it has to be controlled so that you are not bringing people in who have never had discussions with the other communities. That could frighten them, and we have to be careful. There are a lot of community groups that can take on these issues and are doing it at this point in time.

We and the Workers' Party are planning a conference on education. At the moment the Workers' Party are going through a lot of changes after the last election. We are getting together in September and would hope to plan something in the autumn about integrated, comprehensive education.

Education is a hot potato in this country at the moment, and not only on the issue of integration. The government is looking for cuts, and they plan to shift the administration from Ballymena to Derry. People from Ballymena who can't afford to travel to Derry are going to lose their jobs, and they're going to give the jobs to the people in Derry. Since the people from Ballymena are more likely to be Protestant and the people from Derry more likely to be Catholic, what they will be doing is taking jobs from Protestants and giving them to Catholics. I don't think that that is the way it should work.

We argue that the education system should be integrated and education taken away from the churches. Sinn Fein supports the right of churches to be involved in schools: so their policy on education is exactly the same as that of the Catholic church. The three strongest supporters of conservative education and abortion policies in Northern Ireland are the DUP headed by Ian Paisley, the Catholic Church and Sinn Fein.

Give up your dreams

By Bertolt Brecht

Give up your dream that they will make
An exception in your case.
What your mothers told you
Binds no one.

Keep your contracts in your pockets
They will not be honoured here.

Give up your hopes that you are all
destined
To finish up Chairman.
Get on with your work.
You will need to pull yourselves
together
If you are to be tolerated in the
kitchen.

You still have to learn the ABC.
The ABC says:
They will get you down.

Do not think about what you have to
say:
You will not be asked.
There are plenty of mouths for the
meal
What's needed here is mincemeat.

(Not that anyone should be
discouraged by that.)

Workers Press

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* reports workers' struggles worldwide *
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dockers' fight *

PLUS

* Daniel Robertson on the environment
and science * 'Threadneedle' on
economics * Peter Fryer's 'Personal
column' * Charlie Pottins' 'Inside left' *
Bronwen Handyside's 'Two Nations' *

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By Cathy Nugent, WSN
Steering Committee

FROM the back of a battered old bus can be heard raucous laughter. It's Welfare State Network campaigners on their way to another town. Starting on 24 September, 30 of us travelled across Britain, from Hull, through the towns of South Yorkshire, to a lobby of Labour Party Conference in Blackpool.

It was a case of pack up your sense of humour in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile... Or else cry at the terrible contrast between the plight of the working class and what official Labour leaders are doing about it, and shown by the Labour councils of the towns we went through.

Scoffing a buffet put on for the marchers in Doncaster's Mansion House, we saw the "Lady" Mayoress proudly showing off her £90,000 gold chain. Later she invited the "ladies" into her "parlour" to drink "ladies' drinks" (double Bacardis) and view the priceless antiques. That evening's local paper announced £64 million in council cuts.

At another civic reception, in Barnsley, we slipped away to wander the marbled corridors of the huge town hall, built to impress during the 1930s. High on a hill in the centre of the town, it was opened by the Nazi-sympathising Edward, Prince of Wales, while most working-class people were either out of work or scratching around for a living.

It is 1996, but we feel the same kind of resentment Barnsley people must have felt back then. Inside the town hall we see miners' banners displayed like museum exhibits. For Barnsley's burghers, no doubt, the painted slogans "for liberty", "for socialism" are museum pieces — "archaic", "Old Labour" and "strictly for the history books."

The banners clash with ceiling-to-floor glass display cases full of silver platters and other trinkets. See how great our civic masters are! While we live in latter-day slums and put up with £2.50 an hour jobs, our

elected bosses "make savings" in the council budget so that they can continue to deck the halls with shiny treasure.

It did not have to be this way. For years the Labour Party has dominated local government. In areas like Barnsley, despite the presence of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, working-class people will continue to vote Labour. For seventeen years Labour said "vote for us, put us in power." But when they got into local government, they said "really we have *no power*", "our hands are tied", "we can do nothing."

Labour councils did not organise a national fight against Tory cuts. Instead they turned against their workforce and local people, cutting jobs and services.

AS we approach the election we know for sure Labour will say again "our hands are tied", if now not by a Tory-controlled central government, then by "the rigours of competition" in the world capitalist economy.

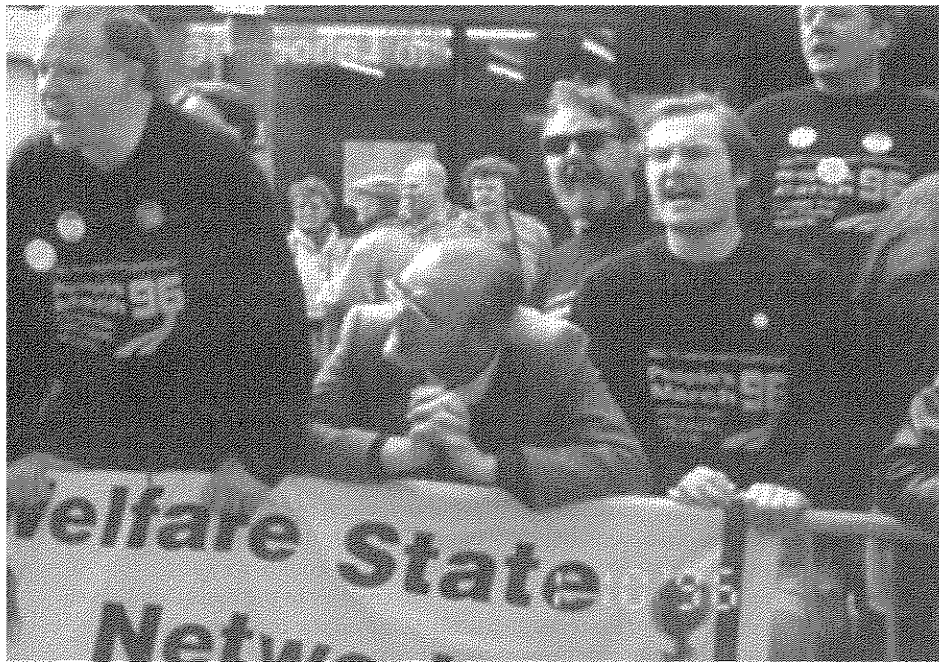
Our future is in our own hands. We need to rebuild our movement from the



Marching for welfare



“ Desperate people cheered us, relieved to hear



jobs and the e state

ground up, organising around ideals which are "old-fashioned" to the Blairites but still have a deep resonance in working class communities: decent social provision, full employment, industrial rights. The Welfare State Network exists to embody these ideals.

Along the march, we talked to local people — pensioners, school children, nurses, the unemployed and people on low pay. Everyone had a story to tell. Thousands support our cause.

On Saturday the marchers joined up with the demonstration in Liverpool marking a year of the dockers' struggle. We stood side by side with heroic men fighting for their livelihoods, and with hundreds of young ravers, whose total disenchantment with life under the Tories was now finally manifesting itself in support for the basic struggle of our class against theirs.

Bury then Bolton followed the same story, desperate people cheering us on our way, relieved to hear someone saying what Major and Blair won't.

We moved on to Tameside. No greeting from the lord mayor here. Tameside have just cut £30,000 from the local unemployed centre. The local trades council had organised a rally against the Jobseeker's

Allowance, the oppressive, vile legislation that will force the very same unemployed into jobs on poverty wages.

On Tuesday we joined up with pensioners and students to lobby Labour Party conference. The feeling was fantastic. We had marched 175 miles, coast to coast, and here we were giving full vent to our demands on the next Labour government.

We watched Blair's speech in a local pub and our feelings turned to anger as he offered nothing. But we won't give up. We know Britain is rich, we know our demands are just and realistic, and the vast majority of people agree with us.

During the march we had passed through Manchester where it was "Children's Week". In the town hall school students from Hulme had created displays, writing about what they want when Hulme — one of the biggest slum housing estates in Western Europe — is redeveloped. They want grass, trees, open spaces, somewhere to play where they will be safe, swimming pools, youth clubs, and nicer, warmer, drier places to live.

For Tony Blair this is too much to ask. For us, it is not enough. We only want the earth.

An emergency plan to rebuild the Welfare State

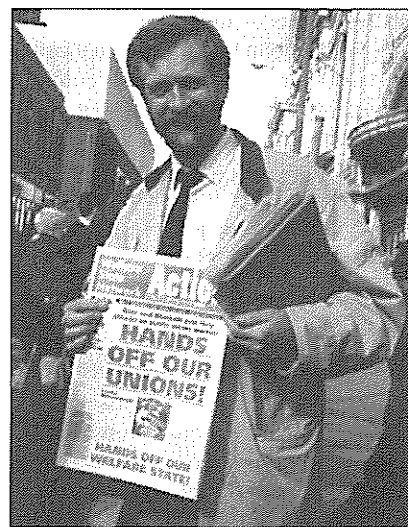
THESE are the demands for a Labour Government that the Welfare State Network will be campaigning around up to, during and after the general election:

- reverse all cuts in all sectors of education
- a building programme to house the homeless
- immediate cash injection for the health service
- raise the state pension, restore the link to average earnings
- create new jobs and introduce a minimum wage of at least £4.26 an hour.

The full text of the Network's Emergency Plan can be obtained from: Welfare State Network, 183 Queen's Crescent, London NW5 4DS.

● WSN Eve of Budget lobby of Parliament, 2pm, 25th November

● "Women and the Welfare State" — WSN conference, 11.30am start, 30th November, ULU, Malet Street, London. Details: 0171-639 5068.



"The Welfare State Network is the best campaign in defence of the welfare state. They don't just talk about action; they go out and organise it."

*Jeremy Corbyn MP,
speaking at the WSN lobby of
Labour Party conference*

someone saying what Major and Blair won't. ♡

Narks, provocateurs and avuncular policemen

By Patrick Avaakum

POLICE spying, infiltration and manipulation of opponents of the Establishment is older than Guy Fawkes, whose celebrated early 17th century "Gunpowder Plot" to blow up the Houses of Parliament was largely something manufactured, and manipulated for their own ends, by state agents. The latest example is the case of former police constable, Janet Lovelace.

Janet Lovelace, who says that she left the police force "because of things like that," has revealed that she was offered money (£200 a month for starters, plus expenses and "special help" with any pressing bills) to infiltrate and spy on the Catholic peace action group, Ploughshares, four of whose supporters were recently acquitted of damaging a British Aerospace Hawk jet, in protest at the export of lethal weapons for use by Indonesia against the people of East Timor.

The Lovelace case set me thinking about some of my own distant but not unrepresentative experiences in such matters.

I once travelled in a car over-full of Irish Trotskyists — then a rare species — going from Dublin to a fisherman's cottage outside Dundalk, to discuss politics and what should be done now that the British Army had finally been allowed into the Catholic areas of Derry and Belfast, which had barricaded themselves off, the previous August (1969). The Provisional IRA did not yet exist.

The Trotskyists in that car were members of a very small and rather sectarian group mainly confined to Dublin, and myself, a member of the British IS group (forerunner of the SWP) and *Workers Fight*. One would soon become active with a group of pseudo-Guevarists who robbed banks in the South, and be killed in an internal dispute, but that was all in the future.

Apart from the Dublin group, the only Trotskyists in Ireland were a few disoriented WRPers and some radical student leaders in Northern Ireland, independent-minded supporters of IS/SWP. (They would break with the IS/SWP and veer sharply towards nationalism, indeed Catholic chauvinism, within two years.)

One thing can be said for sure: neither Irish Trotskyism in general, nor the people in that crowded car in particular, were in a position to pose a direct threat

to the state, North or South of the partition Border.

Yet one of the people in that car turned out to be a police spy! He was exposed soon afterwards.

From what I saw of him, he was a seemingly solid working-class comrade, though of recent political vintage, who would look you candidly in the eye. I remember that he made a good joke: the wish perhaps fathering the thought, he said, "If this car were to crash it would kill at least two Trotskyist groups." All the Trotskyists in Ireland would have fitted comfortably into one small bus; but "the authorities" weren't taking any chances.

They don't just spy. Sometimes they lead you on.

MOVE on a few years, to a docklands club in Salford. I am drinking with political friends, some of them prominent militants in the port.

A man known to one of them, an ex-docker turned semi-professional criminal, joins us. Though I don't know him, he says he knows me, from when I worked on the docks there, and would get up and make speeches at mass meetings.

Soon he draws me aside, away from the table. He knows people, he says, with guns and ammunition to sell. Being Irish, a "commie", and so on, am I interested? I must have contacts! Do I know anybody who would be interested? It is too good a chance to miss. And there would also be money in it for me, if I could help him out.

I have been in the Salford pubs all evening and, suffering from bad neuralgia, I have been overdosing on aspirin for a week. I don't have all my wits about me. But I'm not *that far* gone! He has to be either an idiot "cowboy" or a provocateur, and should in either case be shunned. So I am non-committal, and eventually he goes off.

I am told later that, unlikely as it might seem, he is out on bail — on a charge of armed robbery!

This is about the time the first IRA bombs went off in England. The offices of our organisation *Workers' Fight*, in Gifford Street, Islington, have been raided recently by armed police and thoroughly searched.

Some months earlier, five Irish "Republicans" — "the Hackney Five" —

have been trapped by police agents offering them guns, and charged: the frameup is exposed in the *Sunday Times* and elsewhere, and the police case falls apart. Those people do have links with a pseudo-political gangster group, but they haven't actually done anything. The proactive cops couldn't wait.

The cowboy in the nightclub is eventually jailed on the robbery charge. Before that the story of the incident in the club has gone the rounds on the Salford docks, and he is given a severe beating by some people unknown to me who don't like narks.

Those are just two incidents. There have been many others like them. Lots of political activists could tell the same stories: the people and the details would vary, but they would be pretty much the same stories.

MOVE on to look at the subject of the "security forces" and the left from a different angle, by way of a much earlier experience of my own which sheds light on how some narks are recruited. In this case, the person they tried to turn into a nark was me.

It is 1959. I am just 18, not very grown-up, labouring in Grant's timber yard in Salford. Though I am, in fact, a "Trot", I only half know it yet and move in political circles where "Trotskyist" is the equivalent of "fascist", and "agents of imperialism" is the routine response to my attempts to discuss Leon Trotsky and his relationship to the USSR. I take an hour off one Monday morning and go to the big union building on the Salford Crescent to join the Transport and General Workers Union.

An official shows inordinate interest and, after beating about the bush for a while, finally asks me if I'd like to hand out union membership forms and ask people working in the yard to join. The union officials have been refused when they asked permission to organise the labourers in the yard. Would I!

I spend four days in intense agitation, pestering people to join the union, talking socialism at least as much as trade unionism. I sign up half a dozen, and get a dozen promises to join if I'm not sacked.

