

FIRST ISSUE

socialist

REVIEW

Number 1 April 1978

25p



NEWS
& ANALYSIS

REVIEWS

INTERVIEW WITH TONY CLIFF
DAVID EDGAR ON POLITICAL THEATRE. SCOTLAND:
CHART RIGGING: LOTS MORE

CONTENTS

News Analysis 3
Interview with Tony Cliff 12
Politics of the Theatre 16
Writers reviewed 21
Reviews 22
Cinema 27
Science in Society 28
Chart-rigging scandal 29
Scottish Nationalism 30
Back Page 32

Editor

Alex Callinicos

Reviews Editor

Alastair Hatchett

Business Manager

Dave Campbell

Temporary address: PO Box 82 London E2 9DS

Production

M

John Finn

Printed by Feb Edge Litho

ISSN 0141-2442

Why Socialist Review?

After all, there are so many socialist publications already in existence. Why add yet another one? But there is a gap which needs filling. Nowhere has there been up to now a popular socialist magazine which combines wide-ranging news coverage with consistent coverage of all the issues facing socialists — not only politics as narrowly defined by our rulers, but in its broadest sense, embracing the politics of music, theatre, films, television and sport, the struggle against women's oppression as well as the fight for higher wages.

Of course, it would be a bit overambitious for us to claim that SOCIALIST REVIEW will be able to do all of that. But we mean at least to try.

We shall try in the first place, to offer our readers informed analysis of events taking place in both Britain and the world. We hope, through doing so, to show how the system under which we live is faced with a world crisis, and to examine the response of workers in many countries to the effects of this crisis.

Second of all, we will be including a large reviews section—embracing books, films, plays, music, television. Along with this will go a number of regular features—including 'Writers Reviewed', where each month a particular author will be discussed, 'Science in Society', where we will look at the different ways capitalism moulds personal views of socialism will be given. Last but in some ways most important we hope that 'Socialist Review' will become a forum of debate among socialists to discuss on the left—in particular, the first part of David Edgar's article on 'Political Theatre', in which he critically examines the differing approaches to socialist theatre in Britain since the late 1960s, and an interview with Tony Cliff on the state of the British labour movement, the first in a series on this subject. Without your contributions, and, of course, your letters, it will not develop into a place where the analysis and discussion the left in Britain so badly needs can take place.

Start as you mean to carry on

The best way to ensure that you get every issue of Socialist Review is to take out a subscription and have it delivered to your door.

	individual	institutional*
Twelve issues		
UK and Eire	£4.70	£6.25
overseas surface mail	£4.70	£6.25
airmail rates		
Europe	£5.30	£7.00
Middle East	£5.60	£7.50
Canada, US, Africa	£6.20	£8.25
Australia, Japan etc	£7.00	£9.30
Six issues		
UK and Eire	£2.50	£3.30
all airmail	£3.00	£4.00

* institutional rates apply to libraries, companies etc.

Letters?

We haven't got any because this is the first issue. But we want to know what you think, get your reactions, involve you in the discussions. So if you write, next issue we'll have a letters page.

Send to Socialist Review Subscriptions, Temporary address: PO Box 82, London E2 9DS. Please make all cheques orders payable to SWD. Socialist Review is sent free to prisoners on request.

Carter versus the miners

NEWS
analysis

LABOR AS WIDE AS THE EARTH HAS ITS SUMMIT IN HEAVEN.

Jimmy Carter was put into the White House by the votes of the oppressed and exploited in American society. His chief support came from the labour movement and black people. Like other Democratic Presidents—Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy—he offered the American people change after years of corruption and economic recession under right-wing Republican administrations.

The national coal strike has revealed Carter in his true colours. To force the miners back to work he has invoked one of the most vicious pieces of anti-union legislation in the world—the Taft-Hartley Act.

Behind the strike

The miners' strike is more than a simple industrial dispute. It is the battle of one of the traditionally most powerful and militant sections of American workers to defend the gains they have made over the years.

In the 1940s—years of epic struggle by the miners—the United Mineworkers (UMW) had 400,000 members. They were able to wrest major concessions from the employers—in particular, a union-controlled health and welfare fund financed by a levy on every ton of coal.

But the 1950s and 1960s were the era of cheap oil and the powerful economic position of the UMW was undermined. Non-union open-cast mines sprang up outside the traditional mining areas. The result was a decline in the miners' position. Here are the wage increases miners have received in the last twenty years compared with those of other workers:

Miners:	160 per cent
Dockers:	222 per cent
Construction:	235 per cent
Steel:	237 per cent
Cars, etc:	246 per cent
Airlines:	317 per cent

Conditions have also been hit. The UMW calculates that the death rate among its members is seven times higher than for the average American worker and two-and-a-half times higher than for a British miner. 2,000 miners have been



United Mine Workers of America



killed in accidents in the last ten years. Union membership declined to 160,000.

The union machine became the preserve of a gang of hoodlums. When Jack Yablonski stood as a reform candidate for the union presidency in 1969 he and his family were brutally gunned down on the orders of the man whose job he was running for, Tony Boyle.

The Yablonski murder was a turning point for the UMW. A reform candidate, Arnold Miller, replaced Boyle as president in 1972. More important, the economic bargaining power of American miners has improved dramatically as a result of the 1973-74 oil crisis. The coal industry is booming and profits for some companies have grown eightfold since 1969. US capitalism, eager to reduce its massive dependence on imported Arab oil, is pressing ahead with the expansion of the coal industry. Under the energy programme laid before Congress by Carter last year, coal output is due to double by 1985.

The improved economic position of the coal industry lies behind the present dispute. The miners, aware of their improved bargaining power, have flexed their muscles. The employers claim that 17 per cent of available work-days were lost due to unofficial strikes and absenteeism last year. The weak and incompetent Miller

leadership has proved unable to control this upsurge in rank and file militancy.

The employers, organised in the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association, have decided that this situation must stop. Productivity must increase and wildcat strikes must be stopped. If the union bureaucracy cannot discipline its members, then the UMW itself must be broken.

This is the basic issue which provoked the strike. When the three-year contract between the UMW and the BCOA came up for renegotiation last December, the employers demanded fines for wild-cat strikers and the abolition of the UMW health and welfare funds, which would be replaced by funds controlled by individual companies.

Miller was unable to accept these terms. He called the miners out on strike. The rank and file of the UMW responded enthusiastically. Although only half America's coal output is produced in unionised pits, militant picketing soon began to bite. By the beginning of February, the industrial states of America's mid-West were faced with low coal stocks and the need for power-cuts. The 'Big Three' of the US auto industry—General Motors, Ford and Chrysler—threatened to lay off their workers if the strikes were not ended.

These pressures brought Miller and the employers back to the negotiating table. Miller

signed a deal which conceded all the BCOA's main demands. But he had miscalculated the mood of his members—only three out of the 39-member UMW bargaining council voted for these terms.

The breakdown of the negotiations forced Carter to intervene. On February 24 he announced a settlement which promised a federal commission to investigate the 'basic questions of health, safety and stable productivity'. But employers were given the power to discipline unofficial strike leaders and miners will have to pay 500 dollars a year towards the cost of the health care of them and their families.

Even these terms had to be forced onto the employers, many of whom were planning to negotiate individual contracts with their workers, thus bringing an end to national bargaining. Carter threatened the big steel companies, which form a major force within the BCOA, that he would stop protecting them against Japanese steel imports if they did not accept the deal.

But Carter had reckoned without the rank and file of the UMW. Miners in West Virginia, one of the main centres of militancy, picketed their union offices as soon as the deal was announced. By the end of the first week in March it was clear that voting in the miners' ballot on the deal was running two to one in favour of continuing the strike.

The Taft-Hartley Act

Carter hit back by taking the miners to court to obtain an injunction instructing them to go back to work for a 80-day cooling-off period.

The Taft-Hartley Act, under which the cooling-off period was imposed, is an old enemy of the miners. It was passed in 1947 in an attempt to strangle the greatest strike-wave in the history of the American working class.

The end of the second world war in 1945 ushered in a tremendous upsurge in working-class militancy. In the twelve months following V-J Day more than 5,000,000 workers engaged in strikes. For



the number of strikers, their weight in industry and the duration of the struggle, the 1945-46 strike wave in the US surpassed anything of its kind in any capitalist country, including the British General Strike of 1926. Before its ebb it was to include the whole coal, railroad, maritime and communications industries, although not simultaneous' (A. Preis *Labour's Giant Step* New York 1972 p.276).



John L. Lewis

5,000 work stoppages caused the loss of 100 million working days. 225,000 carworkers went on strike for 113 days to force wage increases out of General Motors. The giant US Steel was forced to yield before its striking workers for the first time ever.

In April 1946 John L. Lewis, president of the UMW, called out his members. Their main demand was a health and welfare fund. Lewis, pointing out that in the previous 14 years there had been 28,000 deaths in the mines, said that every ton of coal mined was 'smeared with the blood of the mineworkers'.

President Truman (like Carter, a Democrat and so supported by the trade union leaders) retaliated by seizing the mines and the railways (where strike action had been threatened) and demanded that Congress give him the power to draft strikers into the army. All 400,000 miners backed the union's strike call and Truman was forced to back down and concede their demands.

But the American ruling class did not take these defeats lying

down. In 1947 Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act. So named after its sponsors, it banned a variety of 'unfair labour practices', like the closed shop, secondary boycotts and jurisdictional disputes. The Tories copied these provisions when they introduced the Industrial Relations Act in 1971. The government and the courts were given the right to suspend a strike for eighty days. Union officials were required to swear that they were not members of the Communist Party or any other 'unconstitutional' organisation.

The American trade union leaders denounced the Act as 'a slave labour law'. The miners immediately came out on strike under the slogan: 'Let the senators dig the coal!' They forced the employers to concede not only a wage increase, but very favourable health and safety provisions and the scrapping of clauses in previous contracts banning unofficial strikes. It is these gains that are in question today.

The miners will almost certainly fight on in defiance of the President and the courts. They will not have the support of the AFL-CIO (the American TUC). George Meany, right-wing boss of the American unions, had called on Carter to use the Taft-Hartley Act weeks before it was actually used.

If the miners win, it will be thanks to their own action and to the support of rank and file workers in other industries. Carter is worried that a breakthrough by the miners will threaten his 'anti-inflation' policy. The next battle may come in New York, where municipal workers' unions are demanding wage increases in defiance of the demands for austerity by the banks to whom the city is in hock. No wonder that the press is not talking about 'Carter at the crossroads'.

Alex Callinicos and Joanna Rollo



George Meany

STEEL

Job robbery

Only days after concluding a ten per cent pay deal based on a 'jobs for pay' swap, the British Steel Corporation has succeeded in closing Cardiff's East Moors works at a very low cost. Redundancy payments of £17,500 per worker have been quoted in the press, but the reality is rather different.

Of the total, £6,500 comes from EEC funds—and would go to those who had not found work within two years; £11,000 is the maximum payment—the average is some like £5,000, which is what the government has been happily paying for years to get rid of dockers.

But East Moors was in any case scheduled for closure in two years time most of the workforce were glad to get out. The real crunch on jobs is coming in those plants which BSC wants to keep, or those which it is building.

Sheffield and Teesside are both areas where the management would like to cut jobs, and maintenance workers may well be those in the firing line, because of the importance of demarcations between fitters, electricians and boilermakers.

BSC will receive considerable help from the top union leadership in the carve-up, though not necessarily from the unions directly involved in resisting loss of jobs. Arrangements on the union side are increasingly dominated by the TUC Steel Industry Committee (TUCSIC), a recallable body, superimposed on the unions and dominated by the most right-wing steel union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation.

TUCSIC does not negotiate over pay, but it can deal with manning and disputes. A notable case was when TUCSIC gave the go-ahead recently to work in one of the new Redcar plants, while the boilermakers were still in dispute over manning. The boilermakers caved in under the pressure.

Tension between steel craftsmen and TUCSIC is therefore extremely likely, especially in view of the craftsmen's reluctance to do a 'jobs for pay' deal on ISTC lines.

David Shonfield

The mysterious case of the vanishing boom

By all the rules 1978 should have been take-off year for the British economy. Three years of cutbacks and falling living standards had at last produced suitably profitable conditions for growth. In the last quarter of 1977, with North Sea oil coming on stream, the balance of payments moved into surplus—for the first time in years British capitalism was exporting more than enough to pay for its imports. The financial press declared that the balance of payments problem was solved 'for a decade'. Notwithstanding a 12½ per cent cut in their members' living standards since 1974 the TUC leaders accepted a third year of (slightly less severe) wage restraint, in a continuing display of spinelessness that surprised even the bourgeois press.

With everything finally running in his favour, Healey cut taxes by £1 billion in November with the promise of more to come in April. Output began to pick up and speculators' money poured into London in anticipation of the boom. By the end of 1977 London stock market prices had risen 22 per cent over the year—the biggest rise anywhere in the world. The British economy was tipped to grow by four per cent in 1978—after three years of falling production the long promised 'export-led boom' was finally underway.

The chorus of delight was cut short by a very sour note from an unexpected quarter. The January trade figures revealed that despite North Sea oil, the balance of trade for the month had moved £324 million back into deficit. Although government spokesmen hastened to explain that January was a freak month and the balance of payments for 1978 as a whole would still be in surplus, the underlying trend is ugly. With the economy picking up both exports and imports are growing, but imports are growing nearly twice as fast as exports (imports seven per cent a year, exports four per cent). If the trend continues, by 1979 the balance of payments will have moved permanently back into deficit, notwithstanding the full benefits of North Sea oil. This is an appalling prospect for

British capitalism. Healey's plans to continue boosting the economy in his April budget will now have to be carefully revised.

It is not particularly surprising, after an average annual growth rate of only 1.9 per cent over the past decade, that the British economy responds to a much higher growth rate by sucking in imports. What is perhaps surprising is that the effect should have been felt so strongly at such an early stage in the boom. None of this would matter, however, if exports were growing faster than imports. The key problem here is the continuing non-appearance of the expected world boom. Treasury experts had forecast that world trade would grow by 9 per cent this year. Now with the US and Germany each insisting that the other take the lead in reflating the world economy, it seems that world trade will be lucky to grow by half that amount. In this situation of continuing stagnation in the world economy, UK exports cannot grow fast enough to sustain an isolated British boom—the market for them simply is not there.

Healey's Budget sums

In a rather silly ceremony at the Palace of Westminster on April 11th the Chancellor of the Exchequer will unveil his 1978 budget. Much fuss will be made about minor adjustments and rearrangements of the tax burden, but the key variable under his control is the overall level of taxation. In what is increasingly likely to be an election year the temptation to make at least some tax cuts will be very strong. To keep on target for a growth rate of 4 per cent a further tax cut of £2 billions is required and this is what was being predicted by the financial press before the cold wind from the January trade figures.

Because of increases in productivity, however, this level of growth will not significantly reduce unemployment. The TUC, in the embarrassing position of having nothing at all to show their members for three years of sacrifice and with the indictment of 1½ million on the dole, are urging the government to cut taxes by a massive £4.7 billion in a bid for a much

higher growth rate. Apart from the warning noises on the balance of payments front there are at least two other reasons why this advice is certain to fall on deaf ears.

1) The Labour Government is heavily in debt to the International Monetary Fund. The IMF is not a charity—it lends money at interest and under stringent conditions to ensure repayment—in this case including a firm ceiling on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (the difference between what the government spends and what it collects in taxes). A tax cut of even £2 billions would push the borrowing right up to the IMF limit.

2) A key problem for British capitalism has been that it has had a higher rate of inflation than its competitors. The British rate of inflation might fall to 6 or 7 per cent by this summer—down to the international average for the first time in years. A tax cut of £2 billions will produce a 16 per cent increase in the money supply (the total amount of money in the economy) but a very much smaller increase in the number of goods produced. The difference will appear as an increased rate of inflation next year. The bigger the tax cut the bigger this inflationary effect will be.

In addition to these factors the Chancellor now has to consider the dangerous implications for the balance of payments of further reflating the British economy in the absence of a world economic recovery. In short, there is no chance whatever of Healey reflating the economy enough to produce a significant fall in unemployment.

What are the implications of all this for living standards? A modest rise in living standards is taking place this year because at least in the private sector, workers are winning wage increases just a little ahead of inflation. To this can be added whatever is given in tax cuts, but it will still come nowhere near to compensating for the massive fall in living standards since 1974. By next year, with the rate of inflation moving up again, living standards will be falling once more and there will still be 1½ million unemployed.

David Turner

Anyone who has much faith in Spain's new 'democracy' should reflect on the case of the revolutionary magazine *Saida*. In December *Saida* published an edition on 'the Republic'. Making clear its opposition to all monarchies, particularly the Spanish one, the leading article reminded readers that the king 'didn't win the country in a raffle' and that, reversing the normal fairy tale course of events 'this king might turn into a frog'.

These nice turns of phrase were too much for the state prosecutor, who summonsed the editor for 'insulting the head of state'. He was immediately joined in the dock when leading members of the four parties which back the magazine* claimed joint responsibility. The five were then jailed for refusing to pay a surety of £350 each and were only released after a week's mass campaign by the trade unions and all the workers' parties. The case, however, comes up again in September.

Saida does not stand alone. A number of liberal and radical magazines have been charged with offences ranging from insulting the Catholic Church to printing articles supporting regional autonomy. *Combate*, newspaper of the LCR (the Spanish section of the Fourth International), printed an article entitled 'the Police State continues'. And just in case anyone had any doubts the issue was confiscated and the editor charged!

But the most notorious case of attack on the freedom of expression is that of the Barcelona theatre director Albert Boadella. He produced a play about the death by garotting of a Catalan anarchist. As a result, he, along with a number of actors, are being charged with crimes against the army. They are being tried by a military court and the prosecution is demanding a four year jail sentence.

The last six weeks have seen the elections of representative committees in most workplaces. Organised by the government, these trade union elections are open to all workers, unionised or not. Over twenty trade union centrals (nation or regional federations) are contesting the



President Suarez, Felipe Gonzalez and Santiago Carillo smoke the pipe of peace?

elections; however, only five or six of these are significant.

The campaign began with a television debate between the general secretaries of the two main unions: Marcelino Camacho of the Workers Commissions (CCOO) and Nicolas Redondo of the Socialist-dominated UGT. Rapidly degenerating into a session of mutual abuse, the debate highlighted the problems facing a divided trade union movement. Many militants claim the whole affair only further alienated non-unionised workers, and this has been reflected in the voting.

The CCOO has established itself as the main 'central' with over 40,000 delegates elected so far. The UGT follows with around 25,000 delegates while 'independants' and those 'without affiliation' have together won a similar number. The two Maoist unions, CSUT and SU have 5,000 between them, and the independent socialist USO has around 4,000. The only union to strongly challenge the CCOO and UGT was the Basque nationalist union, ELA-STV, which has gained over 1,500 delegates in the Basque country.

The CCOO is politically dominated by the Communist Party, but the revolutionary left here has generally welcomed its

victory. It is the strongest and least sectarian of the centrals, and its history of struggle against the Franco regime means that thousands of the best industrial militants are in its ranks. For the revolutionary left, which fights for one united workers union, the CCOO provides the best opportunities. In some areas the CCOO stood as a 'united slate' with other left wing unions against 'independents' and yellow unions; and in the Basque Country hundreds of CCOO delegates are members or supporters of revolutionary organisations (OIC, MC or ICR).

At the centre of the election debate has been the Spanish version of the Social Contract: the Pact of Moncloa. The Pact has the backing of both the Socialist and Communist Parties, but the CCOO is the only union to officially support it. The UGT is verbally 'opposed' but this is widely considered to be only an electoral and recruitment manoeuvre. Real opposition to the Pact, which imposes a 22 per cent wage limit while inflation runs at 30 per cent has been left to some of the smaller unions and, more significantly, to rank and file CCOO and UGT members.

Now that the committees have been elected industrial and professional *convenios* are being called in every region

between the committees and their respective bosses. These meetings to draw up a new general contract are often held at a regional level involving all the factories in a particular sector. In many cases workers delegates have had to call for direct action to back up their pay demands against intransigent bosses. Metal-workers in Madrid called a four-hour stoppage involving over 150,000 workers. This led to a lock-out at one factory, the sacking of the workers' committee at another and a fortnight's suspension without pay at a third. Elsewhere construction workers struck for a fortnight in Granada, the dustmen in Pamplona have been on strike and in Vigo a strike of metalworkers in 300 small factories has resulted in a lock-out. In Andalucia there have been moves among agricultural workers for land occupations, but so far these have been prevented by the drafting in of large numbers of police and the opposition of the CCOO and the UGT.

The Communist Party's response has been to launch a campaign that the 'other side of the Pact', promised social and political reforms, be carried out. As the present government is a rather ambiguous alliance of 'liberals' and ex-fascists it seems rather unlikely that they will carry out their side of the bargain. So the Communist Party are left complaining. As one party official Lucio Labato, put it: 'As a result of hold-ups and defects in the carrying out of the agreement, the workers may suffer more than is necessary from the austerity measures!'

Having formally abandoned the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Spanish Communist Party has discovered another piece of redundant theoretical baggage Leninism! According to the CP Central Committee 'Leninism is not necessarily the Marxism of our era'. Why? Well, CP leader

Santiago Carrillo argues that as some terrorists call themselves 'Marxist-Leninists' it would be appropriate for the CP to avoid the term. One revolutionary newspaper has speculated that we may be in for some more interesting name changes soon supposing Carrillo discovers a terrorist called Santiago!

Mary and Doug Andrews

* These are:

OIC (Communist Left Organisation)

MC (Communist Movement)

ICR (Revolutionary Communist League)

PCT (Workers Communist Party).

UPW

Strange bedfellows

Post Office workers concerned with the Grunwick dispute have watched their executive dither, delay, sabotage and eventually fine them for taking action to black the company. All in favour of staying within the law, and waiting for it to be changed.

