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REVIEW

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Picket line politics

After two months: The state: Ballots

Family facts...and fallacies

The cry that the family is breaking up is one that used to be heard mostly from reactionaries, from the churches and the right. Recently however, many people on the left have been getting excited about the 'amazing' facts that statistics seem to reveal about the family in Britain today...or are things all they seem?

It is part of the ideology of modern capitalism that numbers represent the 'truth', however distorted or inaccurate they may actually be. Some statistics are designed to mislead; others are easily misread or misunderstood, especially if presented in mystifying ways.

There are some specific problems with statistics on families and households. They are usually a 'snapshot' of people of all ages at one point in time, rather than a moving picture of individuals who are child and adult, single and married, worker and pensioner all in the one lifetime.

For instance, only 40 percent of all households in Britain today include children. Twenty seven percent consist of married couples without children, and 21 percent are single persons. This seems to suggest that 'families' as usually understood are in the minority.

But couples who don't have children *now* includes couples with grown-up children who have already left home. Couples normally survive for up to 20 years after their children have left home nowadays. Similarly, five out of seven people living alone are over retirement age and have 'lost' the families they once had.

To look at it another way, over nine-tenths of the population (90 percent of men and 93 percent of women) have married by the time they reach 50. This is almost certainly an all-time high for western European society: in 1951 for example, it was only 82 percent of women and 75 percent of men. And 80 percent of the population have children sooner or later.

Standard of comparison

Sometimes statistics are narrowly defined but give a misleading impression of breadth. Take the frequently quoted (and often misquoted) fact that only 5 percent of the workforce consists of married men with two children and a wife who doesn't go out to work -- often said to represent the 'conventional family' because it appears so often in advertising.

Look at this fact carefully. It says *two* children -- and for every seven families with two children there are ten with one or three or more. It says mothers who don't go out to

work -- and mothers of two children are, as it happens, more likely to go out to work than those of any other number. It is a proportion of the workforce, not households -- and only 60 percent of the workforce are men anyway, whether married or unmarried.

The above fact may be useful for showing up the illusions of advertising or for pointing out that a large proportion of workers are women, but it doesn't prove the family is disappearing!

What about illegitimacy and single parent families? Some inner city areas have very high illegitimacy rates, but the national level is one in every ten live births. Is this high or low? A standard of comparison with the past is needed. From 1870 to 1959, the normal rate was between 4 and 5 percent -- but in wartime it was much higher, reaching 9.3 percent in 1945. Before 1870, it was probably consistently higher, but we don't have complete figures: some historians think it was as high in the 1840s as it is today.

It is not illegitimacy that produces most single mothers, but divorce (35 percent) and separation (28 percent). A further 17.5 percent are widows, leaving only 20.5 percent who have never been married.

Divorce has increased over five times in the last 20 years. Working class people can get divorces much more easily than in the past (with legal aid since 1949 and divorce law reform since 1969) and the fact that people live longer places more marriages at risk but the breakdown of marriages is still basically increasing.

However, between two-thirds and three-quarters of divorced people remarry -- one in four marriages now involves at least one partner for the 'second time around'.

First marriages on the other hand, have been going down since the early 1970s. But it

is not yet clear how much of this trend is caused by a rise in the age of marriage. Marriages of the under-25s have gone down most. Some young people may be rejecting marriage altogether -- but we don't know how many will have changed their minds by the time they are thirty. A more obvious reason for the rise in the age of marriage is economic recession -- by now, youth unemployment must be cutting the number of early marriages substantially.

Two facts stand out with great clarity. One is that the family is changing. There is a *new* conventional family, different from the old but just as strong. In it, couples have fewer children over a shorter space of time, one person is more likely to have a series of marriages, and above all, most married women (60 percent as opposed to under 10 percent in 1931) go out to work at least part time.

The other fact is that class patterns are beginning to change. Illegitimacy and 'common law marriage' used to be a working class phenomenon, unmentionable in middle class circles and causing social downgrading for any middle class woman who found herself in such a situation. Now, many educated and better-off women have won recognition for the right to live as they choose -- and their choices are made easier by better pay, careers, access to child care, maternity rights at work, etc.

But it is a dangerous illusion for such women to think that by changing their individual lifestyles they can change the whole of society. They think of themselves as enlightened social pioneers, whose example will flow downwards by 'cultural diffusion' to the benighted working class. (If you don't believe this read the *Guardian* women's page!)

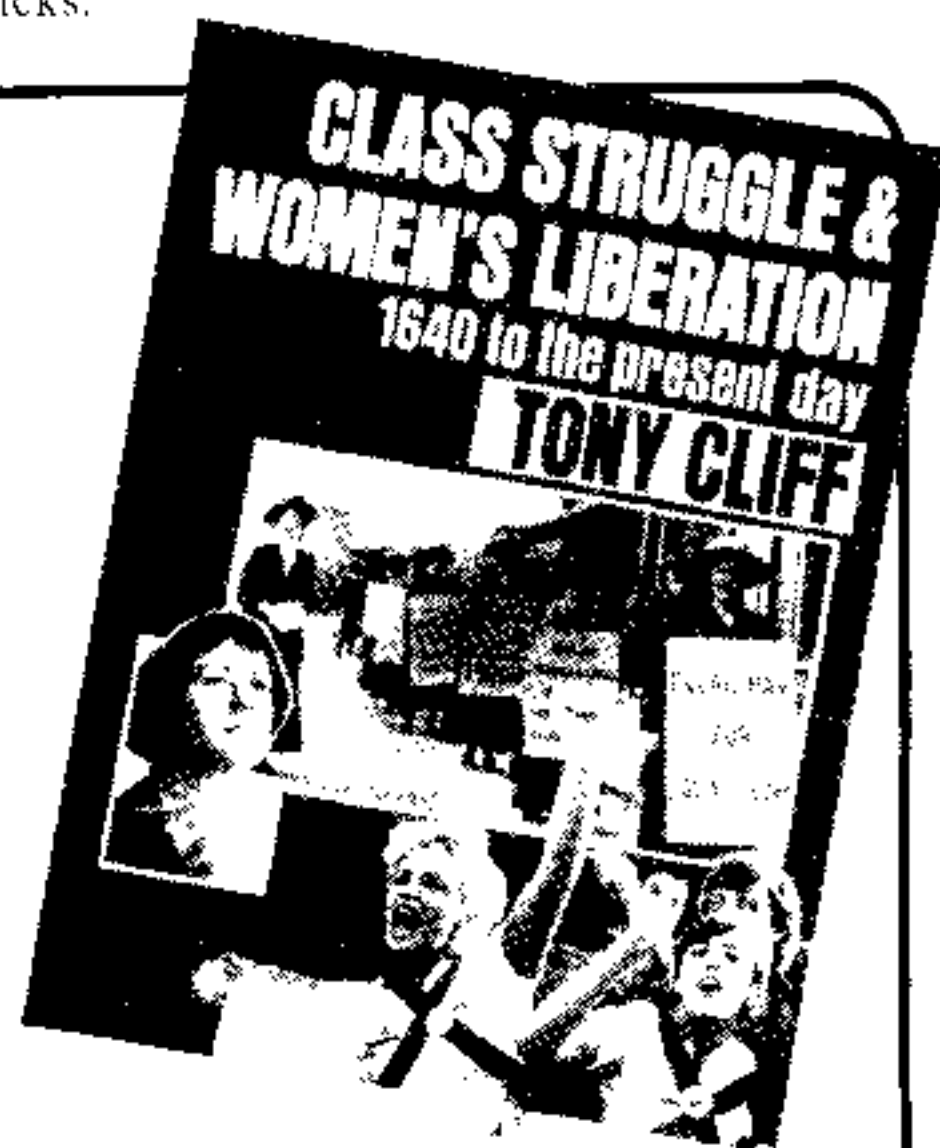
The family is deeply rooted in capitalist society and it will take a revolution to provide any alternative for the majority of the population. 'Cultural diffusion' won't change the hard facts of life for the working class -- and neither will statistical vanishing tricks.

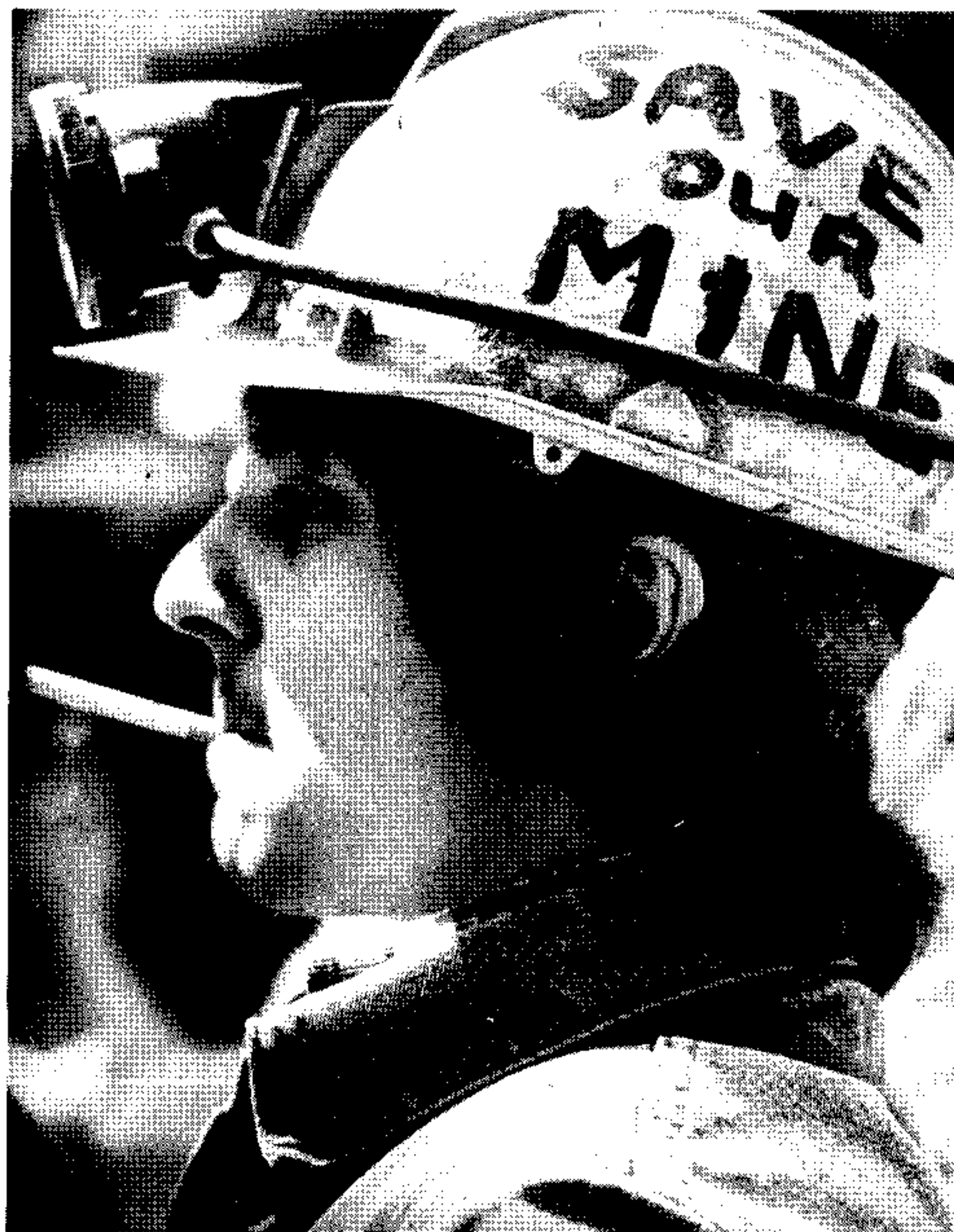
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Not digging for victory

The miners' strike has developed into the most serious class confrontation for ten years. Not since the last major national miners' strike, back in 1974, have the stakes been so high.

A victory for the miners in 1974 meant the fall of the Tory government. Now, of course, the result is unlikely to be that dramatic. It is most unlikely that Thatcher will fall, whatever the outcome.

Short of that, however, a lot can happen, not primarily to the government but to the terrain upon which the class struggle is fought out. A victory for the Tories will mean that it is more difficult to develop those tiny bursts of confidence that have been noticeable amongst some militants in the last few months. A defeat for the government will mean that such confidence can flower and prosper.

One of the characteristics of the miners' strike has been the speed with which events

have developed. That makes any attempt at short term prediction in an editorial statement a pointless exercise. The best that we can do is to try to draw out what we can learn from the development of the strike.

Overall, the strike has settled down to something of a slog with the majority of miners out and with both sides trying to outlast the economic misery inflicted by the other.

Within that, however, there are two important issues which remain to be settled. The first is the question of strike action by the Notts miners, The NUM leadership, and in particular Scargill, seem at last to be prepared to try to mobilise for strike action in the scabbing pits. They have, at last, started

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to organise rallies in the area in an attempt to win the political battle. This shift is to be welcomed but it must be quite clear to everyone involved that it would have been much easier to get solidarity action if the same sort of political will had been shown six weeks ago. Scabbing, like many other bad habits, is something that is best nipped in the bud, not left to flourish under the benevolent care of the press for over a month before it is tackled.

The reason for the reluctance on the part of the NUM leadership has little to do with their personal failings. Rather their slowness to react and now the fact that they have finally reacted, is the result of the pressures they have been under. Left and right, the leaders of the NUM are trade union bureaucrats without any organic links with the rank and file. Their first instinct, because they are subject to the pressures of the union machine, is to stick very closely to the letter of the rule book and not to interfere in another bureaucrats' patch.

But they are also under pressure from their own members. Therefore they have to deliver at least some sort of action on what every militant can see is one of the burning scandals of the strike.

Double pressure

This double pressure under which the leadership acts is illustrated very clearly by the other major issue of the strike: the stopping of coal supplies to the steel works.

Stopping the steel works is an obvious target for the miners. There are, after all, only four of them so they are a much more concentrated target than the large number of coal-burning power stations. They are also far more dependent on regular supplies of coal.

The struggle to stop coal shipments to Ravenscraig in particular illustrates the problem of the strike. There is no doubt amongst the most militant of the miners in Scotland there is a clear realisation that the stopping of coal to Ravenscraig is the key to the advance of the strike. But this layer of militants is only a minority of the Scottish

NUM membership and if it is to win it needs to mobilise the whole of that membership, or at least a significant part of it. The only force currently able to deliver that sort of mobilisation is the Scottish NUM bureaucracy, and Mick McGahey in particular. The problem for the militants then, is how to put enough pressure on McGahey to get him to act.

It is necessary to put pressure on McGahey to act because he is under contradictory pressures from other groups of people. Obviously, he wants to win the strike, but the employers, and their press, and the leadership of the steel unions, and even many of the local convenors, are all screaming at him to be reasonable and to let Ravenscraig stay open.

It is the impact of these two different pressures that lead to the oscillation and vacillations of McGahey and the Scottish NUM bureaucracy. One day they stop coal being unloaded from a Liberian registered ship and the next they allow it to be unloaded from a British registered one. They are unable to pursue any consistent policy.

In order to pursue the sort of policy that could stop coal movements and thus start hurting the capitalist class a lot more than at present it is necessary to have quite a sophisticated political position.

Many workers at Ravenscraig, and other places which will be closed down if coal supplies are cut off, have very real worries that their employers will seize the opportunity to shut the place altogether and throw them on to the dole queue. That argument needs to be met and answered.

One of the obstacles to McGahey and Co providing that answer is that they have for years talked in nationalistic terms about 'Scotland's industry' and so they have built up a whole mythology around what is essentially the idea of class collaboration. If you have spent the last few years talking about the need to 'save' this or that 'Scottish industry' then you are very vulnerable when the press, or even other workers, turn around and accuse you of endangering that self-same industry.

The fact is that the arguments about cutt-

ing off coal supplies to Ravenscraig or anywhere else cannot be answered on these nationalistic grounds. They can only be answered on class grounds: if the miners win, then management will be on the defensive and that much less likely to close down Ravenscraig or anywhere else, for fear of facing another big battle.

That argument, of course, is very clear to rank and file miners. That is why they are on strike rather than bowing to NCB arguments that any action will make pit closures more likely. But the fact that the argument has been won amongst miners does not mean that it has been won amongst other groups of workers. If there is to be a successful stoppage, then steelworkers have to be won to that argument too. It is for that reason that large pickets and a massive mobilisation of miners is needed. A bureaucratic agreement between a couple of officials will fall to pieces at the first hint of opposition.

All of these arguments point to the crying need for political arguments in the strike. The officials can act if they are pressed hard enough by the rank and file — after all, even Joe Gormley was forced to lead official miners' strikes.

Political intervention

It is the organising of that sort of political intervention which distinguishes a revolutionary organisation from other currents inside the Labour movement. After all, even the Labour Party NEC can call for collections for miners, although it still remains an open question as to how much they can actually deliver. But collecting money, while it is vital work, is not enough. It has to be *part* of struggle to influence the outcome of the strike or it is nothing other than charity.

It is to that task that the efforts of the tiny number of revolutionary socialists must be directed. Our problem is that we are so few that the effect we can have is minimal. And that problem is made particularly acute by the fact that the ruling class are already wavering as McGregor's offer of talks made clear. The miners' strike can be won; we have to do our best to make sure it is.



Stopping the steel works is vital for victory

Class struggle hots up

On the face of it, the situation in the class struggle has changed dramatically over the last four months or so. Last October we talked about the 'downturn'. We meant it was like being stuck in a calm of the class struggle, gradually drifting backwards.

It was miserable: no mass strikes, or pickets or demonstrations. Only when you talked about the general politics could you escape from the feeling of misery. If you looked at the struggle it was a story of defeats.

Then there was Warrington. Mass pickets, thousands of people fighting the police; things we hadn't seen for several years. There was a two-day shutdown of Fleet Street. Suddenly the class struggle was back in the centre of the stage. It was not just what Marxists talked about, it was something the press featured day after day. Then Warrington went down, and we were back in the downturn, back to the defeats. Then along came GCHQ.

Again, suddenly there was a situation in which masses of workers were taking action. There was a mass strike — a bureaucratic mass strike, lasting only a day or half a day — but a mass strike bigger than anything in the last ten years, with over a million workers on strike.

It was organised at tremendous speed. Outside the civil service, it was organised on one day. What was amazing was the sight of engineering factories which hadn't been involved in political strike action for ten years, out on strike. Places where you wouldn't expect workers to take action — like some of the nuclear installations — went on strike. There were reports of workers getting together and just walking out, because they felt they had to respond.

Most important strike

Then GCHQ went away. Now suddenly we are in the midst of the miners' strike. This is the most important single strike since 1974, the most important single confrontation against the Thatcher government. And again, before the nonsense at the Libyan embassy, it was a situation where the class struggle was the main item on the news day after day; not just for three or four days, but five solid weeks. The miners' strike, the pickets and the battle between the miners and the police was the central news item.

Having said that, we have to be very careful how we analyse the situation. Because if we aren't careful, we will make mistakes which will to a small extent affect the outcome of the strike. To a much greater extent they can affect what we are trying to build; a network of politically committed militants, a revolutionary party rooted in the working class.

When we come to analyse the situation, we have to start from what we said before the struggle started.

We didn't just talk about the downturn,

At the annual Easter rally of the Socialist Workers Party, Chris Harman, editor of *Socialist Worker* examined the state of class struggle in Britain today. We reprint his talk here.

although we looked at how defeats bred defeats, at how the lack of confidence in the class led either to no fightback, or to a reluctance on the part of the trade union bureaucracy which led to further defeats. We also said that the situation of calm in the struggle was bound to be shattered sooner or later.

We argued this very hard against people like Eric Hobsbawm, who said that the working class was finished. I wonder where Hobsbawm is now during the miners' strike? I imagine he's gone off to Italy to see if the working class is finished there.

Against the idea that the class struggle was no longer central, we argued that the downturn had to be recognised; the slow defeat of the class, the drip-drip Chinese torture effect on the class struggle. But we also said that the situation could not last indefinitely. We pointed to two ways in which there would be a breakthrough, leading to an intensification of the class struggle.

Firstly, any revival in the economy would lead to increased confidence in the workplaces. The moment when workers are no longer faced with mass redundancies, when they don't see every night on television a list of hundreds of jobs being lost, orders coming in, the company beginning to make money, then there's the feeling that the workforce should get some of it. That's when confidence starts to rise and there's an increase in fighting spirit.

Secondly we argued that in spite of the downturn, in spite of the defeats and retreats, the basic problem facing British capitalism hadn't been solved. That problem is that wages are too high for British capital to overcome the problem it faces in terms of the low rate of profit. Eighteen months ago, *The Economist* estimated that real wages had to be cut by 25 percent to solve the crisis of profitability. We argued that meant that the ruling class could not be satisfied with the drip-drip effect on the class. At some point when they believed they had worn working class resistance right down, they would really try to put the boot in.

So we argued that an intensification of the struggle could come from two factors: on one hand, the increasing confidence on the shopfloor, and on the other that the ruling class really putting the knife in and in doing so arousing the working class to struggle. What has actually happened is a combination of those two things. But we have to try to analyse exactly what the particular combination, what the proportion is.

There has been a change of mood, which we began to notice before the miners' strike. For example, if you look at Cowley and Longbridge, they are not the same as they were under Edwardes. Now you're not talking about a situation in which the stewards are hiding in case any one notices them. Instead there is strike after strike; you don't even notice them now. Last week 800 workers at Longbridge came out on strike. It doesn't make the headlines any more. Now that Leyland is making money, workers have more confidence and they go on strike with increased confidence. There is guerrilla struggle in the factories.

If you look at the strike over GCHQ, engineering factories from one end of the country to the other which hadn't taken action in years, came out. And they didn't worry that the stewards would be sacked if they took strike action.

Even if you look at the mines, before this strike there were the other disputes in Yorkshire like the one over bullying by the overseers, which was a very big unofficial dispute. Even last year there were signs of a change in mood in terms of a succession of small strikes here and there.

Change in mood

That change in mood, that increased confidence which is undoubtedly there, isn't sufficient to explain the intensify of the present struggle. Much more important in some ways than the change in mood is the fact that the ruling class has set about trying to put the boot in. Five years ago we talked about the fact that the ruling class didn't dare to make a frontal attack on the key sections of the working class. Instead their strategy was to attack on the edges primarily to soften up the movement until the time when they felt confident enough to attack the more powerful sections.

If you look at what's happened to wages under the Tories you can see the strategy at work. Powerful sections like the miners and power workers have actually done reasonably well in terms of wages. The attacks have been on the weaker sections like workers covered by Wages Councils and young workers, and so on. Chipping away at the edges rather than going for a frontal attack.

In terms of the anti-union laws, the same strategy applies. People think there's a big difference between Prior and Tebbit and King. There isn't. Prior was the soft cop, Tebbit and King are the hard cops.

What did the soft cop involve? Passing the law, and being very very careful how it was implemented; not confronting the powerful sections of the class. Tebbit comes after Prior has done the softening up. Tebbit goes a bit harder. King comes after Tebbit and starts tightening the thumb-screws. No doubt someone will come after King and tighten them even more — if they get away with it.

This strategy can be called the salami tactic. When you cut salami you don't take a knife straight down the middle. You cut it one slice at a time. Having used the salami tactic on the working class movement for four years without taking on the central core of the movement, some elements of the ruling class — what we could call the Thatcherite wing — want to go faster.

They argue that much more can be done to push home the attacks. The steelworkers have been beaten. They believe they have beaten the Leyland workers with the Edwards Plan. Their target moved to the key, powerful sections of the class, the print workers, the miners and I'm convinced the dockers will be next.

They believe that the time is right to take on these groups of workers. But much of the ruling class has doubts. They're what we might call the Heath wing, who remember all too bitterly what happened ten years ago.

They argue against moving too quickly, for caution, for collaboration with the trade union leaders. The Thatcherite wing — the Institute of Directors, Eddie Shah and so on — think that the unions have been weakened so much in the last five years, and before that with the Social Contract, that the time is right to put the boot in. That's what we've been seeing since November.

Look at Warrington. There the Institute of Directors and Shah decided to try to prove that the print unions were paper tigers. And they think that they got away with it. The evidence is that Robert Maxwell, who then offered Eddie Shah four million pounds to stop taking the print unions to court, himself took these same unions to court in the week before Easter. What happened to Maxwell? He understood that he didn't have to go on being a soft cop, that it was possible to go in much harder.

So, following the attack in Warrington in November you had the attack on the shipyard workers, the national agreement forced down their throats with the acquiescence of the trade union leadership. The ruling class became more confident. The balance within the ruling class shifted away from the Heath wing towards the Thatcher wing. Then came GCHQ with Thatcher and Howe really taking an enormous gamble in banning trade union organisation in a section of the civil service. And they got away with it. That tran-

smitted itself to MacGregor. If they can get away with it at Warrington and GCHQ, why not the miners?

MacGregor's reasoning is: it's spring. Scargill's been turned over three times in ballots for industrial action. Now was the time to show that the miners, too, are just a paper tiger. So the boot goes in on the miners.

