

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Answer the Tories

SOLIDARITY!

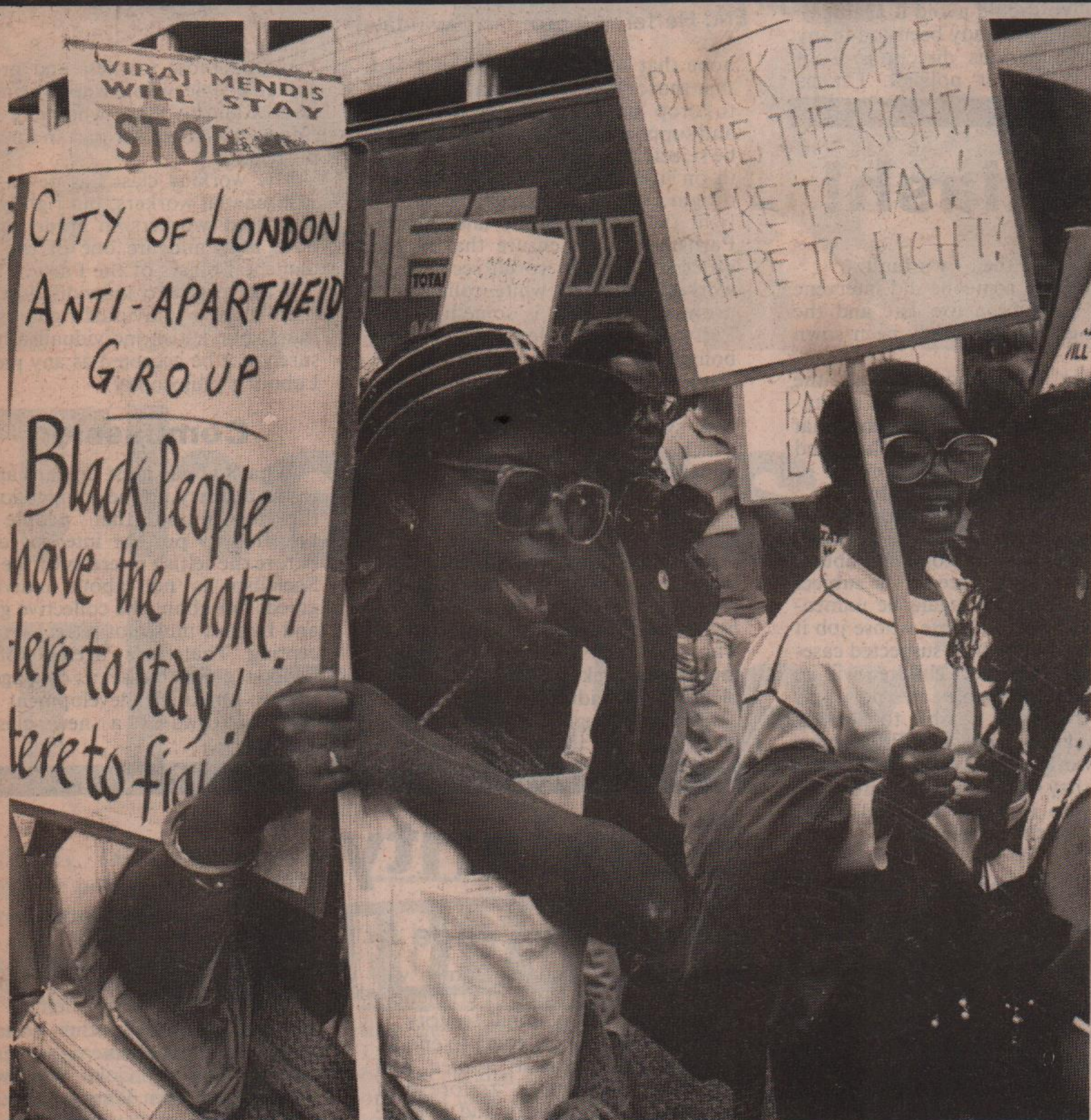


Photo Paul Herrmann

Viraj will stay

4,000 people marched through the streets of Manchester on 11 July to protest at Tory attempts to deport Viraj Mendis.

Viraj, who faces persecution for his pro-Tamil views if he returns to Sri Lanka, has been taking sanctuary in a Manchester church since late 1986.

He has won tremendous support from the local community and some trade unions as well as religious, political, and anti-racist groups.

A new Judicial Review of his case is taking place as we go to press.

"Watching the highly professional television and advertising campaign mounted by the Labour Party during the recent election, I could not help thinking how effective those techniques would have been if that skill had been put at the disposal of all those — miners, printworkers, teachers, nurses, GCHQ and Silentnight workers, and the Liverpool and Lambeth councillors — who struggled so valiantly to protect the jobs and services of those whom they represented.

The most important lesson we must learn from the experiences is the key importance of solidarity, for if the labour movement, and the Labour Party, does not rediscover solidarity we shall be picked off one by one, and the living conditions of Victorian Britain will surely return — including six-day working for everyone — starting in the pits if the Coal Board have their way.

The years ahead will see a growing crisis as the capitalist world sinks back into recession, and the oil revenues decline, leaving Britain with a weakened manufacturing base, long dole queues and with private monopolies taking over our basic industries to make huge profits at the expense of those who create the nation's wealth.

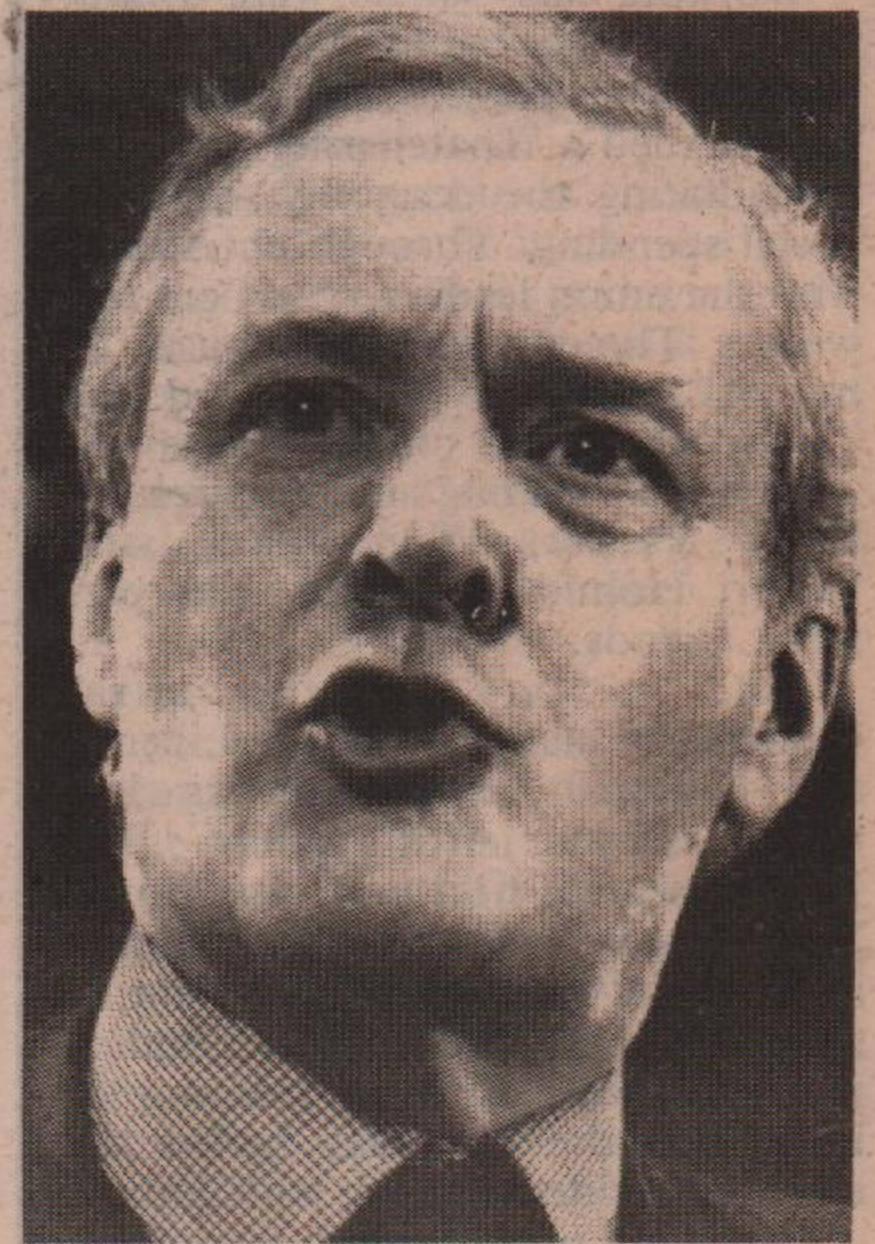
Bitter

The years ahead will also be years of bitter struggle as the government starts to dismantle those essential services in health, education and housing, introduce the hated poll tax and renew their assault upon trade unions and local democracy, hitting the old, the young and the sick who depend on those services.

If the Labour Party is to discharge its historic role as the defender of those who sell their labour to live, we must renew our commitment to socialism, and abandon, here and now, those attacks upon and expulsions of good socialists, which have diverted the Party from its real work over the last few years.

Labour must now address itself to the central issues of our time, ask the real questions that demand an answer, and challenge everyone to face them squarely.

First, for how long are the British people prepared to permit real



By Tony Benn MP

political and economic power in Britain to remain in the hands of the bankers, the multinationals, the media proprietors, and the Common Market Commission, none of whom are either elected by us, or are accountable to us?

Second, for how long are the British people prepared to accept our present status as an American colony, under the military control of a President we did not elect and cannot remove, who has over a hundred bases and thousands of troops on our soil, which he can use whenever he wishes without our consent?

Third, when are we going to accept the right of the Irish people to self-determination and unity, and end partition and the British occupation of the North, which has caused such terrible suffering and bloodshed and has absolutely failed to provide security for working people in both communities there?

Fourth, when are we going to take up the theme of democracy which inspired the Chartists and the Suffragettes and apply it to the task of making all economic, industrial, political and state power accountable to those over whom it is exercised, to prevent modern technology from

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INSIDE: FOUR PAGE WORKERS' IRELAND PULL-OUT

AUSTRALIA

Workers stay with Labor

Tony Brown reports from Sydney on the Australian elections.

In the Australian general election on 11 July, Bob Hawke held on to office, increasing his majority in the lower house from 16 to over 20 seats.

Labor lost votes overall, and suffered quite big swings against it in safe seats, but managed to hold on to most of its marginal seats. In Queensland, the main base of the National Party (the more right-wing of the two opposition parties), there was a four per cent swing towards Labor.

Hawke called the election early because the 38 year old Liberal/National alliance had broken up after an attempt by Queensland's National Party premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, to launch himself into federal politics.

Working class voters were disillusioned by the Labor government's record. The Hawke administration has pursued a 'Thatcherite' policy of deregulating the economy, and cut social spending. Through an Accord with the union leaders, it has cut real wages. The government boasts of having increased profits, and the Labor leaders claim some of Australia's leading millionaires — Kerry Packer, Alan Bond, and Robert Holmes a Court — as personal friends.

But, in face of the ultra-Thatcherite platforms of the Liberals and Nationals, most working-class voters stayed with Labor. The Hunter seat in northern New South Wales was typical. It is a coal-mining area where the coal-owners want to sack 25% of the miners, and a marginal seat. A mass meeting of miners on the Thursday before the election decided to stick with Labor.

Left-wing protest candidates from the Nuclear Disarmament Party and the Greens mostly did badly, despite the Australian system of multiple member constituencies and transferable votes which means that you can vote for a protest candidate no. 1 and Labor no. 2. The best scores were 5% by an Aboriginal standing against the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and 11% by Jack Munday, a former builders' union leader and member of the 'Eurocommunist' Communist Party of Australia, who stood as a Green in Sydney.