On the Friday morning, one big foreman, looking uncomfortable, and one of the Grant brothers, a chubby self-

impressed little man with glasses, a hat and a brown overall coat, come up to me in the yard where I am working. Telling me to go with them, they take a firm grip on me, one for each arm, as if they expect me to try to escape, and march me out of the gate and down the lane to the office. There, I'm kept waiting two hours before being given my cards. Either the decision to sack me was sudden and they have to catch up on the paper work, or they are putting me in my "place."

I go again to the Crescent. The union official comes back down with me to see what can be done. He is told by Grant that I've "been sent" by "the League of Young Communists" to organise the yard. He won't tolerate that! The union can do nothing.

Three weeks later, two policemen come to my father's house in Cheetham Hill. They want me to account for where I was on the Sunday evening two weeks ago. They refuse to tell me why.

Inexperienced, bloody-minded, and with a childish disregard for the relation of forces involved, I say I won't tell them until they tell me why they want to know. They sternly refuse to do that and instead pack me roughly in a car and take me to Frederick Road police station, into a small interrogation room where they immediately lay into me, very persuasively. After a while I condescend to tell them about "my movements" that Sunday night. I was at a meeting of the Cheetham Young Communist League.

All of a sudden they become friendly, solicitous even, one especially playing the role of the avuncular "soft cop." Now they tell me what it is all about. Someone has broken in and smashed windscreens on the Grant brothers' lorries. They are working through a list of people who might have a grievance against them. The reason why I've been sacked must be known to them.

They seem to have no difficulty in believing me about not having smashed the Grants' windscreens. They never check my alibi: if they had, I'd hear of it.

Now the two recently tough-talking policemen start talking, probingly, about politics. They want me to tell them where "the cell" holds its meetings. Demands for other information would no doubt have been made once that was out of the way. I seem a decent, sensible lad, really. I was, wasn't I? I'd tell them what they wanted to know, wouldn't I? For reasons that will become clear — my nerve is restored a bit and I've begun to get my bearings after the first shock of

the pummelling and the first feeling of panic at being trapped in that room with the two large, state-licensed thugs — I am quite willing to tell them where we meet. Indeed, I say, I'll *show them* where we met.

Eager to be shown, they drive me, at my direction, more or less home down to Cheetham Hill Road, the main thoroughfare of the area. There I take them to the local CP headquarters. This is a big old house on Cheetham Hill Road, opposite the Odeon cinema, a relic of the days 15 years earlier when the Cheetham CP was a very big movement of mainly anti-fascist Jews. Securely nailed to a railway sleeper buried deep in the soil of the little garden outside the house is a heavy wooden placard with posters on it advertising the *Daily Worker*. Deep secret!

Disappointed and annoyed, they let me out of the car with a cuff on the side of my head from the "hard cop", for being a "cheeky bastard." Once out on the pavement, the cops in the car with the window down, I ask for their names, telling them I intend to make a formal complaint against them. The sergeant, the 'hard cop', says, with a studiedly contemptuous drawl: "Crawford's my name." There is a mixture of pride and righteousness in the drawl, meaning "What the fuck can *you* do?"

And of course he is right. The idea that I can do anything against them is about as realistic as the idea I'd started out with, of giving free vent to the adolescent, "Irish" and gut-anarchist disdain I feel for police, and simply refusing to discuss my movements with them except on my own terms.

THE line from such events — they are not rare — to the establishment by the police of regular narking connections with people in the labour movement is a very short one.

The stories that have occasionally come out in courts — especially in Northern Ireland — about how the police "turn" Republicans and set up spies, are often stories of raw and uncertain people being bullied, or "hooked" on petty offences, or bribed by paltry sums.

It was a very frightening experience for me. My nerves were on edge for a long time afterwards, and my sleep, never secure, was badly disturbed.

Politically, though, it was a very useful experience, helping sort out my ideas about such nonsensical Communist Party dogmas as "peaceful revolution", about which I had been in conflict with my comrades.

And, frightened as I was, once I'd

adapted a bit, been educated into guile to protect myself, I had inured political attitudes to steady me. I'd been calling myself a "communist" for the better part of three years and a "Republican" for much longer. I knew who and what the police were, and who and what I was. My commitment to certain political attitudes was fundamental to my ability to make sense of the world and my own place in it. There was no way I was going to help them.

I have no new conclusions to draw from all this, or from the latest case to surface, Janet Lovelace. It is no new revelation that there is a great deal of police spying on, and interference with, the left and with the labour movement, on every level. It would be daft to be paralysed by suspicion and spy-hunting, but equally daft to pretend that there is no problem.

Parade of the Old New

By Bertolt Brecht

I stood on a hill and I saw the Old approaching, but it came as the New.

It hobbled upon new crutches which no one had ever seen before and stank of new smells of decay which no one had ever smelt before.

The stone that rolled past was the newest invention and the screams of the gorillas drumming on their chests set up to be the newest musical composition.

Everywhere you could see open graves standing empty as the New advanced on the capital.

Round about stood such as inspired terror, shouting: Here comes the New, it's all new, salute the New, be new like us! And those who heard, heard nothing but their shouts, but those who saw, saw such as were not shouting.

So the Old strode in disguised as the New, but it brought the New with it in its triumphal procession and presented it as the Old.

The New went fettered and in rags; they revealed its splendid limbs.

And the procession moved through the night, but what they thought was the light of dawn was the light of fires in the sky. And the cry: 'Here comes the New, it's all new, salute the New, be new like us!' would have been easier to hear if all had not been drowned in a thunder of guns.

Cable Street and the defeat of British fascism

By Ruah Carlyle

OCTOBER 1996 marks the 60th anniversary of the memorable day when the workers of East London stopped police-protected fascists marching through the Jewish areas of the East End. The Battle of Cable Street was an epic, and is now a myth-enshrouded, event in British working-class history.

On this sixtieth anniversary, fascism is far more of a force in the world than it was ten years ago. The fight against fascism may once more become a matter of life and death to the labour movement. What lessons for this work can we learn from the anti-fascist struggle in East London sixty years ago? Did "objective conditions" and, after 1934, Establishment disapproval kill off Mosleyism, or was it direct action on the streets? What are the lessons for today?

The 1929 Wall Street Crash lurched the world economy into chaos. Companies collapsed and millions of jobs were lost in the Great Depression which then set in. In Britain, too, conditions were severe though not as cataclysmic as in Germany and the U.S.A. The pound was taken off the Gold Standard in 1931, but, in contrast to many private and state banks in other countries, the Bank of England was never in danger of collapse. British unemployment was high, peaking at 23 percent (nearly four million). Elsewhere, in the USA and Germany, for example, it was much higher.

In May 1930, Sir Oswald Mosley, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster — a Labour minister charged with helping to solve the mushrooming unemployment problem and seen as a possible future party leader — made proposals that were radical for the time. When they were rejected he left the Labour Party to form a "New Party". Within two years the New Party, shedding some of its leaders such as John Strachey, had evolved into a fascist organisation. Mosley, the radical Labour MP, had become the Fuhrer of the British Union of Fascists. Britain's biggest ever fascist party was founded in October 1932.

Mosley's economic proposals had been basically "Keynesian". He thought that the best way out of the economic depression was reflation. The government should spend its way out of the depression. The financial boost to the economy would have a positive knock-on effect. These ideas would be bourgeois economic orthodoxy ten years later.

But, in 1930, the Establishment held to a traditional and conventional view, similar to modern monetarism, demanding strict control of expenditure, deflation and cuts in public services such as the dole. Mosley was thus opposed to what the ruling class saw as its best interests. Mosley's "Keynesian" economics — he was by no means the only person to advocate these ideas — were also rejected by most of the Labour leadership. They too thought it necessary to cut rather than spend.

Despite this comparatively radical stance, Mosley at his best

was an elitist reformer, an aristocrat who had come to Labour from the Tories.¹

COMMITTED to old-style "monetarist" economics, the ruling class as a whole was certain to oppose Mosley, unless it felt, as had the German and Italian Establishments with Hitler and Mussolini, a need for fascism. The mainstream British Establishment never came to that pass.

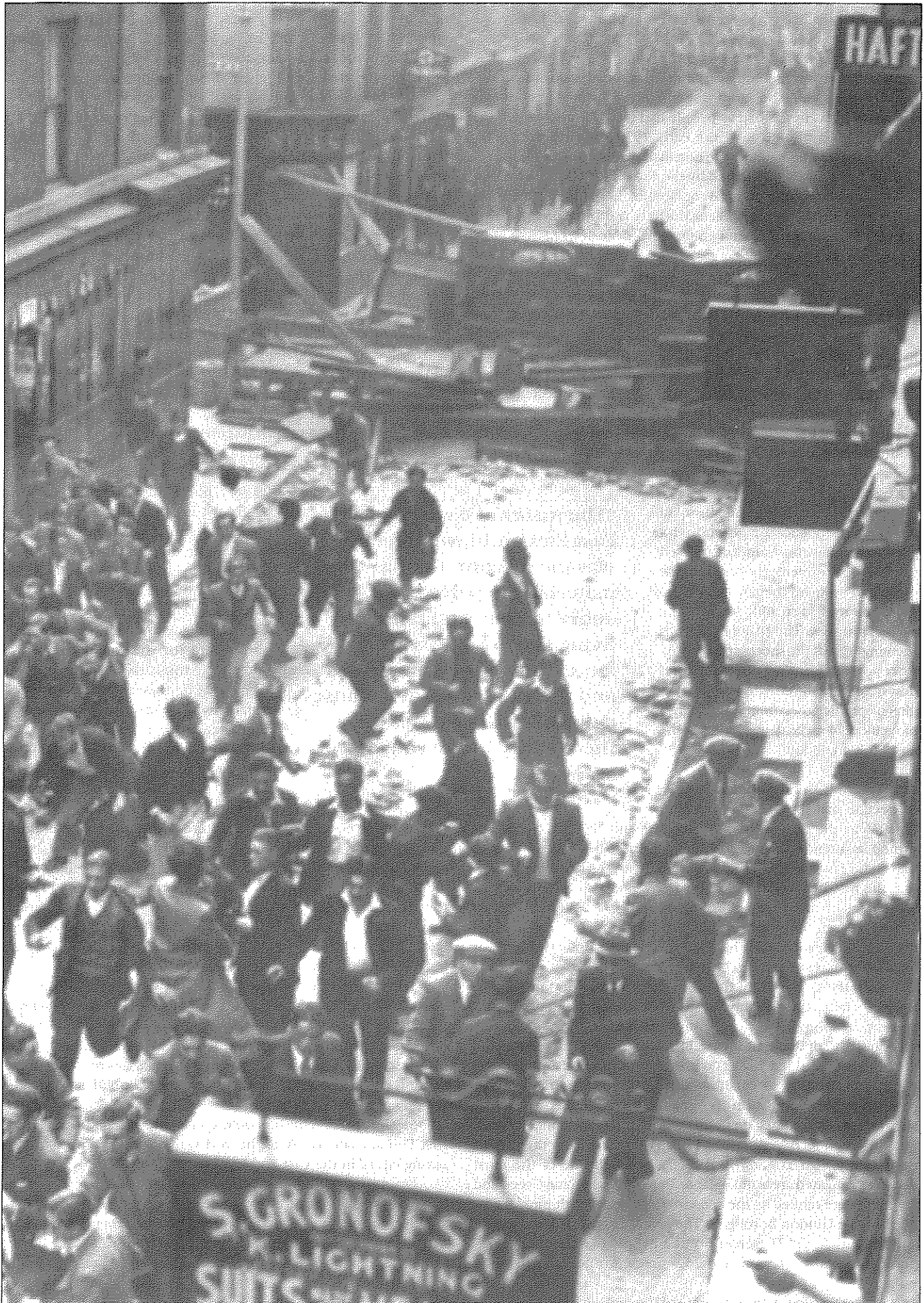
However, there was indeed a small section of the Establishment who thought, as had the desperate liberal Giolitti in Italy and the Junker monarchist von Schleicher in Germany, that they might have a use for the fascists. Most notable of these were the Tory press lords Rothermere and Camrose, the British Rupert Murdochs of the day, both part of the Empire Free Trade faction of the Tory party. They expected a major social crisis, and hoped to make the rabble-rouser Mosley an auxiliary of the Tory Party: their support for Mosley was in part a gambit in their factional war against the Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin.

They made financial contributions to the British Union of Fascists, and, more importantly, they gave it support in their newspapers — notoriously in Lord Rothermere's personally-written front-page *Daily Mail* article and headline, "Hurrah for the Blackshirts", on 8 January 1934. They were keeping their options open. If the economy worsened and social discontent grew, the fascists could be on hand to silence working-class protest by crushing the labour movement in the most brutal way.

By late 1934, the BUF had lost this ruling-class support. The explanation normally given is that they were horrified by Mosley's Olympia rally of June 1934, where dozens of anti-fascists were publicly beaten up by fascist stewards, while Mosley looked on. These atrocities were no different from numerous previous assaults by fascists at BUF meetings. But Olympia was a deliberate, public display of savage violence. Staged to impress an audience which included many MPs and other well-off middle-class and Establishment figures with the ruthless efficiency of BUF fascism, it had an opposite effect. It seemed gratuitous, and the BUF came to be seen as thugs. Olympia took place at about the time of Hitler's "night of the long knives", in which the "left-wing" Nazis were slaughtered, and this increased the resonance. Mosley had demoted himself from a serious politician to a gutter thug. So the legend goes.

But there were other reasons for people like Lord Rothermere to withdraw their support. Although the public atrocity at Olympia, and the BUF's tentative but increasing anti-semitism, did much to alienate the once sizeable Establishment support, mostly they

Facing page: anti-fascists retreating as police attack a barricade in the "Battle of Cable Street."



withdrew support because now they felt confident that they did not need Mosley.

The economy was steadily improving by 1934. There was mass unemployment and devastation in some areas of the country, and there would be another slump in 1937, but the economic depression was not as bad as people had feared in the early '30s. Politically, too, the crisis of the early 1930s was resolved. The National Government, under the nominal leadership of Ramsay MacDonald but actually dominated by the Conservatives, had created and maintained relative political equilibrium. Rothermere, Camrose, and the car manufacturer William Morris (the future Lord Nuffield) concluded that they were not going to need Mosley's fascists after all.

They may or may not have been horrified by the fascists' violence, but if they felt that they needed the fascists then they would have stomached it, just as the Imperial German politician Kurt von Schleicher was willing to stomach the Nazis. Writing to a friend in March 1932, he stated:

"I am really glad that there is a counterweight [to the Social Democrats] in the form of the Nazis, who are not very decent chaps either and must be stomached with the greatest caution. If they did not exist, we should virtually have to invent them." That is what Rothermere, Camrose, Morris and the others would have said, if necessary. For them it did not prove necessary.