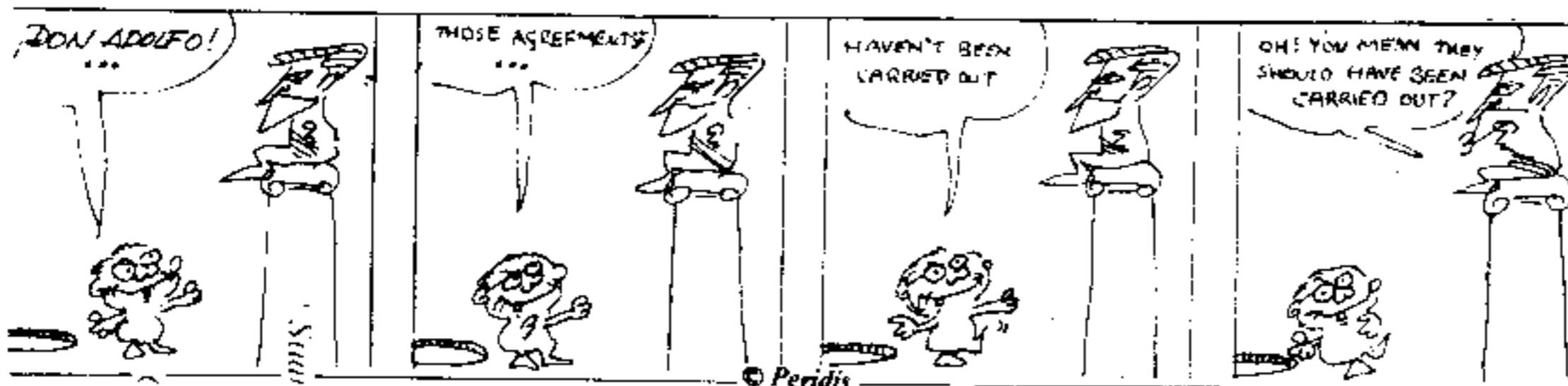
A private member's Bill is currently going through Parliament which gives postal workers the right to strike—which they exercised for eight weeks in 1971. They still will not be able to take blacking action.

Sadly, this is not just the result of a right-wing Labour Government or the Lib-Lab pact. On 31 January Tom Jackson, UPW general secretary, wrote to Tory MP, Barney Hayhoe, asking for support.

Hayhoe replied that he was in favour, so long as the Bill did nothing more than seek to make legal 'industrial action in furtherance of a trades dispute with the Post Office as their employer'.

To which Jackson replied on 7 February: 'Dear Barney, Thank you for your letter. I am grateful for its contents. For our part we are doing our best to see that the Bill does only what you suggest... The latest information is that we have succeeded—but there's many a slip!' There were very few Tories who voted against the Bill's second reading on 17 February.

David Shonfield



NEWS analysis

UNION OF THE LEFT

The day after the Common Programme was signed by the Communist and Socialist Parties in 1972, Francois Mitterrand told a Congress of the Socialist International in Vienna: 'Our fundamental objective role is to rebuild a great Socialist Party on the ground occupied by the CP itself - to demonstrate that of the 5,000,000 Communist voters 3,000,000 can vote Socialist.'

Though Mitterrand's ambition has not yet been achieved, the Socialist Party is several per cent ahead of the Communist Party—a startling change from the early 1970s. It is important to understand the relation between the bases of the two parties in order to understand the continuing rivalry between them.

Though the CP has not held governmental office since 1947, it has maintained a mass base, and is an overwhelmingly proletarian party. At its 1976 Congress it had 491,000 members and the figure must now be well over half a million.

Of these, industrial workers make up 60 per cent of the total, and white-collar workers another 18 per cent. The Party has some eight thousand workplace cells. Its real base lies in its organisation in the CGT and in heavy industry.

It is important to remember that union power in the factories involves extensive influence. For example, the factory committee at Renault Billancourt has over two hundred salaried employees. This is a powerful lever of influence in the hands of whichever union controls. The CP also has a massive base in local government, with 1400 mayors and 21,000 local councillors.

Isolation

But though the CP built its base in the long years of political isolation in the 1950s and 1960s it has renewed its membership considerably. At its most recent national conference, 58 per cent of the delegates joined the Party since May 1968. This shows the Party's continuing ability to grow; it also shows that a large part of the membership must have joined the CP knowing it not to be revolutionary. Another sign of the increasingly

FRANCE: NO LEFT TURN

French workers face another five years of right-wing rule after the legislative elections on 19 March. In the first round of the elections, on 12 March, the Left narrowly led with just under half the popular vote. But in the second round the ruling right-wing majority romped home.

This dramatic turn-around was partly a result of the rigged electoral system, which converted the right's one per cent voting lead in the second round into a 90-seat majority. The revolutionary daily paper *Rouge* calculated that a left-wing MP needed 69,230 votes to be elected, while a right-winger needed only 52,345 to win.

The elections are also a defeat for the Union of the left formed by the Communist and Socialist parties in 1972. The trade union leaders refused to defend jobs and living standards in the hope of a left-wing victory at the polls. They will now face heavy pressure from their rank and file to organise a real fight-back. Many militants are looking ahead to the 'third round'—the trade union struggle against wage cuts and unemployment.

IAN BIRCHALL and **PHIL SPENCER** give the background to the defeat and the struggles that will follow.

Organisations of the French left

Unions	Revolutionnaire
CGT: Confederation Generale du Travail General Confederation of Labour	Revolutionary Communist League
CFDT: Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail French Democratic Confederation of Labour	LO: Lutte Ouvriere Workers' Struggle
FO: Force Ouvriere Workers' Strength	OCT: Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs Communist Organisation of Workers
Parties, etc	CCA: Comites Communistes pour l'Autogestion Communist Committees for Self-Management
PSU: Parti Socialiste Unifie Unified Socialist Party	PCR: Parti Communiste Revolutionnaire Revolutionary Communist Party
CIR: Convention des Institutions Republicaines Convention of Republican Institutions	CC: Combat Communiste Communist Fight
CERES: Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et d'Education Socialistes Centre for Socialist Study, Research and Education.	PCF: Parti Communiste Francais French Communist Party
LCR: Ligue Communiste	PS: Parti Socialiste Socialist Party

social-democratic nature of the party is the fact that the daily sales of the CP paper *L'Humanite* is around 160,000 local dailies perhaps amount to as many again, but there are still many members who do not buy let alone sell, the Party organ.

The Socialist Party is in effect a creation of the 1970s. The old Socialist Party of Guy Mollet, discredited by such crimes as the 1956 Suez invasion, support of torture in Algeria, etc, etc, was a parliamentary rump, as was shown by Gaston Defferre's derisory result in the 1969 Presidential election.

But in 1971 the old Socialist Party merged with the CIR (Mitterrand's organisation), and began to present itself as something quite new. The fact that Mitterrand himself had never been in the old Socialist Party was a great help.

The SP is less monolithic than the CP, and therefore more able to be all things to all persons. Its success depends upon being able to expand into three areas simultaneously: the CP's traditional working class base; middle class sections who distrust the CP; and the post-1968 political left whom the CP would regard as 'ultra-left'.

Doubled

Starting with 80,000 members in 1971, the SP had more or less doubled the number four years later. The SP has a relatively low percentage of industrial workers in its membership, perhaps between 5 and 10 per cent.

Its activists are predominantly white-collar and supervisory workers, and teachers. But the SP has worked hard to extend its trade union influence: in 1971 it had only 54 workplace groups; by 1976 it had over 700. But in terms of voters the SP's working class penetration has equalled the CP's.

An opinion poll of March 1976 showed that 36 per cent of industrial workers would vote Socialist and only 34 per cent Communist. Perhaps more alarming for the CP was the fact that in the age group 25-34, the SP was getting 38 per cent of voters, as against 25 per cent for the CP.

At the same time the SP is able to appeal to the new salary earning middle class in a way that the CP would not be able to. Indeed, the SP has been able to get the support of some layers of management and employers.

Last year some CFDT militants were disciplined for

having allegedly produced a poster which showed a boss sitting on a worker's shoulders, and captioned 'Like your boss, join the SP'.

Thirdly, the SP is less monolithic than the CP even if it is not more democratic. It therefore finds it easier to co-opt leftists and ex-leftists.

Many of its activists have been won from the PSU, which following 1968 had a leftist reputation. Michel Rocard, a skilful demagogue who was for several years in the leadership of the PSU, is now in the SP's top ranks, and is widely tipped as Mitterrand's successor.

Many SP activists belong to the organised left faction known as the CERES. The CERES—in many ways like the Tribune left in Britain—plays Mitterrand's game neatly, by giving the SP a left face, but always lining up with the leadership when there are real difficulties.

The rapid rise of the Socialist Party provoked the bitter row which split the Union of the Left last September.

Under the leadership of Georges Marchais, the Communist Party has in recent years been trying to shed its Stalinist past and present itself as a moderate, reformist party. The difficulty was that the Socialists have, as we have seen, proved to be more successful at this game than the CP.

Abrupt

So last autumn Marchais performed an abrupt about turn. He demanded a renegotiation of the Common Programme, in particular to extend the list of nationalisations proposed by the left in 1972.

Mitterrand rejected this proposal and the Union of the Left split, entering the first round of the elections without any agreement to support each other in the crucial run-off on 19 March.

Behind the split lay the Communists' fear of a repeat of 1947. At the end of the Second World War a coalition government was formed including both the Communists and the Socialists. The CP launched a 'battle for production' to prop up French capitalism.

Maurice Thorez, the general secretary of the PCF, told

striking carworkers and miners: 'We must all work harder, for the nation'. But once the Communists had done their job and contained working-class militancy, their socialist coalition partners turned on them

and booted them out of the government.

The CP is only now emerging again from the political wilderness and is desperate to prevent another fiasco like 1947.



Mitterrand swallows a pill, and hopes the workers will follow suit

REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

May 1968 established the revolutionary left as part of the French political spectrum. Both in electoral terms, and in the context of the general ideological debate, revolutionary organisations are taken more seriously than they are in Britain.

Since 1968, the line-up on the revolutionary left has changed. The Maoists are less important now than they were in the early seventies, though one group, the PCR, produces a not unreadable daily paper. Various other Maoist splinters exist, and at least one has called for a vote for the right-wing parties as a blow against 'social imperialism'.

Of the Trotskyist groups the most significant are the LCR (French section of the Fourth International), and Lutte Ouvrière.

Numerically the LCR is probably biggest. At its 1977 Congress it had 2600 members, with another four or five thousand organised sympathisers. However, despite efforts, it has still not wholly broken out of the student *milieu* in which it made its first gains ten years ago.

Statistics presented to the 1977 Congress showed only 13 per cent of the members were industrial workers, against 22 per cent of students and 20 per cent teachers. 56 per cent of the members were under the age of 26.

Lutte Ouvrière has a much

more solid proletarian base, giving far more priority to systematic work in the major factories. The price of this is a rigid organisation which restricts entry to those willing to accept the toughest definition of a revolutionary cadre.

Side by side with this workerist routinism, LO engages in what is often imaginative propaganda work, for example its successful *fetes* held each year at Whitsuntide. The highly successful campaign of Arlette Laguiller for the Presidency in 1974 (winning nearly 600,000 votes) seems to have led to an excessive degree of importance being attached to electoral work, as well as a miniature 'personality cult' of Arlette herself.

Impossible

The paradox is that LO's organisational approach makes it virtually impossible to use such propaganda campaigns as a means of building the organisation.

Somewhere between Trotskyism and Maoism lies the OCT, which originated from a split in the LCR, under the influence of the ideas of the Italian group Avanguardia Operaia, and subsequently expanded by various splinters from the PSU. The OCT in some ways avoids the weaknesses of both the LCR and LO, through its orientation to what is called the 'workers' and popular left', i.e. the broad

layer open to revolutionary ideas.

This should lead the OCT to a rank and file perspective; unfortunately it all too often drifts towards populism or spontaneism. At its worst this can mean irrelevances like the attempt to build a mass campaign against direct elections to the European Parliament.

Despite continuing splits to left and right, the PSU still exists, but its ambiguous attitude towards the Union of the Left probably disqualifies it from any serious intervention. Many other smaller groups exist; for instance Combat Communiste, which broke from Lutte Ouvrière on the basis of its 'state capitalist' analysis of Russia.

Clear

CC has a very clear analysis of the limits of the Left Union; while its size disqualifies it from any immediate impact, its ideas may be of some influence.

The LCR and OCT, together with a 'pro-self-management' tendency which split from the PSU called the CCA, are running a joint electoral platform, LO, which last year joined LCR and OCT in the municipal campaign, has refused to join, arguing that the platform does not clearly enough point to the limits of the Left Union.

While LO are probably right to see a rightist danger, especially in the LCR's strategy of united front with the reformists, the LO platform stops short at saying that workers must fight their own battles, but without indicating the organisational or political means required.

But the most serious criticism of the whole revolutionary left is that over the last couple of years it has debated its strategy rather than taking any initiatives. No revolutionary group, for example, has made any serious attempt to organise the large numbers of young unemployed in France.

In the post-electoral period, whatever the result, it will be the revolutionary left's capacity to take initiatives that will determine whether it has any chance of winning a section of workers from the grip of reformism. There are, unfortunately, good reasons for doubting the potential of all the existing groups to do this.

For this reason the period after March 1978 may well see the beginning of a period of splits and regroupment.

Paris, 12 March: If you walk through the streets of Paris you can see the excitement in the air. Every law ever made against flyposting is being flagrantly disregarded by everyone. If you walk through in the morning and then again at night the posters will have changed completely.

You are most likely to see the posters of the right in the morning, the posters of the left in the afternoon. This is because squads of fascists, wearing tin helmets and waving clubs, prowl the streets at night in search of left-wingers to beat up.

There aren't very many fascists in Paris but they're very ferocious. They don't dress up their fascism in sheep's clothing like the NF. The posters of the PFN (Parti des Forces Nouvelles) show the Arc de Triomphe dramatically lit up by searchlight.

A huge French tri-colour fills the centre and hundreds of black cars stream past to pay tribute. They say: 'The right exists - show us!'

Another fascist party, the Front Nationale, flaunts the left-wing rhetoric which helped the Nazis so much in their early days. They call themselves 'the party for the defence of the French working class', and they proclaim: 'A vote for us is for the liberation of France'.

The parties of the majority—the ruling centre-right headed by Giscard and Chirac—are a much more serious proposition. Grey, grim and austere, their posters carry no programme, only faces.

Their propaganda, though, is everywhere—the parties of the majority can afford to slip glossy 16-page brochures under every door. These give you the life-history of their candidates, including such

exciting pieces of information as, 'on every occasion Claudius defends architecture'.

The posters of the Socialist Party aren't much different. To the face merely is added the description 'a true socialist'.

Here the faces stop (or almost so). And the fun begins.

Their posters clearly show what 'ifs' and 'buts' beset the Communists. A hard clear programme (for a Communist Party): 500,000 new jobs a year; retirement at 60 for men, 55 for women, etc. Then—the poster one sees on every street corner setting out the vital question: '12 March—everyone votes for the Communists; 13—the Socialists agree to discussions and conclude an agreement; 19—victory for the united left and the change you've been waiting for'.

In other words, the PCF will only step down for socialists in the second round on 19 March if a new common programme is agreed which includes such vital points as the nationalisation of the banks. They are terrified that otherwise the PS will ride to power on their votes and then stab them in the back.

However, in the last few days the PCF has been retreating fast and will almost certainly support the Socialists in the second round.

The revolutionary left has no such scruples. They have no chance of parliamentary



power or the problems that accompany it.

Lutte Ouvriere and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire both take the position—vote for the left in the second round whatever its programme may be: 'The PC and The PS have fallen out. Force them to agree while still voting left' (LO); 'in the second round we must all vote together for the best placed workers' candidate... For the sake of unity we must force the PC and the PS to form a government'. (LCR).

*Here the similarity between the LCR and LO ends. Nothing could be simpler than the purple slogans of LO: 'We're fed up to the teeth'; 'Vote the farthest left possible'; 'Kick out the professional politicians—elect simple workers.'

The posters of the LCR on the other hand, take half an hour to read. They present their criticism of everyone else in a sort of epic poem.

First they attack the right: 'Giscard, Barre, Chirac, all the candidates of the bourgeoisie—out! The terror of dismissal, the nightmare of unemployment, the dread of the end of the month. The women oppressed, chained to housework, humiliated and violated, etc etc

... This is the "good choice" they offer us?'

Their position on the PS and PC is: 'The common programme, version PS or

PC doesn't mean change, it's the expedient of capitalism in crisis, and for the workers austerity and oppression'.

A member of the LCR told me at one of their election meetings (which hardly mentioned the election) that they aren't very interested in the election since they expect LO, which is running 480 candidates, to get most of the revolutionary vote.

Of the many, many other groups and tendencies on the left most articulate are the feminists with their challenge: 'Women—dare to vote for women!' The PC, LO and LCR produce special posters for women.

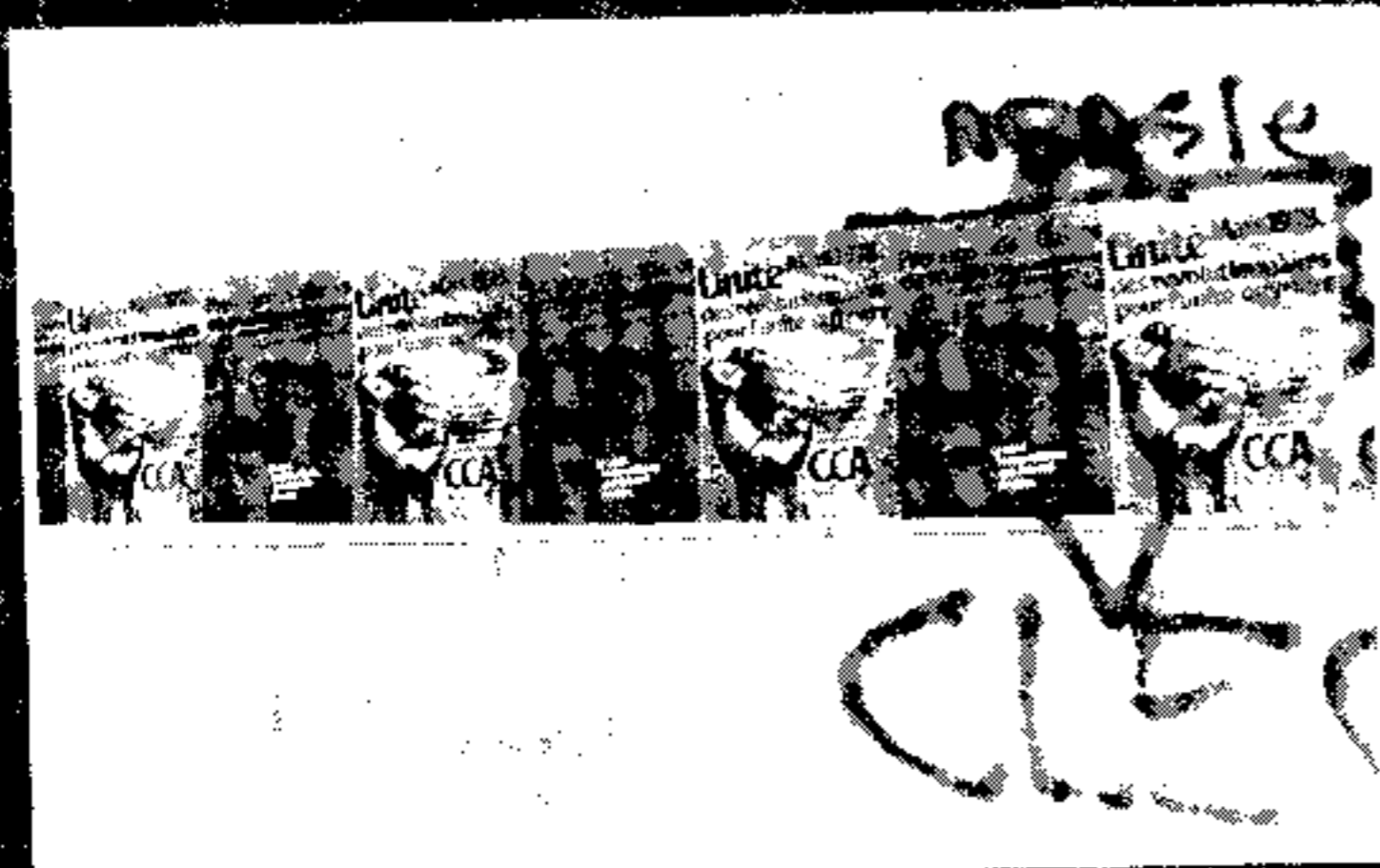
They demand equal pay, maternity leave, etc, but by tacit agreement omit the question of abortion, which caused so much parliamentary havoc a couple of years ago.

The ecologists have their own candidates. Some of them are completely dotty—

They provide a neat way out for those who wish to vote left without appearing to do so.

The punks of Paris have the last word: 'Vive Rotten! Ne Votez Pas!' 'Long Live Rotten! Don't vote!' report: Jean McNair photos: M

PARIS BY POSTER



THE TRADE UNIONS

If a Left Government in France is to succeed in reforming French capitalism without provoking a working-class upsurge, then the role of the trade union bureaucracy will be crucial. In some form or other, the Left Government will need a 'social contract'.

However, for organisational and ideological reasons, such a 'social contract' will necessarily take a rather different form from the British experience.

The French trade union movement is deeply divided. The two major federations are the CGT and the CFDT. (Force Ouvriere, created in 1947 by American money and manipulation, is becoming less and less important; and there are a number of other splinters).

One result of the division is the relatively low level of union membership, probably around 20-25 per cent of the labour force. But the unions can often get support from non-unionised workers for specific actions like one-day stoppages. The French unions receive financial subsidies from the state.

It is a tradition of French trade unionism going back to the first years of the century that the unions are not affiliated to political parties, and that parties do not organise politically in the unions.

For example, Georges Seguy, general secretary of the CGT, was recently widely attacked for publicly calling for electoral support for the Communist Party, even though he made clear that he was not doing so in his official union capacity.

This apolitical attitude has two sides to it. On the one hand, the absence of formal ties means that the 'don't rock the boat' attitude of Labour Party trade unionists is less widespread. It will be far easier to argue that the unions should stay independent of the state.

Yet at the same time, the apolitical status of the unions is used time and again by the bureaucrats to ban any attempt at the organisation of political

tendencies inside the unions, making the task of revolutionaries, and even of militants seeking some form of rank and file organisation far harder.