The Australian Socialist Workers' Party (similar to Socialist Action in Britain, but more Stalinist) campaigned for some time before the election for 'a new party to the left of the ALP' (which, it said, need not be socialist!), but in the week before the election came back to the slogan 'return Labor but prepare to fight'.

It suggested voting 1. for protest candidates; 2. for the Australian Democrats (a small party something like the Liberals in Britain — the Australian Liberals are more like British Tories); 3. for Labor. It explained that the Democrats were to the left of Labor! Questions of the class base of different parties are no longer of much interest to the SWP.

The lesson for the Marxist left from the election result is that ideas of a new mass left-wing breakaway from the Labor Party have no foundation at all at present. There is no serious alternative to the long, hard job of building a fighting left-wing within the trade unions and the Labor Party.

And the election also showed the size of that job. The sad truth is that Labor won the election because at the moment it is the most stable and efficient party for running Australian capitalism.

Don't accept Thatcher's agenda!

"The unpalatable truth is that Labour lost the general election. It was a great professional campaign on the media, but we lost. There must be reasons for this and these reasons need to be looked at.

However, already, some leading figures are saying we need to change policy. The question is, what policies? Surely we need to know. The NEC Home Policy Committee had a paper in front of it which proposed a fundamental change in policy. That, I understand was changed to an assessment. Again, though, what type of assessment?

Resisted

Let me make it clear, if it is being suggested that we cut our policy of public ownership, then that will be resisted.

If it is to accept Tory concepts of privatisation and individual interests over collective needs, that will be opposed.

If it is to get rid of our policy of ending nuclear weapons, it will be resisted.

Eric Heffer, speaking at a fringe meeting at London Labour Party conference, put the case for socialist policies instead of a shift towards the Liberals

resisted.

If it is to further weaken Labour's policy on housing, it will be resisted.

If it is to weaken Labour's policy of getting rid of anti-trade union legislation and fighting for workers' rights, it will be resisted.

That must be obvious.

Retreats

Bringing policies up to date is one thing, using that to jettison basic socialist policies is something else. We have gone through all that before. We should avoid it again.

There have already been too many retreats in various directions from Labour's socialist policies. Let us



Eric Heffer. (Photo: Ian Swindale)

CHILD ABUSE

Stop the backlash!

By Mark Nevill

There has been much in the news recently about the subject of child abuse and particularly recent developments in Cleveland.

Apart from the actual child abuse, probably the worse aspect of that case was the way in which the gutter press and sections of the left reacted towards it.

Their attitude was stark and hideous: "How dare these interfering, nouse-parkers take these children out of the family!" Hardly any of the articles examined the subject of child abuse or seriously takes into account the vast experience of work with children of Dr Higgs, the central figure in the Cleveland case.

This reluctance to deal with the subject of child abuse helps to keep the huge number of victims away from the public's knowledge and that inevitably makes it harder to deal with.

Nobody knows the true extent of child abuse and child sex abuse. The NSPCC guesses that it is one in every ten children. To bring it into stark reality, that means that at present half a million children are being abused.

What should be on the minds of people who are genuinely concerned with tackling the problem of child abuse is the probable outcome of the recent hysterical outburst in the media.

Although I have never had any dealings with children who are being abused, I have worked in a psychiatric day hospital. I encountered many people, mainly women, who were admitted for depression and anxiety, etc., which was the consequence of abuse they had suffered in childhood.

The two most significant reactions of these people were deep feelings of guilt — and anger towards the world for standing by and letting it happen.

This guilt, which often leads to suicide attempts, comes from the belief that they themselves were somehow responsible for what happened to them. They feel that because nobody did anything to stop it, then it must have been either

alright or else their own fault.

Even when someone did intervene it may have been too late and the barbed guilt had already been sown deep.

In the Cleveland case all the tabloids rushed to protect the institution of the family and to deny what the experts — both in Cleveland and generally — say about the extent of child abuse within the family.

This crass and sickening tabloid campaign is part of a backlash against the fight to stop child abuse. If this campaign succeeds the subject of child abuse will again be unmentionable. Many of those whose job it is to report known or suspected cases and to act to protect children will be intimidated. People in positions where they may be able to identify child abuse, teachers, GPs, nurses, social workers, etc., will think twice before they risk sharing the fate of Dr Higgs who is being hounded as an "enemy of the people".

Harder

After the witch-hunt of Dr. Higgs, people will be less willing to identify abuse and think twice before taking or recommending action. Victims of child abuse will continue to suffer horrific abuse and subsequent crippling and torturing guilt. They will now find it harder to come forward and look for help.

Two final points. Firstly, contrary to what sections of the left, like Socialist Worker, say, child abuse is not just a working class problem, caused by deprivation and class oppression.

Child abuse has no class barriers. Bank managers, doctors, barristers, tabloid editors, solicitors, as well as working class people have all been identified as child abusers.

Secondly, of all the writings of recent weeks, we haven't heard much from people who have been abused in the past. One letter sent to Dr Higgs, from a person who had been abused as a child said, "I am sorry that I was born a generation too soon."

What the press campaign against Dr. Higgs will do if we let it is ensure that the present generation also will be a generation which grows up in a dark age of child abuse which society pretends not to know about.

hope that such retreats will end and that those siren voices urging Labour to drop its fundamental principles and support for the working class will be rejected, so that instead of turning in on itself Labour will project forthright socialist policies, seriously fight the Tories, inside and outside Parliament, and ensure that in the process it appeals to all sections of workers, manual, white collar, and professional. That is something the Party has always fought for, symbolised by the Party emblem of the torch of liberty together with a crossed spade and quill. That is Labour's real symbol, not a nice red rose which, once picked, quickly withers and dies.

Yuppies

There are those who say the Party must appeal mainly to the Yuppies, to those workers, especially the higher paid, in employment, to those who own their own houses and to those who seek to solve their problems by individualism.

I always thought the Labour Party was appealing to those in employ-

ment, to those workers and professional people who owned their own houses and to those who were wanting to play a greater part in management, etc.

The working class has never been just manual workers, but rightly, the organised workers in trade unions have been and are one of the fundamental pillars of the Party.

With regard to individualism, the right to have individual rights is one thing, but selfish individualism must surely not be accepted as any part of Labour's philosophy.

Compassion

What Labour must do is to appeal to the decency, to the compassion, to the recognition that people are prepared to put the interests of all before the selfish interests of the few. Socialism is not about individual greed, but about the collective good, and Labour must not retreat into accepting Thatcher's agenda of individual greed, but set its own agenda for co-operative development and working towards a new classless society."

Solidarity

Cont'd from page 1

creating a new feudalism which will enslave us in the name of efficiency, productivity and national security.

Fifth, when are we going to end all discrimination against women and the black community, restore civil liberties to this country and liberate trade unions and local government from the prison in which they are now being confined?

Sixth, when are we going to take environmental issues seriously to protect our towns, villages and countryside from pollution created in pursuit of private profit, halt and phase out all nuclear power and return to the oldest demand of working people in this country that the "earth be a common treasury" and should not be "bought and sold and kept in the hands of a few"?

Seventh, when are we going to stop arguing about which party can manage capitalism best, and start arguing for what is "right" against what is "wrong" so that every policy is judged by whether it meets the people's needs and not whether it makes a profit — re-establishing the case for social justice based on the principle that our society must live

like a community — or die in a jungle?

Eighth, when are we going to work to embrace the ideas of internationalism once more, identify with working people in other countries struggling for the same rights that we want, bury the Cold War which divides East from West, and redirect the skill and money now criminally wasted in our arms budget, to end world poverty in our lifetime, an objective that is well within our grasp, using the new technology wisely?

These eight questions — and many others — must be answered clearly if we are to reverse the deadly drift towards authoritarianism, the Police State — and war — which we have seen develop over the last eight years.

To do that will require an enormous struggle, mainly waged outside Parliament where Labour's strength has always lain, just as the pioneers of trade unionism and democracy had to do in the past.

If, as socialists, we can lay bare the essential nature of the choices that have to be made, and offer a bold vision of the sort of society that it is well within the power of our people to build for themselves, then I truly believe that the response would be overwhelming.

Bad news on Sunday

By Jim Denham

NO-ONE should take any pleasure in the much-publicised troubles of the *News on Sunday*, if only because they have confirmed the widely-held view that socialists are a bunch of incompetents who couldn't run a whelk-stall.

Most of the paper's original principles seem to have gone by the board since the receivers were called in and millionaire businessman Owen Oyston began funding the paper's £150,000-a-week losses.

With circulation at under 300,000 a week (the break-even point is 800,000) and the loss of the colour section and its best-known columnist, Anna Coote, the prospects for the paper look grim.

One possible 'solution' being investigated by Oyston is to turn the paper into a free-sheet: perhaps that was what they were trying out on a small scale at this month's TGWU conference, when copies (with a special supplement largely devoted to an article by Neil Kinnock extolling the virtues of 'one member, one vote') were given away free to delegates.

Under Oyston's proposed new structure, he and the TGWU will become the major shareholders, with 37.5 per cent each. This presumably accounts for the bearded millionaire's presence at Scarborough, and his evident chumminess with Ron Todd.

But what seems to be emerging is very different from the *NoS* founders' dream of a lively, independent-minded socialist paper. Instead we have a dull, unimaginative affair, in hock politically to the TGWU bureaucracy and therefore to Neil Kinnock.

The end of Fleet Street

THE DEATH of Fleet Street was officially announced on Thursday 2 July when Express Newspapers informed its staff it would be leaving the Street of Shame by early 1990.

Express Newspapers' chair Lord Stevens told chapel officials from Manchester and London that 2500 employees had to go: 1000 from Manchester and 1500 from London.

Just a year ago, Express Newspapers shed 2000 jobs without any opposition from the union. Presumably that is what Brenda Dean was referring to when she referred to the plans as "a bleak day for us, especially in view of our cooperation at the paper".

**YOUTH
fightback**

New 'Youth Fightback', 25p plus 13p post from 33 Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3. With articles on school students, Moses Mayekiso, Lebanon, and much more.



The answer to Thatcherism

DURING THE election campaign the political parties paid to have private opinion polls taken so that they could best judge which issues to plug away on, which to try to avoid, and so on.

In an election campaign that sort of thing may make sense, if it helps politicians to gauge and calculate how best to pitch what they want to get across.

But now a school of thought has arisen in the Labour Party to argue

EDITORIAL

that the entire substance of what Labour will say it stands for should best be decided by somehow finding out what most of the electorate want to hear and then offering it to them.

In a political world where eight years of Tory rule — not to speak of centuries of capitalist rule — have established a powerful Thatcherite dominance over many people's ideas, attitudes and expectations, that approach will mean vying with Thatcherism on its own terms, trying to out-Thatcher Thatcher.

Probably it wouldn't work. People aren't that stupid.

But suppose it did work. What would be the point? For Labour's office-hungry career politicians, the point of course is to win elections. For the rank and file, for trade unionists wanting to undo Thatcherism, black people wanting to eradicate the official racism of the British state, and young people looking for work — there wouldn't be any point.

For socialists, the Bible long ago said all that needs to be said on this point: What does it profit a man if he

gains the whole world but loses his soul?

The Labour Party should not go in the direction urged by Bryan Gould and others. Labour, the political wing of the British labour movement, needs to go in the opposite direction.

Where left-wing candidates stood and ran left-wing campaigns in the

General Election, they did better than right-wing candidates in similar areas — sometimes far better. Socialism is the answer to Thatcherism.

A vigorous campaign now for socialist ideas, combined with active resistance to the Tories' measures — that is the way to begin to overturn the dominance of Thatcherism over so much of the British public mind.

A lesson from the USA on secrecy

LIEUTENANT-Colonel Oliver North has testified to the US Congress investigators that he was part of a secret state within the US state machine — a secret state which raised its own money and pursued its own policy, even when it flatly contradicted the policy of the US Congress.

