

SOCIALIST

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ORGANISER

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Labour must defend civil rights!

THE TORY government is tooling up the police with new weapons — guns and clubs — and yet more power to “fit up” whoever they choose. On Monday 16 May, Metropolitan Police chief Paul Condon announced that police in armed response vehicles — police cars with guns — would carry pistols openly and be free to use them without clearance. He said that this would “postpone the necessity to routinely arm police officers.”

Postpone? How soon before all police will be carrying guns? Five years? Two years? Or just until the next time the Tories want to show how tough they are on crime?

The establishment of an openly armed police force goes along with the introduction of a new police club. Instead of the old 16-inch wooden truncheon, worn in an inside pocket, the new model police will all have 22 inch acrylic nylon batons worn openly.

The Criminal Justice Bill...
 * Ends the “right to silence” of the accused;
 * Makes trespass a criminal offence for the first time;
 * Introduces a law against squatting and gives to police the power to evict squatters with 24

hours’ notice and no right of appeal to a court of law before eviction;

* Gives the police extra powers to break up raves or protests. Since 1979 the Tories have steadily built up police power. They have equipped and trained the police for riot control. They prepared and ran a semi-military campaign by the police against the miners’ strike in 1984-5.

Increasingly the police have become a tool-up gang for use against picket lines and protesters.

It is not just equipment and training that have built the new model police force. It rests on a whole spate of laws giving the police more power and undermining the right to protest, to picket, and even to hold free outdoor events like raves.

The new model police force has been used as a cudgel against the labour movement, in tandem with the anti-union laws. Force was decisive in the defeat of the miners’ strike.

It has been used to batter those who protest or revolt in anger at a system that has gutted cities of jobs and left the people to rot.

Of course, the case for more police, more police power, and more police violence, is always

sold on the basis of fear.

The fear of crime is understandable in our society, where the Tories have organised a sharp widening in the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

But life is not like a Western. A gun-toting lawman won’t rid our towns of crime. Giving the police yet more powers and eroding civil rights won’t make Britain a safer place.

The root of crime is the dog-eat-dog culture of Tory Britain, the poverty and alienation. Gun-toting lawmen have certainly not made the USA a safer place to live, any more than their death penalty has.

The main result of cops with guns and bigger clubs will be a more powerful and violent force against the labour movement and against all those who want to fight the capitalist system.

More weapons and more legal powers for the police will mean more miscarriages of justice, like the hundreds of frame-ups by the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad and Hackney police.

An end to the right to silence will lead to more frame-ups like that of the Tottenham Three. With courts able to take silence as evidence of guilt, the police won’t need to forge statements.

Tooling up the police with plastic clubs and arming them will inevitably lead to the police killing more people. Already, several have been shot on the streets in the last decade, and many die in police cells.

Just two weeks ago, an Irish traveller died in Walworth Road police station as a result of a beating he got from the police.

Joy Gardner was killed in front of her infant son by a gang of police and immigration officials. With 22 inch nylon clubs and guns, how many more innocent people will the police kill?

Labour and the unions must demand an end to armed police units, and, instead of an increase

in police power, a restoration and strengthening of the many civil and trade-union rights stolen from us by the Tories.

Labour should commit itself to introducing full democratic control over the police, with elected local police committees controlling all aspects of policing.

It is a disgrace that Tony Blair and his friends in Parliament abstained on the Criminal Justice Bill, and have welcomed the bigger police clubs. In 1994 the labour movement must start the fight to roll back the big-brother State and stop the armed march of the new model police force over our rights and freedoms.

Demonstrate to shut Campsfield Detention Centre!

Saturday 4 June

Assemble at 1.00 at Exeter Hall, Kidlington, Oxford. March to a rally.

Speakers include Bob Purkiss (TUC), Mohammed Idrish and Jeremy Corbyn MP

More details:
 Campaign to Close Campsfield,
 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RQ.

Israel/Palestine

The army is withdrawing

Adam Keller, the editor of *The Other Israel*, reports from Tel Aviv on the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho.

THE ISRAELI army is actually withdrawing. The Palestinian population was very hesitant, until the arrival of the Palestinian police, which changed the mood among the people.

However there are many pitfalls on the road ahead. The settlers are still in place and some of them would like to cause a lot of problems.

Most of the West Bank is still under occupation and there will be quite a long negotiating process until the second part of the Israeli-PLO agreement is reached. I am afraid we can expect

some terrible events before this second part is reached.

Even in the places where the army has withdrawn from the Palestinians do not have full control. The agreement gives the Israeli army the possibility of intervention.

The Oslo agreement’s timetable stated that in July the second phase would be reached and that the Israeli army would re-deploy outside of the major population centres on the West Bank. This clearly will not take place on schedule.

Finally, especially in Gaza, the Palestinian people will have high expectations of economic improvements. The problem of the closure of the Gaza-Israeli border remains — only very few people can cross the border to work in Israel.

The settlers are very demoralised. But they have not yet



Palestinians celebrate in Jericho

given up. Today, Sunday 15 May, many have travelled to pray in the old Synagogue in Jericho. They have been guarded by the Palestinian

police, but have come armed. There were no clashes — but I do not know how long it can go on like this.

Some settlers have moved back to Israel from the Occupied Territories and many would like to. They can not because Rabin will not give them compensation to move. The moment that compensation is offered one-third, or perhaps even one-half, will move back.

Rabin does not do this because he wants to leave them as a negotiating counter. They say that Rabin is keeping them as hostages — and they are right.

The Israeli press is very enthusiastically in favour of the withdrawal. The Israeli elite — the capitalists and also the army’s high command — is very much in favour of the process.

Some 30 or 40 retired generals stood in the street in Tel

Aviv in support of the peace process.

Just as after Oslo, after the Cairo agreement, the biggest capitalists in Israel paid for full-page adverts supporting the deal in the Israeli press, the stock markets jumped again after Cairo.

The ban on trade between various Arab states and Israel has not been totally lifted, but it is crumbling. An Israeli journalist who went to Syria to interview people about the prospects for peace found Syrian businessmen keen on peace — they too believe it will be good for business.

The leadership of Likud is shouting about “surrender” and the “destruction of national values,” however they can not get their own followers out onto the streets. Their support could grow if the peace talks get bogged down again.

Shake-up in Israeli Histadrut

By Adam Keller

THERE HAS been a split in the Israeli Labor Party. Ramon, an ambitious young minister, broke away from the Labor Party and made an alliance with Meretz. Now he has beaten Labour in the Histadrut elections.

The Histadrut has a structure similar to that in Eastern European countries. It is both an employer and a trade union. It has a large bureaucracy and it runs Israel’s health insurance scheme.

Ramon has made himself the reformer taking on the bureaucratic structure. He ran a very personalised campaign.

The Histadrut’s apparatus is a remnant of the 1950s and is very unpopular. It is not an effective trade union.

Nevertheless Ramon’s plan is very unclear. He is everyone’s friend — a friend of the workers, a friend of the employers, a friend of the Palestinians.

I was involved in the Histadrut elections together with the Communists. I was spokesperson for this alliance. We got 3.5% of the vote.

The elections are not conducted like any trade union elections anywhere in the world. They are run like parliamentary elections every 4 years. There are about 1.5 million voters electing leaders by proportional representation.

Ramon got 46.5%. It was a big shock. The Histadrut was created in 1921 and this is the first time anyone other than the Israeli Labour Party has won control.

Now Ramon is negotiating with us. We want to make sure that whatever changes take place, there is a more effective trade union at the end.

Hackney stitch-up

— six held

By Neil Cobbett

SIX PEOPLE were arrested at an open-air festival for the homeless, organised by Hackney council, in Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, north London, on 14 May. Three of them are still on remand in Pentonville prison.

The event had passed off quite peacefully until it was almost due to end. Then police with riot gear turned up and began to act in an intimidatory manner.

This was too much for some people there who began chucking things at them. As the police began to move into the crowd the missile throwers dispersed.

The cops, however, don’t bother to distinguish between people in such a crowd, between those behaving in a less than completely lawful fashion, and the rest of the people who were, if a bit agitated, doing nothing wrong.

They waded into the crowd and began laying into people with their batons.

People who “got in the way” by having the temerity to go to the aid of the injured were roughed up and throw into the back of police wagons. Others were randomly picked out of the crowd and grabbed. All in all, 30 people were arrested.

One person arrested had been talking to Hackney council officers as the police assault began. He went to tend one of the injured. Arrested, he was then “identified” as one of a group of “ringleaders”.

The cops had come out from three stations, including Stoke Newington station and Old Street. There was then some disagreement as to which lucky station would get to process the “nicks” and hence boost its quota.

Stoke Newington police are notorious for corruption, perjury and a less than legalistic approach to the use of dangerous drugs.

Those arrested were charged with various offenses but the common charge was violent assault.

When the defendants went for their bail hearings the police opposed bail for all of them. Three were later given bail.

The defence lawyer was able to demonstrate not so much that there were holes in the police arguments as that they were in tatters. The police had claimed that they intervened at the end of the festival on the grounds that it was “an illegal gathering.” In other words they were using clauses in the new Criminal Justice Bill legislation that has not yet been enacted!

But still the magistrate accepted the police side of the story.

Three people are locked up in Pentonville prison, on remand for who knows how long before their cases come up.

Appeal for witnesses

If you witnessed any of the arrests and can provide time/place/description you can help the accused by contacting:

HCDA, Colin Roach Centre,
 10a Bradbury Street,
 London N16.

What Porter did to Westminster, Thatcher did to Britain

Baroness Thatcher and Dame Shirley Porter

DAME Shirley Porter, the Tesco heiress, was to Tory local government in the 1980s what Margaret Thatcher was to Tory central government – a crass, proud, ruthless, seemingly efficient, mix-it-with-the-opposition defender of the sacred cause of free enterprise.

Dame Shirley ran the City of Westminster as Thatcher ran Britain. Now Lady Porter and her lieutenants are revealed in a report by the District Auditor to have run Westminster Council like a bunch of cynical ward-heeling Chicago or New York political gangsters of an earlier age.

Some of the details – for a full report, see page 16 – provoke disbelief. Systematically, over years, and using the council's civil servants as their tools, they worked – like the Stalinist government in Brecht's fable which grew displeased with the people and elected a new one – to change the population of Westminster to one they could be confident would vote Tory.

By bullying and bribing, they drove poor people out and subsidised the well-off to persuade them to move in.

They used vast sums of public money for party-political purposes. They looted the city's assets for their friends. They coerced council workers into carrying out their orders and "investigated" recalcitrant officials in order to blackmail them. The list is very long.

This was a council that systematically waged class war and party-political war while surreptitiously engaging in major social engineering.

After years of investigation – triggered when Porter gave away valuable public land (graveyards!) for pennies to her friends – the District Auditor recommends that Porter and her close collaborators be surcharged £21 million, the amount of public money used in various ways by the council leaders to secure their narrow Tory objectives.

And who is to surcharge Thatcher, Major, and the rest of the Tory gang who have run Britain for 15 years just as Porter ran Westminster? Thatcher was to Britain as a whole what Porter was to the City of Westminster.

Remember? The forced selling-off of council houses was nothing but a piece of crude Tory vote-buying, and not on a borough but on

a nationwide scale. In principle there is nothing wrong with people owning their own homes: here, the Tories simply took scarce housing out of the public stock at cut-price, making no provision for replacing it, and bestowed it on lucky individuals as a love-the-Tories bribe.

Vote-rigging? Large numbers were driven off the electoral register – that is, deprived of the right to vote – by the poll tax.

Vast amounts of public money have been spent to provide a succession of "work-training" and "work-substitute" schemes whose only use has been a political use for the Tory government, in whose interests the real level of unemployment was disguised.

The government has had civil ser-

And who is to surcharge Thatcher, Major, and the Tory gang who have run Britain for 15 years just as Porter ran Westminster? Thatcher was to Britain as a whole what Porter was to the City of Westminster.

vants working this last decade or more to disguise the real numbers of the unemployed by changing the rules by which they are counted. The Tories say that there are only 2.75 million unemployed now. The International Labour Organisation reckons that the real figure, not counting people on pretend-work schemes, is 3.8 million.

Dame Shirley gave away a few cemeteries and subsidised the sale of flats to yuppies. Baroness Margaret and her gang have looted and asset-stripped a vast amount of public property, from water to British Telecom to coal mines. Vast public wealth has been distributed to the wealthy.

Nothing like this looting of public property for the benefit of private individuals has been seen since the great aristocratic families were allowed by complaisant governments, from the 16th to the 18th centuries, to steal millions of acres



The poll tax "rigged votes" nationwide by driving maybe one million people off the electoral registers. Above the March 1990 demonstration against the poll tax. Photo: John Haris.

of hitherto common land and make it their private property.

Porter's gang "investigated" an "awkward" official, the better to put pressure on him. Thatcher's gang have, in the interests of the Tory party and those it represents, ripped up a great swathe of the civil rights which Britain enjoyed in 1979, when they came to power. The trade unions have been shackled, police powers vastly increased, the rights of the individual in face of the State weakened or removed.

Compared with Thatcher and Major, Dame Shirley has been a crude, clumsy, dabbling little local

amateur.

It is by no means clear, but Porter and her friends may be surcharged. Matters may now have escaped the control of the Tory fixers. In that way a belated and inadequate measure of justice may be meted out.

But nobody will surcharge the national Tory party! No court, no District Auditor, exists to call what they have done for 15 years by its right name and to brand the national Tory party leaders for what they are. They have held the supreme power. They could make and change the law as they went along. The verdict of the District

Auditor on the antics of the "little Thatcher" in the City of Westminster holds a mirror up to what the other Mrs Thatcher did, and got away with doing, in the rest of Britain.

The lesson for the labour movement is that we can rely only on ourselves. Only the labour movement could have stopped the Tories. Because we didn't, we have suffered blow after blow.

Not an auditor or a court of law, but labour movement action, will undo those blows and settle accounts with the Tories and all they represent.

John Prescott — voice of the unions?

AFTER a suitably decent period of mourning — very nearly 24 hours — the manoeuvring for the Labour leadership is now well under way. The latest news on the runners and riders is as follows: media favourites Blair and Brown (their great friendship notwithstanding) will stand against each other; Robin Cook has a lot more support on the soft left of the Parliamentary Labour Party than the media seems to think; Prescott's campaign manager Richard Caborn is looking for a deal with either Blair or Cook; there is unlikely to be a 'hard left' candidate; Ken Livingstone only has two supporters in the PLP.

