

SOCIALIST

Inside this week



Stop the Criminal Justice Bill!
page 7

Socialists debate Sinn Fein



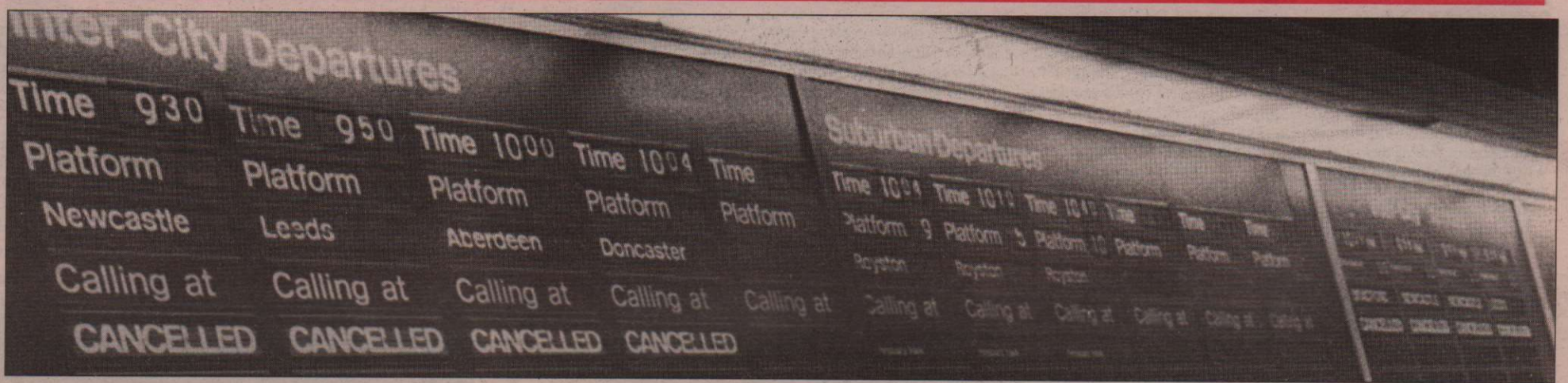
Horror in Rwanda: why it happened
page 5

pages 10 to 13

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

Beat the Tories!



BACK THE SIGNAL WORKERS!

*see
centre
pages*

THEIR FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT

The stakes in the signal dispute

By an S&T worker,
Sheffield RMT

THE SIGNAL workers' dispute has just entered its seventh week. There appears

to be no prospect of a settlement soon.

It will cost Railtrack about £7 million to pay the full demand for an 11 per cent increase. This is less than a tenth of what they have lost.

What is going on?

Railtrack has a direct interest in settling, and indeed it was looking to settle until the Government stepped in. But the Government is funding Railtrack, and has to be pick up

the final bill for the strike losses.

Had the Government not intervened, there would have been a settlement long ago. Knowing the record of union leader Jimmy Knapp, it would probably have been way below the original 11% demand which could easily have been palmed off as a "special case." The productivity increases produced by signal workers over the last decade could have been used as a "model" by a government intent on limiting pay increases only to workers who show "productivity gains."

The best explanation for the government's actions is that they are a fumbling attempt to turn the strike to their advantage.

The "union holding the country to ransom" card has served the Tories well over the last 15 years. They could see no reason, given their overwhelmingly political defeat in the local and European elections, not to play this card again.

Here was a public sector union preventing the "natural" Tory voters in the South East from going to work.

What could have been better?

It seems to have backfired. Instead of the government's stance turning anti-Tory voters into government supporters, it seems to have turned passive anti-Tories into actual signal-workers supporters!

And now a settlement on the signal workers' terms can only look like a government defeat.

But, on the other hand, all previous experience would have suggested that Knapp would have weaselled a deal long before now and got the government and Railtrack off the hook. His main negotiator on these matters, Assistant General Secretary Vernon Hince, has plenty of such deals under his belt and would have found this one a push-over.

Indeed Railtrack have offered him plenty of opportunities for this based around up-front money (which could have been dressed up as an interim pay award) linked to a commitment to discuss restructuring for signal workers.

But Hince has adamantly refused to discuss restructuring until an interim pay award is first of all conceded.

This turnaround has come as

something of a surprise to most union activists.

But the left majority on the executive are intent on winning.

There have been left majorities before which have had some success, but not many have had a major national agreement so blatantly lost due to the mismanagement of a strike ballot by the full-timers on the promotion, transfer and redundancy agreement, which protects rail workers' employment conditions.

Now the left majority on the RMT executive are in a position to make it very difficult for Knapp to sell-out and the government have used Railtrack to pin themselves into a corner.

The longer the strikes go on the greater the hardship for signal workers, particularly those on the lowest grade who are the most numerous. Public and trade union support is vital. No effort should be spared to collect money and get messages of support to signal workers. Build support groups, help them keep up the fight. A victory for the signal workers is a victory for all of us.

How to step up the dispute

Early indications are that the 48 hour three day strike on July 26/27/28 has hit Railtrack hard. While many signal workers obviously look forward to RMT supervisors joining their strikes in August and the boost that will give their action, it is still necessary to look for other ways to step up the dispute industrially.

Don't do the job if it's unsafe.

Rail workers can use the law that provides some protection for workers who stop an unsafe job. All train crews, track workers and others should refuse to go out if they think that the managers running the scab signal boxes are putting them at risk. When this has happened management have not known what to do.

The unions should make it clear

that they will give official backing to anyone who takes such a stand. And we should ensure that refusals to work are collective actions. We should not allow management to pick off individuals. RMT and ASLEF should instruct members not to work on strike days.

Bring forward the pay battle on other issues.

It's great that ASLEF conference has rejected the measly 2.5% offer and decided to ballot for action on pay, the 35 hour week and the PT and R agreement (which provides for job security).

The RMT should immediately start a national strike ballot over pay for the grades that have not yet settled. TSSA should ballot their signal supervisory grade members

alongside the RMT's. This would make possible united action against top-level management attempts to intimidate supervisors into running a dangerous skeleton scab service. Tube workers should strike over this year's lousy pay offer.

Build strike committees. Make it an active strike.

Every RMT branch should set up an open strike committee made up of everyone who is prepared to do the work that needs to be done.

Levies should be set up and collected to finance a hardship fund. This would raise funds and raise the issues. It would create a direct bond between the signal workers and the rest of the workforce.

Flying pickets must be organised to cover every scab box.

Refuse unsafe jobs!

A BIRMINGHAM railworker and RMT member is to face disciplinary action for refusing to work a signal box on strike days. The man, who is an Assistant Movements Inspector (AMI), has been under constant pressure from management to work the box since the strike began. He has argued all along that he is not competent to work the box, as he has received no on-the-job training in any signal box.

He was sent home from work last Wednesday (20 July) and told he must attend a disciplinary meeting the next day. His work-mates immediately staged a 20 minute walk-out in protest.

At the disciplinary meeting the manager present stated "I do not think he at this moment in time is capable of returning to normal duties as an AMI because he's still upset and not thinking clearly." Of course he's upset! So would you be if you had been under pressure for six weeks to do a job that you have not been trained to do, and where you could put people's lives at risk.

As we enter the seventh week of the strike there are increasing reports of Railtrack bosses putting low-grade managers and

supervisory staff into signal boxes who have had only the most minimal amount of signals training. This is in addition to those people who have been asked to do the job if they have worked boxes in the past. In fact Railtrack's bosses devised this policy at the beginning of the strike and they have intended all along to force people to co-operate by threatening disciplinary action.

One Railtrack boss has been quoted in the press as saying: "All our operators are 100% competent and it's not as if we are talking about captaining the Star Ship Enterprise." There speaks someone who knows absolutely nothing about the difficulties and stress of the job and cares nothing about passenger safety.

Railworkers who are asked by management to work signal boxes on strike days — usually because they have had partial training — should refuse. This is strike breaking. It is also putting people's lives at risk.

Railworkers should stage walk-outs and work-to-rule actions if any railworker who refuses to work a box faces disciplinary action.

Defend Taslima Nasrin!

By Sarah Welling

TASLIMA NASRIN, the feminist author from Bangladesh, is in hiding. The state, under pressure from Islamic fundamentalists, issued a warrant for her arrest on 4 June. She is alleged to have made "deliberate and malicious statements outraging the religious feelings of the vast majority of people of Bangladesh."

Her crime? She was quoted in an Indian paper as saying: "The Koran should be revised thoroughly." She says she was misquoted.

The government has already banned one of her books, Shame, for "offending Muslims."

Mass demonstrations have taken place demanding her death. A number of religious bigots have offered

money for her murder. And on 30 June there was a general strike in Dacca in support of killing Nasrin.

More recently, the fundamentalists have surrounded her father, Dr Rajab Ali's, house shouting: "Hang Taslima!"

This is not an isolated incident. The Bangladeshi government has been clamping down on the right to dissent. On 8 June two editors of the Janakhanta daily paper were arrested. Amnesty International commented that "these men have been targeted simply for carrying out their work as journalists and peacefully expressing their opinion." In early June several thousand people attacked the newspaper's offices because it is considered "anti-Islamic" — 15 people were injured.

The Bangladeshi government appears to have been taken by surprise by the degree of outrage its behaviour has caused abroad.

Nasrin has been interviewed in hiding by Australian television.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel has demanded that Nasrin be allowed to leave Bangladesh if she wishes.

Following a campaign initiated



Alliance for Workers' Liberty supporters helped organise a picket of the Bangladeshi High Commission

by Salman Rushdie, the author Gunther Grass appealed to the Bangladeshi Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia, to defend Taslima Nasrin against the fundamentalists' fatwa.

It seems possible that the government knows where Nasrin is hiding but do not want to arrest her: they are worried about the international outcry.

According to the Times of 22 July, Bangladeshi diplomats have been quietly hinting that she should leave the country for political asylum.

The government is clearly susceptible to pressure. • To help Taslima Nasrin write in protest to Dr Yusuf, Bangladeshi High Commission, 28 Queen's Gate, London SW7.

Nigerian strike demands democracy

By Mark Sandell

AS WE GO to press on Tuesday 26 July, a pro-democracy strike by Nigerian oil workers is crippling the Nigerian economy.

The strikers aim to force the military government to step down and let Moshood Abiola, the undeclared winner of the June 1993 presidential election, who is currently in jail for declaring his right to be president, take office.

90 per cent of Nigeria's export earnings come from oil, but production has dropped from 1.89 million barrels a day to as little as 150,000. Last week the capital, Lagos, was at a standstill.

State repression against pro-democracy demonstrations led to 20 deaths in Lagos alone last week. Frank Kokori, the leader of the National Union of Natural Gas Workers, was arrested on 6 June and has since disappeared. Many

other pro-democracy activists, politicians and journalists are in prison for opposing the military regime.

Despite this repression, the strike is solid in most of the industry. The military are playing on tribal differences to weaken the strike. Union leaders in the north, mainly inhabited by Hausa peoples, are refusing to call a strike, but most of the oil industry is based in the south, in mostly Yoruba areas.

Abiola is a Yoruba chief, but won a majority in the whole of Nigeria against the military's favoured candidate in June 1993. The Nigerian military has ruled the country for two thirds of the time since independence.

Initially, the military ignored the strike threat and the unions' demands, believing that the leader of the Nigerian Labour Congress, Pascal Bafyau, who is a self-proclaimed "friend of the Government", would be able to postpone the strike. However, the

Nigerian Labour Congress leaders met in Bafyau's absence, backed the oil unions, demanded Bafyau's return and forced him to back the oil strike.

That the oil workers' strike was able to force the conservative NLC into opposing the Government and raising workers' demands shows the potential to transform the Nigerian labour movement.

The Nigerian labour movement has never gained political independence from the different sections of the Nigerian ruling class. This was true before independence, when workers were used by the Nigerian nationalists as foot-soldiers. It has been true since independence, as the developing Nigerian ruling class has used state funds and appeals to tribal or national allegiance to divide and rule the workers and peasants.

Over the last decade the workers and peasants have been bled dry by the monetarist Structural Development Plan, a scheme

designed by the World Bank to help the Nigerian ruling class force the workers and peasants to pay for Nigeria's economic stagnation

The Nigerian oil workers are absolutely correct to stand up to the military dictatorship. Democratic rights are vital for the workers' movement. But backing Abiola, who is a millionaire and a chief, is no way forward for workers.

The Nigerian workers need a workers' party based on the unions that will fight for workers' demands.

Right now the British labour movement must raise a storm of protest at the military repression in Nigeria, and demand the immediate release of the union leader Frank Kokori and all political detainees. Send protest to: High Commission of Nigeria, Nigeria House, 9 Northumberland Ave, London WC2 5BX. Fax 071-839 8746.

Miners' union promises Labour conference battle over union rights

THE PRELIMINARY agenda for this year's Labour Party conference (in Blackpool, 3 to 7 October) suggests that the key debates are going to be on full employment, the minimum wage, the defence of universal benefits, and trade union rights.

Unfortunately, the big affiliated unions like the TGWU, GMB and USDAW will not be pressing the new Blair leadership to make any firm commitments on the level of a minimum wage or on measures to cut unemployment.

Many resolutions call for Labour to stay committed to universal

benefits, rather than "targetting" or means-testing, but Labour's leaders may well duck a fight on this. Then the key battle will be on trade union rights.

Tony Blair, when he was Labour's front-bench spokesperson on employment, was responsible for wiping all commitments to repeal anti-union laws out of Labour's 1992 manifesto. The National Union of Mineworkers have put in a clear resolution calling for "the repeal of all anti-union laws and their replacement with positive rights for trade unionists".

Tory cost-cutting leaves babies to die

A BABY IS dying. You could possibly save its life. What would you do? Would you simply refuse to do anything on the grounds that it would be too much effort, or that you could not be bothered? Or because it would cost you?

Maybe you wouldn't, but other people do. It is set to become the norm in Tory Britain for premature babies — the premature babies of the poor.

Recent reports that Sheffield Health Authority is planning to put a formal ban on its section of the NHS "buying" medical care for babies born before 22 or 24 weeks, or even 25 weeks, have illuminated the inhuman practice now part of many British hospitals' routine.

An arbitrary cut-off is already common practice in some Health Authorities.

A recent *Panorama* TV report highlighted the trauma and distress of a Birmingham couple, the parents of a premature baby. They watched helplessly as their baby was wrapped up and "left on the side" to die. For over an hour it struggled vainly for life.

The baby's lungs, too weak to support themselves, finally collapsed. When the parents begged hospital staff for help they were told that it was not hospital policy to help such babies!

The baby, although alive and capable of life, was handled as if it were dead. The parents, in considerable distress, were not allowed the most fundamental of human rights; they watched their baby die in the name of cost-cutting.

They were denied the right to assistance from a service built originally to provide health care on the basis of need. The denial of these rights even robbed them of the opportunity of dignified grieving.

The policy of letting premature babies die unaided is supported by arguments of efficiency and effective use of resources. It costs the Health Service thousands of pounds a day to maintain a premature baby's life, and many will die anyway. That is a price current Health Service chiefs consider too high. Their drive to be "competitive" penalises those in the most desperate need because,

of course, it is they who require the most expensive and highly intensive care.

Some doctors support their case, by maintaining that babies supported by intensive care suffer poor health or disability in later life. It is only right that priority be given to "normal", "healthy" people.

These arguments are dangerously close to Nazi-style "cull the weak" eugenics.