Among its other crimes, that secret state made war on the people of Nicaragua.

Peter Wright, a former top British spy-master, has just published a book

in America which convincingly alleges that Britain's secret service conspired against Harold Wilson's Labour government in the 1970s. Last week the *Sunday Times* published large extracts from it.

Whereas North testifies before a Congressional inquiry, with national TV coverage, Wright's book is banned here and the government is stonewalling on Wright's allegations, hiding behind an immense barrier of official secrecy.

The Labour Party must fight to rip down this barrier of official secrecy, and pledge that the next Labour government will dismantle it.

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GRAFFITI

Inner city cutbacks

If the Tories can get their way, hard-pressed inner-city Labour councils in London will have to cut spending drastically in the next few years.

The London Daily News estimates that ten rate-capped councils in London will have to cut spending by a total of over £400 million. These councils have operated for years with huge gaps between their spending limits set by government 'ratecapping' and what they have actually spent, bridging the gaps by



'creative accounting', which means pushing expenditure into a later year's budget. They are now running out of such devices.

According to the official Audit Commission, over the whole of England local authority

spending will go down by 30 per cent over the next five years if the Tories push their plans through. Local authority employment will go down by 37%, mostly because of services being hived off to private contractors.

Unfortunately, left-wing Labour council leaders have already declared themselves defeated. Dismissing the possibility of a fight, Southwark, Camden and Hackney councils have already started making cuts, and Islington council leader Margaret Hodge has said that councils will have to chop jobs but should try to maintain services.

NHS lists

The number of private nursing homes and clinics in Britain went up from 1261 in 1982 to 2032 in 1985. Meanwhile the number on NHS waiting lists went up between 1980 and 1985 from 13.7 to 14.4 per 1000 population in England, from 13 to 15.3 in Wales and from 13.1 to 15.1 in Scotland.

Clamped

London's police hived off wheel-clamping of illegally parked vehicles to private contractors at the beginning of 1986.

The result has been four times as many vehicles clamped — including a hearse taking a coffin to a funeral, a meals-on-wheels van, and doctors' cars.

The embarrassed police are now assigning officers to accompany the private wheel-clamping teams.

Wouldn't it be a better use of Thatcherite doctrine if they privatised prosecutions for 'insider dealing' and City fraud, with payment by results pro rata for penalties imposed after convictions?

A French job

Right-wing Labour MP Stuart Bell, notorious for his claim that social workers in Teesside were reporting more children sexually abused just to get more money for their department, declared last week that he normally lives not in Teesside, nor even anywhere in Britain, but in France.

He was hauled up

Anti-nukes

Despite the right-wing orientation of the New Zealand Labour Party, it has one positive lesson to offer us.

It has refused to allow US ships to enter New Zealand harbours if they may be nuclear-armed — and it has stuck to that policy despite threats from the US, and from

the Australian Labor government.

This firm stand has won such support that the opposition National Party has decided not to make nuclear weapons policy an issue in the election due on 15 August.

Who says that opposition to nuclear weapons has to be a vote-loser?

Tory democracy

We all know how the agendas are arranged for the Tory Party's well-regimented conferences. Central Office simply selects those it likes from the resolutions sent in by local Tory Associations, and throws the rest in the waste-paper basket.

But this year, it seems, Central Office isn't sure of getting enough resolutions praising Thatcher spontaneously. It is circulating a model motion asking local Tory Associations to

praise the government on its poll-tax policy.

This is the party that wants to impose its ideas of democracy by law on the trade unions.

Bourgeois

In the 1960s lots of people used to argue that better-paid workers — car workers in particular — had become 'bourgeois', and so Labour had to drop traditional working class politics. During the big industrial struggles of the late 1960s and the 1970s this argument disappeared, but now it is out and about again.

It is no better now than it was in the 1960s. Consider one fact reported last week: Scotland, where Labour did especially well in the election, has the highest male wage rates of any region except the South-East.

Labour's millions down under

The government party has nearly three times as much to spend on advertising as the opposition. No wonder, because it has the support of the country's leading millionaires.

The prime minister describes one of those millionaires as "a mate", "a very close personal friend", and the finance minister has taken a holiday on another millionaire's yacht. Most of the press and TV is controlled by those few millionaires, and the opposition protests about media bias against them.

A familiar story? Indeed: but this is Australia, and the ruling party is Labor, only a few years

ago denounced by the millionaires and their press as dangerously socialist.

The Hawke Labor government has carried out policies very similar to Thatcher's in Britain, but by trading on traditional loyalties it has managed to do so without big clashes with the trade unions. For the millionaires, it is the best of all worlds.

It's a similar story in New Zealand, where the country's two biggest profiteers, Ron Brierley and Roger Jones, support a ruling Labour Party which has privatised and cut public services faster than the Tories here.

Both in Australia and in New Zealand, working class people are disillusion-

ed and sickened, but so far no more than that. It can't be long before that disillusion turns into active struggle for an alternative.

Soft left

The victory of the soft-left 'Tribune' group in last week's vote by Labour MPs for the shadow cabinet underlines how long the diehard right wing has dominated the affairs of Labour in Parliament.

Bryan Gould's 163 votes was probably a record score — outstripping the 154 gained by Reg Prentice and Shirley Williams when they tied for top place in 1972's vote.

The price of profits

The price miners have paid for the massive drive to increase production in the pits over the last decade, and particularly since the end of the 1984-5 strike, has been the traditional one of blood and broken bones.

Since the Tories first came to power in 1979 the 'major injury accident rate' has at least doubled. In Nottinghamshire, the number of serious accidents has climbed from 55 in 1979 to 173 in 1986, at a time when the workforce has shrunk by 39%.

Over the last year 'serious reportable accidents' have doubled in the Durham coalfield.

The situation will dramatically worsen if the Coal Board is successful in imposing six day working and nine-hour shifts. The aim is to get miners to spend more time at the coal face with the latest heavy duty, high-speed coal cutting machines.

It has been estimated that a nine hour shift over four days would increase machine available time by 30% and productivity by 10%. For the miner it means more dust, more noise, more fatigue, more danger, more blood.

At the same time they want to introduce time-saving, safety-cutting devices like roof bolts; they want to cut down the time spent examining and maintaining the winding shafts.

The Tories want to change the Coal Mines Act, which legally restricts the time spent underground to 7½ hours plus one hour winding time. The main argument for this, when it was made law in 1908, was health and safety. Truly a return to Victorian values.

I think it was historic when the NUM conference last week decided to resist any attempt to interfere with the five-day week. If we had not done that it would have been the green light for the Coal Board to walk all over us and decimate this union.

Our stand gives a timely signal to the rest of the trade union movement that something has got to be done to stop the Tory onslaught. In Arthur Scargill's words: 'They've come so far and they come no further'.

The conference voted 49-22 to reject six-day working and nine-hour shifts. We will hold a pit head, secret ballot on the issue. The date has not yet been fixed. I have no doubt that the Coal Board will be starting a campaign to try and sell six-day working and nine-hour shifts to the men. We need a counter-campaign to win the hearts and minds of the rank and file. If we are going to win. I understand that the Executive next week will be drawing up a timetable for the campaign and the ballot.

I can well understand South Wales's concern to try and protect jobs. The problem is that though accepting Coal Board plans might mean 800 jobs today, it will certainly mean thousands of jobs lost tomorrow. I thought the two-day debate at conference was very good, with both sides putting their arguments with

Blood on coal

IT WAS like all the other mornings, leaving our house and walking to the bus stop. It was a fine day, the sun was up even though it was only six o'clock.

I waved cheerio to my wife, Margaret, and six girls and walked with Sam, my son, to the bus stop.

You enjoy the sun — or what you see of it — when you spend most of your life down the pit.

Wished

I'd been a miner at Auchengeich Colliery for 23 years, and even after that time, I still wished sometimes I didn't have to go down below, into the dark.

I changed into my pit clothes at the bath-house and got into the cage with Sam.

A lot of my mates had already gone down to the pit bottom and I was just in time for the second run of the pit train that takes us to the coal-face.

I noticed a slight haze when I stepped out of the cage. Nothing much. Nobody was alarmed. Believe me, if anyone had been worried they'd never have gone on.

Miners develop a sixth sense for trouble...

The train guard, Harry Clayton, shouted "first five" to let us know there were five empty places on the train. I stepped forward with four men I knew well. Sam was left waiting at the pit bottom.

Most of them at the pit were my friends. That's what makes it all the worse. That slight haze that nobody



worried about should have warned us. Something was wrong down there. Something terrible, for what happened after the pit train trundled into the pitch black was so awful it finished me as a miner for ever.

For that was my last day at the coal face. It would have been my last day on earth but for a miracle that saved my life — and mine alone out of all the mates I set out with.

The haze got a bit worse before we set off down the single-line track.

"I think there's some smoke there," one of my mates, said, sniffing the air.

Unlit

After a few seconds, I smelled it, too. Anyway, we signalled to the control point to start and as the train reached an unlit stretch of the track, we switched on our helmet lamps. All the way the smoke got thicker.

The run took the usual 7½ minutes, but when we reached our

Miners must take

Paul Whetton, secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts, reports from the miners' conference

logic and passion.

Coal Board boss Sir Robert Haslam's statement just before the conference showed how they are going to push the issue. He put out a list of existing pits and said they would not get any more money unless the men agreed to change to six-day working. Two of these were Nottinghamshire pits, Harworth and Cotgrave. We always said it was not just about Margam! What they are trying to do is to pick off pits individually: putting a gun to the head of the miners' there to get six-day working established.

Harworth and Cotgrave are UDM pits, so it is going to put Roy Lynk on the spot. It is all very well him blustering about organising Margam, but his own members do not want six-day working.

After the UDM conference they had to put a notice up in every Nottinghamshire pit, and send out expensive, glossy leaflets explaining what Roy Lynk "really" meant. He did not mean six day working for Notts, or for any existing pit. It was only for 'green sites', that is pits that had not been sunk yet. The attempt to hide what Lynk *did* say failed, and NUM recruitment got a big boost. Now the

NUM must start our own propaganda campaign, aiming to get through to the rank and file in the pits, and particularly at Harworth and Cotgrave.

I was at the NUM conference for the whole week with four other sacked Notts miners. It was worthwhile going. Delegates pointed to the importance of the sacked miners having a presence there. The 344 sacked miners need to be seen and heard.

In the conference Kent put forward an emergency resolution about victimised miners. It called for a one-day strike, other industrial action and a London march and lobby of Parliament. It was carried unanimously, which shows the depth of feeling on the issue, even from those areas where there are only a handful of sacked men.

The Midlands delegate made the point that even in traditionally non-militant areas like his own, they were still able to get a successful one-day strike. If they could do it, he said, then any area in the country could, and it could be done nationally, too. We need to bring the issue to the attention of the public again: our comrades in the pits have not forgotten us, but we get the feeling that the broader trade union and labour

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

Into the June days

Monday 5 June

The factory committee of the Langen-ziepen factory in Petrograd responds to management's announcement of closure by instructing workers to obey its decisions, and not to allow any raw materials or finished goods to leave the factory. A general meeting of members of the metalworkers' union in Moscow calls for legislation for the introduction of a minimum wage, price controls over essential consumer goods, and control over production by Soviets. In Sevastopol a meeting of sailors, soldiers and workers passes a motion of no-confidence in the commander of the Black Sea Fleet (Kolchak) and his chief-of-staff (Smirnov) and orders the arrest of a number of officers for their ill-treatment of sailors. 8,000 workers strike in Kazan for higher pay. In Baku workers employed in the oil-fields exploited by the Knyazev company resolve to sack the managing director for refusing to meet their economic demands.