It is significant that all the above information comes from the PLP and not the unions. People like Bill Jordan and John Edmonds, who ensured Smith's succession in 1992, have so far remained silent. Maybe it's out of respect for Smith. Maybe it's a conscious decision to avoid the old "union barons" tag. Maybe it's concern not to appear to be interfering with "one member one vote" democracy. More likely, their silence is merely an indication of the depths of demoralisation and insecurity presently felt by the union bureaucracy.

So far only one union leader has let his preference be known — and even then, unofficially: Tom Sawyer of UNISON is backing Blair. The Blair camp is also hoping for support from the AEEU leadership and "centre-right" figures like John Lyons of MSF and John Edmonds of the GMB. But even right wing officials dislike Blair and might well find the politically identical Gordon Brown more acceptable. The officials have still not forgiven Blair for his announcement that "the closed shop is dead" Finally, there's that smart-suited middle-class yuppie image that simply gets right up the nose of any self-respecting trade unionist.

The subject of image brings us, inevitably, to John Prescott. No image problem here, as far as most trade unionists are concerned. Rough, tough, plain-speaking John: he goes down well with officials and members alike. The problem is that he's all image and no substance. Even his famous claim to have been one of the "politically motivated men" denounced by Harold Wilson during the seamen's strike of 1966 is — to say the least — hard to verify. Since getting onto the Labour's National Executive in 1990 he has consistently voted with the leadership against the left. The nadir was reached at last year's party conference, when he came to Smith's rescue over "one member one vote" with a largely incoherent speech urging delegates to support "our leader, who has put his head on the block." Without the support of this proliethan-thou poseur, OMOV would almost certainly have been defeated.

Nevertheless, Prescott will attract the support of a lot of rank and file members and may even be endorsed by some leaders (the TGWU Executive and his own union, the RMT, seem likely). A Prescott bandwagon would represent a healthy reaction against the Blair/Brown "modernisers" on the part of the best rank and file unionists and Labour Party members. The left needs to give serious thought to how we react to it.

A lot will depend on whether Margaret Beckett can be leaned on to stand down as deputy leader and whether Prescott decides to throw in his lot with Cook on a soft-left ticket (which might be just about worthy of support). But the fact that Prescott and his minder Caborn are even willing to consider a "dream ticket" deal with Blair is further evidence (if any were needed) of the kind of treacherous fake-left poseur we're dealing with.

Despite all that, however Prescott will be the only candidate who (on paper at least) stands for a minimum wage and full employment. He seems likely to be the figure-head of the unofficial "ABB" (Anything But Blair) campaign launched at a secret meeting last week. Unfortunately, we'll probably have to support him.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Prescott without illusions? Organise the left and th

By John O'Mahony

THERE WILL be no serious left-wing candidate in the election for leader of the Labour Party. Tony Benn considers himself too old. The choice will lie between various lack lustre members of the Labour front bench. Of these the front runner by far is the ex-public-school-boy barrister Tony Blair.

Blair, who is for the labour movement little more than a slightly-animated posh suit of clothes stiffened with conventional ambition for high office, is known to want to move the Labour Party further to the right and further

away from its trade union ties, which he regards as encumbrances. Everyone in the Labour Party and trade unions with an ounce of loyalty to the things the labour movement has always stood for will have one urgent priority in this election: stop Blair!

The possible alternatives, however, are not people the serious left would choose, given any sort of free choice — not one of them. All of them are mired in responsibility for the policies and practices which have made the Labour leadership such a miserably feeble opposition to the worst Tory government in living memory. Look at

them!

Blair's alter-ego Gordon Brown differs from him mainly in having a posh Scottish accent where Blair has a posh English one.

Margaret Beckett, one-time left winger, was the demented genius who committed the Labour Party in Parliament to advocate — unsuccessfully — that the Tory government should compensate the speculators who lost money when Lloyds ran into difficulties!

John Prescott got Smith off the hook at last year's Labour Party conference when they pushed through "one member, one vote."

Robin Cook, a one-time left,

has not distinguished himself from the dominant right-wing Labour Party leadership group except by being more openly for a Lib/Lab alliance.

At best only nuances and "roots" distinguish these candidates, one from the other.

Listen to the discussion going on now around the question of a new leader, and you realise the extent of the present political sickness of the labour movement. This argument is not as it should be, about policy, but about such things as who will most appeal to the people judged least likely to vote Labour and which of the candidates will win most votes in the Tory south.

Five faded soft-leftists



Tony Blair: his political trajectory has been the same as all the other candidates: from the soft left, through Kinnockism after 1983, to SDP-type right-wing politics. What distinguishes him from the others is his vacuousness, his upper-class smugness, and his lack of labour movement roots. It would be hard to argue that Blair is more right-wing than Brown, but Brown sometimes seems to have a genuine hatred of the Tories. Blair does not. As one Tory MP put it, people could vote for Blair "without feeling that they are voting for Labour."

He became Shadow Employment spokesperson in October 1989, when Michael Meacher was sacked for being too pro-union — after saying that a Labour government would ban strikes in support of the Health Service, and pickets with more than six people. Blair continued the drive to wipe any commitment out of Labour policy.

As Shadow Home Secretary he has abstained on the Criminal Justice Bill and chimed in with the Tories' drive to criminalise and jail young people.



Gordon Brown: once a student leftist, in the 1970s he edited a book of Marxist and left-wing writings called "Red Papers on Scotland". Like Blair, he became an MP in 1983 as a Kinnockite, unilateralist and "soft-left". He established his right-wing credentials as John Smith's deputy when Smith was Shadow Chancellor. Like many other ex-leftists, he has out-flanked the traditional Labour right-wingers like Smith — to their right. Since 1992 he has argued that Labour should scrap *all* commitments to extra public spending and *all* ideas of taxing the rich.

The sole difference from Tory monetarism in Brown's economics now is some waffle about "labour employing capital rather than capital employing labour".



John Prescott: the only candidate with a trade-union background (seafarer, involved in the big 1966 seafarers' strike). He has traded on that back-

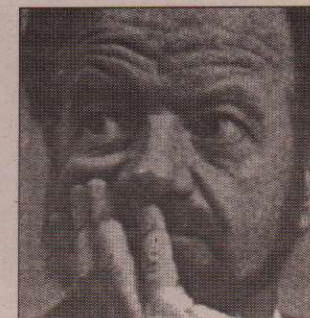
ground for many years now, without ever taking a clear stand on a political issue to justify his claim to stand up for workers' interests.

As a Shadow Cabinet and National Executive member under Kinnock and Smith, he went along with all their policies.

In 1992 stood for deputy leader, claiming to champion the trade union link; then, in 1993, made the winding-up speech at Labour conference in favour of John Smith's OMOV proposals.

He also stood for deputy leader in 1988, against Roy Hattersley and Eric Heffer. He got the backing of the left-wing unions, like the NUM, and 26% of the constituency vote. Socialist Organiser backed Heffer and commented:

"Kinnock and the right wing did not want Prescott to win because he represented some vague criticism of them. But Prescott did not provide a clear alternative, rather a soft protest option. He repeatedly told us he had no political disagreements with Kinnock". Now, however, that "soft protest option" puts Prescott on the "left" — more accurately, since Prescott has never taken a hard political position to the left of Blair or Brown, on the trade-union rather than the media-politics wing — of the available range of candidates.



Robin Cook: another former soft-leftist who moved to the right to become John Smith's leadership campaign manager

in 1992.

Seems to have more genuine concern with political ideas than any of the other candidates: he spoke at a conference organised by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (in which Socialist Organiser played a central role) in 1987.

Cook has campaigned for proportional representation in parliamentary elections. He used to claim that he was against Lib/Lab pacts, but around the 1992 election wrote articles which clearly favoured a Lib/Lab alliance.



Margaret Beckett: at one time "harder" left than the other main candidates, she made a famous speech in 1981 denouncing Neil Kinnock for failing to support Tony Benn for deputy leader.

She soon, however, made up any lag in the race to the right, and as a member of Labour's Shadow Treasury team proposed that the "Lloyd's Names", rich people hurt by losses in the insurance market, should be compensated from public funds. The Tories rejected the proposal as too obviously unfair!

Around the 1993 Labour conference the press made much of Beckett supposedly having doubts about OMOV. She denied it

rank and file to fight for the Welfare State and union rights

the Labour leadership

The considerations and calculations being raised are not about how Labour Party activists might persuade such people to vote Labour, but about how they can be mollified, soothed, persuaded that Labour is merely Toryism with a human face and a softer heart.

Where a minimally healthy party would debate policy and the politics of the candidates, here there is a terrible famine of ideas, proposals, commitment, or confidence that Labour stands — or should stand — for something unique.

Where candidates should be competing for the Labour leadership by way of the advocacy of policy for the labour movement — policy with which the Labour Party can go out and win a majority by convincing millions of working people that it has answers — here they compete to see who can be bland enough to appeal, without reference to politics, and more or less on their own terms, to "Tory" voters.

Even where important if underformulated differences exist, for example between Blair and Prescott on the trade unions, these considerations are being subsumed in the discussion of the different candidates' possible 'appeal' to those who have recently supported the Tory and Liberal parties.

This is not just a media matter, though the media sets the pace. It is the concern of Labour Party activists too. Socialism? Fight the class struggle, rouse up the working class — even if only electorally — to turn the tide on the Tories? No!

John Prescott has talked of

restoring to the trade unions the right to take solidarity action, but not one of the candidates is unequivocally committed to scrapping all the Tory anti-union laws or to restoring the Welfare State.

The hope that flowered in the early '80s of making the labour movement has receded so far that Labour Party activists and political trade unionists now feel bound to choose from the available options, however unpalatable.

A spirit of bleak, ground-down, worm's-eye-view-realism is abroad in the labour movement — the spirit of trade unionism in a bad situation, generalised in Labour Party terms into an overall attitude of accommodating to the status quo and getting the best you can in it. Only within this do the class and policy nuances dividing the likely candidates emerge.

But they do emerge. Prescott seems to have vested in him the trust and hopes of bedrock working-class people in the labour movement. He is perceived to have a commitment to action by a future Labour government to unshackle the trade unions. He talks about restoring the welfare state and seems committed to a minimum wage.

To have to scrutinise and extrapolate like this to decide who is better than whom instead of responding to bold, clear, political manifestos is a wretched business. But that is where we are now and that is what the left must do.

The serious left has to decide where it stands. Should we abstain? No, we should do everything we can to stop Blair or Brown, who would take the Labour Party deep-



Two fronts of the class struggle? Two fronts of social and political in consequence more like! Photo: John Harris

er into the mire of feeble social and political in consequence. Should we then try to create a movement to "draft" Tony Benn or someone like him? It would lack all credibility. That is just another variant of abstention.

Should we back Ken Livingstone who is, it seems, ready to stand again, as he did two years ago when he had the tongue-in-cheek backing of the *Sun* and stood on a *Sun*-friendly platform, describing Labour's tax policy as too extreme?

Livingstone was just a joke candidate then, muddying up the water, and he would be a joke candidate now.

To 'back' Livingstone

would only be a form of clownish abstention.

No, the left should choose the best available serious candidate, unite in a campaign to win the election, and demand of the best candidate commitment to specific, albeit limited, policy objectives. These minimally should be:

- repeal by a future Labour government of the Tory anti-union laws and legislation for the right to strike;
- restoration of the Health Service;
- a minimum wage
- the rebuilding of the Welfare State.

The Labour Party affiliated rank and file of the unions will vote as individuals in this

election. Millions have the right to vote, perhaps a million will vote. It will, inevitably be a modern mini-general election in which the bourgeois media will play a major part.

Already they are pushing Blair for all they are worth. The unions as such — that is the leaders — will probably back individual candidates: the rank and file will vote as individuals.

For this election, the left must campaign in the trade unions, or else the bourgeois media will have everything its own way. This is a new situation for the left.

The left, having agreed on its candidate, should organise

rank and file trade union campaign committees in the unions around the specific programme of demands.

Take, for example a trade unionist who will vote for Prescott (if he stands: Prescott may do a deal with Blair) because he seems to have a better attitude to the trade unions than Blair has. Is it not better that he or she demands of Prescott clear and specific policies, and organises in the union to win support for Prescott on the basis of such policies?

Active "Prescott committees" organised on such a basis would inject better politics into the leadership election process and maybe win many vaguely "Prescott" trade unionists to a commitment to fight for such politics, even against Prescott should he win the election and renege.

This is far from ideal. A campaign for a clear left wing candidate advocating a socialist manifesto would be much better; but we must start from where we are, with the labour movement as it is now after 15 years of Tory rule.

Abstention makes no sense if it can be avoided. There are, despite everything, real issues in this election for political leader of the organised labour movement. The left should bring them out as clearly as possible and organise the rank and file of the trade unions around the best working class platform we can put together.

A victory for either Blair or Brown will be a further blow to the prospects of a revival of the labour movement. A victory for even such an inadequate candidate of the left, or at least of the working-class base of the Labour Party, might help to speed up that revival.

John Smith 1938 - 1994

By Bob Royale

IT IS a matter of sad irony that scarcely a week ago John Smith, in the wake of the council election results, was confidently looking forward to going through the door of 10 Downing Street in about three years time.

Many commentators have pointed to the "modernity" of John Smith's leadership. However there is a reading of John Smith's political career and beliefs that places him in a tradition of middle class progressivism which dates back to the aftermath of World War 1.

John Smith was animated by a sense of moral outrage against the inequalities all too manifest in Tory Britain.

Marxists share this sense of outrage but go on to point out that the working class has power in itself to redress the situation.

Smith can be seen as following in the footsteps trod by many members of a privileged, slightly guilt-ridden liberal elite who saw the labour movement as their natural home. This elite held a moral rather than a materialist critique of capitalism; workers would obtain justice once the capitalists were shown the errors of their ways. Socialism to this elite was an ethical quest rather than a movement to achieve working-class self emancipation.

The fundamental flaw in ethical socialism is that it ignores the fact that capitalism has material as well as ideologi-

cal/moral roots. No moral argument, however, cogently presented, can persuade capitalists to give up their position of power and privilege within contemporary society.

It is interesting to speculate on how, once in government, John Smith would have reacted to capitalist obstruction. Would he think that the capitalists were being irrational or would it provoke a crisis of confidence within his own political and moral world view?

The closest historical parallel to a now sadly fictional John-Smith-led Labour Government is probably the Ramsay MacDonald Labour Government of 1929-1931.

Like John Smith, Ramsay MacDonald held an ethical view of socialism. However in

the slump conditions of the time, capital was more predisposed to respond to the allure of the healthy balance sheet than to the appeal of reason. In such a situation ethical socialism was exposed as nothing more than a set of pious hopes. MacDonald betrayed the labour movement and went over to the Tories.