All these disputes show the ruling class on the offensive. It wasn't the NGA who made Warrington a national dispute. It wasn't the civil service unions or Len Murray who chose to raise the stakes at Cheltenham. It wasn't Scargill or Jack Taylor who made the miners come out on strike. It was the ruling class putting the boot in.

What is important of course is that when the ruling class puts the boot in, the shift in confidence in sections of the class translates into a fightback, whereas two years ago a fightback might have been less likely. So you did get a two day stoppage in Fleet Street over Warrington. You did get a magnificent response when Len Murray walked out of his meeting with Thatcher.

Ruling class attack

What about the mines? MacGregor, having got away with Kinneil, having got away with South Wales, believed he could get away with Yorkshire and provocative action. The preparations in terms of stockpiles are there, the calculation is that he can outlast the miners. Because of the shift in confidence of a section of the class, his action was met by picketing from a couple of pits in Yorkshire, who picketed out the rest of the area. Then the other coalfields started to move. The national leadership was forced to give the go ahead to the strike, which spread.

You can see here the combination of factors. The smaller factor was the growth in confidence in the class. The larger factor was the objective needs of British capitalism leading to a section of the ruling class wanting to have a go. Having understood the situation, we can also look at it from the point of view of the ruling class. Each time they attacked, they have provoked a response, but that response has not led to victories by the working class. We have to be clear about it.

The mass pickets at Warrington were

magnificent. They chanted 'the workers united will never be defeated' — but the class was not united behind revolutionary behaviour, and they were defeated. Again, the response over Cheltenham was marvellous, but it was only a minority united behind Len Murray, who could call out a million workers on a one day general strike but couldn't have disrupted the security of Her Majesty's Government through organisation on the shopfloor in Cheltenham.

If you look at the miners' strike, it seems fantastic — the picketing, the organisation, the demonstration in Sheffield ten days ago — marvellous. Except in the ruling class's mind they saw it over Warrington, they saw it over Cheltenham, and they believe they will get away with it over the miners.

For us it's tremendously important to be clear about the situation. It's very easy to get carried away when the struggle starts picking up, to get carried away by the fact that a fight is taking place, and to misunderstand the character of the fight.

In the class struggle both sides have lines of defence. What has happened with Warrington and CGHQ and what's now happening with the miners is that the ruling class is trying to break through our lines of defence. When that happens there is a tremendously big battle. You can't sit back and say 'this is offensive or defensive' or 'it's the upturn or the downturn' you have to throw everything you have into that battle. But you have to understand the character of that battle.

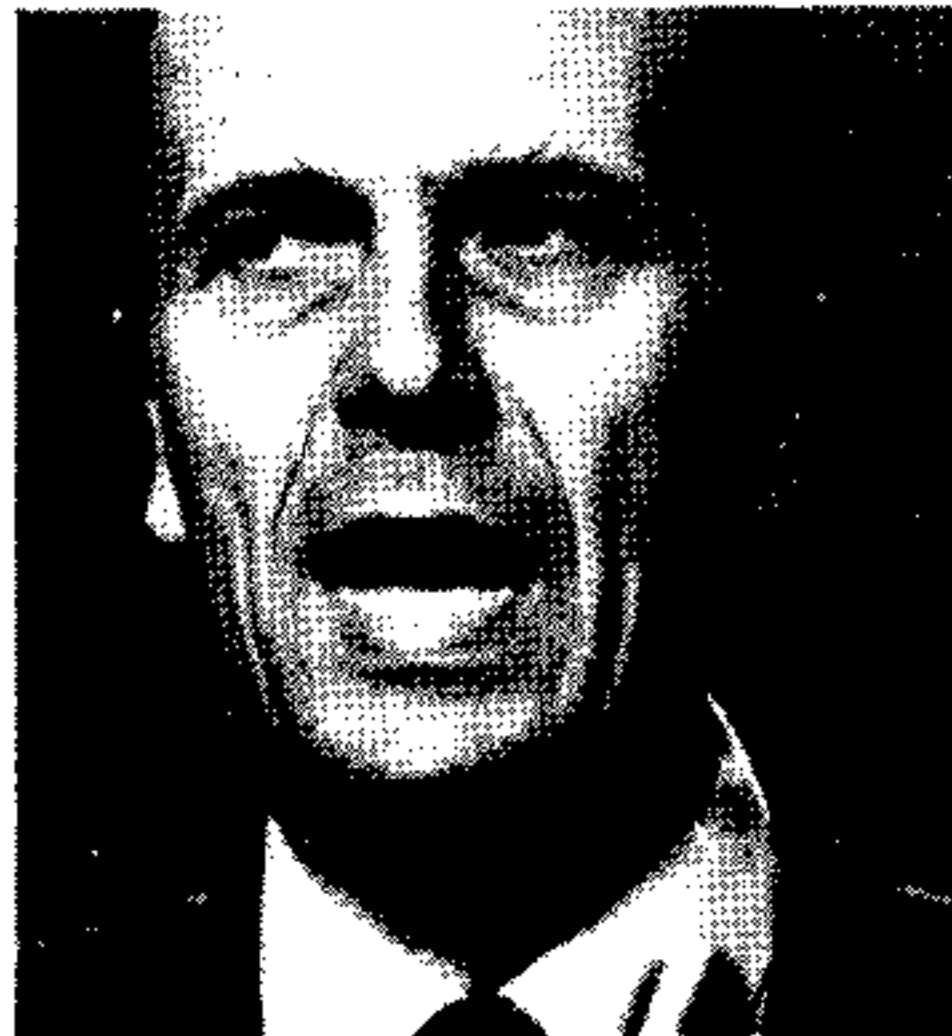
That is clearest when you look at the mines. Consider the timing of the dispute. If it were true, as the media would have us believe that Arthur Scargill engineered the strike to fight the government, the conclusion would have to be that he was mad. Why else would he start a miners' strike in March?

If he was after a confrontation with the government, wouldn't he make sure that all the miners would come out? It is a strike provoked by the ruling class, part of a ruling class offensive which we have to respond to.

If you look at the other element in the situation — the changing mood of workers — you have to understand that it is a section, a minority of the class which has become more militant. The rest of the working class is still in the same mental state, the



Prior: soft cop



Tebbit: hard cop



King: very hard cop



The mass pickets are the key but in 1972 they were 40,000 strong

breakdown of solidarity and so on that it was two or three years ago.

The shift in the mood of the working class is fantastically uneven.

Compare the present miners' strike with the strike in 1972. In 1972 when the strike started there was total unity amongst the miners. In the present strike there was solidarity and unity in Yorkshire, but at the beginning there was weakness in South Wales and Scotland and still, six weeks or so into the dispute, there is this hole in Nottinghamshire. That's quite different from the situation in 1972. The downturn means that there is tremendous unevenness in the class, some sections ready to fight, other sections holding back. You see the unevenness in another sense, when you look at the organisation of the pickets.

Mass pickets

It is important for everyone to realise just how weak the picketing is. If you think about the demonstration in Sheffield ten days ago, you think it was marvellous. All those miners on the streets. Then you think: in 1972 there were forty thousand miners picketing. This time, in coalfield after coalfield, pit after pit, the story comes back: we can't get the money for petrol to go and picket.

The reason is that the downturn has had its effect. You don't even have to compare it with 1972 in the mines, you can look at the steelworkers' dispute in 1980 in a union which hadn't had a strike in fifty years. If you went to the strike headquarters in Stockbridge, it was like a military operation. They had a list of places where people had to go and they lined them up and sent them off. They reckoned half the steelworkers had volunteered for picketing.

With the exception of a few pits, that's not how the picketing is being organised in the miners' strike. There isn't that level of organisation or involvement. The unevenness means you have very militant pits where there are large numbers of miners volunteering to picket and others where that's not happening.

The unevenness is there in a third sense too, when you look at how the miners can win. In 1972 it was solidarity from other workers that was crucial to victory. Saltley wasn't in the mining areas, it was in Birmingham. It was the solidarity of thousands of engineering workers in Birmingham who went on strike and joined the miners on the picket line at Saltley coke depot which ensured success.

If you consider the situation today you see a minority of the class showing fantastic

support and solidarity with the miners while other sections are very backward. In 1972 there weren't the squeals about layoffs that there are now. Workers didn't line up with their employers against the strike because of layoffs. Don't imagine it was because there were fewer layoffs in 1972. One and a half million workers were laid off as a result of the pit strike then.

That's why the strike won. A million and a half workers laid off means very large sections of industry where production had stopped, and profits were not being made. Today you have a situation where on the one hand there is fantastic solidarity, levies, real willingness to support the miners, and on the other hand, you have whole sections holding back. For us what is important is that this unevenness leads to real weaknesses and gaps in the organisation of the strike, and the blacking.

We can analyse the unevenness a bit more. We can say that the unevenness is as a result of two different factors — objective factors — to do with things as they are — and subjective factors, arguments, organisation, politics. Take the simplest example of the unevenness, that between Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. Partly, this is as a result of objective factors. In 1977, the Labour government and dear old Tony Benn, pushed through a productivity deal which had the effect that miners working in one pit could earn nearly twice as much as miners in another pit for doing the same amount of work. Now that is the beginning of a very important explanation for the differences between Yorkshire and the Midland coalfields. In Nottinghamshire you have a large number of pits where wages are twice as high as in some pits in South Wales, Scotland and parts of Yorkshire. But that's not the end of the explanation.

In Yorkshire there are pits with exactly the same high wage rates as those in Nottingham. So it's not just a question of the objective factor, it's also a question of the subjective factor; argument, organisation, leadership. When we ask ourselves why after six or seven weeks the strike isn't as developed as it was in 1972, we have to answer that it is partly a result of objective factors — the Social Contract, the productivity deal, the downturn and partly the result of subjective factors. That is to say, the terrible, disastrous policies of the Broad Lefts in these industries.

In the mines in Nottinghamshire, 25 per cent of the miners voted for strike action. Now I suspect you wouldn't have had much more than that in Selby. But Selby came out and Nottinghamshire didn't. Why? Because

the Broad Left in Nottingham is absolutely rotten through and through. Richardson, general secretary of the Nottinghamshire miners, was elected on a Broad Left platform. What does that mean? It means that instead of being based in one pit, with groups of workers round him who will picket out that pit, and set the strike rolling in Nottinghamshire from the first day that Yorkshire was out, he represents the whole of Nottinghamshire.

In reality he represents nothing. He can't bring a single pit out on strike. So to bring out Nottinghamshire you have to picket from Yorkshire.

Of course we're in favour of pickets going from Yorkshire to bring out Nottinghamshire, but nevertheless, it allows the right wing to argue that it's a question of Yorkshire versus Nottinghamshire. Instead of it being all miners together it becomes like a football match, were the lads from Yorkshire meet the lads from Nottinghamshire and fight it out. The right wing are able to play on it because of the rottenness of the Broad Left.

Building support

It comes back to the arguments we have been having during the downturn about building the politics, relating to the minority, not in terms of arguing for socialist revolution, but in terms of locating and organising the minority in any factory or industry who will be able to set the ball rolling when the time comes. The politics of the Broad Lefts means that they rush to win the positions but they can't carry anything with them when it comes to the fightback.

When they can't carry anything with them they do even worse, which is what Richardson did. He led the moaners and complainers against the Yorkshire pickets. He didn't resign his position and say 'I'm going back to my pit to build support for a stoppage'. He spent four weeks first on one side and then the other, first trying to look like the Yorkshire miners, then trying to be indistinguishable from Chadburn.

If you look at the weakness of the picketing the question of Broad Left politics is important as well. In 1969 there was an unofficial strike in Yorkshire. The official leadership in Yorkshire then was rotten, right wing and corrupt.

Under those circumstances, the Panel met — that was the delegates from each pit including Scargill and other left wingers who are now in the leadership but then were rank and file miners — and they organised a strike against the Yorkshire leadership. The strike

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was organised by unofficial strike committees without a penny from the central funds in Yorkshire.

What happened to the people who led that struggle was that they got pushed further and further up the union structures, and more and more enmeshed in the bureaucracy. So now they are worried about spending the eight million pounds that the Yorkshire NUM has in its funds. They have got cut off from the ordinary miners. But because they are a left bureaucracy, not a right wing one, the militants on the ground in Yorkshire find it very hard to argue and organise against them.

If the leadership was right wing, it would be easy to argue against them in favour of picketing to stop the scabs. Because it is a left leadership, they can argue that those who want to do that are setting miner against miner, playing into the hands of the right.

Broad Left politics means that the input to the strike by the militants, the arguments and organisation are much weaker than they could have been.

On any reckoning in terms of ability, Arthur Scargill is a much better leader and organiser than Jack Taylor. Yet for six weeks the strike was run, or not run, by Jack Taylor. Why? Because Arthur Scargill saw the most important thing as getting elected President of the NUM and going to the headquarters in Sheffield every day. Because the special conference decided it was an area strike, and the constitution says area strikes

are organised by the area, the running of the strike has been left to Taylor.

So you have the weird spectacle that Scargill who knows something about organising mass pickets, doesn't organise them, whereas Jack Taylor, who has no idea how to do anything, does.

Whenever Jack Taylor appears on television he's always in his office, never on the picket line. The reason why this is the situation is because of their politics. Broad Left politics means you abide by the constitution. You go up and up, and when you reach the top, instead of denouncing someone like Chadburn, you pretend he's on your side.

The unevenness is partly a result of objective factors, but when it comes to responding to that unevenness, plugging the gaps in the dispute, it becomes a question of politics. Of course, after a long period of downturn you're going to have unevenness, the question then is, how can it be dealt with? And then the question of politics is central.

If instead of a half a dozen or a dozen miners in Yorkshire in the SWP, we had had fifty or sixty, who had organised during the unofficial strike last year and had been involved in trying to build resistance in the last three years or so, I believe it would have made a considerable difference in terms of the picketing and organisation of the strike.

The trouble is that we as an organisation are too small and too weak to fill the gaps in the dispute. That doesn't mean we should sit

around moaning about how terribly weak we are but we have to recognise the reality of the situation. The problem isn't just in the mines; everywhere in the class is this weakness in politics in each pit, factory and workplace.

One obvious way in which the unevenness shows itself is in the up and down nature of the strike.

It is a manic-depressive strike. You feel defeatist one day, over the moon the next, defeatist again the next. You get the same response talking to miners: the same miner who one day is saying 'Arthur Scargill walks on water' is very depressed about the strike the day after.

This isn't surprising when you consider the nature of the dispute. There is this massive struggle going on in which the ruling class has tried to break through our lines, and the minority of the class has rallied to fightback. But there's no effective leadership and no effective co-ordination, so the thing is very haphazard and accident prone.

What can we do in this situation?

There is a problem: the picketing isn't heavy enough, the blacking isn't adequate. Things have been bungled from the start, both in terms of the organisation of the strike and the organisation of solidarity. And our organisation cannot make up for that.

What to do?

There is a vacuum in the leadership of the strike and our organisation is not in a position to fill it. There is a danger in this situation, and that danger is that we will just service the strike. That we will just get involved in collecting money, for example.

Now of course we should collect money. We argued from the beginning that collections would not only raise money but would make sure that the strike was raised with other workers, would sow the seeds of solidarity, identify those people who would join us in supporting the strike and bring people closer to the party. But the danger is that the money has been so bungled at the level of the bureaucracy that we will merely try to fill the gap.

We have to collect money, but we have to do more than that. The same problem can arise with delegations of miners in some areas. The picketing has been so badly organised and mishandled that miners prefer to go round on delegations to other workplaces, trade union branches, Labour Party branches, etc rather than face the hard graft on getting the picketing organised and doing it. So we can get into the situation where we're taking miners on delegations and getting money, but not confronting the central problems of the dispute: the weakness of the picketing and the weakness in the blacking.

While we have to do the servicing of the strike we have to raise one central question: 'What is to be done?' That should really be our slogan in the present period. We have to say it when things look miserable; we have to say there are things which can be done to retrieve the situation. We also have to say it when things look exciting. It is very easy to get carried away. I always think it's a good idea to remember Lenin at the Finland

Station. After years of exile, poverty, misery, trying to produce a paper, police agents throughout the organisation, then four days in a sealed train going through Germany, he got off the train to be greeted by red banners, workers' councils, revolution.

It would have been all too easy to have said: 'Long live the Revolution!' 'The workers united will never be defeated!' Much harder to say: 'What revolution? Down with the War! Down with the provisional government, down with the capitalist ministers, the revolution is going down to defeat.'

As a revolutionary you must always ask the question: 'What is to be done?'

In August/September 1917, Lenin wrote a pamphlet about the need for the working class to take power. It wasn't called *Forward to Victory* or *Victory is Certain*. It was called *The coming catastrophe and how to avert it*. He was trying to answer the question: 'What is to be done?'

Central question

In the current struggle we have to get involved in servicing the strike, we can't stand on the sidelines but we must not forget the central question of how the strike is to be won. We have to look reality in the face. The truth is painful, but telling lies can lead to death. The truth about this strike is that it has been going on for six weeks and still the picketing isn't being effectively organised. Many of those weeks have been wasted weeks. In terms of hitting the capitalist class much more could have been done. We have to be honest.

If we tell the truth, occasions may come during the course of the strike when what we have to say could exert an influence, could have an effect. Because in situations when two great weights balance each other, a feather put down on one side can alter the situation decisively. But unfortunately it is also likely that the strike will run its course without us having any such decisive effect.

So what can we do? The key weakness is a weakness of leadership. The key thing we have to do — and we shouldn't be ashamed about this — is to build the network of revolutionary militants in the class necessary for the battle afterwards.

That sounds as if we don't care about the strike. But we don't take the attitude that strikes don't matter except as far as they teach you to fight the capitalist class. We

don't say that. Of course we say, this strike is tremendously important, everything must be thrown into winning it: organise levies, solidarity blacking and so forth.

But we also have to face the fact that our intervention may not make any real difference to the outcome of the strike but that we must make sure our forces are bigger when the next battle comes. Because the miners' strike isn't happening in a vacuum. It follows on from Warrington and the GCHQ.

The Thatcher wing of the ruling class produced Warrington, GCHQ and the miners. And whichever way the miners' strike goes, the Thatcher wing of the ruling class will be back. Maybe it will be the dockers next, maybe some other group of workers. But she'll be back. Thatcher's like a woodpecker. The way to deal with a woodpecker is to take its beak away. Every child knows what a woodpecker without a beak is called: a head-banger.

The key thing for us is that the struggle will not go away, no matter what the outcome. It is not true that any mass battle in the middle of a downturn which leads to victory automatically generalises itself into further victories. Even in the upturn, even when the miners won in 1972, the engineering workers in Manchester went down to defeat shortly afterwards. In July 1972, the dockers won. Three months later, Heath's government imposed a nil percent pay freeze which was effective for three or four months. There was no revolutionary leadership in the class. What leadership there was, Len Murray, was off to do deals with Heath the moment the dockers won.

The key question for us, then, is building that revolutionary leadership. How do we do that? By raising our political profile all the way through. Every centrist or reformist asks: 'Do you stand for the interests of the party or the class?' Our reply to that is: 'The interests of the party and the class are the same.' The reason why the class has taken a hammering is that it doesn't have a revolutionary leadership in it, a leadership on the shopfloor, a leadership not involved in Broad Left manoeuvring, but instead leading struggles where struggles are possible. The possibility of beginning to build the elements of that political leadership is there.

First of all, recruitment. We don't expect massive recruitment, but we do believe every branch can put on four or five members.

Secondly, the branches have to systematically search out the minority of the class whose mood has changed. One easy test: which workplaces in your locality went on strike over GCHQ? In those places there is a minority of militants, of activists prepared to organise and struggle when the moment comes. If it comes to solidarity action with the miners, not just the one day strike in Scotland, but strikes in the whole country, it will be the minority who organise them.

How do we get to that minority? First of all of course by going round trying to get support for the miners. That's the first step. But it means nothing if you just knock on the door, get donations and go away again. Any Labour Party person could do that. What matters is doing that, but making sure that you sell a copy of *Socialist Worker*.

Role of politics

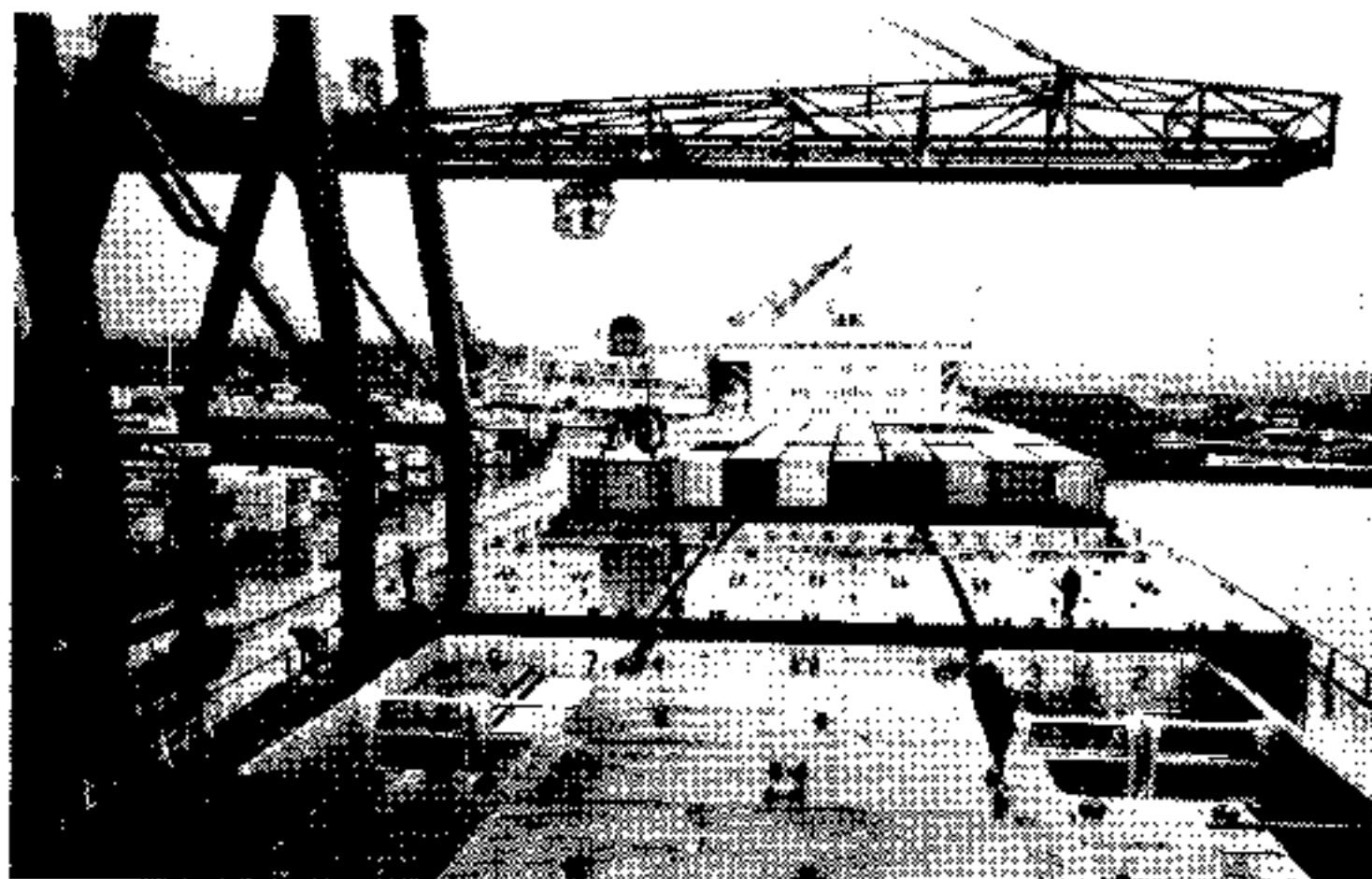
Look at the BLOC Conference in Sheffield in March. We had a meeting there attended by 400 delegates, addressed by Tony Cliff. It was a very good meeting with much more detailed discussion than the rhetoric of the conference.

It is easy to say: 'Marvellous, we got 400 people to our meeting,' and forget that there were 2,000 other people at the conference. People who by and large are interested in reformist ideas in the Broad Lefts and so on. When our speakers at the conference made an intervention, they got applause. When Tony Benn or Terry Fields spoke they got more applause, but our speakers were applauded.

It means many of these people will buy *Socialist Worker*, they will relate to our organisation — if we seize the opportunities.

We have to understand the strike, and understand the key role of politics within it. It is not a question of being optimistic, or pessimistic about the strike. The key thing for us is to focus on the weaknesses of the strike, to locate them and focus on them.

This is not to demoralise people, but to say 'What is to be done?' If we do this, we can build the reputation of our party, we can build up networks of militants around us, so that if there is a dock strike in November or a civil service strike next year, or whatever the next struggle is, we will be that much stronger. We will be more able to provide the leadership which will make victory not just possible, but certain.