Tuesday 6 June

A meeting of soldiers in Kimry (Tversk province) resolves to refuse orders to go to the front; it calls for the overthrow of bourgeois power and for fraternisation at the front (though clearly not by themselves) as a way of spreading revolutionary ideas to foreign troops. A meeting of representatives of the Black Sea Fleet and of the Sevastopol garrison calls for the removal of Kolchak and Smirnov from their posts. Soldiers in the Balashov garrison refuse orders to go to the front.

The factory committee of the Brenner factory (Petrograd) appeals to the Ministry of Labour to allow it the right to control production, given the absence of management from the factory, and effective control of the factory already by the factory committee. A mass meeting of 3,500 workers of the Vulkan factory (Petrograd) recalls its deputies (Mensheviks) from the Petrograd Soviet and elects new delegates, mandated to fight for the transference of power to the soviets.

In Vyatka, the first provincial congress of peasant deputies passes resolutions in support of the Provisional Government, and for active assistance to the front.

Wednesday 7 June

On the fifth day of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Minister of Labour Skobelev defends the record of the Provisional Government, claiming that its fiscal policies are directed against the "possessing classes", and that it seeks to promote arbitration as the most effective way of solving industrial conflict.

The Kronstadt Soviet dispatches a delegation to sailors and troops stationed in the Gulf of Finland to explain why the Soviet refuses to support the Provisional Government.

A 1000-strong meeting in Tver of soldiers of the 196th reserve infantry regiment calls for the soviets to take into their hands the organisation of production and distribution, and all political power. A meeting of the 36th reserve infantry regiment in Moscow condemns the imperialist war and calls for transference of all power to the Soviets. A 1,000-strong meeting of soldiers and workers in Kiev calls for factories to be placed under the control of workers and for estates to be placed under the control of peasant organisations.

Thursday 8 June

The all-Russian congress of Soviets rejects a Bolshevik resolution condemning the coalition Provisional Government as "a convenient tool with which to carry out the imperialist policies of the bourgeoisie", instead it adopts a resolution proposed by the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries approving the formation of a coalition government.

In new elections to the Vyborg Soviet (not the district of Petrograd), the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries lose votes, whilst the number of Bolshevik deputies increases from 21 to 75. In Moscow the printworkers' union appeals

Coal

Tom Green was the only man on a miners' underground train to the coal face who came out alive from Auchengleich Colliery, Lanarkshire, on 18 September 1959. 47 miners suffocated in a fire 1,000 feet below ground. Tom Green's story was first published in December 1961.

part of the coal-face, it was just a blanket of smoke. Like a thick wall, it was.

One or two of the lads began to cough and we could hardly see a thing.

(Tom Green and his mates didn't know that a pit official was already investigating the smoke and a smell of burning. He found a fan belt on fire and used extinguishers. Nobody realised that the fire had spread).

Signal

We were coughing and spluttering and somebody passed the word to get back on the train. We all got on. I found myself in the same seat — at the back going in, and now at the front.

The guard rang the signal bell and the train started off through the smoke. By now it was so thick you could hardly breathe, and I covered up my mouth with my jacket collar. "Breathe through your jackets," I



The 101st Durham Miners' Gala told the men near me. "It's easier".

The next thing was that my mate, Pat Harvey, who was sitting next to me, shouted:

"Tam, for God's sake, give me a hand."

He had found one of the men, Mulholland, hanging over the side of a bogie.

I shouted to the guard to stop the train and we hauled Mulholland back in and started off again for the shaft. (At his control point from which he operated the bogies by remote control, the train man couldn't see his indicators for the smoke. He heard a shout and stopped the train in case someone had been run down. Then, he collapsed, overcome by the fumes.)

Blank

The funny thing is that through all this, I never felt frightened. So far as I was concerned, the train was taking us back to the shaft and everything would soon be all right. I remember thinking that we'd be OK in a couple of minutes — then everything went blank.

What happened is clear enough now. The train stopped and me being dazed I got out and started running.

I have a vague memory of passing the haulage gates in the dark — but it's like a faint memory of something that happened in a dream, something you can't quite get into focus.

I must have travelled more than 150 yards through that hellish smoke on my own, just running and stumbling, and having no idea whether I was going the right way.

For all I knew, I might have been running back into the thick of it.

I don't know how I managed it. I'm about 6ft. 2ins., and as strong as average, but there were a lot younger and stronger men than me on the train.

It wasn't my strength that kept me going through the dark, hardly able to breathe. It was luck.

(It was luck, too, that Tom Green's

shouts were heard by two other miners who were standing in an airlock. They pushed forward into the smoke for 20 yards and found him. They carried him back to the airlock, where rescue workers gave him artificial respiration.)

The next thing I knew was waking up in the pithead ambulance room.

They told me that all the other men on the train — 47 of my mates, friends I'd worked with for years — were still down there, 1,000 feet below.

It took days to bring their bodies out. The rescue workers could work for only a few minutes at a time because of the smoke. Some of the men hosing the actual fire had to be hosed at the same time themselves because of the hellish heat.

(The first trainload of miners managed to escape through an air-shaft before the smoke built up.)

Inquiry

A few months later, at the inquiry into the disaster, it was some consolation to hear the doctor say that they had died instantly and painlessly through carbon monoxide poisoning.

I still wave cheerio to Margaret and the girls every morning and so does my son Sam. But neither of us goes down the pit any more.

It was worse for Sam at the time, not knowing if I was dead or not. He changed his job to steel-working afterwards. He couldn't face mining now. I didn't work again for 15½ months. Then I got a job at Auchengleich as a surface worker.

They're still repairing the colliery, but I don't know if it will ever open again.

I know that I won't ever go back down out of the sun to dig coal for a living. I reckon I've used up all the miracles that are likely to come my way.

the initiative

movement has.

For a number of years the union's energy policy has included the demand for an annual production target of 200 million tonnes. South Wales put in a resolution saying this was "unrealistic", but Nottinghamshire amended this to reaffirm existing policy. We won!

The conference is getting smaller each year. Kent, sad to say, has been virtually wiped out. Other areas are losing members all the time, because of job losses. The one area that has a chance of growing is Notts, when we win back the rank and file from the UDM.

One thing conference showed is that the attempts to isolate Arthur Scargill have failed. Yet the divisions are still there, and so is the alliance between the right wing and the Euro-communists.

The decision to change the rules and have regular election of officials was taken in private session. It was agreed to draw up a programme for it, which will be put to next year's conference. Then there will be time before it is implemented.

Democracy is fundamental, but there are problems. For example, if someone like Henry Richardson was to get voted out, his chance of getting a job back at the pit is virtually nil, so some provision has to be made for that.

Partly the union's move is a response to the threat of new To

trade union legislation, which is partly aimed at Scargill. I think it will rebound on them. When Arthur stands for re-election, I am sure the membership will re-endorse him with a greater majority than they gave him last time. The move to greater democracy should have happened earlier, and we should not just be reacting to the Tories' agenda. It should have been us taking the initiative, rather than letting the class enemy do it.

We went straight from the conference to the Durham Miners' Gala on Saturday. We met up with many other Notts miners, their wives and families. We carried the Notts sacked miners' banner, and it was an experience I find impossible to put into words. To carry that banner through the streets, and to hear the support and comments from the Durham people for all the sacked miners — it was bloody magic.

Durham too is a coalfield under tremendous attack. With six-day working they would lose three of the remaining six pits virtually overnight. They are now trying to introduce nine-hour shifts at Monkwearmouth. I am sure the men in the area will resist it fiercely.

Despite the declining number of pits in the area it was marvellous to see the turn-out they did get on Saturday. If you have never attended the Durham Miners' Gala, then you certainly missed something in life.

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

to all printworkers to ensure that on any day any socialist paper fails to appear, then not a single bourgeois paper should appear either. The Saransk Soviet resolves to introduce the 8-hour working day in all commercial establishments.

The Vitebsk Soviet calls a demonstration for 18 June under the slogans, "World peace without annexations and indemnities on the basis of the self-determination of peoples", "For a Revolutionary International", "To a democratic republic by way of a constituent assembly" and others. A meeting in Sevastopol of delegates from the army, fleet and workforces, agrees to the appeal of the Provisional Government for the return of weapons to officers and for an end to the arrests of officers.

Friday 9 June

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets rejects a Bolshevik resolution calling for the abolition of the State Duma and the Council of State; later in the day the congress bans all demonstrations for three days and appeals to workers and soldiers not to participate in a Bolshevik demonstration planned for 10 June in Petrograd.

During the day leaflets are distributed in Petrograd working class quarters calling for support for the demonstration of 10 June; the Central Council of Factory Committees supports the demonstration; a conference of delegates from 89 factories issues an appeal to Kronstadt to support the demonstration; a delegate-conference of representatives of 28 factories of the Vyborg region supports the demonstration; on hearing of the decision of the congress of soviets, the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks decides to call off the demonstration.

A meeting of workers of the Russian-Baltic factory in Petrograd condemns the arrest of the editor of Trenches Pravda. A soldiers' meeting in Moscow condemns the government's decision to dispatch all reserve regiments of the Moscow garrison to the front. The chief of the Andizhan garrison requests for more troops to be sent in order to break a strike by workers at the "Besh-Bosh" factory.

Saturday 10 June

Leading members of the Bolsheviks visit the major factories in Petrograd to explain the reasons for calling off that day's intended demonstration. At the All-Russian Congress of Soviets Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries attack the Bolsheviks for intending to hold a demonstration. The Provisional Government resolves to ban demonstrations for three days and threatens to use force to break up any street protests. Members of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets visit Petrograd workplaces to explain the reasons for the three-day ban on demonstrations.

Soldiers' meetings in Petrograd call for all power to be transferred to the soviets. Prime Minister Lvov sends a telegram to the Pensa provincial commissioner declaring illegal the decision of the second provincial peasant congress to take over the landed estates. A district congress of peasant deputies in Yadrinsk calls for the earliest possible end to the war, but also advocates that the Provisional Government round up all who have evaded military service in the trenches and send them to the front.

Sunday 11 June

A joint meeting of the Presidium of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, the Executive Committee of the Soviet of peasant deputies, and the bureau of all fractions of the Congress condemns the Bolsheviks for planning a demonstration on 10 June; the Bolsheviks walk out in protest. At the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Dan, leader of the Mensheviks, calls for support for the army and continuation of the war.

Soldiers in the 3rd Siberian Rifles division (Northern front), the 44th Siberian regiment (Western front) and the 249th Reserve Infantry regiment (Rostov-on-Don) refuse to obey orders. A 5,000-strong meeting of soldiers and workers in Moscow calls for the release of all workers, soldiers and sailors imprisoned for agitating in support of Bolshevik policies. A soldiers' meeting in Krasnoyarsk calls for all power to the Soviets and for all supporters of "war until a victorious conclusion" to be sent to the front.



Timothy Dalton (Bond) with Maryam d'Abo

The new soft Bond

'THE LIVING Daylights' is, I read, the 15th movie about James Bond.

The first, 'Doctor No', was made 25 years ago, but the series is still going strong. Indeed, 'The Living Daylights' offers a certain renewal of a form which had become an increasingly stale and dull parade of technical gimmickry and special effects, as lifeless and para-human as a computer game. I confess I can't watch the Bond movies made in the last decade or so for more than a quarter of an hour, even on TV.

Roger Moore was droll but wooden, a humanoid robot in the midst of the gadgetry.

'The Living Daylights' puts human beings back in the profitable Bond formula, and even cuts back a bit on the gadgetry. Roger Moore's Bond sleepwalked his way through hair-raising dangers with the assurance of one who knew himself to be as indestructible as Popeye or Superman. Timothy Dalton plays Bond as if he might be a real person who knows he is laying his life on the line — a human being with nerves and feelings.

Soft

Is that because Dalton, unlike Moore, is an actor? Or is it because this is a James Bond who told the press he intended voting Labour on 11 June?

The new one is a soft James Bond, who falls in love. In a scene towards the end he has to talk about an incident near the beginning in which he might have killed the heroine, and it moves and horrifies him.