The plebeians Hitler and Mussolini started on the political fringes and, with growing ruling-class support, moved towards government; the "aristocratic coxcomb" Mosley began in government and moved steadily towards the political fringes. The BUF began with seemingly great prospects and the support of a number of national newspapers, and retreated to the margins of politics, becoming primarily a movement of racist demagogues in the East End of London.

IT was only in its period of relative decline that the BUF (known after 1936 as the British Union of Fascists and National Socialists) turned its attention to East London and there built the only truly mass base fascism ever built in Britain. It was as late as July 1934 that the first BUF East London Branch was set up in Bow. It was November of that year before the second East End branch was started, in their future stronghold of Bethnal Green. Yet they grew quickly and steadily, until by 1937 they were a powerful force in local government elections.

After the defection of the newspaper barons and the end of the BUF's initial burst of support, the East End branches of the BUF became, by spring 1936, the centre of BUF activity. Why? What was it about East London that focused BUF attention? The Jews of the East End provided the fascists with a unique target. East End Jews were concentrated in small areas: in 1929, 43 percent of the national Jewish population were concentrated in Stepney alone. So, too, could the attack on them be geographically concentrated.

Although its population had been declining from the turn of the century, East London in the 30's was still one of the most densely populated areas of England. Shoreditch, Bethnal Green and Stepney were ranked as the second, third and fourth most populated of the London boroughs. The "New Survey of London Life and Labour" found 18 percent of the people of Shoreditch, 17.8 percent of Bethnal Green, and 15.5 percent of Stepney living in poverty.

In East London there was none of the mass unemployment of

the industrial North. Most people had work, but it was insecure work, often in small factories, "sweatshops", prone to disruption and bankruptcy — low pay, long hours and a pervasive sense of insecurity for the lucky, hunger and destitution for the rest.

East London had been an immigrant gateway for centuries. In the 17th century, French Protestants, Huguenots, sought refuge there from Catholic persecution. The mid 19th century saw a big influx of Irish immigrants. After 1881, when systematic pogroms set Russian and Polish Jews to begin their exodus to the west, large numbers of them settled in the East End, first in Whitechapel then fanning out towards Stepney and Mile End.

Anti-Jewish agitation, loud or muted, active or latent, had existed in the East End since the time of the first large Jewish settlements. "The Jews" were long an issue in the East End labour movement. Some labour leaders sometimes joined in agitation against "the Jews", while others attacked the anti-semites. In the early 20th century, the British Brothers' League and the Londoners' League organised systematic anti-semitic campaigning. Although those organisations declined after the passing of the 1905 Aliens Act, which restricted Jewish immigration, anti-semitism continued. In 1917 there were riots in Bethnal Green against recently arrived Jews, who were not subject to conscription.

"The material basis for East End anti-Jewish feeling was the discontent of a materially deprived and angry 'native' population, living side by side with a large number of immigrants and their descendants, whose cultural distinctiveness cast them easily in the role of scapegoat."

IN this whole period of British history, liberal humanitarianism did not have the authority it enjoys now. "Bashing" and stereotyping "the Jews" was a common part of social and literary discourse. For example, in 1920, Winston Churchill wrote: "This (Jewish and Communist) world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development... has been steadily growing." Anti-Jewish prejudice was deeply ingrained, even on the left.

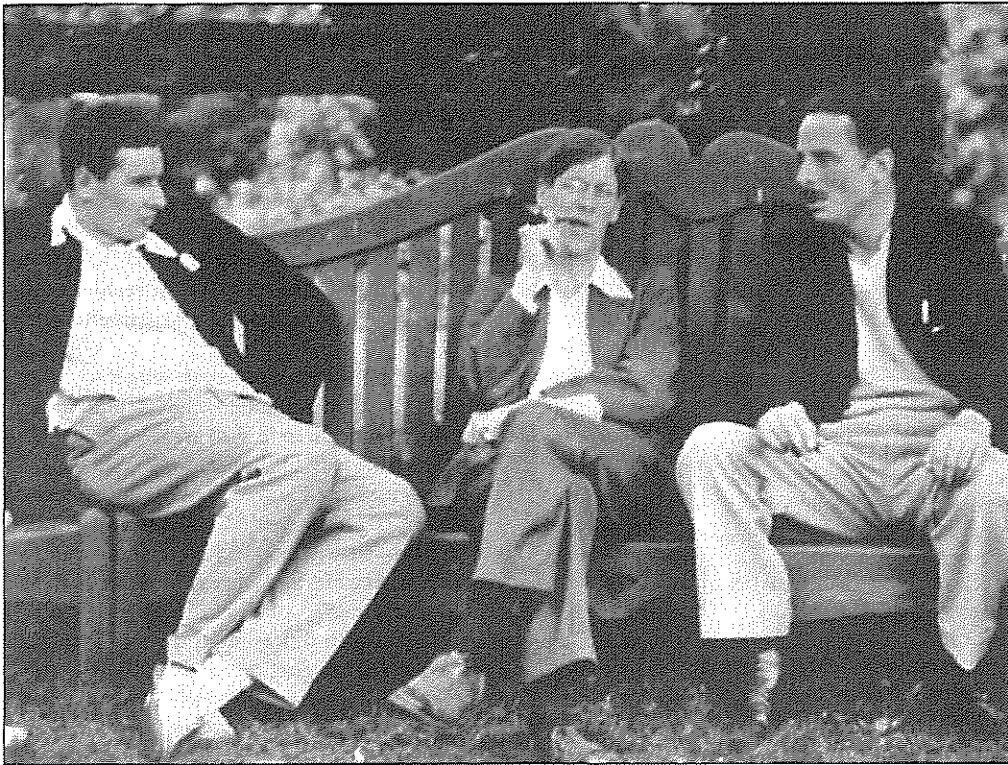
The leading left-wing and anti-fascist periodical, the *New Statesman*, could, while condemning the BUF, write in 1936 of the conflicts in East London:

"The average poorish Jew has a different glandular and emotional make-up... Jews are often much more 'pushful'... there is a widely spread, rough, rarely expressed, smouldering anti-semitic resentment much resembling the feeling our native squirrel might have towards the grey interloper... the shouted insults, window-breaking and beard-pullings to which decent law-abiding-but-money-seeking-at-any-price -to-others Jews have been subjected..." It was a different, pre-Holocaust world.

The material basis for East End anti-Jewish feeling was the discontent of a materially deprived and angry "native" population, living side by side with a large number of immigrants and their descendants, whose cultural distinctiveness cast them easily in the role of scapegoat. All that was needed to make this resentful scapegoating erupt into an aggressive force was a political formation seeking to exploit anti-semitism.

Mosley the ex-minister could speak louder than the traditional East End anti-semitite. What he said was not new, but it struck a strong chord in the East End.

From its inception the BUF had displayed flashes of anti-semitism. In speeches and articles, some of its secondary leaders, such as William Joyce and A K Chesterton, showed themselves as the hard core anti-semites they were. But Mosley himself at first showed signs of wanting to eschew "extreme" anti-semitism. The British Nazi, Arnold Leese, of the Imperial Fascist League, dismissed Mosley as a "kosher fascist".



This remarkable 1926 picture shows Mosley [right], the future fascist leader, with Fenner Brockway [centre], secretary of the ILP throughout the 1930s, and John Strachey, who would go with Mosley into the New Party and, breaking with him when he turned fascist, be a leading Stalinist propagandist throughout the '30s. After the Hitler-Stalin pact Strachey switched from justifying Stalin's atrocities to doing public relations work for the RAF, Bomber Harris and his obliteration raids on German civilian targets. Strachey was a Minister in the 1945 Labour government.

For Jewish immigrants and their British-born families, refugees from persecution in Russia and Eastern Europe, it meant that the Nazis were coming.

After initial confusion, the Communist Party, the Independent Labour Party, and members of the local Labour Party, together with Jewish anti-fascist organisations, prepared to do battle with the fascists and the police, the defenders of the fascists. Cable Street coincided with the siege of Madrid. The anti-fascists, overwhelmingly working-class, painted the slogan "No Pasaran" ("They Shall Not Pass") all over East London, linking Mosley's march with Franco's rebellion in Spain. They took the workers of Madrid as their model and inspiration. But would they be able to stop Mosley?

THE Labour Party and the trade union movement were against the fascists, but they also opposed direct action — physical force — to

In 1934 anti-semitism became central to both the BUF's propaganda and its activities. Its turn to intense anti-semitic campaigning after October 1934 was an outright "declaration of war" on the Jews. That was central to building BUF support in the East End.

They had a profound effect, but they never "captured the East End". The large Jewish minority which provided them with the opportunity through scapegoating of winning grassroots support, also, by its presence in the neighbourhoods and on the electoral roll, prevented them from winning control of whole districts and confined fascist local street dominance to smaller areas.

The story later propagated by the Communist Party, of an East End united against the anti-semitic Blackshirts, does not tally with election results. Nor do eyewitness accounts — from people unconnected with the BUF — of Mosley on informal evening walks through East End streets surrounded by a "forest" of arms raised in the fascist salute.

In the 1937 LCC elections the fascists stood in Bethnal Green, Stepney and Shoreditch. They lost everywhere but proved the existence of a substantial body of support, coming second in Bethnal Green.

In East London fascism set the agenda for political life. In school playgrounds the game of "cowboys and Indians" was replaced by "Jews and Blackshirts". Streets, estates, and "patches" were marked off as either fascist or anti-fascist (Jewish or Communist or both), and were off limits to members of the other side. Indeed for some time an unofficial state of warfare existed between the two factions. Such a conflict could not have been maintained without substantial local support for the fascists.

It was against this background that, in September 1936, Mosley announced that the BUF would march through the East End on 4 October. It was to be the biggest show of fascist strength ever, in this their strongest area. It could have developed into a pogrom.

stop their activities. Like the Liberals, they instructed people to rely on the police to prevent disorder. But unlike the establishment the labour movement feared destruction at the hands of the Nazis, not just discomfort. Even those who opposed direct action helped arouse the working class. The Labour Party and TUC research departments published many pamphlets and leaflets which compared the BUF to Italian and German Fascism. This was no futile activity. Though it could not prevent fascist activities, this literature, along with meetings, created a climate of educated opposition to the fascists in the labour movement and in the broader working class. Thus it helped prepare a united front in action between labour movement militants, revolutionary socialists and unaffiliated workers. In this climate, the militant "actionist" opponents of fascism gained support for physical opposition, even from normally non-militant Labour Party and trade union members.

Naturally the national leaders of the Jewish community also opposed the fascists. In an area where the "Jewish question" was the very centre of politics, the attitude of the Jewish leadership on what to do about fascist harassment was important. In 1936 the Board of Deputies set up a Jewish Defence Committee. Yet, though the Board vehemently opposed the fascists, it told the East End Jews to rely on the police and on no account to oppose the fascists physically. That, the Jewish leadership insisted, would only add fuel to the fires of anti-semitism.

Individual members of the British Establishment were, of course, sympathetic to the BUF or even its supporters, but the state, the civil servants, the police, and the industrialists, all those elements of British society which held to the social status quo, collectively condemned them. The government consistently opposed the fascists, and this too helped create a powerful climate of resistance to fascism "on the ground".

Yet the National Government, with unconscious irony proclaiming itself custodian of the law and of "traditional British

Britain's fascists

March 1930

Mosley forms New Party. Half the members leave when Mosley likens the New Party to the "continental modern [i.e. fascist] movements."

April 1930

Ashton-under-Lyne by-election — the New Party splits the Labour vote, allowing the Tories to win. Facing an angry post-result Labour crowd, Mosley says to John Strachey: "That is the crowd that has prevented anyone doing anything since the war."

June-July

Proposals for a "youth movement." New Party "Biff Boys" organised, supposedly to keep order at meetings and also to protect law and order "in the event of a Communist uprising." This is the beginning of the Blackshirts.

October 1931

General Election. National Government elected with a majority of 498. All but 2 of the 24 New Party candidates lose their deposit. Even the CP did better.

December

Mosley visits Mussolini. Stands with him on a saluting base during a fascist parade.

Summer 1932

Wearing of Blackshirt uniforms and use of fascist title introduced.

1 October

British Union of Fascists formally launched.

January 1933

Nazis given power in Germany.

Autumn 1933

First signs of BUF anti-semitism.

1934

By summer BUF has 100 branches.

8 January 1934

Media magnate Lord Rothermere begins his campaign in support of the BUF. "Hurrah for the Blackshirts" is the *Daily Mail's* headline.

7 April 1934

BUF Olympia rally. Blackshirts publicly beat up dozens of hecklers, disgust a largely middle-class audience, lose Rothermere's support and are thereafter (accurately) identified with violence.

22 April 1934

First big BUF rally at the Albert Hall.

September 1934

BUF rally in Hyde Park.

October 1934

At Belle Vue, Manchester Mosley makes "what amounted to a declaration of war against the Jews."

Late 1934

British economy largely stabilised following the depths of the Depression. BUFNS branches set up in Bethnal Green and Shoreditch.

1935

Mussolini invades Ethiopia.

June

BUFNS adopts Nazi leather uniforms.

July 1936

Stepney Green branch set up.

4 October

The Battle of Cable Street.

11 October

The Mile End Pogrom.

1 January 1937

Public Order Act bans political uniforms and increases police powers to ban marches.

6 March 1937

LCC elections. BUFNS poll one-fifth of the vote in East London.

Mid 1937

BUFNS plunge into disputes. Leaders Beckett and Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw) split, setting up the National Socialist League.

October 1937

Battle of Bermondsey.

Mosley knocked out by a brick in Liverpool.

March 1938

A K Chesterton leaves the BUFNS.

July 1939

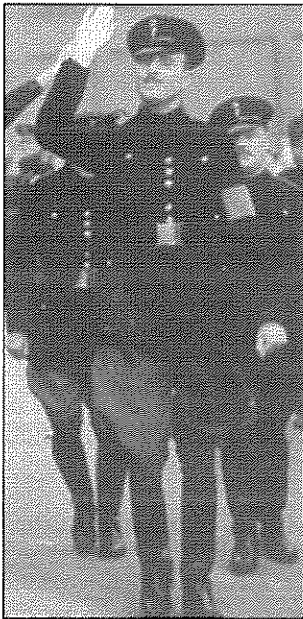
In accordance with their anti-war (pro-Nazi) campaign, the BUFNS hold their last major event, a rally in Earls Court, which resembles a leather-clad pacifists' convention.

September 1939

War begins. BUFNS membership and optimism plummet.

May 1940

Mosley nearly lynched at Middleton. BUFNS and other fascist groups' active members interned.



liberties", found itself defending the fascists' right to "free speech", and, in practice, championing their "right" to make life miserable for East London's Jews. To many in the East End, in particular to many Jews faced with fascist harassment, this was indistinguishable from Government defence of the fascists as such. In practice, that is what it was. According to the East End Labour MP George Lansbury, it was widely believed in the East End that "ordinary people" would not have had the same liberty as the fascists. The police were defending the right of people who aped Hitler, who waved his emblems, and were believed to be in receipt of his money, to march through the Jewish areas in a blatant attempt to terrorise Jews.