Dockers could be next in line



Civil servant militants were key over GCHQ

'Democracy' and the state

The use of massive numbers of police to stop miners picketing has made the role of the state machine a live issue in the labour movement. **Gareth Jenkins and Colin Sparks** look at the arguments.

There is no doubt that the huge police operation against the NUM has been orchestrated by the government. It is clearly part of a strategy designed to smash the power of the NUM and weaken the working class overall.

Nor does it stand on its own as an example of increasingly authoritarian state powers. On the trade union question alone there have been more than 15 years of legal attacks which have attempted to make it more difficult for workers to win their demands. The most recent laws, the responsibility of Prior and Tebbit, have recently been tested by the NGA and by Eddie Shah as part of their attempts to win strikes. The courts have ruled in the employers' favour, just the result the laws were framed to achieve.

But trade union legislation is not the only aspect of the strengthening of law and order. A minor civil servant, Sarah Tisdall, who passed on very low grade secrets to *The Guardian* newspaper, is locked up for six months. A new Police Bill is currently being forced through which will legalise many existing police practices like the arbitrary stopping and searching of 'suspects'. Even the arts are threatened, with the 'video nasties' bill threatening to re-introduce wide powers of censorship.

Hard-won rights

An attack there certainly is, and it is an attack on the hard-won rights of working people. Any miner with lingering illusions about the neutrality of the forces of law and order will by now have had them quite literally knocked out of his head on the picket line. Experience will have taught him that in disputes between the boss and worker, the government, the police and the media (the army hasn't yet come onto the scene) do not aim to keep the peace between the contending forces. They are unequivocally on the side of the boss.

But you can draw two distinct conclusions from this experience. One is that while the police do not behave neutrally they *ought* to, and would do if a democratic government, pledged to observe strict legality, were in control instead of the present viciously undemocratic Tory government. This is very much the current line of the Labour leadership.

Now, there is considerable truth in the assertion that the present Tory government is more vicious and anti-working class than any of its post-war predecessors. But it is not

true that the Tories are departing from a tradition of democratic procedure which the Labour Party is committed to and abides by.

Take the use of the police to break strikes. The problem is not a new one. Just go back to 1977 and the Grunwick picket line. Large numbers of police were used to force the passage of scabs through a determined mass picket. But there was a Labour government in office at the time.

That, however, was small beer. The greatest example this century of the use of the police and the army for strike-breaking was during the General Strike of 1926. A whole apparatus called the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, involving the civil service, the police, the armed forces and civilian scabs, many of them fascists, was set up in the early 1920s and honed into an instrument of strike-breaking over a period of years.

The OMS was set up by a Tory-Liberal government, but it was very much in existence during the period 1923-1924; indeed, plans for its strike-breaking role continued to be developed during this period. This was also the time of the first Labour government. Very far from using their control of the government to break up this scab organisation the ministers of the first Labour government quietly went about perfecting it.

In case it should be thought that this was simply due to the inherently treacherous nature of Ramsey MacDonald, then Labour leader, it should be remembered that even the allegedly 'left wing' Labour government of 1945-51 regularly used the police and army to break strikes. For example it used troops to break dock strikes in 1945, 1946, 1948, 1949 and 1950.

If we take the more general issue of anti-union laws, we have to recall that the ancestor of the Prior and Tebbit legislation was a plan called 'In Place of Strife' dreamt up in the late 1960s by Barbara Castle and Harold Wilson, when the latter was prime minister of a Labour government.

To give these examples is not simply to prove that the Labour Party is as guilty as the Tories. It is to say something about the consequences of believing in the same state machine as your opponents. If you respect the constitution, you have no option but to employ its repressive powers if struggle from below threatens to undermine it.

That is the real meaning behind what people like Gerald Kaufman, the shadow home secretary say when they condemn police behaviour. He concentrates on the *illegality* of their action. The implication is that if only the state machine were reformed and the forces the state made properly accountable to the democratic control of parliament, then disputes between bosses and workers could be resolved and our liberties, freedoms and way of life preserved.

Now, the fact that the police depart from previously understood and agreed norms of behaviour is not to be underestimated. It has

excellent propaganda value for revolutionary socialists, since it demonstrates vividly to millions of workers just how hypocritical the ruling class are. They preach the need to abide by the law, to observe the democratic will of parliament, etc, etc, but are quite prepared to resort to measures of dubious legality in order to protect their interests.

However, at the end of the day, it is not the departure from legality that concerns us, but the forces of the state themselves (legal or not). For the other side of the Labour Party argument is the notion it should not just be the police that observe legality, but everyone else — including, of course, striking miners.

In other words, respect for legality, if carried through consistently, would disarm workers and deprive them of their power to make their will prevail over the employing class.

Essential to Labour Party thinking is the idea that the state is or ought to be neutral, and that it ought to stand above conflicting private interests in order to serve the good of all. This perspective is shared just as much by the left as by the right.

Workers' state

Why should any of this be important! Isn't this just the standard line about revolution: the state cannot be reformed but only smashed and replaced by a workers' state? The point is that failure to understand this is to fail to understand the relevance of revolutionary politics *now*.

Because we denounce the fraud of bourgeois democracy our opponents accuse us of being anti-democratic. That is why, of course, the Tories, are currently presenting themselves as the democratic champions of a miner's right to work.

As revolutionary socialists, we are for *real* democracy — ie for the mass of workers to have a direct control over the conditions of their lives that parliamentary democracy doesn't even begin to touch. That is, we are for a democracy based on workers' rank and file self-activity.

It is the only kind of democracy on which socialism can be built and can only come about as a result of *struggle* against the 'democracy' of capital, a struggle in which the rights of capitalists to their freedom has to be repressed (violently, if necessary). There is no other way in which workers' democracy can be established.

That in turn means not just dispossessing the capitalists. If, after all, their power was simply themselves, we would have got rid of the tiny handful who economically control the system long ago. The power of the capitalists depends on their state (whether or not it has been given democratic parliamentary blessing). And their state depends not only on its physical power (the police, the army, as weapons of last resort), but on its ideological hold over backward workers ie, on workers who for one reason or another fail to identify with the interests of their own class.

Hence, in any struggle, the first problem is to win over these backward workers. Sometimes that is fairly simple. In other cases, as at present with the miners, it is more

difficult. But those claiming to be socialists who tut-tut at the 'violence' of mass pickets are in reality blocking the path to success.

In order to exercise real democracy, workers have to struggle, and struggle means something very authoritarian: workers imposing their will on the capitalist class to the extent of having unfortunately to impose their will on more backward workers.

This debate is not new. Lenin had to face it at the time of the Russian Revolution. His chief opponent was the formidable 'Marxist' theoretician and leader of the German Social-Democratic Party, Karl Kautsky — a man much more to the left than anyone on the left of the Labour Party today.

What Kautsky deplored was that workers set up their own soviet organisations which the Bolsheviks refused to subordinate to parliamentary institutions, that through the soviets workers decided things for themselves (they took the law into their own hands), and that they refused to let the capitalists and their agents have access to political power (they denied them their freedom and their civil rights). Kautsky found all this very undemocratic — and so it was in a sense.

But, as Lenin pointed out, democracy is not something abstract, existing in a vacuum. There is the democracy of a capitalist state (which is the democracy of a tiny handful to exploit the vast majority) and the democracy of a workers' state (in which the vast majority through their own rank and file organisations force the owners of capital to give up their power and wealth).

Vital interests

Both depend on violence, but only a dishonest fool would pretend that the violence of the latter is as bad as, or worse, than the former. And certainly it is treacherous to talk about abiding by the rules of 'democracy', when it is this same 'democracy' which uses the most gigantic violence and swindles in order to preserve the vital interests of the ruling class.

In a passage that is relevant to the miners' strike Lenin inveighed against Kautsky's defence of law and democracy:

'Mr Kautsky quotes from my speech of 28 April, 1918, the words: "The masses themselves determine the procedure and the time of elections." And Kautsky, the "pure democrat", infers from this:

"Hence, it would mean that every assembly of electors may determine the procedure of elections at their own discretion. Arbitrariness and the opportunity of getting rid of undesirable opposition elements in the ranks of the proletariat itself would thus be carried to extreme."

'Well, how does this differ from the talk of a hired capitalist hack who howls about the masses oppressing industrious workers who are "willing to work" during a strike? Why is the *bourgeois* method of determining electoral procedure under "pure" bourgeois democracy *not* arbitrariness? Why should the sense of justice *among the masses who have risen to fight* their agelong exploiters and who are being educated and steered in

the desperate struggle be less than that of a *handful* of bureaucrats, intellectuals and lawyers brought up in *bourgeois* prejudices?

'Kautsky is a true Socialist. Don't dare suspect the sincerity of this very respectable father of a family, of this very honest citizen. He is an ardent and convinced supporter of the victory of the workers, of the proletarian revolution. All he wants is that the honey-mouthed petty-bourgeois intellectuals and philistines in nightcaps should *first before* the masses begin to move, *before* they enter into furious battle with the exploiters, and certainly *without* civil war — draw up a moderate and precise *set of rules for the development of the revolution...*'

We are not, of course, living in a revolutionary period. But those words about workers 'willing to work' during a strike have a familiar ring. And there is a connection between a large-scale strike and revolution. A revolution represents the power of a strike raised to the utmost degree in which workers can only win their demands if they take on and smash, via a mass revolutionary party, the state of their oppressors.

Since nowadays the state interferes in most strikes that is a vital lesson for workers to learn. They should not be bamboozled by the Labour Party, which is simply the alternative party in running the 'democratic' bit of the capitalist state machine, into believing that reform rather than revolution is all that is required.

What these believers in pure democracy forget is that getting rid of Tory MPs and replacing them by Labour MPs will not transform the state machine into an obedient servant of the popular will. It is not the case that the Tory government 'interferes' with the impartial workings of the police or the judiciary.

No doubt, the brutal and stupid Leon Brittan is very much behind the major police operation, but it is also true that, night after night, there have been senior police officers answering questions on TV who have expressed the same sentiments as him. The various court judgements that have attacked everything from civil liberties to trade union

rights have been handed down by a variety of different judges. No doubt foul reactionaries inhabiting a Dickensian world. But they have not been briefed by Thatcher and Brittan. They did not need to be. They think the same anyway.

As soon as you study the question at all seriously a clear pattern starts to emerge. There is a layer of people who all act together to attack workers and any other group in society that presumes to defy order and start thinking for themselves. This layer is made up of judges, senior civil servants, police chiefs, army officers and the like: the people, in short, who run the state machine.

It is this state machine that is attacking us. The government is only *part of* that attack. It happens, in this instance, that the state and the government think alike, but the root of the attack lies in the state, rather than the government.

Anti-communist

It follows then, that the only way to stop these attacks once and for all is to change the state that organises them. That sounds like a tall order, and indeed it is, but it is a necessity if we want to change the world.

For what the believers in the effectiveness of pure democracy also forget is the nature of the economic system in which we live. A moment's thought shows that, whatever the political pretence, the nature of capitalism deprives all but a few of any democratic control whatsoever over their lives. It is not just that civil liberties are limited, it is that the vast majority of us are compelled on pain of starvation to work in dull, grinding jobs.

It goes back to an old truth formulated by Marx and Engels and later developed by Lenin in opposition to those socialists who believed that a fight for real parliamentary, democratic control over the state could usher in socialism: that in even the most democratic of bourgeois countries there is still a dictatorship of capital over labour — with this difference: that the strength of working class organisation has forced capital to concede political rights. These are of course, welcome, but they are used the better to contain labour within the system.



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Defending the town hall

Thatcher faces rebellion from leading Tories over her plans to do away with the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils. Liverpool council takes a stand on its illegal budget as thousands of workers take part in demonstrations on 'Democracy Day' last month. London Transport grinds to a halt on a one day protest strike. The GLC plaster London with posters calling for public support. **David Aicken, Gareth Jenkins and Wendy White** look at the fightback led by the Labour councils.

If the opinion polls are to be trusted, the government has managed to make Ken Livingstone popular. According to the *Standard*, 61 percent of Londoners are in favour of keeping the GLC and only 22 percent are against. A majority also believe that rates would go up as a result of abolishing the GLC and 43 percent think that Ken is doing a good job (as against 42 percent who don't).

A government that based its plans for abolition of the GLC (and the Metropolitan County Councils) on undoubted widespread hostility to 'red' Ken now finds itself on the defensive. Swingeing attacks from the likes of Ted Heath and clever advertising from the GLC have combined to demonstrate that on this issue, unlike many others, the government has lost the ideological argument.

This is important for revolutionary socialists. Cracks in the confidence of the ruling class and splits between its leading political figures are reflected in much wider layers of the population.

The Tory loss of confidence is our gain. If the Tories, under internal pressures from their own friends, are forced to backtrack a bit, their true opponents — workers who are fed up but at present unable to see a way of fighting back — will be given fresh heart.

We have to be careful in our assessment of the situation. Exploiting Tory divisions will not, as some Labour politicians seem to think prevent abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils.

The upswing in Ken Livingstone's fortunes is partly due to his backing away from identification with 'unpopular' causes. He has over the last few weeks presented himself as a model of financial efficiency; he wants to lower the rates (like any good Tory) and has gone out of his way to emphasise how little of the GLC's budget is spent on 'minority' causes.

Nor have we heard much from him (if any-

thing) in support of the miners' picketing or in support of Liverpool's illegal budget proposals. Red Ken has been replaced by the reasonable Ken, victim of Tory extremism. It will be interesting to see how he behaves at the Queen's official opening ceremony of the Thames flood prevention barrier. Will he bow before the royal presence?

Livingstone's own retreat comes at the end of a long retreat by nearly all Labour councils. They have been unable to mount any successful campaigns against Tory attacks and their tactics have weakened workers' organisation. Election pledges of no cuts and no rate rises have collapsed. The real confrontation with the Tories has forced councils time after time to back down.

The Greater London Council promised increased welfare, a defence of education, provision for more nurseries, maintenance of staff levels and a cutting of school meal prices. Reality has proved to be somewhat different. A GLC proposal to cut school meal prices was soon defeated. In June last year 150 striking teachers occupied County Hall to protest at the 'left wing' Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) proposals to cut over 600 jobs by September. In fact by the end of the year over 11 million pounds had been cut from the budget.

The GLC's record on employment has been even worse. With over 400,000 unemployed people in Greater London, they decided to set up the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB). They promised to create 10,000 new jobs and provided a grant of £20 million. The 'Jobs for Change' campaign made remarkably little difference to the unemployed in London, but they produced two nice new free sheets and a colourful brochure!

Discouraging

Their policy of discouraging workers to fight for jobs and to set up their own co-ops when threatened with redundancy has been disastrous. At Associated Automation, a GEC subsidiary in north London, an organised workforce successfully prevented GEC from closing down the factory in the mid-70s. When they were again faced with closure in 1981, they voted to fight.

Unfortunately they had not bargained with the help of the local Labour Party. Backroom manoeuvring between the AUEW convenor and the local party quickly produced a totally demoralised workforce. The poisonous effect of 'alternative' planning (setting up co-ops) prevented the workers from organising a real fightback. The result of the GLEB strategy has in fact been to weaken workers organisations.

Election promises right across the board have meant nothing. London's Islington council was elected on a policy of not raising rates, and did just that. In the south London 'socialist' borough of Lambeth, 'Red Ted' Knight introduced a 48 percent increase in

rates saying: 'The rates system was a progressive tax redistributing wealth to our class.' Local authorities receive their funds from two main sources — rates and central government. Hitherto the government's direct control over central funding has only had a limited effect on local authorities' capacity to raise revenue. Really determined councils have resorted to rate rises to offset starvation of funds from central government.

This is simply passing on Tory cuts to local communities. There is nothing 'progressive' about massive rate rises. It is merely robbing Peter to pay Paul. Some (not even all) services have been preserved—but at the expense of renewed pressure on jobs and conditions. The rash of disputes between Labour town halls and their employees is evidence of that.

However, the ability of councils to continue resourcing services despite government pressure represents an independence that the Tories are no longer prepared to tolerate.

That means that the Tories' new assault on the metropolitan county councils and the GLC represents a qualitative change in their attempts to dismantle social welfare, which we have to take very seriously indeed. If the Tories get away with it — and Thatcher's 'persistence in the face of 'public opinion' is clear evidence of her determination — then the consequences will be disastrous. Services like housing, education and hospitals, the ones which the poorest and weakest members of society rely on most, will be hardest hit.



Putting hope in Labour

Yet the response of Labour councils to past attacks does not augur well for the future. In 1980, rates rose in Lothian in Scotland, by 40 percent, and in 1981, by 49 percent, as the council simply passed on the cuts to those they were elected to defend. George Younger, secretary of state for Scotland, then announced that Lothian had overspent by £53 million and that 6,000 jobs would have to go.

On 30 June 1981, the city of Edinburgh ground to a halt. 30,000 workers struck against the cuts. In the fight that ensued the



Thousands of Liverpool workers demonstrate as the council votes on the illegal budget

Labour Party proved themselves incapable of harnessing the energy generated by rank and file workers. The strike collapsed and the cuts were implemented.

Elsewhere the Labour councils have not even spoken about supporting workers' struggles to defend jobs and conditions. When, in November 1983, residential social workers went on strike, one of the most sickening features was the attack on them, not by the Tories (to be expected) but by Labour councils, such as Lambeth, South Yorkshire and Southwark.

Lambeth stopped wages and banned union meetings in working time. In the 'socialist republic' of South Yorkshire, employers' representatives refused to negotiate with the workers, and homes were closed. Southwark actually went so far as to call in the 'Instant Response Unit' (SPG) to close children's homes.

However, if these are lamentable examples of Labour councils doing the Tories' dirty work, there is now at least something resembling a fightback against the government from the GLC and—in a much more serious and important way—from Liverpool.

Yet the evident success of Livingstone in turning the tables on the Tories will be illusory unless workers take action. Even the massive support for Liverpool's refusal either to raise the rates or cut the services will prove to rest on sand.

The mandate-of-the-people argument is one that the Tories have been fond of using (for obvious reasons). Livingstone has now stolen the idea from them. It is a clever move — but one with potentially dangerous consequences for workers. Of course, it is hypocritical of the Tories to cancel the 1985 council elections while calling for a miners' national ballot.

But the question of parliamentary and council elections (which offer no real demo-

cracy in any case) is strictly secondary and subordinate to the question of workers' struggle. We do not accept that a democratically elected council has higher claims than the interests of its workforce. Hence we do not accept that a council could use its mandate to impose cuts in services and jobs.

We champion the right of any group of council workers to take action to defend jobs, irrespective of the democratic support claimed by their employers (of whatever political hue) to do otherwise. Yet by making the defence of democracy the prime element in the campaign in an effort to outsmart the Tories, Livingstone is tacitly admitting the priority of 'democracy' over struggle. Workers following the Livingstone line are therefore open to blackmail in the future.

If local democracy is saved, if Labour retains control of the GLC, and if it is starved of funds through rate-capping, the democracy argument could be used to try to prevent workers from fighting against the sacrifices demanded by their council representatives.

Local democracy

Livingstone and company have sought to put the emphasis on a demand that is sufficiently broad and abstract to avoid offending middle of the road, respectable opinion. The defence of local democracy is the closest common denominator that can unite Ted Heath and the most left wing GLC shop steward, even though the real content of the demand means something quite different to those involved.

Ted Heath has no interest in saving jobs and services. He is as opposed to putting social need above profitability as Mrs Thatcher. He merely disagrees with the method chosen by the government to bring the megacouncils to heel (on the very reasonable grounds that the borough council

nominees would make such a cock up that it would be a wonderful electoral gift to the Labour Party).

He is — and the point should be obvious — no friend of the worker. People should not need reminding, especially during a miners' strike, that Heath led as vicious an anti-trade union government between 1970 and 1974 as Mrs Thatcher does now. By including him in the ranks of opposition to the government's plans, the anti-abolition campaign disarms those whose concern is jobs and services. The tendency is necessarily to back away from anything like *industrial* action that might lead to criticism from potential Tory allies.

However, simply to criticise the popular front politics of the campaign is insufficient. The fact remains that not only is the Tory party split on the issue but unlike previous campaigns (for example, the ill-fated Fares Fair campaign), this now has now generated a considerable head of steam. It is impossible to go anywhere in London without seeing stickers and badges defending the GLC. It may be passive support but it is still support that can be built on.

We have to argue with many employees, both manual and white collar, who support the democracy campaign, that only by taking industrial action to defend jobs and services can we exercise real democracy, and real workers' control over work, pay conditions, etc. We also test our own leaders' commitment (trade union and Labour Party) to democracy.

In this way we demonstrate where real power to stop the Tories lies. Whereas democracy concentrates on people as passive voters or users of services (and therefore as people for whom the council does things), we concentrate on people as workers, staffing and operating the services, who are therefore able to do things *for themselves*.

In London the one day London Transport strike was, with very few exceptions, solid.

Moreover the picketing was done with confidence and with a real sense that, whatever the limitations of one-day action (which are real enough), this was rather more a fight for jobs than a demonstration about democracy. The strike may have been called bureaucratically and with less than total commitment from the top. But it struck a chord with many of the rank and file.

It is also the case that the demonstration the following day showed signs of being other than simply a demonstration in favour of democracy. There was more than the token sprinkling of manual employees. Some militants, despite attempts by unions like the NUT to limit participation to a token presence, won the argument for industrial action in their workplace. Equally, the willingness to link the issue to the miners' fight for jobs was demonstrated by the number of *Socialist Worker* placards proclaiming 'Victory to the Miners'.

Looking beyond the sectional issue is important for an effective fightback against the Tories. Different groups of workers affected by the cuts often do not see the problems and solutions linked. For example, a teacher and a bus driver suffer similarly at the hands of the Tories, yet see each other's struggles as separate, sometimes even opposing action taken by others to save jobs.

Links between workers in the same groups may not even exist. Bus and tube workers or teachers and school cleaners, have no joint organisation to draw their problems together. Within sections of unions, organisation is often weak and dependent upon the bureaucracy.

Self activity

This can be resolved by the day-to-day work of socialists in the workplace. It means consistent arguing, and never wavering on the politics of relying on the *self-activity* of workers to fight the Tories.

Of course, we should not minimise the problems. The majority union at the GLC, the Staff Association, not only voted not to strike on Democracy Day but set up counter-pickets to promote attendance at work. On the other hand, NALGO went beyond support for the Day of Democracy, and passed a resolution calling for preparation for industrial action in the event of abolition, a position which puts it at odds with the other unions in the Democracy for London campaign, whose chief activity is restricted to publicity.

At the same time, despite support for the day itself, NALGO was unable to carry majority participation in the event. There was a cynical reluctance about support because of a feeling that losing a day's pay was a useless thing to do.

London is the biggest council under threat and the most notorious in Tory eyes, it has set the trend in the campaign against abolition. Elsewhere in the country the response to Democracy Day was patchier (with the significant exception of Liverpool, which is a slightly different case).

In Birmingham the demonstration was small and would have been pitiful had it not been for the presence of dinner ladies fighting to keep their holiday retainer. NALGO

voted not to strike. The metropolitan council was willing to give its employees time off to attend the demonstration. In the absence, however, of any self-activity, many employees took the easy option and went to the pub instead.

Liverpool is a different matter because the fight there has focussed on the city corporation's illegal budget rather than the threat to the Merseyside County Council. Like the GLC Merseyside has concentrated on lobbying and publicity (to educate the public) and avoided campaigning for industrial action.

The leader, Kevin Coombes, has seen the whole fight against abolition as totally separate from the threat to Liverpool. Yet some workers have seen the connection. The buses, which are controlled by Merseyside and not by Liverpool, stopped on the Day of Action and workers joined in the demonstration even though technically it was nothing to do with them.

However, the problem with Liverpool after the magnificent demonstration on 29 March is now drifting away from industrial action towards electioneering. Whereas before the demonstration there had been at least two meetings per workplace organised by councillors to mobilise support, now there is nothing. Activists are not being encouraged to prepare for the inevitable crunch over jobs and conditions, but to become canvassing fodder to ensure a thumping Labour majority.

Militant is leading the way:

'Because of the brilliant campaign of socialist explanation which has aroused Liverpool's workers in a mass movement against the Tories, the ruling class and the Tory government face a nightmare — all their possible options face a wall of opposition from the workers. Without doubt if no campaign had been taken up, the Tories would have already imposed draconian cuts.

'The emphasis of the campaign now switches towards building a solid Labour majority in the May council elections. Trade unionists are being called upon to ensure a swing to Labour, to give the city council an increase mandate for the so-called 'illegal' budget.

'The May elections will become a referendum. We are confident people will decide for a firm Labour council to resist the government.' (*Militant*, 6 April 1984). This stress on elections should not surprise us. As loyal Labour Party members, *Militant* could hardly act otherwise. It is bound by the logic that unless Labour gets and keeps a majority on the council, there is no point to the Labour Party and therefore no point to being in it.