This points to the other main change in the new Bond mixture: its women, and Bond's attitude to women. The cynical sexist predator Bond has become the caring protector of one woman. *Guardian* critic Derek Malcolm complained that Maryam d'Abo, who plays the movie's heroine, isn't a real 'Bond girl', and I suppose she isn't. She's an improvement.

The new film's attitude to women is considerably less sexist, predatory and nasty than the norm for the Bond movies. By comparison Bond is positively chivalrous and old-fashioned. This is said to be Bond for the AIDS age. If so, it's an improve-

ment.

Tom Macara reviews the new James Bond movie

Even the food and wine snobbery is less than usual in this one. (Remember the scene in 'From Russia With Love' where Sean Con-

nelly's Bond twigs that someone is an impostor because he orders red — or was it white? — wine with his fish?)

Bond gets mixed up in the Afghan resistance against the Russian invaders of their country. Even so, the overall political message is favourable to detente, and the chief Russian spy-master is on the same side as Bond against a self-serving

Russian renegade and his American arms-dealer associate.

I'm not sure it is right to be so joky about 'Russia's Vietnam war' in Afghanistan, where four million people, almost a quarter of the population, have been turned into refugees. But on balance I enjoyed 'The Living Daylights', though it drags on a bit too long.

Equal opportunities?

Panorama last week looked at racial discrimination.

Although racial discrimination at work was outlawed in 1968 it was left to individuals to prove they had been discriminated against. Panorama's report asked: can equal opportunities actually be enforced?

Panorama's answer seemed to be by 'ethnic monitoring', as in the civil service. However black people are still under-represented in the civil service, especially in the higher grades.

The BBC claims to be an equal opportunities employer. Yet of the 223 production staff, 37 scene shifters and 70 managers taken on recently, only one was black. In such cases it is very easy for the black person to become isolated.

The reporter said the corporation had 'some way to go' but he also added that "unless blacks take equal opportunities offered in the white majority world, nothing is going to change." So there! Be grateful!

Vastiana Belfon, presenter of the black programme *Ebony*, suggested that barriers could be removed without lowering standards and that the BBC should make up for years of discriminatory practices. Out of 12 local radio trainees hired this year, four were black.

The black trainees were acutely aware that positive discrimination, if handled badly, can be divisive.

They all stated that they wished to be employed for their ability and talents and not just for the colour of their skins.

The statistics for black people on government YTS are horrific. In the



By Dion d'Silva

Birmingham and Solihull area (where one in five of the school leavers are black) Debenhams employs 12 YTS trainees; Marks and Spencer 9; Rumbelows 11; TSB 23; Freight Rover 22; Jaguar 12; and the Co-op 66. Out of all these not one is black.

A study by Warwick University shows that black teenagers, encouraged by teachers who felt they needed to be 'sheltered', tend to be placed in college and community-based schemes with less chance of a job at the end.

Panorama suggested that it was in the interests of a just and stable society that employers take a more responsible attitude and try to find out why blacks are not applying for certain jobs. America was given as the model.

In the Monsanto Chemical Company in St. Louis, up until 1972, the lockers were segregated. It was said

that the company 'could mix anything except the workforce'. However an enforced Federal Government law has meant that more blacks have been hired and in better jobs. It did not say whether there was still the same number of jobs in total.

The implication was that this is what should be happening in Britain. The Inner London Education Authority uses 'contract compliance' to demand companies they deal with to demonstrate that they operate equal opportunities before they get contracts. John Carr was quoted as saying that "America showed the way".

The programme expressed the wishes of a liberal establishment for a just and fair society. But without understanding the origins and interests of racism, the answers given were at best bureaucratic and at worst patronising. It was said that 'ending discrimination means counting, measuring and managing to ensure equal opportunities for everyone.'

The programme concentrated on the problems of the upwardly mobile blacks and the fact that blacks are three times more likely to be unemployed was ignored. In fact the ideas expressed do have a resonance within the left. More and more, demands are being made to follow the example of America regarding quotas and contract compliance, etc.

Yet the situation in the USA is never fully explained. Better-off blacks have made sizeable gains there, but the bulk of black workers are back where they started.

We're not defeated!

2,000 redundancies were announced by Express Newspapers last week. That takes the total to 4,000 sacked in a year, two-thirds of the workforce put on the dole.

And it's the same story all over Fleet Street. At the Mirror, Maxwell has halved his workforce and sacked one of the MoCs; the Observer has got rid of all the machine room operators; and at the Mail the NGA compositors, the cleaners, firemen, security men and carpenters have all been told to go.

Fleet Street, which once boasted the most militant trade unionists after the miners, is being decimated. Those still in work are facing constant attacks on their conditions: longer hours have now been extracted by most managements; our rights to organise are being threatened. At the Telegraph, for example, the post-entry closed shop is likely to be abolished. In most other newspapers, particularly at the Mirror, more and more non-union positions are being created.

In all this the managements are being helped by the Tory anti-union laws. And worse is to come. The Tories' third term will see the probable introduction of a Bill which will abolish democracy in the workplace. Under new government laws, if a union takes a democratic balloted decision to strike and some members decide to ignore it and cross the picket line, the union cannot discipline them. But if I refused to pay my poll tax, because I didn't agree with it, I bet the courts wouldn't let me off!

We must be very clear, the Tories are out to smash us, and we must fight back to defend our democratic rights, our pay and conditions and our jobs. We have suffered huge setbacks, it's true, and not just in Fleet Street, but throughout the whole labour movement.

Losing the miners' strike and the fight at Wapping, and, yes, the General Election, were blows, it has to be said. But we're not finished, we're not defeated.

We must unite and go on the offensive. And we demand that the labour movement back us — the

**By Carol Hall,
sacked News
International
SOGAT MoC.**

leadership, that is. The rank and file proved during the miners' strike, at Wapping, Silentnight, the CPSA dispute, that they understand the principles worth fighting for.

But we want the Kinnocks and the Willis's too. Instead of spouting off about making the Labour Party more "attractive" to voters next time round and giving us more roses, more Brahms, hoping that the working class will go away (where to?), Kinnock and his acolytes have got to take up the fight. They must lead the fight to save our jobs; our schools; our hospitals; to invest in the working class with the same determination that Thatcher shows in fighting for hers.

The way to win more votes, Neil, is to prove to the working class that you are on our side really.

And the TUC has got to pull its finger out. For too long they've sat back and watched the rank and file struggle to save our movement — to preserve their fat-cat jobs — and have run from joining in — let alone leading — the fight. We want action now!

*A campaign to mobilise every trade unionist against the Tory attacks on our democratic right to organise.

*To fight to defend every single job.

*To fight for a decent living wage for every worker: no slave labour, i.e. YTS, JTS.

*To mobilise support for every strike over jobs, conditions and our right to organise and to demand tharworkers sacked for taking action are reinstated.

We demand that you represent us as we elected you to do. The working class are not defeated, not on the run. We will fight for our rights and we will win!



Legal observer John Bowden truncheoned by the police on the anniversary of the Wapping dispute. The leaders of the labour movement should have stood by the printers. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

Brent Council

No backdown!

A month after Thatcher's election victory Brent Council's Livingstone leadership has made it quite clear that it has no intention of fighting the Tories' plans for local government in the coming months.

The clearest proof of this came last week when it was leaked that the council's 'leaseback' deals with City banks had fallen through, almost certainly due to behind the scenes pressure from the government, leaving the council with a deficit on its budget for this year of £28 million.

Instead of initiating a campaign to demand extra resources from the government to meet Brent's pressing needs for housing, more schools, bet-

ter meals on wheels services, etc., the council's Labour leadership have responded by proposing to make cuts of up to £6 million in order to balance the books.

Most of the cuts, which will come in the form of leaving vacancies unfilled, cuts in housing repair programme, etc., will, not surprisingly, hit the working class — the very people who swept the Labour Party into office in 1986 with its biggest majority since the 1960s.

Further, in the best traditions of the Labour right, the Brent leadership is attempting to steamroller through its package of cuts with little or no consultation with the local labour and trade union movement on the other options open to the council. Only certain 'acceptable' wards (i.e. people unlikely to resist) have been privy to the exact details of the measures proposed and timetable of the meetings where they will be pushed through.

In the short time available before these important decisions are taken local labour and trade union activists and a handful of councillors are organising resistance to the cuts programme.

A mass picket has been called for 28 July at Brent Town Hall starting at 7.30 p.m. around the demand of no cuts in jobs and services. All community activists, trade unionists, and Labour Party members are urged to attend.

Within the local Labour Parties of Brent North, South and East activists are pushing motions demanding no cuts in jobs or services and urging Brent council to link up with other Labour local authorities and build a campaign of resistance to the Tory policies on the lines pursued by Liverpool and Lambeth councils in 1985. United action can defeat the Tories.

Last week's Transport and General Workers' Union Conference at Scarborough voted in favour of 'One member one vote', that is, to change the Labour Party's constitution so as to strengthen the position of MPs.

This change is now certain to be carried at this year's Labour Party Conference.

Full report of TGWU conference next week.

London Labour Party

The left under attack

SINCE the Greenwich by-election, we have seen a concerted attack on the left in London, most notably with the letter from Neil Kinnock's assistant Patricia Hewitt which was leaked to the press, complaining about the 'loony left'.

In an attempt to keep this 'loony left' quiet until after the General Election, and thus minimise the 'London factor', Greater London Labour Party conference was postponed for five months.

When the conference finally met last weekend, the trade unions were mobilised in force, wielding their block votes mainly against the more left-wing motions from Constituency Labour Parties.

Each debate was the same. Speaker after speaker, mainly from the CLPs, would put the left-wing view. Little or no opposition would be heard. Yet the left position would be voted down by thousands of votes.

The conference supported an analysis of the general election which argued that the Labour Party was perceived as out of touch, that our policies on equal opportunities were

By Liz Davies

too extreme, and that we should unite behind Kinnock's leadership, especially in condemning "lack of discipline from some prominent individuals" (meaning Sharon Atkin). The conference also supported the Inner London Education Authority's compulsory redeployment of teachers and refused to condemn ILEA's inability to negotiate or consult. And it refused to support black sections within the party.

The main set-piece speakers were Bryan Gould and Larry Whitty, both of whom combined being conciliatory with patronising us. Since the TV cameras were whirring, we dutifully kept quiet and didn't heckle as they praised us for taking up 'sober and sensible' positions in the general election.

They told us that we needed to spend the next four years campaigning in order to win next time — something surely no-one can disagree with. And they argued that the image of the London party had helped to lose the election, implying that we should tone ourselves down.

The only recompense was that the motion supporting 'one member, one vote' was defeated, and our policy on positive images and on lesbian and gay liberation was reiterated. We supported Labour councils such as Haringey in their initiatives on positive images and pledged ourselves to campaign alongside them.

The conference failed to recognise that in order to win the next election we must campaign on issues that genuinely reflect the needs of the people of London.

Policies on such issues as anti-racism, homelessness, low pay, lesbian and gay liberation, trade union rights and women's liberation are highly relevant to a multi-racial depressed inner city such as London. Properly presented, these policies will win votes, as they reflect people's personal experience.

The Greater London Council (GLC) achieved it. With four years' hard work and campaigning on such issues, so could we.

But when we refuse demands for black people's autonomous organisation, or fail to support equal opportunities, that is hardly going to endear us to those dispossessed by Thatcherism.

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

Monday 12 June

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets rejects a Bolshevik resolution condemning the imperialist war and adopts a Menshevik/Social Revolutionary resolution advocating a strengthening of "the military strength of our army and of its ability to carry out both defensive and offensive actions." The Congress condemns the Bolsheviks for intending to hold a demonstration without the knowledge of the Soviet, and agrees to hold a demonstration on 18 June as an expression of confidence in the Congress of Soviets and the Provisional Government.