But the basic argument is about cash. According to Sheffield Health Service manager John Bovington: "I see no way that we can actually fund [a continuing] increase [in care for very premature babies]... We might find ourselves pushed to a point where we had to make some arbitrary purchasing decisions which excluded certain children from treatment."

This would be a formal decision by the Health Authority to refuse to "buy" care for very premature babies.

Babies born to rich parents will still have care — just as rich elderly people will have care, while the Health Service increasingly dumps the poor elderly, and tells them that they are too old for treatment to be worth the cost.

Increasingly, the Health Service is being reduced to the most "cost-effective" treatments, those which reliably and quickly patch workers up to continue producing profits.

When working-class people are too old to produce profit, or so prematurely born that we may well not grow up to be competent profit-producers, then we are dumped. Profit rules, not human rights.

A civilised society would ensure that the option of life support for premature babies would exist for all, rich or poor. Cash calculations would have no role to play in these decisions. If the doctors' and nurses' efforts were to fail, then a humane policy of allowing parents to grieve their loss and hold their dying baby would be followed.

A society which has the wealth and scientific knowledge to give people these options, but denies them in the name of competition and cost-cutting is a society sunk in the depths of barbarism.

And we continue to sink.



For Tory minister Bottomley, it is not "cost-effective" to give the premature babies of the poor a chance of life

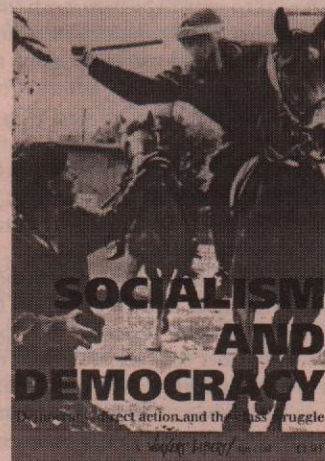
Over July and August, when the labour movement is less active, *Socialist Organiser's* schedule is as follows. The next issue, no.611, will be dated 10 August, and no.612, 31 August. In September we return to our normal weekly schedule.

Our summer issues, because they have a longer life than our usual weekly issues, are a bit "heavier" than usual.

No.606-8 was a special triple issue in pamphlet form: *How to Save the Welfare State*. No.609 was a broadsheet supporting the signal workers.

Socialism and democracy — Marxists, the class struggle and Parliament

£1.95 + 36p postage
From WL Publications Ltd, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.
Cheques payable to "WL Publications Ltd."



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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Newsdesk 071-639 7965 (Latest reports Monday)

Printed by: Eastway Offset (TU) London E9

Editor: John O'Mahony
Deputy Editor: Cathy Nugent
Sales Organiser: Jill Mountford
Published by: WL Publications Limited

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of *Socialist Organiser* and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office

WE SAY

Labour after Blair's victory

THE ELECTION of Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party is bad news for the left.

He is likely to renew the hard right's attack on collective trade-union representation in the Labour Party.

On the day his victory was announced, Blair rushed to declare that there would be no "favours" for the trade unions from the next Labour government. And Labour's National Executive has decided to defer the setting up of a new union/party liaison committee. This was designed to allay the fears of union leaders like John Edmonds and Bill Morris, disturbed by last year's attacks on the union link.

Predictably, John Prescott has not tried to counter these moves. It was necessary to campaign for Prescott as the least-bad candidate in the leadership contest, but no-one should have illusions in Prescott: as deputy leader he will be no counterweight to Blair as leader.

Another sign of what to expect from Blair was his intervention into the field of Tory cant about "family values" and "back to basics." He said that he disapproves of people choosing to become single parents.

Even the usually toadying *Guardian* had to admit: "One Cabinet minister likened Mr Blair's remarks to a stronger version of Mr Major's back to basics speech last October, and added, 'It helps John Major if Tony Blair strays onto his ground'." Quite.

Blair is not even the super-smooth media performer he is cracked up to be. Take this incident, recounted by the BBC's Nicholas Jones: "On the day of the first 24 hour strike by railway signal staff, crews from BBC, ITN and Sky were at the Millbank studios ready to seek reactions.

"All three leadership contenders had been advised by party HQ to leave official comment on the rail dispute to Labour's transport spokesman, Frank Dobson. Blair was obviously anxious to follow the party line. He left by a rear door. When spotted by the crews, he hurried down Great Peter Street. ITN's Hugh Pym led the chase, cornering a breathless Blair a few hundred yards away.

"Untransmitted film shows... Sky's reporter asking Blair why he is running away. Blair says he must consult. A cameraman offers him a mobile phone. Blair retreats to seek advice, returning some minutes later to recite what would become his standard answer: 'I don't think it would be helpful for the Government or anyone else to intervene...'"

In the end the pictures were never transmitted because Blair's friend Peter Mandelson — Kinnock's failed PR guru — managed to nobble the relevant editors. But Blair will not get away with that kind of showing in a general election.

There is no evidence whatsoever that Blair has got what it takes to triumph in three years of long-drawn-out and very bitter political argy-bargy with the Tories. Not even if the Tory party continues to be led by John Major.

Tens of thousands of working-class people have been deluded into believing the media claptrap that "only Blair can beat the Tories", but the reality is this: if Labour wins the next election, it will be despite Tony Blair, not because of him.

The "modernisers" may be triumphant for now, but their "New Model Labour Party" is built on sand. The workers who may vote them into office will do so not on the basis of Blair's support for the free market or because he intones pseudo-Tory sermons against single mothers. They will vote Labour because they want to see the Welfare State rebuilt, jobs created for young people, and the shackles taken off our trade unions.

It is up to the serious revolutionary left to give some direction to this changing mood. To do that we need to learn the lessons of the 1994 leadership contest. What are they?

We need a united campaign in defence of trade union rights and the Welfare State. Any leadership challenge has to be based on a real campaign to win the rank and file.

In 1994 we had to back John Prescott, warts, gaps, conventional ambitions, and all. The flirtation of a section of the left with Ken Livingstone (and his "left-wing" programme of tax cuts for capitalists) was a diversion and a waste of time. Margaret Beckett was a weak candidate with the rank and file of the labour movement, and untrustworthy in her half-rediscovered leftism.

To do better next time the left has to look outwards. To defeat the right wing we have to mobilise the three million or more trade-union rank-and-filers who did not vote in the 1994 leadership election.

If Labour wins the next election and Blair becomes prime minister, then huge battles will open up in the labour movement, as the pent-up energies and hopes of nearly twenty years are unleashed. The Labour leaders' policies will, sooner or later, face major challenges.

If the working-class socialist left is to put itself at the heart of such battles, then we will have to learn the lessons of the 1994 leadership contest. No more stunts! For a united campaign to rebuild the Welfare State and win trade union rights!

The Tories' sop to populism

THE HOME Secretary's decision that the two children who murdered a smaller child must serve at least 15 years in detention is a crying disgrace. These are sick, disturbed, badly damaged children. They must be.

The judge at their trial recommended that they should serve eight years. Why does Michael Howard override the judge? Tory public opinion! The same opinion Major pandered to when he denounced homeless street beggars. Yet the Tories and others justify the system of having highly paid, irremovable, life-time judges on grounds of their supposed independence and imperviousness to pressure. Socialists see those judges as entrenched supporters of the ruling class, and favour a system of elected judges. But we do not repudiate the ideal of impartiality, or think that fluctuating and ephemeral public opinion should directly control legal decisions. Evidently, Tory Michael Howard does. To sacrifice sick children like this is shameful.

Crime: how to answer the Tories

By Edward Ellis

TORY DISASTER at the polls doesn't seem to be reflected in a change in public opinion about law and order.

A policeman who thumped a 'young tearaway' receives thousands of letters in his support, as well as donations, after a court fined him £100. The Labour council in Nottingham claims popular support for its policy to evict 'anti-social' tenants, without any obligation to rehouse them, which it has put into effect in one housing estate. The government clearly believes that its Criminal Justice Bill, which among other things will abolish the right to silence and allow the police to arrest anyone they believe is travelling to a 'rave' (defined as a place where loud music with a 'persistent beat' is played), is a vote-winner, even if VAT on fuel isn't.

While the Tories are visibly losing the argument about the Welfare State, unemployment and mismanagement of the economy, they feel on firmer ground about law and order. Labour is sensitive on the issue. Calls to look after the victims of crime, instead of the criminals, make sense to many people, including many who are sceptical that single parents should take all the blame.

Anyone who lives in inner cities knows it is true that they have become more dangerous over the last decade. Drug gangs are everywhere. Pensioners are afraid to leave their homes. Probably the arming of the police has a degree of popularity.

There is a widespread feeling that a "politically correct" attitude on crime — holding social conditions responsible instead of individuals — has not worked, and has caused more trouble than it has solved. A recent Oprah Winfrey show highlighted an issue in the States, where some murderers and child abusers are using as a defence the fact they have suffered in the past; the show asked: what about personal responsibility? A 'short sharp shock' prison in America claims a huge success rate — 80% — in reducing re-offending.

The net effect is that the Labour leadership — and most notably Tony Blair — consider it an electoral imperative to talk tough about crime. Labour is more open to issues beyond heavier policing, but is anxious not to appear to its voters as 'bleeding-heart liberals.'

Social conditions are responsible for a lot of crime. It is not an accident that crime — especially violent crime — is highest in the poorest areas. Some



If all else fails, John Major feels on firm ground bashing "lawless" youth

people steal because they have no money — for example 16-17 year olds denied social security; but it goes further than that. The kids Nottingham council wants to evict might be less inclined to steal cars and smash them up if there was more to do in their neighbourhood. The sheer boredom of living in a depressed area drives young people to look for excitement, either through theft or drugs.

Spending money on nice places for people to live, with interesting facilities, would help lower crime rates. Providing people with work would help also.

But there is a deeper malaise. In a sense, the Tories are right that there is a problem of 'values.' People — especially young people — want more from their lives than they can hope to get from the types of job available to them. Only a few have any chance of 'making it.' For the rest, if they want nice things — in other words, if they want money — the only way to get it is illegally. For some, spending a few years in prison is a small price to pay for setting themselves and their families up for the rest of their lives through robbery or drug dealing. That at least is how they see it, even if the reality doesn't always match the promise.

Capitalism creates this culture. But under the Tory government, especially in the Thatcherite eighties, it became still more brazen than ever. People are bombarded with images of 'success.' If they can't hope to be a movie star, a pop star, a clothes designer or a Stock Market wizard, what are they supposed to do?

Tory values are responsible for this 'get rich' culture. Coupled with policies — like mass unemployment, cutting welfare and housing spending and so on — which reduce even further legal avenues for

people to have comfortable or even bearable lives, it is inevitable that crime will grow.

Thatcherism — which glorified the 'get rich' culture — coincided with a huge increase in the drug trade. Class A drugs flooded into the country, bringing with them a vast increase in organised crime. Gangs were formed to deal in heroin and 'crack' cocaine especially. Outside the drug gangs, people who became involved in the 'drug scene' were forced into crime to support their habits.

No serious policy to reduce crime can avoid a strategy for dealing with the drug problem. Equally, a strategy aimed at stopping the drug trade will fail. Even the most spectacular seizures of illegal drugs have little effect. There is no reason to believe that heavier and heavier policing of drugs will reduce the numbers of people taking them.

The only policy which might have any effect is one which would be electorally unpopular, unless it was coupled with an educational programme to persuade voters. That is the complete legalisation of drugs, or at least the decriminalisation of drug users, not only for 'soft drugs' like cannabis — which even the Chief Constables seem to want — but of 'hard drugs' as well.

Making drugs illegal does not stop huge numbers of people taking them. Instead it forces them into criminal activity. Violent drug gangs can only exist because they are working an illegal market. If the government was to treat drug-taking as an issue of public health rather than crime, they would begin to deal seriously with the problem. No doubt the drug gangs would find other things to do; but there would be the chance of undermining them and rescuing young people from their

influence.

The alternative is to watch Britain go further and further down the road of America.

Answering the 'get rich' culture is difficult. For different values to have any resonance, a lot of money would have to be spent on improving the inner cities, improving the education system, improving job opportunities and encouraging people to find fulfilling ways to live their lives. Many people turn to crime because they are frustrated, alienated, have low self-esteem. Certain programmes which take this as their starting point have been proven to have more effect in reducing re-offending than mere imprisonment, and cost less than keeping people locked up.

Only a thoroughgoing radicalism can answer the Tories on law and order. A large part of the problem, or at least of its worst contemporary manifestations, is the result of what the Tories have done to Britain, and no tinkering with the system can even begin to make the streets safer places to walk or reduce the risk of burglary.

But if we — and the Labour Party — don't start to address the issues, not only will the streets continue to get more dangerous. The public opinion on crime which the Tories feast on will allow for ever worse infringements on our civil liberties. A climate has been created in which a law as draconian as the Criminal Justice bill or a policy as repellent as Nottingham council's, or the police having a licence to hit teenagers, seem reasonable to millions of people.

Many of those millions may eventually discover that the loss of civil liberties affects them. By then, who knows what powers the police may have? The next Labour government must do something immediately to stop the rot.

The fruits of European imperialism in Africa

Horror in Rwanda



An aid plane lands among refugees at the Zaire border town of Goma. French military and commercial flights are still hogging the airfields.

By Gerry Bates

UPTO half a million Rwandans have been killed in the fighting triggered by the death of the country's president, Juvenal Habyarimana, in early April. Some five million Rwandans — about half the country's population — are now refugees or internally displaced persons.

In Rwanda and the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Zaire, Uganda and Tanzania, over 22 million people are at risk from drought, famine, war and disease. This is European imperialism's legacy to Africa.

Conflicts between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority in Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi date back to before European rule. When German troops arrived in Rwanda in 1890, they found a feudal-type society where a minority of Tutsi herd-keepers ruled over and exploited Hutu peasants. But the division has been systematically exploited and worsened for over 100 years by European powers. The Rwandan armed forces which carried out the worst atrocities were armed, trained, and protected by France.

Rwanda's colonial rulers — Belgian after 1916 — used and sharpened the Tutsi-Hutu conflict, in accordance with the motto, "divide and rule". They introduced identity cards with ethnic origin on them. They made the Tutsis their lieutenants. The Catholic schools set up under Belgian rule took mostly Tutsi pupils.

In the run-up to independence in 1962 the Belgians began to hand over economic, political and military power to the Tutsi elite which they had used to maintain their rule. The Hutus opposed this and staged an uprising in 1959.

While the Tutsis kept control in Burundi, newly independent Rwanda was Hutu-dominated. The old relations of oppressor and oppressed were reversed. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis fled to neighbouring countries. Those Tutsis who fled 35 years ago, or their children, are the core of the "Rwanda Patriotic Front" which has now gained control of most of the country.

Ethnic conflict was not the only legacy of the colonial occupation. So too was grinding poverty.

Most Rwandans are subsistence farmers. But in a country with one of the highest population densities in Africa, a desperate scramble for land easily became entwined with the Hutu-Tutsi animosity.

In the small industrial sector of the Rwandan economy poverty-level wages are the norm — the national minimum wage fixed by the Ministry of Labour is just 75p for an eight-hour day — and

have to be supplemented by other sources of income.

As in the rest of Africa, the "structural adjustment programme" imposed on Rwanda by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as a condition for the receipt of foreign aid has increased poverty and hunger and exacerbated ethnic hostilities.

Absolute poverty and a struggle for increasingly scarce resources cut across any chance of breaking down ethnic tensions, especially in a situation where members of the Hutu and Tutsi political establishments encouraged such tensions for their own political ends.