The CGT remains the largest federation, with probably over two million members, and its main strength in the traditional sectors of French industry. Since the end of World War Two it has been under the effective political control of the French Communist Party.

The internal regime has been bureaucratic to the core, and dissidents, especially members of revolutionary organisations, have been regularly expelled. This still happens today, although in some places the balance of forces is no longer favourable to the bureaucracy.

In some recent factory elections, the CGT has been losing ground to the CFDT, though it still keeps its absolute predominance. The CFDT originated at the end of the First World War as a Catholic union, but since 1964 has had no formal Christian links.

Reputation

In 1968 it acquired a reputation as being to the left of the CGT (largely because, being smaller, it could take up demagogic left positions without having to bear the responsibility). It has subsequently grown faster than the CGT, and now has over a million members.

While formally unpolitical, its leadership has developed close links with the Socialist Party, and the Socialists clearly see it as an important counterweight to the CP's control of the CGT.

In the early seventies the CFDT has a reputation for being more open and democratic than the CGT, but over the last couple of years there has been a witchhunt of leftists in the union, accused of being 'cuckoos' in the union's nest.

Since the defeat of the post office strike in late 1974, both CGT and CFDT have largely played the role of restraining struggle, with the unspoken aim of stressing their responsibility and moderation in the pre-election period.

Where they do launch actions, they are generally token one-day stoppages, with no more than a publicity value—and increasingly demoralising the membership.

Merseyside

Testing ground

Seven or eight years ago people on the left used to talk about Merseyside as the 'Petrograd' of Britain. It was the greatest centre of the militancy that broke through the last Labour government pay policy in 1969-70 and rocked the Tory government in 1972.

The Liverpool dustmen, the Liverpool dockers, the Merseyside building workers' movement, the Pilkington strike in St Helens, Fords Hailwood, the Wigan and North Wales builders, the Fisher Bendix occupation, the Lancashire gas workers... the list seems virtually endless—particularly when you add on top of it the succession of one day stoppages and demonstrations over the Industrial Relations Act and unemployment to a large extent inspired by Liverpool trades council.

Today, Liverpool presents a different image. The image of the employers' offensive 1978. It is a city where unemployment is already an *average* of 12 per cent—and much, much higher in the industrial suburbs built in the 1950s—Speke, Kirkby, Huyton, Skelmersdale.

The biggest pool of unemployed teenagers in Northern Europe. Shop after shop boarded up for protection against the vandalism and petty crime bred by poverty and boredom.

Now in the last couple of months, the great companies with factories in the area have announced a new wave of redundancies—3000 jobs to go at Leyland Speke, 450 at Birds Eye, 670 at English Electric, 160 in Cammel Lairds, 200 at Kirkby design centre: there are even sackings threatened on the buses.

But these are often not just redundancies. They are redundancies with a particular aim in view—the decimation of shop floor organisation.

Callaghan admitted as much in a statement that received front page treatment in the local press:

'Premiere James Callaghan last night bluntly told Merseyside to pull its socks up—and stop going on strike.

'The government, he declared, had not written off Merseyside. But he pleaded with the area to help itself by creating permanent industrial peace.

'Mr Callaghan said industrial peace would remove the aura around Merseyside. His tough warning at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party was met with a rumble of approval from MPs.'

The threat of mass sackings and factory closures if workers maintain a level of militancy is not new. It is the oldest bluff in the business.

The 1971 Ford Strike was accompanied by dire warnings of the closure of Dagenham. And if Leyland workers had had a wage increase for every threat against Cowley or Longbridge, they would be very well paid indeed.

The difference in Liverpool is that for the first time major companies are translating their words into deeds.

Leyland blazed the trail when they responded to the long strike in the Leyland No 2 plant with a notice that they were going to shut it in a few months time.

We don't know whether Callaghan himself was directly involved in that decision. But it certainly gave a lead that big private employers in Unilever, owners of Birds Eye were prepared to follow.

They laid off the whole workforce (predominantly in the TGWU) when the AUEW members struck over wages. And then they insisted that no-one would be allowed back into the factory except on the basis of a nine-point plan for increased productivity, no wage increases for the engineers *and* 450 redundancies. On top of that they announced the sacking of the whole workforce.

Although they later withdrew this last threat in return for an end of the strike, they have kept to the nine point plan and the 450 redundancies.

A number of other Merseyside factories have been closed following a similar, though usually less obvious, strategy. In Birds Eye there is the demand for productivity *without* a deal: elsewhere the 'self-financing' productivity deal is being pushed through to weaken organisation and destroy jobs: for instance, in the print, where SOGAT have agreed to filling of vacancies or replacement of those who leave the industry; or in Dunlops where a number of jobs have been sold for wage increases over recent months.

Overall there is the combination of the repeated ideological left jab—the message especially from the government and the local press that ‘Merseyside is going down the drain because of strikes’ followed by the right hook from the employers.

You can't help getting the feeling that a number of big companies are testing the ground in Merseyside, seeing if they can get away with the sort of belligerent offensive against basic shop floor organisation that they have not dared to try with any sizeable plant anywhere for many years.

If they succeed in Liverpool, then there is little doubt they will try somewhere else.

After all, it is not as if the myth of ‘militant Merseyside’ has really been matched by reality in recent years.

There was a perceptible downturn in the level of struggle in the area after the mid-1970s, brought about by the defeat of the Halewood workers in a long strike against the victimisation of a senior steward in 1971, the run-down of the docks, the scourge of unemployment on the buildings and internecine struggles inside the Dunlops stewards’ committee.

Since then the level of strikes has been lower than in, say, Coventry. The strike which was alleged to have provoked the Leyland No 2 shutdown was the first to hit the whole plant for at least 10 years.

The level of steward organisation has not, perhaps, been ravaged by the involvement of convenors and senior stewards in ‘participation schemes’ as much as in many other parts of Britain. In both Leyland Speke and Ford Hailwood the stewards retain a higher than usual degree of ‘mutuality’ (control over the speed of the track).

But a gap has opened up between the stewards and the ordinary union members that the employers have been only too happy to exploit: in the Triumph strike there was not one mass meeting. It was a

classic case of the stewards’ ‘picketing out’ their own members.

At the end of the strike one senior steward confessed that they needed the return to work, so that the workers could get some money together before the next struggle, over the closure.

The Birds Eye strike revealed much better organisation. There was the very uncommon sight of layed-off workers and unemployed workers joining the pickets.

There were weekly mass meetings. Wives and husbands were involved in the struggle. Flying pickets were sent round the other Birds Eye factories.

This all rested on an already existing high level of steward organisation among the laid off TGWU members. Yet at the end of the day, splits between the AUFW and TGWU members were very much behind the return to work.

Yet there remain very real chances of a fight-back in the city. What developed during the upsurge of militancy in the later sixties and early seventies was a pool of workers in the city who are best described as ‘militant syndicalists’.

They had an ability to lead struggles and to articulate socialist ideas rarely found elsewhere in England. But they saw little reason in practice to go beyond the shop stewards’ organisation, the union branch and perhaps the trades council in the direction of revolutionary organisation.

The result is that there are still hundreds or even thousands of workers who have lived through and learnt from some of the great struggles of the last 10 years: on the docks, in the buildings, in Pilkingtons, in the Fisher Bendix occupation, and so on. What they lack is a political answer to the ideological attack and a confidence that they have the organisational strength to fight back.

The employers’ offensive is pushing politics on to the

Merseyside shop floor. Stewards need to have some answer to the drivel about ‘strikes running down Merseyside’.

Yet their own ideas are often still limited to talk about Temporary Employment Subsidies even if there has been a change over the last year, in that they no longer look to the boss (whose putting the boot in within the factory) to hold their hands when they beg for government money.

A blind hatred of the management is growing among many groups of workers and an awareness that political governmental answers are needed. The confusion is about what those answers could be and how to get them.

The same can be said of the organisational confidence of workers. They know that the old forms of organisation centred on one plant or even one workshop are not good enough when faced with an offensive from a major company.

Unilever, for instance, *can* afford to sit out a long strike. At the same time many of the workers have memories of the comparative success of the Fisher Bendix operation despite all the murkiness of the deals setting up a ‘workers’ co-operative’, the factory is *still there*, employing as many workers as ever.

The mood is one of increased political discussion, but still confused political discussion, of increased anger and frustration, but still undirected anger and frustration. It is a mood that could change very rapidly in a positive direction if for instance one factory was to carry through an occupation it might well arouse widespread enthusiasm.

One thing noticeable at the mass meeting which ended the Leyland Speke strike was the widespread sympathy for a token picket of some 20 unemployed.

Liverpool is a testing ground for the employers. It should also be a testing ground for the revolutionary left.

We have been used, in the past, to growing in periods of rising working class struggle (in 1972, in 1973-74, in the period leading up to the firemen’s strike last year).

We know we have to learn to relate to the bitter, long defensive struggles in resistance to the new employers’ offensive. Liverpool could be a picture of the future for many other areas.

Chris Harman

Car imports

The clamour for import controls on cars continues to rise, and is unlikely to be much reduced by the Japanese agreement to limit the inflow. The Japanese factor is in any case often exaggerated.

Imported cars registered in the UK last year were as follows:

Japan	140,415	10.6%
EEC etc	400,162	34.8%
total	540,577	45.4%

A key factor in this flow is not imports as such, it is manipulation of the market by the multinationals. Some 134,000 ‘British’ cars last year were in fact built abroad, by Ford and Vauxhall above all.

In the first two months of 1978, 62 per cent of Vauxhalls and 72 per cent of Fords sold in Britain were imports, mostly with a fair proportion of previously exported ‘British’ components.

Meanwhile, as the *Financial Times* recently made clear, the government wants to see the Japanese import limit used to increase the competitive market-share warring between Leyland, Ford, Chrysler and Vauxhall. The only victims will be the workers themselves.

LENIN VOLUME 3: REVOLUTION BESIEGED

Tony Cliff

£3.60 paper £7.50 cloth

Pluto Press, Unit 10
Spencer Court,
7 Chalcot Road,
London NW1 8LH

01-722 0141

Pluto Press



Halewood in its heyday — strikers queuing for pay the day before striking.

In the last six months or so the left in the trade union movement has suffered a number of defeats—most obviously, the firemen's strike, but also in the mines, Leyland, etc. How serious have these defeats been?

Going around the country it is absolutely clear that workers are in no way demoralised. It is quite different from the situation after the defeat of the postmen's strike by the Heath government in 1971—then, when you met postmen you found that they were extremely depressed. Now, when you meet firemen, they have fantastic pride in their struggle—no sense of demoralisation at all.

I'll give two simple examples. In one case, I spoke to a couple of firemen from a station in Essex and asked them about their relation to the fire officers, who scabbed on the strike. They said: 'We simply don't feed them—we cook for everybody, but not for the officers'. That's a sign of self-confidence—they wouldn't have done it otherwise.

You may have read about the other case in *Socialist Worker*. In one station an officer was given a cup of coffee by a fireman and he got terrible stomach pains. He suspected the fireman of poisoning him and so he rushed to the police station. He was taken to hospital and operated on—they found he had an ulcer! Now this again shows that the firemen are not on their knees.

What is also clear when you go round the country is that workers don't believe that they can win. They don't know *how* to win. It is not a question of their being demoralised—they don't feel that they don't have the strength to fight. They don't know how to mobilise their strength.

Therefore, when you ask how serious the defeats are, the defeats *are* serious from the simple standpoint that we have never had in Britain three stages of incomes policy that worked. Under Wilson between 1964 and 1970 we had two stages, and then the third stage fell to pieces. Under Ted Heath the collapse started at the second stage.

At present, not only is stage three holding, but they are talking about stage four. We've had support for stage four from Weighell of the NUR and Dave Basnett, of the GMWU for example. And therefore we should not underestimate the feeling of impasse inside the movement.

What caused these defeats? In particular, did they simply result from the role of the trade union leaders, or did the weakness of shopfloor organisation and rank-and-file organisation generally also play a part?

To start with the union leaders, when I wrote a book on productivity deals eight years ago I didn't mention the full-time convenors. As a matter of fact the estimated number of full-time convenors in the country in the late 1960s was 500. There are probably 6,000 full-time convenors today. That's a very great change.

Again, I'm not talking about convenors only. When you look at the mines, there are three key people in every NUM lodge—the

INTERVIEW WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This interview with TONY CLIFF, a leading member of the Socialist Workers' Party, is the first in a series with socialists of differing viewpoints on the state of the British Labour movement. The interview was conducted by Alex Callinicos

president and secretary of the lodge, and the lodge delegate to the NUM Area Council.

Now it is very interesting—these three lodge officials don't work down the pit, although they are paid the wages of a face-worker. The abyss between the conditions of their life and those of a worker really at the face is absolutely massive and they'll do *anything* to avoid going back to work down the pit, even if they started out as faceworkers.

Now this is the organisational aspect—in other words, the trade union bureaucracy has a much bigger base in terms of the number of people supporting them in the workplaces than simply the 3,000 union officials. But there's something much more important than that.

Because of the massive productivity deals of the late 1960s and because of incomes policy and unemployment, the power of the individual shop steward, which was largely based on his ability to shift piece rate, to shift bonus-rates, has declined quite seriously. One of the best proofs of this is the fact that wage drift—ten years ago one of the most important expressions of the power of individual shop stewards—has practically disappeared from industry.

Therefore, we are in a period in which the struggle must become much wider than the individual shop and in which, on the other hand, the organisation inside the factory relating the individual shop stewards still goes through the convenor, who is increasingly collaborating with management through participation schemes etc. Faced with participation and the new wave of productivity deals the shop stewards feel themselves less and less able to act as a collective.

What we find as a result is that the overwhelming majority of unofficial strikes at present involve not so much unofficial strikes of whole factories, but unofficial strikes of individual sections within the factory. Quite often the strikes are not led by the convenor or the shop stewards' committee but by individual stewards.

In many cases we have the phenomenon of the unofficial, unofficial strike—in other words, the rank and file in one section or other start a strike and they are supported subsequently by the shop stewards.

All this is a fantastic impediment to workers fighting. They feel they cannot deal with the big things. They can handle little, sectional problems, but how the hell can you deal with massive issues like redundancies or a general wage claim within one shop?

But beside these organisational points, there is something not less fundamental and that's the ideological aspect. You see, the assumption of the reformists in the movement—and this applies not only to the labour leaders but also to the convenors and to the stewards and the rank and file, to all those who accept the basic reformist ideology—is that reforms can be achieved within the framework of capitalism without challenging the capitalist system.

Now, as long as capitalism was expanding there was logic in it—it sounded OK. But now that capitalism is really in crisis, unless the militant is ready to challenge capitalism itself he cannot even fight for reforms.

I'll give one simple example. The shipyard industry internationally is in crisis. This crisis is even more serious in British shipyards. Now what was the reaction of the leadership of Govan shipyard workers to this crisis? They signed a 31-point agreement with management which includes no strikes for the duration of the agreement, increasing flexibility and a target to cut the number of manhours per ship from 850,000 hours four years ago to 400,000 hours next year. In other words, seeing that we have unemployment anyhow, lets cut the number of employed workers even more! Of course, another expression of this situation is the readiness of the shop stewards at Govan to take ships blacked by the workers of Swan Hunter.

Now the logic of this situation is quite simple. If Marx was right when he said that the working class is the grave-digger of capitalism, then, of course, the sicker the capitalist system the better it is for the gravedigger.

But if on the other hand the job of trade unionists is to get benefits within the framework of capitalism, then the sicker the capitalist system the more concessions the workers must make to the system. In other words, they have to become the doctors of capitalism rather than its gravediggers.

This is the reason why left reformists who were ready to fight when capitalism was doing well will not fight when capitalism is doing badly. On the QE2 the captain doesn't mind if people play soccer. But on a tiny little raft the captain can't let anyone rock the boat. That is the reason why the Joneses and Scanlons have moved so far to the right.

Of course, the fact that reformism is identified with the Labour Party and that Labour is in power accelerated this shift to the right. I don't believe for one minute that if the Tories were in power the NUM Executive would have accepted the ten per cent limit by 14 votes to 10 - perhaps they would have rejected it by 14 to 10. Now this ideological aspect is important because it affects not only the people at the top but also the leadership on every level of the movement.

We can sum all this up by saying that the labour movement is facing a crisis of leadership that affects every level of working-class organisation, from the top of the trade unions down to the shop steward's committees.

How do the Broad Left and the Communist Party fit into this crisis

You see, there is no question that when Scanlon and Jones became the leaders of the two biggest unions in the country this gave a fantastic filip to the activity of the rank and file, the shop stewards, the district committees, etc. But at the same time only those left leaders could have contained the militants. The CP and the Labour left in the unions would not have tolerated from right-wing leaders like Deakin and Carron what they did tolerate from Jack Jones and Scanlon. That is the first thing we have to say.

Second of all, because the Communist Party for many, many years has put the emphasis on electing left-wing union officials, once they got the left-wing union leadership they found themselves in a very



serious internal crisis. The question for the CP was whether they put the emphasis on rank-and-file trade union activity—in other words, on militancy here and now on wages and conditions— or whether they put the emphasis on propaganda for an alternative economic strategy of import controls, state control of investment, etc. to be implemented by a left Labour government at some time in the future. They chose the second option. In reality, today the most enthusiastic Tribunites are the Communist Party leadership.

But this causes problems for them because for a long time the strength of the Communist Party was that it was a community of militants. It is true that in their programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, the CP talked about the parliamentary road, etc., etc. But this duality, this split personality, did not affect the Party too much because really what kept them together was their activity in industry. But now that the trade union bureaucracy has moved so far to the right the crisis of reformism goes throughout the party.

One of the expressions of this crisis is the fact that blacklegging, which was unheard of among union officials—especially left-wing ones—twenty or thirty years ago, has become respectable not only among union officials but among Communist Party convenors.

The Jim Airlie phenomenon is absolutely astonishing, especially when you compare the behaviour the right-wing convenor of Austin Pickerskill shipyards in Sunderland who simply said we are blacking the Swan Hunter ships and then Jim Airlie at Govan takes them. The difference is that the right-wing convenor is less committed to the Scanlons and the Jones of this world and so under less pressure from them not to rock the boat.

Isn't there a danger of being too pessimistic in looking at the present situation? After all, sections of workers have broken through (eg at BOC), and there still seems to be a willingness to fight on the part of many workers—take the case of the power-workers who we saw on the news chasing Frank Chapple the other day.

There is no question that workers would like to fight. The move from defensive strikes to offensive strikes can take place very quickly. You have simply to check the strike statistics after the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders occupation in 1971 and UCS was a defensive struggle which did not lead to a complete victory, although it was a significant victory. The number of strikes for wage-claims as a result of UCS was simply massive. There is not a fantastic abyss, a Chinese wall, between defensive and offensive strikes, between even a retreat and going on the offensive. But what is necessary is that one significant group of workers will stand up and fight.

Now the idea was that perhaps the firemen could do it but the firemen did not win. The strike was not generalised giving money to a fireman was not generalisation of the struggle.

Because of that, when you ask me if I'm pessimistic, I'm not pessimistic at all—I simply say you need a *breaking point*. A breaking point can come in Speke over the closure by Leyland of the Triumph plant—I suspect it will not come there. I suspect that it will be postponed until a group of workers stand up and fight. Exactly *when* that takes place I can't predict.

Switching to the future, then, what will be the impact of the coming general election on this situation?

In particular, what would be the effect of a Thatcher government, which seems to me to be the most probable outcome?

First of all, I will deal with the question of the *approach* of the general election. I believe that James Callaghan will very likely use the coming general election as an argument for phase four. If the general elections come in October this year or even more so if they come in March next year, he'll turn around and say: 'We've cut the rate of inflation to seven or eight per cent and therefore we want a phase four of (let's say) five or six per cent'.

Now, all the arguments that I have used up to now about phase three will be sharpened at that time. Because workers are prepared to give the benefit of the doubt, because of loyalty, because loyalty is based on fantastic conservatism and basically because workers are not prepared to throw existing organisation away unless they see something to substitute, to fill the gap, and this something doesn't exist yet, because of all this, I think that the lead-up to the general election will not change the trend by itself.

A Tory *victory* on the other hand, will change it extremely quickly. All the bitterness that collected over the last three or four years will burst in the face of Margaret Thatcher—not in the first few months, because for the first few months militant workers will be stunned by the immediate impact of a Tory victory. But after a few months, workers will begin to fight because they have not lost anything in terms of their massive power.

Workers have not really been beaten. There have been defeats—in the hotels, at Grunwick, but generally among weaker sections of workers. What happened to the big battalions? They were not defeated by going into battle and being beaten—they simply didn't go into battle, because they were held back by the union bureaucrats and the convenors, etc.

Now if you have a Tory government, this holding back will no longer be effective and therefore workers will burst into fight. So the situation can change radically if the Tories win.

This looks like a good opportunity to ask you about the article you wrote in Socialist Worker recently in which you predict three possible outcomes to the present impasse—another rebellion of the lower-paid as in 1969, a UCS-type situation, or a spontaneous general strike like France in 1968. Isn't there a fourth alternative—more of the same, with the trade union bureaucracy

containing rank-and-file militancy and people's frustrations being channelled rightwards into the Nazis?

I'll deal first of all with your second question. Fascism cannot become a mass movement before workers go into a mass struggle and are disappointed. Up to now, the National Front are on the periphery—they get only five per cent of the vote and, when it comes to the key areas of the working class, they simply don't exist. The fourth alternative isn't an alternative—unless one of the first three possibilities takes place and leads to a defeat for the workers.

What did I mean by the three alternatives I outlined? We know that 'theory, my friend, is grey, but green is the eternal tree of life'. I don't really believe that one of the three alternatives will happen as I put them. What will happen is a combination of them or some other permutation of their elements.

What is common to the three examples I gave? In each case we have a long record of workers being held back by the union bureaucracy, a long long period of workers being depressed because they didn't get a lead in the struggle, followed by an action by some group which changes the situation. In the first case it was the dustmen, in the



' . . . the situation can change radically if the Tories win . . . '

second case it was UCS, in the third a working-class movement was detonated by the action of students.

Now I can't really know the exact form of what happens, but one thing is clear—you can't go on and on with a situation like the present, where working-class organisation is intact, workers still haven't been beaten and there is a steady deterioration in their quality of life. This will especially be accelerated if there was a small upward trend in economic life. If there were five months of economic growth then there's no question of it—the expectations of workers would rise much more quickly than if the recession continued.