But this leads it into a dangerous delusion. It is forced to play up the importance of winning elections *as a substitute* for workers winning struggles. Its triumphalism conceals the fact that even if (as we hope) Labour does get a thumping majority there will still be the Tory government, the Tory commissioners, the treachery of the trade union and Labour leaders (right and left) to contend with. On this aspect *Militant* maintains a diplomatic silence. It leads workers into a confrontation without attempting to warn them of the obstacles ahead.



London teachers strike against 'left-wing' ILEA attack on jobs

To expect that workers can be switched from one-day strikes to putting all their energies into going on the knocker and then being called out only when the new Labour majority is under attack is to invite disaster.

If workers are lulled into the false expectation that all that has to be done now is win an increased Labour majority in order to defeat the Tories, it will be extremely difficult (if not impossible) to reverse these expectations when the reality becomes clear.

The real tragedy is that, despite the Marxist language of Liverpool's anti-Tory fight, their practice is not so very different from the more openly reformist strategies of such Labour councils as the GLC. At the end of the day, what workers do is secondary to the task of ensuring Labour's numerical strength on the council and its support in the community.

In Liverpool, as in other areas threatened by the plans to abolish the Metropolitan County Councils and the GLC, we have to build on the anger generated by the Tories' contempt for 'democracy' and on the widespread sympathy for the miners. But only on the basis of not fooling anyone that there is an easier and quicker way than taking industrial action.

Otherwise, the Tories' continuing determination to attack jobs and conditions will be without an effective answer.

Pickets and ballots

The class war makes strange bed-fellows. Alex Callinicos looks at some of the people who have been caught out by the miners' strike.

A sharp rise in the level of class struggle puts socialist ideas to the test. The present miners' strike is a good example. Six months ago it was easy enough to waffle on about the evils of Thatcherism. It didn't mean anything in practice. But now every political current within the working class movement can be judged on the basis of what they are doing to help the miners win. Nothing has more effectively exposed Neil Kinnock than his public vacillations over the strike and private support for a ballot.

The miners' strike has put self-proclaimed revolutionaries to the test as well as the Labour leadership. Its effect on many of the entrists within the Labour Party has been to encourage them to liquidate themselves even further into the Labour left. In the case of *Socialist Action* some spurious rationale for this liquidationism is provided by the claim that a 'class struggle left wing' represented by Arthur Scargill, Tony Benn and the left Labour councils is now taking the offensive against the Tories.

Party and sect

The strike also poses problems for revolutionaries organising outside the Labour Party. One way of illustrating this problem is to draw on the distinction, first drawn by the Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov at the turn of the century, between propaganda and agitation. Propaganda, Plekhanov said, is many ideas to few people, agitation is few ideas to many people.

The contrast, then, is between presenting the totality of revolutionary socialist politics and organising around some concrete partial demands (higher wages, no sackings, etc) which can draw workers into struggle. The test of a revolutionary organisation lies in its ability to connect propaganda and agitation, for it is only through workers' involvement in struggle, provoked by some specific grievance, that they become open to revolutionary socialism.

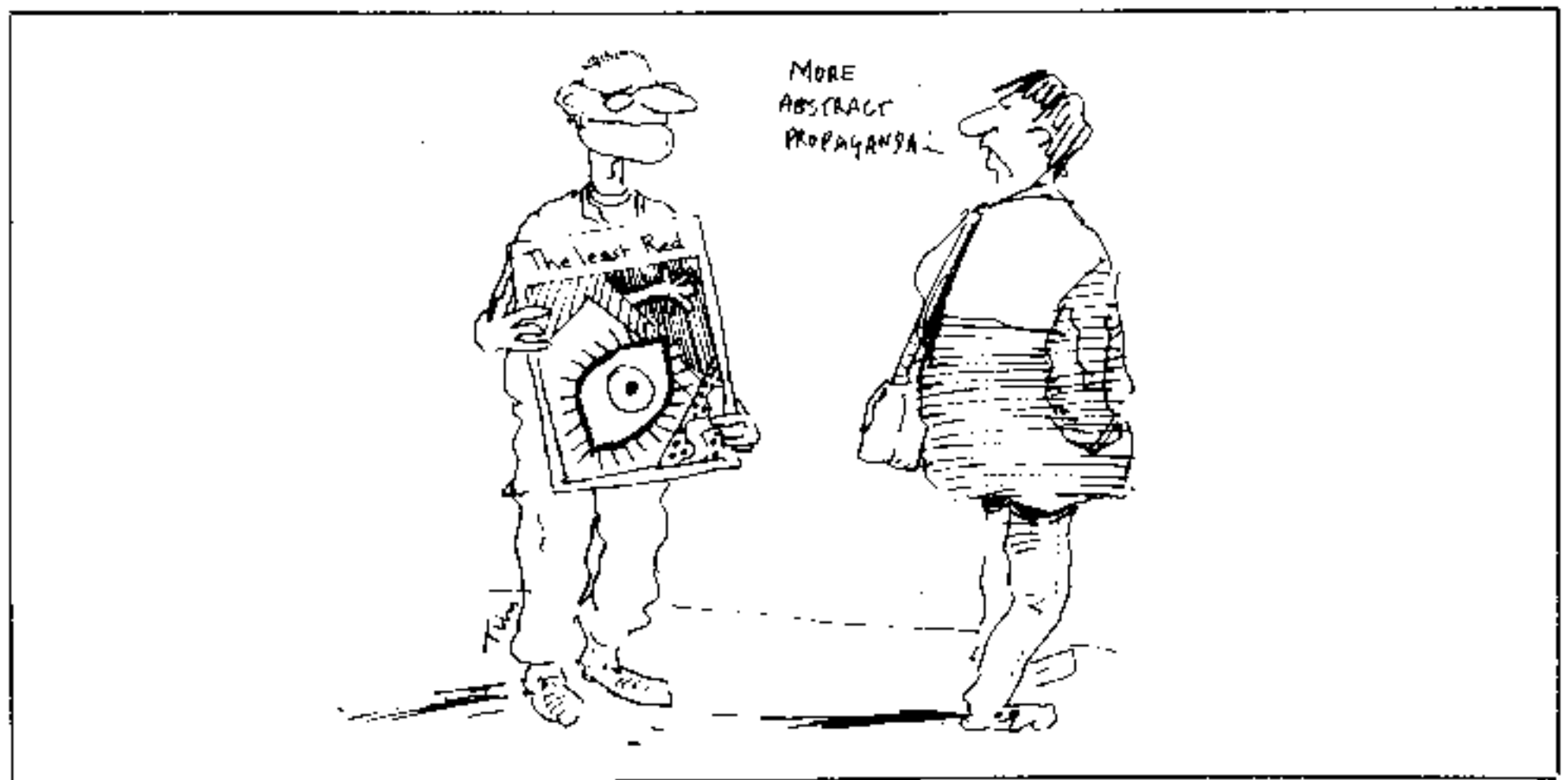
This distinction permits us to draw the dividing line between a party and a sect. A party engages in both propaganda and agitation, because its orientation is on workers in struggle, while a sect restricts itself to propaganda, preaching only to the converted.

This said, it is still true that the precise balance between propaganda and agitation varies according to the objective situation. Thus, in the past few years, the Socialist Workers Party has concentrated primarily on propaganda (weekly political discussion meetings etc). This has not been out of choice but because the downturn in class struggle

has meant that there have been comparatively few strikes to which to relate.

The situation has now shifted somewhat, with the slightly more militant mood among sections of workers shown by the GCHQ strike, and of course, by the battle in the coalfields. The question is now, without abandoning the strong emphasis on politics of the past few years, to lay a greater stress on agitation.

It's important to understand that agitation is *not* the same as activity. It is quite possible to be extremely active, without raising socialist politics at all. For example, one can work very hard raising money for the miners, taking strikers round to different workplaces and so on, without having the necessary political arguments about the need for rank and file control of the strike, a high



level of picketing, stopping coal entering the steel plants, and so on. Mindless activism and abstract propaganda go hand in hand.

A good illustration of this general truth is the Revolutionary Communist Party. This organisation has in the past been fairly contemptuous of trade union struggles, on the grounds that until the mass of workers have broken from their reactionary and reformist beliefs strikes are of little meaning. So they have preferred instead to work around issues like Ireland and racism. This approach is a classic example of propagandism. It is only when workers are drawn into struggle around the economic issues directly relevant to their lives that they will begin to break the hold of bourgeois ideology on their consciousness.

At any rate, it has penetrated even to the RCP that the miners' strike is important. The April issue of their paper, *The Next Step*, reports their activities around the strike under the headline: 'The RCP hits the pits'. Elsewhere in the same issue an editorial denounces reformism of the Labour Party: 'The prevailing strategy of Labourism avoids the question of power and dissipates energy in a vain battle to reform the system.'

It comes as some surprise, then, to discover that these ultra-revolutionaries actually agree with Neil Kinnock (and Ian

MacGregor and Margaret Thatcher) in calling for a national strike ballot. Yet there it is in black and white in the RCP's 'strike special', 'The miners' next step'. RCP leader Mike Freeman writes:

'The Revolutionary Communist Party is in favour of a national ballot because it can become the focus for stepping up the strike action. Campaigning for support for an all-out stoppage can go hand-in-hand with extending picketing and sympathetic action. A campaign around the national ballot is the only way to ensure rank and file control over the dispute.'

As the last sentence indicates, the RCP have grasped the central problem of the strike — the mismanagement of the broad left leadership of the national union and of the militant areas (Yorkshire, Scotland, South Wales and Kent). But to imagine that a *ballot* will solve the problem is ludicrous.

This is not to make opposition to strike ballots a matter of principle — for socialists, as for the employers, a ballot is a weapon in the class struggle, to be used where appropriate and not otherwise. Is it appropriate

now? The answer is, most obviously, no. A ballot would not, as Freeman suggests, 'heal the divisions' between Nottinghamshire and the militant areas. On the contrary, given the low involvement of even striking miners in picketing, given the large-scale scabbing which has now gone on for nearly two months, given the press campaign which undoubtedly would be mounted for a 'No' vote, the result might well be a defeat for the militants and an even more divided union.

The key to achieving 'rank and file control of the dispute' lies in encouraging organisation and initiatives *from below*, independently of left as well as right officials. Waverers and scabs will be won over only through the example of decisive action which draws far larger numbers of miners in picketing, and ends such scandals as the agreements which are keeping the big steel plants operating.

The RCP's support for a ballot is a logical consequence of their propagandist politics. Problems are not judged in the light of the concrete needs of the struggle, but through abstract theorising. The result is that the RCP, who have always made a great deal of their supposedly highly 'orthodox' Marxism, end up taking an essentially liberal stance towards the most important strike of the decade.

Libya - 'the middle road'

The shooting at the Libyan embassy has been seized by the media as an opportunity to launch new attacks on Libya and declare its leader Colonel Qaddafi 'a madman'. **Phil Marshall** examines the true nature of the Libyan regime.

We should be careful before making our own criticisms of Colonel Qaddafi and his regime. In 1981 the US government ran a long campaign against the Libyans. To give support to their shaky allies in nearby Egypt and Sudan, Washington sent a fleet into Libyan waters and shot down two Libyan aircraft. The world was told that Qaddafi was an agent of Moscow and, according to Vice President Bush 'the world's principal terrorist.' Former President Carter described Qaddafi as 'sub-human.'

Today, as in 1981 much of the abuse is racist in tone and designed to justify support for western interests in the Middle East and North Africa. We have to disentangle the facts about Libya before we are in a position to assess Libya and Qaddafi's personal role.

At the end of the second world war Libya was one of the poorest countries in the

world. In the late 1940s it exported little more than scrap metal from abandoned military equipment and was dependent on US and British subsidies in return for use of the Wheelus and Tobruk bases.

The country was ruled by the pro-Western King Idris, who offered the oil multinationals generous concessions to explore in Libya's promising central region. In 1958 oil was discovered and Libya entered a period of rapid development. By 1968 the country was producing 2.5 million barrels of oil per day — making it the world's fourth largest producer.

Constant intrigue

Idris was both weak and corrupt. He was surrounded by tribal leaders eager to secure a share of the oil wealth and the palace in Tripoli was the scene of constant intrigue. Political parties were suppressed but by the late 60s worker and student movements were growing fast. During the 1967 Arab-Israel war, students marched through the major cities, while oil workers and dockers struck and refused to permit the pumping of oil or the loading of tankers.

On 1 September 1969 soldiers of the Free Officer Movement headed by 28-year old Colonel Muammar Qaddafi took over the

headquarters of the palace guard and other key installations. A few hours after the bloodless coup Qaddafi announced, 'in the name of God' the establishment of a Libyan Republic to be led by a Revolutionary Command Council.

While today's Libyan Republic goes under the name 'the Jamahiriya' — 'the state of the masses' — the coup was distinguished by the absence of any mass involvement.

Qaddafi and his young officer friends had conspired for years to seize power. A year after the event Qaddafi was asked whether the conspirators had ever involved civilians in the plot. He replied: 'Absolutely not. All we told them was "keep going" but we never integrated them except in our thoughts.'

The coup was popular. Qaddafi soon moved against the vestiges of Italian colonial influence — 30,000 Italians were expelled, foreign banks converted into Libyan companies, military bases evacuated. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) doubled the minimum wage, reduced rents, stopped contract labour and began a drive against corruption. Qaddafi also declared his commitment to Islamic principles. Churches were closed, a ban on alcohol imposed and nightclubs shut down.

The RCC hesitated before defining its political strategy. In a series of debates various models were put forward before Qaddafi declared that Libya would follow a path that would 'rid the people of poverty, hunger, backwardness and ignorance. We call this socialism.'

'Communism suits some, while capitalism or socialism suits others,' Qaddafi maintained. 'Theoretically speaking socialism means here that nobody should have a lot of capital and be very rich and able to exploit the people. Socialism does not mean the final elimination of class differences. Such differences are essential to society. That is the law of life ... Briefly socialism means social justice. It is the middle road. It is the way to close the gap between the classes.'

Following the 'middle road', Qaddafi insisted that all political activity should be channelled through one body, which would unite all Libyans. This was to be the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) — modelled directly on Nasser's ASU which had been established after the Egyptian leader's coup against King Farouk in 1952. Qaddafi's choice of the name reflected his admiration for Nasser and his eagerness to take up Nasser's domestic and foreign policies — the attempt to develop an independent national economy, the involvement of 'the masses', pan-Arabism, anti-Zionism.

Qaddafi nationalised some 60 percent of the oil operations and by 1974 had led a move among Arab oil producers that led to a fourfold increase in prices. The new revenues were put into welfare spending, defence and a series of ambitious development plans.

By 1975, 1,000 kilometres of new road had been constructed and port capacity doubled. Industrial development plans aimed at a growth rate of 14.1 percent per annum — to be achieved by expanding petrochemical plants, building a huge iron and steel plant at Misurata and developing construction materials production and light manufacturing and food processing.



Qaddafi: 'The trade unions have nothing to do with politics'

Though the Libyan domestic market was small, the pace of industrialisation was rapid. In 1971 there had been 140,000 workers in oil, manufacturing, construction and transport. By 1978 the figure was 315,000 many being immigrant workers — mostly from Egypt. Over the 20 years to 1981 the numbers engaged in construction, oil and manufacturing rose to 28 percent of the employed population.

The official line that the new state was to be based on 'the masses' bore no relation to the reality. While the working class grew it was denied the right to organise. In March 1972 there was a week-long dockers' strike in Tripoli for better pay and conditions. Soon afterwards the government forbade strikes and all stoppages in schools and colleges.

Qaddafi declared that the unions would not be allowed to play a political role. 'The trade unions have nothing to do with politics,' he ruled. 'Trade unions and federations are professional organisations. It is ASU members who engage in politics ... Politics must be confined to the ASU. It is impermissible to conduct politics outside the ASU in any union or profession.' The RCC decreed that anyone who advocated or established a political party would be subject to the death penalty.

National unity

Four years after the coup Qaddafi elaborated the official philosophy of the 'Third International Theory'. This was based on the notion that the driving forces of history are nationalism and religion. Using the idea of national unity and his own set of Islamic principles, Qaddafi argued that development could be attained by steering a course between capitalism and communism — not only in Libya but worldwide.

He first attempted to combine 'socialist' planning with private enterprise. The result was the growth of a ruling bureaucracy drawn from the army and the ranks of technocrats and professionals, and businessmen acting as middlemen for foreign contractors, import agents and property speculators.

In 1978 Qaddafi issued a series of decrees designed to extend the 'revolution' by nationalising land and commerce, placing private enterprises in the hands of cooperatives and outlawing landlordism. While some businessmen were squeezed, the reforms did not fundamentally affect a system shaped by the nature of the 1969 coup and the ten years of development that had followed.

Libya remained a 'mixed' economy. Important areas of the oil sector remained under the control of US oil companies — notably Occidental — while middlemen and import agents prospered, the more so as Libya faced its own economic crisis.

The political system of today remains the one that was installed by the 1969 coup. Despite the rhetoric of 'revolution', the reforms and decrees, Libya is still ruled by a tightly-knit bureaucracy that owes its first loyalty to the army and to Qaddafi personally. In this sense Libya is no different from the other Arab state capitalist regimes — Egypt under Nasser, Assad's Syria, Iraq, Algeria and South Yemen.

But the Libyan situation is complicated by Qaddafi's attempt to establish 'popular power'. In April 1973 Qaddafi declared a 'cultural revolution'. In line with his 'Third International Theory' he argued that parties like those of capitalist and communist societies cannot represent the people. To fill the gap he insisted on the establishment of 'people's committees and congresses' as organs of direct democracy.

The organs of 'popular power' proved troublesome. Imposed by the ruling bureaucrats, they encouraged local and tribal rivalries and the development of a new bureaucracy with its own ambitions. In some areas the population refused to participate. In others Qaddafi found that his plans were meeting with genuine opposition. When the committees proved to be an obstacle, Qaddafi overruled them.

In 1979 Qaddafi established another structure of political authority inside the committees and congresses. These 'revolutionary committees' were charged with exercising ideological leadership within the existing bodies. Qaddafi chose reliable elements from among the young cadre that he had been training during the mid-1970s.

The 'revolutionary committees' became an extension of the ruling bureaucracy. Today they function as a political police force, disciplining the anti-Qaddafi elements that have become increasingly vocal over recent years. Activists patrol the universities for signs of student dissidence and are sent abroad to monitor the activities of exiled oppositionists. They were almost certainly responsible for both the hangings at Tripoli university last month and the shooting at the Libyan embassy in London.

Qaddafi's 'young guards' are likely to become more active. Oil revenues have fallen rapidly over recent years — in 1980 they were \$22 billion, in 1983 only \$10 billion. Development plans have been frozen and living standards cut in an attempt to reduce

Libya's huge import bill. Once one of the world's most reliable customers, Libya is now badly in debt and pays for much of its goods in oil.

Discontent is growing and Qaddafi is determined to snuff out all organised opposition before it can establish a popular following. The regime already has a long record of violence against its opponents. The RCC passed its first death sentences in 1972 and carried out its first executions in 1977, when a large group of students and officers were hanged. More hangings took place in 1980 and since then assassination attempts on Libyan oppositionists abroad have taken place regularly.

Vocal opposition

The most vocal opposition comes from the Libyan National Salvation Front, led by a former member of the Free Officers Movement, now based in Sudan. The Front is supported by Egypt and Morocco and almost certainly has US backing. There are also groups of pro-Moscow communists and Baathists — the latter probably supported by Iraq. There is so far no suggestion of an organised opposition that looks to the revolutionary tradition.

Qaddafi is not 'mad'. He represents one current of a movement that has come to power in successive Arab countries since Nasser's coup in Egypt in 1952. In this movement petit-bourgeois nationalism combines with military organisation. Reforms are imposed by a group that is fundamentally hostile to the mass of the population.

For all Qaddafi's 'mass' theories he remains in control of the Libyan political apparatus and shows every sign of adopting ever more ruthless methods. Only another military coup is likely to unseat him — or a genuine movement of Libya's steadily growing working class.

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The slick, the black and the party boss

The US primary elections have been all over the media. In the USA itself some of the left have gone into the Democratic Party to 'move it to the left'. **Bill Roberts, Lance Sefa and Joe Allen** of our US sister organisation the *International Socialist Organisation* look at the candidates and what they stand for.

The making of a president to serve corporate America is a long and sometimes confusing process. At this stage the Democratic Party is only midway in the primary campaign — the elimination process to pick the party candidate to go up against Reagan in November.

Combine the primary season with the general election campaign and there is nearly a year of nonstop campaigning. There is no escaping the hype. Neither 'Dallas' nor 'MASH' reruns will be safe from interruption.

In the end, after the last television commentator has laid the whole affair to rest, nothing fundamental will have changed. Whoever takes the prize will get on with the job of defending and expanding the empire.

Even though the outcome is predictable the primary process tells us something about capitalism's largest party here — its constituencies, the issues it defines and its

chances against Reagan.

The primary contest period is long and confusing because each state determines its own method for picking candidates. Some states have direct election of delegate slates pledged to the candidates. Other states have a caucus system, open only to party members (usually anyone who shows up to take part in the process). Still other states combine the two systems.

This process begins in early February and ends shortly before the party convention in July. At the convention the delegates cast their votes and the only unknown is the choice for the vice-presidential candidate.

With three candidates appearing to stick in the race all the way, what can be said at this point about the men who would be president? And how will they do against Reagan in November?

Gary Hart

The early strong showing in the Iowa caucusing and the first open balloting victory in New Hampshire in February produced the surprise win of Gary Hart over Walter Mondale — the odds-on favourite. Both successes gave Hart the necessary boost to stay in the race for the long haul.

Hart's early success can be attributed to careful packaging and voter cynicism. His slick television image of youth, intelligence and Kennedy-style 'vigour' injected some life into what appeared to be a dull campaign already captured by monotone-Mondale. Under the heavy media spotlight, Hart looked bright and 'new', while Mondale

appeared for what he was, the same old stuff.

Gary Hart is a US senator from the state of Colorado. He was George McGovern's campaign manager in the disastrous 1972 loss to Richard Nixon.

During the Kennedy administration he worked for Bobby Kennedy at the Justice Department in a section known as the Subversive Activities Control Board. A left-over department from the McCarthy era, Hart worked here in the appeals section handling cases seeking to overturn designations of 'subversive', 'Communist-infiltrated' or similar hex. He of course, represented the government who handed out these designations.

New package

Hart has packaged himself as a 'neoliberal' a candidate with 'new ideas'.

On closer look, however, the 'new ideas' are the old ideas in a new package. Recognising what he calls the 'changes sweeping industrial America towards a new era', Hart presents himself as the person to bring them about.

But what are these changes? Besides the inevitable new technology we are told that what is needed is 'more entrepreneurship' and 'private-sector initiatives.' Union wages and government anti-poverty programmes are old fashioned, they 'hurt the national interest' says 'new ideas' Hart.

Gary Hart has criticised Mondale for his special interest connections, especially with labour. He opposed the 1979 government

loan to Chrysler. He also opposes 'domestic content' (80 percent of automobile components must be manufactured in America) legislation. Both of these are key items on the labour bureaucracy's agenda to save jobs.

He opposed the Chrysler bail-out because it 'contradicts the basic tenets of free enterprise that once characterised our nation's economy.' He is against protectionist legislation not in solidarity with international workers, but because these proposals 'damage US international competitiveness'.

Hart's plans call for labour management cooperation to help boost this competitiveness. He told *Business Week*: 'Labour defers its wage demands or conditions them on productivity or the profitability of the industry involved.'

Sometimes referred to as the 'Atari Democrat' because of his hype of new technology, Hart offers little hope to the laid-off steel or auto workers. 'New ideas' for the basic industry worker means robots and lost jobs. Hart paid for this 'new ideas' in all the industrial belt states from New York to Illinois. He offered no short term solutions to their immediate problems. Mondale beat him by 10 to 20 points and captured most of the delegates in the industrial state primaries. Only Massachusetts and Connecticut — states that have made the shift to high-tech industries — gave Hart victories.

The upstart from Colorado has caught the international ear with his positions on the Middle East and his ideas about a 'leaner, smarter' military. He is a strong supporter of Israel: 'Without Israel', Hart told the Conference of Presidents of Jewish Organisations, 'the map of the Middle East might long since have turned red, and Soviet expansionism would continue unchecked.' Hart has pledged, upon becoming president, to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. He would not recognise the PLO 'until and unless they rejoin civilisation'.

Although Hart says he would not fight a war in the Middle East over oil supplies ('that's Europe and Japan's problem, not ours') he advocates a build-up of rapid deployment forces capable of 'quick and decisive action'. He opposes wasteful military spending (they all do) on systems like MX missiles and the B-1 bomber. But he still calls for a 4 percent annual increase in military spending. He is for a moratorium or freeze on missile deployment, but would not withdraw Cruise or any other system from Europe.

Hart's constituency does not seem to concern itself with the waste and devastation in human terms of the decaying industrial areas. Hart doesn't either, and incidentally, has always been backed by oil interest in Colorado and elsewhere.

Hart's 'new ideas' did not sell in the states hit hard by the economic slump. Unemployment in these areas is still running at 10 percent or more.