Juvenal Habyarimana came to power as a military dictator in 1973. His vicious rule was backed up by France, which worked with some success to replace Belgium as the most influential power in Rwanda, as in neighbouring Zaire and Burundi. The French equipped and

"The Rwandan armed forces which carried out the worst atrocities were armed and trained by France."

trained Habyarimana's Hutu army — the same army which, this spring, massacred hundreds of thousands of people on the sole grounds that they were, or were thought to be, Tutsi.

From 1990 the Rwanda Patriotic Front, based on Tutsi exiles but also rallying some Hutu oppositionists, launched open war against the Habyarimana regime. Many of the Tutsi exiles in Uganda had fought with Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army there in the 1980s. When Museveni won power in Uganda in 1986, they won a secure base. Through Museveni, they have good relations with the USA: US-French imperialist conflict is thus a factor in the Rwandan conflict.

France sent troops to help the Hutu-chauvinist military dictatorship in 1990. Further troops were sent in June 1992 and February-March 1993, as the conflict grew sharper and government repression bloodier, with the creation of anti-Tutsi death squads. The French trained these militias as well as the regular army.

The recent bloodbath seems to have been triggered by a combination of events. In 1993 multi-party elections were held in

Burundi, and a Hutu president won, for the first time ever.

In October 1993 Tutsis murdered him. Hutu peasants retaliated by murdering their Tutsi neighbours. Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army struck back, massacring thousands of Hutus and trying to wipe out the activists of the party that had won the elections.

Then, in April this year, Habyarimana and the new president of Burundi were both killed in an air accident. The accumulated tensions reached boiling point. Rwanda's Hutu army and militias, probably panicking at the prospect of the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front seizing power, launched a pre-emptive massacre of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis.

The "interim government" took the opportunity to settle accounts with their Hutu political opponents, including the Prime Minister and some senior army officers, whose loyalty to the ruling party was subject to doubt.

As one aid agency worker put it: "This is not a tribal war. Hutus are killing Hutus, and Tutsis are killing Tutsis, for political, social and sometimes ethnic reasons. But the causes of this conflict are colonial and social. To refer to it as a tribal war suits the purposes of those who want to turn their backs on Rwanda and leave it to cut its own throat."

In June France sent a new contingent of troops, in an attempt to prop up the collapsing Hutu government, but soon conceded defeat. Now the big powers are washing their hands of the mess they helped create. They see no pressing reason to intervene. Unlike in Kuwait, there are no oil supplies to protect.

Charities such as the Catholic aid agency Cafod have been quick to point to the contrasting approaches: "We have only to think back to the Gulf War to remember how quickly the Western powers were able to respond. When it is a question of saving lives in a 'non-strategic' conflict, weeks go by with nothing being done."

Now Burundi is in a similar state of collapse, and Zaire is in not much better condition. Since Zaire is tremendously rich in minerals, the next trigger for big-power intervention — no doubt on the pretext of helping the refugees — may well be to bolster the corrupt and dictatorial government in Zaire. In the Horn of Africa Somalia and the Sudan are likewise trapped in a spiral of dissolution.

The collapse of Rwanda and the unleashing of a tidal wave of millions of refugees flooding across its borders is a product of capitalism in decay. As Rosa Luxemburg said in the opening years of the twentieth century, the future of humanity will be socialism or barbarism.

Known Marxists in flares make comeback

FASHION-CONSCIOUS acquaintances tell me that there will never be a full-scale '70s revival. Gary Glitter's cult status and the small-scale comeback of flares notwithstanding, they assure me that the clothes of that decade are just too hideous, and the music to embarrassing, for any generalised "retro" movement ever to catch on.

I'm not so sure. Last month, for instance, Jimmy Knapp described Railtrack's offer to the signal workers as "derisory." Younger readers will never have heard a union leader use that particular adjective and may not even know what it means. But twenty years ago "derisory" — usually uttered with a contemptuous sneer — was a key word in every General Secretary's vocabulary. It was good to hear Bro Knapp revive it. Somehow, it suggests that he isn't planning an early sell-out.

Railtrack management have played their part in the mini '70s revival as well. The distinctive combination of incompetence, arrogance and blatant dishonesty of Bob Horton and his minions conjures up memories of Michael Edwardes and his "tough guy" regime at British

Leyland. In fact, Horton has achieved something even Edwardes at his most heavy-handed never managed: widespread public support for the strikers.

Now we have that other hoary old cliché of bygone days, the Red Scare. Last week the *Times* reported that Railtrack is "increasingly concerned" about the activities of the "hard left" within the RMT rail union. The evidence? Two (out of 21) members of the union's General Grades Committee are "known Marxists." One (Bob Crowe) has a bust of Lenin on his desk, while the other (Patrick Sikorski) is university-educated.

No matter that this sinister pair work for London Underground rather than Railtrack, and are not the most central left-wingers for this dispute. No matter that the signal workers voted four to one for action in an 80 per cent turnout in a ballot conducted under the Tories' legislation. Clearly, the determination and solidarity of the signallers is the result of Marxist agitation and nothing whatsoever to do with any genuine grievance.

If further proof of the involvement of dangerous extremists were needed, the *London Evening Standard* revealed that the names of ten strike-breakers on the West Coast mainline were faxed to signal boxes round the country last week. Classic "union bully boy" tactics from the '70s — made all the more worrying by the use of modern technology. All we need now is a plucky strike-breaker ready to be paraded round the media, defying the Reds and the Bully-Boys, and we'll have a full-scale '70s revival on our hands. Get your flares and tank-tops out of mothballs!

And the block vote was undemocratic?

LAST YEAR'S abolition of the block vote has not resulted in the much-heralded cutting of the "umbilical cord" between Labour and the unions. Nor does it look like producing a more democratic alternative arrangement.

The "new relationship" between the Party and the unions seems likely to revolve around a new body, provisionally called the National Trade Union and Labour Party Committee, which will have an office at Walworth Road and provide General Secretaries with direct access to the party leadership.

The new arrangement has been privately agreed between the leaderships of all affiliated unions, including the AEEU, which always boycotted the old Trade Unionists for Labour organisation. Labour's National Executive has agreed "in outline" but postponed a final decision at its July meeting so as not to appear to be railroading Blair immediately after his coronation.

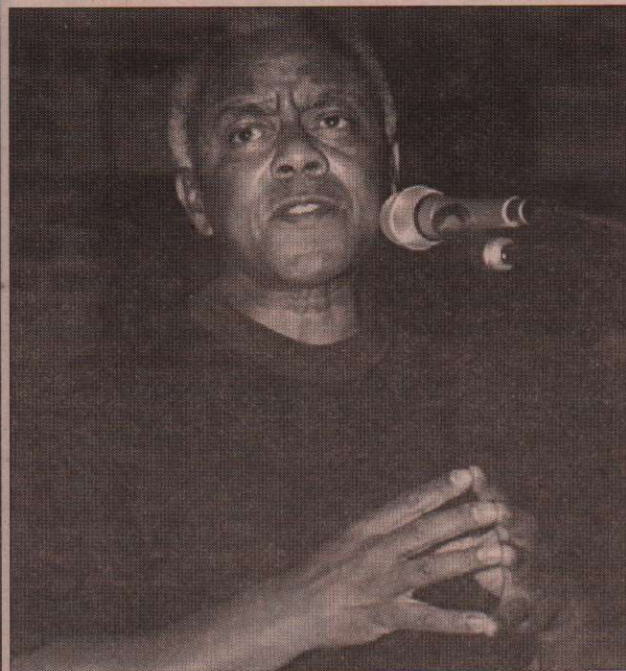
You will notice that the new arrangement contains no structures for rank-and-file input, and no requirement for any form of accountability on the part of the General Secretaries. And they said the block vote was undemocratic.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Ideas for freedom



Neville Alexander spoke on the fight for a mass workers' party in South Africa.

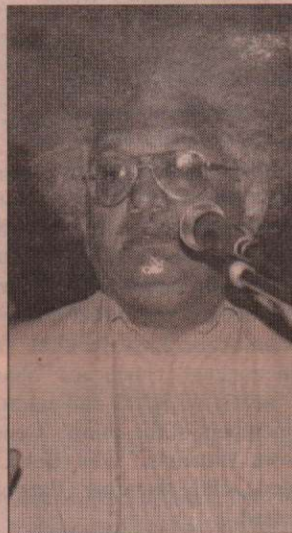
Our annual "Workers' Liberty" summer school took place in North London from 8 to 10 July.

Perhaps the high point of the event was the report from South Africa by Neville Alexander. Alexander, a former Robben Island prisoner, is a long-time Marxist, and one of those who are trying to create an independent mass workers' party in the new South Africa.

Alexander also took part in a forum on who Marxists should organise, and how the Marxists of one country should relate to those in other countries.

One of the other high points of the long weekend was a lecture given by Harry Ratner, a veteran of Trotskyism in Britain and France. He spoke on the British Trotskyist movement of the '30s, '40s, and '50s. Ratner has just published his autobiography, "Reluctant Revolutionary", which Socialist Organiser will review at some future date.

An important debate was staged on Ireland between Sinn Fein and the Alliance

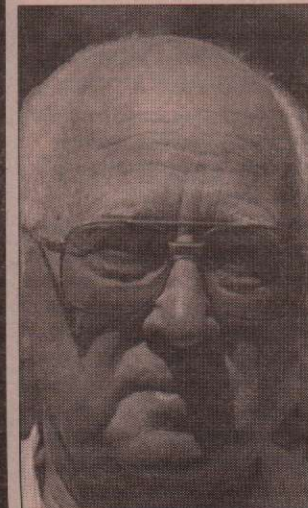


Meghnad Desai debated the AWL on full employment

for Workers' Liberty. Francis Molloy, a Sinn Fein councillor from Armagh, presented Sinn Fein's view of the situation in Ireland, and Sean Matgamna (John O'Mahony) spoke for the AWL. This was quite a heated debate. One of its notable features was the fact that almost all those who spoke against Sinn Fein and for the AWL's condemnation of the Provisional IRA's military campaign were Irish people. The main speeches and summings-up are printed in this issue of Socialist Organiser, pages 10 to 13.

In all some 300 people attended, and there were, over the weekend, almost 50 workshops and meetings on a wide range of topics of interest to socialists. A number of AWL trade union fractions also met to plan their work.

Towards the end, an important session was given over to planning the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's work to build a strong campaign to rebuild the Welfare State.



Harry Ratner spoke on the history of the Trotskyist movement.

Bobby socks it to 'em

WHO WAS the mysterious "Bobby" to whom Tony Blair paid tribute at his victory party last Thursday? The name meant nothing to most of those present, but (according to both the *Observer* and the *Guardian*) it was the Blair camp's codename for Peter Mandelson.

It seems that Labour's former director of communications is so distrusted and despised within the party that his involvement with the Blair campaign had to be kept a closely-guarded secret. According to the *Guardian*, some Labour MPs and "even a member of the Shadow Cabinet" let it be known that they would not support Blair if Mandelson were in the campaign team. Journalists who were fed pro-Blair stories by Mandelson were forbidden to name him as their source.

Mandelson's involvement with the Blair campaign certainly helps explain the extraordinarily favourable media coverage that attended the Boy Wonder's every utterance, no matter how banal. Print

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

and broadcast journalists who failed to deliver sufficiently fulsome coverage of Blair's "keynote" speeches, or who put the wrong 'spin' on a story, would be bombarded with complaints and thinly-disguised comments from Mandelson. And, after all, what journalist in his or her right mind wants to be told that they will be frozen out by the man who is certain to become the next leader of the Labour Party — and the next Prime Minister? At one point, Mandelson even complained to BBC TV about lack of coverage of Blair the Family Man. Two days later News at Ten showed Blair playing football with his children.

In fairness it should be said that Mandelson's spin-doc-

toring skills were no more than an added bonus. Vacuous banality and meaningless sound-bites come naturally to Tony Blair. Mandelson simply ensured maximum coverage.

BUT how long will Blair's media honeymoon last? He is not the first Labour leader to be greeted with almost universal approval from all quarters of the print and broadcast media. In fact, most Labour leaders since Clem Atlee have had a good press for the first few months of their reign.

The only exceptions I can think of are Jim Callaghan, who took over with Labour already in power and unpopular, and poor old Michael Foot, who was never going to stand a chance with the press

however much he tried — but that's another story.

In general, however, there is a fairly set pattern of press coverage that has attended Hugh Gaitskell, Harold Wilson and Neil Kinnock: initial enthusiasm followed by gradually increasing sniping, culminating in ferocious attack at election time. Gaitskell and Wilson both experienced this cycle in its relatively mild, pre-Murdoch form; Neil Kinnock got the full treatment in 1992.

So far, Blair's warm words and resolute avoidance of anything remotely resembling socialism have ensured him the approval of the Tory press. Even the *Sun* offered him a guarded welcome on the morning of his coronation — provided he "shows the guts to slaughter the sacred cows of socialism." But it won't last.

Even the mighty skills of Peter Mandelson (who was, after all, Neil Kinnock's press supremo for five years) cannot prevent the inevitable. The *Daily Mail's* headline of a month ago, "Where's the Beef in Bambi?" is surely a sign of things to come.

Stop the "anti-prostitute" vigilantes!

AGAINST THE STREAM

By Sean Matgamna

LEAVE ASIDE for the moment the question of whether or not they should do such a thing. What happens when you set a gang of men — any men — to roam the streets as vigilantes, harassing, bullying, and intimidating prostitute women?

They will soon be harassing, bullying, and intimidating women who are not prostitutes — women who by their gait, clothes, make-up, or behaviour, or where they happen to be on a street or in a neighbourhood, look to the gang of men "like prostitutes."

Already here we have crossed the line from facts — women known for certain to be prostitutes — to the judgement of types of women and types of women's clothes, make-up, and behaviour. For, of course, it is not always possible to "know", especially in a large, busy city area.

Already we are in the realm of preconception, prejudice, and social judgement.

Inevitably, and quickly, the

gang organised to intimidate prostitute women and their clients or potential clients will come to be felt as threatening and intimidating by large numbers of women in the area.

Inevitably there will be incidents where they pick on the "wrong" women.

This would happen with any group of self-righteous men organised as vigilantes for such work. Natural selection would ensure that at least some of those taking part would have prejudices against women "of a certain type" — "tarty", "brassy", "flashy" women — and would be only too quick to act as police, judge and jury against them.

In Balsall Heath, Birmingham, where the vigilante gang organised to harass local prostitutes is made up entirely, or almost entirely, of Muslim men, it is a great deal more likely to happen; and it is happening.

Many of these men are religious Muslims, which means

that some of them will be very religious indeed. As fundamentalist Muslims, they will disapprove of the normal behaviour of the women in Birmingham — including the behaviour of young Muslim

women kicking over the traces of family and community control. Some of them will, as committed Muslims, even think that behaviour differs very little from the behaviour of prostitutes. If you find that hard to believe, then you have never talked to a hard-line Muslim

man.

These will be men of a Muslim community whose women are the least liberated and among the most oppressed of the women of Britain. The vigilante activity of the men will indirectly be intimidatory for these Muslim women and reinforce the demands on them for submission and conformity.

Not to say this for fear of appearing "racist" is simply to be gutless. We fight the racists as racists when they raise their ugly snouts. We also fight for

women's rights — even against those who are themselves targets of racism.

I repeat: the much-publicised, mainly Muslim, vigilantes of Balsall Heath — and they have had remarkably favourable press publicity — do not strike me as men who should be encouraged to harass women in the street! No men should. No group of men — whether Muslim, Christian, or card-carrying atheist — should be allowed to operate such a vigilante squad against women. And Balsall Heath, though the most publicised, is not the only example of this sort of thing.