The fascists would march through markets abusing Jewish store holders and kicking them. They would bellow anti-semitic propaganda over loud-hailers late at night in Jewish areas and chalk foul abuse on the pavement outside Jewish shops, including the slogan "P J" (Perish Judah). They assaulted and incited assaults on Jews. In the "Mile End Pogrom" of October 1936 — in the week after the battle of Cable Street — Jewish shops had their windows broken, Jews were beaten in the street, and a pre-school aged girl and an old man were thrown through a plate glass window. The list of such incidents is enormous. In this context the fascists' "right to free speech" became something else: police defending the right of pogromists to spread terror in Jewish streets.

To many young Jews, political or not — and large numbers of Jews were members of the Communist Party, the Independent Labour Party, the Labour Party, and of Jewish left-wing groups like Hashomer Hatzair and the Workman's Circles — the proper response to fascists marching through Jewish areas was simple: don't let them! Sign petitions, try to get the marches stopped, but if all else fails, collect the bricks and build the barricades: that was their attitude. It was in this climate that the ground was prepared for the united action by anti-fascists which stopped Mosley at the Battle of Cable Street.

THE two main organisations that practised physical force opposition to the fascists were the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain, and it was their activities — notably their part in the Battle of Cable Street — which most people today think of as the opposition to the fascists.

A Stalinist myth surrounds the Communist Party's role in the Battle of Cable Street. The CP had a grand anti-fascist reputation, but an increasingly spurious one.

Up to 1934 the CP had been in the throes of the Stalinist policy known as the "third period", when, so they said, revolutions were just about to happen everywhere. This was nonsense, and in Germany led the CP to play into Hitler's hands, but it had meant that the British CP was willing to throw itself physically — as at Olympia in 1934 — into fighting fascism, perceived as the last-ditch defenders of a dying capitalism.

By 1936 this view had changed dramatically. The CP's central concern became "anti-fascism". They were the anti-fascists par excellence. In fact, "anti-fascism" meant opposition to Germany and support for USSR foreign policy, to whose interests the CP was subservient. It would alter its relationship to the fascists, as to everything else, in line with what the rulers of the USSR saw as their needs.

Stalin was pursuing a policy of creating a "democratic anti-fascist front" of the USSR with the capitalist powers France and Britain against the German Nazis; the British CP, like CPs everywhere, was now advocating a Popular Front. This meant allying with non-working-class organisations opposed to German fascism, and in Britain by the late 1930s this would include "progressive Tories".²

The British CP was trying to gain respectability, aping mainstream politicians in the hope of allying with them. As a result, the



Was Mosley really an anti-semitic? One of the most idiotic of academic pseudo debates was initiated around this question when Robert Skidelsky published a biography of Mosley in 1975. The meanest acquaintance with BUF literature brands such a discussion as unserious. In 1938, in a pamphlet outlining the BUF's policy, Mosley said that he would, on coming to power, immediately deprive all British Jews of citizenship and deport all those considered "undesirable." He wrote of Madagascar as a possible place to which Jews could be exiled. So, at that time, did the German Nazis.

CP did not always oppose Mosley militantly, because they feared that continued militancy would make it impossible to ally with 'respectable' politicians. By 1936 they were shying away from physical confrontations. Abandoning class politics, they more and more attempted to compete with the fascists as British nationalists, and even as protectors of religious freedom against "compulsory idolatry" in Germany. They were loudest in demanding blanket police bans on the fascists, and counterposed campaigning for bans to organising on the streets. That was their initial approach to what became the Battle of Cable Street.

The Stalinists' reputation as the foremost anti-fascists of the 1930's has been glamorised in history as a result of the CP's untruthfully taking almost all the credit for the Battle of Cable Street. The reality was different.

THE CP only threw their considerable weight behind the East End anti-fascist mobilisation when it was clear three days before that they had lost control of their own local members and sympathisers who would follow the Independent Labour Party's call on workers to block the route of the fascist march. At first they told workers not to oppose the fascists in the East End, and instructed CP members to go to the Embankment and then Trafalgar Square instead.

Joe Jacobs, a local CP branch secretary, who later broke with the party, was instructed by his superiors four days before the fascist march not to get involved and instead to build for a demonstration, miles away in Trafalgar Square, in support of the Spanish Republic against the Spanish fascists.

His instructions were clear: "Keep order: no excuse for the Government to say we, like the BUF, are hooligans. If Mosley decides to march, let him... Our biggest trouble tonight will be

to keep order and discipline."

So, while the CP was to concentrate on demonstrating against foreign fascism, Britain's actual fascists were to be allowed to march through Jewish streets unopposed! In his posthumously published autobiography, Jacobs explains the reason for the eventual change of line very clearly: "The pressure from the people of Stepney, who went ahead with their own efforts to oppose Mosley, left no doubt in our minds that the CP would be finished in Stepney if this was allowed to go through as planned by our London leaders."

Thus, as a result of the CP's efforts to gain respectability, the better to serve Russia's foreign policy, anti-fascist mobilisations became disunited and less effective. After Cable Street, they continued on their course. At the July 1937 Mosley rally in Trafalgar Square, the CP refused to help block the way to Mosley, leaving the job to the ILP (along with some CP rank and filers disgusted with their own leadership). They issued ridiculous pseudo-patriotic literature reminiscent of the early 30s German CP's suicidal attempt at mimicking the Nazis by way of "National Bolshevism" [see box].

The Independent Labour Party, not the CP, was the most consistently confrontational anti-fascist force in the East End and beyond.

The ILP had been one of the early constituent organisations of the Labour Party.³ It had split from the Labour Party in 1932, moving to the left. By 1936, the ILP, though it was still a hybrid political formation, in which bits of reformism, pacifism, and revolutionary socialism were confusingly mixed, was much nearer to being a communist party in the old sense of the word than the official "Communist Party" was. Some of its members were Trotskyists.

The ILP broke up fascist meetings by way of massing oppo-

sition, heckling and fighting. They barred fascist processions, organised petitions, and defended Jewish areas — particularly in the East End — from attack.⁴

And, of course, not only political anti-fascists were involved. The Jewish community had its own ex-servicemen's anti-fascist militia, the Blue and White Shirts.⁵ British Jews, branching out from their orthodox background, were often attracted to revolutionary politics, many joining the CP. There were also many smaller, local anti fascist bodies.

Many older Jews had memories of the pogroms which had forced them to flee Eastern and Central Europe. Their children knew their people's history. For them physical opposition was not so much a political as a practical matter of life and death in the East End.

ON 4 October, the thousands strong Blackshirt march was to begin in Royal Mint Street, pass along through Gardiners Corner (now the top of Whitechapel Road) and on to four separate street meetings in Shoreditch, Limehouse, Bow and Bethnal Green. It never even got going! The march was stopped dead. As many as a quarter of a million people, East Londoners and outsiders, jammed Gardiners Corner. Only an army would have cleared the way for the Blackshirted thugs. An army of police tried and failed.

Tramdrivers abandoned their vehicles in the middle of the road. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Phillip Game, had drafted in a third of the London police force, 6,000 policemen, the whole of the mounted division and had a primitive helicopter, a gyroscope, flying overhead.

Despite these forces, which made numerous charges at the anti-fascist crowd, breaking many heads, no thoroughway for the fascists could be cut.

The Police Commissioner then proposed a diversion through the dock area around Wapping, and along Cable Street. There a virtual war was fought between the police and the defenders of the anti-fascist barricades. British, Irish and some Somali dockers fought the police. The anti-fascist barricade was constructed of furniture, paving stones and a lorry. Pretending to retreat, the anti-fascists lured the police forwards, and took up positions behind secondary barricades while from the upstairs tenements on either side of the street other anti-fascists threw bricks, stones, bottles, marbles for horses' hooves, and boiling water down on the bewildered police.

While the outnumbered and powerless fascist heroes waited in vain for a path to be cleared for them, the police faced chaos. Rare in British street battles, stray policemen were taken prisoner by the barricaders. For those moments the rule of the British state in East London was suspended.

At about 5pm, after a three hour battle, the Commissioner said to Sir Oswald Mosley that he would no longer be held responsible for the safety of the fascists. Speaking as one knight to another he said: 'If you go ahead sir, it will be a shambles!' The beaten police cancelled the fascist march, and sent them off to the Embankment. They did not pass!

The lessons of Cable Street

YET the reaction in the pro-fascist areas of East London to the fascists' political defeat at Cable Street did not everywhere produce the atmosphere that the CPer (later MP) Phil Piratin depicted in "Our Flag Stays Red", of disgusted BUF residents "tearing up their membership cards." MI5 reported to the Home Office

that as many as 2,000 people — many, no doubt, transient recruits — joined the BUF in East London after Cable Street.

However, despite its distortion by later Stalinist historians and propagandists, Cable Street was tremendously important. It was a great morale booster for the hard pressed East London Jews and for all anti-fascists. While an open war, perceived as the working class versus fascism, was raging abroad in Spain, in London workers, translating the Spanish anti-fascist slogan "No Pasaran" into English as "They shall not pass", had indeed beaten back the fascists. In East London, they had not passed! The fact that the fascists and anti-fascists never came to blows (the street war was entirely between anti-fascists and police) or that the effect on fascist recruitment was favourable for them, was irrelevant to Cable Street's potent political symbolism.

Cable Street entered working-class legend. It is rightly remembered as something the working class and its allies won against the combined might of the state and the fascists.

Any discussion of how well or badly the BUF did must judge it in both a national and local perspective. Nationally, the fascists were an utter failure. The broad opposition to the fascists — the mainstream Establishment after 1934, as well as the labour movement — in combination with the relative economic improvement in Britain, blocked off short-term BUF prospects of taking power.

After 1936, the BUF tended to be the sort of "Foreign Legion" for Berlin that the Stalinist CP was for Moscow. If in the immediate pre-war period it grew steadily — its biggest ever rally occurred in July 1939 — it was as a "peace movement".⁶

In local terms, in East London, however, the fascist failure was a qualified one. Here, even after the defeat at Cable Street, they achieved and sustained a mass base of support which, if it could have been repeated elsewhere, would have given them major political weight and at least the possibility of power.

They polled a fifth of the vote in three districts in the 1937 London County Council elections. On being told this, Mosley is said to have shouted "Better than Hitler!", explaining later that four years prior to gaining power Hitler had consistently polled under 20%. Of course, Hitler achieved that all over Germany, whereas Mosley only managed one fifth of the vote in the three most favourable districts of London. Yet, if war had not come, the East End might have been a base from which fascism could have expanded. Had the ruling class again felt the need for them, as Rothermere had before 1934, East London would have been a strong base from which to expand.

It has been plausibly argued that Mosley captured the support of large numbers of the non-Jewish youth, and had they been old enough to vote he might have won the Bethnal Green council seat. Given the intensity of the opposition mobilised against them, these fascist gains were remarkable.

THE Battle of Cable Street led directly to the Public Order Act. Rushed through the House of Commons, it became law on the 1st of January 1937. The Public Order Act is often and falsely seen by reformists as a significant hindrance to the fascists, and by some as the thing that finally killed off Mosleyism. This is an illusion. The Act banned political uniforms, gave the police added powers to ban marches at will, and strengthened laws against racist abuse. Though it was an annoyance to the fascists, the Act did not cripple them and did not "finish them off" as some too legalistic interpretations of its effect seem to suggest.

It may have deprived the now plainly clothed fascists of some Blackshirt-uniformed glamour and prestige. A handful of anti-semitic speakers were indeed arrested and charged. Where before

The Mosleyites after 1934 built on a long tradition of anti-semitic agitation, especially in London's East End, by groups such as Arnold Leese's "Imperial Fascist League." This cartoon is one of a number preserved in police files that are now publicly accessible: most of them are so vile that they are unreproducible.

"PERSECUTION"



Whenever a Jew is found out and punished he raises the cry of "Persecution."

There was also lower-level anti-semitic agitation in the mainstream press. This is the East London Hackney Gazette (2 October 1936) commenting on a Jewish petition to the government to stop British Hitlerites marching through their community.

THE FASCIST MARCHES. JEWS' TACTLESS PETITION.

THE Fascists propose to hold an anniversary rally on Sunday afternoon next, and to afterwards march through the East End and conduct open-air meetings at four different points. The Jewish People's Council against Fascism and Anti-Semitism has organised a petition, to be presented to the Home Secretary to-day, urging that the proceedings should be banned. Such a request is both stupid and tactless. Jews who enjoy more freedom and rights than their fellows in any other land ought to be the last to attempt to deny them to the nationals of the country which gave them those privileges.

the police had 'defended free speech', and thus the fascists, now they took on the role of regulating and supervising them, within more restrictive laws.

Yet the POA was a broad blanket measure, designed more to help the police control left-wing opposition movements, for example the hunger marchers, than for suppressing the BUF. For decades after Mosleyism had vanished down the great sewer of history, the POA was being used against the labour movement.

The POA did nothing to stop anti-Jewish harassment (despite a few prosecutions). It did not even stop large-scale violence. On

3 October 1937 there was great violence when the Mosleyites, no longer Blackshirted, tried to march through Bermondsey, South London. Despite appeals by Doctor Salter, the much respected local Labour MP, to let the fascists pass and 'respect their free speech', local people erected barricades and there was serious fighting, not far from the scale of Cable Street.

The Public Order Act did not quell the BUF any more than the banning of Nazi uniforms at one point quelled Hitler. If it appears so in retrospect, that is only because the BUF went into decline soon afterwards. The POA played at best a secondary and conditional role in that decline.

WHICH was proved to be the effective method of fighting fascism, direct action as advocated by the ILP and the Trotskyists or the policy of reliance on the police advocated by the LP, CP and trade union leaders?

On the ground, it is virtually certain, insofar as fascist actions were curbed and protection provided for the Jews, that the effective action taken against the BUF was that by local people and labour movement activists, and their supporters from outside. In fact, as we have seen, the POA itself was a product of militant anti-fascist action. Street action forced the authorities, who had at Cable Street tried to assert the right of the pogromists to march into the Jewish ghetto, to go through the motions of curbing them. The truth is that, in the East End, despite the POA, legal fascist harassment of the Jews continued. The BUF was not destroyed until war forced the state to suppress it, in late May 1940, as a Hitlerite agency.

Though the fascists did well in the area, sustaining a fear of pogroms amongst the Jewish population by continual harassment and virtual terrorism, they never came close to physically outnumbering their opponents, and without police protection the would-be marchers — if they had attempted to march — would have been scattered, and many of them possibly lynched.

Their need for police defence was an indication of the fascists' weakness against the "Red Rabble" when it went into action.