The Presnensky Regional Soviet (Moscow) votes 23 to 21 in support of the introduction of workers' control over production and distribution. Unskilled workers in the railway-engine factory and other factories in Kharkov strike for higher pay; after refusing to meet their demands, members of management in a number of factories are arrested, and the factories are placed under workers' control. Soldiers in Kazan refuse to obey orders to leave for the front.

Tuesday 13 June

The resolution of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets to hold a demonstration on 18 June is published.

Workers at the Kusnetsov factory in Tula strike for higher pay; workers in other factories black transference of orders from the Kuznetsov factory; the strikers are sacked and called up into the army.

A meeting of 1,500 workers of the Kiev arsenal votes to send a message of support to the Kronstadt Soviet. A mass meeting of workers and soldiers in Kazan calls for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and for soviet power. Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries shut down a joint meeting of the Simbirsk Soviet and local provincial executive committee after Bolsheviks and soldiers protest at the despatch of conciliationist delegates to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. The Executive Committee of the Saratov Soviet condemns as counter-revolutionary the despatch of local regiments to the front.

Wednesday 14 June

The Bolsheviks' Central Committee sends a telegram to local party organisations to support the demonstrations called by the Provisional Government for 18 June, and to mobilise for them under the slogan of "All power to the Soviets!". The Executive Committee of the local Petrograd Soviet calls for support for the Petrograd demonstration under the slogan "For a Democratic Republic".

A meeting of 8,500 soldiers in Petrograd votes with only three votes against, against a new offensive in the war. Soldiers in the 3rd Reserve Infantry regiment refuse to obey orders and leave for the front. Soldiers in the 90th and 91st Reserve Infantry regiments (Saratov) vote to disobey orders to leave for the front; the Executive Committee of the Saratov Soviet condemns their decision.

A delegate conference of railway workers of the Ivanovsky region votes narrowly against a Bolshevik resolution against the war, and in favour of a resolution in support of the Provisional Government. A provincial student congress in Voronezh, attended by 250 delegates (including 16 Bolshevik delegates) votes for an end to the war and in support of the formation of a coalition Provisional Government.

Thursday 15 June

A meeting of soldiers of the Moscow regiment of the Petrograd garrison demands the despatch of all officers and land-owners to the front, the dissolution of the State Duma, and the closing down of Black Hundreds' newspapers. The Executive Committee of the Helsingfors Soviet votes in support of the policies of the Kronstadt Soviet and condemns the Provisional Government's attacks on the latter. A provincial peasant congress in Archangelsk declares its support for the Provisional Government and a strengthening of the army.

By 262 votes to 182 the Moscow Soviet of workers' deputies votes down a Bolshevik resolution advocating workers' control over production and distribution. A general meeting of the regimental committees of the 169th infantry division on the Western front condemns the domestic and foreign policies of the Provisional Government as a threat to the revolutionary democracy of Russia.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Towards a workers' programme

THE NATIONAL Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) is one of the most militant and socialist unions in South Africa.

136,000 strong, it has achieved the aim set by the Congress of South African Trade Unions — one industry, one union. It has united seven separate metalworkers' unions from different political traditions into a class-conscious, organised and powerful new union.

At its recent conference it put forward the case for a democratic socialist society controlled by workers.

It supported the African National Congress's 'Freedom Charter' as a *minimum* acceptable for a democratic society, but stressed that the demands of organised workers and of the Freedom Charter can only be realised in a socialist system.

The workers, the union argued, need to have clear aims and a specific socialist programme, the content of which it must now discuss thoroughly and democratically within all union structures.

The conference felt that "the lack of initiatives and the confusion that exist within the community itself on political issues arise from the lack of a working-class programme... the organised working class can only take the lead in the struggle if it has a clear programme and aims which clarify exactly what is wanted by the working class and what is meant by their demands".

NUMSA will play an important role in the coming COSATU conference. It will be challenging other unions to develop a socialist programme that goes beyond rhetorical acceptance of the Freedom Charter.

NUMSA does not reject the dominant symbols and statements of the popular movement. It recognises their significance. But it insists that if workers are to achieve their goals, the development of a socialist programme and method of organisation is irreplaceable.

SOUTH AFRICA



NUMSA founding conference, May 1987

Free Moses!

AT ITS congress in May, the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa, NUMSA, elected Moses Mayekiso as its new general secretary.

Moses is on trial for treason. His 'crime' is that he helped build democratic structures in the black township of Alexandra. If he is found guilty, Moses could hang.

NUMSA members have been taking action, including token work stoppages, to publicise Moses' case and to demand his release. Employers in the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation (SEIFSA) have threatened to dismiss workers for this kind of action.

Already the US multinational Otis Elevators has made such threats.

This is part of an offensive by the employers and the state against the trade union movement. As Berni Fanaroff of NUMSA commented, "The state of emergency has become much tighter than it was in 1986... SEIFSA have become much harder, our members in certain factories have been given final written warnings for the Moses Mayekiso stoppages".

NUMSA has stood by Moses despite the threats and intimidation. The international workers' movement should do everything possible to build a massive campaign for Moses' release.

Metalworkers fight back

On Tuesday 14 July some 80,000 black workers took part in the biggest ever strike in the South Africa metal industry.

The Botha government has declared the strike illegal, thus setting the scene for a major confrontation between the giant metalworkers' union NUMSA on the one side and the metal bosses and the state on the other.

The strike is part of the metalworkers' campaign for a living wage.

- NUMSA is demanding:
- A minimum wage of R4 (about £1.30) an hour;
 - A minimum increase of R1 (about 30p) per hour;
 - A 40 hour working week;
 - 'No taxation without representation' (i.e., black workers should not pay for military spending);
 - No victimisation for strikers;
 - Improved maternity benefits;
 - Paid leave on May Day and 16 June.

A NUMSA member told us: "Since 7 this morning (Tuesday 14th), 80,000 NUMSA members have been on a lawful strike after an overwhelming majority of our members voted in a ballot for strike action after negotiations with the metal bosses' federation SEIFSA had deadlocked.

"The strike is effective in the whole of the Transvaal, in Natal and in the Eastern Cape. Many metalworkers who are not members

of NUMSA have joined in.

"So far there are no reports of security force action against strikers.

"The strike was originally planned for three days, but the intervention of the government, declaring the strike illegal, means that we must now rethink and work out how to respond".

Illegal

The government has declared the strike illegal by a complex procedure.

In South Africa's industrial relations system, any settlement of a dispute in the Industrial Council is 'gazetted' and so becomes law. Action over wages, for example, outside of that agreement can be declared illegal.

NUMSA had planned the strike to commence on the day that the previous Metal Industry Industrial Council agreement, for 1986-7, ran

out, and before the new 'agreement' — which was not supported by NUMSA, the largest union in the industry — could be 'gazetted'.

However, the government simply extended the terms of the agreement, so making the strike illegal. NUMSA lawyers hope to challenge this move.

The metalworkers' living wage battle is part of the wider campaign of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) for a living wage.

After a resounding yes in its own ballot, COSATU's largest affiliate, the 350,000-strong National Union of Miners (NUM), could well be involved in action over wages in the next few weeks.

The prospect of prolonged strikes in the two crucial sectors of the South African economy — the mines and the metal industry — cannot please P W Botha.

This latest strike by NUMSA comes on top of a massive strike

wave that has been sweeping South Africa since early 1986, just after the formation of the giant union federation COSATU.

There have been significant disputes in almost every sector of industry without any serious or lasting defeat being inflicted on any group of workers. In particular, public sector workers for whom strike action is formally illegal have just had successful strikes on the railways and in the post office.

Emergency

A victory for the metalworkers will give a massive boost to the black working class as a whole. The very fact that 80,000 workers are on strike shows that Botha's state of emergency has not crushed the unions.

Free Moses Mayekiso! Free all detainees! Send messages of support to MAWU, The Metal and Allied Workers Union, 4th Floor, COSATU House, 268 Jeppe Street, Johannesburg 2001, South Africa.

Send letters of protest to: The President, P W Botha, Union Buildings, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa.

WORKERS' IRELAND



Why 'Workers' Ireland'?

This broadsheet and the pamphlet 'The New Anglo-Irish Treaty' are the first *Workers' Ireland* publications. They are produced and written by supporters of Socialist Organiser, but we hope in future to draw in a wider range of contributors.

For too long there has been almost no real *discussion* on the British or Irish left about the impasse in Northern Ireland. Each group has its slogans, but there is almost no common ground even in terms of registering the basic facts of the situation. Those on the left who support the Catholic revolt, and those who do not, might as well be talking about two different places.

We support the Catholic revolt; but we are also concerned for the Protestant workers and their rights. We have our own ideas about a way forward; and we also want to open dialogue and debate on the left where at present there is no communication at all.

Extra copies of this broadsheet are available, price 10p each plus postage, from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Future *Workers' Ireland* publications will open their columns to controversy, criticism, and articles from different points of view; send them to the same address.

Workers hit back at Haughey

SOUTHERN Ireland is in deep economic trouble, with unemployment nearly 20 per cent and a huge foreign debt.

This February, Fianna Fail, traditionally the more nationalist and populist of the two big parties, won a general election and took power from the traditionally right-wing Fine Gael. Since then the Fianna Fail government has decreed huge cuts in health spending, which have provoked strong working-class protest.

Ireland's health service is facing a massive crisis provoked by major cut-backs in spending.

This week, Ireland's biggest hospital, St. James's in Dublin, announced 50% cuts, as an alternative to complete closure in two months' time. 316 beds and 300 jobs are to go, and the whole service is to be drastically reduced. Other hospitals face a similar cash crisis.

The Fianna Fail government of Charles Haughey, who accuse the previous Fine Gael-Labour coalition of overspending on health to the tune of £55 million, want cuts that will entail 2,000 jobs lost and

the closure of nine hospitals.

Hospital charges have also been introduced. There have been reports of patients turned away from hospitals for want of the £10 fee.

A big wave of workers' protests has swept Ireland since April in opposition to the health cuts. And on 24 June, about 25,000 workers marched in protest in different cities. Nurses, technicians, ambulance crews, maintenance men, local authority workers, postal workers, bus crews, home helps, printers, tax officials, telephone operators and others joined the demonstrations, along with representatives of Sinn Fein and the Irish Labour Party.