In his two years as Labour Leader John Smith attempted to relax the regime of repression that Kinnock in his paranoid years had unleashed against the Left. This move towards liberalisation flowed from both John Smith's sense of decency and his realisation that there are certain Labour Party traditions and values worthy of support and nourishment.

In the last six months of his

life there were signs that John Smith was groping towards a restatement of British Social Democracy — the emphasis on community, fair shares for all, and perhaps ultimately, the formulation of a strategy which could hold out the possibility of an eventual return to full employment.

Although such a programme would not be sufficient for the attainment of socialism, compared to the thin political and economic gruel served up to the labour movement in the Kinnock years it would appear to be a feast of delights. It would have the added attraction of holding out the prospect of removing the Tories from office.

• Bob Royale is a pseudonym. The writer is a Labour councillor in a northern city.

Media rule OK!

L ABOUT PARTY members will be watching carefully the new electoral and policy making procedure in the Party, known as media rule-OK! The policy-making body that brought you the reform of the trade union link after the 1992 election defeat is now hard at work selecting the next leader of the Labour Party. Not only the *Independent* but also the *Sun* and the rest of Murdoch's papers have cast their vote firmly for Tony Blair, giving him a third of the electoral college vote disposed of by the newspapers. The *Economist*, which dominates the magazine section has dropped heavy hints that it too will back Blair. Only the traditionally cautious and cagey TV section of the college has yet to cast its votes. Blair is, according to all the newspaper editors, the man most feared by the Tories. This, you understand, is inside knowledge, from the horse's mouth, so to speak. But if they fear him, why do you think newspapers push him so? Labour Party and trade union members have been advised to stay at home, keep their mouths shut, stay calm and watch the press for details.

A NEW and tragic genetic abnormality has been isolated — this dreadful condition may lead to a normal foetus developing into a Tory Party leader. This dangerous genetic mutation has been traced late in life by a London genealogist, Paul Penn-Simkins, to John Crust, a husbandman who lived in Leake between 1702 and 1751. Not only is John Crust the great, great, great, great, great grandfather of John Major, he is also the great, great, great, great grandfather of Margaret Hilda Thatcher.

Scientists are confident that within one generation foetal scanning and gene replacement therapy could leave the Conservative Party without a leader. Rumour has it that many backbench Conservative MPs believe that they can greatly speed up this process.

PETER MANDELSON, on Channel Four's *A Week In Politics*, spoke of "the Labour Party's voters and

GRAFFITI

VIVELA
REVOLUTION

By Cyclops

consumers." Consumers? Perhaps Mandelson should concentrate his modernising skills on some other product — perhaps turning old fashioned cheese into something thoroughly up to date, bland and tasteless, like Kraft individually wrapped, processed cheese slices. Yet, of course, "consumers" is precisely what the electorate is in the eyes of all bourgeois media pseudo-democrats, including social-democratic marketing technicians such as Mandelson. Not for these creeps the ringing words with which the proud song of international labour begins: "Arise ye starvelings..."

TORY DICK-HEAD Terry Dicks has once again proved how well deserved his name is. Dicks is chair of the House of Commons all-party Committee on Qatar, where a Britain was given fifty lashes for selling alcohol to a Muslim two weeks ago. Just before the sentence was carried out Dicks was reported widely opining that the sentence was thoroughly justified and enjoyed much support in Britain. He continued "I am satisfied that the judicial system in Qatar was operated in a perfectly proper way, and the punishment fitted the crime." The man was denied both a translator and a lawyer at the trial, so was tried in a language he did not understand. The man he is alleged to have sold alcohol to — a police agent — was not called to the witness stand. Now you know what a Tory MP understands by "fair trial."

Fair exchange is another matter. Dicks registered two expenses-paid trips to Qatar last year That does seem like a fair exchange for a few words from Dicks, and cheap by many Tory MPs' standards.

Mr John Smith — an apology

The following statement has been issued by the editors of the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Sun*, *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, etc, etc.

AT VARIOUS times over the past two years, our newspapers may have inadvertently given the impression that we regarded Mr John Smith as a man of mediocre talent and less than total honesty. Furthermore, readers of our publications may have gained the unfortunate opinion that the late Mr Smith was wholly unfit for high office and in any case there was no chance of that ever happening because the British public would never be so foolish as to elect another Labour government.

We now accept that there was not a scintilla of truth in these suggestions and unreservedly apologise to Elizabeth, the girls, the labour movement and the entire population of Great Britain. The late Mr Smith was, we now

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

realise, a man of outstanding ability, unimpeachable personal integrity, brilliant wit, unbounded compassion and masterful command of his brief. He bestrode the world like a colossus, a giant among pygmies, a prince among men. The nation has truly been robbed of the finest Prime Minister we never had, for there can be no doubt that the

respect, affect and, indeed, love that he engendered in the hearts of the Great British public, would have swept him to power at the next general election as surely as night follows day.

But through the tears, we must now look forward to ensure that the golden heritage he bequeaths his party and the nation is not wasted. That is why we say that the great democratic institution that is

*"The charismatic
Mr Blair is the
man the Tories
most fear."*

Equality in the boxing ring?



By Jean Lane

THE Durham Miners Gala, August 1984. The sun was beating down and crowds of people, all done up in their best, were pouring into the field. Stalls, booths, music, food and drink, noise and games provided a welcome respite to the — so far — five month long strike. Everyone was in holiday mood, taking a break from the flying picketing, the soup kitchens, the collections for strike fund and solidarity. A brass band blared "When the saints go marching in" next to an impromptu football match that involved 44 players as if the drinkers at the beer tent nearby already had double vision.

In the middle of it all, a stage with speakers' chairs and a microphone faced a great crowd of cheering miners and supporters. Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn bellowed out demands for solidarity, determination to fight to the end and admiration for the struggle of the men, women and especially the youth who had suffered so much privation in their fight for jobs.

A year later, when the strike was lost, Neil Kinnock, the Labour Party leader, would rise to speak and over half the crowd would turn their backs in eloquent disgust at the man who never visited a picket line till the strike was nearly over, who had condemned miners' violence along with that of the police as if it was all the same,

and who had failed to rally the active support needed from the rest of the labour movement in order to win.

"Blood of my blood, flesh of my flesh," he would try to portray his own mining background as if he still belonged, to the backs of heads massed before him.

On this occasion, however, heads faced front and voices roared approval as Dennis Skinner strode to the microphone. "Well, the sun's out. The miners are out. And before long the Tories'll be out."

The roar could be heard to the furthest tea tent at the edge of the field where people milled around the various entertainments on offer. In one tent, a cat walk had been erected between the rows of seats and a beauty parade was in progress. Little girls, dressed up, made up and mincing along, prepared for their greatest role in life, practising the poise and beauty they would need for their wedding day.

In another was a boxing ring. Little boys learned what it would need to be a man, to batter or be battered, to see if they were going to be fit to survive down the pit.

Thus "working-class culture," which is actually bourgeois culture made material necessity by working-class life under capitalism, is kept alive and kicking during the strike that was turning working-class lives and their relation to the bourgeois state upside down. The culture that the pro-boxers would keep alive is part of a harsh and often brutal life which is only romantic to those who don't have to live it.

Nowadays, of course, men model — beauty contests of a

sort though the links to purity and marriage are no longer there. And, likewise, women do box. This is not an example of liberation, or of equality between the sexes.

The women boxers who took part in a TV documentary called *Champions* a couple of weeks ago did not do it because men do. It is not just some misguided demand for the right to batter each other like the men. They have their own reasons.

Sam Beckford from South London said that she had so much aggression and frustration in her that she needed an outlet for it. "I work for London Underground. You can imagine how frustrating that can be."

*"If she wants to
win, she will
have to knock
that girl out."*

Stacey Weston from America said that she was always getting into street fights and trouble. "I decided to put it in the ring," she said. "I might as well make some money out of it." The fight that she won against Dublin's Deirdre Gogarty got her a black eye, a broken nose, and \$2,500. Deirdre later went on to win her next two fights in the US, both with knock-outs.

During one bout at York Hall, Bethnal Green, in Europe's first ever all-women international boxing championships, a judge explained what boxing is all about, men or women: "If she wants to win, she will have got to knock

the Labour Party must now elect Mr Tony Blair to lead it to certain victory. The charismatic Mr Blair is the man the Tories most fear. We are all terrified of him, which is why we are telling you this.

Mr Michael Heseltine — an apology

IN RECENT weeks some of our newspapers (not mine — N Lloyd) may have given the impression that Mr Michael Heseltine is a dynamic, vigorous and visionary politician, now fully restored to robust health and ideally suited to leadership.

We now accept that there is not a scintilla of truth in this suggestion. Mr Heseltine is a very sick man with a dicky heart. He would be best advised to retire from the strenuous world of politics immediately and tuck up in bed with a nice cup of Horlicks. We'll just have to wait for Mr Portillo to grow up a little.

that girl out. And she's got to punch and punch until she does."

All of the women in the film admitted that before a fight they wondered why they put themselves through it; they must be mad. After the fight, win or lose, they felt a tremendous sense of achievement, of having withstood something awful that gave them a feeling of personal worth.

All the women trained every day. They fought men in their training sessions — men bigger and heavier than themselves. So why should they not fight men in the professional ring? Boxers are matched according to their weight and length of experience. Women wear safety gear to protect their breasts. They also wear protection for their abdomens and genitals as do the men.

They, like the men, do not wear any head protection during a fight (which doesn't prevent their brains from being bashed against the inside of their skulls on impact anyway). They dehydrate themselves beforehand to try to get into a better weight category, putting their brains at even further risk from long term and cumulative damage — just like the men.

Whether boxing should be banned or not depends, for me, on whether it would be possible to remove the head completely from the sphere of combat and still call the sport boxing. But if those who oppose a ban on boxing think that men can beat their brains out if they want to, they must demand the right of women to do it with them, on equal terms. If they can't do that, they shouldn't take boxing at all.

Against the police, the state, the Nazis — for jobs and homes for all

Youth unite against racism

By Mark, South London

THE YOUTH United Against Racism conference on 14 May was a great success. From around the country young people came to hear speakers from the left of the Labour Party: Neil Gerrard MP and Tower Hamlets councillor, Phil Maxwell; from the trade unions, Glenroy Watson, RMT, London Underground; and from campaigns against racism and injustice, Youth Connection and Action for Black Justice.

Discussion and debate was wide-ranging and occasionally heated. Many ideas for action were shared and developed.

The majority of the conference agreed to use Youth United Against Racism to fight for a united and democratic anti-racist movement and to campaign for anti-racism based on the labour movement — an anti-racism that fights all forms of racism from the police, the state, or the Nazis. We support black self-defence and we will campaign for the labour movement to fight for jobs and homes for all — which is the only way to undercut the Nazis' false 'answers.'



Labour councillor from Tower Hamlets, Phil Maxwell, spoke at the Youth United Against Racism Conference. He spoke of the need to win Labour to a policy of building homes and creating jobs. Photo: Garry Meyer

“Only under the banner of socialism can we move forward”

Labour councillor Phil Maxwell spoke to the opening session of the conference.

IT IS NOW just over a week since the local election results — which were brilliant for Labour across the country. And results in Tower Hamlets were quite extraordinary.

When you have been in opposition for eight years against a local authority that is to the right of most Conservative authorities, to move suddenly from that to a situation where Labour has 43 seats to the Liberals' 7 is quite an extraordinary transition.

That happened because large numbers of people who would not normally vote came out and voted against racism.

Of course the defeat for the fascists at the ballot box will not end racial attacks. Now we have the job of remedying the causes that lead to the proliferation of racist ideas in East London.

The Liberal Party created the political environment which enabled the BNP to come in and push their policies. The BNP never dared put out a leaflet saying “we will forcibly re-patriate black and Asian people.” The Liberal party “repatriated” them out of Tower

Hamlets! To do it they used the law of “intentionality” — meaning that if you intentionally left your home there is no statutory responsibility for a local authority to house you — to target Bangladeshi immigrants.

For example, one man lived in Britain for 26 years, a worker creating wealth in Britain. He earned £90 a week as a porter in Claridges Hotel. Every couple of years he went home, eventually bringing his family over to join him.

The Council wrote to this man and told him that since he had “intentionally left his home” in Bangladesh they would not help him get a house.

He had to take his family back to Bangladesh.

The Liberal Party didn't talk about it much, but they achieved the BNP goal of deporting black people.

Over the last couple of years in this area the fight against racism has been taken up by a determined layer of youth. Local Asian youth organised a mass picket and drove the BNP papersellers off their long-standing Brick Lane paper sale.

On the day Beackon was elected councillor, all the workers at the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Centre walked out.

The media image of East London — an

area swilling with white racists — is rubbish. If it wasn't for the white working-class vote we would not have a Labour administration now.

One of the ways we peeled away the racist myths cultivated by the Liberal Party here is to look at the resources available and what we can do with them.

Ten years ago 90% of available building land was owned by the council. We wanted to build on it. That land was robbed from us by central Government and given to the London Docklands Development Corporation. They told us the LDDC would create jobs and homes for local people.

There are houses, but they remain vacant because people cannot afford them, while families with 6 or 7 children still live on the top floors of tower blocks.

The Liberals' racist myths that Asians are taking jobs and housing can only be countered successfully if we start creating jobs and building homes.

We have to deliver on the Tower Hamlets Labour Party election pledge to build 1,000 homes in four years and create a nursery place for every child that needs it. This must be top of our agenda.

It is only under the banner of socialism and, immediately, a programme of building homes and providing jobs for all, and opposing racism that we are going to move forward. I welcome the Youth United Against Racism initiative.

Kevin Sexton, a supporter of the Alliance for Workers Liberty was elected as Convener of the National Union of Students' London Area at a conference of around 80 student activists on 14-15 May.

Kevin stood on a programme of fighting the attacks on student grants and education. His main opponent was Labour Students' Rokshana Fiers, who polled only 23 votes to Kevin's 52.

Youth Connection: leading the struggle

Aszol Miah spoke to the conference

WE FORMED Youth Connection in response to violence among Asian youth. There was a lot of fighting between us and the police were just arresting anyone. Youth Connection was formed originally by 12 of us to stop all this violence because we thought the bigger issue was racism.

We were quite successful. Even the police had to admit we had stopped the violence. That was early last year. Then when Quaddus Ali was attacked we knew we had to do something.

We decided to take a leading role in the campaign because for too long we relied on our elders. The youth of our generation feel they have their own voice and we can be heard.

We organised a demo on 3 October of 2,000 people. We've had pickets and meetings. We accepted help from any organisation as long as it was behind us.

In the local elections we worked with other organisations. We took transport out on the day of the election to get people to vote and to protect the Bengali wards.