CONTRAST Britain and Germany, and you see clearly the "objective" reason why British fascism failed at a national level. In Germany, the choice was: communism or fascism. In Germany, economic collapse led to

political collapse, which effectively by 1930, even before Hitler, marked the death of the country's fledgling Republican constitution. The harsh social conditions polarised politics and society.

In Britain, after the crisis of 1931 and the creation of the so-called National Government, the centre ground in politics held. This political bloc prevented serious political disturbance in the 1930s. Although basically Conservative, it played a roughly similar role to that of the Weimar centre coalition which had ensured the German Republic's survival through the economic crisis of the 1920s.

In retrospect it can be seen that in the broad "National" gov-

Leon Trotsky on fascism

Hatred and despair against the proletariat

THE magnates of finance capital are unable by their force alone to cope with the proletariat. They need the support of the petty bourgeoisie. For this purpose it must be whipped up, put on its feet, mobilised, armed. But this method has its dangers. While it makes use of fascism, the bourgeoisie nevertheless fears it.

Under the conditions of capitalist disintegration and of the impasse in the economic situation, the petty bourgeoisie strives, seeks, attempts to tear itself loose from the fetters of the old masters and rulers of society. It is quite capable of linking up its fate with that of the proletariat.

For that, only one thing is needed: the petty bourgeoisie must acquire faith in the ability of the proletariat to lead society onto a new road. The proletariat can inspire this faith only by its strength, by the firmness of its actions, by a skilful offensive against the enemy, by the success of its revolutionary policy.

But, woe if the revolutionary party does not measure up to the height of the situation!

If the revolutionary party, in spite of a class struggle becoming incessantly more accentuated, proves time and again to be incapable of uniting the working class about it, if it vacillates, becomes confused, contradicts itself, then the petty bourgeoisie loses patience and begins to look upon the revolutionary workers as those responsible for its own misery.

All the bourgeois parties, including the social democracy, turn their thoughts in this very direction. When the social crisis takes on an intolerable acuteness, a

particular party appears on the scene with the direct aim of agitating the petty bourgeoisie to a white heat and of directing its hatred and its despair against the proletariat."

**The Only
Road for Ger-
many,
September
1932**

For the workers' united front!

NO matter how true it is that the social democracy by its whole policy prepared the blossoming of fascism, it is no less true that fascism comes forward as a deadly threat primarily to that same social democracy, all of whose magnificence is inextricably bound with parliamentary-democratic-pacifist forms and methods of government...

The policy of a united front of the workers against fascism flows from this situation. It opens up tremendous possibilities to the Communist Party...

The social crisis will inevitably produce cleavages within the social democracy. The radicalisation of the masses will affect the social democrats. We



The 1936 Public Order Act was drafted as a comprehensive measure, with the Establishment's need to control hunger marches of the unemployed very much in mind. It continued to be used against the labour movement long after Mosleyism had ceased to matter.

Bolsheviks in 1917."

The Turn in the Communist International and the German Situation, 1930

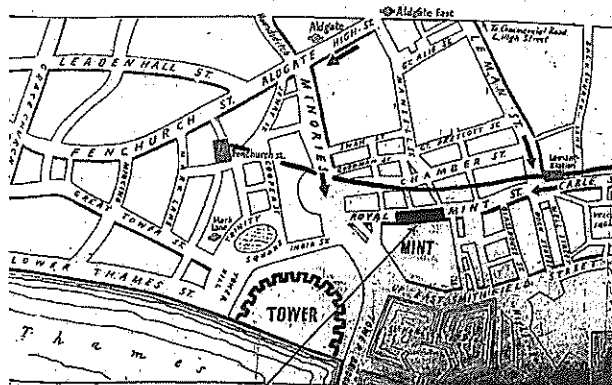
No to state bans!

THE struggle against fascism, the defence of the positions the working class has won within the framework of degenerating democracy, can become a powerful reality since it gives the working class the opportunity to prepare itself for the sharpest struggles and partially to arm itself... to mobilise the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie on the side of the revolution, to create a workers' militia, etc. Anyone who does not take advantage of this situation, who calls on the 'state' i.e. the class enemy, to 'act', in effect sells the proletariat's hide to the Bonapartist reaction.

Therefore, we must vote against all measures that strengthen the capitalist-Bonapartist state, even those measures which may for the moment cause temporary unpleasantness for the fascists.

We have to take strong measures against the abstract 'anti-fascist' mode of thinking that finds entry even into our own ranks at times. 'Anti-fascism' is nothing, an empty concept used to cover up Stalinist skulduggery."

Bourgeois Democracy and the Fight Against Fascism, Writings, 1935-6. 'Bonapartist' here means dictatorial, authoritarian.



THE FASCISTS PLAN TO ASSEMBLE IN ROYAL MINT STREET. MASS IN TENS OF THOUSANDS IN LEMAN STREET, CABLE STREET, GARDINE'S CORNER AND ST. GEORGE STREET. RALLY THERE AT 2PM

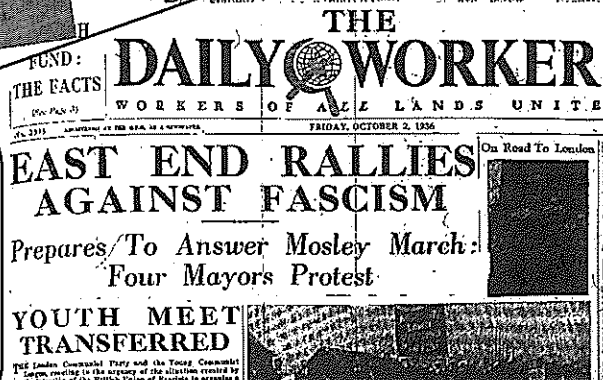
**The Daily Worker's map of East London,
printed on 4 October 1936**

will inevitably have to make agreements with the various social-democratic organisations and factions against fascism, putting definite conditions in this connection to the leaders, before the eyes of the masses... We must return from the empty official phrase about the united front to the policy of the united front as it was formulated by Lenin and always applied by the



ANTI-FASCIST RALLY ON SUNDAY

All anti-Fascists are asked to rally to the Embankment (opposite Temple Station) at 2.30pm on Sunday. There will be a march from the Embankment to Trafalgar Square, where London's youth will vow solidarity with the Spanish people.



These excerpts from the Stalinists' *Daily Worker* show that the CP followed where East London workers and the ILP led. The overprinted CP leaflet (top left) shows it too. (The image on the leaflet is of Spanish anti-fascists making their heroic stand against Franco.)

ernment, the Establishment had found the effective bourgeois solution to Britain's political crisis, one year before the BUF was founded. In the General Election of the autumn of 1931, the Labour Party was reduced to under 50 seats, fewer than in 1918. For things to have developed along radically different lines, vast social unrest, or an immense economic catastrophe, or both, would have been needed to destabilise Britain politically. Nothing like that happened. After the crisis of 1931/2 objective conditions slowly turned unfavourable to fascism. The ruling class did not feel threatened; the British Establishment simply didn't need the fascists.

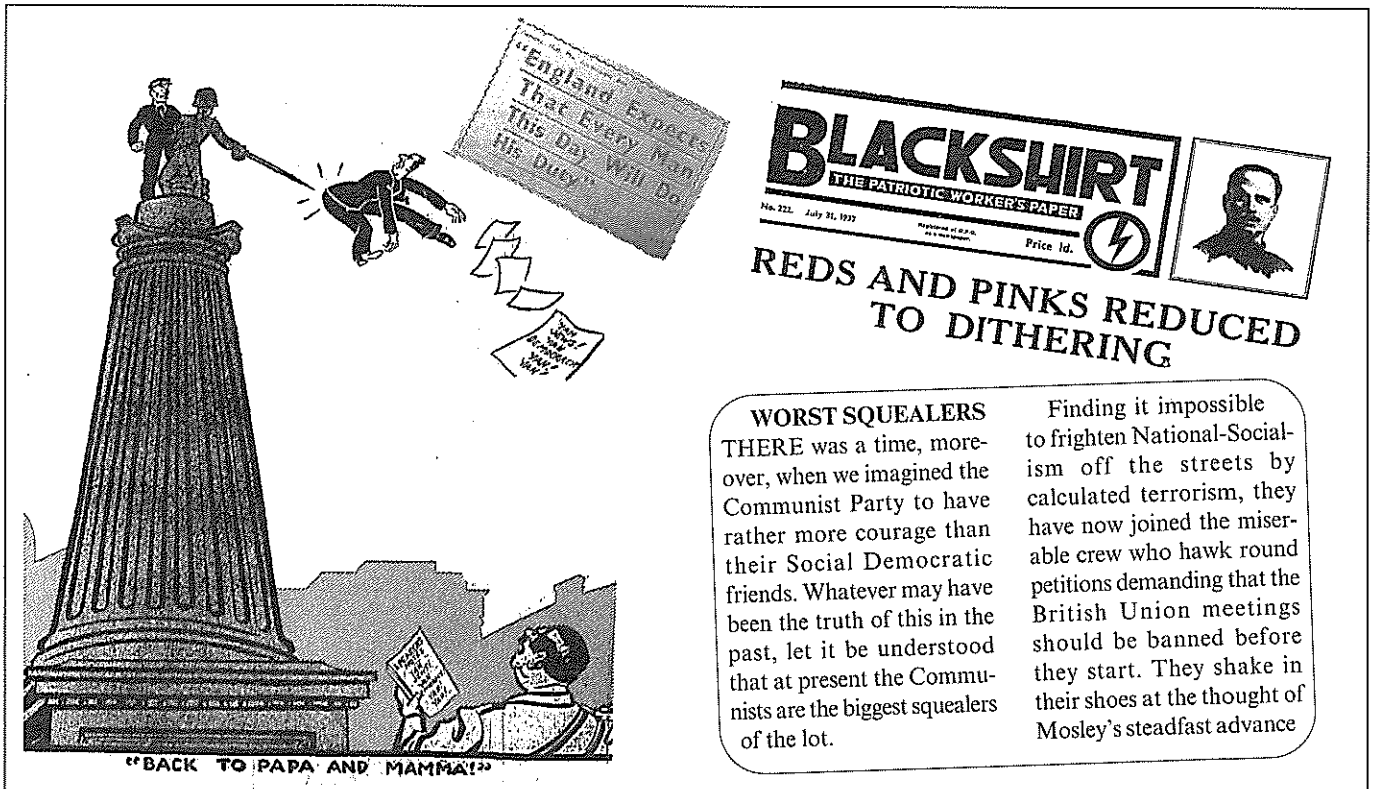
The fundamental determining factors in the BUF's political impotence were that economic conditions and the political relations built on them did not favour a radical bourgeois revolution in Britain: nevertheless, the action of fascism's opponents helped lessen the damage it did to the labour movement and to the Jewish communities.

Yet it was not "objective conditions" that stopped the police forcing a way for the British Hitlerites into Jewish East London: it was a quarter of a million workers massing on the streets to tell them that they would not pass, and making good the pledge by

erecting barricades and fighting the BUF-shepherding police. A year after Cable Street, it was the working class and the socialist movement which again put up barricades in Bermondsey to stop the fascists marching.

Despite the official opposition of the Labour Parties and trade unions to a "United Front" against Fascism, and their denunciation of anti-fascist direct action, members of the Labour Party and trade unions often, as we have seen, acted locally in unison with CP and Jewish militant anti-fascists, enlarging the physical opposition. As well as that, the denial of halls (private and public) for meetings, and the prohibition of loudspeakers in parks enforced by many Labour councils, did great damage to the fascists, who by 1939-40 were reduced to appealing in their press for rooms. The BUF's relative success in the East End only highlights their manifest failure to create a mass movement anywhere else.

In the 1930s East End their "message" had tapped into exceptionally favourable conditions. Essentially similar conditions allowed fascism to be a force in the East End in the '70s, '80s and now, with the revival of (predominantly anti-Asian) political and street racism organised by the National Front in the 1970s and more recently by



When the BUF marched to Trafalgar Square, the Stalinists left it to the Labour Party to oppose them, and appealed to British nationalism against them. Trafalgar Square? Nelson! The cartoon and quotation from Nelson appeared in the *Daily Worker* and in a pamphlet for mass distribution. Having abandoned class politics, the Stalinists thus reached inspired heights of idiocy, competing with the fascists on British nationalist ground. In both cases, it was pseudo nationalism: if the CP was a conduit for Russian propaganda, by the late '30s the BUF had a similar relationship to Germany. *Blackshirt*, the BUF paper directed at working-class people, sneered at the Stalinists: "There was a time... when we imagined the Communist Party to have rather more courage than their Social-Democratic friends..." A K Chesterton, the writer of this article, was a hard core anti-semitic who lived to help found the National Front in the 1960s.

the British National Party. These fascists thrive in the same social conditions which provided the BUF with their unique mass base in the East End: that of chronic poverty, an influx of distinctive and equally poverty-stricken immigrants, and an underlying racist culture.

The great lesson for today is that the determination of the labour movement and Jewish community limited the effects of BUF terror and opened the prospects of defeating the BUF, irrespective of what the Establishment did, including the labour movement Establishment.

Fascism's opponents — ILP, Communist Party, and Labour Party — took note of recent European history and learned the

lessons from the defeats by fascism of foreign labour movements. Their attitude to fascism was "catch it young and kill it quick". That was vitally important then. It is no less important now.

The Second World War really finished off the BUF. 800 fascists were interned. Now fascism abroad was the foreign enemy, and the BUF was increasingly viewed publicly as merely a satellite of the Nazis. They were now incontrovertibly "un-British", an accusation which killed them. Mosley was

seen — if Britain should fall — as an aspirant English stooge of Hitler. The would-be British Nationalist hero had turned into a Quisling in waiting. Hell roast him!

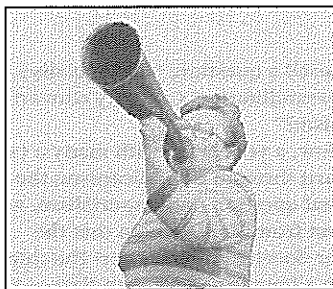
"It was not 'objective conditions' that stopped the police forcing a way for the British Hitlerites into Jewish East London: it was a quarter of a million workers."

Footnotes

- 1 Mosley's wife, Lady Cynthia, the daughter of Lord Curzon, visited Trotsky at Prinkipo in 1931 and provoked Trotsky's reflection in his 1935 diary that it was typical and indicative that Labour Prime Minister MacDonald had put Mosley, the "aristocratic coxcomb", who as a fascist was trying to turn sane old Britain into one more ward in the European lunatic asylum, in the 1929 Labour government.
- 2 In France, the CP leader, Maurice Thorez, advocated a CP alliance with "patriotic", "anti-Nazi" — that is, anti-German — French fascists!
- 3 Its founder Keir Hardie, who died in 1915, was ridiculously claimed in *The Blackshirt* to have been "the first British National Socialist"!
- 4 Colin Cross, author of what is still the best narrative about Mosleyism, claims that the ILP as pacifists played a secondary role in physical oppo-

sition, confining their role at the Battle of Cable Street to filling roads with passively resisting people. I think he is mistaken. The people who answered the ILP call to block the streets in October 1936 did not expect to succeed in stopping the fascists with their hands in their pockets!