Therefore, the three alternatives I gave were simply illustrations of what frustration can lead to. The fourth alternative is not on unless the workers go into struggle on a mass scale, are really beaten and then get completely demoralised.

What political conclusions do you draw from this analysis for the activity of revolutionary socialists? In particular, what do you think the perspective is for building rank-and-file organisation and what role do you see for united action by the left wing of the labour movement?

First of all, the most important lesson is the need to build a rank-and-file movement. But quite often people see building a rank-and-file movement in terms of building relations between combine committees into a movement that covers all industry. Now we have to speak about a much wider, much deeper movement, a movement that goes much further, because when you look at the situation in the working class you'll find that the shop organisation is more cohesive than the factory organisation.

From the outside a factory looks like a unit, from the inside it looks like a collection of villages. Also, you'll find that the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee is always much stronger than the Combine Committee. And when you look at the relation between Combine Committees, there hardly exists any relation at all.

When you add to this what I said about the crisis of leadership affecting every level of the movement, then, when it comes to building a united rank-and-file movement, we mean not only going to the factories to collect money for Dessoutter or Grunwicks but also going *inside* the factory to argue the case for Dessoutter. *Don't* rely like ten years ago on going to the factory convenor and asking him to collect the money. It is very good to ask the convenors to collect the money, but you have to do the propaganda inside the individual shop as well. Don't simply put the demand, eg, for strike action, in the way it was done in the docks last summer.

The National Shop Stewards Committee in the docks decided against the ten per cent and they expected the different docks to vote for it. You needed only one dock—in Southampton—to beat the decision, so that with only a tiny handful against strike action the whole thing collapsed. What was necessary under such conditions was to argue in every individual section of the docks—to argue the case again and again on every dock, and only then to argue it

nationally and take it back to the membership.

In other words, we must not simply deal with the unity of the rank-and-file leaders from the top—we have to relate to the rank-and-file leaders on every level of the movement. We have to strengthen shop organisation, factory organisation, combine organisation, making propaganda for workers' unity at every level. This is a very big task.

Also, we must make it absolutely clear that building rank-and-file organisation is a question of politics. You can't simply say that you are opposed to sackings in steel, for example. The truth of the matter is that the steel industry is losing ten million pounds a week. Now, my calculation is that the steelworkers' wage-bill (including management) is less than twice the annual losses. Therefore, if workers really want to preserve their jobs and at the same time to accept the capitalist system, the only alternative is to demand that all workers accept a wage-cut of more than fifty per cent, and that, of course, is not on.

We have to put the political alternative. We have not simply to demand that there are no sackings, but that the steelworkers should be paid full wages, that they should be put on a three-day week, etc. These demands begin to challenge the basis of the capitalist system—they lead to the need for a planned socialist economy, not in terms of some abstract economic alternative, but in terms of what workers *need* faced with the world steel crisis. Therefore, the question of politics comes to the fore.

The question of racialism, for example, brings politics to the shop-floor. One of the most serious things that we find at present is that in some unions the racialists are doing far too well for our liking. This happens where for one reason or another the lack of unity between workers fits the racialist propaganda.

For example, if you look at the railways you'll find that there are different messhalls for drivers, for guards and for shunters. Now, seeing that the drivers are practically all white, seeing that the guards are black and white, and that the shunters even more so, the area where racialism is strongest is in the drivers' union, ASLEF, which is much worse in this respect than the NUR. It doesn't make me happy at all to learn that there are NF resolutions from two branches coming up at the ASLEF conference. Here again, then, rank-and-file unity involves a political fight.

Now, how does this relate to left unity? It relates because we can't simply say 'All or nothing'. There are workers who agree with us on A or B but not on C. There are workers who are against racialism, against the Nazis, but not against immigration controls. Of course, we as revolutionary socialists must be consistent and we make it clear that we are against immigration controls. But if somebody joins the Anti-Nazi League and he doesn't agree with the abolition of immigration controls, that's his headache.

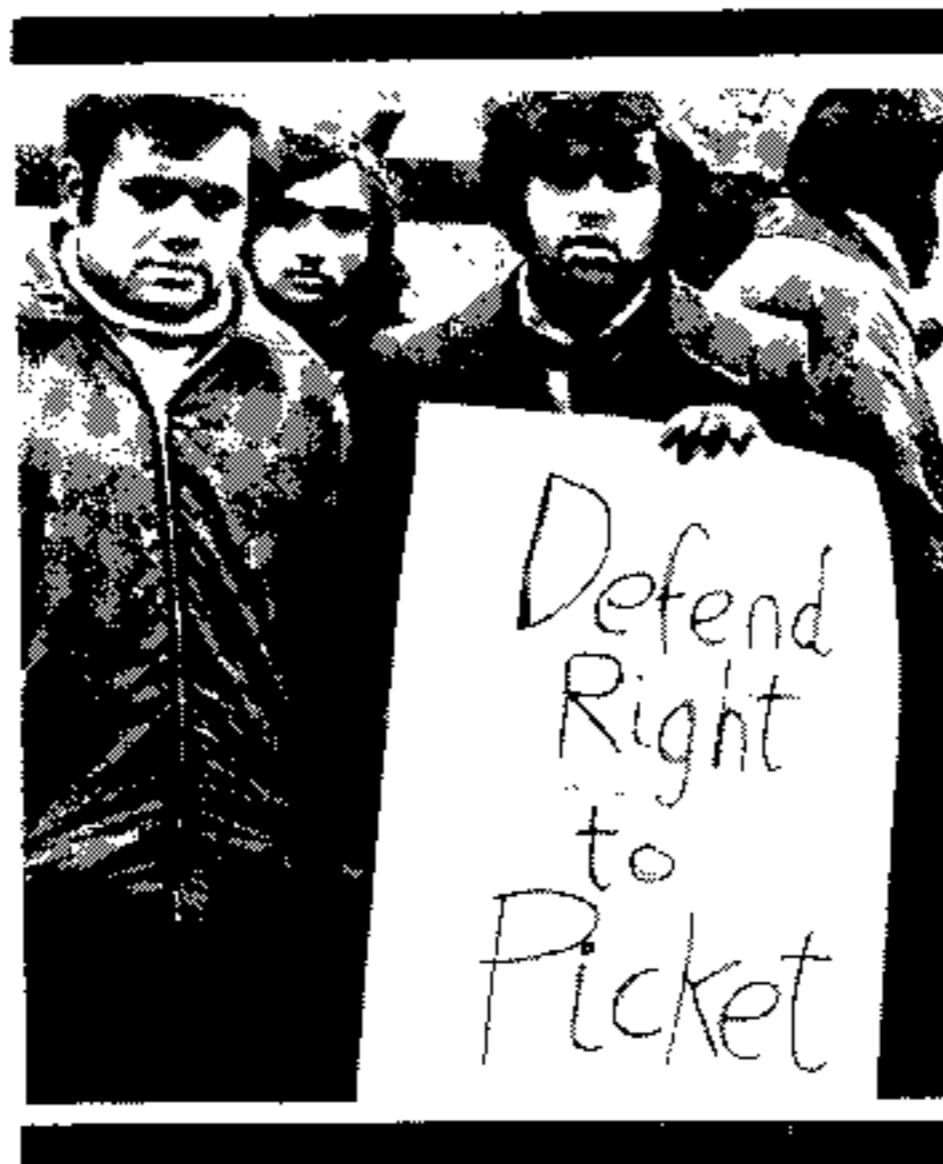
Again, we believe that the Nazis have to be stopped, if necessary, by physical confrontation. If someone believes only in making propaganda we say: 'All right. Let them

distribute the leaflets, they are pacifists, they won't use violence, they will be attacked by the Nazis, and we will use the physical force to protect them against the Nazis.

Now, when it comes to the trade unions the same problem faces us. Of course, we would like a movement that is based on complete independence from the trade union officials, whether left or right, a movement that supports the trade union officials only to the extent that they support the rank and file and therefore will support Bob Wright for AUEW president only to the extent that he agrees with rank-and-file demands. This will be *our* attitude as revolutionary socialists.

But there are members of the Communist Party and members of the Labour left who have illusions in Bob Wright, who will support him unconditionally. Then we'll say: 'All right, we'll agree to differ on the question of what attitude to take when there is a clash between Bob Wright and the rank and file.

If there is a Leyland toolroom strike and Wright opposes the strike, then we will *not* support him and we will support the toolroom workers. But if there is a situation and it will appear again and again where the choice is between Bob Wright and a right-winger like Terry Duffy,



' . . . the test for us will be whether we can relate to the struggles that so take place . . . '

then we will support Wright against Duffy.

This sort of question will arise because when the movement has been shifted so far to the right the issue of united action with people who are to the right of us but still on the left centre of the movement becomes very important. But let's be clear about it—this unity of action in *no* way means that we hide our attitudes to the union bureaucracy.

The main problem for us is not our attitude to Bob Wright but our attitude to the individual strike that takes place and in many cases Bob Wright will be against the strike, as in the case of the Leyland toolroom workers. Therefore, I don't really believe that the question of our relation to Bob Wright should take more than five per cent, if you want to put it in terms of figures, of our thinking.

The main emphasis will not be on Bob Wright but on the independence of the rank and file from the trade union bureaucracy, *including* Bob Wright.

In conclusion, how does the problem of building a new socialist party fit into this perspective?

First of all, everything I have said up to now—the crisis of leadership at all levels of the labour movement, the importance of politics in building the rank-and file movement means that the need for a revolutionary party is greater than ever.

Now, a revolutionary party must relate to the immediate struggle and to the final struggle—the struggle inside capitalism and the struggle against capitalism. Because of this interrelation the question of the rank and file is central for us. We establish our credibility only to the extent that we can lead the rank and file both politically and industrially here and now.

Of course, if the Tories came to power and there was a mass movement in opposition to it, the Socialist Workers Party would look much smaller than it does now because it would be a small fish in a big stream. Now we much prefer such a situation because it would give us a much bigger opportunity to create a mass influence for our party over time, although its immediate impact would be to cut us down to size.

At present our growth is quite modest because of the low level of struggle. However, for the first time that I can remember the SWP is appearing as an alternative to the Communist Party.

We are not an alternative to the Labour Party in terms of the working class as a whole, but we appear as an alternative to the Communist Party in terms of the industrial militants in struggle. We also appear as an alternative in terms of activity against the Nazis.

At the present time the test for us will be whether we can relate to the struggles that so take place, even if they are small and defensive. We must relate to the rank-and-file at every level of action, even if the action takes place within the individual shop or factory. This means trying to root the SWP firmly in the workplaces.

Only if we succeed in doing this will we be able to exploit the opportunities that will come when workers' frustrations explode into mass action.

POLITICAL THEATRE

PART ONE

1978 is the tenth anniversary of all sorts of important things. It is also the tenth anniversary of the beginnings of a small, perhaps not very important, but nonetheless quite remarkable phenomenon: the growth of the socialist theatre movement in Britain.



DAVID EDGAR

In 1967 there was one independent socialist theatre group in Britain: Cartoon Archetypal Slogan Theatre. There are now at least 18 full-time, subsidised socialist groups, in addition to perhaps as many unsubsidised or local groups who propagate revolutionary socialist ideas. In addition, socialist writers have penetrated the bourgeois theatre (of the eight new plays produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company over the last 12 months, five have been written by socialist revolutionaries) and television (the names that spring without much difficulty to mind include Jim Allen, Trevor Griffiths, Colin Welland, Alan Plater and John McGrath). However, while the scale of socialist theatre work is impressive, it is obvious that its intervention in the working-class struggle itself has been at best patchy and peripheral. Furthermore, socialist theatre has remained at a remove from revolutionary organisations.

What follows is an attempt from the uncomfortably interior perspective of a writer who has worked in socialist theatre for seven years to explain why this should be so. There are two reasons why 1968 can be taken as the starting date for the development of political theatre in Britain. The first was the general upsurge of revolutionary, or at least radical, consciousness among students and intellectuals, which affected young theatre-workers just like anyone else (and also affected them in a particular way, as I shall argue in a moment). The second was the abolition of the institution of theatre censorship, practiced since the 18th Century by the Lord Chamberlain. The most obviously irksome manifestation of censorship applied to sex (the writer Joe Orton suffering particularly and amusingly!), but political censorship was also involved and the very bureaucracy of script approval (which took several weeks) effectively pre-empted topical or improvised work.

Some groups, like CAST, had always mercifully ignored the Lord Chamberlain, but for most theatre-workers his abolition was a welcome release. The immediate reaction of the institutional theatre was to increase the sexual content of plays. A second development was a mushrooming of small theatre spaces dedicated to 'experimental' work, much of it from America and the continent. For the development of socialist theatre, however, two further happenings were more important.

The first was the growth of a group of University-educated writers (who formed a group, Portable Theatre, to tour their work) who drew much of their energy from the counter-cultural ideologies of the 1960s. One such writer, Howard Brenton, described the making of a play *Fruit* as follows: 'In writing *Fruit* I was influenced by some French Marxist texts (the Situationists were particularly important to the May 1968 students). The Situationists defined the spectacle as 'the society of the spectacle' where there is a screen called public which is reported on the telly and in the newspapers. This version of public life is a spectacle, it operates within its own laws. It's a vast, intricate confidence game'.²

Brenton outlined his theatrical response to the consumerist spectacle as follows:

'The theatre is a dirty place. It's not a place for a rational analysis of a society--it's there to bait our obsessions, ideas and public figures. A really great outburst of nihilism like *Fruit* . . . is one of the most beautiful and positive things you can see on a stage'.

The style and content of the Portable plays did not attract a working-class audience. Nor was it likely to: the theory of the capitalist spectacle was developed precisely to explain the lack of proletarian consciousness in the post-war Western countries. For many radicals in the late 1960s (including Marcuse and some of the French student activists of May 1968), Marx's prediction that the working class would become ever more impoverished and so increasingly revolutionary as time went on had been disproved by history. The working class had been 'bought off' by a combination of material and ideological bribes. This did not, of course, make the capitalist system any less alienating and dehumanised: indeed, these thinkers saw alienation as a much more important phenomenon than exploitation.

Revolutionary politics was seen as being much less about the organisation of the working class at the point of production, and much more about the disruption of bourgeois ideology at the point of consumption. The centre of the revolution had shifted from the factory-floor to the supermarket.

As Brenton makes clear, the Portable playwrights fitted neatly into this perspective. Their work was violent, anarchic and destructive; and had, as another Portable writer affirmed, 'a very bad record with working-class audiences'. There was, however, another important development in socialist theatre at about the same time, which did not completely write off the working-class revolution.

The revival of the street theatre movement is described by Richard Seyd of Red Ladder (which started life as the Agitprop Street Players) as follows:

INTERVIEW
DE CALVIE

'Red Ladder Theatre emerged from the ferment of 1968. The Camden Road-based Poster Workshop itself a product of that ferment --was at the time making posters with and for those involved in the Great London tenants' rent fight. The Tenants' Action Committee asked the Poster Workshop whether anyone could get together a short sketch to put on at the beginning of their meetings to get them off to a lively start. A small group came together and made a 15-minute play'⁴.

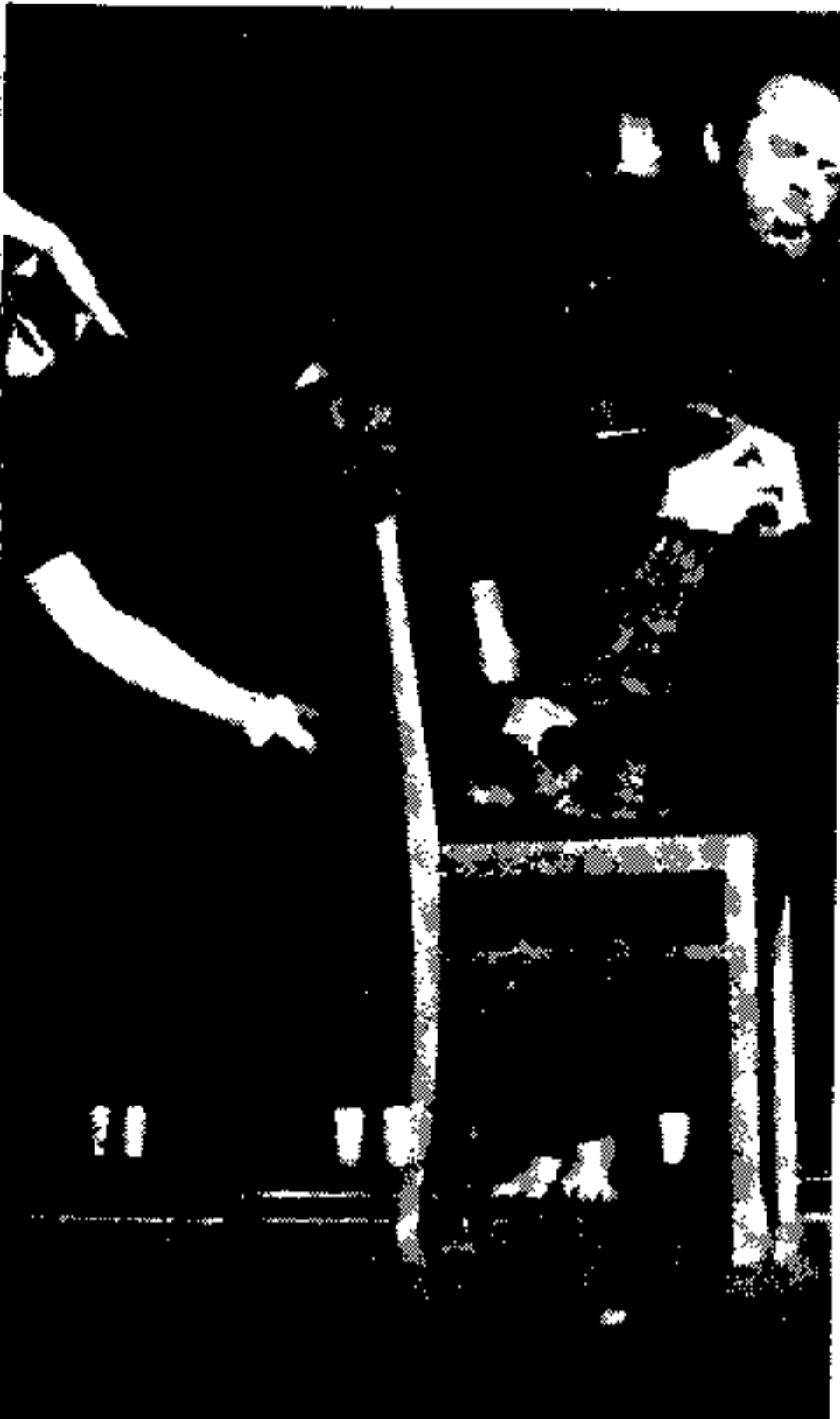
Red Ladder are now fairly scathing about their own early work (Seyd says of their second play that 'the title was its only redeeming feature'), and see their development in terms of their realisation that 'we had to relate to working people through their own organisations and not stay on the outside of the Labour Movement'.

However, it is clear that the growth of a more class-orientated theatrical strategy was not merely an internal development, it was essentially a response to the greater militancy of the class itself, after the 1970 General Election. Some groups, indeed, are aware in retrospect of missing the boat, and remaining in the counter-cultural tradition long after it had become clear that reports of the death of working-class militancy had been much exaggerated.

(Roland Muldoon of CAST acknowledged recently that CAST remained committed to 'the alternative culture revolution' throughout the early period of the 1970-4 Conservative Government admitting that 'rich situations like Heath versus the miners went untouched by us'.⁵).

The 1970-4 period saw a strenuous effort by a growing number of theatre groups, however, to create and then satisfy a demand for socialist theatre. For many, the paramount condition was that plays should be presented to people where they lived and worked, in community centres or pubs, in trade council halls or on the streets. The move towards a working-class audience took many forms, but

Roland Muldoon of CAST



CAST performing *Muggins Awakening* in 1968



John Marmion

it is possible to isolate three (with the reservation that, in many instances, the approaches overlapped).

The first approach was Community Theatre, which saw its function as the service of a particular geographical area, either from a (non-theatre) base, or touring. A good example of a group of this type is the Combination, who work for a Community Centre in Deptford, providing a number of services (including legal aid and educational advice) in addition to the presentation of theatre.

Second there were groups who toured round the country, presenting shows of general political industrial import (including Red Ladder itself, 7:84, North West Spanner and the General Will). A third approach was, in effect, a combination of the first two.

Some groups sought to serve constituencies of people, bounded not by geography but common interest. Often these constituency-directed shows were in fact produced by political touring groups (an example is a show I wrote for the General Will about the Housing Finance Act, which was played to tenants' groups in 1972) until the later emergence of constituency groups like Gay Sweatshop and the Women's Theatre Group.

The dominant theatrical form of the work produced by community, political-touring and constituency groups alike was agit-prop.

Agit-prop the finest hour of which occurred immediately after the Russian Revolution is one of a number of interventionist forms of socialist art that have been created in response to the perceived failures of social-realism, the dominant radical form of the last 150 years.

In order to understand the reasons for the development of agit-prop, it is necessary to define realism. John Berger has written a good definition in his book *Art and Revolution*⁶. He argues that, unlike the bourgeois form of naturalism (which attempts to portray a surface view of human behaviour as accurately as possible), realism is 'selective' and 'strives towards the typical'. The actions of people are presented within a 'total' context: the central character's actions are felt 'as part of the life of his class, society and universe.'

Realism, in other words, does not show people's individual behaviour as being somehow independent of the society in which they live: it relates people's recognisable activities to the history that is going on around them.

Many revolutionary artists have felt, however, that realism is an inadequate artistic

tool in periods of heightened class struggle. The Marxist critic Terry Eagleton points out that Bertolt Brecht rejected realist novels as realising to 'a certain set of social relations', as a form 'appropriate to an earlier phase of the class struggle'.⁷ Brecht turned instead to new forms, like Expressionism and Dadaism, that sought to expose capitalism in a much bolder and more aggressive fashion.