We are an umbrella group of about thirty different organisations.

Manchester Action for Black Justice

IT IS early on the morning of 22 January 1994 outside a night club in central Manchester. People leaving the club are confronted by over 100 police, some with dogs.

There have been no 'incidents.' No one has called the police.

The owner of the club did not have a full licence, but no one leaving the club is to blame for that.

Nevertheless, the police attack. A woman is punched by coppers in the stomach and will subsequently miscarry. People are bitten by dogs. Some need stitches. Others are coshed with police batons.

The majority of those attacked are black. So powerful a force is racism in this confrontation, so big a part does it play in the police action that one woman will later say of the experience: “I felt like I was in South Africa.” The police attack on 22 January was unprovoked. The police were the aggressors and the thugs, the people

guilty of assault. Yet it was the victims of this attack — the peaceful people assaulted as they left the club — who have been charged with assault.

Action for Black Justice has been set up to demand an open public inquiry to investigate every police officer involved in the attack and to demand that all the police officers who assaulted those people be suspended without pay.

Action for Black Justice is campaigning for all charges to be dropped. So far, the campaign has organised four big public meetings.

It has forged links with the local labour movement. Youth United Against Racism voted to give Action for Black Justice its full support. Raise their case in your local labour movement and anti-racist organisations.

• Action for Black Justice — Mondays (12pm-4pm) at the Amani Centre, Shoreham Walk, Moss Side, Manchester, 061-226 7325.

Youth **UNITED** against racism

Become a supporter!

We are committed to

- **Uniting all campaigns into one democratic anti-racist movement**
- **Active self defence — stop the Nazis organising**
- **Fighting police racism**
- **Making the labour movement fight for jobs and homes for all**

Ring: 071-252 4245 for details

YOUTH FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Youth Fightback is...

Health, wealth

Nik Barstow exposes the Tories' lies

THE TORIES claims that people in Britain are healthier and live longer than ever before. And they present the continuing rise of an elderly population who need health services more than younger people as a crisis which means health care must be rationed.

The Tories tell only part of the story. Working-class people in Britain, particularly in Britain's inner cities, are more likely to die prematurely than the well-off, and a 'health gap' is widening.

Between 1987-91 in Manchester, for example, there was a 58% greater chance of men dying prematurely, and a 43% greater chance of women dying prematurely. In the poorest areas of Hulme, Moss Side and Ancoats men were 60% more likely to die prematurely than in the middle-class areas, women 93% more likely!

Those figures for early death can be repeated for city after city — there have been similar studies in Glasgow and Birmingham showing the same things.

Working-class people are also more vulnerable to long-term, limiting illness without the means to cope, and poor health in childhood which can affect people for life.

Almost half of people aged over 65 in Manchester were found to have a long-term, limiting illness. At the other end of the age scale, every part of the city was found to have more low birth-weight babies than the national average.

These figures show a fact of life in capitalist Britain that has been true since long before Frederick Engels exposed it in *Condition of the English Working Classes in 1844*. And the Tories have worsened the divide between rich and poor.

The link between ill-health, early death and poverty has been well documented by health researchers but covered up by the Tories. Their much-vaunted 'Health of the Nation' doesn't even mention income or class.

What are the facts?

Between 1981 and 1989 the richest 10% of the population gained £87 a week from the combined effect of income tax cuts and increased indirect taxes (like VAT), while the poorest 10% lost £1 a week.

The idea peddled by the Tories that the poor are only a small 'underclass' of people who are congenitally incapable is disproved



Hospitals are being shut in many major cities. Above: demonstration against closure of Withington hospital, Manchester. Photo: Paul Herrmann, Profile.

by the figures which the shifts in income have produced.

In 1979 only 9% of the population in Britain was on less than half the average income — by 1993 this had leaped to 24%.

Saving the Health Service is a vital job for the labour movement. We must ensure that people are treated fairly, and that inner cities where ill-health is concentrated don't see the service cut to ribbons.

But there is a bigger job — to rebuild a welfare state which protects people from the causes of early death or disabling illness, a welfare state which ensures jobs, adequate income and affordable housing.

The price of blood

BLOOD donors are public spirited people. The willingness of thousands of people to give a little of their time to help others by the free donation of blood, through a well-managed, universal system, is a hall-mark of a decent service, and it has worked.

The Tories are setting about changing all that as part of their drive to an internal market. In April 1992 the National Blood

system means that the centres now have an incentive to get plasma from 'paid donors' because there are corners cut in testing blood and checking donors' health.

After massive scandals in Europe about infected blood products, why isn't the trade in paid-for blood supply simply banned? A ban was planned by EC Health Ministers, but a massive campaign by international drug companies ensured the plans went nowhere because they said it would be a "restraint of trade". Market systems and a genuine welfare system don't mix.

Market systems and a genuine welfare system don't mix.

Transfusion Service was abolished and replaced by the National Blood Authority, which is now managing an internal market in blood products.

The Regional Transfusion Centres which organised collection and distribution — and co-operated to help when regions faced shortages — must now compete for income from hospitals!

This is bringing a real 'market' into being. The costs of the highly bureaucratic new

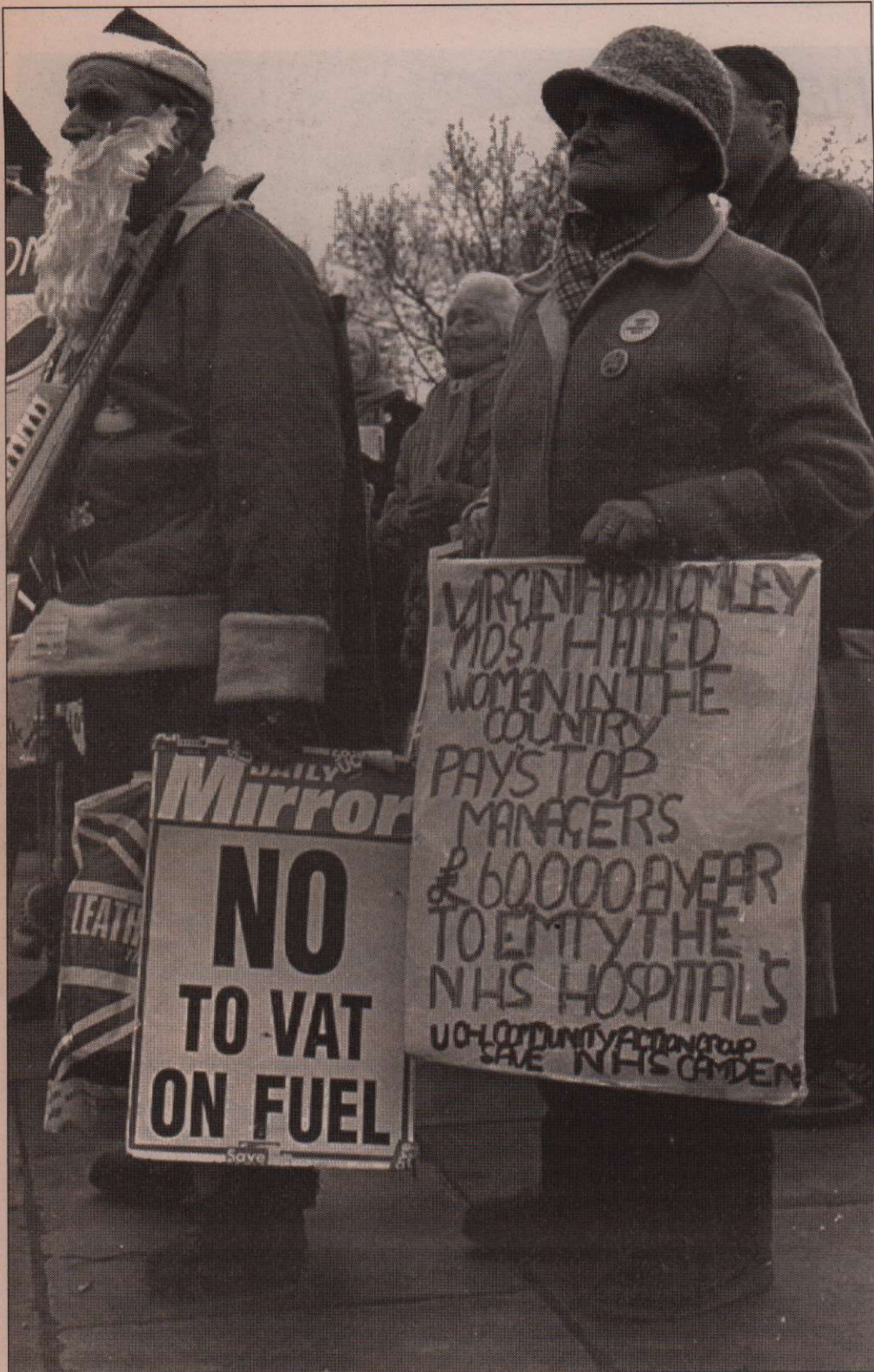


Aneurin Bevan found the Health Service to free health care from market constraints



The poor die younger and get more sick more often — not only because of inadequate medical care but primarily because of poor housing, poor diet and the grinding effects of poverty

and inequality



20,000 turned out for the TUC Health Service demonstration last November. Photo Garry Meyer

Complaints rise as system collapses

A REPORT on Health Service complaints procedures issued last week showed a huge rise in formal complaints about hospital treatment.

In England there were 16,218 complaints. A decade later the annual figure had more than doubled to almost 45,000.

Complaints about GPs have risen less, but still by over 50%, and the smaller rise is often put down to how difficult it is to make a complaint.

There are a lot of claims that the Patients' Charter has turned patients into 'consumers' willing to complain, as if they'd bought a

pair of shoes which fell apart after a week!

The reality is that most people don't like complaining about over-worked nursing staff, harassed doctors and other staff who they know are trying to help them.

The Health Service is falling down because it is over-stretched.

The Tories try to use the idea of 'consumers,' not 'patients,' to divide people from the Health Service as a service.

The real answers should be collective. They are about properly funding the service and ensuring there are sufficient staff and resources.

Trusts keep their secrets about crisis in Health Service

IN FEBRUARY Labour Health Spokesperson, Ian McCartney MP had a meeting with senior managers and the Chair of Central Manchester Trust to discuss concerns about overstretched physiotherapy services. Labour had comments from doctors and therapists that the hospital couldn't provide even a basic level of service. The Trust denied it.

The *Health Service Journal* last week took up the story because, by mistake, Ian McCartney had picked up a ring-binder from the table which contained a set of background papers and reports which seemed to tell a very different story.

Astonished the MP wrote to the Trust Chair Professor Moore: "We are deeply disturbed ... such vital information about the level of service reduction and the consequences for patient care ... was ... hidden from us."

"When direct questions were put by us on these matters, we were given advice which ran contrary to your own information contained in the briefing packs in front of your management team."

The letter continues: "If such a cynical exercise of concealment and misrepresentation had been carried out before a parliamentary select committee the trust would run the risk of being in contempt of Parliament."

Copies of letters from ministers and Department of Health civil servants in the file also led the MP to wonder how far ministers who had written reassuring letters to Mr. McCartney about physiotherapy services at the Trust had been misled.

"Did your Trust mislead ministers who in turn misled MPs and Parliament or did you inform the minister as described and he/she therefore chose not to inform MPs appropriately?" he asks Professor Moore.

A three-line memo found in the file, written to Trust medical director Mike Cheshire three weeks before Mr McCartney's visit, had immediately caught the MP's eye.

It reads: "I think we are heading for trouble as regards our lack of ability to deliver physiotherapy."

The memo, dated 1 February, was in fact a response to a memo sent to Dr Warrell a week previously by Paul Bannister, clinical manager at the Robert Barnes medical unit.

Dr Bannister's memo reads: "Physiotherapists form a pivotal (sic) role in (elderly patient) care, but in the coming months we are once again going to be caught out by a significant shortfall in the provision of physiotherapy services."

"Within the day hospital and the wards of the Manchester Royal Infirmary we are having an approximate 40 per cent reduction in the service and within the wards at Barnes Hospital we already have approximately 20 per cent reduction in the service."

There was more. The effects of physiotherapy cuts are graphically illustrated in a series of memos written over the past year by clinicians at the trust and neatly filed in the black binder.

Consultant vascular surgeon Michael Walker, writing on 14 July 1993, says: "This situation is really farcical ... we have amputees on the ward with wounds well healed who should have been discharged some weeks ago, but ... we are unable to initiate home visits."

A letter from nursing staff in the cardiac surgery unit, also dated 14 July, concludes:

"This reduced service will prove detrimental to the welfare and post-operative recovery of the patients and may result in a longer period of hospitalisation."

An undated hand-written note from Lennox Holt, consultant rheumatologist, says: "It is impossible to provide a satisfactory rheumatology service if it does not have the back up of outpatient physiotherapy."

"Clearly we are going to lose rheumatology referrals at a rapid rate if we are unable to provide satisfactory treatment ... this may have serious financial implications for the Trust."

The real questions are not just about whether there are problems at the Manchester Hospitals but whether policy decisions are being made in secret, and kept secret on the advice of Health Service managers nationally.

One of the documents which the *Health Service Journal* reported Ian McCartney finding was headed "Service Reductions with effect from September 1993" and said, according to their report the "physiotherapy services for patients with conditions that were not life threatening would be available only when acute in-patient workloads allow."

Decisions to ration treatment — in this case treatment mainly of elderly patients in constant pain — are being taken in secret by the unaccountable 'Trust Boards' which the Tories' new Health Service system set up.

When Major denied there were any real examples of services being rationed — calling Labour front benchers 'liars' for raising the issue — he obviously hoped that the new commercial secrecy in the Health Service would keep the lid on what is happening.

London's Health Service

THE King's Fund Institute — an academic body whose ideas were used to justify the closure of hospitals in London — has had belated second thoughts.

In a new booklet, *London: the key facts*, they say that "newly emerging evidence" shows the capital's health care needs have been underestimated.

They now say London needs an extra £200 million for health services — the Department of Health says London overspends by £70 million!

The Tomlinson review of London Health Services never took account of similar figures produced by Professor Jarman — although they had been given to the Department of Health they were "not made available."

Professor Jarman's figures showed that London has fewer than 10 hospital beds per 1,000 of the population as against 12 for the rest of England — and between 1985 and 1992 the use of the Emergency Bed Service trebled. His conclusion? "Bed closure should take account of London's relatively poorer health and primary health care circumstances, longer hospital waiting lists, poorer provision of residential homes, and evidence from the Emergency Bed Service of increasing pressure on beds."

A survey of hospitals carried out by nine Community Health Councils on 25 April found 58 patients who had been waiting for treatment on trolleys for over three hours.