Of course, it is no fun living in a "red light" area, but the prostitute women too have rights. The act of prostitution is not illegal. Prostitutes are usually working-class women who can find no better way of staying alive or of raising a family — for example, the fifty-year old Balsall Heath woman interviewed by Maggie O'Kane in the *Guardian* recently who went "on the game" nine months ago because, with no hope of a regular job, it was the only chance she had to get the money to stop her home being repossessed.

Bullying vigilantes are no solution.

The ABC of beating the Criminal Justice Bill

**YOUTH
FIGHTBACK**

Rebellion



Youth Fightback is...

... 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.

THE CRIMINAL Justice Bill is a monster! With 117 clauses it is a massive attack on everyone's civil rights.

- It includes new trespass laws that will criminalise travellers and protesters.
- It introduces new laws against parties and festivals.
- It makes squatting a crime and gives police new powers to evict squatters.
- It ends the right to silence when you are arrested.
- It gives the police new powers to stop and search people simply on suspicion, without having to give a reason.
- The Bill even includes provisions for setting up a new system of prison for 12 to 14 year olds.

So far there have been two national demonstrations against the Bill, the latest last Sunday, 24 July, with over 50,000 people marching through London to 'Kill the Bill'.

These demonstrations and the wider movement against the Bill include youth from the many environmental groups and campaigns. The protests have also drawn in thousands of youth from the rave scene. They have flooded out of the clubs onto the streets against a Bill that will make most free raves illegal.

This new protest movement shows that youth won't let the Tories batter us into submission without a fight. Yet confusion reigns as to how to defeat the Bill.

The Criminal Justice Bill was due to become law last month but its final third 'reading' has been set back to November after the savaging some parts of the Bill got in the House of Lords. This gives the campaign more time to organise to stop the Bill.

The Tories are weak and crisis-ridden. A

mass campaign like the anti-Poll-Tax movement could still defeat the Criminal Justice Bill.

What do we need?

A HUGE national demonstration is planned for October. It must be built for!

BUILD local action. Local anti-Bill groups must be set up everywhere. Some already exist, uniting all those who oppose the Bill.

CAMPAIGN as a priority to win active support from the labour movement. Launch an offensive inside the Labour Party to ensure that every Labour MP votes against the third reading. On Tony Blair's orders most Labour MPs abstained on the second reading. The labour movement must demand from Labour MPs a commitment to repealing the Criminal Justice Bill.

DRIVE to get trade unions committed to fight the Criminal Justice Bill. It will be used against picket lines and protests. Raise the alarm in the unions!

EVERYONE in the campaign must be convinced of the need to disobey the Criminal Justice Bill if it becomes law. Like the Poll Tax, we may have to defeat the Bill by defying it. We must support those it is used against.

The Criminal Justice Bill is an attack on so many fronts and on so many groups that a massive protest movement can be built to stop it and defy it. Defeating the Criminal Justice Bill would also be a boost for all those fighting the Tories.

In active solidarity with those victimised by the new law, socialists must show ourselves to be the champions of civil liberties and democratic rights.

We must also use the example of the Criminal Justice Bill to convince young people that class-struggle politics against the Tories and the capitalist state is central to liberation.

While uniting in action with all those who oppose the Criminal Justice Bill, we will not be able to avoid arguments with the liberal greens, anarchists and others. Class politics is central!

An important point about the Criminal Justice Bill is that green liberalism based on vague public opinion can not defeat the capitalist state. Neither will adopting a lifestyle of "opting out of the system."

Hiding or running away will not win freedom from the Tories and their system!

Socialists must bridge the gap between youth who want to fight the Criminal Justice Bill and the wider labour movement. We can not allow the Tories and their press to isolate those fighting the Criminal Justice Bill.

We must fight to stop Labour's neo-Tories like Blair chiming in with the Tories, thus driving youth away from the labour movement.

This poster was produced by Youth Fightback. You can contact us c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, or by phoning 071-639 7967.

Why you should support the signal workers

The Tories, BR management and the media are out to blame the signal workers for the chaos on the railways on strike days.

But it is the Tories and BR management who are to blame.

Here are four reasons why you should support the RMT signal workers.

1 The signal workers are putting forward a claim for an 11% interim payment to bring them into line with other railworkers. They need it. Their average wage is just £183 per week.

In some areas two signal workers now do the job that was previously covered by 100. In the last ten years the number of signal workers has dropped by over 30%; the number of train miles per signal operator has increased by over 47%. All this time BR, and now Railtrack, have given the signal workers nothing.

2 Railtrack are hiding the truth when they say that there is not enough money to pay the signal workers. Bob Horton, the Chairman of Railtrack, pays himself the ridiculous sum of £2,335 per week for a three-day week. That amounts to a 210% pay increase since last year! It has now been revealed that Railtrack Board members claim a £500 attendance allowance on top of their salary every time they attend a Board meeting.

Refitting Railtrack's new HQ alone cost £7 million — twice what it would have cost to set-

tle this dispute.

At the same time the total cost of preparing for rail privatisation so far is £700 million, paid for in your fares and taxes, which includes:

- * £303 million on over 13,000 redundancies and early retirements in the last two years, so railworkers are forced to do the same amount of work with fewer people;
- * £146 million for restructuring in 1993/4 — creating a new massive bureaucracy of managers with no extra investment for services;
- * £48 million in fees to outside consultants — lawyers, financiers and public relations advisers;
- * £32 million to create Oprafr — the rail franchise granting body;
- * £20 million to create Ofrail — the privatised railway watchdog.

3 The money that goes into the pockets of private operators should be used to deliver a safe and efficient service provided by properly paid staff who are working safe hours rather than the dangerous amounts of overtime needed to make ends meet.



Cost cutting for privatisation doesn't just affect signal workers' pay packets. It has also led to a rundown in the service that everyone of us who regularly uses the railways is aware of.

We need to return the railways to public ownership, but this time under the democratic control of workers and users.

4 The Tories have made this into a test case. That is why the Treasury intervened to

block a settlement last month. What started as a simple dispute between Railtrack and signal workers has been turned into a battle over government pay freeze policy — a policy which aims to cut the wages of millions of people.

A victory for signal workers will be a victory for all trade unionists and working people. Victory will blow a massive hole in that Tory policy and show workers in the public sector and elsewhere that the government can be beaten.

What you can do

- * Have a meeting at your workplace to discuss your union's pay claim. Press for strike action to win it now!
- * Take a collection, and petition for the signal workers.
- * Send a delegation to their picket lines.

Id support kers



"Is the Chairman still being paid in cash?"

Are you sure it's safe to travel?

THE HANDFUL of unreliable services provided on strike days are not up to the usual safety standards. How could they be? There is only a skeleton staff of management and supervisors carrying out a job

which they are unfamiliar with and which many have not done for years.

The RMT has shown that this breaches railway safety standards. They have had reports from around the country of potentially

dangerous occurrences being hushed up. At the same time staff who have questioned this have been threatened with disciplinary action. The RMT is concerned for the safety of the travelling public and has therefore called upon the Health & Safety Executive to intervene.

It has been established that:

- * Managers who have never seen particular signalboxes before are being asked to work them without any training;
- * As a result, the usual minimum three-week training period for learning how to work each different box has been abandoned;
- * Commercial managers with absolutely no knowledge whatsoever of signalling have disciplined experienced signalling

supervisors for refusing to do a job they know is unsafe.

Some of the incidents so far include:

- * In **Edinburgh** there was a short stoppage of work by drivers frustrated and angry with so many mistakes being made. Inexperienced supervisors put two trains on the same track but had them travelling towards each other! A serious accident was only averted by the quick response of the drivers and the fact that the trains were going slower than usual due to earlier signalling problems. Could this happen on your journey?
- * Why did a manager working in the **Victoria** box not know how to operate a vital piece of safety equipment? He had to spend three quarters of an hour phoning round to other managers to find out how to even turn it on. Who gave this person his safety clearance?
- * Why were passengers at Sandhills near **Liverpool** trapped between level crossing barriers?
- * Why was a rail inspector sent home in **Birmingham** after he said he was not able to operate a signal box safely? Why was he subjected to intense intimidation?
- * Why is Railtrack operating the **Three Bridges** box on strike days with four managers, two of whom have never operated a box, while the other two last did so some four years ago? Why was their only previous knowledge of the box based on looking at it when it was closed on a previous strike day?
- * Why, if the system is as safe as Railtrack would have you believe, has ASLEF, the train drivers' union, reported near misses at **Woking, Southend, Portsmouth, Glasgow, Crewe, Shoeburyness, Wolverhampton, Leeds, Westbury, Paisley, York, Preston, Edinburgh, Llandudno and Llanwrst?**

Your life is at risk if you travel on the train on strike days.

Subscribe to *Socialist Organiser*

Name

Address

Enclosed (tick as appropriate):

- £5 for 10 issues £25 for a year
 £13 for six months £ extra donation

Cheques/postal orders payable to "WL Publications"
 Return to: **Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA**



Australia: \$70 for a year, from WL, PO Box 313, Leichhardt 2040. Cheques payable to "Socialist Fight"
 USA: \$90 for a year, from Barry Finger, 153 Henderson Place, East Windsor, NJ 08520. Cheques payable to "Barry Finger"

**Support the
signal
workers!**

**National demonstration
30 July**

**Assemble: 12.30, Grafton Place,
outside Euston BR station,
London**

Which way forward in Ireland?

There is no B

What is the way out of the impasse in Northern Ireland? Is it a boost to the Provisional IRA's military campaign, so that they can push Britain into enforcing a united Ireland? Or can it only be a political solution which accommodates the rights of all communities — a federal, united Ireland with autonomy for the mainly-Protestant areas? Sean Matgamna from Socialist Organiser debated Francis Molloy from Sinn Fein at the Workers' Liberty summer school on 8-10 July.



Sean Matgamna

I'M GOING to argue that Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA — which I take as one movement — is a big part of the problem in Northern Ireland. Not the basic problem, but a symptom that makes the basic problems worse, and in no sense part of the solution.

In Britain the situation in Ireland is presented as the republican movement being unreasonable, being murderous, being psychopathic and so on. That's how the British press presents the central problem in Ireland. And that, of course is nonsense.

The fundamental problem in Ireland now is that the island is divided between two relatively distinct communities. There are various disputes about definitions, and I don't want to enter into those disputes. But the people who are broadly defined as Protestants or Unionists are distinct from the people who are broadly defined as Catholics, Nationalists or Republicans. In fact, the Protestants would define themselves mostly as British. There are perhaps 4.5 million Catholics/ Nationalists/ Republicans, perhaps something over one million Unionists/Protestants.

The Protestants — I'll call them Protestants but all the rest is implied — are dispersed throughout the island, but most of them, the Protestants that we are talking about, are a concentrated majority in North East Ulster. And these people have quite distinct traditions.

They were originally a colony put down in Ireland 400 years ago, during the time when Ireland was dominated by Britain, exploited by Britain, and treated very savagely by Britain. In the 18th century Irish Catholics, as Catholics, suffered under a system against the Catholics very like apartheid in South Africa. In theory you could change your religion, and you can't change the colour of your skin, but in reality not very many changed their religion.

The problem of Irish politics today — especially working-class politics — is how to unite the two sorts of Irish, and whether they can be united. History shows that it is not possible to combine a United Ireland with an independent Ireland. The minority in North East Ulster

refuses to be part of a united independent Ireland in which they would be a minority at the mercy (as they see it) of a Catholic, Nationalist, Republican majority they consider to be alien.

Thus, the question of how to get a democratic, workable, living relationship between the majority and the minority becomes the dominant one.

Relations between Ireland's Protestant minority and its Catholic majority have been complicated by the intervention of Britain.

Instead of the Protestants and Catholics on the island working out how to relate to each other without British interference, what we got was the British and the Unionists partitioning Ireland in a particularly messy, stupid and blind way. They created a Northern Irish state that is plainly untenable and can not continue to exist in its present form.

WHY DID they do that? Britain wanted to control Ireland for imperial military reasons. When Britain finally granted Ireland a limited form of home rule in 1921-22, it maintained British bases in the South — for example, in Cork, up to 1938.

Britain used the Orange, Protestant, Unionist minority to hold on in north-east Ulster, "playing the Orange Card", as one politician put it. They used them against the majority of the Irish initially to argue that no part of Ireland should be independent and that because of the division, all parts of Ireland had to remain subordinate to Britain. When that failed to derail the movement for Irish independence they compromised — they partitioned the country.

Perhaps, you will say, that made sense in the circumstances. I'm a socialist. I don't believe any people — Protestants in Ireland, or Irish people in the old UK, when it included all Ireland — should be forced to remain in a state against their will, if it is possible for them to separate. In theory, you could make a serious case for the separation of North East Ulster.

But they didn't separate North East Ulster! They separated six counties which at that time had about a 35% Catholic minority within them. It was the majority in about half the land area of the Six Counties.

Thus we got the abomination, the monstrosity of a so-called "Protestant state for a Protestant people" with a Catholic minority within it that was a bigger proportion of the Six Counties' population than the Protestants of all Ireland would have been as a minority in an all-Ireland state.

It was only by way of British intervention that Ireland could have been carved up in this way. And in fact they destroyed it for themselves. If the Protestant Unionists and the British had been less greedy, if they'd taken only the areas with a clear Protestant majority, then they would probably be impregnable now. There might still be a big Catholic minority in Belfast, but this "Protestant state" would not have the vast heartlands of Catholic majority population it has now. But that's the partition they enforced.

In 1918, Sinn Fein, not this Sinn Fein, but one of its ancestors, also called Sinn Fein, stood in the British general election, saying that if they won an Irish majority they would secede from the Westminster Parliament and set up a Dublin parliament. They got the majority and set up a Dublin government.

The British responded with a reign of terror against nationalist Ireland and against the new Dublin government. They went around the county burning towns and villages, engaging in systematic atrocities against the people, burning small factories, in order to break the will of the Irish nationalists.

When it came to negotiations in 1921, Sinn Fein only agreed to the partition under threat from British prime minister Lloyd George that the alternative was an "immediate and terrible war". We know now that Britain had plans to round up a large part of the population in the south and put them in concentration camps so that they could not support the Irish national-

ist guerrilla army. Concentration camps then did not mean death camps, but simply "concentrations" of population. Such camps had been used by the British in the Boer War to stop the civilian population supporting the Boer guerrillas. They were now prepared to do the same to a vastly larger number of the nationalist Irish.

Even so, Sinn Fein's delegates accepted partition only for a limited period of time — or so they thought. They were promised that within a few years there would be a re-arrangement of the borders so that the Catholic areas in the north would be able to secede to the south. They believed that if that happened, the Protestant areas would not be viable on their own, and would join a united Ireland. Lloyd George argued that with them, anyway, though in retrospect it is a doubtful proposition.

But they were tricked. When the time came to do that, it didn't happen. The existing partition stayed, creating a murderous, nonsensical entity, the "Protestant" Six Counties, where today the Catholics are perhaps 45% of the population! In this so-called Protestant state for a Protestant people the British have not allowed the Protestant majority to rule themselves internally for the last 22 years because when they did rule internally they ruled to keep the Catholics down.

Now Catholics were kept down not because the Protestants were nasty people, but because such a big minority was seen as, and in reality was, a threat to the Six Counties state. A decade or fifteen or twenty years from now Catholics could be the majority in the Six Counties. The Protestants saw this threat long ago and treated the Catholics as second class citizens. The dominant Protestant community took as many

"The Provisional IRA's war 'on Britain' translates itself under the pressure of reality into a war on Irish Protestants."

jobs as it could for itself, in conditions of chronic mass unemployment. At the end of the '60s, after fifty years, the Catholics revolted.