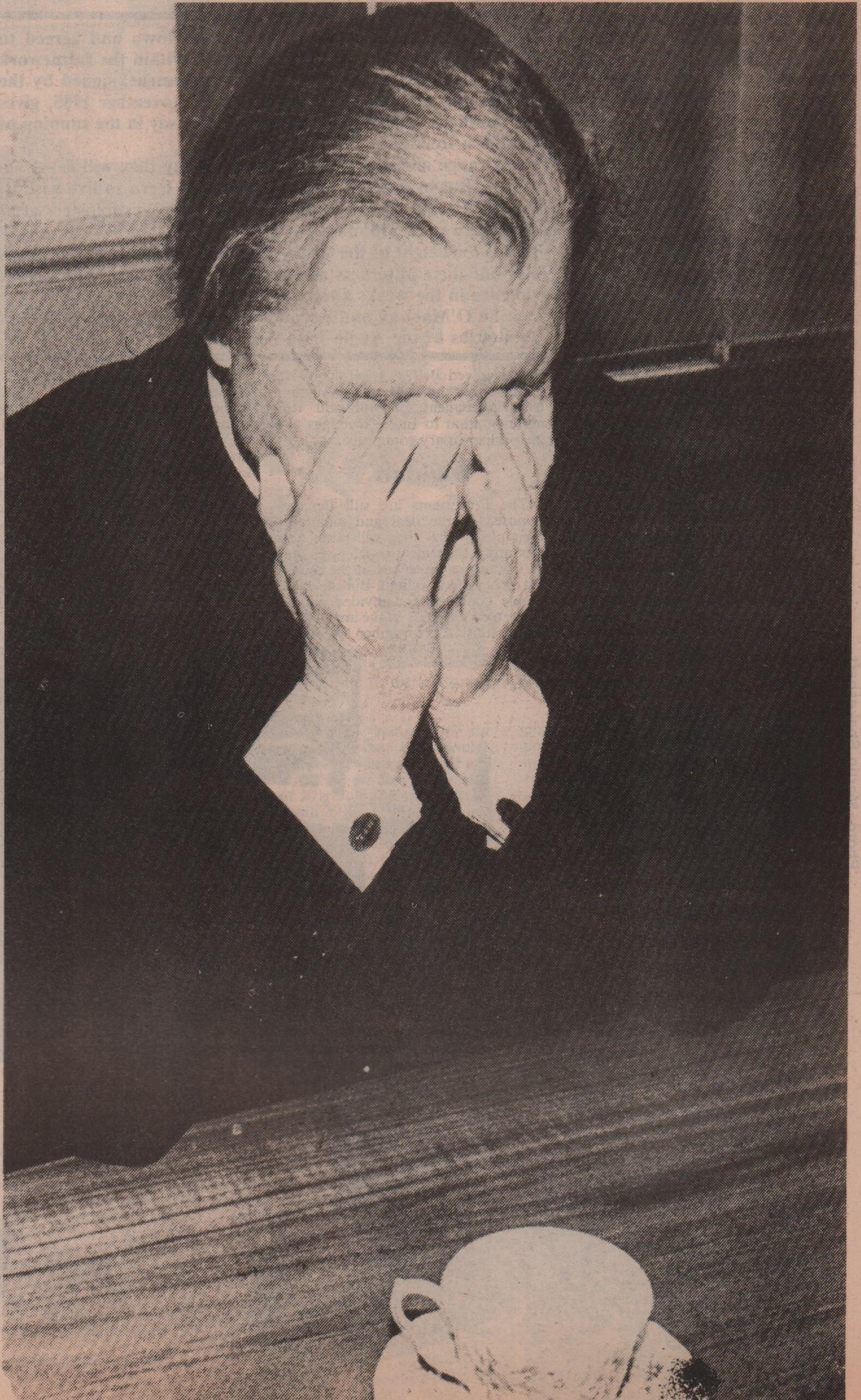
Only the Labour Party and the so-called Workers' Party have opposed the cuts in the Dail (Parliament).

The marches — and the campaign as a whole — have largely been organised by the Alliance of Health Service Unions (AHSU), which includes the Local Government and Public Services Union and the Federated Workers' Union of Ireland.

Speaking on June 24, the secretary of AHSU, Pat Rabitte, warned of "widescale industrial action" if the government did not retreat. And there have been strikes by doctors and nurses, as well as the national protest strike that accompanied the June 24 marches.

Now the government is discussing new ways to implement an austerity programme of £300 million worth of cuts. The cuts will affect all areas of government spending.

But Haughey and co. have already learned that there is a powerful and radicalising working class to contend with. The Irish working class has been militant and forceful many times in the past. Now with the Fianna Fail government on the ropes, a new phase of working class struggle could be opening up.



Haughey: under pressure

18 months in Northern Ireland

THE ANGLO-IRISH Agreement was signed at Hillsborough Castle in County Down on 15 November 1985. After 18 months, despite the massive and continuing opposition of the Unionist community in Northern Ireland, and the opposition also of the Sinn Fein nationalists, it seems pretty certain that the Agreement has been established as the framework for Northern Ireland politics in the foreseeable future.

The Democratic Unionist Party leader Ian Paisley and James Molyneux, leader of the Official Unionist Party, have just agreed to talk to the British government without prior conditions. Until now they have refused to talk to the British government unless the Anglo-Irish Agreement had first been suspended.

Already there exists a degree of Anglo-Irish cooperation which would have startled both sides as recently as the Falklands war, when the Irish and British governments fell out of step with each other, bitterly and acrimoniously. In early April 1987 an historic first meeting of an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Committee took place according to the terms of the Agreement. It was the first such Anglo-Irish parliamentary contact since the 26 Counties seceded in 1919.

The Unionist leaders have just climbed down and agreed to open talks with the British government, within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This agreement, signed by the Dublin and London governments on 15 November 1985, gives the Southern Ireland government a major say in the running of Northern Ireland.

The Orange and Unionist organisations say they will never accept it. But in practice they are having to learn to live with it. The 13 Unionist MPs have slunk back to Westminster, after staying away for 18 months.

This is the height of the Orange marching season and it is possible that their bitterness and resentment will flare into serious violence in the weeks ahead.

John O'Mahony outlines and analyses events during the first 20 months of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

If a devolved Belfast government is set up within the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, it will add its representation to future meetings of the parliamentary committee.

Divided

The Protestants are still fiercely opposed to the deal and maintain their pledge that they will never accept any arrangement which gives the 26 Counties a direct say in the running of Northern Ireland. But they are deeply confused and divided about what to do about it. In the immediate aftermath of 15 November 1985 they

tried all their available weapons, to no avail.

They called a mass demonstration within days of the signing of the deal. But upwards of 100,000 people thronging the centre of Belfast did not sway — and can't have surprised — either the government or the massive bipartisan majority of the House of Commons which had backed the new British-Irish treaty.

They organised strikes. In January 1986 15 of Northern Ireland's 17 Westminster MPs resigned (the others being the SDLP's John Hume and the Provo leader Gerry Adams). They forced a Northern Ireland



The RUC block off Woodhouse Street to stop Loyalists marching into area of the town. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft.

'general election' to give the Six Counties majority the chance to express their verdict on the Agreement. Though the Unionists lost one seat to the SDLP in a constituency finely balanced between Catholics and Protestants, they got an overwhelming Protestant vote against the Agreement. Neither the government nor the House of Commons were impressed or swayed.

Boycott

Afterwards they tried a Unionist boycott of Westminster. They organised civil disobedience like the withholding of rates. None of it achieved anything.

The central feature of the Agreement was that it was an international treaty between the 'two sovereign governments' in Dublin and London.

So long as the resolve of the two governments held, there was not much the Unionists could do.

Mass unemployment — and a collapse of industry in the last eight years far more severe than the collapse in Britain — had undermined the industrial muscle of the Protestant working class. And they were affected by the general UK political climate. Just as the Northern Ireland majority working class used the current weapons of working-class militancy in May 1974 to defeat the power-sharing government which had been set up in Belfast in January 1974 — learning from the British working class, especially the miners — so in 1985 and afterwards they were affected by the spectacle of the miners' defeat at the hands of Thatcher. Thatcher's 'Iron Lady' mystique was a palpable factor in Northern Ireland after 25 November 1985.

Exhausting almost all its weapons, the Orange community — almost in its entirety — settled in to a war of attrition. The leaders orated and fumed. The legal para-military Ulster Defence Association (UDA), long shrivelled, began to grow rapidly, and to recruit openly in places like Harland and Wolff's shipyard.

A mainly rural equivalent of the UDA, the Ulster Clubs, started to organise a paramilitary formation. Outlawed groups like the UVF and the Ulster Freedom Fighters (a cover-name for a section of the UDA) started to kill Catholics at random.

The flashpoint for serious violence was always likely to come at the point where the police and the army — now politically under the influence of the Dublin government — tried to stop Orange marches through Catholic areas where they had 'traditionally' swaggered their triumphalism, banging the lambeg drum and tooting the Orange flute. The previous summer, 1985, the mere knowledge of British-Irish negotiations had spurred Orangeists into making a test case of an RUC attempt to control one of their 'traditional' marches, through the Catholic area of Portadown.

On 31 March 1986 a mass Orange rally at Portadown was to be the focus of a 'day of action' against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It seemed to be flashpoint. There was talk of armed action by the most determined paramilitaries against the British state personnel. At one time 100 British troops were landed from helicopters to seal off a Catholic part of Portadown which seemed under threat of invasion.

But it wasn't flashpoint: the authorities 'compromised', keeping the Orange crowds out of some



A young woman, upset, watches the annual Orange parade march along Gauvaghy Road, a predominantly Catholic area of Portadown.



the Tunnel', a Catholic

Catholic areas but letting them march provocatively on the edge of a Catholic housing estate.

It was to be the pattern of the summer marching season. The authorities cannily ducked out from confrontation. The official Unionist leaders were willing to play along with the 'lifeline' offered them by the authorities. There was rioting by youths who fought the police at Portadown and Belfast and other places, but it was controllable. After 31 March, the Official Unionist leaders recoiled from confrontation.

From day 1, 15 November 1985, Orange indignation had been stirred to white heat. Inter-communal tension became acute. Over 1100 Catholic families were forced out of their homes by Protestants. The summer of 1986 also saw the deployment of another weapon by the Unionists — an intense drive to subvert and intimidate the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Ninety per cent Protestant, the RUC was 'their own'. Its members lived in Protestant heartlands. Their social and political prejudices and sympathies were those of their community.

Intimidation

Men like Paisley publicly called on the RUC to decide where their loyalties were — with the 'dictators' at Westminster, or with their own Protestant community. On the ground, RUC members were subjected to ostracism, intimidation, violence — even to their children. Many policemen were driven out of their homes. Recruitment to the RUC had been slowing down anyway for the previous five years.

Yet the state had an overwhelming weapon here too. The British state is directly responsible for 22% of jobs in the Six Counties, and indirectly for perhaps half. For RUC members, it was stick with the RUC — which, with overtime and so on, pays very well indeed — or go on the dole. Though the Police Federation came out more or less explicitly against the agreement, the attempt to subvert the RUC failed.

After the summer 'season', the next dramatic event took place in the South. The anniversary of Hillsborough was marked by a mass excursion into a border town, led by an Paisley's deputy and rival Peter Robinson. There had been Orange threats to strike at the south. A few small bombs were set off in Dublin and Donegal by the UDA/UFF.

But it was stalemate, and the Protestant politicians knew it. On the eve of the Hillsborough agreement they had already started political

manoeuvring, attempting to appear reasonable by offering political alternatives. Faced with a powerful voice being given to Dublin 'in loco parentis' for the Catholic population, some of them suddenly started to talk about power-sharing in the North. The most interesting of a number of such kites flown was the January 1987 document of the political wing of the UDA.

Their problem here was that the Catholic constitutional-nationalist SDLP already had a powerful say in what happened through the mediation of the Dublin government, and an internationally-agreed perpetual guarantor in that same government. It would not make sense for them to abandon that in return for negotiations, which, even if they produced Six Counties power-sharing, would still leave the Catholics at the mercy of the Protestant majority, whose leaders might not be so amenable once the Anglo-Irish framework had been removed.

The Protestants began to pin their hopes on the two general elections which were looming in Britain and the 26 Counties. They hoped for the defeat of Thatcher in the election (as the Catholics hoped for her victory), and dreamed of holding the balance in a British parliament, and having the weight they had in the mid-'70s when they helped sustain the minority Labour government, at a price. Paradoxically, they also hoped for the return to power in Dublin of Ireland's main constitutional nationalist party, Fianna Fail. Fianna Fail's leader Charles J Haughey had denounced the 26 Counties coalition government which signed the Agreement for 'selling out' Ireland's national interests. He promised to renegotiate the Agreement. The Unionists looked to Haughey as a possible deliverer.

On the Northern Ireland Catholic side the Anglo-Irish Agreement was rightly seen as a great achievement for John Hume, the leader of the SDLP. If only because the Protestants were so hostile to the Agreement, most Catholics supported it. Naturally they felt more secure now that Dublin had a hand in Northern affairs. The IRA and Sinn Fein bitterly denounced the Agreement in terms identical with Fianna Fail, saying that it 'copper-fastened' partition. The Agreement became the focus of the competition between the constitutional and physical-force nationalists. At the time of the mini General Election in January 1986, Sinn Fein — a self-proclaimed socialist party — disgraced itself and showed its basic Catholic communalist nature by making an explicitly Catholic sectarian appeal. In an election about the Anglo-Irish Agreement Sinn Fein, opposing the Agreement, appealed for a Catholic electoral bloc with the SDLP, which was one of the Agreement's originators and its main and most passionate champion in the election. It was the 'count the Catholics' sectarian politics long identified with the worst elements of the constitutional nationalists in the '40s, '50s, and '60s.