There is one apparent advantage Hart carries with him into the second half of the primary season. In the polls he is shown to be ten to 20 points better than Mondale in a match-up with Reagan. This electability factor will be a key point against Mondale and



Jackson's 'rainbow coalition' will change nothing for unemployed black workers in Detroit

Jackson in Ohio, Texas and California. In order to go to the convention with enough delegates to win the nomination, Hart will need to win nearly all the remaining primaries and certainly a loss in either Ohio, Texas or California would leave him short. Wins in a couple of these states, however, could give him important bargaining power inside the party.

Jessie Jackson

Jessie Jackson, the first black candidate strong enough to go all the way through the primary process, will go to the convention in July with enough clout to make some deals. What those deals might be he is not saying. He would probably like primary voting reforms in the South to give blacks a better chance of winning office.

Jackson's ability to inspire blacks to register and vote in record numbers is impressive. Although he has not come close to upsetting Mondale, he has consistently captured 17 to 30 percent of the vote. In Georgia he won 21 percent, in Mississippi 30 percent and in Arkansas 20 percent. In the north he has done equally well. Capturing 70 percent of the black vote in Illinois, he held 21 percent of the total vote there. In New York he did even better with 26 percent of the total, one point short of Gary Hart. In Pennsylvania Jackson slipped to 17 percent, but he won Philadelphia in spite of newly elected black mayor, Wilson Goode's endorsement of Mondale.

Jackson is an exception to the rule that it takes big money to run credibly. Jackson, the poorest of the candidates, has little to spend on expensive television time. He did not buy one television ad in the Pennsylvania primary contest and yet he was able to keep his campaign on the front pages and news programmes.

Race has been a factor in American politics since the Civil War. Jackson's

candidacy only helps to put this fact up front. Not since the active civil rights movement of the 60s, when the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (mostly black Democrats from the segregated state organisation) came into the 1968 Democratic Convention demanding their seats (which they didn't get) has the case of black America been forced on the king-makers so baldly.

Jackson, however, represents only a tiny portion of the black community. It is a section that has had some success over the last 20 years in gaining a tiny foothold in American capitalism. But it is always on the verge of being pushed out of its new position. Reagan has done much to raise their anxiety level over the last four years.

Lip-service

Black politicians and middle class blacks reached their positions because of the civil rights movement. They understand this and when necessary pay lip-service to its memory. Because of racism, the overwhelming number of blacks will go a long way with one of their 'own' capitalist leaders.

Jackson has attempted to build his campaign on what he calls a 'rainbow coalition' (still mostly black). He champions the disenfranchised, the poor and underemployed, hispanics, and women. His main strategy is to get them registered to vote, proving with figures that if these sections had voted in the last election Reagan would not have been elected. At that level the argument holds and with his successes to date, the strategy has some credibility.

There are many on the left who have joined this 'rainbow coalition'. They see it as the only viable strategy for change in America. They argue that registering blacks and getting out the vote for Jackson is the way to move the Democratic Party to the left

and so take up the issues of unemployment, racism, poverty and war in a serious way.

A major advocate for this black electoral strategy is Manning Marable of the Democratic Socialists of America. He puts it this way: 'The political centre of the black movement is essentially an American version of social democracy.'

Even if this is accurate it would still be necessary to overlook or fudge Jackson's positions over the years. Jackson has been involved in mainstream Democratic Party politics for 20 years. He has endorsed every Democratic presidential candidate since 1968.

He is not interested in moving the Democratic Party to the left, unless that means strengthening the party's hold on the black community and his position in the party. He will not lead an independent campaign as some have suggested. As he put it, 'I will put jet fuel in my butt and campaign for my party's nominee.'

The idea that the Democratic Party is flexible or will ever be flexible enough to be reshaped is mistaken. Even when the civil rights movement was in the streets, the Democratic Party moved only enough to absorb leading elements and then became the graveyard for that movement. This is the history of the party and its service to US capitalism. To ignore that history is to mislead whatever activism there is into another dead-end.

Jessie Jackson's aim is to join the power brokers of his party. His entry fee is black votes. He must organise blacks into the party

organisation, one he began to put together as soon as he and Jimmy Carter were defeated by Reagan four years ago.

Mondale represents the mainstream Democratic Party. This includes organised labour, big city machines like Chicago and New York, and the sometimes unpredictable Dixiecrats of the old south.

With this base he began putting a coalition together that would have dumping Reagan in 1984 as its only goal. To this core he added women's organisations, civil rights groups and others hit by Reagan's massive social programme cuts.

The coalition first took shape in September 1981 with the largest ever Labour Day demonstration in Washington DC. Nearly half a million union members, civil rights workers, anti-war and women's activists joined together under the banner of AFL-CIO (TUC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to protest against Reagan's cuts and military build-up.

Although Mondale did not speak to the gathering, his strategy was evident. The theme was solidarity. But it wasn't solidarity on the picket line of the air traffic controllers (PATCO) who were at that time being smashed by Reagan. The slogan was for solidarity at the ballot box in the bi-election more than a year ago.

Since that historic gathering, several important strikes have gone down to defeat, millions have lost their jobs forever and Reagan has continued on his merry way dismantling a generation of reforms.

states of Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan he put his organisation to work. These are the blue-collar states, the most heavily unionised areas of the country and they have a tradition of voting mainstream Democratic Party. Mondale spoke to their main fear — job loss — and they gave him their vote.

One revealing aspect of Mondale's 'comeback', after defeats in the early rounds, is his turn to cold warriorism. In attacking Hart directly, and by implication, Jackson's call for a 25 percent reduction in military spending, Mondale calls them soft on Communism, especially in the Caribbean basin. He is in favour of a continued US presence in Honduras as a way 'to interdict arms shipments to El Salvador' — Reagan's rationale.

This side of Mondale should not be surprising. It is part of the Hubert Humphrey legacy which he embraces. It follows from the Labour bureaucracy's cold war demands to keep jobs while keeping quiet on Vietnam, dismantling SALT II, and giving the Pentagon whatever it wants.

Arms reduction

Mondale says he is for a nuclear arms freeze as a first step towards arms reduction. He too would not remove any missiles already in place. He also calls for a real 4 to 5 percent increase in military spending. He is a strong supporter of Israel and has been able to hold the Jewish working class vote, despite Hart's histrionics for claiming he is the number one champion of America's number one client state.

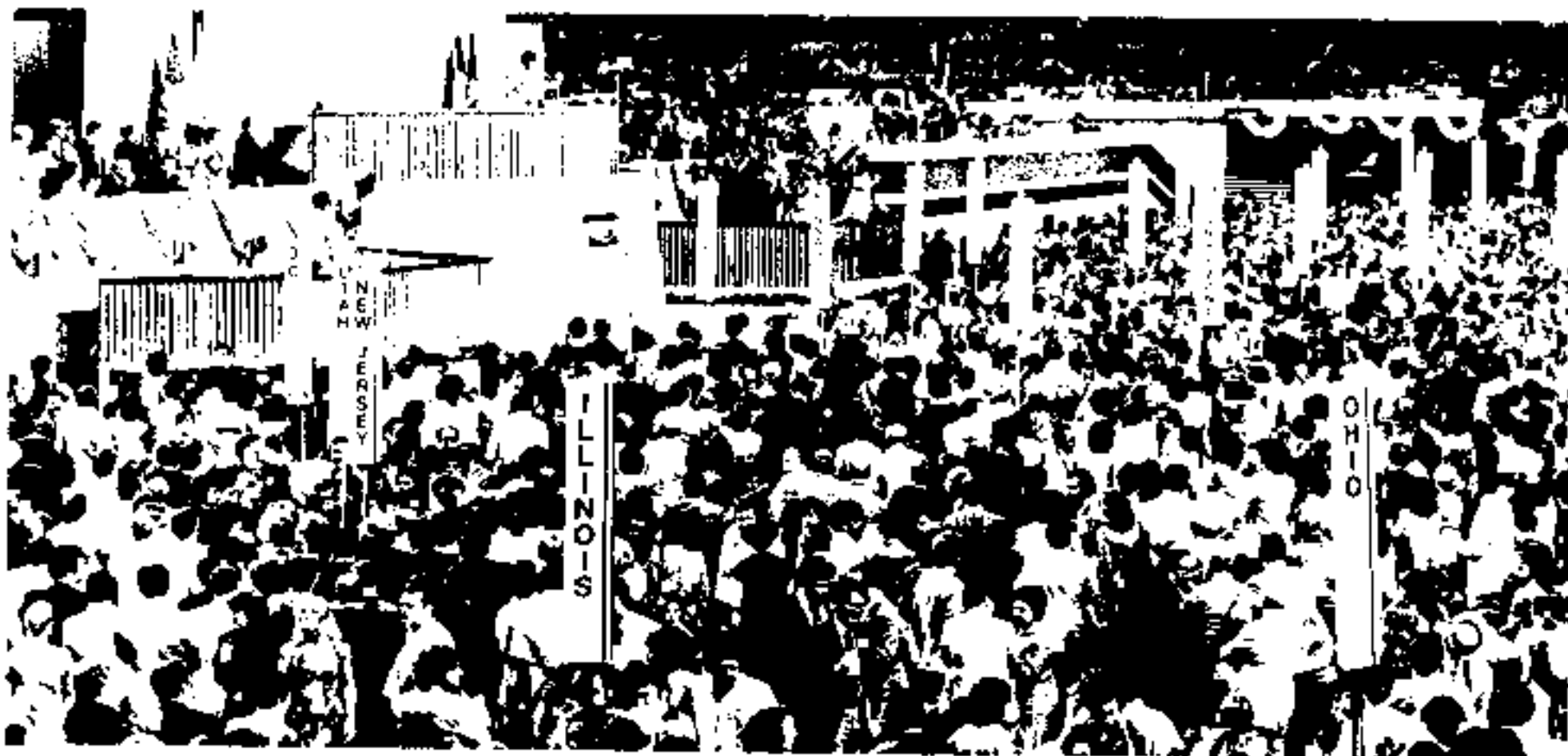
The big question is what will happen if, as looks likely, Mondale captures the nomination in July.

Hart's followers will feel they have a stake in the 'new America' no matter who is president. They might vote against Reagan on environmental issues but this may not be enough to hold them. Their loyalty to the Democratic Party is highly questionable.

Jackson may indeed help to deliver the black vote, especially if he gets a good deal in San Francisco in July. There really is no other place for black voters to turn. If they perceive a sell-out to Mondale they will once again join the majority in not voting.

As far as the left is concerned, they will once again find they have no home inside the Democratic Party. They will have wasted their time, energy and money helping to put together capitalism's biggest con-game. Even with Reagan out, capitalism's needs must be met and this means more of the same — checks on the working class, continued arms build-up and another charade in four years.

Election year in America is like a non-stop circus and everywhere you turn you are offered cotton candy — all fluff, sweet and sticky, with no real substance that can satisfy. Most voters understand this, but in the advance of a real alternative they reach for the fluff and hope for something better. That alternative has yet to be built. There are no short cuts to this process, either through the graveyard of all progressive movements, the Democratic Party, or down the electoral road. It is a lesson the left has yet to learn.



The Democratic Party Convention: the circus that will nominate the new ringmaster

and to do this he must foster illusions in the possibility of changing American politics through a capitalist party. Jackson believes his position proves the case. His is the exception which always preserves the myth that anybody can make it in America.

Jackson has demonstrated he can muster black votes. But for black Americans, who are overwhelmingly working class, the question remains: 'For what?' Jackson certainly will gain something. But the Democratic Party will be the same and capitalism's needs will be the same needs that are in contradiction to black America's needs.

Walter Mondale

Walter Mondale, the likely Democratic Party nominee for president, is the best known office seeker. He has also had the best

Nevertheless, Mondale had his coalition for an electoral solution. Out of it he received the earliest-ever endorsement from the AFL-CIO before the start of the primaries. The National Organisation of Women came out early for Mondale. Also, numerous elected officials from the reactionary Ed Vrdolyak in Chicago to the black mayor of Detroit, Coleman Young, support Mondale. Seeking endorsements everywhere, it was clear that even before the first primary election, Mondale had the support of the Party regulars.

Hart and Jackson have made an issue of this. As Hart put it, 'Mondale has too many special interests to please. He can't possibly solve America's problems with so many IOU's in his pocket.' To some extent the label of wheeler, dealer and Party-boss hurt Mondale in the early going. But in the key

Fighting the mailed fist

The Reagan administration has just rushed fresh military supplies to the government of El Salvador. They use the presidential elections and moves towards a democratic 'civilian government' as justification. **Noel Halifax** and **Carla Lopez** look at the background.

The elections have been a farce. Even the western media have been forced to admit as much. The government claim that sixty percent of the electorate voted. Anyone not doing so faced a fine of fifty colones, roughly twice the weekly wage of an agricultural worker.

To back up the financial threat, the death squads continue their intimidation and murder.

There were only two major candidates: the right wing Napoleon Duarte of the US-backed Christian Democratic Party and the semi-fascist Major D'Aubuisson of the Arena party, and the death squads.

Voters had the choice between these two 'democrats' against a background of strikes, power cuts, a break down in the electoral computer, and with the guerrillas in control of a third of the country.

The Duarte strategy, backed by the US, is to try to win over some of the peasantry by granting mild land reforms and building up a rich peasant layer. With this social base he hopes to be able to isolate and defeat the leftist opposition.

D'Aubuisson stands for a policy of terror. Arena has a strong following amongst the middle class. It is nationalistic and anti-communist in the extreme and its mass rallies which were a prominent feature of the election campaign make it very similar to a fascist party. It wants no compromise: all opposition must be wiped out.

Military machine

It is sometimes thought that the ruling class in a country like El Salvador is a mere puppet of the US. It is true that without substantial US aid the left would have won by now, but it is not at all the case that the local rulers jump to orders from Washington.

US policy has two faces: on the one hand it props up the local military machine, on the other hand it wants a partial social reform to isolate the left. Sometimes, as under Carter, it is the latter aspect that is in the foreground. Sometimes, as with Reagan, it is the mailed fist that is prominent.

But that policy has to operate through the local class forces and these are much more obdurate than Washington might wish.

El Salvador remains a largely agricultural country but it is very far from the 'banana republic' image of the western media. The last twenty years have seen a huge

mechanisation of agriculture and, as a consequence, peasants have been driven from the land. The proportion of landless peasants rose from 11.8 percent in 1961 to 40.9 percent in 1975, to over 65 percent in 1980.

Peasants have been transformed into landless labourers, mostly dependent on seasonal work available in the coffee and cotton plantations. There has been a massive increase in rural unemployment and a drift to the towns.

These ex-peasants have provided the labour force for new manufacturing industry. Roughly 14 percent of the population work in manufacturing industry. These 130,000 manufacturing workers are concentrated in the growth areas of textiles, food manufacturing and pharmaceuticals. Overall, there are 870,000 wage earners out of a total population of 4.5 million.

The social structure of El Salvador is polarised along class lines. On the one side stand a sizeable urban working class and a proletarianised peasantry. On the other hand are the 200 or so families that make up the ruling class. With their original base in landholding these were the people who then diversified into the new manufacturing industries.

This social structure is the reason why the US inspired compromise solution of Duarte cannot work: there is no indigenous social class which can carry it through.

The ruling class modernised agriculture and diversified into industry in the 1960s and 1970s and found that it had created, along with its profits, social forces that terrified it and which it could not control. The first attempts at social reform, back in the Carter era, unleashed mass popular actions on a scale that horrified the local ruling class. Ever since then they have blocked every attempt at land reform.

The same social forces that moulded the political attitudes of the local ruling class and drew them increasingly towards the death squads also gave a new life and a political jolt to the left.

The political heritage in El Salvador, as in the rest of Central America, is dominated by a tradition of peasant based struggles and guerrilla war under the leadership of elite parties with Stalinist political ideas. Until the seventies Cuba and Vietnam were the models for revolution. A long guerrilla war in the countryside leading to an encirclement of the towns and then to victory. Cuba and Vietnam were the models.

In the late seventies some of the left, and in particular the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL) developed a strategy that tried to relate to the changed social structure and the mass outbreaks that it produced. As well as the guerrilla struggle, the FPL mobilised hundreds of thousands in land seizures, mass demonstrations and strikes. In June 1980 the FPL was able to call a demonstration in the capital, San Salvador which mobilised more

than 150,000 people.

In October 1980, the left organisations together with their associated unions, called for a general strike. Tragically, a section of the left (FAPU-FARN or National Resistance), controlling the vital electricians' union, refused to support the strike. They argued for a 'broad popular anti-fascist front' and claimed that a general strike would alienate 'progressive' capitalists. The strike was divided and broken. The defeat was followed by bloody and vicious reprisals: it was then the death squads became active with a vengeance.

The same year saw the agreement of the four main left wing groups to set up an umbrella organisation, called the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), to wage the military struggle. At the same time as the urban working class was reeling from the defeat of a general strike and the death squad offensive, the left withdrew their leading activists from the cities to lead the rural military struggle. The civil war became a struggle between two rival armies: one backed by the mass of the people and the other by the might of the US.

The war has disrupted the economy. Many peasants have fled to the towns and many workers have been thrown out of work. There has been a wage freeze in force since 1980, despite high inflation. The FMLN has kept the support of the vast mass of the population, but it has been passive support. Between 1980 and 1982, those who were politically active would leave the towns and go to join the guerrillas.

Popular support

The extent of popular support for the FMLN is illustrated by the fact that they control around one third of the country, despite having to rely on their own resources. Their supply of weapons, for instance, is almost entirely those captured from the army. Despite US propaganda neither the Cubans nor the Nicaraguans provide any substantial military aid.

The FMLN is only a military alliance and the liberated areas are run according to whichever group controls a particular zone. The ERP (People's Revolutionary Army), for example, is one of the largest and most pragmatic of the groups. They see the struggle against the state in simple military terms, and take as their model Vietnam or Cuba.

The other large group, the FPL, retains some idea of linking the military struggle to mass action. There is a faction inside the FPL that argues for a leading role by the working class and for the need to build a Leninist-type party. From 1982 onwards, many FPL activists moved back to the cities.

The election campaign also saw the re-emergence of mass working class activity after a four year gap. There were a series of strikes in protest at the continued wage freeze. The workers of the Central Reserve Bank were out for over a week. There were strikes in the coffee industry, the state-run social services, the administrative office in charge of election arrangements, and in some of the factories run by the Institute of Supply. In response, the army took over the

Institute-run San Martin factory.

The resurgence of workers' struggle gives a reality to those voices inside the FPL who urge political work related to the working class, but they are very much a minority on the left. The majority view remains guerrillaist. And there is a strong pressure for some sort of compromise solution.

The local CP is the most articulate voice calling for dialogue with the 'progressives' in the government, with a view to some sort of Zimbabwean-style compromise. The idea, which goes back to the Stalin era, is that there should be a 'broad cross-class alliance' including local capitalists, to fight against imperialism.

The tragic irony in El Salvador is that such ideas are widely canvassed, and widely believed, in a situation where it is the local

capitalists who organise the death squads and the only ruling class force talking about a compromise is the US.

Moderation

The arguments for moderation gain a lot of strength from the claim that, even if the guerrillas win a military victory, they will come under the same sort of pressure that the Sandinistas are experiencing in Nicaragua. It is better, the argument runs, to avoid going too far: after all, the US government could still commit combat troops to prop up their ally.

It is true that the US is a powerful and dangerous opponent, and it is true that in the last resort Reagan might commit the marines to bail out a tottering regime. One of the factors

influencing his decision, or that of his advisors, will be the likely cost, human, material and political, both within the country and throughout the region.

Moderation will only minimise the cost to the US of any intervention. The real nightmare facing Reagan is that El Salvador becomes part of a chain reaction starting in Nicaragua and ending up in Mexico City.

The same conditions that exist in El Salvador are repeated throughout Central and Latin America. 'Moderation' will deny the workers and peasants of Latin America the inspiration and example of a developed revolutionary movement.

A determined revolutionary policy in Latin America is the best way to mobilise support for the struggle against both the local butchers and their US backers.

SPAIN, ITALY, PORTUGAL

Taking on the workers

In the mid-seventies the Mediterranean fringe of western European capitalism was at risk. Portugal, Spain and Italy all saw a huge working class upsurge. In all three countries the revolutionary left was numbered in thousands.

Ian Birchall looks at a legacy they all share from the seventies — all three have Socialist governments.

Today there is little left of that revolutionary euphoria that shook the Mediterranean in the seventies. In Spain, Italy and Portugal workers are facing the downturn with bitter defensive struggles. In Spain Felipe Gonzalez heads a Socialist government elected in 1982; last April Mario Soares bounced back to head a coalition of Socialists and Social Democrats in Portugal; and in Italy Bettino Craxi, despite the relatively small size of his own party, has become Italy's first Socialist prime minister.

In each case the role of Socialists in power is to help carry through a certain modernisation made necessary after decades of fascist or clerical rule. Thus Craxi has triumphantly negotiated a new Concordat with the Catholic Church which makes it clear that Catholicism is not the Italian state religion. Soares has been denounced by the clerical right as a 'Marxist-Atheist' for introducing a rather timorous legalisation of abortion (permissible only in cases of rape, possible deformity or risk to the mother's health), and a somewhat similar measure has been brought in by Gonzalez. Both Gonzalez and Soares intend to lead their countries into EEC membership.

In all this modernisation there is no specifically 'socialist' content, and a balance sheet of all three governments will show that their main function is to defend and strengthen capitalist rule.

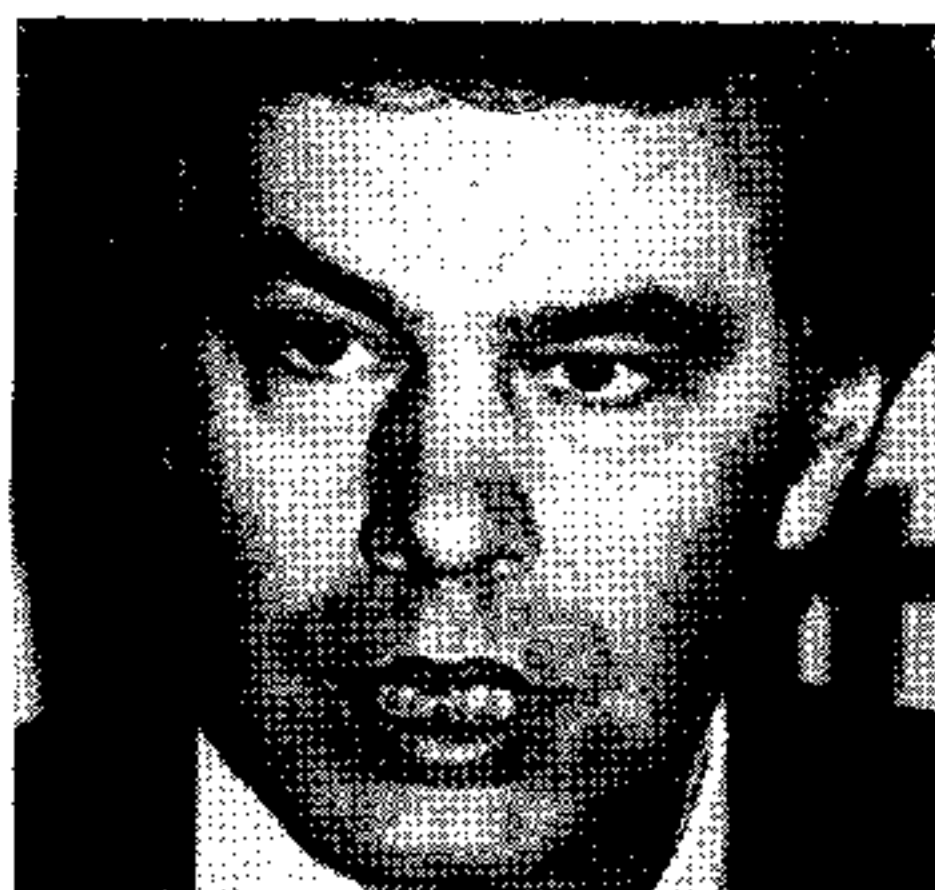
Little has been heard since the autumn of 1982 of Gonzalez' pre-election promise to get out of NATO. Gonzalez may have entertained Fidel Castro in Madrid, but he has also become the USA's biggest arms customer.

On the economic level, Gonzalez has introduced the forty hour week and in-

creased pensions. But on the crucial issue of jobs, his role has been a straightforward defence of capitalist interests. His pre-election pledge of 800,000 new jobs long forgotten. Gonzalez is presiding over 2,300,000 jobless (a rate of 18 percent). In some areas, such as the shipbuilding regions of Galicia, unemployment is up to one third of the active population. And only a quarter of Spain's jobless receive unemployment benefit. But the government is pushing ahead with plans to cut back further in basic industries (especially steel and shipbuilding) with a further 65,000 redundancies planned by 1986. *The Economist* (7 January) has praised Gonzalez for deciding not to make unemployment a priority, as Mitterrand had done in France in 1981; it describes his first year in office as 'a model of responsibility' compared to Mitterrand's.