A big Catholic civil rights movement, modelled on the American black civil rights movement, took to the streets of Northern Ireland demanding equal rights and equal treatment with Protestants, what they called "British standards" — "one man one vote, one man one job, one man one house". Into this situation jumped the Provisional IRA, demanding a united Ireland. That compounded the tragedy.

IF THERE is a big, powerful Irish Protestant minority that doesn't want to be in a united Ireland, then how can they be got into a united Ireland?

Only by way of persuasion, never by way of coercion. If you doubt that, the actions of Northern Ireland's Catholics should convince you. About half a million Catholics, perhaps one-third of them actively or passively supporting the Provisional IRA, have made the Six Counties ungovernable for over two decades.

One million Protestants held against their will in a united Ireland would be able to do at least as much.

You cannot solve this conflict within the Irish people by way of force! You cannot do it. The Protestants cowed and coerced half a million Catholics for fifty years — and then they revolted. Coerced Protestants would do the same.

The Provisional IRA which sprang into the sit-

uation created by the civil rights movement in 1968-70 was committed to the following fundamentally wrong and quite delirious set of ideas.

They defined Northern Ireland as "British-occupied Ireland". It is only "British-occupied Ireland" because a million Irish people want it to be "occupied" — a million Irish people who say that they are British.

Calling it "British-occupied Ireland" is radically misleading, and it led the first "Provos" to think that all they had to do to "free Ireland" was to attack the British. The truth is that talk about "Brits out" often sounds to Protestants like a slogan meaning, "me out", because they think of themselves as "Brits."

That was the first of the delirious, false and ultimately counter-productive ideas of PIRA, that it was British-occupied Ireland. It has been the false premise on which they built their whole campaign.

The second false idea was the rigid dogma that the only way forward must on principle be movement generated by the use of armed force. The Irish republican movement is a very old movement. It has its roots way back in the communistic French secret societies of the 1850s. There are a number of different strains within that republican movement.

Around 1970, the strain of republicanism which is now the PIRA believed in "physical force" on principle, and that anything else was morally wrong. They launched a guerrilla war, at first based on a very small minority of the Six Counties Catholic minority. Why? It was wrong, they said, to engage in politics in the London, Dublin and Belfast parliaments.

Thus, we have had 23 years of a war launched by a movement based on radically false ideas and judgements — in fact, on pernicious ideas and pernicious misjudgement.

Let me repeat: the idea that the basic problem is Britain occupying part of Ireland, the idea that it is only Britain that keeps Ireland divided is pernicious and nonsensical. The Provos' 23 year war prove that — it seems to have proved it even to some of the leaders of the IRA!

A million Irish people want Ireland divided and are willing to fight to maintain the Northern sub-state: they have organised a general strike, armed militias, and indiscriminate sectarian slaughter against Catholics chosen at random — seeing the Catholics in the north as the enemy within, the fifth column for the 26 county Irish state.

A million Irish people reject the idea of a united Ireland and therefore, one of two things must happen.

Either they are going to be coerced — and they can't be coerced: probably they could not be coerced even by the entire Catholic population of Ireland, and they're certainly not going to be coerced by the half-million Northern Irish Catholics, or the minority of that half million who support the Provisional IRA — or they are going to be persuaded. Unless they are persuaded there is going to be no united Ireland!

Ignoring the fundamental truths, the Provisional IRA launched a military campaign which has made the whole situation far worse than it was 25 years ago. That campaign is a big part of the problem now; it is no part of the solution.

The brute reality is that the main opposition to a united Ireland is an Irish opposition. Therefore the Provisional IRA campaign, though dressed up in anti-British political terms, is directed fundamentally against Irish Protestants. British soldiers are shot, of course, but over two decades it has increasingly become a campaign against Irish Protestants, defined as "people who collaborate with the state;" or "people who play a part in sustaining the state".

There is a difference, which I do not want to blur, between the UDA and the so-called UFF on the one hand and the Provisional IRA on the other. To a large extent, the ideas around which the Protestant militarists rally are traditional imperialist ideas. They are ideas about superiority and delusions about being Ireland's mas-

British solution!



Irish Protestants are willing to fight for what they see as their collective rights, even against the British government

ter race. They behave accordingly: some of them go out and, without apology, kill Catholics at random.

Except for a few pseudo-left pseudo-Republicans who go in for assassinating Protestants as Protestants, you do not get this on the Republican side. They know better. Their movement has some of its roots in a progressive and enlightened outlook on the world. The idea that all the people of Ireland are equal is a central dogma of Republicanism, and such ideas inhibit Republicans, at least in what they say.

What they do is a different matter. The Provisional IRA only dresses up what it does in a better suit of political clothing than the Protestant paramilitaries can manage.

The Provisional IRA claims and exercises its right to shoot workers — Protestant or Catholic, but in practice usually Protestants — who do such work as fixing a window in a police station. This is not too different, despite the political colouring which Republican tradition forces them to adopt, from what the Protestant sectarian killers do.

The reason for this is not, as the British press says, that the Provisional IRA are psychopaths, but that the communalist logic of the situation asserts itself. The fundamental opposition to a United Ireland is Protestant Irish opposition, and therefore the Protestants "collaborate" with the British. They regard the British state as their state. The Provisional IRA's war "on Britain" translates itself under pressure of reality into a war on Irish Protestants. If you declare war on the British state in Northern Ireland you are, inescapably, declaring war on the Irish Protestant minority who support that state as

their state. That is the terrible reality.

This is how people who call themselves Republicans and followers of Wolfe Tone, James Connolly, Patrick Pearse, and Liam Mellows, come, despite the fine words they sometimes speak, to act as Catholic sectarians.

The Provisional IRA is not responsible for the Catholic/Protestant division in the Six Counties, but it has made the divide much sharper, deeper, broader, and bloodier.

By creating the present Catholic minority in the Six Counties, Partition also divided the Catholic people of Ireland. The Northern and Southern Catholic/Nationalists are miles apart. Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA have the support of a big minority of the Catholic community in the North — their highest-ever vote was 42% of the Catholics — but Sinn Fein has very little support in the South, not more than 1.5% of the vote in the South in recent times. Their claim to represent the Irish people is utterly false.

The Provisional IRA's war cannot win any of its objectives. If the IRA's war succeeded in getting Britain to withdraw, and it will not, the consequence could not be an united Ireland. If the British withdrew without a political settlement the Protestants would fight to win their own self-determination from the rest of Ireland. They are armed. They will fight. There is no good reason to doubt that.

In the early 1970s they organised a powerful mass armed militia. They organised a powerful general strike that defeated the British government in 1974.

Faced with British withdrawal, without a political settlement which satisfied the Irish minor-

ity, you would get the repartition, not the unity, of Ireland. Probably the Catholic areas of the North would secede to the south, and in Belfast you would also get mass slaughter on the model of Bosnia and Beirut. British withdrawal without a political settlement would end all hope of Irish unity for — probably — centuries.

The British are not going to agree to pull out. We should not want them to pull out without a political settlement! I do not want to see Ireland pulled apart in full-scale civil war. I do not want to see Belfast reduced to the conditions of Sarajevo or 1980s Beirut.

The war is a war that cannot be won. It would be a good thing for that war to stop. There are signs of serious moves to stop it. This is good — without qualification. The war has not brought a united Ireland one inch nearer. Arguably, it has pushed it way back.

If the war ends, it will end without a victory for the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein. That will be a terrible comment on the last 25 years: the war's end without victory will be a massive condemnation of everything the Provos have done.

Sinn Fein has changed much in the last 25 years. It has shed many of its starting principles. It no longer rejects entry into the Dublin parliament. It has vastly expanded its political operations since the 1981 hunger strike. It may be about to declare that there are other acceptable means to its end than armed struggle.

There are people inside Sinn Fein who are socialists. I do not know if the people here today are in that category. But the way forward for socialism in Ireland must be by way of a radical criticism of the Sinn Fein/Provisional IRA tradition.

Provisional Sinn Fein is not the first republican movement to talk about going into mainstream politics. Fianna Fail began as a similar movement. In power, it was a conservative, quite right-wing force. In the 1940s another party, Clann na Poblachta, led by people who had led the IRA in the 1930s, went the same route. Today, the Democratic Left/Workers' Party, the former IRA of the 1960s, are not exactly the vanguard of the progressive forces in Ireland!

There is no reason to doubt that if Sinn Fein goes political it will become another bourgeois force on the model of Fianna Fail, Clann na Poblachta, and the Workers' Party, but based on a more limited constituency, that of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. That will not be progress, except for ending the war.

From a socialist point of view, our cardinal concern is to unite the Irish working class. Irish workers will never unite through a military campaign which most Protestants see as directed against them.

Socialists, British and Irish, should tell the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein: call off this senseless, counterproductive, and sectarian war, now!

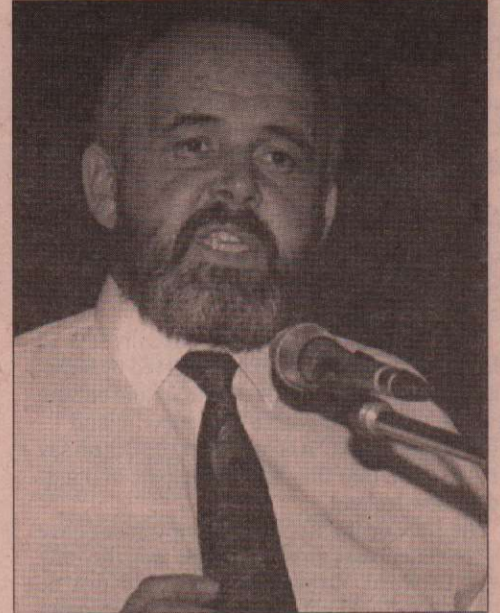
Francis Molloy

I WOULD like to thank you for the opportunity of speaking at this conference. We need to deal with *all* of the inaccuracies in the last speaker's contribution before we go off on a tangent. This is part of the disinformation which has gone on for so long.

A divided Ireland has come about by the British imposing partition on the people of Ireland. At no stage did Republicans or Sinn Fein ever accept partition.

It is worth noting that the partition which was imposed was only part of the settlement. A boundary commission never met and was disposed of by the British after the Six Counties was established.

The Loyalists in the Six Counties have always been encouraged by Unionists here — by the Conservative and Unionist party here — to fight. Churchill's saying "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right" was always part of the strategy of inciting and encouraging violence



Francis Molloy

inside Ireland.

They wanted to divide and conquer. It has always been Britain's policy.

Britain has played the Orange card when it suited them, and withdrawn it when it suited.

Unionists in the North have always refused to be part of an all-Ireland state because they historically, were a planter nation within Ireland. There is also a similarity between the Protestants of the North and the people of the rest of the island. But there was a reason why they were put in there.

The British government, in order to stabilise their control over Ireland, planted a population into the six north-eastern counties to control and dominate what was at that time the most disruptive section of the population. At that stage they wanted their solution to the land question.

But what we have failed to take account of is the coercion of nationalists into the Six County state, against their will. They have been part of it for 70 years.

No one has yet taken up their cause. The British government always blamed Stormont for Unionist discrimination. But we have had 20 years of British direct rule. The British government have not tried to change matters. In fact it could be said that discrimination has been greater under direct rule. Nothing has really changed.

Is Sinn Fein today different from the Sinn Fein of 1918? No, it is not. It is the same party. There has never been a break in our structure since 1918, and before, from 1908, when Arthur Griffith formed it. People have left Sinn Fein and gone in different directions. Some people have got what they wanted out of the struggle. But Sinn Fein today is the same Sinn Fein which won 75% of the vote in the 1918 elections.

The Irish people did decide they wanted an independent Ireland. They even decided in a Parliamentary election, based on Westminster constituencies, that they wanted an independent Ireland. What did Britain do? Simply passed it aside and partitioned the country. As in many other places, they divided and conquered.

The last speaker said that the IRA jumped on the civil rights bandwagon. I participated in the civil rights campaign. In 1968 I picketed outside a courthouse in a totally Loyalist town against the fact that people had been discriminated against in housing. When we made a protest we were stopped. No one should talk to me about this. I know what it was about. I know the part the Republicans played in it.

Okay, it could be said that this was before the split in the movement. Those now in the Democratic Left/Workers' Party played a big part in the civil rights movement. But the Sinn Fein structure remained united right through this period.

It is very easy for those sitting on the sidelines, in the safety of London or Dublin, to say to the people of Armagh, you should not defend your-

selves. I was in Armagh the night that John Callaghan was shot dead. The B-Specials, an armed wing of the Unionist Party, shot down that man as he protested on the streets as part of a demonstration looking for civil rights. They were looking for British rights — that's what they were looking for. They wanted the same rights as those living in Finchley, or anywhere else.

But the IRA could not stand idly by, as Jack Lynch did later on, and watch people being slaughtered in the streets. It was not an organised IRA that reacted, but the armed militia of the people. For people to say that we should have just sat there and got more people shot, until we were shot off the streets, is to ignore the reality of the situation.

The British granting of a veto to Unionists has always been the problem in Ireland. There is the same problem today. The Downing Street Declaration reinforces that veto, over and over again. It does not change the situation. It does not try to get over the problem. It says to the Unionist population: if you do not want to go up that road, you do not have to do so.

Imagine living with a child who does not want to go to school and saying "well, you do not have to go to school." The Protestants have been acting like spoilt children for so long. They have been saying they will not go because there is nothing there for us.

Until the British government actually says to them that their best interests are served by building a new Ireland — their traditions and culture can be recognised within that new Ireland — they will not move. It is only after the British say this to them that they will participate in building a new Ireland.

The IRA or the Republican movement have never stated that armed struggle was the only way forward. Otherwise we would not be involved in Sinn Fein or the civil rights campaign or the prison protests or the other campaigns we are involved in.

We are the people who have said time and time again that we want to take the gun out of Irish politics. But there are more people at the table than the IRA. There are people with bigger and better armaments than the IRA will ever have. Those people are controlling the destiny of the people of Ireland. They also control the destiny of the people of this country.

The speaker criticised abstentionism. Abstentionism was our policy. Abstentionism still is our policy and we make no apology for it. We have not changed. We still refuse to go to Westminster. We are talking about principles here.

Gerry Adams, as MP for West Belfast, never took his salary. We have principles — and compare them to any other elected representative! We say: Britain has no right to be in our country, so why should we sit in their parliament? Why should we go there?

Even if all of the 17 Six Counties MPs were Sinn Fein MPs, what effect would they have in Westminster? The whip system would ensure that we would not be heard. Censorship would ensure that our voice would not even be heard in Parliament itself, or in the outside media.

Participation in Westminster serves no purpose.

Republicanism started this peace process. We have not been driven into it. We began it because it is our people who are suffering. Our people are in jail. Our people are being murdered. Every day our people campaign politically with the threat of the gun over their heads.

We, the Nationalist people in the Six Counties, have been coerced by force of arms — by both the British and Unionists. "Collusion" has never been mentioned, because collusion is the main point of the corrupt system in the Six Counties.

The British government tried for years with a shoot-to-kill policy. It became a political problem. So they re-wound up the Loyalist population. They provided guns to Loyalist paramilitaries, brought through Brian Nelson from South Africa. The British government organised this through their agent, Brian Nelson. Nelson was brought from Germany by Tom King.