The elections, in February in the South and in June in Northern Ireland, clarified how things stood. The demagogic opponent of the Anglo-Irish deal, Charles J Haughey, formed a minority government, and predictably did a somersault. He went to Washington and was more or less told by Ronald Reagan to toe the line. He probably would have, anyway. He pledges his (and Fianna Fail's) support for the deal, and he has repaired his relations with Thatcher, ruptured when Haughey's Fianna Fail government sided with Argentina during the Falklands war.

Thatcher's victory in the 11 June UK election was the final blow to Unionist hopes. In Northern Ireland itself, the Unionist vote was down. The SDLP took South Down from the official Unionists, and pushed its share of the total vote up to 21.1%. Sinn Fein, however, held on to its 11.4% share of the vote (only 2% down from its peak in 1983), and Gerry Adams held West Belfast despite the absence from the contest of Gerry Fin, who must have taken votes from the SDLP in 1983.

Within two weeks of the election, the Protestant leaders have withdrawn, or are about to withdraw, their demand for a prior



Protestants clash with the RUC as Orangemen try to defy a ban on marches through Catholic areas. Photo: John Arthur, Reflex.

British government commitment to scrap the Anglo-Irish deal before they will talk. But talking, even if the British government should decide to get the Unionists off the hook immediately, is not agreeing. It is improbable that either London or Dublin will trade in the Anglo-Irish Agreement for any form of power-sharing in Belfast, or the Catholics make an indefinite commitment to the Six Counties entity.

Even should the main political leaders like Molyneux and Paisley want to reach agreement, their 'followers' may not let them.

In February 1987 Paisley and Molyneux announced in London that they would talk to Thatcher, only to be forced to eat their words when they got back to Belfast. And the various kites flown about power-sharing cannot be taken at face value. They are the tools of political manoeuvre and bargaining.

The processes have been slower than I expected, but the prospect is still of a political differentiation in the Unionist camp between those who will ultimately be brought to try to reach some agreement for devolved government within the Anglo-Irish deal, and those who will continue to resist, perhaps going as far as serious armed resistance, or serious military activity against the South, on the scale of the murderous bombs in Monaghan and Dublin the early '70s or more.

An Phoblacht gloats in an editorial (25.6.87):

"Frankly speaking, if the loyalists can be broken on the heretical issue

of power-sharing because of the pressures from the Hillsborough Treaty — which, when all is said and done, is really a product of the IRA bomb of Brighton and the electoral rise of Sinn Fein — then they can most certainly be broken on the issue of national self-determination".

Despite vague talk of socialism, by 'national self-determination' An Phoblacht means in practice the incorporation of the Protestant minority, without minority rights or guarantees, into a Catholic-dominated all-Ireland state.

Conceptions

In any case the Protestants haven't been broken on the issue of the Anglo-Irish deal yet, and they are probably a long way from it. Some of them will never accept it. They bow, if they bow, to their conceptions of the power of Britain and of Mrs Thatcher's determination to wield it against them as much as necessary. They do this in conditions which allow them still to think of the existing state in Northern Ireland as fundamentally, despite Dublin involvement, the British state — their state. The case would be radically different if they were faced with coming exclusively under Dublin rule, or if Britain withdrew. Then they would certainly try to achieve their own 'self-determination' by carving out their own state in north-east Ulster.

The Provisionals talk dangerous and irresponsible nonsense here. The bourgeois constitutional nationalist John Hume is far more in touch with the reality from which working-class

politics in Ireland (and working-class politics concerning Ireland in Britain) must begin:

"We should begin where we are and not where we would like to be. The statement of sloganised objectives is easy. Achieving them is another matter. There are no instant or sloganised answers. Only a process...will heal the division in Ireland. Only patient work in developing that process over the years will produce the final stability..."

We see the road ahead in three stages. The first stage is the creation of equality of treatment in the North for all people. The second, based on that equality, is the process of reconciliation, of breaking down the barriers which divide us.

In practice that means working together in all institutions of the North and by so doing over the years to build the trust to replace the distrust that has disfigured us till now...

The second stage, the breaking down of barriers, will evolve naturally into the third stage, the development of new relationships within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. That will bring the only unity that really matters, a unity born of the agreement on how we are to live together, the forms of such unity to evolve by agreement and out of mutual trust and respect. This is a process that no-one need fear since all are involved and since the Ireland that will emerge will be an Ireland built and agreed to by generations of

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Loyalists being escorted by gardai away from the vicinity of the court following the appearance of Peter Robinson, Democratic Unionist Party MP.

From previous page

building together...

The framework for the process outlined above ought to be the Anglo-Irish framework. Firstly, because it is the framework of the problem. The relationships that are in conflict are not confined to the North, they are within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. The framework of the problem, the British-Irish framework, should be the framework of the solution.

Secondly, it is the framework of maximum consensus, since it is based on the consensus of 59 million people of both islands, rather than the consent of one-and-a-half million of them. Thirdly, and because of that, it is the road of minimum risk...

The process involved is not one that any Northern Protestant need fear if he or she enters the process with self-confidence. They must be part of the process, part of the building. What emerges must have

their hallmark too and must respect and cater for the diversity of the Irish people. In the second half of the twentieth century, what is the alternative?

The harsh truth is that we will be sharing the same piece of earth for a long time to come..."

Of course Hume's objective is not ours. Our solution in Ireland is socialism — the complete economic, social and political reconstruction of Ireland on a new basis, integrated into a Socialist United States of Europe. Within that the Irish Protestant minority could have a wide measure of autonomy.

But only the Irish working class can create socialism in Ireland. Right now, though the tremendous resistance in the South to Fianna Fail's cuts programme shows the potential of the Irish working class to fight for socialism, it is a working class chronically split on Catholic/Protestant communal lines. In Northern Ireland the working class is crippled by that split.

Though socialists have no reason positively to endorse or support the bourgeois tinkering that is the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we have an urgent responsibility to understand what the bourgeoisie is trying to do. Hume explains it plainly. The model is the EEC, which has to a serious extent overcome the antagonisms within Western Europe that tore it apart in two world wars.

Framework

After World War 2 the bourgeoisie needed to unify the West European economy, but they couldn't, because of the competing nationalisms. So they created an economic framework which left the sovereign states in being and groped towards economic union. First in 1951 they created the European Coal and Steel Community, in which the coal and steel of Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg were integrated and placed partially under international control. Then in 1957 they signed the Treaty of Rome, under which Western Europe has been — partially and piecemeal — economically integrated.

Riddled by the contradictions and stupidities of capitalism as it is, the EEC has nevertheless been an enormous

success in integrating Europe. That is the governments' model in Ireland.

The Irish and British claims to sovereign control over Northern Ireland — or the rival claims of the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland — are irreconcilable except within a British Isles framework. The hundred years since the first Home Rule Bill have demonstrated beyond serious argument that the twin Irish-majority claims to full Irish separation from Britain and for a united island are irreconcilable.

Partition 'worked' for 50 years on a basis of the Catholics being repressed. Then, about two decades ago, that 'settlement' broke down. All attempts at a new internal Northern Ireland settlement have failed.

So the competing claims have been ignored, and a very loose framework, a sort of British-Irish political condominium, has been created over Northern Ireland. Over time, perhaps a long time, the ruling classes hope to create new structures. Part of it is the drawing together of Britain and the 26 Counties, for example in the British-Irish parliamentary committee.

Drift

This is more than just the general slow and faltering drift to West European unity that has been going on for nearly 40 years — it is the reknitting together of a new British Isles framework.

On the economic level this is by no means new. The Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement was signed as long ago as 1965. The Hillsborough Agreement puts it in a new, internationally recognised, framework. Haughey's 'coming round' is more than opportunism — it corresponds to the basic logic of present-day British-Irish relations.

Socialists, of course, point out that capitalism in Ireland is bankrupt, and should be replaced immediately. We indict the Irish bourgeoisie for their present savage onslaught on the Southern working class, for mismanaging the economy and so driving out many tens of thousands of young people. But the bourgeoisie will exploit and mismanage until we overthrow them. And until we overthrow them, capitalism will evolve

and develop, as it did in Europe after the failure of the working class to overthrow it in the wake of World War 2.

Irish bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists and chauvinists may deplore the small tentative steps towards rapprochement between Britain and Ireland. Socialists should welcome them in general, while pointing out their inadequacies and maintaining our general opposition in principle to the bourgeoisies in London and Dublin.

Chauvinists

Certain would-be Trotskyists and other 'anti-imperialists' who deal not in reality but in symbols and historic memories deplore the rapprochement as a victory for imperialism, pretending that the sovereign and independent (albeit economically weak) Southern Irish state is some sort of colony. On that basis they wind up as Irish chauvinists.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement should not be given credence; but neither should the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist alternatives to it. In fact there are no viable nationalist alternatives. John Hume is quite right within his terms of reference. Nothing could be more shameful than to have the Irish would-be Trotskyist groups — the Mandelbrite People's Democracy and the British SWP's affiliate, the SWM, for example — denouncing the sell-out of Irish sovereignty involved in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. PD even criticised the Provos for being too tepid in their opposition to the Agreement!

As with the EEC — a wretched and contradictory alternative to the Socialist United States of Europe which revolutionary socialists have advocated since World War 1 — we should take no responsibility for what the bourgeoisie has done, but we should not endorse nationalist myths and utopias in opposition to it.

The Protestant opposition to the Anglo-Irish power-sharing agreement is still far from having collapsed — perplexed and baffled though it is. It is impossible to know what bloody clashes will come this summer. It is impossible to know what die-hard Protestant resistance will be left after a prolonged process of differentia-

tion in the Protestant community has led to a serious attempt to set up a power-sharing government in Belfast within the Anglo-Irish framework.

The danger of sectarian civil war is intrinsic to the basic situation in Northern Ireland. To ignore it or to minimise it in favour of a light-minded dismissal of the one million Protestants is politically unserious. There are signs that the British Marxist left is becoming less unserious about it than they used to be, and that some recognition (perhaps helped by SO's polemics) has crept in that immediate troops out without a political settlement would immediately mean sectarian civil war and repatriation.

In any case the demand 'Troops Out Now' is less popular than it used to be. Socialist Worker now confines itself to talking about 'socialism' — immediately, with a split and fratricidal working class? — as 'the answer'. Socialist Action has tried unsuccessfully to duck the issue by shifting to a proposal that the British troops must go in the lifetime of a Parliament.

In the debate at the 1986 Summer School (reproduced as an appendix in the Workers' Liberty pamphlet 'The New Anglo-Irish Treaty'), Sinn Fein industrial organiser Daisy Mules was far more honest and serious when, asked why there has not been civil war, she said:

"In new buildings near Derry, Catholic families have had to move out because of Loyalist attacks on their homes. So that possibility of civil war is always there. But in our analysis it certainly isn't going to happen at the moment. And Britain won't allow it to happen".

Meanwhile, in the South, the working-class struggle has been stoked up by the savage cuts pushed through by Fianna Fail (with the hypocritical but clear support of Fine Gael, who abstained). Struggles like this show that the Irish working class is capable of carving a way out of capitalism, and out of the bloody impasse in which the British and Irish bourgeoisies have put the working class in the Six Counties bearpit. We need a working-class socialist movement capable of linking those struggles with a consistently democratic and socialist programme.

Workers' Ireland series
no. 1

The new Anglo-Irish Treaty

By John O'Mahony

Plus debate with Daisy Mules of Sinn Fein

A full analysis of the Anglo-Irish Agreement plus the debate between Socialist Organiser and Daisy Mules (Sinn Fein). Available for £1 plus postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.