Zola and so

What the author of *Germinal* said to the socialists

Emile Zola, the author of *Germinal*, the great novel of working class struggle recently made into a film, was also sympathetic to socialism and a hero in one political struggle, the "Dreyfus Affair" of the 1890s (see box, page 11). This interview with him by Max Beer appeared in the *Social Democrat* (magazine of the Social Democratic Federation, then the main Marxist group in Britain) of October 1902. Beer was the British correspondent of the German socialist paper *Vorwärts* and author of a "History of British Socialism." Jean Jaures and Jules Guesde, referred to by Zola, led two factions in the French socialist movement; the "Guesdists", though generally more revolutionary, were reluctant to take sides energetically in the "Dreyfus Affair" seeing it as a non-socialist issue.

IN MARCH 1898, M. George Clemenceau gave me a letter of introduction to Emile Zola, who at once consented to receive me "at any time after nine o'clock in the evening." It was but a few weeks after his condemnation to a year's imprisonment, consequent upon his letter, "J'accuse," published in *L'Aurore* of 13 January 1898.

The nervous strain which Zola had endured in those stormy days



Emile Zola

of his trial was still visible on his whole countenance. He looked rather old and weary; his shoulders stooping and his beard was rapidly turning grey. His features were by no means as rigid as we see them on the usual photos. A sad smile played upon his face as often as he spoke of the persecutions he had to undergo from the judges and from the howling mob surrounding the court of justice.

Zola bade me take a seat on a sofa, while he moved a chair opposite to me, and scrutinising me very attentively, sat down. He bent forward, so that his head was close to mine, and asked me to begin with my questions.

"The subjects that always interested me most were Socialism and the Jewish question. It is, therefore, natural that I should look upon the author of *Germinal* and the defender of Dreyfus with deep admiration. But *cher maitre*, I cannot conceal the fact that your Rougon-Macquart series and *Trois Villes* do not contain a single Jewish character worthy of our sympathy."

Zola: "Yes that's true. All my Jewish characters have, so far, been quite despicable. They are, however, such as I saw them."

"Exactly. I do not impugn your power of observation. It is, as all the world knows, very comprehensive; and your studies are painstaking, sincere, and scientifically correct. You will, however, permit me to say that your observation of Jewish life did not go far enough. You had no opportunity of seeing the whole of it."

Zola: "During these last few months of anguish I thought a good deal of the Jewish question. And I had good reason for it, too. As you know, I was for a long time under the influence of the historical theories of Hyppolite Taine, who laid so much stress on the racial factor in human development. My novels might surely give

the impression that I regarded the Jew chiefly as a money-mongering and luxury-loving human being. My recent struggle, however, taught me that there are many Jews who belong to quite another category. There are in human history some factors more potent than race or religion."

"Economic ones!"
Zola: "Precisely. You see, the rich Jews and Jewesses hate me as much as the Nationalists and the Catholic bigots do. A few days ago a Jewish lady positively insulted M. Anatole France, our greatest critic and essayist, for having signed the petition for revision of the Dreyfus trial. But I am glad to say that the Jewish 'intellectuals' are on our side."

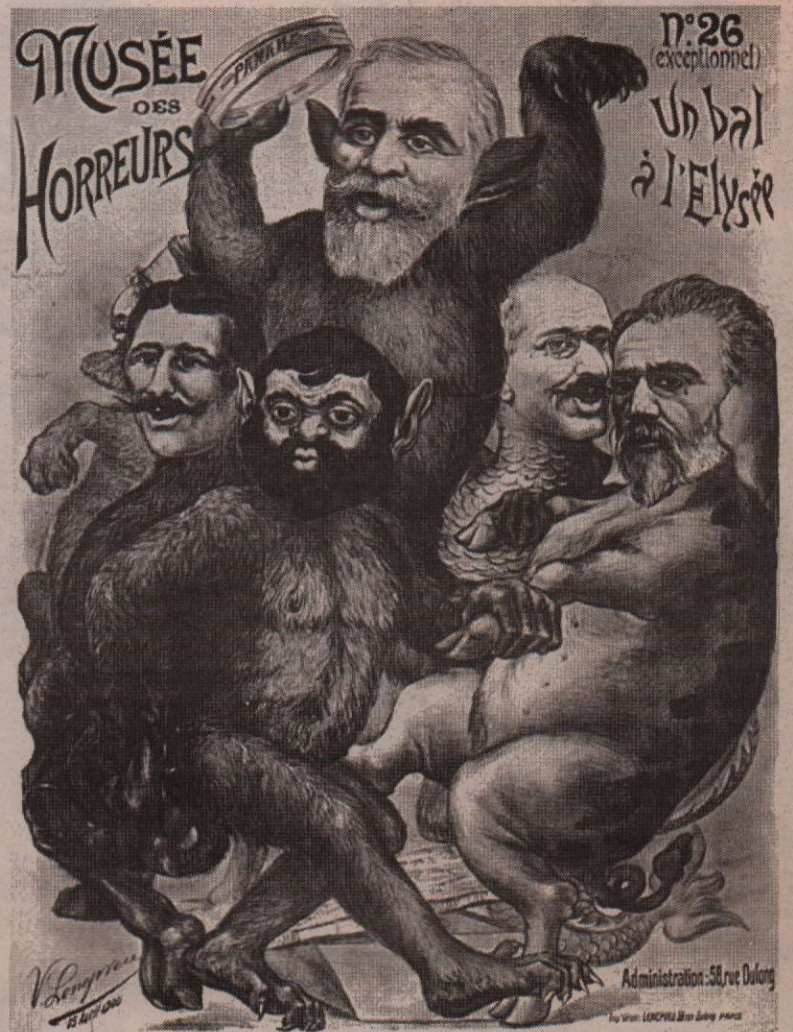
"And the Jewish proletariat too. One object of my coming to you is to express to you the respectful thanks of many thousands of Jewish workmen in New York for your defence of social justice."

Zola: "I am deeply touched by this sign of recognition on the part of Jewish labour. I have seen their poverty, their wretchedness, and their toil when I was in London in 1893. I went round Whitechapel to convince myself of the evils of the seating system."

"The anti-Semites see only the few Jewish millionaires, and shut their eyes to the misery of the toiling Jewish masses in Russia, in Austria, in England and in America. There is no Jewish question at all, but there is a struggle between the owners of the means of production and the owners of labour-power. This struggle knows neither race nor religion. It is a struggle going on, consciously or unconsciously, in the whole civilised world. Abolish this antagonism and Dreyfus trials will be no more."

Zola: "You are, of course, pointing to socialism."

"Yes, *cher maitre*. The final chapter of *Germinal* expresses the



A right wing magazine caricatures Zola (right), Dreyfus (second from right), and others in the "Affair".

advent of socialism in words so powerful that it would be exceedingly presumptuous on my part to deal in your presence with this subject. Although you do not belong to any socialist organisation, all socialists look upon you as one of their great leaders."

Zola: "I am not a leader in socialist thought, yet I sincerely wish to have all socialists as my friends. You see, only Jaurès and his friends are supporting me. Some Guesdists are standing aloof; some of them are behaving badly. They do not see that I am not fighting for a certain individual, but for the liberty of our great and noble France and against a conspiracy of mighty foes, as militarism and the Catholic Church. I need all sympathy, all assistance I can get. It is, therefore, painful to see socialists taking no interest in the stormy events which are convulsing the French nation. They think I entered into a deadly struggle for a rich Jewish captain. He is for me only a symbol, a victim of terrible forgeries, a witness of the degradation of our Republic, which inscribed on its portals the democratic trinity: Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality... But, after all, truth is almighty. It will prevail."

Zola was speaking passionately and with great fluency. He was easily accessible, eager to impart knowledge and imbued with a modesty as sincere and deep as his love of truth. He actually thanked me for the trouble I had taken in calling upon him. At the conclusion of the interview he inquired again about the position of the millions of Jewish workingmen, about their aspirations and ideas. He also asked a good deal about England,

and regretted that he was no linguist. "Je suis du Midi," he remarked smilingly; "mon cerveau n'est pas organisé pour des langues." ("I am from the South: my brain is not organised for languages.")

After a hearty handshake, I left the little house in the Rue de Bruxelles, having spent one of the happiest hours of my life.

It is perhaps, an echo of that interview, when Zola in his last novel, *Truth*, now in course of publication, says:

"And at the sight of that paradise acquired by Jew wealth, at the thought of the splendid fortune amassed by Nathan the Jew money monger, Marc instinctively recalled the Rue du Trou and the dismal hovel without air or sunshine, where Lehmann, that other Jew, had been plying his needle for thirty years and earning only enough to provide himself with bread. And ah! how many other Jews there were, yet more wretched than he — Jews who starve in filthy dens. They were the immense majority and their existence demonstrated the idiotic falsity of anti-semitism, that proscription *en masse* of a race which was charged with the monopolisation of all wealth, when it numbered so many poor working folk, so many victims, crushed down by the almightiness of money, whether it were Jew, or Catholic, or Protestant. There were really no Jew questions at all; there was only a Capitalist question — a question of money heaped up in the hands of a certain number of gluttons and thereby poisoning and rotting the world."

This passage is probably the most socialistic in all Zola's writings.



In January 1898 Zola braved imprisonment and harassment when he openly denounced the Dreyfus frame-up in an open letter, "J'accuse" ("I accuse")

cialism



Renaud (Etienne Lantier) in Claude Berri's film of Zola's novel *Germinal*, a tale of 19th century French miners

Who was Alfred Dreyfus?



Dreyfus

CAPTAIN Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish member of the French general staff, was convicted in 1894 of spying for Germany and sent to a penal colony on Devil's Island.

Dreyfus was entirely innocent, and eventually this became clear. But even when it came to be widely known that the imprisoned Jewish captain was innocent, there was tremendous resistance by the French military establishment to either exculpating him or

releasing him from captivity.

Their attitude was in parallel to that of the British judge, Lord Denning, who said recently that it was better for the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, the Irish men wrongly jailed in the '70s, to rot in jail, than for the British judicial system to be discredited by having to admit their innocence.

But there was more to it: anti-semitism. The facts of the case in question, Dreyfus's innocence or guilt and his fate rotting on Devil's Island, became less and less important as all of France polarised for and against "Dreyfus." The case became on one side a rallying point for all the anti-semitic, chauvinist and Catholic traditionalists in France.

On the other side the Republicans, the Radicals, the Democrats, and the working-class left — part of it reluctantly, suspicious of such a non-socialist issue — took up the cause of Dreyfus like people who knew that they were fighting for the soul of France, and that the outcome of this struggle would determine the state of French politics for a long

time to come. For a time it looked as if even civil war was not ruled out.

Finally the left won, routing the right. After four years Dreyfus was released and reinstated. The forces who won this victory dominated French politics for the next 40 years, overshadowing the right. After 1940, the political descendants of the "anti Dreyfusards" helped the Nazis to round up Jews for systematic murder.

Emile Zola was the outstanding hero of the Dreyfus case. When all legal recourse seemed exhausted with the acquittal of the real traitor Esterhazy by a court martial which believed he was guilty, Zola deliberately courted imprisonment by publishing — on the front page of *L'Aurore* — an open letter to the President of the Republic under the famous title, "J'Accuse." There he spelled out the truth about Dreyfus.

It was the turning of the tide. Sentenced to a term in jail for libel against the head of the army, General Billot, the sixty-year old man fled to London. He died, asphyxiated by leaking gas, in 1902.

Who was Jesus Christ?

Was Jesus the King of the Jews?



By Rob Dawber

LAST WEEK concluded a survey of the first parts of the Christian Gospels, those covering the Nativity. These are presumed to be the mainstay of the Jesus story, but it is already apparent that the popular myth that exists is at best an interpretation of the texts we have. This is to leave aside for the moment the question of to what extent the texts themselves are original, or — to quote Celsus quoted by Eusebius — refashioned "three times, four times and many times."

We have learnt to read them in a particular way, to believe in a particular meaning. But this cursory enquiry has revealed that there are other possible interpretations, and one other especially.

Was Jesus "King of the Jews"? Or at least a pretender to national leader at a time when this role was intimately bound up with the idea of being chosen to lead by God? Maybe he was just a fighter, indignant at the injustice of Roman rule, whose followers cast him in the role of messiah?

The royal line of David had been cut short by the Babylonian invasion of 597 BC, when King Jehoiakim had to witness the murder of all his sons before being blinded himself. There had been many would-be Messiahs since, all of them proving their worth by the ability to fight the current oppressive foreign or homegrown government in the name of God's Law.

If they failed in their fight then they could not possibly be the Messiah as their failure was evidence that they were not favoured by God; but if they succeeded?

The quote earlier from the Gospel of John best sums this idea up — Jesus was not born in Bethlehem or of the line of David, but otherwise did seem to fill the requirements of the Messiah. Matthew and Luke invent genealogies to "prove" he was the Messiah, which idea of "Messiah" we have been educated to interpret in a heavenly, other-worldly way. But if we interpret it in a political, earthly way we have a different light to cast on the whole Jesus story.

The Jews were suffering under the Roman Empire, the greatest and most successful slave hunt in history, as it entered its final period of decline and economic decay. The call for the "Messiah Joshua" (or in ancient Greek "Christ Jesus") was not at all an appeal to someone who represented peace in an everlasting life after death. Rather it was a revolutionary slogan. The first Joshua had conquered the land for the Jews; if he should come again, or someone in his name, then perhaps he could conquer it again. It was a call for someone who would lead the people in their final assault, someone who would lead them to freedom in the here and now.

But this particular assault, as with many others, failed. Jesus, so all the records tell us, ended up crucified. That in its turn gave an impetus to those, Gnostics (from the Greek 'gnosis', knowledge), who said that it was wrong to try in the first place and who argued that redemption was not for this world but for another. And there were others who tried to present defeat as victory, partly as an attempt to discourage further reckless assaults. Seeing your leader hanging from a cross, as the Romans sought to make an example, wasn't the end, they argued. That was really the victory.

Desperate, particularly after the defeat of the Jewish War of 66-70AD, there were those, in increasing numbers, who wanted to believe this.

That this is what happened isn't just a matter of assertion or speculation. It can be shown to be true by a close analysis of the Gospels themselves.

The first example looked at, the Nativity, is however both a good and a bad example when looking for an answer to the question, who was Jesus Christ? It is good because it shows us that what passes as being generally accepted as a New Testament story is based on very little, and that what little there is is contradictory both within and between the different Gospels. It puts us on our guard when reading what follows. It is bad because it allows of no real useful comparisons between the Gospels other than straightforward contradiction.