- 5 The Blackshirts' political uniforms were not unique: the Young Communist League wore khaki shirts, the ILP Guild of Youth wore red shirts and red blouses, and there were also greenshirts, supporters of the Social Credit party.
- 6 The pro-Berlin and pro-Moscow Peace Parties, the BUF and the CPGB, finally converged after the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 1939 and the joint German-USSR invasion and partition of Poland, when the CP, for a while, made propaganda for German foreign policy.



Soft on the Israel peace process

ITHINK *Workers' Liberty* has been too soft on the Middle East "peace process". Faced with Netanyahu's flagrant disregard for the accords between Israel and the Palestinians, it is tempting to see the days of Rabin and Peres as a golden age of progress towards peace. Indeed, when Rabin was assassinated, *Workers' Liberty* referred to "immense progress." But from its inception, the deal between Arafat and Rabin, the 1993 Oslo Agreement, was largely fraudulent. It was a long way short of genuine independence and democracy for the Palestinians. *WL* has said as much; but the whole thing has been much worse than the magazine's editorials have suggested.

No doubt what is needed now is a united front of those opposed to Netanyahu, and prepared to defend even the limited gains the Palestinians have made. But a socialist policy must go much further.

Under the Agreement, Israel kept control of everything it wanted. Most of the West Bank and a sizeable chunk of Gaza remain under Israeli control. Security and foreign policy is under Israeli control. The agreement gave Israel control over the borders of the 'limited autonomous' areas, control which has been regularly used to close them to Palestinians who work in Israel — causing terrible economic hardships.

The agreement guaranteed Israeli security (although not Palestinian), effectively giving Israel the right to continue collective punishments — i.e., to demolish the homes of suspected terrorists, send in troops to round up "suspects", and so on (sometimes resulting in the deaths of innocent civilians), even in supposedly Palestinian-run areas, although they preferred Arafat to do the job. Roads crossing the West Bank and connecting it to Gaza stayed under Israeli military control; and Israel maintained its control over water, an essential issue in a country with large arid areas.

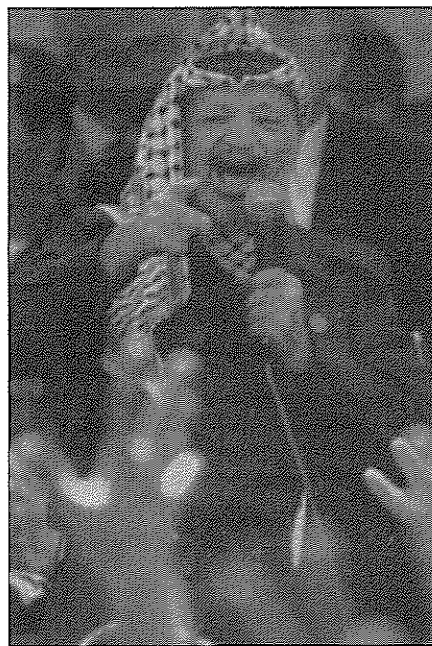
The Palestinian police and security forces largely carried out Israeli dirty work in areas it was hard for them to police directly, especially Gaza (in addition to carrying out dirty work entirely of Arafat's own) — until Netanyahu's aggressive posturing forced Palestinian police into conflict with the Israeli army. The largest death toll in a single day in Gaza since Israeli occupation began in 1967 was at the hands of Arafat's security forces.

Nothing whatever has been discussed in the way of reparations for Palestinians who have lost their homes since 1948, whether by

eviction, or compulsory land seizure.

Crucial issues were either not addressed, or status quo continued, awaiting "final status" talks, supposedly before 1998, although Israel under Labour regarded the timetable as flexible. These include, most importantly, the matter of Jewish settlement on the West Bank and Gaza.

There are more settlers now than before the agreement; they are as armed and militaristic as ever, and the Israeli army has been at hand to defend them. Israel maintains jurisdiction over the settlements, and land requisitioned for "security purposes" since 1967; in 1993 these lands comprised 65% of the West Bank and 42% of Gaza. Israel's policy, after Oslo, was to increase the areas under its direct control. Other issues yet to be discussed were the status of East Jerusalem, conquered in 1967, and the plight of the refugees.



The Palestinian economy is, if anything, even more dependent on Israel than before. The 1994 Paris Accords on economic relations tie the Palestinian economy close to Israel, and effectively make it difficult for the Palestinian authority to have economic relations elsewhere, for example with the Arab world. As Israeli journalist Asher Davidi put it in the *Davar* newspaper: "there is a consensus in the elites of Israel — the bourgeoisie and the security establishment — that if we cannot attach the economy of the occupied territories by military law, then we will do it by economic neo-colonialism." It isn't hard to do: Israel has a GNP of about \$64 billion; the West Bank and Gaza \$2 billion.

The Palestinian "Authority" has been

starved of the funds needed even to pay its repressive policemen (numbering 30,000 or so) and various intelligence forces (estimated as between six and nine separate organisations), its teachers (somewhat fewer in number than its police), its hospital staff, or provide its hospitals with medicine.

While the United States swiftly rewarded Israel with \$180 million in addition to the \$5 billion it gets annually, Yasser Arafat's hopes of foreign aid flooding in to help Palestinian reconstruction have been sadly dashed: Gaza will not, as he gleefully promised, become a "new Singapore". Israel was in any case happy to give up direct control of Gaza: it had become a security nightmare; it has suffered so much under Israeli occupation that it is one of the most poverty stricken places in the world, with a GNP that has been steadily falling (\$600 per capita in 1992); Rabin was on record saying he "wished it would sink into the sea".

The larger game plan behind Oslo was Israel's desire to normalise its own economic relations with the Arab states (which apart from with Egypt, were virtually non-existent before the last couple of years.) The Israeli government estimates that the Arab "secondary boycott" alone (the ban on companies who do business with Israel) costs it \$400m a year. Shimon Peres' recent book, *The New Middle East*, advocates regional economic integration modelled on the EC. (It also advocates that Israel join the EC). The United States also, of course, would like a more stable Middle East for its own investments, and is therefore unhappy with how things are going now.

The belief, widely held in Israel as well as outside, that Rabin's rapprochement with Arafat represented a huge policy shift (winning him and Peres, with Arafat, the Nobel Peace Prize), a break with the hawkish past, and a triumph for peacemakers, is therefore hard to sustain. In effect, Israel barely changed its policy towards the Palestinians at all. What they got from Arafat was much in line with what Israeli governments proposed in the past, but was rejected by the PLO.

Why such ferocious opposition from the Israeli right — giving Netanyahu a small majority in the elections — if everything has moved so much in Israel's favour? The simple answer is that the Israeli right is so right wing that they see anything short of driving the Arabs out as a sell-out. Gush Emunim, the organisation to which most of the militant settlers belong, is at least as fanatically extremist as the Islamist groups; they believe, among other things, that the murder of an Arab by a Jew should not be punished, as it is not a crime. (Their profoundly reactionary messianism is as hostile to secular Jews as to non-Jews, making

them unpopular in wide layers of Israeli society. But Rabin, at least, counted Gush members among his personal friends).

The fact remains that Oslo was in accord with the policy of the Israeli Establishment, Labour and Likud (it was after all Begin who made peace with Egypt on pretty similar terms regarding the Palestinians, but rejected at the time by the PLO) since the 1970s.

I am not arguing that Netanyahu does not represent a significant shift. Certainly, he does. But socialists must insist that simply reversing the trend of the last few months is not enough. Either a return to a Labour government, or a return to Labour policy, would still leave the Palestinians without their democratic and national rights.

Critical defence of Oslo — and this has been the basic view of *Workers' Liberty* — is usually on the grounds that the existing alternative is far worse: the change under Netanyahu would be evidence for the truth of this. But why should socialists passively accept the existing alternatives? The point to our programme is to intervene in the situation to create new alternatives. We can vigorously oppose Netanyahu without endorsing, or taking any responsibility for, either Peres or Arafat.

Oslo paved the way for Netanyahu. Clearly, no agreement could guarantee that nothing would change, a future Israeli government wouldn't try to tear it up, and so on. In the last analysis, force is what counts. But Oslo left so much power in Israeli hands, and legitimated so much use of that power, that Netanyahu's task was made a lot easier — if, indeed, tearing the agreement up is his project: he is so ridiculously demagogic that it's hard to know what his real intentions are.

Workers' Liberty has argued for two states in Israel/Palestine for over a decade, and I have always wholeheartedly supported that policy. It is, if anything, even more relevant now. It means rejecting the hawkishness of Netanyahu, and the more subtle Israeli imperialism of the Labour establishment, and Arafat's miserable prostration before it.

Clive Bradley

The issue is sectarian privilege

HOW can *Workers' Liberty* expect to conduct debate with anyone if they can't get basic facts right?

Jim Denham (WZ34) claims the initial cause of debate with myself was a letter from Billy Hutchinson. This is factually incorrect. The initial dispute began when one of your supporters, Annie O'Keeffe, intervened in a dispute between my organisation, Socialist Democracy, and Irish Militant Labour over their support for Hutchinson and the loyalist PUP's "socialism."

This is no small point. Annie O'Ke-

ffe posed a question: "Can socialists forgive paramilitaries? Can they convert to socialism?"

Now, a year later, with many a twist and turn through republicanism, the national question and imperialism, we find out from Jim Denham that the answer doesn't really matter! Hutchinson can be a fraud or a left-wing Nazi — all that really matters is the apparently more conciliatory attitude of Loyalist paramilitaries since the IRA ceasefire!

Having shown his respect for fact and political consistency, Denham goes on to make a series of howlers that would be more in place in a comic.

He announces that imperialism is dead in Ireland. Why? Because the imperialists can't turn a profit in the North!

After this exercise in Marxism as bookkeeping he asserts: "If anti-imperialism is the ability to twist the designs of an imperialist power then the Loyalists are the most effective anti-imperialist force."

It isn't and they're not.

There's nothing more common than having a popular base for imperialism that's more reactionary than the imperialists themselves and proves a block to the "logical" development of strategy. Drumcree was a perfect example of this. The mass support for the peace process within the nationalist community fits much more closely with imperialism's plans for a settlement than the Orange "not an inch" reaction. Yet imperialism capitulated to the right with only the most token resistance and then launched a no holds barred attack on the nationalists. No matter how conciliatory nationalism becomes it is not the base of the British occupation. Mayhew and Major made it perfectly clear that their policy was that there would not be any direct mass confrontation with the Orange mob.

Denham attempts to escape unto higher ground by lecturing me about Leninism. According to *Workers' Liberty* this means "utter rejection of the idea that the socialist working class has any concern, or anything but contempt for the integrity of states."

Dead wrong, Jim — that's not Leninism, that's its antithesis. Your saying that the working class has no concern about the conditions under which it struggles — absolutism, military occupation, colonialism, semi-colonialism — it's all the same to the working class! What rubbish!

If I follow his advice and re-read Lenin I find: "The bourgeois nationalism of an oppressed nation has a generally democratic content that is directed against oppression and it is this content that we unconditionally support", and "finance capital does not in the least nullify the significance of political democracy as a freer, wider and clearer form of class oppression and class struggle."

If there were a united Ireland which oppressed a northern minority I might

find myself prioritising the rights of a Protestant minority. If that minority demanded separation I might support that demand. I don't know for certain because it's a totally abstract question with no connection with the real world.

In the real world we have partition based on British guns and supported by a section of the population who receive sectarian privilege and who regularly rebel whenever that privilege is threatened. Only a minute section of the population support self-determination for the North. The demand of most Protestants is for the right to continue the British occupation and prevent the completion of the Irish national revolution. We say that no such right exists.

We say that partition is the motor of sectarian division. It splits Protestant from Catholic, North from South and welds Protestant worker to Unionism and Catholic worker to nationalism. Protestantism is not some monolith but composed of many different identities, one of which is membership of the Irish working class — which has an organisational form in a 32-county trade union movement.

Rather than having nothing to say to Protestant workers we say to them exactly what we say to Catholic workers — that it is in their interests as a class to end the carnival of reaction and division that partition represents.

When Annie O'Keeffe wrote her original letter I accused her of a fatuous idealism. I have no hesitation in repeating that charge against Jim Denham and *Workers' Liberty*. This isn't the dewy idealism of the novice, but the expression of a deep dishonesty.

This dishonesty is very evident in Jim Denham's letter. He begins by not knowing if Hutchinson's socialism is genuine or not, but by the end of the letter his inversion of Leninism has enabled him to make his mind up and identify Hutchinson as a representative of Protestant workers.

This is a fundamental betrayal of both Catholic and Protestant workers. To hand to the death squads leadership of the working class is to negate even the possibility of socialism.

John McNulty

Exclusions: a dead end

NOT every area of social life can be changed at the same speed. Even after a socialist revolution, we should not aim to raze the bourgeois education system to the ground and replace it all at once with a ready-made ideal socialist education system, but rather to reform and improve.

When, as at present, capitalism is pushing

its education system back towards barbarism, we defend its positive elements and continue to battle for improvements. Violently disruptive students are generally not proto-socialist rebels, but demoralised children who obstruct an education which their classmates need and want.

Thus far I agree with William Irons (WL 35). Since any functioning community must have some limits, norms, and rules, some exclusions of students from schools are probably unavoidable.

Today, however, we have a huge increase in exclusions, driven by schools' desire to do well in league tables and by teachers' exasperation under increased stress, and accelerated by the political climate in which "New Labour" chooses double-quick punishment for "young offenders" as a prime election slogan.

Whatever about this or that individual exclusion, the wave of exclusions is no answer at all to the problems in schools, not even a short-term one. Children who are violent and disruptive because they are alienated and embittered are not made less alienated and embittered by being excluded. If students do better in a new school, that must be due mostly to what the new school does to *include* them; it points to something wrong with their previous school, a problem which the school has ducked, rather than tackled, by exclusion.

To channel the energy from the frustration of teachers — and students and parents — into a battle for more resources, improved training, and better schooling methods, is not merely a "long-term" aim, but the only immediate answer. "More resources" in the abstract are not a sufficient answer — the resources have to be deployed so that they do not act as a perverse incentive to students to be more disruptive as the best way to get more care and attention, and also so that they are not purely reactive, like the metal detectors and armed guards in US schools — but more resources are necessary.

The anger and energy generated by the crisis in schools should be directed against the government and the ruling class, not against a few unhappy students. As long as the rule is

all-out strikes for exclusions, but only petitions, demonstrations and one-day strikes for more resources and better methods, we are caught in a dead end.