Redundancies continue

One part of Franco's heritage that Gonzalez is particularly keen to dismantle is the degree of job security which workers received in return for being deprived of trade union rights. The government is anxious to encourage temporary work contracts; *Le Monde* (19 November) quotes a ministry of labour official arguing the novel thesis that reducing job security is a weapon against unemployment: 'We must encourage firms to take on workers at the first signs of an upturn, knowing that they can sack them if the conjuncture changes.'



Craxi, Gonzalez and Soares: giving workers a rough ride

All this has not gone without resistance from the working class. There were three times as many strikes in the first two months of 1984 as in the same period of the previous year. In February half a million workers struck for two days against cuts in living standards; unions have rejected an attempt to hold wage rises to 6.5 percent (as against predicted inflation of at least 8 percent).

Gonzalez' reply is repression thus undermining workers' organisation and their ability to resist a possible threat from the right in the future.

Appeasing the army and the ex-fascists means taking a tough line against the left. In the Basque country rising unemployment in steel and shipbuilding has given a new lease of life to the armed struggle by the nationalists of ETA.

In response Gonzalez has tightened anti-terrorist laws (including one which says that expressing political support for ETA is an offence) and strengthened the police anti-terrorist unit. The government also seems to be giving at least tacit support to the Anti-Terrorist Liberation Group, a set of off-duty police who have been crossing into France to murder Basque refugees. Little wonder that *The Economist* (4 February) said: 'Most Spanish generals have a good reason to admire Mr Felipe Gonzalez's socialists.'

In Portugal, still a bitterly poor country, Soares' attempt to make workers pay for the crisis has taken on an even more naked form. Thousands of workers in state-run industries have not been paid for several months, in some cases over a year. Once again Soares' response is repression. When workers demonstrated outside his residence early in April, 285 arrests were made.

Confrontation

The United States have got their base in the Azores for another seven years, in return for financial aid to Portugal. Five thousand Lisnave shipyard workers are idle, and in February police attacked a demonstration of four thousand shipyard workers, wounding twelve. The 1975 legislation which forbade the creation of private banks and insurance companies has just been repealed, and various public sector banking firms are being privatised.

In Italy there has been yet another sharp confrontation between a 'socialist' government and the organised working class. The crunch issue has been wages. As *The Economist* enthusiastically put it: 'One of Europe's most powerful trade union movements is being pounded to pieces — by a government headed by a Socialist.' The issue is Craxi's attempt to smash a fundamental component of Italian workers' living standards — the automatic wage-indexation system, which guarantees workers 75 percent of any increases in the cost of living. Craxi intends to chop off three percent of any increases, which it is estimated, a loss of over five pounds a month to the average worker.

This has unleashed the fury of Italian workers. A demonstration against the proposed cut mobilised some seven hundred thousand people in what was almost certainly the biggest demonstration in Italy since the end of the second world war.

But Craxi is not without allies, and his position has been bolstered up by the trade union bureaucracy. The two smaller union federations, the CISL and the UIL, are backing his measures. But, breaking a unity of action that has existed ever since 1972, the largest union federation, the Communist-led CGIL, has come out strongly against the measures and helped to organise the mass demonstrations.

However, CGIL opposition is not all that it appears. The CGIL has made it clear that it does not oppose revision of the indexation system in principle, and it has also made it clear that it opposes working for a general strike. The CGIL's real concern is that the action against Craxi's decree was originally called by factory councils in Turin and Milan; if the CGIL had not stepped in to take the leadership of the movement, opposition might have developed outside its control. It was crucial that the opposition should not cut across the political ambitions of the Italian Communist Party. As Luciano Lama, secretary general of the CGIL, told the mass demonstration in March: 'We are not here to oppose Parliament; we respect its powers. We are simply asking the members



Portugal 1974—ten years after they overthrew fascism workers face a bitter attack from a Socialist government.

of parliament to take account of our desire for justice'. With enemies like that, who needs friends?

Craxi's government has welcomed cruise missiles, and is planning to chop 26,500 steel jobs by 1986. Craxi has also put to death one of the liberal measures of the late seventies — the reform of psychiatric hospitals, a reform which didn't work because the funds to make it work were never available. (At his inauguration Craxi tastefully observed: 'We must get the lunatics back in the asylums').

All three Socialist prime ministers are still in fragile situations. Craxi and Soares preside over coalitions which could collapse at any time; Craxi in particular is constantly at the mercy of votes of confidence. And Gonzalez, who seems to have the firmest base, may also be insecure; February saw the resignations of his finance minister and of the Socialist president of the Andalusian regional government.

Nonetheless, there are reasons to believe that all three may prove resilient. In Spain and Italy, at least, there are signs of economic recovery. Spain is now the world's tenth industrial power, and is getting increased foreign investment, notably from Arab countries and the American multinational ATT. Italy has seen a marked improvement of exports and the balance of payments. If the ruling class want to continue this recovery without too much working class opposition, the Socialists may be the best people to do the job.

On the left the only alternative force are the Communist Parties, and these too are increasingly bankrupt. The Spanish CP has fallen from quarter of a million members to 40,000 since 1977; its recent conference was bitterly divided between pro-Russian and Eurocommunist wings, and a new pro-Russian party has been launched by Ignacio Gallego. The Portuguese CP still gets 17 percent of the vote, but is trapped in a sterile Stalinist dogmatism. Communism in southern Europe is not dead, but terminally ill. (Of course, between terminal illness and death there can be a great deal of blood and slime).

So for Spain and Portugal Gonzalez and Soares seem set to remain the least unacceptable alternative for the ruling class. Italy is more volatile. For the moment the Christian Democrats (who advocate the free market, spending cuts and a pro-US foreign policy) are very happy to serve under Craxi. There are still some Christian Democrats who would like to do a deal with the CP but this looks increasingly unlikely. For electorally things are going slowly but surely in Craxi's direction. The CP is going into electoral decline. This will also weaken the Christian Democrats, who have kept their vote largely by being the only bulwark against Communism; as the threat subsides, so does their claim to be the automatic party of government. Moreover, the Christian Democrats have long suffered from inability to pick up middle class votes, which have increasingly gone to the Socialists. Craxi should be able to fill the electoral vacuum.

Interviewed in March's *Labour Herald*, Eric Heffer said of the Labour leadership: 'At present we have what I call the Felipe Gonzalez syndrome — in other words, image building. Everything is geared to building the image of the movement's leadership.' Kinnock is certainly not as good looking as Gonzalez, and probably not as intelligent; but the performance of Socialist prime ministers in southern Europe should be food for thought for anyone who thinks we shall get an easy ride from the next Labour government.

To our readers in the Netherlands:

Any readers of *Socialist Review* in the Netherlands who are interested in further discussion of the ideas of the Socialist Workers' Party, please write to: *Socialist Review*, PO BOX 82, London, E2 9DS, UK.

Class and communalism

Communalism is a difficult idea to explain to western socialists. Northern Ireland is an example of communal politics. It does not have to be based only on religion—in India it is a combination of religion with caste, language, region and ethnic origin. **Barry Pavier** examines the communal strife in the Punjab.

Communalism grows in the soil of Indian class society. This is much more complex than that of Britain. It includes a mass urban petty bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat, a mass rural bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie and a huge class of small farmers. This is quite apart from the working class (urban and rural) and large private and state capital. All classes except for the owners of large capital are splintered by religion, caste, language, etc — the working class not least.

This has several consequences. Firstly, it has produced rampant factionalism inside the ruling class. The crisis hit India early, in 1965, and ever since different regional ruling class factions have been at each others' throats, fighting for the major share of the limited resources now available. Secondly, it means that there are numerous divisions between different sections of the working class. Not only between workers in different parts of the country, but also in the same city and the same factory. Workers migrating from the south to, say, Bombay, probably won't speak the language of the local workers. They will live separately, watch different films, have different leisure activities and celebrate different festivals. This tends to insulate different groups of workers from each other. Of course, managements attempt to use this for their own ends.

This is the situation in the Hindustan Lever factory in Bombay, as described by

Bennett D'Costa, general secretary of the Employees Union (more or less equivalent to a British convenor):

'Because of the struggles and the unity of the workers, as long as this is strong, the management cannot even think of creating splits on this basis. But it is at a time when there is a lull and there is a general weakness and bickering, then at that stage these types of forces raise their heads...the union has to be very vigilant about these things, it's a great threat.'

This is in one of the best organised factories in Bombay, where they have had 180 sectional strikes in the last two years. It shows the third consequence of the structure of Indian class society. It is possible for one splinter of the regional ruling class, or petty bourgeoisie, or some combination of these two, to mobilise sections of small farmers and the working class behind it, on the basis of religion, caste, or regional solidarity. There is one condition, working class passivity and in particular a lack of clear class-centred politics. This is what permits



Indira Gandhi: moves to encourage Hindu chauvinism

situations like Punjab today, and Assam and Sri Lanka last year.

Yet it can be fought, and the divisions of Indian class society can be overcome. The way forward is indicated by what happens at Hindustan Levers — militant rank and file action, involving all the workers and controlled by them, combined with a factory leadership containing socialists who are well aware of the dangers of communalism and who argue for specific actions to counter them.

These socialists are not aligned with a major party. Bennett D'Costa's politics are a mixture of revolutionary socialism and Maoism, which might seem peculiar to a British audience but which is quite explicable given local conditions. They do not suffer though from the parliamentary cretinism of the two major communist parties, and the importance of that becomes clear once you look at what is happening in Punjab.

First, the communal violence is not the work of an oppressed minority or the expression of a backward, pre-capitalist society. The economy of Punjab is based on agriculture that has been completely transformed by capitalism, even to the satisfaction of the Communist Party of India (CPI), whose political line for the last 30 years has been based on the need to complete the bourgeois revolution. Consequently the class struggle in the countryside is sharply drawn between capitalist farmers and the rural working class. There is no 'peasant question' in Punjab.

A faction of the Punjabi bourgeoisie, emboldened by its growing strength, precipitated the crisis by attempting to grab more power through gaining special status for the state of Punjab. This faction operates through the Sikh regionalist party, the Akali Dal. They began a low-level civil disobedience action, which stuttered on for a couple of years to the end of 1982, and then became badly unstuck.

There has always been a wing of Sikh regionalism which argued for an independent Sikh state (Khalistan), run on Sikh religious law, much after the style of contemporary Iran. In 1982-83 the Congress (I) government tried to use this faction to split the Akali Dal. They covertly promoted the most prominent figure of the Khalistan faction, Jaswant Singh Bhindranwale. This ploy succeeded only too well. Bhindranwale spectacularly outflanked the conservative



The roots of communalism lie in Indian class society



Ruling class factions stoke up support on the basis of religious and regional divisions

Akali leaders.

The problem for the Congress (I) is that he ran completely out of control and has continually raised the stakes by setting loose his mass base of petty-bourgeois youth. At present he is holed up in the Golden Temple of Amritsar (which offers medieval-style sanctuary), making agitational statements and directing a growing terrorist campaign, not only against the government, but also randomly against non-Sikhs. The conservative Akali leadership has been compelled to move towards him in order to maintain any influence.

Bhindranwale has exposed the cruel truth for the Akalis: they are dangerously overplaying their hand. Even in Punjab there is only a 52-48 majority for Sikhs over Hindus. In the neighbouring state of Haryana, separated from Punjab in 1966, there is an overwhelming Hindu majority. The terrorist campaign has become extremely vicious during the last month. In March, Sikh students on motorcycles drove into the village of Kahnuwan and machine-gunned the first 16 non-Sikhs they came across. At the beginning of April they killed two leading politicians, one Congress (I) and one Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP—neo fascists). The response to this has been counter-terrorism, so far mainly confined to attacks on Sikhs in Haryana, but with threats of action in Punjab.

This is hardly surprising, since the BJP is a militant Hindu chauvinist party and is linked with a mass para-military organisation, the RSS. The RSS has previously concentrated on organising anti-Muslim pogroms, but it is

possible to recognise their hand behind two Hindu defence organisations in Punjab. Operating through such fronts, which pull in greater forces than the BJP could alone, has been a consistent policy of theirs for the past five years. Given the right (or wrong) conditions, Bhindranwale and the RSS between them could turn Punjab and Haryana into a disaster of Lebanese proportions.

The role of the Congress (I) has been suitably disgusting. Having stoked up Bhindranwale in the first place, Indira Gandhi has moved in completely the opposite direction. Abandoning the policy of the past 40 years — the Congress as the protector of minorities — she and the rest of her government have been making a number of moves to encourage Hindu chauvinism. This is election year and she has more than half an eye on the threat from the BJP.

Nod and a wink

However, what it does is build the RRS. The 'non-party' front unites right wing politicians who are members of parties other than the BJP, and mobilises their support. Indira Gandhi's new moves to the right are building these organisations as Congress (I) politicians feel that they have some kind of official sanction, even if of a nod-and-a-wink kind.

But where is the working class? In Punjab, mainly in the countryside, and there we find the best organisation that the CPI possess. An agricultural workers' union, over 125,000 strong (out of about 800,000 agricultural workers in total). Founded in 1954,

it actually has quite a good record of organising struggles. It has the achievement of socialism as one of its objects. Over the past few months neither it nor the CPI have organised a fightback. The other communist party, the allegedly more left Communist Party (Marxist), has been acting as 'honest broker' between the government and the Akali Dal rather than organising working class resistance to communalism.

The communist parties' impotence is a sign of the utter bankruptcy of reformism. They both refuse to put the working class at the centre of their politics, and hold to the idea that there is a nationality question in India, urgently in need of solution. At various times this has led both of them to embrace very unpleasant ruling class regional parties, notably the Akali Dal. This has meant they have ducked the daunting but essential task of confronting the idea in Sikh workers that their religion is the most important aspect of their lives. The same applies to all religions and castes, and the consequences are frequently made painfully clear.

At the moment it looks as if the best that can happen in Punjab is that some dirty compromise will be cobbled up between Indira Gandhi and the Akali Dal which will temporarily outflank both Bhindranwale and the RSS. The worst is a ghastly three-way shoot-out and indiscriminate sectarian violence. The tragedy is that communalism can be fought, but to do that beyond the confines of one militant factory requires a revolutionary socialist party with a general perspective of working class politics.

A world to win

The world is divided into hostile national states yet economically is internationally organised as never before. **John Molyneux** explains the history and the relevance of the theory of Permanent Revolution to understanding the world and what it means for the prospects of a socialist revolution.

Marx wrote:

'In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society.'

The replacement of feudalism by capitalism is a progressive phenomenon. This is not to deny the brutality of the process. Capitalism comes into being, 'dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt'. Nevertheless it is still an important step forward for humanity.

This is because capitalism a) produces an enormous advance in the forces of production creating the material basis for a classless society; b) results in an enormous socialisation and concentration of the forces of production helping the eventual takeover of these forces; c) gives rise to an integrated world market and world economy laying the basis for overcoming the division of the world into hostile and warring states; d) creates its own gravedigger — the working class — the only class capable of overthrowing capitalism and bringing to completion the tendencies towards a co-operative classless world.

Capitalism was thus a necessary episode in human history. There could be no leap from feudalism to socialism.

Marx's list of 'progressive epochs' is a 'broad outline', a very broad outline. When we come to look at the actual historical process, to approach it concretely as a basis for action, we have to take into account the fact of *uneven development*.

The rise of capitalism was anything but a uniform or simultaneous process. The bourgeois revolution accomplished in Britain in the seventeenth century and in France in the eighteenth century was in other countries delayed until the nineteenth or twentieth centuries and in some parts of the world is not fully complete to this day.

What should be the attitude of Marxists to this phenomenon of belated bourgeois revolution?

Marx encountered just such a situation in the German revolution of 1848. Germany at that time was a backward country relative to Britain, France, Holland. It was fragmented into numerous semi-absolutist, semi-feudal principalities and states in which the process of industrialisation was only in its first

stages. Its working class was little more than embryonic. Its bourgeoisie appeared to be about to make its own version of the 1789 revolution in France. The *Communist Manifesto* summed up the Marxist strategy as follows:

'In Germany they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie. But they never cease, for a single instant, to instil into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin...

'The bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but a prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution.'

It was a limited form of what is now known as 'the stages theory'. First with the bourgeoisie against the forces of feudalism, then against the bourgeoisie from the moment of its victory. The fatal flaws in this strategy (then, as on so many subsequent occasions) was that the bourgeoisie failed to play the historical role assigned to it. Fearing precisely the development of events that Marx hoped for, it betrayed its own revolution and came to a deal with the aristocracy.

Independent party

Marx was quick to learn the lesson. In 1849 he broke his former alliance with the petty bourgeois democrats and declared in favour of an independent workers' party. In 1850 in the 'Address to the Communist League' he outlined a radical perspective of independent working class action to transform the democratic revolution into an international socialist transformation.

'While the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible...it is our interest and our task to *make the revolution permanent*, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at last the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians.'

This was the starting point of the theory of permanent revolution. It was destined to remain a dead letter at the time of its



Sandinistas: anti-imperialist but not a working class revolution

formulation as by then the German revolution was decisively defeated and Europe was entering a prolonged period of political reaction accompanied by an enormous expansion of capitalism. For further development of the theory we need to look to Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The situation of Russia was in some respects similar to that of Germany in 1848. It was the most backward of the major European countries, under the absolute rule of the Tsar. It was just beginning to experience the development of capitalism and industry, rendering Tsarism more anachronistic. Russia was on the eve of revolution.

Yet in other respects Russia was very different. International capitalism was now half a century older and more advanced. It had undergone a tremendous process of growth, concentration, monopolisation and internationalisation, and had entered the stage known as imperialism. The industry that appeared in Russia was the product not of gradual development on native Russian foundations, but of this advanced capitalism.

As Trotsky wrote:

'At the same time that peasant land-cultivation as a whole remained, right up to the revolution at the level of the seventeenth century, Russian industry in its technique and capitalist structure stood at the level of the advanced countries and in certain respects even outstripped them.'

In relation to Western Europe, Russia exhibited not only *uneven* but also *combined* development.

Within Russian Marxism there were three distinct responses to this. The first was that of Plekhanov and the Mensheviks who based themselves on Marx's general historical scheme and applied it mechanically to Russia. They expected Russian history to follow the pattern of England and France, to undergo a bourgeois democratic revolution led by the bourgeoisie. The role of the

working class was to support the bourgeoisie in this, and care to be taken to preserve this alliance.

If the working class became too revolutionary they might 'frighten off' the liberal bourgeoisie and throw it into the arms of the autocracy. Plekhanov's response to the defeat of the 1905 revolution was that the workers 'should not have taken up arms'.

The second position was that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Lenin rejected the Menshevik view that the revolution would be led by the bourgeoisie. He argued:

'It fears to lose in this struggle its property which binds it to the existing order; it fears an all-too-revolutionary action of the workers who will not stop at the democratic revolution but will aspire to the socialist revolution.'

It would be the working class in alliance with the peasantry, who make the revolution.

Nevertheless Lenin accepted the revolution of the bourgeoisie in the sense that it could not go beyond or overthrow capitalist social relations. Lenin envisaged the revolution establishing the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.' By this he meant a temporary revolutionary government of representatives of the workers and the peasants making a clean sweep of Tsarism, and the remnants of feudalism, and institute a democratic republic expropriating the large landowners, but stopping short of taking over capitalist property.

Transition to socialism

The third position was that of Trotsky and has passed into history as the theory of permanent revolution. Like Lenin, Trotsky argued that the workers not the bourgeoisie would make the revolution. But he differed from Lenin in maintaining that the logic of events would not only bring the working class to power but would compel it to start the transition to socialism.

Against the Mensheviks Trotsky argued that the law of combined and uneven development (which he was the first to formulate) had produced in Russia a bourgeoisie that was exceptionally weak and a proletariat that was particularly very strong. The bourgeoisie, dependent from the outset on foreign loans, was economically and politically the junior partner of European finance capital. It had long ago abandoned any revolutionary pretensions and had no desire to see a revolution in Russia. Moreover the bourgeoisie was organically linked to the aristocracy.

There was no possibility that the Russian bourgeoisie would place itself at the head of the peasantry and lead the struggle against Tsarism. But this weakness was not to be found with the working class. On the contrary, its strength was based in the advanced industry that had been implanted in backward Russia. The workers were concentrated in huge factories like the Putilov works in Petrograd. So the working class despite being a tiny minority of the population, held in its hands the key productive forces and was potentially immensely powerful. It would therefore fall to the proletariat, and

not the bourgeoisie, to carry out the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Against Lenin, Trotsky argued that 'the proletariat, once having taken power, will fight for it to the very end' and that in the cause of this fight the pressure of immediate problems (unemployment, the implementation of the eight-hour day, the resistance of the propertied classes etc) would compel it to employ socialist collectivist measures against bourgeois property.

Lenin believed that such a development was ruled out by the peasantry which made up the great mass of the population. The revolution, he thought, would lead to a majority of peasant representatives in the revolutionary government who would back the revolution only to the point where it overthrew the Tsar and the landlords. Thereafter it would side with the bourgeoisie and push the working class and its party out of power.

Trotsky rejected this perspective. Holding that, as Marx had noted, the fragmented conditions of existence of the peasants make them 'incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention'. The peasantry he maintained would play a crucial part in the revolution but it would not be an *independent* one. It would have to follow one of the main urban classes. Since the bourgeoisie in the towns would not support the expropriation of the landowners, the peasantry would follow the working class, at least up to the creation of workers' power.

To the objection (repeatedly raised by both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks) that Russia could not leap straight to socialist revolution because its economic development was too backward Trotsky replied that this was true only if you viewed Russia in isolation. But, Russia was part of a world capitalist system ripe for socialism. The key to the survival, the permanence of the

'Russian' socialist revolution lay in spreading it internationally.

This then was the theory of permanent revolution as presented by Trotsky prior to 1917. In the event, as is always the case, reality proved more complex than any forecast. No one for example, foresaw the nine months of dual power or the role of the soviets.

The position of the Mensheviks led them further and further to the right. In their rigid conviction that the Russian Revolution should be led by the bourgeoisie they searched frantically for a revolutionary bourgeois democracy to support. 'When', as Trotsky put it, 'no leading bourgeois democracy was to be found, the Mensheviks themselves undertook, with more or less success, to carry out its duties.' They ended up in alliance with the reactionary (not revolutionary) bourgeoisie against the working class.

The position of the Bolsheviks was better, but had it not changed would nonetheless have ended as providing a left cover for the Menshevik slide to the right. It did in fact begin to play this role in the first two months of the revolution when *Pravda* took a position of conditional support for the Provisional Government and made concessions to the idea of supporting the imperialist war. It was only Lenin's return from exile in April with his famous *April Theses* that reoriented the Bolsheviks in the direction of an open struggle for workers' power. Lenin had to break with his past position and wage a vigorous fight against many of his closest followers.

In contrast Trotsky was vindicated on five crucial points. 1) The overthrow of Tsarism in February 1917 was accomplished by the working class not the liberal bourgeoisie. The fact that power passed temporarily to the bourgeoisie was because the workers' parties handed it to them not because they won it. 2) The bourgeoisie in power proved



Russia 1917: the Mensheviks were worried the working class would 'frighten off' the liberal bourgeoisie

incapable of carrying through the main tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, convening a Constituent Assembly to found a democratic revolution and solving the agrarian question.

3) The bourgeois revolution did grow over directly into the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. 4) This revolution did initiate a process of international revolution in Hungary, Germany, Italy etc. 5) The failure of the international revolution meant ultimately the loss of workers' power and the failure of socialist revolution in Russia.

Up to this point, Trotsky developed the theory of permanent revolution only in relation to Russia. He had not applied it to other economically backward countries or to the problems of colonial revolution in general. It was only in response to the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 that he made this generalisation.

China in the mid-1920s experienced a massive revolutionary struggle against foreign imperialism and its own feudal warlords and landowners. This struggle was spearheaded by the new Chinese working class and took the form of a huge wave of revolutionary strikes. Politically there were two main forces involved: the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang (founded by Sun Yat-Sen and then led by Chiang Kai-Shek) and the Chinese Communist Party.

Subordination

Throughout this period the by now Stalinist Comintern imposed on the Chinese CP a policy of political and organisational subordination to the Kuomintang, including entering the Kuomintang, and handing over membership lists, and refusing to criticise the principles of Sun Yat-Senism. This strategy, a rerun of Menshevism, was pursued in the name of the bourgeois democratic nature of the Chinese Revolution. It led to complete catastrophe. In 1927 Chiang Kai-Shek turned on the Chinese Communists and massacred them.

Trotsky subjected this policy to severe criticism and it became one of the major issues in his struggle with the Stalinists. At first this criticism was limited by factional pressures. Trotsky was then in alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev who both opposed the theory of permanent revolution. This induced him to attack Stalin not from the standpoint of permanent revolution but on the grounds that even if the Chinese Revolution was bourgeois democratic the Stalinist strategy was a complete travesty of pre-1917 Leninism.

