

Do you know you are being pissed on?

Editorial

ROBERT Maxwell died falling into the sea from his yacht, the *Lady Ghislaine*, in November 1991, and was buried at the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. His was a life lived to the full as a gruesome satire on the human condition under capitalism.

The story is summed up in one masterful incident. Feeling as powerful as God because he had so much money, Maxwell stood on top of the *Daily Mirror* building in Holborn pissing on the crowd far below. Turning to a minion he said: Look at them! They don't even know they're being pissed on. Any of them who knew would not have dared accuse him for fear of a bankrupting libel writ!

Maxwell pillaged and robbed, mostly legally, on a gigantic scale, like some modern chequebook-wielding Tamburlaine or Genghis Khan. He was, it seems, set up in the publishing business by the British secret service. He was to gather and publish publicly available scientific information on their behalf, first from Germany and then from Russia.

Over time he grew very rich and became very powerful. In 1964 he became a Labour MP, but he was defeated in 1970. Soon after he was publicly branded as unfit to run a public company by the Department of Trade and Industry. But Maxwell had divine, or at any rate MI6, protection.

Evidence suggests that he also had KGB protection and possibly was, or was regarded by the KGB as, their agent. He was the public friend of Stalinist East-European dictators, from East Germany's Honecker to Ceausescu of Romania, and publisher of fawning, sycophantic biographies of them. A consistent union-buster in his own enterprises, Maxwell backed General Jaruzelski when he banned the Polish labour movement, Solidarnosc, in 1981.

In 1984 he acquired the once respectable tabloid *Daily Mirror* and turned it into something like a family photo album.

It would be wrong, however, to see Maxwell only as a grubby little man, as the demented or even psychopathic creature he must have been to treat people the way he did, casually stealing the pension



Maxwell "negotiating" with Mirror-Group workers. "Maxwell turned the lives of workers on three continents upside down at will. To him they were "like flies to wanton boys", to be crushed, or pissed on, for sport."

funds of many thousands when he needed cash. In his last period Maxwell reached a Wagnerian grandeur of capitalist lunacy.

With the boldness and daring of a steppes bandit, he grabbed every chance to make money, crushing all who got in his way. He turned the lives of workers on three continents upside down at will. To him they were "like flies to wanton boys", to be crushed, or pissed on, for sport.

Yet he thrived because he was rich — or passed himself off as rich — and got richer and richer. No-one could touch him. No-one could say a rude word about him in print, or he would have them for libel. Everybody in the newspaper business, it seems, knew something, at least, but no-one dared say anything seriously disparaging about the fat bandit.

He set himself up as a universal international go-between. And all the time he swindled and robbed and sacked workers — and pissed down on to the street from the roof of his office building.

Maxwell's career shows us what absurdities and monstrosities the power of money can generate, and how grotesque is our world in which the business of

everyone is to rob his neighbour of the fruits of his labour, if he can. In which the greatest robbers are the most respected and the most influential, the most immune from criticism. Until they die.

That is the capitalist norm. It goes on all the time, everywhere, in the pores of society. In all areas of your life, someone you don't see and don't know is pulling strings that shape and control your life. People you don't see are pissing down on you.

The good thing about Maxwell is that, though it is small comfort to the people whose pension money he stole, he was a visible, gargantuan, grotesque, monstrous caricature of the system which spawned and nurtured him and which now, continuing to do what he did in a smaller, greyer, way, righteously disowns him.

In Oscar Wilde's well-known story, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a portrait of a debauchee ages and becomes gruesomely ugly while the man whose crimes and self-indulgence register on the painted face remains young and fresh. Maxwell is to modern capitalism what that painting was to Wilde's deceptively young and fresh debauchee. ■

Labour must rebuild the Welfare State!

AFTER 17 years of the Tories' drive to destroy the Welfare State, the labour movement must once more fight for the recognition of the priority of life over the inhuman priorities of profit, against the Tory party which champions those priorities, and against Tony Blair's Labour leadership which defers to the Tories.

How can we best do that?

We must demand that Labour commits itself to rebuilding the Welfare State and to making good all the cuts imposed by the Tories since 1979. Decent public services can and should be paid for by taxing the rich.

Life before property!

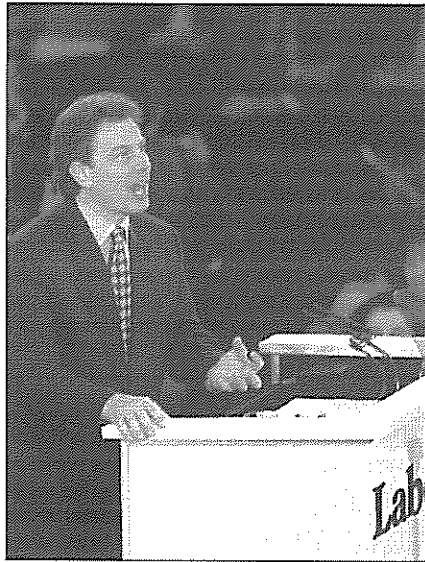
The right of all to a decent life above the right of the rich to indulge in squanderlust and obscene luxury!