In the same way, socialist theatre-workers in Britain responded to the increased militancy of the early 1970s by rejecting the social-realism of writers like Arnold Wesker, that had demonated radical theatre for 15 years. They, like Brecht, sensed that realism was an inadequate form for a radical era: and they were also aware that the rise of mass-populist culture (notably television) had increased rather than decreased the problems of the realist approach.

The contradiction is put simply: the dominant form of television drama is naturalism, which shows people's behaviour as conditioned, primarily or exclusively, by individual and psychological factors. The socialist, on the other hand, requires a form which demonstrates the social and political character of human behaviour.

However, in the television age, the masses are so swamped by naturalism and, therefore, by its individualist assumptions, that the superficially-similar techniques of realism are incapable of countering individualist ideology. The realist picture of life, with its accurate representations of observable behaviour, is open to constant misinterpretation, however 'typical' the characters, and however 'total' the underlying social context may be.

Faced with this barrage of bourgeois culture, the response of agit-prop is precisely to eliminate the surface appearance of the situations it presents, and to portray instead what it regards as the political reality beneath. The capitalist, for obvious example, is shown as a Victorian, top-hatted archetype because the makers of the piece of theatre believe that, despite all the surface changes in the appearance, style and attitudes of the employing classes, the fundamental reality is still that of heartless exploitation.

There is no danger here of misinterpreting the actions of the capitalist in terms of his individual psychology: his class-motivation is all too clear. The archetype is then presented acting within a series of non-realistic images which further define his class-behaviour, as occurs classically in Red Ladder's show about the National Cake:



The "National Cake" is a metaphor that is familiar to everyone. In "The Industrial Relations Act" we use that metaphor visually. Inside that overall visualisation we then place further metaphors that express the ideas we want to get over: the workers are bakers who bake the national cake, the strike is seen as a knife which cuts into the cake; the myth of the "national interest" is exploded visually because it is the capitalist who sits on top of the cake, the workers purchase cake to eat, the cake itself is a visualisation of the class structure in society, etc.

'All these images can be concretised and made immediately comprehensible in seconds. Equally, because the image is so clearly defined, every time one of the actors changes position within the image a point is made visually: the "union official" moves from the base on to the lowest rung of the ladder, the "strike knife" held by one worker is too heavy, held by two it can be wielded as an effective weapon . . . In this manner we attempt to explain, albeit simply, the concept of wage labour, inflation, and many other ideas of central importance to the tactics and strategy of the labour movement, and we try to explain them in a way that sticks firmly in people's heads.

'The basic intention . . . is to try and make the economic and social forces that so deeply affect our lives—which are usually invisible, hidden from our understanding—visible and tangible so that they can be grasped and, hopefully, acted upon.'

Functional agit-prop of this type remained the dominant form of socialist theatre throughout the period of the Heath Government, and for a year or two beyond.

Since then, however, a number of groups have moved away from this style, at least in its pure form. New directions have included, on the one hand, a return to forms of social-realism (particularly among newer groups whose work deals with sexual politics), and,



Photos this page: Women's Theatre Group in *Vinegar Tom*

on the other, a much greater concentration on the entertainment value of performances, sometimes at the expense of overt political content.

These developments have been analysed and criticised in a lengthy and detailed article by a socialist writer/director in *Wedge* magazine*. The thesis presented is that recent developments have been a reformist retreat from the original revolutionary principles of socialist theatre, a retreat brought about by an increasing reliance on subsidy from the state.

(The facts on the growth of subsidy are simply stated: in 1971/72 the Arts Council of Great Britain gave two socialist theatre groups a total of £10,363; by 1973/74 it was paying eleven groups £41,490; and in 1976/7 18 groups were receiving a total of £421,093. This does not include locally-financed groups, or groups in Wales and Scotland.⁹)

The *Wedge* article defines the baleful consequences of subsidy as follows:

1 The 'professionalization' of the theatre groups, through the achievement—in August 1974—of Equity recognition and Equity wages for socialist theatre-workers. This meant that 'revolutionary socialists who had started doing theatre as a political weapon, to create propaganda and agitation' were now joined by 'left-wing actors, active within their union, but with little or no other political work behind them'. The result was that 'once jobs had been created, people began to do the work as a job, and the possibility of careers within the theatre was created'. Finally, subsidy caused the 'rise of an administrative class' within the groups themselves.¹⁰

2 A move away from the principle of playing to workers in struggle, caused by (a) increased technical equipment, particularly musical equipment, which created the need to play 'venues that could accommodate the technology', i.e. arts centres and small theatres rather than pubs and clubs; (b) an increasing reliance on the bureaucratic organisations of the Labour Movement as a source for bookings, when 'working class' audiences were sought; and (c) the creation of internally-democratic structures only among 'the arbitrary group of people who were the company at the time'. This internal democracy, the *Wedge* article argues, had the paradoxical effect of cutting the companies even further off from the working class, by rendering them 'accountable to non-one but themselves'.¹¹

These factors, the article continues, have had a destructive effect on the form and content of the work itself. First, the influx of professional performers led to a stylistic regression: 'The professional actors, who basically wanted "meaty parts" criticised the use of "cardboard two-dimensional working-class caricatures" and argued for putting "real people" on the stage, people the audience could 'identify' with'.

'This tended to mean lots of family scenes, emotionally fraught arguments and inner

* The author of this article, although well-known in left-wing theatre, has rather capriciously asked to remain anonymous. Another point is that only half the article has been printed, and much of my quotation is from the as-yet-unpublished second half, which has yet to be revised. I am hoping that quoting this will not unduly misrepresent the argument.

psychological motivations: all the clap-trap of British drama training was to be imported, uncritically, into a popular theatre tradition'.

Furthermore, the move towards the labour bureaucracies as bookers of the shows tended to degrade the content of the plays.

'many companies who once had militant things to say about the Tories became strangely silent in their plays about the Tory policies of the new Labour Government . . . The emerging administrative class within the theatre groups began to increasingly look for bookings and support, not to the mass of the working class, but to the bureaucratic layers of its workplace organisations . . .

'Scenes in plays began to be altered so as not to criticise or offend the district officials and Trade Council secretaries who laid on the bookings'.

This development, the article continues, occurred precisely because the very method of play-making had lost all contact with the people that the work was supposed to be created about and for:

'Revolutionaries would be unanimous in recognising that the ideas of the plays came from the most advanced sections of the class and that the particular skill of the theatre group is to turn these ideas into images, stories, scenes and songs and give them back again to the class—and to learn from what goes down well, and what does not. A dialectical process, in other words . . .

'The essence of the reformist illusion, however, is that radical intellectuals are the originators of ideas, the possessors of wisdom, and will set out to "educate" their audiences, and "raise their consciousnesses". It is not enough to reject this position as being arrogant or elitist (which it is). It is necessary to discern that what has occurred is a degeneration from dialectical materialism into idealism, in other words the belief that ideas can change material reality, by themselves'.

Despite its anonymity, the *Wedge* article is important because it is one of the few consistent critiques, written from within, of the socialist theatre movement. It seems, however, to contain several fundamental flaws.

The first is that, by defining the events it describes as 'a battle of political lines' between 'Revolutionary socialist' and 'professional theatre workers' (also characterized as 'reformists' and occasionally 'Maoists'), the writer leaves out of account the relationship between developments within the theatre and the state of the struggle outside it. This omission, indeed, leads on to the thoroughly undialectical implication that socialist theatre can create a revolutionary working-class on its own.

The movement towards 'workers in struggle' among socialist theatre-workers in



the early 1970s was, as I have shown, a response to and indeed only made possible by a heightening of the class struggle. In the same way, events of the post-1975 period can be understood in terms of what the *Wedge* writer himself acknowledges to be 'a period of class retreat'.

One of the major points made in *Wedge* is that the groups turned away from the advanced sections of the class, and began to rely on reformist bureaucracies. (It seems to be doubtful, by the way, that this is literally true: what certainly did occur was the socialist theatre did not *increase* its penetration of the working class to the extent that one might have predicted in 1974).

The *Wedge* article begs the question, however, of the organisational form in which such a relationship with rank-and-file advanced workers could occur. It seems to me obvious that this kind of relationship (if it is to move beyond the necessary but parochial business of dealing with specific struggles in particular workplaces) can only exist if socialist theatre is part of a mass-revolutionary movement that has its roots deep within the advanced sections of the class.

It is no coincidence that the example of a satisfactory theatre/class relationship posited by *Wedge* is in a post-revolutionary society (the Peoples' Republic of China). In the absence of mass organisations of advanced workers, it is no surprise that theatre groups have found it impossible to relate in any consistent way to them. The organisational forms even the geographical spaces in which to appear — are just not present.

Wedge may be correct to say that theatre-groups are operating in a political vacuum; but the point is tautological. Groups are working in a vacuum because it is a vacuum in which they are working.

The objective state of class relations also has formal implications for socialist theatre. One of the clear consequences of the lack of a mass-revolutionary perspective in the British working-class has been the collapse of wage-militancy in the post-1974 period (and the gradual realisation by revolutionaries that the *political* content of the class-activity of the 1972-4 period had been over-estimated).

The move away from pure agit-prop towards more complex theatrical forms seems to me satisfactorily explained in terms of a considered response by the groups to this failure of economism. Red Ladder, who have the authority of not a little experience, have found that agit-prop, although a good weapon for confirming workers in their struggles and drawing practical lessons from their experiences (in other words, a form ideal to the subject-matter of economist militancy), is not suited to the tasks of a period of class retreat.

As Richard Seyd wrote of the agit-prop form: 'If people don't think that capitalism is an absurd and damaging way of organising society, then very little that one does is going to change their minds'.¹²

Furthermore, agit-prop is formally 'unable to fulfil the artistic task of portraying and interpreting the way people operate, and why they operate in a particular way, revealing the contradictions as they grow out of the social, economic conditions of society itself'.

Specifically, the techniques of agit-prop are incapable of dealing with questions of consciousness, precisely because they portray only the assumed objective essence of a situation, rather than dynamic between how people subjectively perceive that situation and the underlying reality.

The move towards the presentation of 'three-dimensional characters' might have been partly caused by the desire of performers for 'meaty parts', but even if the groups had been peopled entirely by vegetarians, it would seem likely that they would have found the agit-prop form an inadequate tool under developing circumstances.

Indeed, the *Wedge* article itself acknowledges that 'one of the weaknesses of the revolutionary left' was that 'they hadn't developed any theory of aesthetics—and had simply stepped into the shoes of an agit-prop tradition, and tried to develop it from within'.¹³ In an uncharacteristic fit of idealism, the article does not go on to enquire why this extraordinary omission should have occurred?

It seems clear to me that, in the same way that the absence of mass revolutionary

organisations has prevented the building of a dialectical relationship between socialist theatre and class, the absence of a consequent mass revolutionary *culture* has obviated the growth of new theatrical forms. And in the same way that the lack of mass-movement forces theatre groups into the arms of bureaucratic *organisation*, so the lack of a revolutionary culture forces them to relate to reactionary *forms*.

The work of Brecht did not drop off the trees, it drew on the existence of a working-class movement that was sufficiently culturally mature, for example, to produce nearly 200 Social-Democratic and nearly 20 Communist *daily* newspapers. The comparison with Britain today is odiously obvious.

Faced with this situation, socialist theatre-workers have set out on a search for possible new forms, a process which has certainly been *allowed* by subsidy but not necessarily *caused* by it. It is possible to analyse — and criticise — these attempts (which go far beyond the slide into rampant naturalism posited in *Wedge*), without explaining their limited success primarily in terms of reformist careerism; and this is what, in the second part of this article, I intend to try and do.

- 1 See, particularly, Joe Otton, *Foot*, Methuen, London 1967.
- 2 Quoted in P. Ansove, *The Portable Playsights*, Plays and Players, February 1972, *ibid*.
- 3 *ibid*.
- 4 Richard Seyd, *The Theatre of Red Ladder*, New Edinburgh Review, August 1975.
- 5 Roland Muldoon, *Cast Revival*, Plays and Players, January 1977.
- 6 John Berger, *Art and Revolution*, Penguin, London 1969.
- 7 Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, Methuen, London 1976.
- 8 Seyd, *op. cit.*
- 9 From the *Annual Reports of the Arts Council of Great Britain*, 1971-2, 1973-4 and 1976-7.
- 10 Anon, *Gram: Aid and Political Theatre*, *Wedge*, Summer 1977.
- 11 *Ibid*, Part Two unpublished.
- 12 Seyd, *op. cit.*
- 13 *Wedge*, *op. cit.*



The Second Part of this article will appear in our next issue: Editor

Raymond Chandler wrote seven novels, a few dozen good short stories and created the most famous private detective of them all, Philip Marlowe.

The detective story in the 1930s was of two types; those which were variations on a theme of genteel murders in English country houses or the American pulp product. Chandler, after losing a lucrative position in an oil company through drink, turned to writing for magazines like *Black Mask*, magazines short on literary pretensions, but long on violence.

But these lurid magazines developed a style of their own, feeding on the variety of American city slang and developing a tightness of pace which Hemmingway was to copy. Compared to the sterile snobbery of Agatha Christie, the 'hard-boiled' writers look like a chromium-clad limousine alongside a bath-chair.

Sharply critical

Chandler used the detective story form in a series of exciting novels which developed a sharp commentary of society, highly critical of its institutions and values. Subsequent writers, Mickey Spillane and John D MacDonald, abandoned this side of detective fiction altogether. Their 'gumshoes' are drunken thugs with as few moral qualms as the hoods they pursue.

Chandler was different. His novels depict 'a world in which gangsters can rule nations, and almost rule cities'.

It is the world of Los Angeles, a world of neon-lights and 'genuine' Chippendale cocktail cabinets, the seedy boarding-house and the 47 room eye-sore, and the gambling houses where the bored rich throw money into the pockets of sophisticated murderers. Law there is administered by cops whose main problem is to decide whose stomach they can safely jump on, or who at best to try to preserve a shred of decency like a down and out who keeps wearing his old school tie.

Bay City represents all that Marlowe (and Chandler) loathed. Bay City was the chic suburb in Southern California.

'If I lived there, I would probably think so. I would see the nice blue bay and the cliffs and the yacht harbour and the quiet streets of houses, old houses brooding under old trees . . . I knew a girl who lived on 25th Street. It was a nice street. She was a nice girl. She liked Bay City.

'She wouldn't think about the Mexican and Negro slums stretched out on the dismal flats south of the old interurban tracks. Nor of the waterfront dives along the flat short south of the cliffs, the sweaty little dance halls on the pike . . .' (*The Lady in the Lake*).

Poverty existed side by side with the latest ranch-style villa, but south of the cliffs, hidden by clever architects and property conscious City Halls.

The rich clients who employ Marlowe are outwardly suave, but behave like over-indulged children, who have been rotted by having too much of whatever they wanted. Marlowe spends most of his working life patching up their lives, not out of concern for them so much as an alternative to some safe, dull life in the Mid West.

Chandler wasn't the only writer to depict modern city-life as vile; that alone doesn't make his writings radical. He wasn't in any way a socialist, but because he looked critically at

the reality behind American myths, he began to realise that the 'Mexican and Negro slums' were an inevitable by-product of the society which creates the yacht harbours and the old brooding houses.

In these novels, crime and business are brother and sister; both depend on the other.

'That's the difference between crime and business. For business you gotta have capital. Sometimes I think that's the only difference.'

'A properly cynical remark', I said. 'But big time crime takes capital too.'

'And where does it come from, chum? Not from guys who hold up liquor stores'. (*The Long Goodbye*).

In Marlowe's world, newspaper owners suppress embarrassing stories, the police drop cases which implicate the powerful and politics are just the oldest branch of the advertising industry. Chandler realises that American society is inherently violent and unjust. Marlowe discovers this time after time. In *The Long Goodbye*, probably the best of the series, every establishment institution is seen as a racket.

But Chandler doesn't go any further. He is aware that society stinks, he even has a rough and ready class understanding of society, but there is no hint of

change: the socialist or even liberal solutions do not exist for him. Capitalism is given, fixed and unchangeable.

So Philip Marlowe continues to walk down the mean streets of capitalism alone. He is the last romantic hero, wearing a powder blue suit instead of a suit of armour and speaking in jive-talk rather than verse. He has his own rigid moral code, based on a chivalric honour; he is the shop soiled Galahad.

'I'm a romantic, Bernie. I hear voices crying in the night and I go see what's the matter. You don't make a dime that way.' (*The Long Goodbye*).

Moral dignity

This is the appeal of the character; the lone proud man achieving some moral dignity in a lousy world, while still moving and working in it.

However, it also limits the horizons tremendously. Marlowe daren't get too involved with other people. Relationships bring compromises, so he leads a solitary life. He spurns friendship and love for the pleasures of solitary chess problems and drinks in secluded bars.

Women present the biggest threat: they are either marauding sharks in cocktail dresses or spoilt brats who want to add Marlowe to their collection of poodles. Both types make too many demands on him, and this is the real weakness of the novels. Marlowe's independence is achieved only by his contempt for most women, who, falling for his almost supernatural allure say such absurd things as 'You big brute, I ought to throw a Buick at you.'

Despite the appeal of the 'man who neither tarnished or afraid' Chandler's novels become increasingly bitter. The humour of *The Big Sleep* gives way to a shrill despair in *Playback* as age and the modern world catch up with Marlowe, who like all romantic heroes doesn't improve with age. At his height, however,

the novels of Raymond Chandler are provoking and political entertainment, and novels like that are rarer than calluses on a banker's

WHY YOU SHOULD BE A SHAMUS

by Paul Cunningham



Bogart as Marlowe in a 'forties film version of *The Big Sleep*

Everybody is a potential drum

As Serious As Your Life
Valerie Wilmer
Allison & Busby - hardback - £6.50
Quartet - paperback - £2.95

As America is the most powerful nation in the Twentieth Century, so too its popular culture, has become the most widespread, indeed the dominant culture of the contemporary world. It is ironic then, that the wellsprings of that culture's popular music have been American society's most oppressed groups - country music from the poor whites, jazz, blues and therefore rock & roll and soul, from the blacks. There are continuities in black American music which go right back to pre-slavery Africa. So history haunts us as Western Europe buys back the music of the slaves.

Yet the black community as a whole has not benefited, except in curious intangible ways. Jazz, the main impetus for popular music has never been more than a minority music. (The two exceptions being the decade of swing which was dominated by white bands, and the contemporary vogue for jazz-rock.) Whenever jazz has achieved popularity, it has become necessary for black musicians to move further out, away from the mainstream in order to create a music which will function as a private language - inaccessible to white society and immune to being adopted and stripped of its capacity to act as a form of resistance and cultural opposition.

Hence the succession of revolutions within the state of jazz since the great bebop revolt of Charlie Parker, Monk, Gillespie et al. They effectively turned their backs on popularity in order to open up new possibilities for expression within the medium. At the time their formal discoveries were dismissed by all but a small coterie of friends and admirers as 'Chinese music', now they can be seen as working solidly within a tradition to extend it. They did so at great personal

cost without the form of academic and financial support which would have been made available had they been making 'serious' i.e. white, European music.

The same fate has attended the subjects of this rich and rewarding volume: Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Sun Ra, and the group of Chicago musicians who clustered around the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. For twenty years these Afro-American musicians have made great personal sacrifices to push back the boundaries surrounding jazz and produce a music that many find as daunting and impenetrable as the work of Cage and Stockhausen, yet as Valerie Wilmer illustrates in several anecdotes here, this same music can, under the right circumstances be as vital and immediate as any 'popular' music. The musicians are playing in an atmosphere heavily politicised by the black struggles in Africa and America of the past two decades. They know that their music fails to achieve support because it doesn't come from within a certain white tradition. They are understandably bitter, and

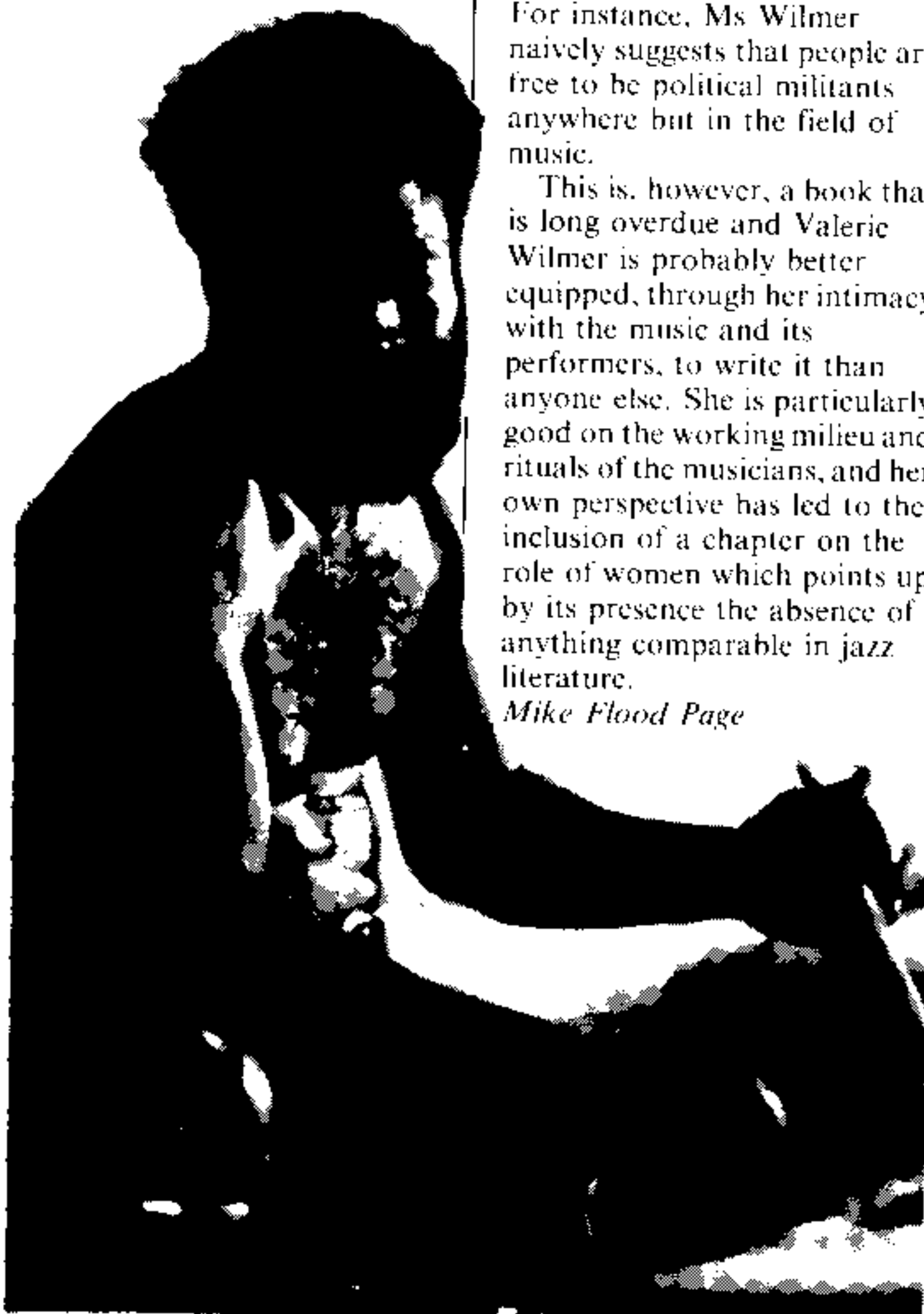
to a certain degree, elitist in their attitudes to other musics and musicians.