This was the person who was shooting people. This was the person who shot a solicitor in Belfast who had been defending Republicans. This is the sort of British coercion that the Nationalist people faced.

We want Unionist consent in building a new Ireland. We need that consent. We recognise we must have that consent. We want an Ireland where we can bring together all political persuasions.

We can call a conference of all Irish people to decide the new type of Ireland which we want to build. We want the Unionists at the conference, to defend their traditions. We, the Republicans, defend their right to do that.

We are not coercing any Unionist into a United Ireland.

But we have to recognise the reality of the situation. The Unionists are a minority within Ireland. The majority of people decided they wanted an independent Ireland and were denied it.

The British government are now saying that they want the people of the North and the people of the South to self-determine their own futures. Well, the people of the South have already decided. They have had their self-determination. We, as Republicans, might maintain that it was imposed, it was not a free choice.

The people of the North also need the right to self-determine — but to do so without the artificial boundary created by Britain.

The border has been maintained by British guns. It has been the main problem in creating a new Ireland. That border must be removed.

We are asking the British government to facilitate a conference of all Irish people, in order that we may as a nation decide our own future without outside interference.

In these circumstances the Unionists will attend that conference.

But the British government, the main player in the situation, must facilitate this conference. We are asking them to become the persuaders.

At the moment, and for the last twenty years, the British government are saying that their best interests are served by a united Ireland.

We want the British to become the honest broker they have never been.

The issue of the IRA campaign has been raised. I cannot answer for them — I am not a member of the IRA.

However some points can be answered. The IRA shoot Protestants because they are Protestants? Nothing could be more ridiculous. If the IRA has wanted to shoot Protestants over the last 25 years, it would have been very simple.

I live in a Protestant, totally Loyalist area. I have never interfered with them. Any interference has been from the upper-class Unionist politicians, who have used the ordinary working-class Protestants to try to intimidate Catholic people out of their land, so they can expand.

One interesting issue has been raised as part of the review of parliamentary constituency boundaries during the last few months. Of the 17 constituencies in the North, five lie to the west of a straight line drawn down through Lough Neagh, and 12 are east of that line.

All the development and job creation for the last 70 years is east of the line. The west has been deprived, and it is a quite deliberate policy. They want people to emigrate to find work, so they can extend their plantation.

Do the IRA shoot building workers? "Building workers" is a simple term. These people are rebuilding structures that have been designed to control the nationalist population — these are barracks, army compounds and the torture centres of Castlereagh and elsewhere.

The IRA have demolished them and building workers have been brought in to rebuild them. These people are colluding with the occupation force.

I am certain that the IRA never asked: are you a Protestant? Are you a Catholic? There are plenty of Catholic workers on these sites. So the target is not Catholic or Protestant. The target is the job that is being done. That job is the re-establishment of British control in the Six Counties every time the IRA cause a rift in that control.

It is interesting that the speaker actually takes the line that the oppressed are wrong. That the oppressed must get down on their knees and apologise for being oppressed. I would have expected socialists and working-class people should look at the problems created by the oppressor.

The Ulster Workers' Council Strike was referred to. The point was not that

the Protestant working class were taking on the British administration and defeating them. They did not defeat them. They co-operated with them. The British army soldiers and RUC stood by at check points with armed UDA men who had cudgels and sticks. They were there to enforce the barricades, not trying to smash them. There was no attempt made by the British army or the RUC to dismantle the barricades during the UWC strike.

After the strike was over the leader of it, Glen Barr, got a government job in Derry creating jobs for young people. What other person who would bring down the establishment would get a government job afterwards?

It would be wrong to miss the opportunity to say what we are doing to persuade Unionists that their best interest lie within an all-Ireland state.

I, as a councillor in County Tyrone, provide two constituency offices, one in Dungannon and one in Coalisland.

Over the last three years our surveys show that 30% of the people we represent on a daily basis over housing and other social matters come from the Loyalist community. We do not only represent the Catholic community. We represent those within the areas we are elected from.

"I believe that if the British soldiers are removed then the Unionists will sit down with us."



Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams with his deputy Martin McGuinness: they have talked of winning Protestant consent, but it comes down to "sit at a table and agree with us — or else."

We accept there are limits to our ability to reach the Loyalist community, but we are doing our best.

At the moment your country, Britain, is being run by 10 Unionist MPs. This is occupation in reverse. They are responsible for NHS cuts, school closures. They are keeping the Tories in power.

Unionists talk about representing the working class of the Shankill Road. If anyone knows the background of these individuals they will know that they are capitalists who are playing Orange card. They use the grievance of the Shankill Road.

If unemployment is 70% in the Shankill Road — and I am not sure it is — then we condemn that. But the people who made it 70% are the Unionist politicians. They are part of the government administration.

Do not let anyone tell you that these people represent the working class. Can the working-class Protestants ever shake off the shackles of Unionist control and the Orange order? When Larkin tried to organise in Belfast, the Orange Order moved in at high speed to ensure that he did not get across to working-class people. They divided and conquered on behalf of their political masters, the British government.

We need to deal with reality. We in Sinn Fein have put out the hand of friendship. Too often it has been cut off.

Francis Molloy

THINK that people who sit here and say Gerry Adams should walk down the Shankill Road saying, "OK lads, let's sit down and sort out this Six Counties problem," are a bit naive. The reality is that this will not happen. We are saying that you need a conference which the British facilitate.

Whether you like it or not the problem is the British occupation of our country. The six occupied counties have a population that remains loyal to the British. That is what they were put there to do.

How do we get over that problem? We want to talk to the Unionist population. We want to sort out how we can best govern the island of Ireland.

We want a conference of all Irish people. We accept that before that conference we would put our policy of a unitary state. We accept that that conference may come out with alternative ways of governing Ireland. It may be federalism. It may be any of a number of ideas.

As Republicans we are interested in such a discussion.

The Unionists want to go back into Stormont. Maybe we should have the all-Irish parliament there. We would see then how conciliatory some people are.

As regards poverty and the Shankill Road. Yes, poverty exists — it exists in the same way poverty exists in the Falls Road. The nationalist and Unionist politicians agreed to differ and apportion out the housing in each area. It did not matter about the standard of housing — so long as it kept the people quiet.

Poverty in the Shankill road is down to years and years of Unionist misrule, followed by years and years of direct British misrule.

To deal with the issue of building workers. Now, I can not speak for the IRA; I represent Sinn Fein, a legitimate political party with a democratic mandate in Ireland.

Our policy is for demilitarisation of the situation. There are a lot more weapons than those that are held by the IRA. The major factor is the British government. The other factor is the loyalist paramilitaries.

We believe that the loyalist paramilitaries are armed and directed by the British establishment. It is an illusion that the British government is the honest broker standing between the warring factions.

There is an old joke in Ireland that the loyalist population will fight to the last British soldier. Now I believe that if the British soldiers are removed and the British remove the veto then the Unionists will sit down with us. They will not be coerced.

I work with Unionists and Protestants. The idea that Protestants are opposed to every move towards a united Ireland is wrong. I went to a conference recently in Dungannon where a Protestant woman — an RUC man's wife — said that she did not believe that one million Protestants are opposed to a united Ireland. Part of the million Protestants want to discuss how we can get peace.

The speaker said we did not put forward our policies in the Falls Road. I would ask the speaker to stand for election in the Falls Road and put forward his policies. We will put forward ours. Let's see who is elected.

The cause of British occupation. The reality is that occupation does not cost Britain as much



Loughinisland: Protestant bigots murdered Catholic men chosen at random

as it is supposed. Most of the money that is spent in the six counties is from the European exchequer. The British government is supposed to match this money pound for pound. Does it do that? No!

On reconciling differences. People should read our policies. We have a policy document, "Towards a lasting peace in Ireland," dealing with the process. We are the only party in Ireland which has put on paper proposals for ending the conflict.

We do not have to restate and restate that our policy is to build a socialist Ireland. But we also have political reality. Until we can decide what type of Ireland we want, there is no point in discussing the matter. For those who say "wait until the revolution here" — well, we have not got the time.

Our cause is urgent. We want to live in peace today.

You say loyalist violence is simply reactive to IRA violence. This is an illusion. Every time nationalism takes some strides forward the first thing you see is a renewal of the loyalist paramilitaries.

Loyalism is defending its privileges, and perks. They do not want to give up the benefits or to live in a normal society. They do not want to live in a society where everyone is equal.

We are saying to the Unionists that we want them to be part of the Irish nation. This is better than what Britain offers.

We want the British government out of Ireland. They should facilitate a conference so that we can talk to the Unionists.

Sean Matgamna

THE HALF-TRUTH is the enemy of the truth. We have had a series of half-truths from the Sinn Fein speaker. There has been much misrepresentation and demagoguery.

Let's define what we have in common.

Are we against the Catholics defending themselves? No, we are not. Are we not prepared to stand up to the British state? Nonsense! We are the only one of the British left groups that has been raided by armed police for our stand on Ireland, in the 1970s.

The idea that we are not sympathetic to Republicans who have been tortured by the British state is demagogic nonsense.

There is an Irish political expression — "the politics of the last atrocity" — which means that when there are atrocities on each side, you can not let your reaction be governed by horror at the last atrocity.

Six men are killed watching the World Cup and we react with horror against the Protestants. Go back a bit further to last October and 10 people are killed in the Shankill. Then you react against the Republicans.

You can not make your mind up by simply saying: the British torture people and that's terrible. You need an overview.

The problem with the half-truth is that it has no overview.

The point has been made that Sinn Fein is not socialist. I would add that Sinn Fein is not

republican! You can not have republicanism in the spirit of Pearse, Connolly and Tone which does not regard all the people of Ireland as equal, not just in words but in deeds.

The Declaration of Independence of 1916 plainly states that the Republic would treat "all the children of the nation" equally. You can not be a republican unless you regard the Protestants as having equal rights. Then it becomes a matter of defending their rights when they say that they are different from the rest of the Irish, and will not be subordinate.

Padraig Pearse, for example, rejected the idea that you could coerce the Protestants. You can not be a republican and treat one million people on the island of Ireland as second-class citizens. You can not be a Republican and regard them as enemies — unless they do what the majority wants. You can not coerce them into "consent".

About majorities and minorities, we do not just say that the minority must submit. For example, in the old United Kingdom the Irish were a small minority. If you apply the approach which says minorities must obey the majority, the whole idea of Ireland having the right to secede has to be rejected.

Consistent democrats accept that there are minorities within minorities. The minority in Ireland has collective

rights. They do not have the right to oppress Catholics. Their rights may include the right to secede. What is wrong with the Six Counties is not that it is "a Protestant state for a Protestant people" — what is wrong is that it is an abortion, with a vast Catholic minority. So it is untenable.

The speaker has claimed that Sinn Fein never changed. Sinn Fein began in 1904 or 1905 as a monarchist party! It was committed to a dual monarchy between Britain and Ireland. It became the Republican Party in 1917. It split in 1922-23, and then again with De Valera in the mid-twenties. In 1921 the Sinn Fein delegates, in their majority, did vote to accept partition.

All this is small beer — but it is an example of mystification. Another example: it is not true that 75% voted for Sinn Fein in 1918. Actually, 48% in Ireland voted for Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein got 73 out of 105 seats because 25 seats went to them uncontested in the South. It was not such a sweeping majority, though it was a majority.

I am for that majority. I am for that Sinn Fein. But we should try to relate to history as history, not as convenient mythology.

Francis Malloy made the demagogic point that it is easy to be in London and not understand why the Catholics need to defend themselves. The truth is that, in its origins, the Provisional IRA had nothing at all to do with defending the Catholics. In 1969 when sectarian violence started the IRA was a united body led by Stalinists, and it had more or less disarmed itself. The IRA had nothing to do with defending the Catholic areas!

As it happens, I was there, in Derry. I know this is the truth. The Catholic areas of Belfast and Derry were barricaded. The British army were on one side with machine guns, and we on the other side had mainly hurley sticks, not Provisional IRA guns.

The Provisional IRA split from the older Stalinist-led IRA because they failed to defend the Catholics — or so they said. Then the Provisional IRA launched a military offensive.

In 1971-2 they bombed the centre out of most Northern Irish cities and towns. That was not defending the Catholics, either. The truth is that the Protestant ultras were a small minority of Protestants before the military offensive of 1971. Afterwards, for a while, the ultras became a majority with an armed mass movement, the UDA. There were 35,000 or 40,000 armed people in the UDA in 1972.

I would certainly not argue against the right of the Catholic community to defend itself. But you do not defend yourself by declaring you will shoot workers who do any work that can be construed as work for the British state.

When I spoke earlier on I said that "collaborating" Catholic workers could also, in Provisional IRA theory, be shot. But in practice it is mainly Protestants. The truth is that the Protestants regard the British state as their state.

It is nonsense to suggest it is a matter of British occupied Ireland and this is just a war against the British state. This translates in a war situation to a war against that part of the population who regard the British state as their state.

That is why, to a large extent, the IRA war is a war against the Protestants. It is a war against Irish people.

Is there a civil war going on? Yes, there is a subterranean civil war. In this situation you get the double-talk of the demand for the Protestants to sit down "at a table".

If they sit down at a table, what happens if they do not agree with you? After six months? A year? Will you then accept their right not to be forced into a United Ireland?

The idea that Britain can persuade the Protestants — what does it mean? Britain has tried and the Protestants have reacted against them.

It was not the IRA that smashed Britain's attempts to set up a powersharing new political structure — it was the Protestant general strike. I think it is true that at the beginning that strike probably had a lot of coercion in it. But anyone who denies that after the second or third day that general strike was a real, mass movement of Protestants — a movement so strong it defeated and broke the will of the British government — is living in cloud-cuckoo land.

Britain will not persuade the Protestants with a few nice words. They are not persuadable! They do not trust the British or the Dublin politicians. The call for Britain to "persuade" is really a call for Britain to coerce.

You have the following paradox: the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein — demand that which has the same political line — demand that Britain coerce the Protestants!

What could be more nonsensical than the Provisional IRA trying to coerce the British into coercing the Protestants into a United Ireland? Yet that is their basic "strategy"?

The Sinn Fein speaker says he wants Unionist consent. This is double-talk. You actually want Unionist consent, or else. Or else — we will continue to attack you.

If we plainly sum up what the Provisionals are doing, its nonsensical character is obvious. The

fact is that Sinn Fein does not want an Irish solution to the conflict — they want a British solution.

The British have played a god-damned awful role. They continue that role by maintaining the artificial Six Counties entity. But the underlying logic of Sinn Fein's policy is the demand for the British to become super-benign fairy godmothers for Irish nationalism!

We want an intra-Irish solution by agreement between the sections of the Irish people. Sinn Fein want a solution by way of Britain strong-arming the Protestants! Fantasy could not become more fantastic!

I think, these days, the British would be willing to coerce the Protestants. No section of the British ruling class now supports the Protestants in Ireland. Britain has no military interest in being in Ireland — as it did during the Second World War and even afterwards. Britain certainly has no economic interest in controlling Northern Ireland.

But, if they tried to get out by coercing the Protestants they would face a massive revolt. If they left then, a united Ireland could not be the result.

If there is to be any type of a United Ireland it will be a federal united Ireland. A united Ireland without any special protection for the minority is utterly ridiculous. It will not happen.

I found myself reacting to the point that we are denouncing the oppressed. It is a powerful emotional argument. But we have defended the oppressed! Throughout the 1970s we defend the Provisional IRA. We did it partly because it is difficult to disengage yourself, to see things clearly, in such a conflict.