But it is such comparisons that are the most fruitful. Comparing subtle and not so subtle textual variations allows the Gospels to be chronologically ordered, the viewpoints of the authors to be discerned, some sense of the person they are centrally interested in to be extracted. And comparing this with what we know to have been happening in the world outside the minds of the Gospel writers we can see a process of deification — of a man turned into a God.

• Next week: *Jesus is baptised by John the Baptist.*

Put children first



Belinda Weaver

reviews

Children First

by Penelope Leach

£14.99

Michael Joseph

THE MESSAGE is clear: children need their parents but often can't have them because work takes too long, it's too far away, and bosses refuse to allow parental leave.

For those children with stay-at-home parents, life is often constricted and saddened by poverty.

Leach condemns British society where the marketplace is everything, where anything *not* in the marketplace, anything not done for money (as parenthood isn't) is seen as peripheral. Society, as she puts it, "is nothing but the children we were, the children we have had, the children we have now and those they will have in the future" — but children come last, not first.

Children, and parents, have to fit in to a society geared to the unencumbered individual adult, the "economic man" of capitalism, as if they were marginal exceptions.

Parents aren't helped to succeed, but they're blamed if they fail.

Leach's answer is to change the rules we live under, to make society more child-centred.

First, and most important, she says, is to lift parents out of poverty. There are many factors that put children at risk, but all are exacerbated by poverty. All would be less dangerous without poverty.

She argues that inflexible work practices must change, that jobs should be brought back to local communities (both to rebuild local life and to cut out stressful, polluting, time-wasting commuting) and that parents should be encouraged to believe that they are doing a valuable job.

She believes that each community could have safe "child places" for children to go while their parents work. These places could also incorporate baby and child clinics, health services, advice and counselling services, as well as being a community meeting place.

You'd expect the Tories and their ilk to hate the book, but the liberals have jumped on it as well. It was dismissed as "Grow your own job" in one *Guardian* piece. The *Independent on Sunday* was aggrieved that Leach had spawned a generation of guilty, over-worked parents with her previous books, childcare manuals like *Baby and Child*.

The *IoS* also ran a piece last year about parents tyrannised by "little emperors", and



Penelope Leach: denouncing market madness

the *Guardian* recently ran a piece ridiculing the idea of children's rights by Catherine Bennett, whose "Spoiling the child: the case against modern parenting" was shown on television in March.

Bennett claims modern parents are guilt-ridden, over-indulgent child-worshippers, creating a race of selfish and demanding monsters. Bennett's sneering implies there is an obvious, common-sense way to raise children, very different from the "excesses" of these foolish creatures — tell them what's what, a sharp smack when they're out of line, and everything will be straightforward.

Bennett also argues that since children would one day stop being children, they aren't really oppressed and thus do not need

human rights.

The notion of children's rights is difficult for some. They see children as vulnerable but irrational creatures who need protection, not rights.

Leach thinks they need both. She knows that the mere existence of rights will not eliminate child beating and child sexual abuse, yet the possession of rights will support children who are badly treated, and may encourage more of them to seek help when they need it.

In her book she shows that the denial of children's rights is commonplace. "Even notices in shop windows that state 'Only two unaccompanied children permitted at a time' are sometimes shrugged off as 'unfortunate-

ly realistic'...

[But] if a shopkeeper could show that black people were responsible for more thefts from his shop than white people, would it be acceptable for him to put up a notice reading 'Only two blacks at a time'?"

Most Leach-bashing is ill-informed, or based on wilful distortions. In her childcare manuals Leach does try to educate her readers about children and their development, something no parent, not even a mother, "instinctively" knows. What people do with the information is up to them.

But there is no formal preparation for parenthood in society; many people have no contact with babies and children before they become parents; parents these days mostly learn on the job. Her books are for them. They are maps to unfamiliar territory, not straitjackets.

Leach suggests that child development be taught as part of schooling, partly so that people can do a better job when they become parents, but also to help people make a very important decision: whether to have children at all.

For those who do, and who want or need to return to work afterwards, Leach discusses the existing (and often unsuitable or inadequate) childcare options. She thinks that most care options — childminding, nannies, nurseries — are simply not as good for a child's early development (up to age three) as parents are.

Above age three she believes that children need the stimulus of nurseries. She prefers childminding for under-threes because it most closely mimics the home — familiar carer going about daily and family tasks — but wishes that more parents could stay home with their children.

Of course, some parents don't want to stay at home, and Leach has no quarrel with that, but she believes many more parents would stay home with their children if they could afford it; if the work of childcare were more valued; and if there was no penalty for it in the job market.

In Leach's ideal world, mothers would breastfeed, and mothers and fathers could spend reasonably well-paid months at home with their tiny children without losing their jobs. When they did go back to their (local) jobs, they would have free and flexible options for childcare. Their supermarket would have people-with-children checkouts (with no sweets on display), there would be child-sized toilets in restaurants and shops, their children would be welcome in the world.

Leach doesn't have a map to get to this world; she has no programme for achieving it beyond urging parents and politicians to fight for it. That's where we come in. Leach has shown what could be, and should be. The rest is up to us.

The real meaning of body-line



Gary Scott reviews

Beyond a Boundary

by CLR James

READERS OF *Socialist Organiser* may be aware of CLR James's political and historical writings. CLR James was also a well respected cricket correspondent and *Beyond a Boundary* is a cricket classic.

Beyond a Boundary is both a book about cricket and autobiography. It deals with the values and ideas that influenced CLR James's early life, values embodied in the game of cricket.

He recalls an afternoon in 1956 when he

listened to a speech by Aneurin Bevan ridiculing concepts like "playing with the team," "keeping a stiff upper lip" and "playing with a straight bat" — all cricketing expressions.

While the audience laughed James could only smile "but not wholeheartedly." He writes: "Mr. Bevan had dropped a single sentence that tolled like a bell, 'I did not join the Labour Party, I was brought up in it.' And I had been brought up in the public school code."

The main influences in his life apart from cricket were the public schools' moral code and nineteenth century English literature. His favourite novel was Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. He notes the stiff upper and lower lips of Thackeray's heroes, the self-discipline and reserve that typify the English "gentleman."

The development of these characteristics he traces back to the 19th century, to the headmaster of Rugby School, Thomas Arnold. Arnold made organised sport, particularly

cricket, a central part of his boys' education.

Arnold was attempting to:

"create a body of educated men of the upper classes who would resist the crimes of Toryism and the greed and vulgarity of the industrialists on the one hand, and the socialistic claims of the oppressed but uneducated masses on the other."

Trotsky once wrote that "workers were deflected from politics by sport." CLR James could not accept that. His own life refutes Trotsky's assertion. It was a cricketer, Learie Constantine, who helped James develop his understanding of West Indian politics and introduced him to the British labour movement.

James makes out a big case for cricket. He wonders how a book called *The Common People*, by GDH Cole and Raymond Postgate, a social history of the English working class covering the 19th century, can not once mention WG Grace, one of the best known Englishmen of his time.

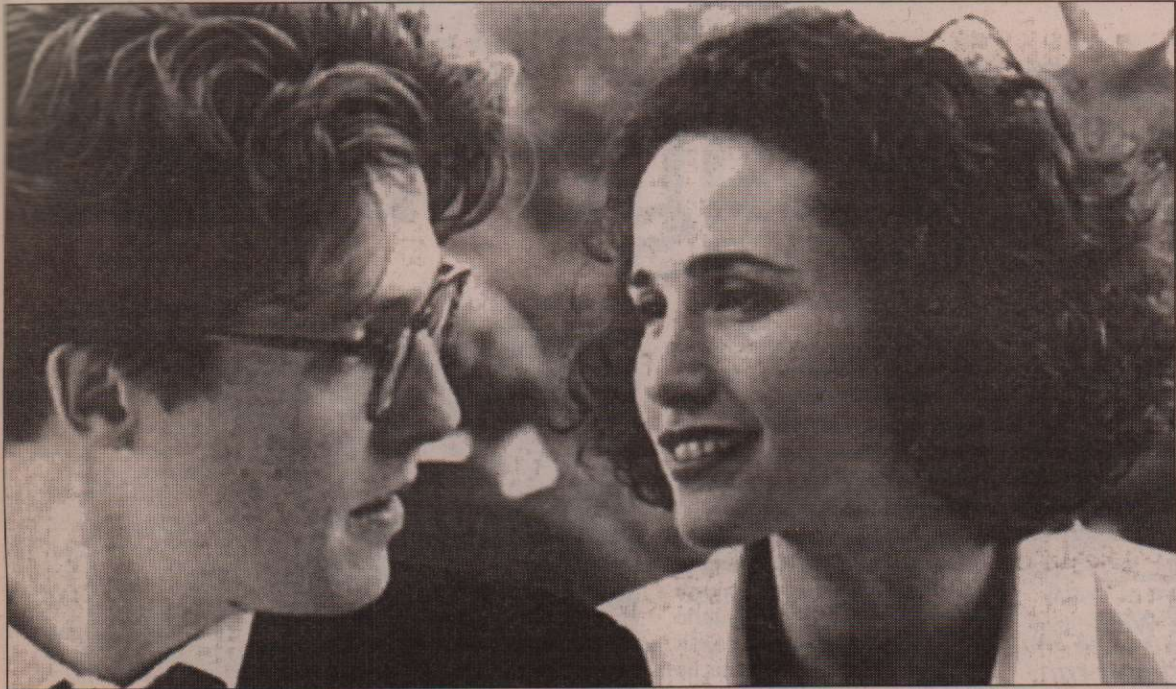
Throughout the book he combines his vast knowledge and understanding of cricket with his political and social insight to shed light on cricketing controversies.

One of the most controversial and well known episodes in cricket history is what became known as the "body-line" series of 1932.

Many cricket historians see "body-line" simply as an attempt to stifle the run-making of Don Bradman. The theory of "body-line," devised by England captain Douglas Jardine, involved the English fast bowlers bowling at the batsman's body rather than the stumps. The batsman would be forced to fend the ball away and be caught.

For CLR James "body-line" was "the blow from which 'it isn't cricket' has never recovered. It was the violence and ferocity of our age expressing itself in cricket."

James notes that the "body-line" tactic was used in the series that followed against India, a side that contained no Bradmans.



Charles and Carrie (Hugh Grant and Andie MacDowell) — more like apparitions than anything rooted in everyday”

A tourist-eye view of Britain



Matt Cooper
reviews

'Four Weddings
and a Funeral'

Directed by
Mike Newell

FOUR WEDDINGS and a Funeral is a sentimental comedy that is neither sentimental nor comic enough. It is not a bad film, it simply is not a good enough film.

The film, you will not be surprised to learn, centres around four weddings and a funeral at which the rather gauche Charles (Hugh Grant) encounters the rather vague — in the sense of faint and ill-defined — Carrie

(Andie MacDowell). She's American but beyond that the character is thinner than a cardboard cut out.

If sentimental comedy is to work

"It deviates from the thoroughly bourgeois when slipping into the aristocratic."

the audience really has to be able to get sentimental over the characters — with MacDowell the only concern is that her character is so

lightweight that the first gust of wind will blow her straight out of the plot.

MacDowell's problem is not hers alone — Grant's declassé character is not so firmly anchored either. It is carried only by a sound portrayal of a certain stereotypical incompetent Englishness. Grant's coterie in the film seem more like apparitions than anything rooted in a society of our everyday experience.

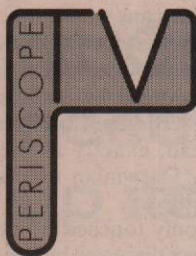
This is a tourist eye view of Britain. It deviates from the thoroughly bourgeois when slipping into the aristocratic. The four weddings are no lager and sausage rolls in the church hall affairs — they are thrown by the rich and powerful. Only the funeral is held on a council estate against the backdrop of a chemical plant. Perhaps a point is being made here about the values of wedding and funerals — but it is too little, too late.

For the most part the film takes its glamour from characters who are Conservative MPs — Corin Redgrave, no less, playing an essentially apolitical, blokish Tory bore, the "seventh richest man in Britain," who drives around in a Land Rover. This chocolate box Britain is an easy setting for romantic comedy, aimed firmly at the American market. It flatters our sensibilities only to deceive.

All of this is a shame since the film does have its good points — the gloss and glamour of the weddings is subverted by a gay couple for whom naming their love, let alone having it recognised through a ceremony, is out of the question. Then there is Charles's deaf brother, a character who might be nauseatingly right-on but proves that disability can be part of jokes rather than the butt of them.

Perhaps the greatest let-down of the film is Richard Curtis's script. Curtis came to fame writing *Blackadder*, but has since found a comfortable niche in selling British films to the Americans (he wrote *The Tall Guy*). In *Four Weddings* he has produced a script that has some very funny lines in it but, alas, too few of them to sustain the film.

Some criminals have all the luck



Wayne Geoffries
previews
*Assignment
and Horizon*

Assignment on BBC2, Tuesday 24 May 7.45pm

ASSIGNMENT covers the human rights trials in Ethiopia of members of the deposed dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam's 'Derg' regime which was responsible for a reign of terror in the mid-'70s which claimed 100,000 lives.

This was round the time that Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were bombing Cambodia into the stone age.

riminals go on trial; oth-

ers, the super criminals who killed millions get a Nobel Prize (Kissinger) or die of old age in bed (Nixon) and have their passing marked by a national day of mourning in "the greatest democracy in the world..."

Horizon BBC2 Monday 23 May 8pm

HORIZON looks back at the last 30 years of scientific progress. The programme hopes to answer the question why 'science' has not solved the world's problems.

Science? Capitalism! New machinery is used to increase exploitation not to improve people's quality of life. If that happens it is a by-product. Profit is the unwavering god. Technology that could eradicate world hunger will not, under capitalism, be used to do that — not unless it can make someone a profit.

Solidarity forever

THE TITLE and chorus of this song are well-known, the words, less so. This is a pity because in 28 lines *Solidarity Forever* punches out the faith of working-class socialism in the vigorous fighting language of the Industrial Workers of the World, for whose militants Ralph Chaplin wrote it in 1915.

The IWW was a class struggle trade-union movement built by the American working class in the early years of this century.

Led by Vincent St John and Big Bill Heywood the IWW was aflame with the spirit of revolutionary syndicalism and socialism.

It urged the workers to "throw the bosses off your back." It used songs like this to spread its message.

When the Union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun,
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?
But the Union makes us strong.

Chorus:

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

For the Union makes us strong.

Is there aught we hold in common with the greedy parasite
Who would lash us into serfdom and would crush us with his might?
Is there anything left but to organise and fight?
For the union makes us strong.