They are highly skilled musicians who could earn big money if they adopted any of several commercial options open, but they refuse to compromise. This book is a testimony to their struggle. It reflects honestly, I believe, the musicians who are Wilmer's primary sources and the contradictions within their stance. They are caught in the problem of making a music which is revolutionary in formal terms, and in self-conscious political terms, but is at the same time unpopular within the black community. Thus ironically of those few musicians who have found it possible to give up their day job and derive a stable income from the new music, a number have only been able to do so by accepting teaching posts at white universities, or grants from white foundations.

My criticism of the book derives from its greatest strength - its closeness to its subjects - because at times some distance from the musicians' own attitudes would have prevented the patronising elevation of the black musician to the role of persecuted saint. For instance, Ms Wilmer naively suggests that people are free to be political militants anywhere but in the field of music.

This is, however, a book that is long overdue and Valerie Wilmer is probably better equipped, through her intimacy with the music and its performers, to write it than anyone else. She is particularly good on the working milieu and rituals of the musicians, and her own perspective has led to the inclusion of a chapter on the role of women which points up by its presence the absence of anything comparable in jazz literature.

Mike Flood Page



Books

People in paper chains

People in Paper Chains
Birmingham Community Development Report No. 3.
(Available from Home Office Community Development Project Room 1372T, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT)

This report is mainly based on the experience of the Saltley Community Development Project, an area where 40 per cent of the population originate from the Mirpur, Pakistan, which was submerged in the early 1960s by the construction of the Manyla Dam. Most Mirpuree men migrated to Britain at the back end of the British economy's need for cheap immigrant labour.

Much of the work of the Project has been about the Mirpurees' problems - with the immigration laws, dependents being allowed into Britain, tax problems, etc. Many case histories are mentioned which remind us of the viciousness of British immigration policy. Did you know dependents have to wait up to three years just to get an interview at the British Embassy in Dacca? Once you get an interview you have to pass the 'strict test of eligibility' which has become notorious within immigrant communities. Small kids are interviewed alone, bone X-rays of the children are used to disclaim the stated ages so entry can be refused! If you are lucky enough (sic) to get to England the often openly racist immigration officials, some of whom are members of the NF, have massive discretionary powers. A Bombay woman, Mrs Goliara, was sent home even after giving birth to a child at Heathrow! The official said 'It was all a ruse to get the woman into the country.'

The pamphlet also looks at the insecurity and fears of many immigrants once in Britain. The police have arbitrary powers of arrest if they suspect you of being an 'illegal immigrant'. The connection between tax codes for dependents abroad and their entry clearance produces a 'Catch 22' situation. Decisions against an individual in one department jeopardises that person in what should be a

Books

completely separate matter. These bureaucratic paper-chains produce massive human misery.

The report places this misery in the context of the desire of the British State to move to a contract labour scheme. Immigrants who settled in the UK before the 1971 Immigration Act are a residual problem for the State; preventing a total contract labour scheme similar to those of other European countries. Through various administrative procedures, the state has made the process of settlement an obstacle race rather than a right. These practices, which if written down would contravene all known human rights principles, have abolished the freedom of entry of dependents and massively reduced black people's rights. All this without resorting to legislation and running the risk of affronting liberal opinion.

This pamphlet is a must for all socialists to read. It is a mine of information or an easily readable form, on the plight of Black communities in Britain. It is also available in Urdu.

We must not only oppose the visible excrement of racism, but also its hidden, barely recognisable form.

Phil Lee

So little understood

A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement
Guillermo Lora
Cambridge University Press
£7.50.

The strength and solidarity of the Bolivian working class in the face of brutal repression and shocking working conditions is extraordinary and in many ways defies conventional analysis. In a country where the vast mass of the population is still today peasant and agricultural workers the often decisive role of the working class in shaping political history is quite out of proportion to its size.

In part this is due to the overwhelming importance of mineral exports in the economy, and the correspondingly central role of the miners. But the degree of unity and solidarity of the working class as a whole is all the more impressive, especially given the efforts of successive governments to divide and neutralise it, to buy off its leaders, to intimidate it through poverty, or to eliminate it more literally through massacres and army occupations. (The miners'

strike of 1976 is the most recent example of this).

Guillermo Lora's book provides an indispensable background to an understanding of the Bolivian workers' movement. Lora is himself a leading member of the Trotskyist POR - the Workers' Revolutionary Party - and was the author of the famous Pulacayo Thesis, approved by the miners' union in 1946, and an important source of revolutionary analysis for many years after.

His history, then, was written primarily for Bolivian militants, and in the original the more directly historical chapters were interspersed with sections of interpretation and exposition of the basic principles of Marxism. However, only the first half of the history has ever been published in Spanish attempts to publish the second half dealing with the years 1930-70 were foiled successively by Banzer's 1971 coup in Bolivia and then by Pinochet's two years later in Chile.

It is good then to have a version of the book as a whole in print, even if with all the theoretical chapters omitted the narrative becomes a rather bald succession of events, organisations and activists. A weakness of Lora's approach becomes apparent in his concentration on formal and party organisations. One of the greatest strengths of the Bolivian working class has always been the capacity to transcend party loyalties, and Lora's approach, dominated by the POR's aim to be the revolutionary vanguard, underemphasises this. Another weakness is the failure to include the peasantry in the analysis. While the Indian population of the countryside provides a constant backdrop to Lora's narrative it is rarely permitted an active role in the events he describes. Again, his party affiliations perhaps hamper a full analysis.

The final sections, on the Peoples' Assembly and the coup which destroyed it, are taken from a book Lora published in Chile in 1972. Even in this shortened version, the book is the most comprehensive there is on the subject and provides the basis for understanding Bolivian politics, strategically so important in South America, and yet so little understood in comparison with its economically powerful neighbours.

Olivia Harris



And...

Coming this month from Pluto are Harry McShane and Joan Smith's *Harry McShane: No Mean Fighter* (£2.95), Tony Cliff *Lenin: Volume 3 The Revolution Besieged* (£3.60), and John Harrison *Marxist Economics for Socialists* (£2.40).

Lawrence and Wishart have recently reissued Wal Hannington's *Unemployed Struggles 1919-1939* (£2.95) and will shortly be reissuing Willie Gallacher's *Revolt on the Clyde* (£2.50).

Virago have recently reprinted Olive Schreiner *Women and Labour* (£1.75), Ray Strachey *The Cause: a short history of the women's movement* (£2.95), and Margaret Llewelyn Davies, ed. *Maternity: Letters from working women* (£1.75).

The Women's Press was launched in February with five feminist titles, the most popular of which appears to be the novel by Kate Chopin *The Awakening* (£1.00).

Allison and Busby are publishing the selected writings of John MacLean this spring entitled *In The Rapids Of Revolution* (£2.95) and a dossier on the 1968 'Prague Spring' edited by Vladimir Fiserka called *Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia* (£6.50 hardback only).

Julian Friedmann Publishers have just published accounts of the guerilla war in Rhodesia edited by Raeburn and Wilkinson with the title *Black Fire!* (£2.95).

The paperback edition of Victor Serge's *Conquered City* is now available from Writers and Readers (\$1.25)

Alastair Hatchett

Pluto Press

THE NON-STOP CONNOLLY SHOW PARTS 1-6

Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden £2.00 each

LIGHT SHINING IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Caryl Churchill £1.50

FEMALE TRANSPORT and WILL WAIT?

Steve Gooch £1.50 each

THE MOTOR SHOW

Steve Gooch and Paul Thompson £1.50

THE CHERRY ORCHARD (Chekhov)

Trevor Griffiths's version £1.50

FISH IN THE SEA and LITTLE RED HEN

John McGrath £1.50 each

THE LORENZACCIO STORY

Paul Thompson £2.00

For details of all these plays and the
PLUTO PLAYSRIPTS CLUB - 12 plays a year
for only £13 - write to:

Pluto Press
Unit 10 Spencer Court
7 Chalcot Road, London, NW1 8LH
01-722 0141

FOR LAW, READ CLASS

The Politics of the Judiciary
J.A.G. Griffith
Fontana £1.25

'DENNING HITS AT STRIKERS LEGAL BACKING' shouts the main headline on page 2 of my *Daily Telegraph* this morning (March 3). Lord Denning (who told a reporter the other day that he normally buys the *Sunday Telegraph* rather than the *Sunday Times* 'because it is cheaper') is Master of the Rolls, the second most important judge in the country. He is long past the age when most working people retire, but he still gets £22,000 from the taxpayer. He is widely regarded in the legal profession as a 'bit of a boy' for some of his 'unconventional judgements'. But when it comes to the important things in life, Lord Denning is not at all unconventional.

He hates strikes, he regards the legal immunity for strikers which has existed on and off since 1906 as a scandal. He would love to be able to put strikers where he believes they ought to be—in prison. And he is not afraid to say so—on this occasion on his inauguration as President of the Holdsworth Club, which is the law society of Birmingham University. As is usual on such occasions Lord Denning made it clear that his views as President of the Holdsworth Society would never, in any circumstances, influence him as a judge from faithfully administering the law which with he so passionately disagreed.

Lord Denning has been President of a lot of other things in his time. In 1972, he was chairman of the Marriage Guidance Council. He chose his chairman's address that year to make a scurrilous attack on Bernadette Devlin, then MP for Mid-Ulster. The noble Lord has nothing against Bernadette's politics, of course, (judges don't have political views). What annoyed him about Miss Devlin was that she was about to give birth to a child which had been conceived out of wedlock! The 'fabric of society' was being 'ripped apart'. Lord Denning mused, when elected representatives started getting themselves in the family way, and then openly admitting it right out loud, like an usher farting in court!

The judges are not automatons or neuters as they sometimes like to pretend. They are men; men with ideas and prejudices just like anyone else. What sort of men are they? Lord Justice Lawton, who started his career at the bar by joining the politically neutral British Union of Fascists, said in the Riddell lecture in 1975: 'Judges are drawn from all ranks of society'.

By this the Lord Justice meant, of course, that you will find judges who went to many different schools: not just Eton, that is, but Harrow, Winchester and even Repton. Not all went to Oxford or Cambridge either. A few even went to Leeds University, or

Birmingham or Manchester. There's a sprinkling of the nouveaux riches on the bench along with the aristocrats. And that, as far as Lord Justice Lawton is concerned, makes up 'all ranks of society'. 'Society' as far as he is concerned, can't possibly be said to include the offal and dregs some of whom appear before him from time to time in the courts.

All judges, even the ten per cent who didn't go to public school, are lawyers. That means that they have all passed through the peculiarly constipated education which law affords. They have all been barristers, that is they have 'done their time' in chambers, which is still impossible for anyone without substantial private means. They have all 'eaten their dinners' and solemnly performed (until it seems almost natural) in the bizarre ceremonial of the Inns of Court. Their class origins and ideas have been nurtured in the sealed hothouse of the British legal system. They are stronger-rooted and more ostentatious than in any other section of the British oligarchy.

If there is anyone left who still believes that the judges are 'neutral' or 'objective', John Griffith's book will open their eyes. He has collected together a body of case law which proves beyond any shadow of doubt the heavy bias of the judiciary in every part of the law. When the government passes laws which threaten property-owners, the judges go to every length to fight for 'the right of the individual'. When the government pass laws to keep out immigrants, the illegal immigrant has to prove he is not guilty before he can be released. When squatters claim that their eviction means homelessness and despair for their children, the judges (Lord Denning in particular) declare that that has 'nothing to do with law'. Yet when prostitutes or editors of radical papers come before the courts on a non-existent charge ('conspiracy to public morals'), the judges make up the charge, and find the defendants guilty on it, in order, as one Law Lord put it, 'to uphold the moral welfare of the state'.

In perhaps the most impressive section of book, John Griffith compares the treatment of expelled students and expelled union members. In both cases, he points out, people have been expelled or dismissed in a way which could threaten their livelihood.

... 'preservation of a moral and social order to which it is accustomed.'

Yet the existing laws, and the judges' conception of 'natural justice' is stained out of all recognition in order both to uphold the dismissal of students and to annul the dismissal of trade unionists by their union. 'Why' asks John Griffith 'is the expulsion of the union member almost always set aside, and that of the student almost always upheld? The answer lies in the general attitude of the judiciary ...' Yes, the 'general attitude', which supports the discipline of the headmaster or the board of governors, who curb the spirit of protest or rebellion or rule-breaking, but detests the discipline of the trade union, which threatens the property of employers and shareholders.

The bias of the judiciary is not changing for the better. John Griffith has not selected a lot of cases from the 'bad old days' when judges were monsters, and everyone knew it. Almost all his cases, including some very recent ones indeed, come from the 'bad new days' when the judges are monsters, but very few people realise it.

The trend, he points out almost incidentally, is for judges to allow more power to the police, a wider use of conspiracy laws, a sharper interference with any progressive legislation by a Labour government, and a more overtly racialist oppression with black defendants or deportees.

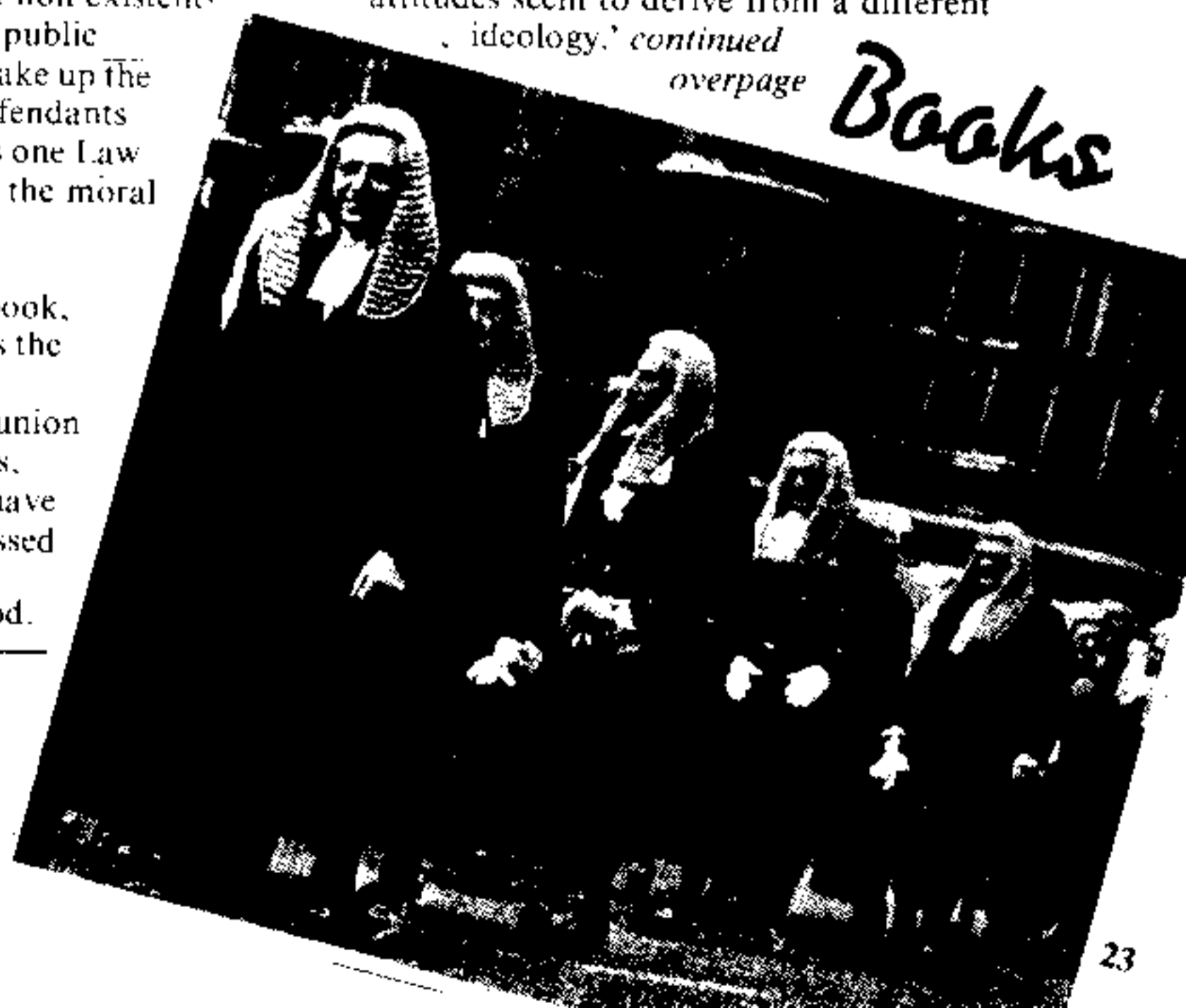
His little book all points in an obvious direction until its conclusion, which doesn't point anywhere at all. He makes a desperate effort to free himself from the stigma of Marxism by asserting that the Marxist view of the law 'takes us only some way along the road'.

'The function' he explains 'performed by the judiciary in our society is not a peculiarly capitalist function. Some of its manifestations—such as its tenderness towards private property and its dislike of trade unions—may be traced to such a source. But its strong adherence to the maintenance of law and order, its distaste for minority opinions, demonstrations and protests, its indifference to the promotion of better race relations, its support of governmental secrecy, and its concern for the preservation of the moral and social behaviour to which it is accustomed, these attitudes seem to derive from a different

ideology.' *continued*

overpage

Books



Books

This is the familiar, unedifying spectacle of the powerful left-wing academic, at the end of a painstaking work, seeking to wriggle off the Marxist hook by inventing a narrow view of Marxism, and dissociating himself from it. *All* ruling classes have survived by *disguising their robbery with a way of thinking* which extends far outside the field or the factory. Discipline in the streets and in the home, conformity of ideas, racialism, government secrecy and the 'preservation of a moral and social order to which it is accustomed'. All these are not incidental but fundamental to the maintenance of capitalist robbery (as they were to the maintenance of any other system of robbery). That is all very clearly explained by Marx and Engels, and John Griffith's characterisation of Marxism does no one any credit. He will (and has been) denounced as a Marxist anyway by the supporters of the judiciary. And rightly so. For his facts and research lead inexorably in that direction.

His second major argument that the judiciary is not pursuing a capitalist role is that the judiciary in Russia and Eastern Europe are equally repressive and reactionary! There is another conclusion to that, which is that the systems of society in Britain and Western Europe have more in common with those in Eastern Europe in Russia than they have in conflict.

The wriggling and squirming at the end of the book however has a more serious consequence. 'Our freedoms' writes John Griffith 'depend on the willingness of the press, politicians and others to publicise the breach of those freedoms

'The Press, politicians and others'. These are the people to whom John Griffith would have us turn for the protection of our freedoms. Yet the Press, by and large, is wound into the same web as are the judges. So are most politicians. If our freedoms depended only on these, there would be less of them even then there are.

The people who established the freedom of the press were the people who sold the *Poor Man's Guardian* on the streets in the 1830s and established by sheer organisation and weight of numbers the right of papers to be published without the penal 'stamp'. The people who broke the Combination laws were the weavers and stockingers who went on strike in spite of them. The people who established the right of procession were the hundreds of thousands of working people who marched with the Chartists. The people who wiped the Industrial Relations Act off the Statute book were the dockers and the printworkers who went on indefinite strike and forced the Industrial Relations Court to free the five dockers arrested for contempt of the legislation. Yet this episode, because it ridiculed the 'rule of law', is described by John Griffith as a 'calamity'. It wasn't a calamity. It was a victory. The rule of law is the rule of the capitalist class, and the more it is ridiculed, the better.

I mustn't give the wrong impression, John Griffith's book is first class. It is an unanswerable exposee of judicial hypocrisy and prejudice and it has made him a lot of powerful enemies. All socialists should read it. The waverings and wriggings at the end are easy to spot, and easier to straighten.

Paul Foot

FOUNDER OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION

William Morris—Romantic to Revolutionary
E.P. Thompson
Merlin £3.90

As this revised edition of Thompson's classic appeared last summer, my review is indecently late. I have one excuse. My enthusiasm for Morris, and keenness to chase off the accumulated myths, far outstripped the sober needs of writing for a monthly magazine. Six months or so of picket lines, setbacks and grind were needed to cut it down to size.

William Morris was, of course, the greatest of the socialist Pioneers in this country. 'His propaganda (as often as not)', Thompson tells us, was 'the first to be heard in this great town and that city; every group of socialists included some who had been converted by his words, his poems, or his *Signs of Change* . . .'

What is Surrealism?

Andre Breton, selected writings
Edited and introduced by Franklin Rosemont
Pluto £5.00

What is surrealism? 'To transform the world, to change life, and re-make human understanding from scratch' answers Breton. Transformation of the external world by proletarian uprising (as in Marx) the systematic re-organisation of the emotions and senses (as in Baudelaire).

Dreams, orgasms, madness, the feelings we habitually negate or worse sentimentalise, they are as real as the Winter Palace. A Marxism which denies them, denies itself. 'I really cannot see, despite a few muddle-headed revolutionaries, why we should abstain from taking up the problems of love, of dreaming, of madness, of art, of religion, so long as we consider these problems from the same angle as they, and we too, consider the revolution' writes Breton.