In September 1927 Trotsky threw off this limitation and argued unequivocally that: 'The Chinese Revolution at its new stage will win as a dictatorship of the proletariat or it will not win at all.' From this point on Trotsky took the view that permanent revolution had been raised 'from the realm of reminiscences over old differences of opinion among Russian Marxists ... into a question of the character of the inner connexions and methods of the international revolution in general'. In 1928 he formulated its principal conclusion as follows:

'With regard to countries with a belated



Chile 1973: minister in Allende's 'Marxist' government calls on workers to return to their homes, fearing they would antagonise liberal elements in the army

bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all its peasant masses.'

It was in this form that the theory became a key component of Trotskyism in the 1930s and since. It was an immense breakthrough. It shattered the mechanical conception dominant in the Second International where the revolution was destined only to occur in the advanced countries and to be followed by the backward countries only after prolonged capitalist development. It disposed finally of the view that the bourgeois remained, in some sense, a 'progressive' force and the disastrous 'stages theory' of revolution which led (and still leads) would-be revolutionaries into holding back the struggle of the working class in the name of an allegedly necessary 'bourgeois' stage of the revolution.

Today more than fifty years have passed since this breakthrough was achieved. The question we now have to ask is: what is the current validity and relevance of permanent revolution in the light of the experience of the last half century? The first thing to be said is that the essence of permanent revolution is now more relevant than ever. The development of capitalism (particularly in the last 20 years) has made it more international, more internationally integrated and more widespread.

As a result sectors of modern industry have been superimposed on the backward agrarian economies of numerous third world countries. In other words combined and uneven development, as it existed in pre-revolutionary Russia, has been massively generalised. And of course where capitalism goes there it creates its opposite, the working class.

Today there is no major country in the world, and few minor ones, where there does not exist an urban working class capable of taking power and initiating the socialist revolution. The refusal of so many 'third worldists' to recognise this is a case of self-

imposed political blindness born of education in a Stalinist/Maoist tradition founded on rejection of the theory of permanent revolution.

A point which brings us to a second way in which permanent revolution has increased its relevance. If Trotsky generalised his theory from the Chinese Revolution to cover the countries 'of belated bourgeois development' as a whole, so from the same starting point Stalinism has generalised its stages theory not only to all the third world but also, via the anti-fascist popular fronts of the thirties, to the advanced capitalist countries.

'Historic compromise'

From Spain in 1936, to Chile in 1973, to the Iranian revolution, to the Italian CP's 'historic compromise' we have seen the same strategy of class collaboration, of alliance with, and subordination to, the 'progressive' sections of the bourgeoisie. Even in Britain which experienced its bourgeois revolution in the seventeenth century our decaying Communist Party aspires to no more than a 'broad democratic alliance' with a left government 'opening the way to socialism' at some future unspecified date.

The theory of permanent revolution which insists on the potential for workers' power not only where the working class long since became a majority, but also where it is still a minority, is the essential point of departure for cutting through this nonsense and avoiding the endless repetition of such disasters as the Pinochet terror in Chile or the Khomeini terror in Iran.

The final element in Trotsky's theory, his insistence on the impossibility of socialism in one country and the possibility of an international revolution, has been confirmed and strengthened by recent developments. Engels in 1847 rejected socialism in one country on the grounds that, 'By creating a world market big industry has already brought all the peoples of the earth, and especially the civilised peoples, into such close relations with one another that none is independent of what happens to the others. This was a projection of trends which he and Marx had perceived to be inherent in capitalism.'

Today, it is reality. We have now not only a world market, but also a world production line with individual commodities traversing the continents at various stages in their manufacture and capital relocating itself from one corner of the globe to another. In This context even the most determinedly self sufficient of economies (China and the Eastern European bloc) have had their economic fences breached by the pressure of world competition and their need to partake of the benefits of international technology and international finance.

Connected to this we have seen the remarkable domino effect of even relatively small revolutionary breakthroughs (none of which has yet resulted in workers' power). Consider for example the chain reaction that extended from the colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique back into the heartland of Portugal in Spring 1974, and then back again to Angola and Mozambique and from there on to Zimbabwe, and beyond to Soweto. The rising anti-imperialist war in Central America is another example. One has only to consider the incalculable international consequences of a seizure of power by the workers of Brazil or South Africa (never mind Britain or France) to see the potential for world revolution today.

Having said all this it nonetheless has to be recognised that the course of the class struggle in the third world has not conformed exactly to Trotsky's prediction. His analysis in the 1930s seemed to suggest that for the colonial and semi-colonial countries only two alternatives were possible: either their continued domination by imperialism or the dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact history has proved far more complex with a wide variety of intermediate cases emerging.

Imperialism

First there have been cases where imperialism has granted independence to a native bourgeoisie, not without struggle, but without a fight to the finish — India being the most important example. Secondly, there have been some cases where former colonies or semi-colonies have undergone sufficient economic developments to be on the road to becoming independent centres of capital accumulation, eg Brazil. Thirdly there have been a number of successful wars of liberation which had led to independent anti-imperialist but nonetheless manifestly capitalist regimes eg Algeria and Zimbabwe. Fourthly, there have been the 'communist' revolutions which have led to more or less fully state-owned economies (China, Cuba, Vietnam etc) but which were not led by the working class.

To attempt to fit all these variations into Trotsky's schemes without amending or developing it in any way leads to contradictions and political errors. For example Mandel and his followers in the Fourth International have tried to maintain the pure letter of Trotsky's formula. In doing so they have been forced to argue that in the first three cases outlined above (ie those where private ownership remains) the bourgeois revolution has not yet been completed and that in the fourth case (where private owner-

ship has been abolished) the full process of permanent revolution has occurred and workers' states have been established.

The 'incompleted bourgeois reaction' they justify on the grounds that not *all* 'the tasks of the bourgeois revolution have been achieved'.

That is a democratic republic, national independence and unification, distribution of land to the peasantry.

This means expecting a carbon copy repetition of the French Revolution to be repeated in every third world country. It leaves these would-be Trotskyists in the classic Menshevik position of looking for a bourgeois democratic revolution that isn't going to happen for the simple reason that the bourgeoisie already holds power.

The idea that some countries have achieved 'workers' states' has even more serious consequences. Basing itself on a fallacy that state property equals workers' state, it leads to the view that the socialist revolution can be achieved not only without a Marxist revolutionary party (in fact under the leadership of supposedly counter-revolutionary Stalinist parties) and so undermining the whole basis of Trotskyism but also without the self-emancipation of the working class, which undermines the whole of Marxism.



Spanish Civil War: Communist Party supported the Popular Front.

In order to preserve the essence of the theory of permanent revolution (the strategy of raising the working class to the leading role in the anti-imperialist revolution and transforming that revolution into a socialist revolution) it is necessary to recognise that this is not a universally predetermined sequence of events. In particular it is necessary to recognise the possibility of what Tony Cliff has called 'deflected permanent revolution.'

This is what has taken place in countries like China and Cuba where neither the bourgeoisie tied to imperialism, nor the working class, lacking revolutionary leadership, has been the driving force in the anti-imperialist struggle. The resulting social vacuum has been filled by a section of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, leading a cross-class alliance for national liberation. Such movements lead to state ownership as this is the only way the native petty bourgeoisie can transform itself into a new ruling class. The economy becomes bureaucratic state capitalist, the fundamental economic and social contradictions of

capitalism remain as does ultimate subordination to the world economy.

However, if permanent revolution is not predetermined neither is 'deflected permanent revolution'. We can see that there are a number of cases where circumstances rule out the possibility of national liberation being achieved by any force other than workers' revolution. One example of this is South Africa. Here the white ruling class is too entrenched to succumb to petty-bourgeois-led guerrillas. The only road to the destruction of apartheid is the road of urban insurrection by the black workers. Another example is in Palestine. Again, the power of Zionism backed by US imperialism is simply too great to be overthrown by the PLO guerrillas or by any force less than the Arab working class of the Middle East.

Crucial factor

Closer to home we have Northern Ireland where the stalemate between the forces of nationalism and imperialism can be broken only by an unequivocally socialist working class movement North and South to simultaneously challenge the Southern bourgeois/Catholic state and reach out to the Protestant workers in the North. In these situations we can say, as Trotsky did of China in 1928 that 'the revolution will win as a dictatorship of the proletariat or it will not win at all.' Elsewhere there is more than one option. But in each case the crucial factor is the role of the working class, its level of independence from other classes and its revolutionary leadership.

All of these arguments lead us back to the starting point of the theory of permanent revolution and Marx's decision in 1848 to break with the petty bourgeois democrats and fight for the foundation of an independent workers' party. The theory of permanent revolution does not mean revolutionary socialists forming the left wing of petty-bourgeois nationalist movements: it means beginning with the independent organisation of the working class and *from that ground* taking up the national, democratic and peasant questions. This was, in fact the common starting point of all the Russian Marxists, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks and Trotsky alike.

The Mensheviks' erroneous stages theory led them to compromise this independence, the Bolsheviks' fierce adherence to it led them to abandon their stages theory, and Trotsky's analysis led him to recognise the central role of the revolutionary party in actually making permanent revolution happen.

Today it must be admitted, the dominance of varieties of Stalinism (Maoism, Castroism etc) itself the legacy of the catastrophic defeats and subsequent passivity of the working class in the advanced countries, has ensured that the task of building revolutionary workers' parties in the third world has scarcely begun. It remains essential for all that, and the best contribution we can make to it is to combine our theoretical argument for the strategy of permanent revolution with a concrete demonstration of the potential and relevance of the working class by what we do in practice here.

State sponsored scabbing

Duncan Blackie reviews *States of Emergency* by Keith Jeffery and Peter Hennessy RKP (£14.95).

At a time like the present a sober and realistic appraisal of the role of the state in strike breaking, and its limitations would be welcomed. *States of Emergency* by Jeffery and Hennessy attempts just that, a detailed, if academic account of the role of the government in industrial disputes from 1918 to the present.

The roots of the earliest attempts at centrally co-ordinated strike breaking lie in the emergency organisations set up during the first world war. The 1915 Munitions of War Act made strikes illegal in war industries, which were given a liberal definition and extended well beyond the immediate area of munitions production. As the book shows the government had little success in stopping industrial unrest. Rank and file activists soon got around the complicity of union leaders with employers.

The compact between unions and government muted the full expression of labour grievances and the emergence of unofficial union leaders in a widespread shop stewards' movement. The shop

stewards demonstrated their power in February 1915 when there was a major stoppage of engineers on "Red Clydeside". The following July 200,000 miners in South Wales came out on strike.

The impetus for extending the powers of the state came as the war ended with a massive wave of militancy. Strikes of cotton workers in Lancashire, electrical engineers in Birmingham, munition workers in London and the Midlands, and finally the London Police strike in August 1918 are but a few examples. The then Prime Minister, Lloyd George, later remarked that the country was 'nearer to Bolshevism that day than at any time since'.

Ruling class fears

The fear amongst wide sections of the ruling class was reflected by Lord Milner when he wrote: 'I fear that the time is very near at hand when we shall have to take strong steps to stop the 'rot' in this country unless we wish to follow Russia into impotence and dissolution'. Leaving aside the purile remarks by the authors about revolution never being on as it is 'unBritish', the account gives an impression of the paralysis felt by the government at the time.

'The railway strike of 1919 drove some so far as to suggest that private owners of pigeons should be approached through the country and a scheme prepared to utilise their services if necessary.'

In 1919 the war cabinet, faced with a London bus and tube strike set up the

Industrial Unrest Committee: 'To make necessary arrangements for dealing with any situation that might arise from industrial unrest at the present moment and in the future.'

In July 1919 some 900 naval ratings were drafted into the Yorkshire coalfield to maintain pit head pumps, and throughout the year the army played a prominent role in civil contingency planning.

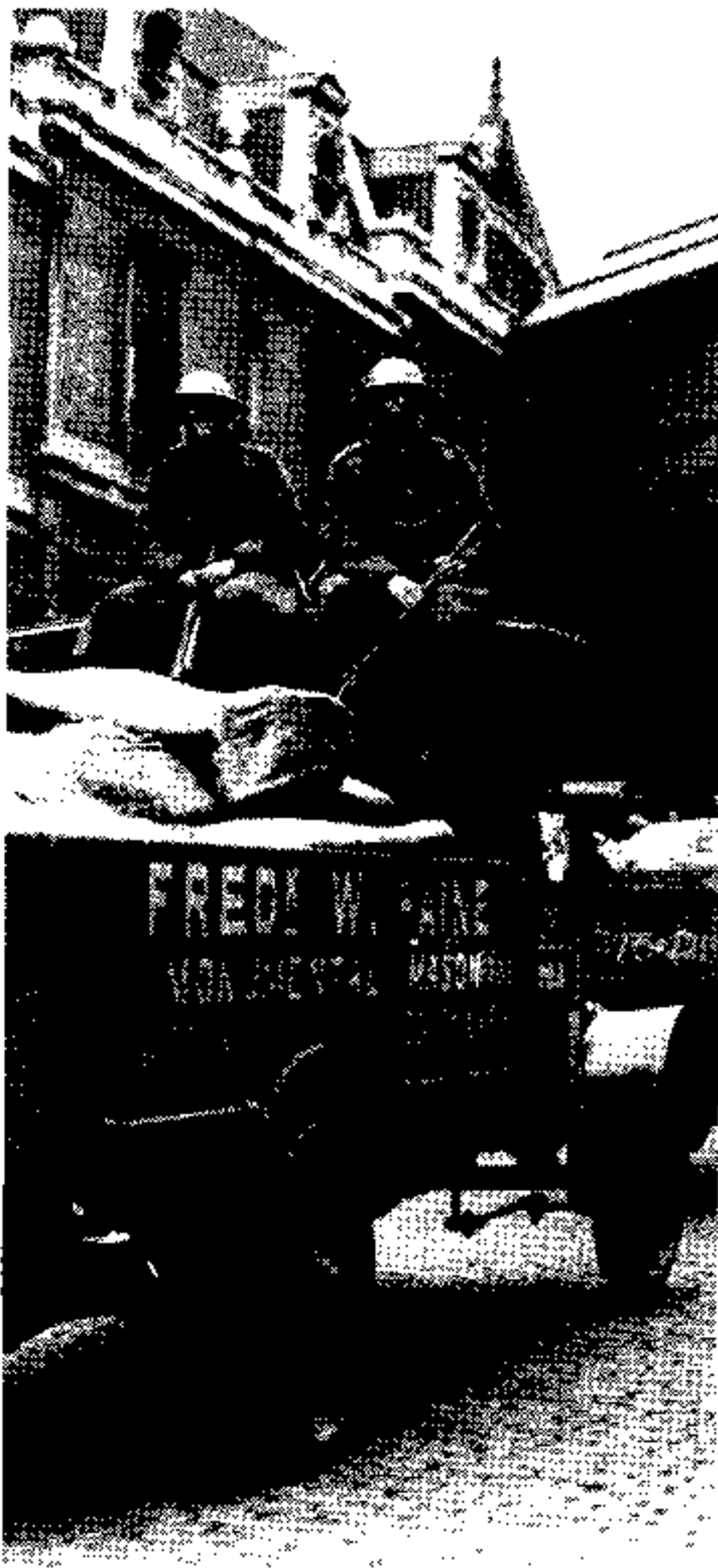
Faced with the problem that the use of troops, to say nothing of their questionable loyalty, inflamed rather than quelled discontent, the government disbanded the army coordinating centre and set up the Supply and Transport Committee under cabinet control. During 1919 and 1920 civil servants worked to review plans for strike breaking, assessing the number of scabs needed to operate each industry etc.

As part of the London Electric Power Scheme:

'Various technical and learned societies, including the Institution of Civil Engineers were approached privately and agreed ... to invite their members by circular to volunteer for service during a strike.'

A member of Lloyd George's cabinet, Geddes, suggested the formation of a permanent organisation for dealing with strikes. The book gives two reasons for this. The first, characteristically overblown by the authors a legal one, that, as the Defence of the Realm Act had lapsed, the use of troops in industry was now unconstitutional. The second reason, much more importantly was that troops don't make very good workers anyway. It was possible for them to carry out limited manual duties but they were quite incapable of running a power station, for example.

The miners' strike of 1920 saw the appointment of 11 regional civil commissioners for England and Wales, each



given the job of maintaining supplies in their respective areas. The experience gained in this dispute gave the government an idea of how to deal with many of the problems, such as how scab labour could best be deployed.

Jeffery and Hennessy say that this also provided a problem for the government as to whether there was 'reasonable provision for preventing the starvation of the country and maintaining orderly government.' In other words strike breaking. Both then and since the reality is not whether there is enough strike breaking but the extent to which the government of the time has been able to organise it.

During the miners' strike of 1920, when the rail workers threatened to come out in support, the government pushed through the Emergency Powers Act. This gave government departments the powers to requisition almost anything, restricted the issue of firearms, made marches illegal and made anyone promoting the interests of the strike liable to arrest.

This has been used 12 times, three before the war and nine after. Four of these by a Labour administration. An amendment was made in 1964 to enable action to be taken in advance of a strike.

The results of civil contingency planning in the General Strike was not one of great success. The volunteers recruited from students and the middle class managed to run less than 5 per cent of trains. The special constables, had to be restricted to the rich areas of London in order to release the regular police for the East End. The Specials had so little understanding of working class life that they managed to do little more than elicit howls of derision from local populations.

The only food to leave London docks did so with an escort of 20 armoured cars. Indeed one of the main lessons drawn by the government was that a show of force was

more important and effective than the actual use of it.

'Armoured fighting vehicles can exert a great moral effect by their formidable appearance, but as this effect is greatly decreased when crews are seen to dismount and attend to engines, vehicles of doubtful reliability should never be taken out.'

In the period following the second world war, the Labour government faced a similar if less extensive wave of militancy and used troops at the slightest sign of trouble. The powers fell into virtual disuse between 1950 and 1970, but with the onset of the crisis in the early seventies they were used a total of five times by the Heath government.

National interest

At the height of the miners' strike in February 1972, the Emergency Powers Act met its Waterloo, a month into the strike:

'A state of emergency was declared on 9 February. On the next day an event occurred that has haunted contingency planners ever since. Saltley coke depot in Birmingham was closed after a six day struggle involving at peak moments, 800 police and 15,000 massed secondary pickets ... The effectiveness of the miners secondary pickets enabling them to control power supplies with the passive support of their trade union colleagues, meant that one union in the 70s could do what both the triple alliance and the General Strike had failed to do in the 20's.'

In the final chapter the authors grapple with 'problems' of government impartiality in cases not as clear cut as 1919 or 1926. They argue it is legitimate for the government to break strikes when the question of state power arises. In the 70's the government intervened to prop up their incomes policy,

this they see in a different light.

States of Emergency is a good read for the facts and figures behind a wide range of disputes. But it falls short of providing a coherent overall analysis. It is shot through with contradictions.

Having ploughed through 250 pages of a clear exposition of the use of government powers to break strikes in the interests of employers it comes to the conclusion that successive governments have defended the 'national interest' against those seeking to 'hold the country to ransom.'

In the final pages an interesting conclusion is reached. Governments need to intervene in industry in order to provide an additional form of management, capable of uniting the interests of all employers as distinct from individuals. The form this should take is of close consultation between unions and government, no-strike agreements find much favour as part of an exercise in self-restraint.

Such a plan is clearly utopian and nonsense. But it is a plan used on their ultimate fear, independent rank and file activity. What is useful about the book is though written from a bourgeois viewpoint it demonstrates the value of the trade union leaders to the employers.

Time and again it states that the most effective strike breaker is not brute force, or roaming bands of fascists, but the trade union bureaucrats.

'When all is taken into account the country depends on governments and trade unions recognising that it is in nobody's interest that there should be a final showdown. Should a 'High Noon' occur, the balance of social and institutional forces could be tilted permanently in favour of one side or the other changing the political and constitutional landscape of the country beyond recognition.'

Excellent, which way to the OK Coral?



Centre: In the post-war years the ruling class looked increasingly to the use of emergency measures as many workers looked to the example of the Russian Revolution. Left: Troops strike breaking during the 1926 General Strike. Right: On 9 February 1972 the government declared a state of emergency as miners' pickets clashed with police at Saltley coke depot. The next day 40,000 workers shut the depot.

Women's liberation—two traditions

Tony Cliff: *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation* (Bookmarks, £4.50)

Tony Cliff's new book is likely to start a lot of arguments — indeed it will be a pity if it doesn't, because they are the kind of arguments we ought to be having, about the connection between women's liberation and the struggle for socialism.

The book ranges very wide, from a discussion of the English Revolution of the 1640s to recent descriptions of working class family life. This makes it exciting to read: there is bound to be something in it you haven't read about before, whether it is the role of women in the Paris Commune or the origins of the modern American women's liberation movement in the agitation for black civil rights. At the same time it means that each chapter can lead on to further reading and, of course, further arguments as to what it's all about.

The central argument of Cliff's book is the Marxist one that the fight for women's liberation cannot be separated from the class struggle. Though he states this position more or less dogmatically in the introduction — and it is to be hoped that this won't put too many uncommitted people off reading it — what he goes on to do is *demonstrate* the point over and over again through the history of real, actual struggles. This, of course, is what the Marxist method is all about, and I doubt if it has ever been applied so thoroughly to the question of women's struggles.

On the other hand, there is the history of women in revolutions of the past. This shows that women have been involved, and women's position in society *has* been challenged, in all the great modern revolutions. These facts have often been written out of history — initially by men, but more recently by women anxious to argue that revolutions are irrelevant to women.

Sparked

The Parisian working women who went to drag the royal family out of Versailles in 1789, the women of the Paris Commune, and the women strikers who sparked off the Russian Revolution of 1917 obviously didn't think revolution was irrelevant!

When it comes to explaining why in the end women got a great deal less out of these revolutions of the past than might have been expected given their high level of involvement, only an analysis in class terms can really give meaningful answers, and this is what Cliff's book gives.

There are two traditions in the struggle for women's liberation. One that sees it as a fight separate from men and separate from the class struggle. The other that regards the fight for women's liberation as inseparable from the struggle to emancipate the whole working class. Here we review two books, *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation* by Tony Cliff that argues unequivocally for the revolutionary tradition and *Wigan Pier Revisited* by Beatrix Campbell who unequivocally rejects it.



Equal pay victory at Trico in 1976—class is a gulf with a habit of opening up under the feet of women's movements.

In particular, there is a full account of how the counter-revolution in Russia in the 1920s was accompanied by a retreat from women's liberation as well as from workers' power.

The relationship between class struggle and women's liberation is shown, in the second place, by the history of women's movements since the nineteenth century. Many of these movements have set out to unite women across class barriers. But class is a gulf between women which has an uncomfortable habit of opening up under the feet of women's movements.

Sometimes the middle and upper class women in these movements have ended up by abandoning or selling out working class women's interests. Such was the Women's Trade Union League of the USA, which organised massive demonstrations, including a cavalcade of millionairesses' cars, in support of striking New York waistmakers in

1909, only to denounce the strikers as 'extremists' for rejecting the compromise deal the ladies arranged for them!

Sometimes they have ended up supporting reactionary, even militaristic governments. This is what happened to the middle class feminists of Germany and Russia when the first world war broke out — and, of course, to the militant Suffragette movement in Britain. It is shocking how many women don't *know* that the leading Suffragettes handed out white feathers to 'cowardly' men who wouldn't volunteer in 1914, and renamed their paper *Britannia* to show their patriotism. Read about it in Cliff's book — and about Mrs Pankhurst's personal visit to Kerensky in Russia in 1917 urging him to resist the Bolsheviks!

Sometimes these movements have just drifted away from an initial concern for working class women into a preoccupation with

middle class lifestyles and careers. Perhaps the most damning quotation from the current women's movement in Britain is in one of Cliff's footnotes: Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh's advice that 'For those who can afford it, paying someone to clean the house or cook meals is preferable to making it the duty of one household member.'

This book does a great deal more than denounce middle class feminists of the past and present, however. It turns the critical eye of the Marxist method on the history of the working class movement itself, exposing the sexism of leaders and the narrow craft and bureaucracy of the trade unions. Proudhon is there: 'a woman must be either a housewife or a harlot'; so is the British imperialist and sectarian Belfort Bax: 'the existing marriage laws are simply a "plant" to enable the woman to swindle and oppress the man.'

In fact, you can't discuss the relationship between women's liberation and class struggle without a full scale attack on the conservative and sexist traditions of the labour movement in country after country, and this Cliff provides.

Oppressive

But there are also notable exceptions, and the book contrasts the reactionary American Federation of Labour, which was racist as well as sexist, with the alternative tradition of the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World), who included legendary women organisers like the 'Rebel Girl' Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Mother Jones. The most notable exception of all is the massive mobilisation of women before, during and immediately after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Cliff shows how the sexism and craftism of the trade unions in late nineteenth century England, and the eagerness of well-heeled ladies to found cross class unions of women workers', tragically reinforced one another. Each provided the other with a good excuse for separatism — the male workers' suspicions of the philanthropic ladies, the ladies denouncing the trade unionists' sexism.