It is we who ploughed the prairies, built the cities where they trade
Dug the mines and built the workshops; endless miles of railroad laid.
Now we stand outcast and starving 'midst the wonders we have made
But the Union makes us strong.

All the world that's owned by idle drones is ours and ours alone.
We have laid the wide foundations, built it skyward stone by stone.
It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own,
While the Union makes us strong.

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.
We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn
That the Union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold.
Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand-fold.
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.
For the Union makes us strong.

The trouble with families



Geoff Ward
reviews 'Family'

BBC1
Sundays 9.30pm

RODDY Doyle's *Family* charts the disintegration of a working-class Dublin family.

Each episode of this gritty four part drama covers events from the perspective of one member of the family. Last Sunday it was 13 year old John Paul.

Doyle vividly brought out the many social pressures which adolescents face.

"The reasons why these things occur lie way beyond 'lack of parental discipline'."

We see John Paul disgusted with his parents when they return home drunk one night, and at the same time himself experimenting with alcohol and glue-sniffing.

We see him react to the uncertainty and fear generated by his parents' vicious rowing by — briefly — running away to the even greater insecurity of life on the streets.

John Paul is gradually being dragged down by his surroundings and he may end up like his father, opting for a life of petty crime.

Little else is on offer.

His teacher's advice, 'pull yourself together', inevitably falls on deaf ears.

The grim realism of *Family* has proved too much for some critics in Ireland. The tower block housing estate in Ballymun is untypical of the Irish republic, they say, hoping to deflect attention from the fact that much of it is typical of much of working-class life in Ireland. All *Family* does is focus and concentrate it for dramatic effect.

John Paul ends up in hospital having his stomach pumped out, and in frustration a doctor lashes out at his mother.

Yet the reasons why these things occur lie way beyond 'lack of parental discipline'. And most to them way beyond the control of individual working class families — except when they act in concert as part of the labour movement.

Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

LANCASTER

Tuesday 24 May,

"How to defend the Welfare State"

7.30 Albert Pub, King Street

LEICESTER

Thursday 2 June,

"Should anti-racists vote Labour?"

Debate between AWL and Inter-Racial solidarity.

7.30 Castle Community Rooms, Tower Street

LONDON

Wednesday 1 June,

"How to defend the Welfare State"

Speakers: Chris Hickey and member of St. Thomas's UNISON
7.30 Callthorpe Arms, 252 Gray's Inn Road

LEEDS

Thursday 2 June,

"Did D-Day bring freedom?"

7.30 Adelphi Pub.

MANCHESTER

Saturday 4 June,

"The fight for workers' liberty" Dayschool

10.30 - 5.00, The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road.

CANTERBURY

Tuesday 24 May,

"How do we win women's liberation?"

7.30 Keynes College, UKC

BIRMINGHAM

Thursday 19 May

"Socialism or Islam"

Debate between AWL and Hizb-ut-taharir

2.00, University of Central England SU, Penny Bar site.

East Midlands Conference in Defence of Pensions, Benefits and Welfare Rights

Saturday 21 May
International Community Centre,
Mansfield Road,
Nottingham,
10am to 4pm
Discussions on pension rights, defending public services, universal benefits and building a united movement against the attacks

DEBATE

Italian fascism's links to the ruling class

DEBATE

By Jim Taylor CAFE

MARTIN THOMAS in his article "Is Fascism a Conspiracy" seems to misunderstand the point the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe is trying to make about the role of the P2 Masonic Lodge in the election victory in Italy of Silvio Berlusconi's far right alliance of which the most powerful component part is the fascist MSI.

We do not see it in terms of a conspiracy, but for the first time since the Second World War major sections of big business have backed fascism. The question is — what was the role of P2, of which Berlusconi is a prominent

member, in influencing the "strategists of capital" into supporting the MSI?

When P2 was exposed, its 2400 members included 953 of the most powerful men in Italy, including cabinet ministers, leading bankers and

"P2 was founded and run by L Gelli, one of Italy's top fascists."

industrialists, top civil servants, generals, admirals, and the directors of the three intelligence services.

P2 was founded and run by

L. Gelli, one of Italy's top fascists. During the war he was an officer in the German SS and in 1945 he helped leading Nazis escape to Latin America. He was very close with Stefano delle Chiaie, leader of the NAR, which carried the Bologna bombing in 1980 in which 85 people were murdered. Within P2 delle Chiaie was appointed by Gelli as "regulator", this means he would be in charge of discipline.

Despite changing its name and image the MSI leopard, which for 45 years was clearly fascist, has only changed its spots to deceive the voters and a gullible foreign media. Meanwhile, MSI leader Gianfranco Fini states that Mussolini was "the greatest statesman of all time."

The origins of the MSI are



Fini" admirer of Mussolini

rooted in the Salo Republic, the most vicious, brutal and degenerate period of Mussolini's reign. Set up by Hitler, Salo was pure Nazi ideology; consequently the MSI was closer to Nazi Germany than Fascist Italy,

and many of the front groups it spawned, like the sieg-heiling thugs who joined Fini to celebrate on election night, are openly Nazi.

Fascism is a mass movement to destroy totally, with absolute ruthlessness and violence all the organisations of the working class and all democratic rights and to impose the most brutal dictatorship which rules by a reign of terror and mass murder.

Today most fascisms are Nazi in ideology, which means they are based on, first, racism and anti-semitism, followed by "biological racism" and "conspiracy anti-semitism", and then, inevitably genocide.

Martin is absolutely right: the decisive battles are still to come. Meanwhile Berlusconi and Fini will not go immediately for full blown fascism, but will employ the salami tactic, destroying the working class organisations and democratic rights slice by slice.

Socialist Outlook: back on form

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Chris Reynolds

WHAT? Socialist Outlook having the nerve and grit and independence of mind to defy prejudices and take a stand unpopular in the broader left? Never!

So we used to think. Then on 26 March we stood rebuked: Outlook published an article by South African socialist Salim Vally arguing the case for the Workers' List in South Africa's elections, against the ANC.

"We are aware that our standing in the election serves primarily to increase our

profile and raise working-class demands... [But] we feel we have an enormous responsibility here to hold up the banner of real democracy, socialism and independent workers' struggle, and also to expose the role of those who have for years held up the Stalinist societies as examples of socialism".

It was too good to be true. In its 14 May issue Outlook creeps back into the great left-liberal pro-ANC consensus.

"Although some tiny left-wing groups have... run a propaganda campaign to warn people of the dangers of a future government of national unity, the ANC has managed to draw nearly all sections of the mass movement behind its... pro-

gramme..."

The editorial tries to keep a front of principle. It emphasises, with a great show of stern criticism and Marxist rigour, that the new government (with F W De Klerk, Pik Botha, and the National Party's Derek Keys as finance minister) is not after all "a workers' or socialist government".

Outlook is for class independence (their oh-so-militant italics) from the ANC-National-Party coalition — in general. But a direct political challenge to that coalition, in particular? No.

Trotsky used to call this combination of militancy in abstract, and feebleness on concrete issues, *centrism*.

The Language of the genes



READERS may remember my enthusiastic accounts of the 1993 BBC Reith Lectures which were, for once, by a scientist. This was Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics at University College, London, and he gave six highly accessible and interesting talks on genetics, dwelling in a very human way on how genetics affects our lives, not neglecting the negative ways that pseudo genetic arguments have been used to oppress or even exterminate minorities in many societies. Now, Jones has expanded his talks into an absorbing book, with much new material.

Genetics is a young science, it being barely a century since the work of Mendel on inheritance in pea plants was redis-

covered. It is only forty years since the discovery of the structure of DNA showed how genes were constructed and how they could be passed on. It was soon realised how genes could be altered, thus revealing how natural selection was able to produce new species.

Jones describes the sorry history of human genetics, with the ignorant beliefs of scientists, let alone the ordinary bigot in the street, that genes explained criminality, stupidity, genius and the supposed defects of oppressed groups in various societies. But he points out that only now, after a couple of decades of intensive research, are we in a position to start understanding human genetics.

Modern knowledge presents very little opportunity for "eugenics", the misguided attempt to "improve" the human genetic stock by preventing certain groups from breeding, pursued in Nazi Germany and in democratic USA in the 1930s and 1940s. Nowadays, people likely to pass on life-threatening genes

to their offspring are more and more able to receive help and advice, a state of affairs more akin to true "eugenics".

Human genetic knowledge reveals that the concept of "race" has no basis in science. The skin colour genes are distributed on an environmental basis, with peoples remotely related having similar skin colours because they live in similar environments. If the different colours corresponded to true races, then many other genes would be distributed in a similar way. However, this is not found. To take the example of the ABO blood groups, the B group is very rare in England, but common in central Russia and West Africa. Those racists keen on the "purity" of the blood should classify the central Russians and West Africans in the same racial group, one different from that of the English. But Jones rather sadly notes that, while racists can no longer rely on genetics for support, this is unlikely to alter their views. By definition, prejudice has no need of facts.

The distribution of individual genes in human populations can tell us a lot about the history of various groups. The genes of the Basques in northern Spain and southern France show that they have been relatively isolated for 18,000 years, since the last Ice Age. Their European neighbours are far more recent arrivals.

Another blood group system, the so-called Duffy genes, exist in African and European variants. The Black population of North America possess some 25% European Duffy genes, evidence of considerable crossing of the "racial" barrier. A smaller proportion of so-called whites possess Duffy genes of African origin.

The sickle-cell gene, which is found largely in malarial regions of West Africa where it helps protect against malaria, also carries historical knowledge. North American black people may carry it, since they originated in West Africa, but different sickle-cell genes are found in different parts of the USA, showing, for example, that black people in the

north largely came from Nigeria while those in the south came from countries further to the west. A small population of "white" people in southern Portugal also possess West African sickle-cell genes. These must have been brought over by Africans whose other genes were swamped by those of the local population. But, in an area ravaged by malaria, the sickle-cell genes survived and spread, exactly as predicted by Darwinian natural selection theory.

I have only touched on the many topics discussed by Steve Jones. He gives ironic thanks to the science research funding bodies which, starved of funds by the government, have failed to support his research. This has led him to spend more time on journalism, broadcasting and writing. Science research's loss is our gain, however. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. I think you will not only learn from it but enjoy it, too.

• **The Language of the Genes** by Steve Jones. Flamingo (HarperCollins), £7

UNISON conference report

Labour right in factional frenzy

By a UNISON member

PROGRESS on the UNISON (NALGO-NUPE-COHSE) mergers in the branches seems shaky, but the behaviour of the old NUPE right wing at UNISON's first conference (Bournemouth 15 - 18 May) seemed set to widen the gulf between the old unions, possibly to breaking point.

Conference started with some excellent votes overturning the

National Executive. An increase in the time allocated to discussing rule changes was won, along with the reference back of a proposal to ban the discussion of Labour Party issues at Conference.

The factional frenzy then whipped up among old NUPE and COHSE branches by Tom Sawyer and others clearly showed these Labour right-wingers' total lack of commitment to progressive merger.

The ex-NUPE Labour Right

is utterly determined to prevent UNISON having a collective voice in the Labour Party. There were even attempts by the National Executive to ban motions from the orders paper because they conflict with Labour's policies.

Motions calling for action on pay were lost.

A call for solidarity action in the Health Service debate was carried. Fighting for jobs rather than pay seemed to be conferences' main concern. A motion

linking pay cuts to job losses would have united the two issues.

Democracy in the union has been a big issue this year. An emergency motion from the Liverpool Branch is being put to conference deploring the fact that the branch has been told that it can't convene an AGM or elect shop stewards or branch officers.

Following an unofficial strike against racism in a Day Centre, the Branch Secretary Judy

Cotter, who opposed the action, reported the stewards involved. The General Secretaries leaped at the chance to close the branch down, refusing members the right to hold their leaders accountable. Now some stewards face disciplinary action, possibly expulsion, though they still haven't been told of the "charges" against them.

The issue in Liverpool is the right of stewardss and members to take action and hold

their leadership account.

Sunday night of conference saw the ridiculous spectacle of two "left-unity" meetings held at the same time in different venues. We need a united left, built on branches, allowing the fullest democracy, and preventing any one group from imposing a monopoly.

To campaign effectively in the coming years UNISON clearly need full branch mergers, lay member control and a single affiliated political fund.

Defence of the Welfare State and full employment

Maxine Jordan, UNISON Manchester

AT THIS week's UNISON Conference, delegates passed motions in defence of the Health Service and the Welfare State.

A fringe meeting, organised by the Full Employment Forum, discussed the need for Labour to commit itself to full employment as a central focus of a future Labour Government and to defend the Welfare State. Labour MPs Dawn Primarolo and Roger Berry talked about how an increase in public spending could be paid for by taxing the rich.

On full employment, Dawn Primarolo said this should mean full employment for all, a national minimum wage, and a commitment to positive rights for trade unionists, including the right to take secondary action. Overall, the discussion focused on winning the battle of ideas on

such basic principles.

UNISON on Monday passed two important motions. One, in defence of the NHS, committed itself to campaign to take Trust Hospitals back into the NHS — campaigning "to take place within the labour movement, including where appropriate making representatives to appropriate political parties" — and also to campaign in defence of jobs and services and provide leadership and support to members taking strike action. The motion passed in defence of the Welfare State and universal benefits made the link with full employment, and committed UNISON to campaigning vigorously on this.

Now that this has been agreed on a national level, activists should bring the campaign into their local UNISON branches, and commit their Labour Party wards and constituencies to campaigning on a national and local level.

Defend the Darnall 8!

"NO JUSTICE, No Peace" was the message from an angry mass picket of a Sheffield Police Station last Monday. A large crowd of over 500 people came to protest against racist policing after the arrests of 8 young men, 6 of whom were Asian, over the May Bank Holiday. The size of the protest clearly showed the strength of feeling in the local community and across the city.

The mass picket of Attercliffe Police Station was organised by the Darnall Defence Campaign which was set up following the arrests. The Campaign is calling for an end to police harassment, the dropping of the charges and for an independent inquiry into racist policing at Attercliffe Police Station. A second mass picket has been called for 1 Magistrates Court when the first cases are due to be heard.

• The Darnall Defence Campaign can be contacted at 447 Redmires Rd, Lodgemoor, Sheffield S10 4LF.

UCW: fight for the shorter working week

POST

THIS YEAR'S postal workers' union (UCW) conference is taking place against the backdrop of an increasing management offensive.

Royal Mail managers at Divisional level have been trying it on up and down the country. Their drive has been to by pass or side step existing national agreements to weaken the union and victimise activists.

This has led to a series of unofficial local strikes in the last few months, most notably the week long dispute in Liverpool which started with an unofficial walkout after a bullying manager picked on a worker with a stutter.