In the twentieth century, the only 'art' worthy of the name defies capitalist 'reality'. Says Breton, 'Today's authentic art goes hand in hand with revolutionary socialist activity'. Communism and surrealism are necessary to each other; 'communicating vessels'.

Breton thereby makes a critical linkage between the era of Bolshevism and our own pre-occupations, across the four decades when the genuine revolutionaries were strung out between a bourgeoisie that rejected them and a communist orthodoxy that heaped insults on them. More than anyone Breton held the line, not just expounding Marxism but expanding it, and applying it, with luminous intelligence, to a world of the imagination, a veritable Lenin of inner space.

This is a publication of genuine political importance, the most important book Pluto

But Morris was more than that. After fifty years of neglect and misrepresentation, the new research which began with this book in the 1950s has shown him to have been the most coherent and original of Britain's Marxist theorists, one who trod a revolutionary road unknown to his eminent contemporaries in the Second International.

For most of his life Morris was primarily a poet and craftsman, a theorist of art and society, and a moralist in the vein of John Ruskin. Even today his influence on modern art, architecture, design and literature is not fully appreciated, just as the relationship between these and twentieth century politics is not appreciated. Most of Morris's political writings, as he said himself, play on a recurrent theme: the central importance of work in human experience and an insistence that art is work unstripped of its original creative joy—everyman's birthright. His analysis of the loss of this natural joy in capitalist and pre-capitalist production makes him one of the earliest 'diagnosticians of alienation' (to use Thompson's phrase).

But in 1883, at the age of 48, Morris did something that was unusual then, even for a radical intellectual. He joined a Marxist circle—the Democratic Federation, founded

LUNCH WITH JOHNNY ROTTEN
Meret Oppenheim, 1938



'POETRY IS MADE BY ALL ... NOT BY ONE'

have published since Williams' *Proletarian Order*. Comrade Rosemont is an outstandingly sympathetic and eloquent editor demonstrating the true political clarity of a man and a movement who the bourgeoisie are still trying to turn into a rather quaint species of artist in mausoleum-exhibitions such as the current assemblage on the South Bank.

It is a volume of enormous compressed political intelligence. To be an artistic agitator of such profundity Breton has understood Marxist philosophy through Hegel and re-worked, as Marx himself did, the heritage of the utopian thinkers. He



overhead at surrealist exhibition 1978 WOMAN surrealist map ... what's it all mean? MAN Well I suppose that its trying to portray, er ... it's like a child would draw a map, you know, a child-like drawing ... see the united states is missing. WOMAN Oh yes and England's missing too! MANYes ... I don't understand that at all.

by H M Hyndman just two years before. Inside the Federation he worked like a Spartan to turn it (successfully) into the first 'distinctly socialist body' in this country and after the split of 1884/5 founded and led the Socialist League which for a short time was Engels's sole hope for the movement in Britain. All in all, then, Morris was a founder of our revolutionary tradition.

The key to Morris's originality is in the attitude he took to the working class during the split at the end of 1884. For Hyndman the class was the muscle for which a party of quasi-intellectuals was the brain, the power house in that now-familiar formula, aggressive left reformism. Demonstrations and other forms of working class manifestation would force Parliament and the State to accept 'progressive reforms' 'Stepping stones to Socialism.' Morris entirely rejected this use of the class as a 'turnip bogey'. For him, workers and the workers' party were the be-all and end-all. Thus, although he was no great abstract thinker, was erratic in his judgement, and like the other Social Democrats was tied to a theory of the 'Iron Law of Wages' which limited working class self-activity, Morris was able to go further than any of his

contemporaries towards a Leninist theory of revolution.

Now, that seems an extraordinary thing to say about someone normally dismissed as a utopian dreamer and intellectual Luddite. But let's look at some of the things he said over eighty years ago:

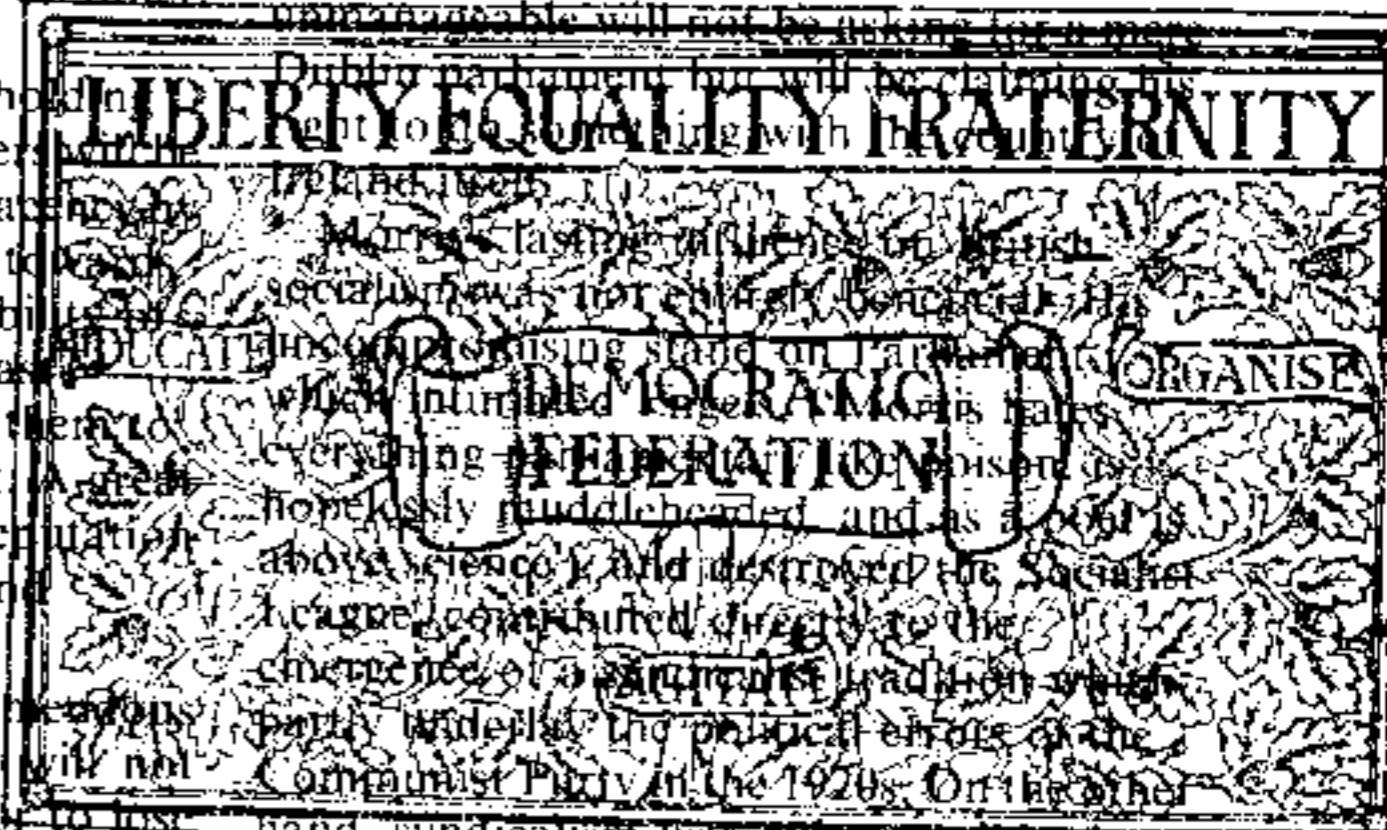
On Parliament: 'Parliament and all other institutions at present existing are maintained for the purpose of upholding (wage) slavery . . . Socialist members in the future looked on with complacency at the government classes as serving to the ending of propping up the stable robber society in the safest and least troublesome manner by beguiling them to take part in their own government invention, and well worthy of the reputation of the Briton for practicability—and swindling!'

On the State: 'Nothing but treacherous force can deal with this force; it will not suffer itself to be dismembered, nor to lose anything which really is its essence without putting forth all its force in resistance; rather than lose anything which it considers of importance, it will pull the roof of the world down upon its head.'

On the vanguard party: 'To forge this head

of the spear which is to pierce the armour of capitalism is our business, in which we must not fail' (Morris's emphasis).

On Permanent Revolution: 'The Irish will be divided indeed, like the familiar demon in the old fable, cut by his unhappy employer into two unmanageable devils; and the more unmanageable will not be asking for more.



Dublin parliament but will be claiming its right to the funding with the county of Wick and Wexford. Morris's lasting influence on British socialists was not only that he provided a principled stand on Ireland which inspired the Socialist League, but also that he provided a great, hopelessly muddleheaded, and as a result above science, and destroyed the Socialist League, contributed directly to the emergence of a particular tradition which party leaders and political editors of the Communist Party in the 1920s. On the other hand, syndicalism was quite possibly the

only credible alternative to the social democratic forms of organisation before the rise of the workers' councils, the shop stewards movement and the Soviets and after the First World War. The point is, that precisely because Marxists split from the main body of reformist politics far earlier in Britain than on the Continent, our revolutionary movement throughout this entire period offers more parallels with the development of Bolshevism than anything outside Russia.

This is a remarkable book, not simply because years of dedicated research into one great revolutionary have uncovered a whole lost era, although we should be thankful just for that. In writing it, and confronting Morris's hatred of 'State Socialism', Thompson developed a line of analysis with which he could break from Communist party dogma and shed new light on the self-activity of the British working class. The 'modes of perception' that he discovered studying Morris underlie *The Making of the English Working Class* and other books that we treasure.

Of course there are things about Thompson's approach which we should take exception. His concern for *British Marxism* and *native* working class consciousness leans dangerously close to sentimental nationalism at the expense of the international context. In this book it mars his appreciation of Morris's theoretical problems, by glossing over the dominance of Lasalle and the German Social Democrats, and the influence of the Narodniks on Morris's theory of the party. Writing in the bleak years of the Cold War he bends the stick till it hurts. So also he is seduced by the worst elements of idealism in Morris. Utopias like *News from Nowhere* were, even for Morris, no more than a last resort. In his last years, up to his death in 1896, Morris expected a long, long period of State-dominated transition which would swamp the working class, and it made him despair. There are parallels with 1956—but now?

But let's leave that aside. This is a magnificent book and a long-awaited reprint. Rich in detail, profoundly thoughtful on the modern implications, Morris deserves our serious attention. Ken Montague

BRETON It is the nature of dream & revolution to agree, not to exclude each other



TROTSKY is from *Classified Skies & How to Fly* by the world revolution

PATTI SMITH Jesus died for somebody's sins . . . But not mine

sought to apply dialectical materialism to the world of Freud, Edison and Vyshinsky and develop artistic techniques appropriate to 20th century capitalism; 'We are specialists in revolt' announced the Surrealists 'We have nothing to do with literature: but we are quite capable, when necessary, of making us of it'.

In this process Breton redefined beauty; 'it will be convulsive or nothing at all', fished his own unconscious, denied classicism, savaged Stalinism, rescued Freud, discovered Césaire, the Martinique poet of negritude, wrote factory bulletins for Billaincourt, knocked off stunning collages, organised exhibitions, denounced the Moscow trials, solidarised with the Hungarian uprising and organised against French colonialism in Algeria.

This book is the twentieth century odyssey of an unorthodox Marxist incapable of political compromise: or prosaic thought. As Ian Birchall wrote in his obituary in issue 27 of *International Socialism* 'Breton will serve us, not because he succeeded, but because he raised the issues'. Breton went on asking the question which the authorities, East and

West, in the galleries and academies, asylums and studios, didn't want to answer. His spirit roams, potently, if we can only rise to it. It's there, just under your safety-pinned nose.

'There are still today, in the lycees, even in the workshops, in the streets, the seminaries and military barracks, pure young people who refuse to knuckle down. It is to them and them alone I address myself; it is for them alone that I am trying to defend surrealism against the accusation that it is, after all, no more than an intellectual pastime like any other' says Breton.

John Cooper-Clarke, punk poet, dad dead of asbestos poisoning, Salford new-wave-dada-agit bopper, the label doesn't matter, replies 'Punk is the nearest thing to the working classes going into areas like surrealism and Dada. Until now they've been the domain of the middle classes. I think people in the New Wave have done the smart thing and walked into those areas. Now you've got a kind of working class vision of things'. As Rosemont says, 'The proof of the pudding is in the outcry of eternity . . .'. David Widgery



Behind the mist

Dutiful Daughters
eds. Jean McCrindle & Sheila Rowbotham
Allen Lane £5.95.

There used to be a part in films where it all went misty and faded out. There used to be a part at the end of a chapter where the bedroom door closed and it went . . .

And then there came childbirth, always going on amidst screams from an upstairs room while it seemed the whole world waited with the father down below.

Or else there were glimpses of another kind. The times of illness. The times of bereavement. And most of all the scrubbing and cooking and washing and sewing. Waiting wrapped in shawls, in an anxious, huddled line at the pit-head after a disaster. Or queueing for bread.

Often such depictions were sentimental. Almost always they were shadowy. The women in the back room. A weary figure, waiting and fetching and bearing. Surrounded by children. Nameless more often than not.

So very rarely the figure at the centre of the stage, certainly not once her pretty looks had faded. That's how it was with women.

Only Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham have opened the door on another scene. This time the story is told by women themselves.

Dutiful Daughters comprises the memories of middle-aged and older women—mainly working class women—from England and Scotland.

And it's a different world: the pains of puberty and the horror of menstruation; complete ignorance of childbirth right up

until your first labour; hating your mother who made you drudge at home, and never told you the things you needed to know; years of sexual intercourse without ever experiencing orgasm, or even knowing what it is.

Low paid jobs like farm work and office cleaning; the deprivations and loneliness of the war years; growing up in affectionless families; TB, depression, and abortion.

But it isn't by any means all misery.

There's the fun involved in making your way in a new job; the friendships made in the war; the affections of children and a kind husband; the pleasure of a first indoor bath and toilet.

Yet over and over again recur the most basic concerns of two generations of women: the misery of bad housing; the struggle to control their fertility; the boring and low-paid nature of their work.

You may feel well acquainted with facts and statistics relating to the conditions of women's lives in the twentieth century. But this book can't fail to astonish and even wound you. It's on territory such as this that oral history can score above all.

I doubt if any of these women ever dreamed that one day her life story would be told, let alone in print to thousands of readers. The editors have done a fine job in transcribing the individual accents and manners of speech, sufficiently preserving the alternating hesitations and spontaneous flow of memory. It takes patient and sympathetic interviewing to gather material as sensitive as this.

Dutiful Daughters should inspire many more women to follow in its footsteps. There are many many more stories to be told.

Judith Condon

THE BOOK MARX CLUB

supplies paperback books for socialists and trade unionists. For as little as £4.50 we send up to six books a quarter whose retail value can be as much as £7. Now well-established with in excess of 600 members, Bookmarx is an opportunity

which no-one should be fool enough to miss. These are the books for the second quarter of 1978 (retail price in brackets). You get List A plus one other list (please state preference) for £4.50. We will send additional lists for £2.50 each.

LIST A

Trade Unions Under Capitalism. Tom Clarke & Laurie Clements (£1.95). A collection of some of the best Marxist writings stressing the importance of independent Rank and File action in the trade unions—from Marx & Engels as well as contemporary writers.

Kill Me Quick Meja Mwangi (50p). This unusual African novel tells the tragic story of two unemployed youths in modern Nairobi.

(£1.00). A new printing of a masterful book telling of a woman's fight for spiritual and sensual freedom written in 1899, slammed at the time as vulgar, sordid and unwholesome.

LIST B

Lenin Vol 3 - Revolution Besieged Tony Cliff (£3.60) The latest volume of Cliff's masterly biography covers the period following the 1917 revolution and the experience of the Communist International. A special offer will be available on the first two volumes for club members.

LIST C

In the Rapids of Revolution John Maclean (£2.95). A new selection of the writings of one of the greatest Marxist teachers, not just of red Clydeside, but of international standing.

Distributors of

Football hooliganism
Roger Ingham et al £1.50
Prison secrets
NCCL £1.25
What choice Windscale?
Friends of the Earth £1.00
Coming soon
Your rights at work
NCCI 70p
Order now from your bookshop!

LIST D

Politics of the Judiciary J A G Griffiths (£1.25). A detailed expose of the class politics of judges and the whole legal system, this new book is essential reading for anyone likely to come up against them.

A Light Shining in Buckinghamshire. Caryl Churchill (£1.50). A playscript by a modern socialist playwright which expresses the ideas of the diggers and the levellers in the English revolution.
Outcasts of Foolgarah Frank Hardy (60p). This hilarious novel by the famous Australian author of *Power Without Glory* is based on a dustmen's strike.

LIST E

Women's Bodies, Women's Rights Linda Gordon (£1.50). A new history of the fight for adequate birth control in the USA.

For Coloured Girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf. Ntozake Shange (£1.50). This remarkable new play/poem explores the double exploitation of black women.

Send applications with cash to:
Bookmarx Club, Bookmarks,
265 Seven Sisters Road,
London, N4 2DE

PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTION

Publications Distribution Co-operative
27 Clerkenwell Close London EC1R 0AT
Telephone 01-251 4976

**HARRY McSHANE:
NO MEAN
FIGHTER**

Harry McShane and
Joan Smith

£2.95 paper £7.50 cloth

Pluto Press, Unit 10
Spencer Court,
7 Chalcot Road,
London, NW1 8LH

01-722 0141

Pluto Press



SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE (128 pages) : £1.25*

Sex, Family and the New Right; Radio Alice in Bologna; American Leninism in the 1970's; Remembering the Tet Offensive; Marxism and Workers' Control;

*From left bookshops and direct from PDC, 27 Clerkenwell Close, ECL.

British Associate Editors: Sheila Rowbotham, David Widgery.

Colin Sparks
announces

The DEATH of the CINEMA

Julia

This is probably the best film out on general release at the moment. It is unusual for a number of reasons, not least the fact that the central figures are women. Over the last four years various American films have been made portraying the friendships between men (some cynics say the only screen love affairs these days are between Robert Redford and Paul Newman) but few deal with women's relations with one another.

Taken from a collection of reminiscences by the American playwright Lillian Hellman, the film deals with the friendship between Lillian and her childhood friend, Julia. Julia, the more assured and forceful of the two, when an adult goes to study with Freud in Austria. Lillian, after failing at first to find her in Vienna, stumbles upon a militant workers' demonstration, and learns that Julia has been badly beaten by the Nazis, because of her involvement in the anti-fascist movement.

Lillian in turn becomes involved in the struggle against Hitler and delivers money to German anti-Nazis in Berlin.

The film's strongest feature is the relationship which develops between Lillian and Julia. It is also refreshing to see Lillian's relationship with Dashiell Hammett, the author of *The Maltese Falcon*, presented as the open, easy-going friendship suggested in Hellman's autobiography.

Fascism is presented as the violent, vicious creed it undoubtedly is, and this is horrifyingly brought home when some Nazis throw a student over a balcony. Julia and some comrades rip into them heroically, sustaining terrible injuries in the process.

It is a film which should leave no one in any doubt as to the nature of fascism, but I think it doesn't present either the German Resistance or the Austrian socialist movement at all satisfactorily. That apart, however, it is a film worth seeing.

Paul Cunningham



or is it?

The commercial cinema is not what it used to be. In 1946, the peak year in Britain, 1,635,000,000 seats were sold. By 1975, the figure had fallen by a factor of ten, to 125,000,000. The decline has been long, slow and steady, and most other countries show the same pattern.

The obvious replacement for most people has been TV, whose extension to virtually complete national coverage mirrors the fall in cinema admissions. The audience for popular TV shows are vast. In the week ending 12 February 1978 the top show, *This Is Your Life*, had an audience of 19.5 millions. Nineteen other shows had audiences greater than 15.5 million.

The link between the availability of TV and the rate of visits to the cinema is very close (See Table.)

These facts have led many people to suggest that cinema is dying on its feet. There may be a long term truth in this, but in the short run the picture is very much more complicated. And the consequences of the change have not been to drive poor old MGM to the wall just yet.

TV is certainly a very profitable business. The sums of money involved are very large and rising quickly. The revenue of all ITV companies in January 1978 was £24,795,672, up 35 per cent on the same month in 1977,

which was in turn up 39 per cent on the same month in 1976. In the financial year 1976/7 Thames TV—the largest of the ITV companies—made an *after tax* profit of £3,620,000.

What has happened in Britain is that the owners of TV and Cinema have become closely linked. For example, the Rank organisation, starting off in flour-milling, moved into the cinema and, in 1972, acquired a 38 per cent share in Southern TV. Thames is half-owned by EMI, who own, apart from other things, the ABC cinema chain.

One of the reasons for this is that, although ITV is profitable, it is not profitable enough. Lord (Lew) Grade of ATV put it like this: 'In television there's a ceiling on the money you can earn. In the film business there's no such limitation.' So in 1975 ATV joined with the General Cinema Corporation of Boston to form a film distribution company. ATV had also been busy financing cinema films — for example *The Return of the Pink Panther* and *The Eagle Has Landed*.

In the USA still massively the largest market for film and TV — a related process has taken place. By 1977, most of the big Hollywood production companies were getting as much revenue from the sale of material to TV as from Cinema films. These companies, too, have become parts of massive capitalist concerns. In 1966, Paramount was taken over by Gulf and Western. In 1967 United Artists was taken over by the Transamerica Corporation. In 1969, Warner Brothers was taken over by Kinney National Services. MGM moved out of film making into TV programmes and the ownership of hotels and gambling companies in Las Vegas.

One of the major consequences of this has been that, in the USA at least, cheap TV productions have become the staple of movie companies while Cinema film-making has concentrated on attempts to manufacture single big films designed to realise massive profits. This is a very risky business — 10 million pounds is a very low budget in this league — but the rewards can be bigger still.

For us, the consequences will continue to be pretty dire. More *Hawaii 5-0* on the box and more *Airport 197N* on the local tlix. But then, there is always the occasional *Star Wars* to take the misery out of it . . .

Table

Country	Cinema visits per year	TV sets per thousand of population
Britain	3.26	285
France	3.45	213
W. Germany	2.46	270
Italy	9.77	186
Ireland	9.66	172

Policies on energy, and on the contribution of nuclear power in particular, should long ago have become essential and central topics for debate in all political arenas. The importance of these issues dwarfs many lesser topics which have obsessed political activists. This is not to say that energy policy should become an outlet for ulterior political aims. It must not. It is too important an issue.