Nevertheless, this is a trick argument. If the oppressed are the Northern Ireland Catholics, who the hell says that Sinn Fein represents the oppressed? In reality, the bourgeois nationalist SDLP has more than twice the vote of Sinn Fein. If the Catholics are "the oppressed", then John Hume is their main representative, and the demand to back the oppressed uncritically translates into the demand to back John Hume!

Who says that we must go from sympathising and siding with the oppressed to agreeing with what Sinn Fein, or John Hume, say? It is a trick argument.

I have argued today not as a socialist, but as a republican. I believe that progress in Ireland is only possible by treating all its people equally. As James Connolly said, "Ireland apart from her people means nothing to me."

Finally, about socialism. Sinn Fein talks about a new Ireland. What does that mean? The only new Ireland that will get the parasites off our backs and stop emigration, is an Ireland where the working class has taken power.

That Ireland can not come into being without the working class remaking Ireland. The key is to unite the working class. From this point of view the Provisionals must be doubly condemned. The Provisionals have deepened the already existing divisions in the working class.

If this movement ends its military campaign on the basis of accepting that you can not coerce the Protestants — and the reports in the *Irish Times* suggest that this is one of the points of tentative agreement in the Hume-Adams discussions — the Provisionals condemn their entire 25 year record. I can understand how people are trapped, and drawn in to what the Provos have been doing. That does not make it anything less than an historical *cul de sac*.

I appeal to those in Sinn Fein who think they are socialists to look at their history. It is a terrible history, shaped by mystical pseudo-Republicanism not by any rational politics, republican or socialist. In practice it is Northern Irish Catholic communalism, wrapped up in inappropriate "Republican" ideas. It has set back the Irish working class, Irish unity, Irish Republicanism and Irish socialism — for a generation.

A History of Ireland told in words and pictures. From the 11th century to the present day.

95p + 29p postage.

From WL Publications Ltd, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques payable to "WL Publications Ltd."

A WORKERS' GUIDE TO IRELAND



This pamphlet is dedicated to all the victims of the crimes the British Empire and the divided Irish bourgeoisie — Orange, Green, and Green-Whitewash-Orange alike — did to the people of Ireland in 1922. It is dedicated also to the Irish Labour movement in both sides of the border, which must fight its way out of the Provisionals' new capitalist trap to build a future and build the only republic that is a true and equal republic of all the people of the Irish people for Ireland — the workers' republic.

A WORKERS' LIBERTY special 95p

Who needs men?



Jess Smith reviews

How to be a woman and not die in the attempt

Directed by Ana Belen

THIS FILM is undoubtedly an accurate portrayal of men's presumption, thoughtlessness and dishonesty towards women. However, the film loses most of its impact by making its central characters so bourgeois.

I cannot identify with the heroine because she is a woman who: tells her servant to shut up and make her another cup of coffee; prepares a business dinner for her husband by ringing up a caterer and hiring a dozen Indian waiters; moans about how she's got to bring up three kids single-handedly because she gets to pick them up from the airport at the end of their boarding school term.

There has been a crop of Spanish films in recent years — I'm thinking particularly of the films of Pedro Almodovar — which have successfully exploited the comedic potential of one of Spain's biggest natural resources: machismo. *How to be a woman...* tries to do this too, but in a more direct and perhaps more distinctly feminist way.

The only strength of this film lies in

Carmen Maura's performance. Her shifts of mood are handled very skilfully indeed. We see her torn apart over whether or not to end her marriage and her depression at the thought of another failed relationship. And we see her seething resentment at being the "dogsbody" at work.

Carmen Maura certainly knows how to turn on a vast range of emotions.

And so she manages to convey a real sense of what it is like to be a woman, despite the fact that the character she plays is a woman who can take comfort in all that money can buy. Designer clothes, nice long holidays in exotic locations... who needs men when you've got all that?



Jane Ryan

reviews

The Flintstones

Directed by Steven Spielberg

Profitable summer movie junk

A MAN for this shallowly green-conscious age, Steven Spielberg, has made his best-known work a



The Flintstones cast

recycling of old cultural junk.

Indiana Jones, for example, reworked the typical fare of 1940s serials, employing on it amounts of capital that would have sufficed for a year's production at one of the big studios of the Forties.

Certainly, I was one of many millions who enjoyed the result, but superbly turned out glossy junk it was, nevertheless.

I found nothing enjoyable in *The Flintstones*, the latest Spielberg recycling. It is simply awful. But so was the

1960s TV show Spielberg recycles.

This was a one-idea enterprise: portray the "typical" American family of other sitcoms as stone age cave dwellers, and equip them with 1960s technology made of stone, shell and animals.

It was not a funny idea in the first place and the jerky-cheap cartooning style and voices spouting "bright" state-of-the-art sitcom dialogue made it unendurable.

Spielberg's recycling has not made it less unendurable, despite a talented cast headed by John Goodman (from the splendid *Roseanne*).

The Flintstones is one of three TV recycles now in the cinemas. *Maverick* has got reasonable reviews and might be worth seeing if you have nothing

better to do.

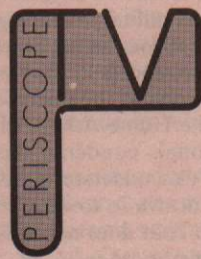
I might have gone to see *The Beverly Hillbillies* because I liked the TV show from which it comes, but then I read a reviewer who said it was worse even than *The Flintstones*, and I decided not to risk it. I'd done my duty by *Socialist Organiser* readers for this week!

King of the Beasts

No other creature, none,
Can do what we can;
No other species, not one,
Systematically preys
On Man, but man.

Sean Matgamma

In the age of the anti-utopians



Paddy Dollard

previews

Planet of the Apes

BBC1
1 August

SOME OF the best films of the last decade or two — *Planet of the Apes*, *Blade Runner* — and many lesser films, *Soylent Green*, for example, have been products of the wave of pessimism, sour anti-utopianism and historical despair that is still flowing strongly around us. One of its by-products is the resurgence of the dog-eat-dog, life-will-always-be-lived-in-the-jungle right.

The old belief that science would give humankind an ever-growing control of our environment and allow us to go on improving ourselves and our societies, died.

So did much of the old political optimism, of which mass socialism was part.

Fear of science and loss of confidence in the possibility of human reason controlling human life took its place. Science had been seen as the benign curer and provider; after the development of the nuclear bomb, it seemed to many to be like Pandora's box in the myth, out of which once opened came the great evils of life — disease, destruction and death.

The horrors of Hitler's automated,

"rational" slaughter factories where scientists experimented on children, and the seeping, creeping awareness of what really lay behind the lying facade of Stalinist "planning" did, of course, contribute enormously to creating this change of mood.

But the catalyst was the fear of nuclear annihilation and the fear of the life-threatening damage we have done to our common mother, the earth in the 200 years since the industrial revolution began. Utopias about a perfected life in the future gave way to anti-utopias about hell in a future world human beings have destroyed, mutilating or mutating themselves in the course of the destroying.

Blade Runner — a marvellous parable about Creation — takes place on an earth suffering from permanent acid rain and half-abandoned by human refugees forced to move out into space from the ruin they have created. Life-like robots are in conflict with their human creators.

In *The Terminator* we are told of a near future world in which intelligent machines have taken on an autonomous life of their own and almost exterminated the humans.

In *Soylent Green* (1973), set in the 2020s, the people of the damaged, overcrowded world need to recycle dead human meat as human food.

In one moving scene an old man — Edward G Robinson — dies voluntarily, high on drugs in the "virtual reality" room of his choice: he projects himself back into the world of his youth, when there were green fields

with horses in them.

In *Planet of the Apes* — which is being shown on BBC1 on 1 August, to be followed by its sequels — the world is ruled by intelligent apes in a civilisation roughly at the level of Europe's late middle ages, and human beings have regressed into herds of dumb cattle-like beasts.

There were earlier films about the danger of nuclear annihilation, like for example, *Dr Strangelove* (1963) but *Planet of the Apes*, I guess, was a watershed in film anti-utopian science fiction.

This mood of despair and the socially catastrophic loss of hope that produces it is itself now a force working towards producing its own worst nightmares.

Love, hope and reason are necessary for progress and for the averting of disaster. The struggle for democratic and rational human control of our society as the embodiment of love, hope and reason is made ever more glaringly necessary by the things around us from which the anti-utopian science fiction artists extrapolate and generalise — creeping ecological disaster, for example. The anti-utopians sap our will to strive.

Marxists are today the main opponents of this social despair and its current dog-eat-dog political offshoots, the seed of a future regrowth of confidence and progress.

Planet of the Apes, BBC1, 1 August; *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, BBC1, 2 August; *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*, BBC1, 3 August.

Abram Leon was right

LETTER

I WAS sorry to see the article you printed by Werner Cohn ("Abram Leon was wrong," 24 June), not because I am in favour of suppressing views that are hostile to Trotskyist politics, but for the sheer vulgarity of the polemics contained in it. Leon is condemned for his "hodge-podge of secondary sources," and Trotskyism after Trotsky's death for the view that "Judaism is simply usury writ large." An extra twist of demagoguery is added with the remark that "Leon was fatefully influenced by the very anti-Semitism that killed him." But not a single concrete argument is used to refute his thesis.

Obviously, many of Leon's sources were secondary — anyone who has made even a superficial study of the history knows that few scholars can command sources in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Ge'ez, Arabic, Yiddish, German, French, English, Spanish... need I go on? Does comrade Cohn himself command them all? And I do not think the remark that Leon believed that the sole function of Jews in the society of the late Roman Empire and the Middle Ages was limited to "usury" should even be dignified with a reply. A proper reading of his book is sufficient answer to that.

Leon's main contention, so far as I understand it, is that the Jews survived the destruction of their state in the first and second centuries AD because they had a functioning position in the economy of the Dark and Middle Ages as

"a people class." The conversion of the Khazars — a Turkic people in central Asia — and the existence of Jewish enclaves elsewhere, such as the Falashas in Ethiopia, shows that the survival and development of Judaism at this time was not a mere question of physical descent, and has to be explained by other factors.

I would go further, and say that at least for analysing the development of national groups in Eastern Europe, the Trotskyist movement has not taken on board sufficiently his basic insights on this question. How otherwise are we to understand the spread of the German language in town life in this area outside of the operations of the Hansa trading network and the conquests of the Teutonic Knights? Without such a tool of understanding, how can we explain the set-up in Transylvania, where the bourgeoisie and proletariat were German, the landowners Magyar (Hungarian), and the peasants Vlach (Romanian), or the functions of the Phanariot Greeks within the Ottoman Empire? Or of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, where the large landed families were Lithuanian and the petty gentry class Polish?

Attack the limitations of Leon's thought by all means — few Jewish Trotskyists operating under Nazi illegality could possibly have enjoyed full library access to all the latest works of scholarship on this very complicated question. But don't attack him precisely where he has been proved right!

Al Richardson, South London

Sefton council workers face huge fines

UNISON

By a Liverpool UNISON member

Sefton council, on Merseyside, are taking the UNISON union branch secretary, Nigel Flanagan, and branch chair Martin Murphy, to court for organising a one-day unofficial strike against the threat-

ened privatisation of Technical Services.

As a result of the action, agreed at a mass meeting of over 600 workers, the privatisation proposals were dropped, but Sefton councillors obviously want their pound of flesh. If the High Court finds against them, Flanagan and Murphy may be held liable for costs and damages. There is also the threat of Sefton council sack-

ing them.

The council hauled the national union into the dock, too, but on the opening day of the case said it accepted that UNISON nationally had repudiated the action. The judge was having none of it: only he would decide whether the national union had acted properly. So Sefton council (where Labour is the biggest party) changed tack, and accused UNI-

SON nationally of not having repudiated the action according to the strict letter of the law.

They are talking about six-figure damages. UNISON general secretary Alan Jinkinson did his utmost to leave his branch officials carrying the can alone, and is now having to pay for it.

Martin and Nigel also face the prospects of huge fines and costs against them, with the knowledge

that the national union doesn't intend to do anything to help them. It is likely, in fact, that the national union will take disciplinary action against them at the September National Executive.

The basic principle at stake here is the right of elected representatives to get backing from their national union when they are being attacked under the Tory anti-union laws. We should pres-

surise the National Executive into supporting Martin and Nigel, and get them to stand up for their members.

The court reconvenes on Friday 29 July for the judgement. Lobby Manchester High Court from 9am! Messages of support and donations to Sefton UNISON, 38 Crosby Road North, Liverpool L22 4QQ; tel 051-920 6140, fax 051-928 0298.

Support the Liverpool UNISON stewards!

By a Liverpool UNISON member

BY CHARGING four Social Services shop stewards in Liverpool with "participating in and/or supporting unlawful industrial action", UNISON leaders have made themselves policemen for the Tory anti-union laws.

The National Executive refused to support the unofficial action taken by seven out of 20 members at Fairfield Day Centre against racism. Now it is victimising the stewards who did, rightly, support their members in dispute.

Ironically, the Director of Social Services vindicated the action by issuing a statement accepting that there were racist practices at Fairfield, and expressing regret that management had failed to tackle them. It comes to something when a union like UNISON which prides itself on its equal-opportunities policy is less progressive than management.

We are all too used to seeing craven capitulation by union leaders to the Tory anti-union laws, as they put concern for union finances above their responsibility to defend members' jobs, pay and conditions. But the National

Executive's actions against Liverpool are a step further. If they get away with them, then anyone considering industrial action will face attacks not just from the employers and the Tory courts, but from their own union too!

The fundamental reason for the disciplinary action is the UNISON leaders' fear of the rank and file. In the Fairfield Day Centre dispute, members took action because their work situation was unbearable. They couldn't afford to wait for the union to jump through the legal hoops demanded by the anti-union laws.

Although it should not be a point of principle for union members to break the law, often hanging around for weeks waiting for the national union to complete the legal formalities can mean defeat. The delay allows the employers to organise more effectively to undermine the dispute and intimidate members, and the union leaders to string out the dispute in the hope that the members will get demoralised and give up.

Some union activists say that there are more important issues than the "boring" and "bureaucratic" ones of internal union democracy - issues like pay, cuts, and Compulsory Competitive

Tendering. But without internal democracy we cannot hope to organise a fight back on those issues.

We passed a resolution at union conference this year declaring UNISON a "member-led" union, but the National Executive clearly have no intention of putting that into practice. It is up to the membership to give a clear warning to the National Executive that we will not tolerate witch-hunts. The Liverpool dispute is not an obscure wrangle between local factions - it raises fundamental principles of union democracy which should be of concern to all trade unionists.

Don't let the National Executive get away with victimising the Liverpool stewards! The disciplinaries, originally scheduled for 27-29 July, have been postponed to September. The Liverpool "Unity in UNISON" campaign is calling for them to be dropped altogether, and for the members of the Liverpool branch to decide through an AGM.

Support our call: send messages of support and donations to Liverpool "Unity in UNISON", c/o UNISON office, 4th Floor, Foster House, Canning Place, Liverpool L1.

Strike wins "resounding success"

By a Bromley UNISON member

BROMLEY UNISON's first-ever strike on 14 July was a resounding success. Over 1000 council employees failed to report for work, either as a response to the strike call or through refusing to cross picket

lines.

The Personnel Division's attempts to organise strike-breaking were frustrated by not knowing where workers were missing because managers who would normally have made such reports were themselves on strike.

The strike was part of UNISON's ongoing campaign to

defend pay and conditions of employment.