It will be difficult to pinpoint any single issue as the most important next week, but the shorter working week will provide a focus for people's concern over jobs and management's productivity drive.

As one Manchester Postal worker commented: "The shorter working week is very important as it could potentially lead to national industrial action later this year. We will be arguing that it's important for the executive council to do something about it! All we've had so far from the leadership is one letter to management and one informing the members. But even that hasn't been done properly. For example our

branch received just 200 copies from head office for a membership of 5,000."

The week could be very chaotic indeed as delegates have been suddenly bombarded in the last few days with a series of supplementary reports from the Executive on every issue under the sun. Many suspect a conspiracy to push through unpopular policies without proper discussion, but it is perhaps more likely to be a simple cock-up. The EC simply have no clear idea what they are doing or where they are going. This can be seen very clearly with their response to being knocked back by the members after attempting to ram through a productivity deal in Royal Mail. They have simply held up their hands and said: "You tell us what to do. We don't know."

• As we go to press, Michael Heseltine has announced privatisation plans for most of the Post Office. Only serious industrial action can stop this Tory attack.

BIFU conference — for a 28 hour / 4 day working week.

BANKING

THE MASSIVE job losses across the banking, insurance and finance sector will dominate discussion at next week's BIFU conference.

Delegates should support the call for the union to put forward a claim for a 28 hour / four day working week with no loss of pay as a workers' answer to the jobs crisis. National strike action will be needed to win this claim. (Full report next week.)

CPSA right win elections

CIVIL SERVICE

LEFT ACTIVISTS in the low paid civil service workers union CPSA found the results of this year's Executive elections a big shock.

Many were hoping that the poll would see a majority of Unity supporters elected and that this would lead to a campaign of industrial action against the Tory attacks. But the right wing has regained and slightly increased their control over the executive.

There are several reasons for this: Firstly, the General

Secretary interfered in the ballot with a biased insert attacking Unity. Secondly, the ballot paper was so constructed as to present the "Democratic Left," a tiny unrepresentative group of Labour right wing careerists, as the legitimate left wing opposition to the "Moderates".

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the leaderships failure to organise a serious fight against the Tory attack has produced a great deal of cynicism and fatalism amongst ordinary members.

• Next week: where now for the CPSA left?

NUCPS: left needs to sharpen up its act

By an NUCPS delegate

NUCPS'S FINANCIAL crisis dominated most of Conference week, pay and Market Testing being relegated to one morning. The end result: little to take the union forward.

The Broad Left meeting attracted over fifty to hear speakers from all the factions on the way forward on jobs and pay. Both Unity (the old Stalinist faction) and Membership First (based on Customs and other smaller areas) put forward few ideas other than a very defensive strategy which is

presently leading to a haemorrhaging of jobs and constant attacks on conditions.

The decision by DsHSS and DoE/DoT sections to take strike action in defence of jobs and against privatisation needs to be extended, with the announcement of 20% cuts across the board in DOT and the winning by IBM of the DsHSS IT Support Agency (ITSA) contract.

There was an openness to new ideas and debate all week, but the Broad Left need to ensure that its ideas are sharpened up and that it campaigns effectively amongst the NUCPS members.

Ideas For Freedom Workers' Liberty '94 Friday 8-Sunday 10 July

Caxton House, Archway, North London

GUEST SPEAKER Neville Alexander, a leader of the South African Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), and a Workers' List candidate in the recent elections, will be speaking on Saturday 9 July at Workers' Liberty '94

This year at Workers' Liberty...

THREE SHORT COURSES introducing Marxist politics.

A • Why does capitalism have crises? • What is imperialism? Introduced by Martin Thomas

B • Can people really change? • What will socialism be like? C • Why a working class revolution? • Does socialism mean state tyranny? Introduced by members of the Socialist Organiser Editorial Board.

RUSSIA Hillel Ticktin and Bob Arnot from the journal Critique discuss the crisis in Russia. Where is Russia going?

OTHER INTERNATIONAL SUBJECTS Include briefings on • Brazil • Mexico • South Korea • Nigeria.

Debates on • Ireland • Middle East • Class Nature of the Stalinist states.

THE LEFT *Revolutionary History* are sponsoring a three-part course discussing the development of post-war British Trotskyism.

Speakers include Al Richardson. RACE AND CLASS We look at • After Millwall, what next for Britain's anti-fascists? • The

history of black people in Britain • What is happening to the Asian family • Why is America so racist? CRIME AND

PUNISHMENT Sessions include • Is there an alternative to the police? • What should be done to the prison system?

Workers' Liberty is an annual event to promote political debate on the left. All major issues which face socialists — from the politics of beating the Tories to issues of sex and sexuality — are discussed.

Cheap food, entertainment, a bar and accommodation are available. There is a professionally staffed creche.

For full agenda / ticket fill in and send to: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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BEFORE END OF JUNE: £7 (unwaged), £11 (low-waged/students), £16 (waged). Subtract £1 (unwaged) and £2 (other) for Saturday-Sunday tickets only. Cheques payable to "WL Publications."

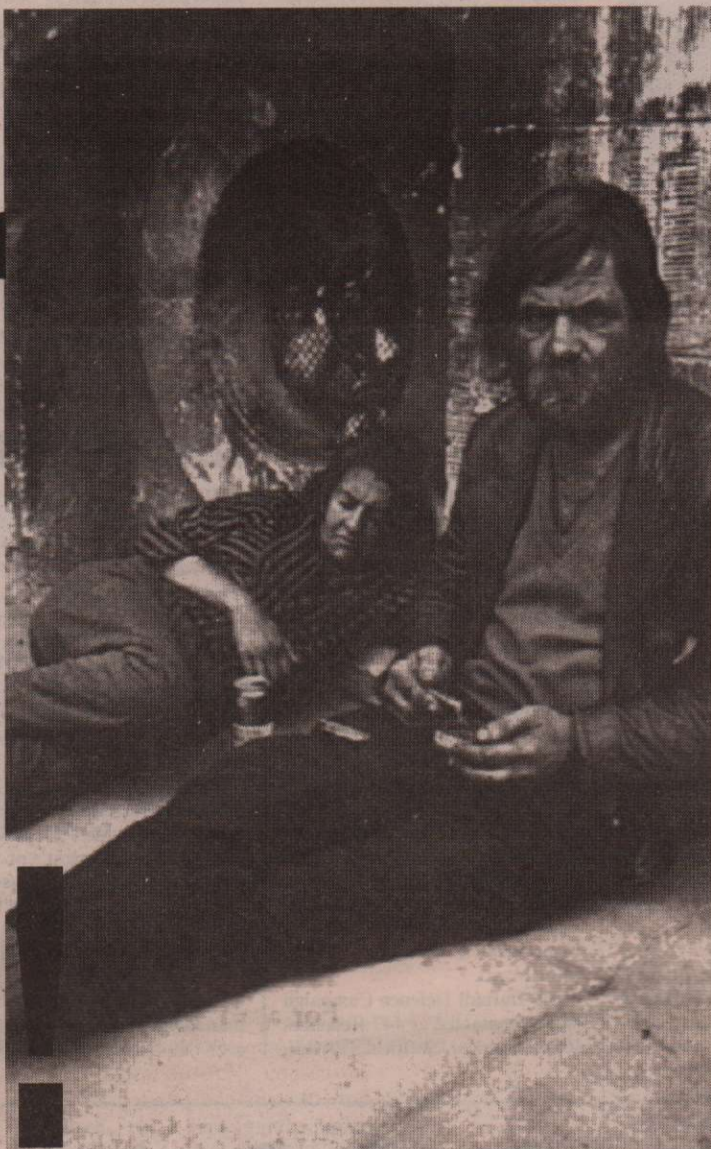
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Send us a birthday present!

Westminster council corruption: what price a Tory flagship?

Beggars Dame Shirley!



Westminster's homeless — not the sort of stable community Dame Shirley had in mind!

By Joan Trevor

SUPPOSE THIS is a board game puzzle: you are a hard-pressed Tory council leader; how do you go about conjuring up a badly needed 1,132 additional Tory votes? Pay 13 grand out of public money each to working-class tenants living in key marginal wards to make them go away. Then sell off their empty council flats to Tory-voting yuppies. Great! Can you think of other ways of conjuring up Tory votes?

Export 100 ex-homeless out of the borough, then sell off Ambrosden Hostel to property developers who'll turn it into 40 luxury flats — 40 more Tory votes! Cost? Half a million to rehouse the current residents; sell the hostel, worth £2.75 million, for £630,000.

You might also consider a little judicious favouritism, for example, spend £6.5 million on high profile clean-up campaigns targeted particularly at those key marginal wards.

But this is no game!

These were the sort of calculations Dame Shirley

Porter and her understudies made and the price they were prepared to pay with Westminster rate-payers' money to keep Westminster council Tory. This was revealed in *Panorama*, 16 May, in a programme the cowardly BBC had held off showing until after the recent local government elections.

All this villainy happened in the run-up to the 1990 local government elections.

About that time the District Auditor stepped in to investigate abuses by the Westminster Tory administration — such as their sell-off of cemeteries on valuable ground to developers for, literally, pennies.

The District Auditor's four-year investigation revealed, amongst other abuses, extensive gerrymandering — rigging the demographic make-up of wards to benefit the party in power. The Tories systematically turned council properties into luxury accommodation to replace the working-class people living there with "natural" Tory voters.

They called their campaign, "Building Stable Communities." Bitter Westminster council employees renamed it "Building Safer Constituencies."

To help Westminster North Tory MP — now Sir — John Wheeler, Dame Shirley, Deputy David Weeks and Chief Whip Barry Legge were prepared to undermine Tory national policy.

Part of the Tories' housing legislation was "Tenants' Choice" whereby council tenants could take their estates out of local government control, the long-term aim being to undermine public housing provision and make more Tory-minded voters.

One estate in Paddington, the Walerton and Elgin, fancied that and prepared a bid for the Housing Corporation who had the power to decide if they should stay under council control.

The Westminster Tories' problem was that they couldn't afford to wait that long. They needed more "natural" Tory voters quickly and therefore wanted the estate to stay in council control: that way they could carry on paying working-class people to go away, and replacing them with yuppies.

So, while in public they applauded the tenants' bid for freedom from the council, behind the scenes they plotted to keep the Walerton and Elgin under their control, going to the extraordinary lengths of setting

up bogus residents' campaigns against Tenants' Choice, and "investigating the backgrounds" of Housing Corporation staff with a view — what else? — to blackmailing them!

Weren't these just the maverick acts of out-of-control Tories? Not at all!

Dame Shirley went repeatedly to the Department of Environment asking for dubious grants like a "visitors' grant," in recognition of the wear and tear to her borough caused by tourists. In the run-up to the 1990 elections she sent the DOE a paper called "Electoral disaster!" — presumably outlining the difficulties she anticipated holding on to Westminster if the government didn't help her out financially.

The Tories feared they would lose Westminster especially as the poll tax was not the model low rate of £275 but £428.

The government knew what the Westminster Tories were about and they did not let them down. For Labour to win Westminster or Wandsworth, the Tories' other flag-ship borough, would be too devastating for the Tories.

So they indulged in a flurry of grant-giving which, with Dame Shirley's last-minute cost-cutting exercises, brought Westminster's poll tax down to £270 — the second-lowest in the country. (The lowest was that of another borough beginning with "W".)

Labour, and those unions representing the staff pressurised by politicians into implementing these illegal and corrupt policies must stop it happening ever again!

The District Auditor has recommended a £21 million surcharge on Dame Shirley and her associates for their corrupt waste of public money. Now the case will go to either a public inquiry or to court.

But it won't end there. A group of Westminster residents has instructed lawyers to investigate further with a view to suing the Tory administration for crimes like those outlined above.

The final surcharge might exceed £40 million.

Dame Shirley, David Weeks, Barry Legge, Sir John Wheeler and all those ministers at the DOE who helped them should be beggared for what they did in Westminster.

But will they? We'll see.

THIS IS *Socialist Organiser* no.600. 600 issues of a socialist newspaper is a hell of a lot of newsprint — and a hell of a lot of struggle against a hostile environment.

Sustaining the paper is a continuous battle, especially in these lean times for socialists. The recent experience of others will put this into perspective.

In September 1991 a fortnightly called *socialist* was launched by well-heeled middle-class lefties who at one point told the interested bourgeois press that they had delayed the paper's launch in order not to miss the college lecturers when they returned from the summer holiday.

They got quite a lot of support from such people, amassing a vast launch fund of some tens of thousands of pounds. Their journalists were to be paid commercial rates; trade unions would give them advertising; they would be "non-sectarian" and so would have the good will of everyone from the Scottish Nationalists to the *Morning Star* left; WH Smith would circulate the paper for them.

The paper began, after a number of false starts, with a great fanfare and much self-importance. One of its leading lights, the daughter of a Liberal MP and a woman with more money than sense, upbraided a *Socialist Organiser* seller on a march because she saw the large-type "Socialist" on our masthead as an attempt to pre-empt the then still-only-a promise *socialist*!

Yet this new milestone for the left lasted only a few months before going monthly, and then soon ceased publication. They had not understood the ABC conditions of publishing a socialist paper in conditions like ours.

In the first place, you must have ideas and the belief that they matter and are worth sacrificing and working for. That does not have to mean dogmatism or intolerance, and it is not incompatible with a paper like *Socialist Organiser* that often proceeds by way of debate. It does mean that you take your own ideas seriously, that you fight for them when you have to.

The second condition flows from the first, and, as the American socialist James Cannon once put it, this secret is as old as the pharaohs: you need slave labour, in this case voluntary "slave labour." We are not a commercial newspaper, but a paper produced by people who, because they believe in the ideas the paper purveys and develops, are willing to do whatever is necessary, and take wages the paper can afford to pay rather than commercial rates.

Thirdly, you must have a network of devoted readers, on whom (and not on WH Smith) you can rely to sell the paper and take it into the labour movement.

Finally, you must relate to and allow yourself to be regulated by the needs of the working class and the labour movement. You must not submerge it in, or cease to struggle within it for your ideas, but if you do not regulate yourself according to the needs of the labour movement, then you inevitably lose your way.

Socialist understood none of this, and fulfilled not one of these conditions. In consequence a vast amount of money was wasted, and a lot of people had the experience of a needless failure for socialism.

If you, dear reader, think you catch a whiff of envy here, you are not mistaken! *Socialist Organiser* is badly in need of money, and we will gladly take it, without strings, even from college lecturers and other such middle-class riff-raff!

If you have not yet sent us a 600th birthday present, we ask you to think about doing it now. Cheques and postal orders to "WL Publications," PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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