Good health care, education and housing, and a decent job or upkeep when unable to work, must be made fundamental human rights for everyone. For that, public ownership and control of the utilities and of the suppliers and ancillary activities of the public services is essential — for example, nationalisation of the drug companies which draw such huge profits from the Health Service.

Public services should be run under democratic workers' and community control, not by unelected and unaccountable quangos and managers. We believe that such democratic control would bring changes in the substance as well as the organisation of services like health and education — shifts, for example, towards positive and preventive health policies and towards continuing lifetime education.

About £30 billion is currently paid out to the rich in dividends and interest, another £30 billion in over-the-top salaries and perks, and about £70 billion in undistributed profits. As Kenneth Clarke explained:

"Profits of industrial and commercial companies have increased by one third over the past three years. Their share in



Blair: short on passion, politics, commitments...

GDP [national income] has risen from 12.5% in 1992 to 14.5% in the first three months of 1995, and the real rate of return on capital is approaching levels last seen in the late 1980s."

It is wrong for this vast flow of loot to go to a rich few while social spending is as starved as the homeless youths sleeping rough on pavements and in doorways in the centre of London.

Moreover, military spending could be cut by half at least by simply scrapping nuclear weapons and changing from a standing army to citizens' defence. That would save £11 billion a year.

A Labour government determined to rebuild the Welfare State could gather at least £120 billion a year for that purpose, so that it could spend at least £40 billion on welfare while still having plenty of cash for public investment in industry to introduce new technology and shift resources to the most socially-useful areas.

£40 billion is about five per cent of national income, or one-third of current gross industrial and commercial profits. A system which cannot afford that amount to restore security, hope, life and joy to millions of people, but can afford much bigger sums for the luxuries of the rich, for the waste of the advertising business and fruitless competition, and in lost production through millions being kept unemployed — that system is sick and corrupt and morally indefensible.

All the private hospitals and health facilities should be nationalised. That would increase the National Health Service's count of hospital beds by one-third, and its staff also by one-third. Another £10 billion a year would restore the health service so that everyone would have the right to proper health care, provided promptly and free without charge.

£10 billion put into a building programme would allow local authorities to take over the 900,000 houses and flats lying empty, and offices standing idle, and renovate and convert them to make new homes.

Others of the hundreds of thousands of building workers now jobless should be employed to build new houses where necessary, to do the long-postponed repairs needed for school and hospital buildings, and to build new nurseries for under-fives.

£2 billion on running costs would fund an extra 400,000 under-five nursery places. An extra £4 billion on schools and further education would allow decent staffing and class sizes. Another £4 billion on higher education would pay for restoring student grants without parental means-tests.

New jobs in public services and a reduced working week would enable the Labour government to guarantee everyone's right to a decent job. That would cut at least £20 billion off the social security budget, which could be put straight back into increasing pensions and benefits. A full, free, happy life for all, or for none! ■

Socialist Labour Party crashes in Yorkshire

THE RESULTS of the Hemsworth by-election was not good news for Arthur Scargill and the Socialist Labour Party.

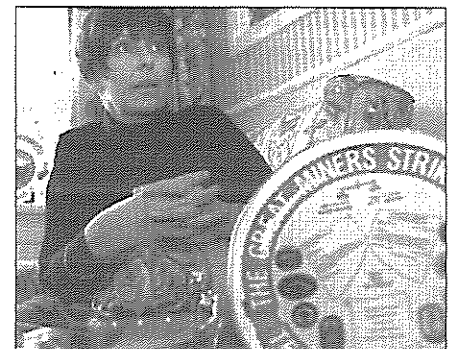
Brenda Nixon's vote of just 1,193 put the SLP in fourth place behind Tories, Liberals, and Labour which secured over 70% of the poll.

Put in proper perspective the vote looks even worse than the headlines. Scargill's party got less than half of the Militant (Real) Labour's candidate Lesley Mahmood's vote in the Walton by-election and less than a third of her disastrous vote relative to the local Labour vote.

And this was a constituency in the heart of what was the Yorkshire coalfields, once Arthur Scargill's stronghold. The Monster Raving Looney Party was a mere 500 or so votes behind the SLP!

The Hemsworth result should make people looking to the SLP think again. It may not mean political oblivion however, for Scargill.

The Communist Party of Great Britain survived for decades as a small but significant current in the labour movement, rarely polling more than the SLP's Hemsworth vote. That would be a great waste.



Brenda Nixon