The proposed energy strategy for developed countries is awesome in its simplicity. There will be an energy gap. The only way to fill it is by nuclear generation of electricity. The only way to do that is by an accelerating commitment to a plutonium fast-breeder programme. Holy writ!

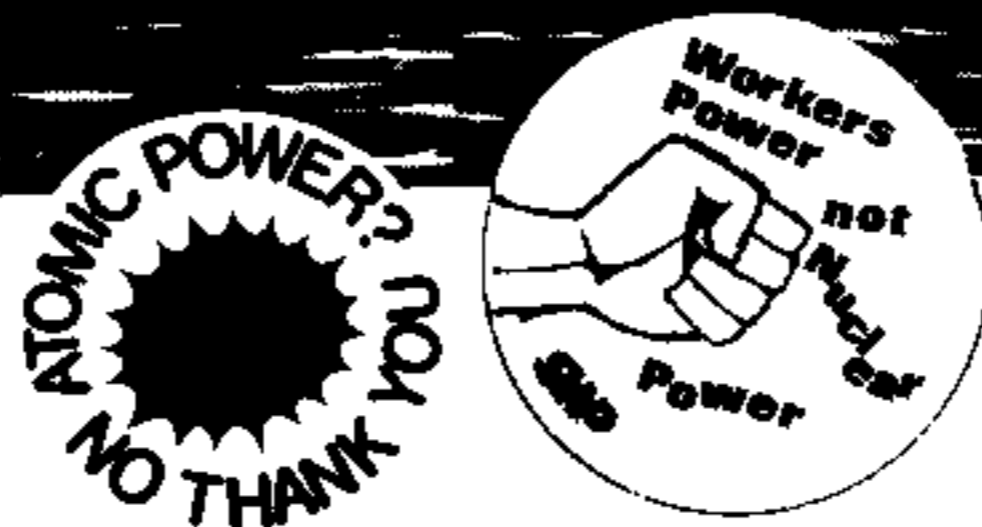
A battery of questions arises as to the feasibility and desirability of this deceptively simple proposal. Perhaps I can outline enough of them here to convince you that reconsideration of this policy is a priority.

Underpinning this whole energy policy are the assumptions that exponential economic growth is good for us, that analogous energy growth is tied inexorably to it, and that both of these are possible on an unlimited time scale. The real situation is that even if we can produce enough energy to sustain this growth we shall eventually, and in some cases fairly soon, run out of essential resources and pollute our environment beyond redemption. Socialist policies must face up to this reality, however unpalatable it may seem. But this is a larger question. Let me now examine cursorily some of the secondary issues in the energy field.

Will there be an energy gap in the 1990s? There may be but there need not be. Arguments that there will be are not valid arguments for rapid development of the fast breeder. For technical reasons fast breeders could not make a significant contribution to UK energy production until well into next century. The nuclear establishment argues for a quick decision to build just one commercial fast breeder (CFR) 'to keep our options open' and simultaneously claims that fast breeder development is inevitable. An 'inevitable option' is one curious artefact of the nuclear age. The spending of £1000m to £2000m on CFR would create strong economic pressure to spend even more on further reactors of the same type.

This means that now is the time to give the most serious consideration to alternative policies. The first and most obvious alternative is to reduce the wastage of energy. Even our less than half hearted 'Save It' campaign has conserved up to 6 per cent of annual energy usage for an expenditure of less than £8m, the total energy savings in three years being equivalent to nearly £2000m at 1976 prices.

There are strong indications that if the



NO NUKES IS GOOD NUKES

large expenditure on nuclear research and development over the past thirty years had instead been spent on alternatives such as solar, wind, tidal or wave power the cost-effectiveness in terms of energy available would have been greater. The development of these alternatives would certainly have produced more jobs. The nuclear industry is extremely capital intensive and it requires esoteric skills. Thus the reprocessing plant proposed for Windscale would produce relatively few jobs at a cost of over £½m per job, some hundred times the amount needed to create a more conventional job. In contrast the development of renewable energy resources from sun or wind would require the employment of plumbers, joiners and engineers on labour-intensive projects using easily understandable technology.

Proposed nuclear power programmes for the UK and other developed countries have been grandiose in the extreme. That proposed for the EEC countries has been criticised as being impossible to achieve in terms of money and resources and indeed these criticisms are now widely accepted. Developed countries may not be able to afford nuclear power programmes. This is obviously more true for underdeveloped countries. Even such a nuclear hawk as Edward Teller last month stated that nuclear power was not appropriate 'economically and structurally' for the Third World, a statement which contradicts claims that Third World survival depends on our selling them nuclear technology.

Economically and socially the nuclear option, for it is only one of several options, can be strongly criticised. Serious doubts

and questions also arise as to its safety. The principal issues here are the risk of accidents at nuclear plants, the problems of dealing with radioactive waste and the indissoluble connection between civil and military uses of fissible nuclear materials.

The risks of a serious incident at a nuclear plant have been minimised as comparable to those of being struck by a meteor. But unquestionably this is a complex technology vulnerable to the human fallibility of those who operate it. Part of the Windscale reprocessing plant has been out of operation since September 1973 following an accident which contaminated thirty five workers. In the words of the official report 'there appears to have been no reason to expect such an incident'. How many more such cards could be up the sleeve of the nuclear genie?

One aspect of reprocessing and waste disposal illustrates how each area of established policy deserves to be questioned. A large proportion of the expansion sought at Windscale is for capacity to reprocess oxide fuels from other countries. It is often claimed that the UK leads the world in oxide-fuel reprocessing technology, a dubious claim since no country has successfully reprocessed oxide and the intention is to do so in increasing quantities.

The timetable proposed for the contract to reprocess Japanese fuel was intriguing. The first spent fuel rods were to arrive in 1979 and lie in storage here until reprocessing began in 1985 (although we are currently so short of appropriate storage facilities that a Calder Hall reactor has been pressed into service as a store). The resultant highly radioactive liquid wastes would then remain in this country until at least 1990 at which time a process of glassifying the liquid might become a practical proposition (on the other hand it might prove never to be feasible). Why the indecent haste to import material which is to remain untreated for at least six years? Much play is made of the contractual option to return the radioactive waste to Japan. It would be dangerous to transport highly active liquid waste and the Flowers Report has questioned the wisdom of returning the waste in any form.

The correct energy policy can only be chosen after proper and informed discussion of all its technical and social implications. The present official policy should therefore be probed deeply. It is possible that strong arguments could then be accepted for its adoption. The alternatives deserve equal consideration. Once the nuclear path is taken in earnest there may be no return.

Ian MacLintoich

Ian MacLintoich is a Labour member of Dundee Council and health and safety officer at Dundee University.

The Crisp Green Whistle Test

by Mike Flood Page

The Chart-Rigging Scandal

The recent scandal about rigging the pop charts has not only illuminated some practices which the music industry accepts as 'a fairly normal marketing operation,' but has also pinpointed the central contradiction which faces record companies as they jostle for key positions in a market worth over £250 million annually in Britain alone. The dilemma of the capitalist record company is that the appeal of their 'product' (an industry term used indiscriminately for records and artists) is based upon its novelty.

The premise of the entire music industry, including print and broadcast media, is that a record will have a limited life, to be replaced by something newer and better, with perhaps an afterlife as a 'golden oldie'. This runs directly counter to the industry's devout wish to render this sizeable market as predictable as that for baked beans or underwear; thus cutting down wastage, lessening the necessity to purchase new capital (artists), minimising risk, and generally maximising profit. To this end the companies use a variety of devices, but in almost all of these partly for ideological, and partly for commercial reasons, the charts have come to play a central role. A brief history will show how, and why.

A deep analysis would look into some of the interesting assumptions that underly the collapse of popular opinion in any area, let alone one as complex as musical taste, into a unitary ranking from 1 to 30, 50 or even 100, on the basis of sales figures. There are obvious questions to explore about the presumed compatibility of commercial and other criteria, and the relationship with ideas of competition and excellence.

Suffice it to say that the assumption that sales success equals worth had become firmly implanted in the realm of popular music by the early 1950s when the British pop weekly *New Musical Express*, following the American example began listing a Top Ten record sales. The other pop papers rapidly followed suit and the Top Ten became a Top Twenty, or even Thirty. Accuracy was hardly a watchword, but then no-one took them seriously anyway.

The decisive change came in 1964 with the introduction of pirate pop radio which adopted another American device: format-

ting, usually based around a Top 40 playlist. Suddenly chart placing became synonymous with airplay, which in turn was highly correlated with sales. It was during this period that chart-rigging first became a profitable operation. The first taste of chart-rigging scandal came in 1967 when the *Melody Maker* reverted from a Top 50 to a Top 30 listing on the grounds that the absolute numbers (and therefore the ease of buying-in) involved in the bottom twenty places were too small to prevent rigging.

When the BBC opened Radio 1 in November 1967 to replace the banned pirate stations it too adopted a Top 40 format. To guarantee an authoritative hype-free chart it joined forces with the British Phonographic Industry (representing the record companies) and some trade magazines to commission a chart from a market research organisation, BMRB. It has since become the arbiter for all BBC daytime airplay, for two weeklies and one trade paper, and for record stores, many of whom will only stock the Top 50 singles. Chart albums will also be liable for discounts at high street stores like Boots, Smiths and Woolies, so the charts have become a conservative mechanism.

Most people who buy records on a Friday or Saturday go with no fixed intention. If the choice is about equal between two albums and one is offering a major discount because it is in the Top 50, then that is the one that will be bought. It therefore sells more and remains in the Top Fifty, and therefore continues to be discounted because volume sales are expected and so on.

However, because a record is a unique item, the marginal preference can be exploited. Thus if only the new Bob Dylan and nothing else will satisfy you, then the stores can afford not to discount, and can even raise the price on it. For this reason general pricing changes in records are often initiated on a record with guaranteed popularity. Elton John's *'Captain Fantastic'* with the largest advance sales of any British album at the time was among the first used to hike an LP price to £3.25, Bob Dylan's *'Hard Rain'* took it up to £3.79.

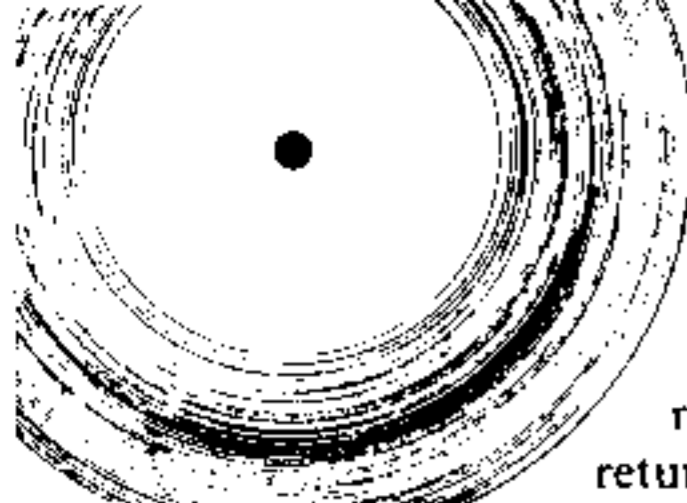
However, the central point is the overwhelming importance of the charts. All pop records are in competition for public attention, and thence sales. Hundreds are released every month, only thirty can be in the Top 30 at a time. Get a record in the charts and nine tenths of the battle is over. The peculiarity of the charts is that although sales of the number one single in any week runs into several thousand, and that of number twenty will still be in the region of seven hundred to a thousand, numbers below that fall away pretty fast, between number thirty and number fifty the gap may only be ten or twenty sales in a week. The total sales of any record in this region will only be about 250 per week.

Thus paradoxically by establishing one authoritative chart BMRB have made it relatively cheap for anyone with the intelligence to find out their 375 chart-return shops to buy into the bottom end of the charts and thus kick off the whole process. As the recent newspaper revelations have shown there are plenty of people ready to do just that.

From the point of view of the record companies this could become self-defeating. If everyone does it then the chances of anyone record getting into the charts are back to what they were before chart-rigging, and every company would just have added overhead. However, short-term interest seems to have won out, probably under the increasing pressure of the current economic situation which in the last couple of years has caught up with the record industry who had hitherto enjoyed ten years of continuous expansion. As chart-rigger Julian Beauchamp told the *Daily Mirror*: 'One thing's for sure everyone's doing it.'

In their constant battle to render predictable the unpredictable i.e. the taste of a record-buying public, the charts are central to the record companies' strategy. However they are by no means the only tactics: a whole armoury of devices are used by the record companies. Often the primary aim as with chart-rigging, is to get frequent radio play. Airplay is according to the folk wisdom of the industry, the way to guarantee sales, although the Sex Pistols point to the possibility of other avenues.

In addition to chart-fixing by buying at chart-return shops, approaches to staff involved in the compilation and publication of the charts may be tried: this can occur at any level from shop counter staff, via the bodies which compile charts, to the



magazines and broadcast media which use them. Key record dealers ie those returning chart placings may find themselves the unexpected recipients of free copies of records they can then sell for 100 per cent profit, and a more indirect means is the handing out of discount vouchers at discos which can only be redeemed on certain records, again at chart-return stores.

Various gatekeepers of music taste, who automatically sift out most new releases and select others for attention may be approached via a variety of means: more often subtle forms of mutual obligation are established rather than outright bribery. Media personnel are the constant target of attempts to improve their life-style with everything from free records to trips abroad, this goes for radio, disco, tv and press staff, all of whom subjectively may feel themselves independent of pressure: 'Rip-off Records sent me to New York to review the Livid End, but did I give them a bad write up!' is a common line. While such integrity is admirable it also ignores the fact that the primary question in the media is attention: whether it's negative or positive is entirely secondary.

A further attempt to render the market more amenable to control has been the increasing diversification of record companies like EMI into other areas of the record and music marketing process—from dancehalls to distribution.

Equally interesting here is the importance of notions of the rock star, or genre in rendering a market predictable. A successful persona or style which overrides the merits or otherwise of a given record again guarantees initial sales and media response. Every new Rod Stewart record will go on the BBC playlist, every new punk record has a certain small but devoted audience ready to buy it unheard. It is a common boast in the marketing department of many record companies that they can predict the sales of any given Country and Western album to the nearest dozen, thus making even that small market profitable.

All this of course is to say that record companies behave like any other profit-making concern, under capitalism, with the key difference that since their product's appeal is unique in each case, and based upon novelty, the devices to assess and manipulate demand are particular to it. Perhaps it is worth noting, then, the context of the chart-rigging scandal breaking into the headlines. Chart-rigging has probably increased with the industry as a whole feeling the pinch at least after ten years of boom. However, it is also true that the BMRB franchise to compile the charts is due up for renewal shortly and at least two other charts are waiting in the wings. A new trade paper, *Record Business*, is setting one up on the American model, incorporating airplay in the lower reaches of the chart; and Gallup are preparing a new chart for the *Melody Maker* and some commercial radio stations. Since it seems accepted that rigging has been common knowledge for years in the record industry, it seems valid to enquire just why the scandal should have broken now.

All revolutionary socialists agree on the nature of the Scottish Nationalist Party. It is a middle class party with a divorce nationalist ideology supported by some Scottish capitalists pursuing a parliamentary road to independence. None expects these Tartan Tories to introduce socialism into their new Scotland.

«FOR A SCOTTISH WORKERS' REPUBLIC»

Knowing about the true nature of the SNP, however, does not really help decide our attitude to independence for Scotland. We have to decide whether an independent Scottish state would be a step backwards for the working class. If it represents a step forward, then fear of the SNP must not be allowed to frighten us into opposing a progressive demand.

An independent Scottish state means an end to the present British state based as it is on an Unionist constitution. It would probably mean the creation of a federal state. Therefore attention has to centre not on Scottish nationalism in isolation, but on the total picture of an independent Scotland in relation to the British state.

Today the British economy like all industrial economies is suffering from a world slump. Britain is in a worse position than many other economies and could be described as a weak link in the chain of advanced industrial economies. It has been suggested that the underlying cause of this position is the backward nature of the British state. Far from being a modern democracy, the British state is an 'Ancien Regime' incapable of aiding the further development of the economy despite many efforts to avert continuous decline.

There is a marked division within British capitalism itself, between the City—finance capital, and domestic industrial capital. The

city as a base for international capital, has traditionally had a strong hold on the state. This state has served the interests of imperialist development overseas at the expense of domestic industrial capital. While the city remains a thriving centre for international finance, domestic capital lacks the short of funds to provide the capital equipment and hence productivity to stand off foreign competition. There can be no real change in the fortunes of industrial capital without a radical change in the state which could overcome the interests of the City and put industrial capital first. To rectify the fortunes of ailing industrial capital a modern, democratic state is a necessary.

In the nineteenth century, the British constitutional monarchy was a most advanced form of state when compared to the absolutism of the Habsburgs and Romanovs. Today the British state form has become a drag on the further development of domestic capital. Aptly described as a state for Whig and Tory gentle folk, it is an out of date state trying to cope with the problems of advanced capitalism.

The British State is a bourgeois democracy. But such democracies can take very different forms and enjoy differing degrees of democracy. Lenin was very concerned to stress the differences to be found within bourgeois democratic states. 'It would be a fine Marxist indeed who failed

Socialism is seen, and rightly so, as the complete negation of the social order that has dominated the world for many generations of mankind. It is true, as one reactionary politician has said, that Socialism would change our way of life. That is what makes the struggle worthwhile. No greater transformation of the conditions of life has been conceived of as a possible achievement of man himself. The movement to bring that change into being stands out in opposition to the economists and top politicians now engaged in futile efforts to make capitalism work. The pretence, made by some of them, that their efforts are in line with the ultimate aims of our movement makes it necessary that the revolutionary character of socialism be openly proclaimed.

It is becoming increasingly evident that we are living in a world of conflict inseparable from the existing social order. The opponents of Socialism must shut out the thought that revolutionary change is necessary if man is to extricate himself from the overwhelming conditions of conflict and start on the road towards human development. The supporters of capitalism have nothing to offer mankind beyond the continuous existence of a system of society which totters on under the weight of crises inherent in that very system. We have philosophy, economics and history on our side calling for the surrender of the forces defending capitalism.

Socialism will be possible only when the workers, those who meet the needs of society, decide that they are determined to lay the living conditions of mankind on a new foundation. The whole future of humanity rests on the emergence of the proletariat as the creative force in society.

It was Marx who referred to the class struggle as 'the immediate driving force of history' while some of his socialist contemporaries were calling for collaboration between two main classes in capitalist society. His conclusions about the role of the proletariat sprang from his philosophic views confirmed by his analysis of capitalism. Marx lived long enough to find inspiration from the initiative shown by the workers in the Paris Commune of 1871. It is worth noting that Lenin also made many references to the Paris Commune.

Lenin, like Marx, put stress on the need for initiative 'from below'. This principle, enunciated by the two revolutionary figures mentioned, is not affected by the fact that Russia turned away from socialism. It is the fact that the workers held power that makes the Russian Revolution an important socialist event. Those of our opponents who see in this approach to socialism evidence that Marxism carries with it the implication of violence are looking in the wrong direction. They shut their minds to a host of events in recent history. Their boasted

HARRY MC SHANE TALKING ABOUT SOCIALISM

'democracy' never permits social change of a kind that is fundamental. We are more aware of this today than we were years ago. After Hitler and Pinochet we know that violence has been the savage last resort of counter-revolution against the masses.

Socialism meets the desire for freedom innate in every human being. In 1875, nine years before his death, Marx wrote of 'the withering away of the state'. He was pointing ahead to a situation in which class division had long since ceased to exist. No other school of thought can possibly visualise a situation of that kind. The class struggle is important and cannot be avoided because it marks the road towards the class-less society. With the end of class oppression the state disappears.

We can play no part in the building of the new society - that privilege must be left to those who come after us. We are in the position to deplore the criminal policy pursued by Stalin and his supporters after the establishment of proletarian power in Russia. But we have no right to imagine that future generations will be less intelligent than we are. What a thought that is!

It is possible, however, to see with Marx, the obstacles to human development under capitalism and to visualise human progress once they cease to exist. The veil can be lifted in that way. Our absorption in the class struggle makes it difficult for opponents to charge us with possessing utopian tenden-



cies. It was Marx who wrote in the *Grundrisse* when referring to production when capitalist conditions have gone 'The measure of wealth will no longer be labour time, but leisure time.' Marx elsewhere referred to socialism as 'the realm of freedom'. He looked forward to the ending of the division between mental and physical labour, which he saw as the reduction of the worker to 'a fragment of a man'. Instead of labour-power being sold as a commodity he saw production being carried on by 'freely associated labour'. Marx was so aware of the debasement of man as being inseparable from capitalism that he could hardly avoid giving thought to what would happen once creative labour replaced production for profit. His philosophy of man actuated Marx throughout his life.

This view of socialism is far from discarding political activity, but there is more to politics than what happens in Parliament. Issues like wages, unemployment and the war danger become of much greater political importance as time passes. The economic crisis has brought many matters of importance into political discussion.

Parliament has lost much of its prestige but its control over the forces of law and order, the armed forces, education and a number of other services means that it cannot be ignored. It is possible to forget the fact that the full picture of what is happening is concealed from the public, and even Members of Parliament. One could take up a great amount of space on Parliament and the forces hidden behind the scene, but it is only intended here to emphasise the political potentialities of the working class. There have been examples of political pressure being used by certain sections of the working class. One of the great obstacles to the extension of industrial action is the close relationship between top trade union leaders and the Cabinet. Solidarity in the working class as a whole, coming from below, is an urgent necessity if we are to further the cause of Socialism.

Socialist leadership, devoid of elitist tendencies, is a vital necessity. Courage and determination is required, but it is also necessary that everything possible be done towards spreading theoretical knowledge among as many workers as possible. The greater the theoretical understanding the greater will be our confidence in victory over the class enemy. Greater vigour must be shown in this field. The concept of motion which Marx took from Hegel and detected in the world of human beings, if seen and grasped, will strengthen our faith in the certainty of victory by the working class and the establishment of Socialism.

Harry McShane. *No Mean Fighter* by Harry McShane and Joan Smith will be published in May by Pluto Press. Price £2.95

REALM OF FREEDOM