Bromley's Tories are supporting Chief Personnel Officer Sandra Campbell's plans to replace the current national conditions of employment with a cumbersome local scheme which would leave many workers £1000 to £4000 a year worse off.

Fight Department of Transport job cuts!

CIVIL SERVICE

By a DoT worker

LAST WEEK the Department of Transport (DoT) announced that 1500 jobs would be cut over the next 18 months. Unfortunately there are more cuts on the way. In August we expect another 800 to 1000 jobs to go.

The reason for these job losses is an arbitrary cut in Department of Transport funding, in order to prepare the way for tax cuts before the

next election. As a result, not only are the Tories slashing jobs; they are also willing to see increased deaths on the roads and sea, as safety staff are cut back.

Hardest hit by the announced job cuts is the Highways Agency, which was only set up on 1 April this year. The Government plans to shut four Agency offices and partly close four others, from a network of 11 offices. These office closures will mean at least 500 job losses, probably more. Then the Government intends to make the bulk of the remaining staff re-

apply for their own jobs!

On the day of the announcement there were no walk-outs, and the workers' reaction was more of shock than of anger, but activists in both NUCPS and CPSA unions believe that industrial action can be won.

Given that the Agency intends to shut offices by June 1995, and to begin handing out compulsory redundancy notices by December this year, that action has to begin as soon as possible.

Transform the NUT! Fight for left unity!

TEACHERS

By Ivan Wels

THE Annual General Meetings of the two left groups in the major teachers' union, the NUT, have both voted for left unity. The Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU) met on 11 June, and the Socialist Teachers' Alliance on 2 July.

There are differences of nuance and emphasis between the STA and CDFU, and there has been

mistrust in the past, but they produce motions for conference which both sides generally support wholeheartedly.

Although merger is not on the cards at the moment, there is now a commitment to closer cooperation. Specific initiatives include the Leicester conference, the Section 11 campaign, and the production of a national bulletin to go directly to all local associations [union branches]. Hopefully, closer cooperation will avoid any repeat of such things as the setting up of an STA candidate against Christine

Blower, a CDFU supporter, in the Inner London Executive elections earlier this year.

The main stumbling block has been the Socialist Workers' Party [SWP], who for their own reasons have promoted the STA as the "socialist" organisation against the "right-wing" CDFU - an entirely bogus counterposition. However, at the STA AGM they were completely sidelined. Realising they had lost the argument, they only sent three people (last year they sent over 30), who argued that somehow talking about left unity

would cut across support for the signal workers! In the afternoon even those three SWPers failed to attend.

One of the main arguments for unity is that if the CDFU and STA can cooperate on the union executive (in the Left Caucus), why not apply this nationally? In Manchester meetings have been held involving CDFU, STA and non-aligned members which have helped to mobilise on several issues.

All this is a very healthy turn and bodes well for future battles against the Tories.

Telecom engineers under attack

TELECOM

By a central London BT engineer

BT BOSSES plan to force engineers on residential customer-facing duties to change their work patterns, and do more weekend and evening work.

Negotiations between BT and the National Communications Union on the controversial CSIP proposals have finished with the union rejecting BT's final proposals and BT management determined to force change through.

BT wants to reduce its budget for overtime pay and shift allowances at the expense of engineers' income. BT wants "flexibility", but are not prepared to pay for it. The BT management propaganda machine, better resourced than the union's, has swung into action, with personal letters to all 27,000 engineers so far affected and management briefings where individual workers are put on the spot.

The union has made clear that no agreement has been reached, and that no engineer should volunteer for changes in work patterns yet. After some dithering the union is conducting a consultative ballot on the proposals and recommending a no vote.

The General Secretary had promised BT that the union would remain "neutral" in the ballot! However, an emergency meeting of the union's Telecoms Industry Committee forced a change of direction.

The CSIP issue has been simmering for a couple of years now in BT. Although at present only the

27,000 staff immediately affected are to be ballot, other engineering workers on business comms work and on payphones will inevitably be affected too. Eventually most BT workers, including clerical staff, will be affected.

This crucial issue calls for a broadened-out political campaign. A very large no vote is needed in the consultative ballot, and preparation for a subsequent industrial action ballot is essential.

The options offered to the staff have few advantages, and many disadvantages. We may have four-day work weeks over Monday-Saturday or Monday-Sunday without adequate payment. BT wants the right to force us to start or finish work an hour earlier or later as demand allows, so that we will not be able to say when we will finish work. Non-payment for Saturday working, and the non-voluntary part of the option, are the sticking points.

The union has a long-standing claim for reduced working hours, but the only offer from BT on this is that if some engineers opt for a three-day week over Friday to Tuesday, they will only work 36 hours. We need much more than this - a reduction in hours for all BT staff.

The consultative ballot will be held between 1 and 26 August. One hundred of out 130-odd branches of the union with members affected have signed a petition calling for a vigorous campaign to reject the CSIP proposals. The task is to persuade the membership that the union will fight all the way on this issue.

Teachers' union election reflects growth in left support

By Bernard Regan, National Union of Teachers Executive

ALTHOUGH Doug McAvoy, the existing right-wing General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, has been re-elected, the margin of 1552 between him and Mary Hufford, the left-supported Deputy General Secretary, could hardly have been closer.

Mary Hufford's vote of 37,329 reflects the growing confidence of teachers following the success of the continuing tests boycott which began in 1993, the wish of the predominantly women members to see a woman in the union's top post, and the developing influence of the left within the union.

The removal of John Patten from the office of Secretary for Education is a reflection of the defeat inflicted on the Tory

Government and their attempts to push forward the reintroduction of selective education. In 1993 the campaign was jointly conducted by the three teacher organisations, including the TUC-affiliated National Union of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers.

This year the NUT continued the campaign alone, goaded by NASUWT General Secretary Nigel De Gruchy. He said that the Tory retreat, meaning that the amount of work teachers had to do for the tests was less, indicated that the boycott should be called off.

De Gruchy's position is thoroughly reactionary. It is a sell-out of teachers and students. The tests will be used to discriminate against working-class students and will be used as a way of disciplining teachers. Patten's proposal to bring in external examiners is a move to break the NUT

boycott and ensure the delivery of the school league tables based on the tests. De Gruchy has gone further than this, however. In welcoming the boycott-breaking moves by the Tories, he is also inviting them to use anti-trade-union legislation against NUT members.

Recent months have seen a number of bitter exchanges between the NUT and NASUWT leaderships. Much of this is sparked by competition for members between the two and the non-TUC affiliate, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

Inside the NUT the left is faced with increasing responsibilities as it must become prepared to take on the leadership of the union. Hufford's vote has added to the impetus inside the union towards uniting the two biggest left groups - the Socialist Teachers' Alliance and the Campaign for a

Democratic and Fighting Union.

The AGM of the STA voted to open discussion with the CDFU about joint work and moves towards unity, and a similar motion was adopted at a recent CDFU meeting.

The autumn election for the Deputy General Secretary post, in which Mary Hufford will be standing for re-election, will provide an opportunity for the left to demonstrate its influence within the NUT and should see her re-elected. The left has many issues to address - reactionary education policies, cuts, job loss, temporary contracts, attacks on working conditions, racist cuts to areas of the education service and so on. The left inside the NUT is beginning to come to grips with these issues that face the union's members and with the serious responsibility it places on its shoulders for leading the NUT as a whole.

SOCIALIST

Holiday reading

ORGANISER

Campaign to save the Welfare State!



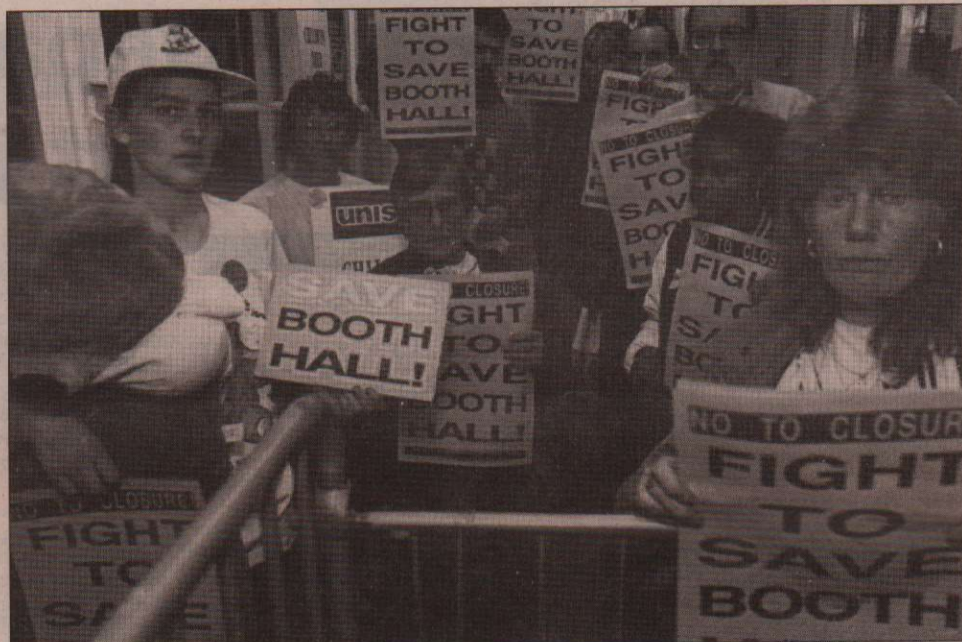
Alan Simpson MP reviews the new pamphlet, *How to Save the Welfare State*

ONE IN three of Britain's hospital and nursing home beds is now private. The cut of 109,000 beds from Health Service hospitals between 1981 and 1991-2 was almost exactly matched by 115,000 more private beds.

The NHS is being largely pulled out of important areas of health care — notably, care for the frail elderly, and dentistry — to leave them to the rule of the market: pay if you can, suffer if you can't.

The values of unemployment benefit, the basic state pension, and child benefit have been cut by a half, relative to average earnings. More and more of the millions of people rejected by Tory Britain as not yielding enough profit are being pushed into begging, crime, or means-tested benefits.

The council housing stock has been slashed by forced sales and a virtual ban on new building, and council rents are being pushed up towards 'market' levels. Education is being reshaped through cuts in public funding, increased scope for market forces, and a transfer of power from elected local authori-



Protest against hospital closure in Manchester. Photo: Paul Herrmann, Profile

ties to quangos and to central government.

In dozens of different ways, the Welfare State is being hacked away. In place of its comprehensive civilising framework, the Tories are shaping a society where decent provision has to be bought for hard cash, with only substandard pauper provision for the poor.

Health spending in Britain, at about 6% of national income, is lower than in almost any other advanced capitalist country. Benefits and pensions in Britain are meaner than in continental Europe. Pre-school education, and class sizes in primary schools, are worse in Britain than in most west European countries.

Yet the Tories still tell us that we 'cannot afford' to keep the Welfare State. We can afford billions in tax cuts, 'golden handshakes', bonuses, consultancy fees, and big pay rises for the rich — but not the smaller amounts needed to restore full employment and decent social provision!

Yet Labour's leaders are still refusing to promise any extra funding at all for the Health Service! Labour's leaders have mumbled apologetically when they should have roared out angry defiance, and quibbled about details when they should have taken a clear and immovable stand on the great labour movement principle of an equal right for all to a decent life. There are many campaigns against the destruction of the Welfare State, but most of them are localised or partial.

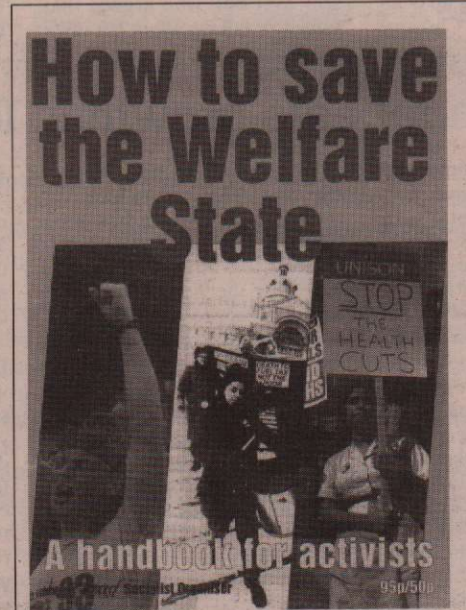
The tone is still being set by the ideologues of the New Right — by views like those of Hayek ("a road to serfdom with a speedometer marked by the percentages of the Gross National Product devoted to state welfare services") and Rhodes Boyson ("the state spends all its energies taking money from the energetic, successful and thrifty and gives it to the idle, the failures, and the feckless").

This pamphlet is a welcome and well-documented attempt to turn the tide and stake out a principled, uncompromising, across-

the-board defence of the Welfare State.

• The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and the Campaign Group Supporters' Network are planning a major national conference in the autumn on the defence of the Welfare State. They hope to pull together different local initiatives into a single major campaign.

If you want to know more about the initiative then contact SMTUC Assistant Secretary Trudy Saunders on 071-703 3493 (evenings) or write to her c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



95p plus 28p postage from WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

By Joan Trevor

SOME OF OUR readers will be thinking about summer holidays right now. Some lucky readers will actually be about to go on one.

Whether it's a stay on a Greek island, a package tour to a Spanish costa, a trip to the caravan or a week at Centerparcs, you've earned it and you've probably been looking forward to it all year, and, like last year, when it's all over you'll say "I wish I didn't have to go back."

A week later, back in that office, or the factory, or at home you'll say: "I don't believe it ever happened."

Depressing, isn't it? Once a year millions of British people shell out probably hundreds of pounds to get away from home and "be themselves" for a fortnight or a week.

"Being yourself" can mean the bestiality of drinking in a bar by night and sleeping the hangover off on a beach by day. It can mean looking at sights, natural or man-made, rockpools and forests, works of art or architecture.

It can mean doing some activity you particularly enjoy, angling, haranguing anglers, sunbathing, cleaning beaches so that they're fit to sunbathe on.

For many women, "being yourself" can simply mean release from shopping, cooking, washing up, washing and looking after the children for a week. Can.

All these pleasures under capitalism, packaged and sold for profit, are rationed out as our consolation for a year of grinding boredom or sheer graft.

Some people, who might be unemployed or hard-up, or who cannot get the time off work, will have to wait 'til next year, for an upturn in the economy, for a Labour government to commit itself to policies for full employment, for full-time rights for part-time workers, for a decent pay rise.

But jobs, and decent pay, like holidays, don't have to be rationed. There is enough work in the world for everyone to do, and for everyone to do it without knacker themselves in the process.

There is enough wealth in the world for all to have access to leisure facilities and the leisure time to enjoy them. There is enough imagination and ingenuity in human beings to make these things available to all. And to organise work so that we don't cling to our fortnight in the sun as the only time in the year when we can begin to know ourselves.

If you are going on holiday this year pack this paper in your luggage along with your swimming costume, your snorkel, your fishing lines and your holiday reading. Equip yourself with some of the ideas that can make this ideal a reality.

And, remember, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty will keep working while you're away, building towards that time.

If you would like to contribute to our work, please send a cheque/postal order payable to "WL Publications" to the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Subscribe to Socialist Organiser

Name

Address

£5 for 10 issues £25 for a year
 £13 for six months £..... extra donation

Enclosed as appropriate

Cheques/postal orders payable to "WL Publications."

Return to: Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Australia: \$70 for a year, from WL, PO Box 313, Leichhardt 2040. Cheques payable to "Workers' Liberty"
USA: \$90 for a year, from Barry Finger, 153 Henderson Place, East Windsor, NJ 08520. Cheques payable to "Barry Finger"