Chris Reynolds

Alf Marks joins the SWP

A FEW union branches supported the Socialist Workers' Party summer school, Marxism 96. Members of those branches might be interested to know that the atmosphere there was, at times, less democratic than a typical right-wing-controlled trade union conference.

Members of the SWP might want to ask themselves what exactly they're up to letting things degenerate to that level.

Workers' Liberty, like many other groups on the left, ran a stall outside Marxism, and intervened in the odd meeting. Not a big deal, you might think. No? The SWP found it so outrageous that within a couple of hours of our arrival on the Saturday they threatened to call the police to move us on!

They didn't go through with their threat to set the police on fellow socialists, but when one of our comrades leafleted — yes, *leafleted* — outside one session, they got the college authorities to remove him from the building. And then from the steps outside. Twice.

On the Sunday, SWP organisers told us that we couldn't sell *Workers' Liberty* on the steps outside the University of London Union. Why? Marxism is an SWP event! So there, presumably. They tried this on each time we did a sale on the steps, and of course we asserted our right to sell where we liked. We suggested to them that if even the bourgeoisie in Britain allowed free speech and free assembly, then socialists should be able to do so too.

Oh yes? Rotten liberalism! On the first occasion, after a bit of good old-fashioned shouting didn't work, a sizeable number of SWP comrades formed a circle around one of our people, selling *Socialist Worker* loudly to drown out what he was saying.

We continued selling, and when SWP organisers saw that their newer or less hack-ish comrades and periphery were becoming interested in what we were saying, they stopped playing ring-a-ring-a-rosy with us.

This was a victory of sorts, but a hollow one. It's pretty sad to have to defend free speech and free assembly from socialists.

Later that day the SWP got more aggressive. Hacks stood in front of us, to stop us selling or talking to people. We jiggled from side to side a bit to show how ridiculous they were being — and, yes, they just jiggled from side to side in time

with us.

Gradually they became more aggressive. One of them — a young man with a subtle grasp of both the English language and the art of the polemic — pushed his face into mine: 'Fuck off,' he said.

It was put to him if socialism is about freedom and human liberation, this kind of intimidation has no place in relations between socialists. His brain clunking into gear, the SWP comrade's eyes flashed with liberating insight: 'You lot haven't got anything to do with human liberation. You're just scum.'

Impressed by the level of political education, openness to debate and manifest confidence in the ideas of their organisation thus displayed by the SWP organisers, I decided to "make a commitment" to it and join the party.

When an SWPer came over to me in a bar waving membership forms in my face, I said, "yes" and "Alfred Marks" joined "the socialists". An AWLer with whom I was sitting asked the SWPer why she didn't ask me if I agreed with the SWP's politics, what I thought about the world, who I was, etc. She looked blank, trying to work out if this was rotten liberalism, Menshevik dilettantism or plain Zionist sabotage. She asked me nothing at all. While I filled in the form my comrades explained that I don't agree with the SWP. She didn't care. They told her that I am a member of another organisation, that I am even a member of the Labour Party. But nobody's perfect! They said I was only joining to prove a point. That didn't faze her either. I wanted to build the Party didn't I? Absolutely.

Right. This couldn't-care-less tolerance when recruiting members makes a strange contrast with the police-mindedness with which they try to repress other socialists at their events. There is a connection though: raw people thus recruited are political blanks for the leaders of the SWP to educate into the authoritarian know-nothing intolerance displayed by the hacks on the steps outside Marxism '96.

How the SWP recruits is up to them. What shouldn't be left up to them is how they behave to other socialists. The labour movement should say that the sort of behaviour exhibited at Marxism 96 is simply not acceptable.

Members of the SWP should stop and think. After all, what would your reaction be if you were told you couldn't sell outside a Labour Party or trade union event? The labour bureaucracy's role is to screw down on working class activity and debate, to stifle opposition to the system; yet they let us sell this magazine outside their conferences this year, and the SWP did not.

Andrew Woods

ADVERTISEMENT

AT THE end of October James D. Young's book *The Very Bastards of Creation: Scottish-International Radicalism, 1688-1995, a Biographical Study* will be published by Clydeside Press. It is the first sustained Marxist analysis of the history of Scottish radical culture and politics from the Union of 1707 (with flashbacks to 1688) until 1995.

Challenging English cultural imperialism and the Brit propaganda of historians like Linda Colley, it will make a big impact on the Left. As a critique of those who have turned genuine internationalism into a 'sort of international jingoism', Young's argument for a Scottish workers' republic are supported in I. Meszaros' latest and most brilliant book *Beyond Capital*.

The second part of Max Shachtman's article on "Trotsky's contribution to Marxism" will be in *Workers' Liberty* 36.

The rise of the Euro-nazis

By Jim Taylor

SINCE the British National Party won a council by-election in Tower Hamlets, East London, in 1993, fascism has slid out of the headlines in Britain. But the alarming rise of fascist and far-right groups elsewhere in Europe shows that groups like the BNP can grow very quickly when the mainstream right is in disarray and social-democrats offer no answers to economic chaos.

Across Europe the spectrum ranges from sieg-heiling skinheads burning refugees alive in Hoyerswerda and Rostock to the "respectable" Vlaams Blok in Belgium; from the hideous reincarnation of the pre-war and wartime Iron Guard to the millionaire nazi heir Jorg Haider in Austria; from the vicious little Centrumdemokraten Partei of Holland to those nostalgic for Ustashi terror in Croatia. Often the "respectable" and the open Nazis work together.

In France meetings of the Front National (FN) of Jean Marie Le Pen have been stewarded by thugs of openly nazi groups. Attacks on immigrant hostels, mosques, synagogues, meetings of socialists, on individual socialists, trade unionists, Catholic priests, north Africans and Jews, instigated by the FN or in which they have a hand, are "plausibly denied".

In 1986 mass disillusion with the French Socialist Party government elected in 1981, and the disarray of France's mainstream right, enabled the FN to consolidate. The FN had 32 deputies in Parliament and a thousand councillors. Although it lost its MPs when France scrapped proportional representation, it recently won control of the city council in Toulon, and has consistently scored between 10% and 15% of the vote.

In the late 1980s the German Republikaner Party, inspired by the FN and using the same tactics, seemed poised to make the same breakthrough, enjoying major electoral successes in West Berlin, Bavaria, North Rhine Westphalia and Baden-Wuerttemberg. In Frankfurt the neo-nazi NPD gained seven seats in the City Parliament, re-establishing itself there for the first time in over twenty years. This was accompanied by a massive upsurge of racist violence, petrol bomb attacks on refugee hostels and a spate of more than 70 racist and political murders by the nazis.

Since then, however, the Republikaner have gone into decline. The NPD

has also suffered reverses, as has the third main far-right group, the Deutsche Volkunion (DVU) led by millionaire press magnate Gerhard Frey.

There remain more than seventy openly nazi organisations in Germany. The two main ones, the GdNF of Christian Worch and the FAP, have been responsible for a horrendous catalogue of violence.

In Italy the MSI, under the new leadership of Gianfranco Fini, entered the Government in 1994 in coalition with multi-millionaire media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. Fini changed the party's name to the Alleanza Nazionale (AN), proclaiming it was not fascist but "post-fascist", and with Berlusconi's help built a new media-friendly image.

THE MSI praised the statelet created by Mussolini with German military help in September 1943, which was the most vicious, brutal and degenerate episode of Mussolini's tyranny. Ideologically it was closer to nazism, with its concepts of racial hierarchy and genocide, than the pre-1938 Mussolinian fascism. MSI propaganda boasted Salo was "the zenith of Italian political achievement."

The largest and most powerful nazi organisation in Belgium is the Vlaams Blok (VB). A virulently racist party whose election slogan is "our people first", the VB has received up to one third of the vote in certain areas. Its origins lie in the pre-war Rexist movement which collaborated with the nazis during the German occupation. It persistently demands "amnesty" for those who assisted the nazi invaders. VB is closely linked to the extremely violent Voorpost (Vanguard) Organisation, which often acts as the VB's strong arm squad.

In Austria, the FPÖ of Jorg Haider, the yuppie nazi who inherited millions from property confiscated from Jews by the nazis during the Anschluss and who is hailed by his fans as "Hitler's adopted son", has won a third of the vote in Carinthia, historically the stronghold of Austrian nazism. In the last elections Haider won 22% of the vote nationally.

The main openly nazi organi-

sation in Austria is VAPO, led, until his imprisonment, by Gottfried Küssel. In 1993 VAPO conducted a vicious letter bomb campaign in which several people were badly injured. VAPO is closely linked with the German FAP and GdNF, and with Gerhard Lauck's NSDAP-OA.

Rumania has witnessed the formation of the sinister Vatra Romaneasca (VR), the successor organisation to the pre-war and wartime Iron Guard, a nazi death cult. The VR proclaims its intention of waging a "bloody struggle" against the Hungarian, German and Gypsy minorities. VR was instrumental in the pogroms in March 1990 in which several Hungarians were killed, and has been involved in the racist murder of Gypsies and violence against Jews.

In the September 1992 Parliamentary elections PUNR, the political wing of VR, won 14 seats in the Senate and 30 in the Chamber of Deputies. VR leader Gheorghe Funar was elected mayor of Cluj, capital of Transylvania.

Throughout Europe the nazis are on the rise and on the march. They are better funded, better organised and have greater credibility than at any time since the war, and are well coordinated, with a series of international networks in place.

At a time when we are remembering Cable Street we must also understand what is happening in Europe. An international fightback is long overdue.

TRADE UNION POLITICS AMERICAN UNIONS & ECONOMIC CHANGE 1960S-90S

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Trade unions constitute one of the most distinctive and important expressions of interest group association in modern America. Yet social scientists have had relatively little to say about contemporary trade unionism in the U.S. as a political, economic, and institutional phenomenon. In particular, social scientists have neglected two themes that are the focus of this collection: The first is that the interest disjuncture between the layer of salaried, full-time officers—the union bureaucracy—and the rank and file is crucial to understanding union behavior; the second is that American capitalism has undergone a fundamental transformation, in part due to the globalization of production and financial markets, which has effectively undermined the preconditions for postwar-style American trade unionism. What emerges from these thematic developments is a distinctive portrait of American unions during the past thirty years.

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Writing Marxist history

THE NEW book-length double issue of *Revolutionary History* entitled 'Essays on Revolutionary Marxism in Britain and Ireland from the 1930s to the 1960s' is probably the best yet.

Claran Crossey and James Monaghan's *The Origins of Trotskyism in Ireland*, reconstructs developments to 1950. This is an innovative survey which adds substantially to the pioneering work of Rayner O'Connor Lysaght on the Irish Marxists and provides a platform for further research.

The still burgeoning C L R James industry has seriously neglected James' 16 years in the Trotskyist movement, particularly his activities in Britain between 1934 and 1938. John Archer, who knew James in these years, contributes a brief account, happily free from the cultism and inflation which currently rages around James.

Paul Flewers has gone back to the internal documents and publications of the Trotskyist organisations — the Revolutionary Socialist League, the Workers International League and the Revolutionary Workers League — and taken advantage of recent research on the Communist Party in order to examine the attitude of revolutionaries to World War II. He discusses events from the 1939 to the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 bringing out the changing positions of the different organisations and coming down — critically — in favour of the Proletarian Military Policy propounded by the American SWP and the WIL in Britain.

John McIlroy's analysis of the 1945 dockers' strike documents the role of the Communist Party and the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party. This detailed study goes beyond its explicit subject matter to deepen our

understanding of the problems facing the Trotskyists as war turned to peace and sheds new light on the activities of the RCP.

The late Sam Levy's memories of the last days of the RCP — offered by one who struggled to keep an open party in existence in 1948-9 — are tinged with bitterness against Jock Haston but also secondary leaders, such as Ted Grant and Jimmy Deane, who he sees as conniving, through political weakness, in the collapse of the Party.

Two intriguing obscurities also see the light of day for the first time in decades. In the early 1950s Alan Christianson, a former member of the WIL and the RCP, was involved in attempting to establish a group around C L R James, then sojourning a second time on these shores. In this piece penned in 1954 Christianson depicts (on the basis of sometimes faulty memories of the 1940s) the Trotskyist leadership bureaucratically throttling proletarian creativity and announced what was to become a fashionable infatuation with shop stewards *en masse* as the spearhead of socialist liberation.

A decade later 'An Anonymous Author' (who continues to defy all the forensic efforts of the editorial board of *Revolutionary History* to run him or her to ground) busied himself with the relationship between theory, internal regime, social composition and politics in Gerry Healy's groups of the 1950s. As the editor says, this is 'a remarkable document', a welcome addition to the comments on Healyism in this period of Brian Behan, Peter Cadogan, Peter Fryer — and more recently Harry Ratner.

THERE are tributes to the 1930s Trotskyist Dr Ryan Worrall and Ellis Hillman, previously unpublished letters by Rosa Luxemburg on the Russian Revolution and reviews and debates. This issue is indispensable reading for all involved in revolutionary policies, particularly the youth and those who have not seen this journal previously. The editorial board can take satisfaction in comparing this volume with its first slim predecessors in the late 1980s. They have demon-

strated that creating a collective dedicated to recovering the history of the revolutionary movement and possessing autonomy from the different political groups is a viable project. Nonetheless problems remain and some of them are reflected in this issue.

Members of such an editorial collective will have differing political views. They will require a range of skills, skills in organising, writing, technology, production, marketing. Ultimately their work must be governed by and judged by their *historical competence*. That is why calls in the past for the exclusion of critics of Trotsky-



ism, and experienced historians such as Walter Kendall, have been so utterly misplaced. If submissions to *Revolutionary History* are to be judged by the political conclusions they reach, rather than the enrichment of our knowledge and understanding of the world and our ability to transform it, we might as well pack it in now.

The historian E H Carr used to insist that ultimately we can only understand the past through the eyes of the present. In all its stages the process of historical creation is imbricated with our political values. Our politics influence our selection of materials, our interpretation of them, our final conclusions. The better we understand and control this, the better the work we produce. But if with Trotsky we reject "treacherous impartiality", Marxist historical scholarship can bring us to new levels of understanding and develop our consciousness. It still demands, amongst other things, the cultivation of the historical imagination; scrupulous verification of facts; empathy with

those who embody conflicting ideas; understanding of conflicting perspectives; rejection of ahistorical approaches and searching analysis of the alternatives available to actors *at the time*; reasoned conclusions which address existing literature and alternative explanations. This — and much more — goes into the finished historical work.

Politics informs historical recreation. Historical recreation is not simply reducible to politics. Decisions to publish articles should be governed by the exacting standards of veridical scholarship, not agreement with the conclusions reached or

predilections of politics or personality. Members of the collective should insist on — or as the case may be defer to — judgments based on these standards. I am aware this matter is not without difficulties and needs to be worked through in practice. And I am not being elitist. With a modicum of commitment and reading any comrade can learn to judge good history from dross.