Finally, Cliff discusses the family in modern capitalist society. He quite correctly recognises that while the working class, women as well as men, fought to defend the family in the nineteenth century against the ravages of the industrial revolution, this does not make it any the less oppressive and confining. Indeed, he argues, the family is *especially* oppressive and confining for the working class, as economic

pressures add to the tensions, while middle class families can purchase the goods and services, or even just the variety of life, which ease the strain.

He also discusses how homosexuality is a 'problem' for capitalism because it challenges both the material basis of the family (privatised reproduction of the labour force) and its ideology. When it comes to sexual relations in the future, after capitalism has been overthrown, Cliff says perhaps Engels was right about a series of one-to-one relationships being the norm — but then again, perhaps he wasn't! The point is that we don't know, and we can't lay down prescriptions for the future. But socialists are committed to improvement in this field: we have to get rid of 'the intimacy that is poisoned at its roots by capitalism'.

Altogether, the book is a full and effectively argued statement of the Marxist position. One or two minor complaints: footnotes don't always give full references for the further

reading you'd like to do, and the most commonly misread statistic about the family today (that married men with two children and a dependent wife form only 5 percent of the workforce — see p2 of this issue) is misread again by Cliff or his immediate source.

In no sense can Cliff's book be the last word on this subject. There is clearly room for argument on the material in every chapter, and sometimes the point-scoring is a little crude. For example, Cliff's argument that the granting of the vote to women in Britain was not the result of the suffrage movement *at all*, but rather of the threat to capitalism posed by the Russian Revolution. If the prior existence of a suffrage movement had nothing to do with it, why then did French women have to wait till 1945 for the vote? Surely French capitalism didn't feel less threatened by revolution!

But it is clear, readable and mostly very convincing and it certainly should become a classic.

Norah Carlin

Beatrix Campbell: *Wigan Pier Revisited*
(Virago £4.95)

During the late 60s and early 70s there was a massive upsurge in women workers' militancy. Women flooded into trade unions: in NUPE the number of women trebled, in COHSE it quadrupled, in ASTMS it went up by seven times.

Women who it had been thought were impossible to organise went on strike. Equal pay which had been the official policy of many unions for years suddenly became a live issue, as women began to fight for wage rises to bring them up to the level of men.

Every one of these strikes, whether it was won or lost struck a blow against sexism. For every time women organised, they challenged their traditional image as passive, submissive and only interested in the home.

Their militancy certainly frightened the ruling class, but it did something even more important, it began to overcome the deepest division within the working class — that between the sexes. Whenever a sexist trade unionist began saying how useless women were as militants, socialists could point to an office or a factory where women were proving that this was rubbish. Men who had never thought of women except as pin-ups or wives were suddenly confronted with women asking for solidarity as trade unionists.

This militancy did not exist in isolation. It was part of a general advance of the working class. After the election of the Labour government in 1974, and the co-opting of the trade union leadership to preside over cuts and redundancies, the confidence and fight in the working class began to slip. The wave of militancy was over,

In the past couple of years a growing number of feminists, many of whom would claim to be socialists as well, have reacted to the lack of women's militancy during the last few years by blaming men. Beatrix Campbell is one such woman.

She believes that there is something called the 'men's movement', which is very powerful and all pervasive. According to Campbell it has 'defeated women's right to independent economic means'. It can be found in the pub, the working men's club and on the picket line, in all cases it is defending 'male solidarity'.

Strikes, trade unions and workers' solidarity are all old-fashioned, 'the old ways of class struggle is dead', says Campbell. 'What's so special about trade unions?' she asks, 'they are just another place in which men and women play out their conflict of interest.'

Love object

Miners attract a particular venom. We are told 'The socialist movement in Britain has been swept off its feet by the magic of masculinity, muscle and machinery. And in its star system, the accolades go to the miners ... It is masculinity at its most macho that seems to fascinate men. Miners are men's love object. (Ian McGregor's love object, I wonder?).

If Beatrix Campbell was a trendy Tory, or an American professor trying to prove that the working class is dead then her daft ideas wouldn't really matter. Indeed they would pass without notice in a world already awash with pundits and academics who have definitely proved that the working class will never fight again.

But Campbell claims she is a socialist, '*Wigan Pier Revisited*'

does not just attack trade unionists, it also contains some heartfelt and moving accounts of just how dreadful life in Tory Britain is for the unemployed and the poor.

Her strategies for organising women are extremely reactionary, but come dressed up in feminist rhetoric. Her views on the organised working class would not disgrace a Tory lady from Brighton, where they are slipped in between pleas on behalf of the poor.

Although Campbell mentions the changes in the working class which have pulled more and more women into paid work, she never really takes women seriously as workers. Instead she turns to community politics as the way forward for women.

But when we look at the sort of activities she praises, we can see how far her feminism is from a genuine theory of women's liberation. Pages and pages are spent on describing women organising 'nurseries, better health care for women, mothers' and toddlers' groups and children's playschemes.'

So after all the claims that women are the progressive sex organising in new ways we come down to this. Women's new radical role is in fact doing what they have always done, looking after the kids. By a feminist sleight of hand the source of women's oppression, the fact that they are expected to carry the burden of childcare has become a way forward for women's liberation!

Campbell attacks revolutionary socialists for looking to the future rather than creating socialism now. But what she suggests does nothing other than give a progressive gloss to capitalism and all its rotten ideas.

Such is the price of believing that the divisions in the working class are so deep that they cannot be overcome. Given the miserable political climate over the past few years, it is not surprising that such an idea has gained ground.

When workers are on the defensive, their most reactionary ideas will come to the fore. Feeling that they cannot defend their jobs through organisation they will, in desperation, try to justify their right to a job, higher wages or whatever by using the ideas pumped at them by the ruling class. White workers will say they should be first in line for jobs, men will say that they have more right to work than women and so on.

But when workers are on the offensive these ideas slip into the background. For any group of workers who are involved in a dispute, concentrating on the differences between workers becomes counter-productive. No group of workers, however strong can win a major dispute on their own. They find that they need the solidarity of many workers who they might have previously regarded as inferior.

This does not mean that all male workers will miraculously drop any sexist ideas they have *immediately*

they go on strike. But when such ideas do not fit the situation they have less force.

Because she concentrates on those who are *victims* of capitalism, rather than those who have the power to confront and ultimately overthrow it, Campbell's vision of the world is essentially static. The people she is most interested in during the six months she travelled the North of England in order to write this book, are those who manage somehow to come up with at best an individual solution to their almost insoluble problems.

It is an unfortunate fact of life that most of Campbell's subjects, the long term unemployed, the battered wives, the single mothers stuck in the home, do not have the power to force the government to change course, let alone to overthrow a system from which they get the roughest deal.

In the midst of a miners' strike, a book which thinks of the miners' power as hopelessly outdated and illusory is pretty irrelevant. Campbell dismisses their struggles as economic, and claims that they, like all men, will only fight about pay. Yet they are the people who are threatening to turn the Tories' economic policies around, and over jobs, rather than pay. If they win it will benefit the whole class, for it will have kicked a huge dent in the confidence of the most vicious government since the war.

Outdated

As the miners now on strike travel the country to get solidarity from other workers, the lesson that they are not just fighting for themselves is constantly being reinforced. And as the strike goes on, stopping the movement of coal becomes the priority, the fact that they *cannot* win alone becomes obvious.

They are forced, whatever ideas they have to see other workers as members of the same class, who can and will give them the backing which they need to win. Whether these workers are men or women, black or white is not the key issue.

Ideas such as sexism divide the working class, they suit our rulers, not us. They stop workers fighting effectively, so when workers begin to move these ideas have to be quietly pushed into the background, as they no longer have a function.

Campbell has made a mistake. The 'old methods' of class struggle are not dead, as Ian McGregor and Margaret Thatcher are finding out to their cost at the moment. If the miners win every other worker in the country will feel more confident to take on their own bosses. The situation of downturn in workers' struggle which produced this miserable little book will have changed, and revolutionary socialists will no longer be alone in thinking that the working class can change the world.

Ann Rogers

Academic drivel

A Short History of Socialism
George Lichtheim
Flamingo £2.95

A book with this title is bound to be bought by large numbers of people looking for a brief introduction to the ideas and history of the socialist movement. Unfortunately they will be wasting their money and, if they read through its turgid pages, time.

Lichtheim isn't a Marxist or a socialist, he is just interested in ideas — any ideas irrespective of their significance to the development of socialism. Nowhere in this book is there any conception of socialism as the self emancipation of the working class. Class struggle is totally absent as the driving force of history. So without these measures of how socialist theory has developed from, and influenced the development of working class history, Lichtheim is left completely directionless. Instead we get a catalogue of ideas with every philosopher from ancient Greece onwards getting a name check. Even worse most of these ideas are not explained in terms of what they actually meant but in reference to preceding theories. As a result of this approach more space is spent on pre-1880 Russian populism and anarchism than to Marx — which given Lichtheim's inability to understand any of Marx's ideas is probably for the better.

Such a hotch-potch is alright if you are interested in reading about the eccentricities of the earliest Fabians or the significance the clinical insanity of most of the French Utopian Socialists had to their theories, but it is no way an introduction to the history of socialism.

Unfortunately when Lichtheim does come down from the clouds to discuss the more important socialist thinkers things get worse. Marx, we are told, only believed class struggle occurred in the market economy (so

much for the opening line of the Communist Manifesto) and had no strategy for the transition from capitalism to socialism (so much for his writings on the Paris Commune). We are also presented with a description of Marx's theory of capitalist crisis which never once mentions the rate of profit. For Lichtheim Marx believed socialism would arise because of 'the automatism of the economic order'; leaving aside, what, if anything, this means there is certainly no conception of the overthrow of capitalism as the result of the growth of the strength and organisation of the working class caused by the development of capitalism itself.

Primitivism

When Lichtheim finally arrives at the Russian Revolution, the most important event in any history of socialism, his own politics become clear. In fact it's the only time anything becomes clear, for Lichtheim's style is aimed more at demonstrating his own grasp of 'intellectual history' than clear explanation. Leaving aside such absurdities as, 'Trotsky, for all his revolutionary fervour, remained a Menshevik because he went on analysing political conflicts in sociological terms' and: 'Bolshevism possessed a strategic advantage that its rivals could not match; its very primitivism', we are presented with the vision of Lenin as a Jacobin conspirator driven for 30 years by the desire to revenge his brother's execution for his part in a plot to kill the Tzar. Finally a coup d'etat ushers in the Bolshevik dictatorship 'thinly disguised as the rule of the soviets.' Only then 'towards the end of his life Lenin saw the Russian revolution as the link in world upheaval' thus allowing Stalin to spread the dictatorship after 1945!



Leon Trotsky—just a Menshevik sociologist?

While such a history of the Russian revolution has no connection with reality, but could form the basis for a follow up to Dallas, it is the common view of events amongst right wing academics such as Lichtheim and it does have a very obvious political function. Having sealed off from history the revolutionary road to socialism by presenting it as being based on a minority coup d'etat leading directly to Stalin's labour camps, Lichtheim is then free to present the welfare capitalism of the British Labour Party and of Scandinavian Social Democracy as the only viable form of socialism. Having cut off socialist theory from the Leninist

politics that alone can fulfil the ideas of that theory, socialism is reduced to a set of abstract ideas with no inherent criterion to judge between the utopian socialists and Marx or the Fabians and Lenin. It is within such a framework that Lichtheim's book rests.

In his introduction David McLellan claims Lichtheim's book 'is intellectual history of a depth and scope that is rare indeed'. It isn't rare at all — it's just another example of worthless right wing academic drivel. Anybody buying it for its title probably has grounds for action under the Trades Description Act.

Graham Wright

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Chris Harman

■ **Rereading 'Nineteen eighty-four' in 1984**

Paul O'Flynn

■ **How far has shop-floor organisation been weakened?**

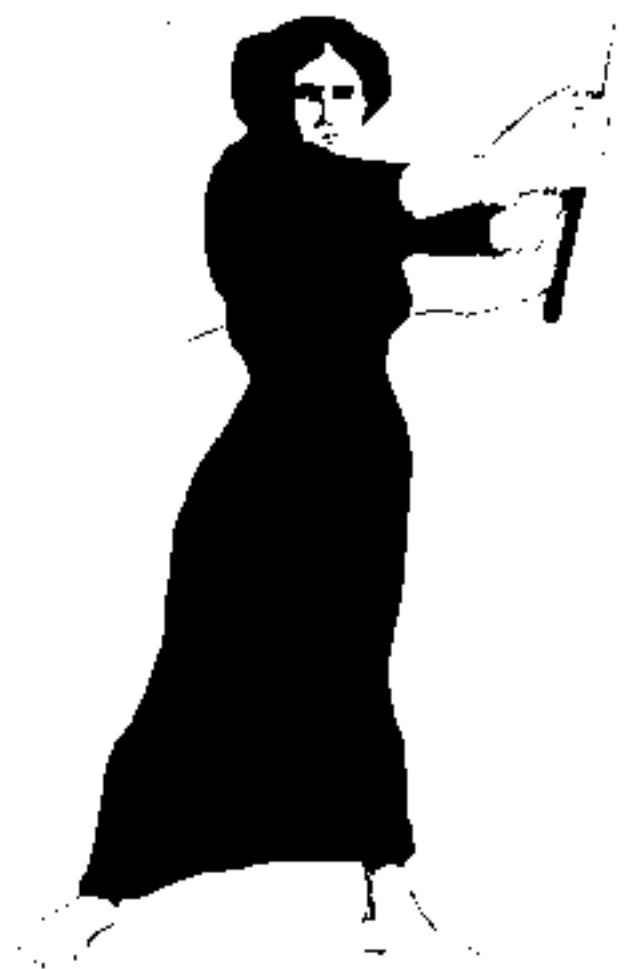
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Red Petrograd

In last month's *Socialist Review* Colin Sparks' review article of SA Smith's *Red Petrograd* was illustrated by a photograph of 'a meeting at the Putilov factory to re-elect the Petrograd Soviet' in which there was a prominently displayed banner which according to the photo's caption in part reads "Long live the feast of the universal army of workers". The photo may be of such a meeting but the banner actually reads "To repair one steam engine is to bring forward the end of hunger and poverty and by this to finally end capitalism".

This aside the article was absolutely right to stress the importance of Smith's book. Not only is it evidence against the right wing argument that the revolution was not made by ordinary people, it is also evidence against an increasingly popular view on the left that the revolution was led by skilled 'labour aristocratic' workers who were only interested in their own ends at the expense of other workers.

Obviously all of the old divisions within the working class did not disappear overnight but the struggles of 1917 began to challenge them both by forcing workers to rely on one another and by inspiring weaker groups like unskilled, lower paid workers (often women) to begin to move forward on their own. If any reader looks back at the photo they will see that it embodies some of this new unity. It is obviously taken in one of the large workshops in the factory but the meeting is made up of a wide variety of people. A good indication is the display of hats—an important status symbol at this time! Look too for those with collars and ties, the different clothing and the sprinkling of women workers—probably some of the first—brought into engineering factories in Russia,

as in Britain and Germany, to help produce munitions for the first world war.

The tragedy was that these beginnings were not built upon. Here again the banner in the photo is significant for it records the struggle to keep production going against enormous odds during the civil war as the counter-revolutionary armies closed in on the revolution. The banner appears to be illustrated with a steam locomotive and it is worth recalling that so desperate was the situation that whereas in 1917 18 million tons of grain were shipped by rail in 1918 the figure was 1 million; 1919, 2 million; 1920, 3 million. In September 1920 approximately 60 percent of all engines were out of use and only 100 new ones had been produced in the previous year.

Divisions

Against this background the towns collapsed, many of the workers of 1917 went to die at the front, or back to the countryside to scavenge for food or were sucked into the bureaucracy created to try to hold things together. Hunger and poverty did not end as the banner hoped. Instead it was they that won out and as they did so all of the old divisions were reinforced.

Smith's book helps us to recall the better days of 1917 and shows that we are not romantic and utopian in our view of what happened. Colin Sparks is quite right to recommend it. But if anyone is put off by its length and price they should beg or borrow or twist student friends' arms to get them a copy of a much shorter article by Smith that appeared in *History Workshop* no. 11, 1981, entitled 'Craft consciousness, class consciousness, Petrograd 1917'.

Mike Haynes



The banner with the unfulfilled promise

Israeli Marxists

The article 'Inside Israel' by Cockerill and Rogall (*Socialist Review* March '84) was much too sweeping in its dismissal of the Jewish working class. The article also contradicts itself. It discusses moves to cut real wages because of the economic chaos and how this is already resulting in mass public sector strikes. We are told of past examples when the Oriental Jews have turned to radical politics (Israeli Black Panthers) and what about the recent weak attempts at an Israeli peace movement? Yet the article concludes that because of their limited privileges and the hold of Zionism on Jewish workers that they will never challenge the Israeli regime itself. This is the same attitude that those on the British left, who have illusions in the IRA, have towards Protestant workers in the north of Ireland.

Of course Zionist ideology, small economic advantages over Arab

workers and false 'trade union' organisations wedded to the state make things more difficult. However, it should be the job of Jewish Marxists in Israel to take advantage of the economic contradictions facing the Israeli ruling class to start winning Jewish workers away from Zionism. State run trade unions in Poland did not stop the formation of Solidarity.

If the Arab and Palestinian workers inside and outside Israel were to give a lead along class lines rather than purely nationalistic lines, a large proportion of Jewish workers could be won over to the struggle for socialism. As Marxists we know that the working class is uneven in its development of class consciousness. A united working class struggle is very difficult to build in places such as Israel, but revolutionary socialists should not give up this aim.

G Ungpakorn

Popular literature

Dear comrades,

You've done a real disservice to a very important and useful book by publishing a silly review of Ariel Dorfman's 'The Empire's Old Clothes'. I would ask you in all seriousness to publish this as a corrective.

In effect your reviewer, Brandler, dismissed what Dorfman has to say as trivial. Dorfman shows many kinds of popular literature to be racist etc, but says Brandler, we knew that already. He sees children as 'beguiled' and adults as 'intoxicated' by reading these things, so says Brandler: How come he's so different? We really don't need this kind of analysis, he concludes. People are confused and contradictory, so the 'problem is not a question of cultural analysis but of

revolutionary organisation'.

First, Dorfman doesn't just 'look' at the Lane Ranger etc. He is the first writer I know in this field who not only shows that there are imperialist, racist and sexist assumptions in some popular literature, but who also shows convincingly *how they might be influential*.

Commonsense

Second, Dorfman *doesn't* see everyone but himself as victims of this literature. Brandler can't have read the book properly or he would have seen Dorfman's stunning opening and closing passages telling of his conversations with a Chilean peasant woman who argued with him not to steal her fantasies away,

Then during Allende's period, she has discovered for herself a new perspective and brushes off the fantasies of popular literature. Isn't that 'active enough' for your reviewer?

It's not a question of being made totally passive; it's a question of learning how to understand the *attempt*, the *effort* of particular writings to work on us. (Brandler completely ignores Dorfman's superb analysis of the Readers' Digest, in which he shows how that magazine seeks to turn us into all knowing but motionless doting gogglers at events and ideas.)

Third, we get that bald opposition, either cultural analysis or revolutionary organisation. Try a substitution or two: either economic analysis or revolutionary

organisation. Either Marxist analysis or revolutionary organisation... Looks silly, doesn't it? Well, and it was silly. Because a book doesn't answer every question doesn't mean it has answered none. If people have confused and contradictory consciousnesses, might it not help us if we understand a bit better how they have been confused? Marxists do actually need a bit of understanding along with their organisations.

Ariel Dorfman's book is *not* another clever, abstruse academic book. It is a committed, fascinating and beautifully written study. It is honest about its politics, and about its limitations. That's rare, so why besmirch it? It is worthy of reading by every SWP member and supporter.

Martin Barker

Taking our liberties

Civil liberties have suddenly become a big issue in British politics.

GCHQ, Sarah Tisdall, the police in Nottingham — one Tory outrage has followed another. Even more important, in each case the Tories have wrong-footed it and ended up causing a real stir way beyond the people who normally get worked up about this sort of thing. There seems every prospect of more wrong-footed Tory outrages to come.

In these circumstances campaigning over civil liberties can become a vote winner for the Labour Party. Quite coincidentally the obituary columns last month gave us a reminder of the last time that happened. Henry Brooke died at the age of eighty.

You may well ask who on earth Henry Brooke was, because scarcely anything has been heard of him in the last twenty years. But in 1963 and 1964 his name was a household word. He was home secretary in the Conservative governments of Harold MacMillan and Alec Douglas-Home. He was a somewhat austere and reactionary character, whose numerous petty outrages against civil liberties built him up into a figure of widespread loathing and ridicule.

The campaign against Henry Brooke played a significant part in Labour's election victory in October 1964. Indeed for many people the highpoint of election night was Henry Brooke's personal defeat in his Hampstead constituency.

Basic arguments

Probably in Neil Kinnock's campaign committee someone is working out how to do a similar job on Leon Brittan. I hope the Labour leadership do mount such a campaign. It will make it all the easier to fight back against the Tory attacks on civil liberties if they do, and it will make it all the easier to put over certain basic socialist arguments about the state.

To do both of these things effectively will however mean us mentioning a number of things that Neil Kinnock's campaign managers will regard rather like swearing in church. Let me give an example: the case of Philip Agee.

Philip Agee is the former CIA agent who broke from the CIA, wrote *Inside the Company: A CIA Diary* and has since devoted his life to very effectively exposing the work of the CIA and other intelligence agencies. In short he is the sort of person who any lover of civil liberties should regard as a hero. In the mid 1970s he was living in Britain (he faced threat of prosecution and perhaps worse if he remained in the USA) until, in mid-November 1976, the home office refused to renew his residence permit.

After a vigorous defence campaign (during which he spoke very ably at a number of Socialist Workers Party meetings) Philip Agee was eventually thrown out of the



Philip Agee: Exposed the CIA and kicked out of the country by a Labour home secretary

country. His 'crime' was quite simply that he had exposed the CIA. You can imagine the outrage if Leon Brittan threw someone out of the country for that.

But it wasn't Leon Brittan who threw Philip Agee out of the country. It was a Labour home secretary, Merlyn Rees. And the cabinet of which he, Merlyn Rees, was a member included as its deputy prime minister at the time, Michael Foot (who you might think would at least care about civil liberties) and Tony Benn. Both remained in the government. Clearly neither saw throwing someone out of the country at the behest of the CIA as a resigning issue.

It would be comforting to pretend that the Philip Agee affair was a freak. But it wasn't. It stemmed directly from the policy of the Atlantic Alliance which every Labour government since the war has followed. That meant that the CIA was to be regarded as an essentially friendly (if sometimes a little over-enthusiastic) organisation. Under every Labour government since the war cooperation between British intelligence services and

the CIA has been a matter of quite unexceptional daily routine. So what could be more natural than to deport an effective foreign critic of this 'friendly' institution?

But you only have to mention the routine practice of cooperation with the CIA to be reminded of a number of other routine practices that must have gone on under every past Labour government. For example every past Labour government has utilised the political spying operations of the Special Branch. Only occasionally is that dramatised, and then it causes a fuss. In 1966 Harold Wilson launched a vicious attack on militants of the seamen's union, which was then engaged in a militant strike. The brief he was working from had clearly come from the Special Branch. It caused something of a sensation and was a key incident convincing many socialists that they should leave the Labour Party.

That was a dramatic example. But no one has ever suggested that Wilson was behaving in an abnormal way in getting material from the Special Branch. Nor has anyone ever suggested that the Special Branch's activities have ever been significantly curbed because the Labour Party was in office.

And the same goes for all the other distinctly unpleasant organisations which go to compose the state: M15, M16, the SAS and so on. For all of them it has been 'business as usual' during past Labour governments. And 'business as usual' for bodies like this can mean nothing other than daily trampling upon civil liberties. No wonder then that past Labour governments have such an appalling record on civil liberties.

Heaped praise

Does the present leadership of the Labour Party even pretend that things will be any different on this score when they form a government? So far as I know they do not. They are certainly all committed to the Atlantic Alliance, and therefore presumably to continued intelligence cooperation with the CIA. Over the GCHQ affair Kinnock and the others all had ample opportunity to say that they would get rid of the network of spying which that institution is by definition. They said no such thing. Instead they heaped praise on the 'vitaly important work for national security' which that institution was doing.

You could continue the list: the Special Branch, M15, M16 or the SAS — Kinnock and his team have never suggested that any of these might be scrapped.

If that is their attitude to the more exotic pieces of the state machine, just think how they would behave with, for instance, a chief constable.

Actually, you don't need to stretch your imagination. As part of his campaign over the policing of the miners' strike Gerald Kaufman went to see the chief constable of Nottinghamshire equipped with a thick dossier on police malpractice. Kaufman came away maintaining that the chief constable was completely blameless.

If that is how Kaufman stands up for civil liberties as the shadow home secretary, god knows how he would behave as the real one.

Pete Goodwin