Once decisions to publish are taken there may be an urgent need, say, to correct errors of fact in an otherwise useful piece, the editors may wish to qualify vital points in footnotes or occasionally commission a response. The idea that members of the board should possess an unqualified right to register disagreements on a wide range of matters is a recipe for disorganisation which has no place in a disciplined historical journal. Some years ago *Revolutionary History's* appearance, studded with disclaimers about different articles and documents, made it difficult to interest many readers in it. Since then matters have improved dramatically.

However, a statement by Ted Crawford appears in the current issue criticising John Archer's contribution on the grounds of tone. Ted then retails an anecdote involving himself and Archer and criticises 'sectarians' for inadequate appreciation of James. There is nothing here of any real substance or urgency, nothing that could not be dealt with — at the most — in a letter for the next issue. I hope this does not open the floodgates. It is bad practice and will not help the journal make its way in the world.

Neither of course will the recent practice of members of the editorial board taking their ball home, not, apparently, because of differences over history or historical method but because they disagree with the editor's political characterisation of Moldova or Liechtenstein or whatever. This nonsense helps foster amongst some readers the mistaken view that the *Revolutionary History* collective is a closed group with its own 'line' on issues. Rather the editor Al Richardson has stated in *Workers' Liberty* the need to expand the editorial board and extend the readership. A barrier to this may be unstudied use of the polemical machete against those intrepid enough to correspond critically with the journal. There is no necessity for the editor of a journal to respond to every letter. Abstinence may stimulate a response from readers and organic debate. If an editorial response is necessary it should be measured. It may be couched in a manner which develops dialogue and interests the critic further in the journal or in a manner which recalls William Holden's exhortation to his minions in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*: "If they move kill them." Buckling to the latter temptation will reduce the readership. It should be resisted.

It is heartening to see this

issue moving towards more original articles. A good, sober, researched article on the Blue Union dispute of the 1950s would shed more light than much of the assertion-based debate that has now found its way from *Workers Press* into *Revolutionary History*. Here again rigour is essential. As the Old Man himself taught us: "The circumstances that the author was a participant in the events does not free him from the obligation to base his exposition upon strictly verified documents" (Preface, *History of the Russian Revolution*, p18). In encouraging primary research *Revolutionary History* should consider its current emphases. It has been, in substance and quite understandably, about *Trotskyist* history. This may prove too restrictive in two senses. It may encourage too powerful a focus on the internal operation of Trotskyist parties and groups, their policies, splits, factions, leading comrades — important as these are. It was again Trotsky who emphasised: "Only on the basis of a study of political processes in the masses themselves can we understand the role of parties and leaders whom we, least of all, are inclined to ignore." (ibid, p16.)

We need history which starts from the state of the class struggle, the state of working class consciousness, the position in the Labour Party and the Communist Party, history which locates the activities of the Trotskyists — rank and file as well as leaders — in this context. This requires a canvas of *revolutionary history*, not simply *Trotskyist* history, and explicit address of developments in the labour movement, the role of the CP, ILP and other left currents. Why should the history of the CP, for example, be left to the tender mercies of the nouveau Stalinists who are presently tackling it with gusto? (See Bruce Robinson's report in the issue under review.)

Such a revolutionary history

has to add to the dimension of political history, *people's history*. Even within existing confines there has been too little detailed attention to the activities of the Trotskyists in the Labour Party and the trade unions. There has been too little about the culture and dynamics of Trotskyist groups and about the lives activists led. Who were the Trotskyists? Why were they Trotskyists? Why did they cease to be Trotskyists? These are all questions requiring more detailed investigation. It must, moreover, be an *international history* in the sense of locating national developments within the ambit of international developments and international organisations. Here again more work is required on the documents and press of the Fourth International — and making them available.

In practice, resources and people available constitute real restraints but the format of the journal, with one issue usually devoted to the development of Trotskyism in a particular country, is somewhat restrictive. *Revolutionary History* has executed its international obligations admirably: it should in the future produce more material on Britain. Some issues should have a thematic rather than a national format, whilst others should simply consist of a range of articles on different subjects. This would increase flexibility and from what people tell me, readership of the journal. To take one example, *Revolutionary History* would seem to be the ideal vehicle to publish a series of articles exploring the different forms *entrism* has taken, our experience of *entrism* and the arguments about it. Or a series of articles on Trotskyists and the CP, Shachtmanism, critiques of the recent neo-Stalinist writing on the CP — the list is a long one.

Finally, there is a need for more explicit discussion of the purposes of our history and the forms it should take, problems of philosophy, research and problems of writing. It would be useful to have in *Revolutionary History* a brief symposium on these questions involving not only comrades such as Walter Kendall, Ray Challinor, Al Richardson, Pierre Broué and so forth, but veterans of the revolutionary movement and perhaps historians from further afield. *Revolutionary History* is a valuable asset to our movement and these comments are offered in

the spirit of strengthening and extending its work.

Daniel Joseph

Essays on Revolutionary Marxism in Britain and Ireland. Revolutionary History, Volume 6, No. 2/3. Available from Socialist Platform, BCM 7646, London WC1N 3XX @ £5.95

The drive for knowledge

WHEN Ruskin College, Oxford, was being set up by bourgeois philanthropists a hundred years ago — the college still gives selected trade unionists a late chance of a good formal education — a serious proposal was made that it should be named the "the college of Jude the Obscure", after the title of Thomas Hardy's novel.

Hardy tells the story of a young worker, Jude's attempts, for the love of learning, to educate himself in a world where higher education was both scarce and the prerogative of those with money.

Jude is a serious attempt to translate the novel into a film intelligible to people of our time, who are likely to have great difficulty understanding both Jude's passionate, governing quest for knowledge, understanding and "book learning" and his problems with a society both highly structured and relentlessly enforcing of that structure.

The people who built the labour movement understood it as well. It was a central thing in their lives too, the drive to acquire knowledge. Ideas like "knowledge is power" were not tired clichés to them. Somehow, after long hours at often back-breaking work, they would find the energy to read and study.

Keir Hardie, the Scots miner who founded the Labour Party, had to teach himself to read in the evenings. There was no other way forward for people who had become possessed of the idea that they were ignorant and that the world treated them as it did in part because of that fact. The love of learning, which is central to the drive of *Jude*, was part of it. But it was inextricably entwined with a drive for social self-betterment: the socialists were those who looked not to individual self-betterment but to collective working-class action.

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The outlook of such people was summed up in a popular maxim of the early labour movement: "A full, free, happy life — for all, or for none!" In turn, the growing labour movement roused and stimulated a desire for education in its members — people who would have remained dormant without the labour movement.

The trade unions built up education programmes as did the socialist societies. Within these the battle between Marxism and bourgeois ideas took place.

In 1908 some of the students of Ruskin demanded that Marxist economics be taught — and then seceded and founded their own education network. As the "Plebs League" and the "National Council of Labour Colleges", it survived, publishing its own monthly magazine, *Plebs*, into the 1960s.

Teaching basic 'non-denominational' Marxism, they fructified the trade unions — in South Wales, for example, where militant leaders like Noah Ablett were Plebs League people.

One of the great problems of translating *Jude the Obscure* into *Jude*, the film, is to convey this central passion of Jude's life — of the majority of working-class lives — to people living in a world where, despite Tory destruction of student financing, education is far more readily available... and far less widely prized.

I felt that the film did not quite succeed in doing it. It is as if the makers of *Jude* themselves have difficulty in understanding it; or maybe that they harbour a lurking, cynically 'modern' notion that Jude was in fact a bit of a twit.

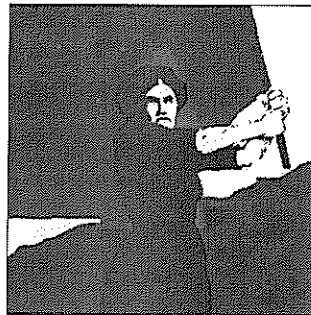
The love entanglement that in its day made Hardy's novel a scandal to the prudes and the philistines is far more congenial to a 'modern' audience. Oddly, too, the film translates Hardy into modern parlance that I for one often found jarring.

The late Victorian Sue talking of someone being "confrontational" is too glibly and anachronistically modern, and there is much like that in *Jude*. (The heroine accusing herself of "intellectualising" while fucking, for example.)

I found Christopher Eccleston a convincing Jude and Kate Winslett a moving Sue. You won't come away from *Jude* feeling cheerful; but you may come away with new insight into the workers who built the early labour movement.

Jane Ryan

WOMEN'S EYE



When life means death

FOR a portrayal in miniature of the tragic, repulsive lunacy in which capitalist society ensnares humankind, you would be hard put to it to outdo the Mandy Allwood saga.

Wonder-working science transforms an infertile woman into a marvel of fecundity. For reasons of her own, by accident or design, she ignores medical advice and becomes pregnant, not with one, but with eight embryos.

She cannot possibly deliver any of her embryos alive. For any to survive, six will have to be aborted. So all the medics tell her. She listens instead to some inner voice of megalomaniac super-motherhood and to a tabloid editor crackling a chequebook and offering her vast sums of money. Or maybe just to the editor: for Mandy immediately hooks herself and her eight doomed embryos into the bourgeois publicity machine, acquiring a "publicist", Max Clifford, and an exclusive contract with the *News of the World*.

Do the medics tell her that all the embryos will die if she does not abort six of them? Yes, but the *News of the World* tells her that there will be a sliding scale of payment — more money for more embryos retained in her womb. Reduce the pregnancy

to twins? There would not be anything remarkable or lucrative.

Whatever went on in Mandy Allwood's head, the prospect of large sums of money cannot but have influenced her decision to ignore the doctors. Amidst vast ballyhoo, she has five months of pregnancy and then what the doctors say is inevitable, inevitably happens: she loses all eight embryos.

Mandy Allwood was, quite properly, entitled to

"The News of the World and Max Clifford are crying all the way to the bank."

Health Service care. The Tory News of the World, which is an enemy of the National Health Service and a champion of private medicine, did not offer to pay for the large medical costs of monitoring the circus they had set up. This freak show was run for private profit at public expense.

The poor foolish woman is now said to be "distraught". It is understandable. Are her ringmasters at the *News of the World* distraught? Is Max Clifford, her pimping 'publicist' distraught? They will be

crying all the way to the bank!

Ms Allwood is a heroine to the anti-abortionists, the misnamed "Life" people. Resolutely resisting abortion and championing "life", she is, they think, what their cause is all about. They don't notice that their cause is here reduced to plain idiocy, with eight dead embryos, where two might possibly have developed and lived had Ms Allwood been guided by her doctors and not by the *News of the World*. Championship of "life" here quickly turned into the lucre-fuelled pursuit of death.

Here we have wonderful medical science combined with the miraculous technology of modern communications to provide a repulsive freak show with an audience of tens of millions, and one no doubt very costly, in human terms, for Mandy Allwood. This TV-age freak-show is as morally indefensible as the exhibition of afflicted and economically helpless people was at 19th century carnivals.

A mad, repulsive world we live in! A world where people are manipulated, used, exploited, and hook themselves into freak shows, for money! A capitalist world.

Annie O'Keeffe

Dockers fight for a future

Thousands rally to support while Blair stays silent.

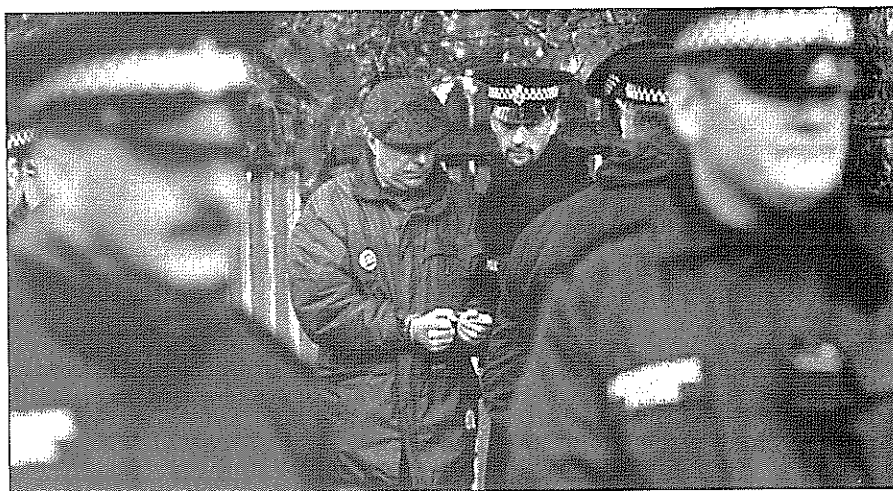
Mark Catterall reports.

LIVERPOOL on 28 September saw the largest labour movement march in the North-West of England for several years, with some four or five thousand marching in solidarity with the Liverpool dockers who have now been locked out for over a year.

At the front of the march were older trade unionists, many labour movement banners and dockers' families; at the end, large numbers of ravers, anarchists, and radical greens. Even though many of the younger marchers appeared to believe trade unions were irrelevant, their readiness to turn out for the dockers was a very hopeful sign for the future.



Dockers and supporters occupy the roof of the Mersey Docks and Harbours Corporation. Photo: Dave Sinclair



Jimmy Davies, the Port Stewards TGWU Secretary, was arrested during the anniversary events. Photo: Dave Sinclair

As we marched through the city, most passers-by were vocal and ready in their support for the dockers. However the boarded-up shops and bankrupt businesses signalled the dire problems facing the local labour movement.

The dockers have probably received more effective support internationally, from dockers in other countries, than from their own union and the local labour movement. For example, the demonstration has been followed by the Australian dockers' union ordering a one-week boycott of Liverpool shipping, but no union in Britain has felt strong enough to organise similar solidarity.

THE dockers, mostly in their forties and fifties, have nowhere to go; Liverpool in decline provides a pool of desperate unemployed who will scab to get a job; so both bosses and workers are set for a long fight.

From 1989 when the government abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme and the port employers defeated the strike, Liverpool had been the only port with unionised

dockers. All the rest have been converted to casual labour. Even in the Mersey ports, a workforce of 1,000 before 1989 had been cut down to 500.

Five years ago 80 dockers' sons were taken on by Torside Ltd on different terms from the other dockers. It was through an attack on that group that the present lockout was engineered.

Torside 'offered' redundancies, saying they wanted to cut the workforce by 20 and employ agency, part-time labour. There was a unanimous strike ballot. The employers backed down, but only until the legal 28-day time limit for the ballot was used up. Then they sacked all 80. The sacked dockers put up a picket line. The other dockers refused to cross, and were all locked out.

Whatever the immediate outcome of this dispute, the dockers' courageous stand has put down a marker for the future.

● Send messages of support and donations to: Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee c/o TGWU, Transport House, Islington, LIVERPOOL. Tel: 0151 207 3388. Fax: 0151 298 1044.