Labour & Trade Union Review

November-December 1989 No.14

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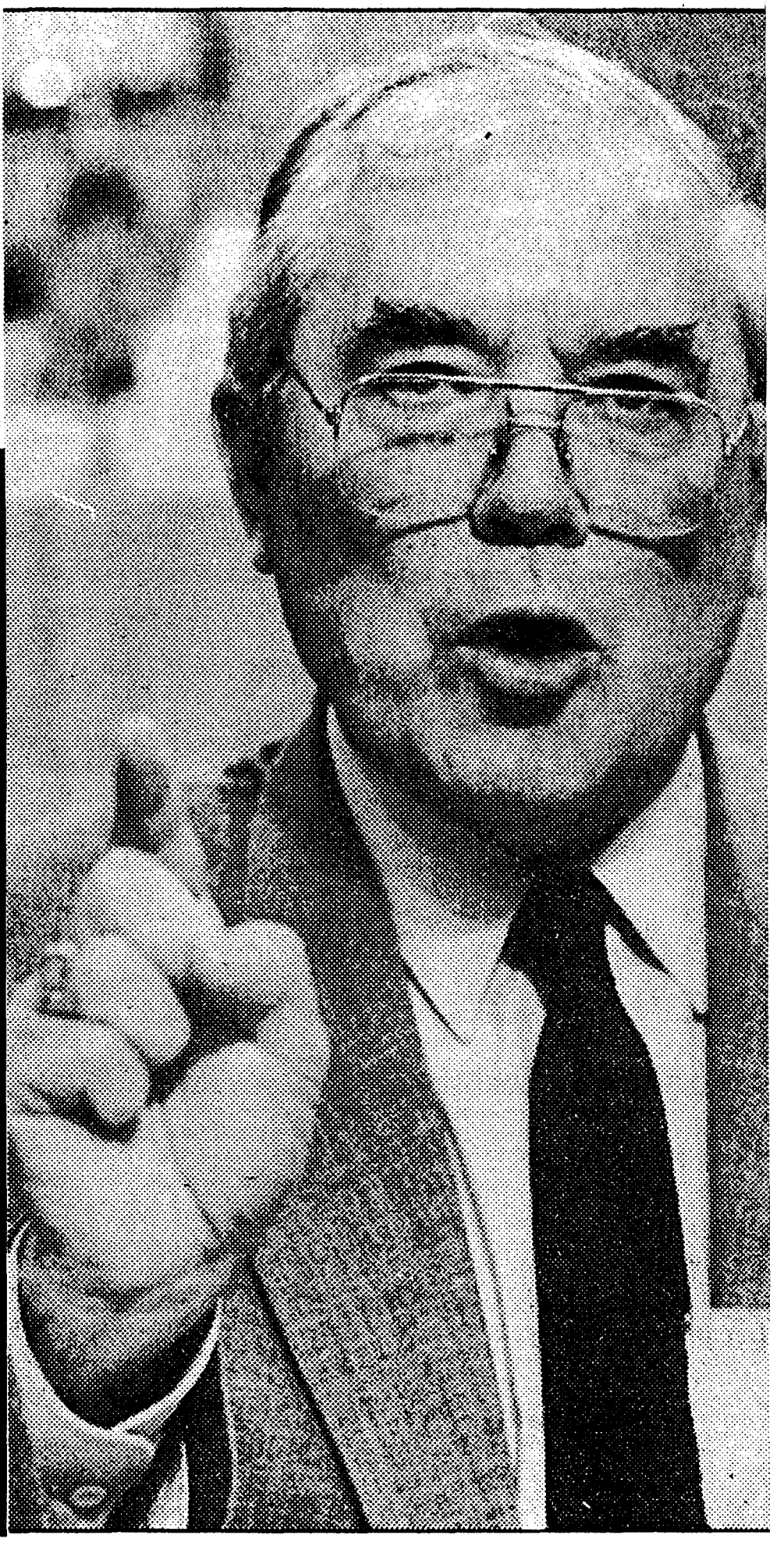
THE TRIUMPH OF THE EETPU

The Hitler-Stalin Pact

1688: A class analysis
Labour in power 1945-51
Northern Ireland 1969-1989
Thatcher & Gorbachev

plus

Animal Rights
Conference Diary
Labour and the Farmers
L&TUR in Conference
Notes on the News



All Hammondites now ?

Within hours of the TUC making an issue of Labour's industrial relations proposals at Blackpool two months ago, Neil Kinnock resolved the ambiguity surrounding Labour's position by announcing that Labour would retain, in some guise or other, essential elements of the Tory trade union laws and would underpin these with proper sanctions. The old notion (which survived, as we pointed out in our last issue, in the **Final Report of the Policy Review**) that Labour in office would simply restore the *status quo ante* Thatcher in the sphere of industrial relations law, has been buried at last.

It has been buried in a manner which reveals the degree of ideological convergence between Kinnockism and Thatcherism, to which we have also drawn attention in the past. But the fact that it has been buried is an entirely useful thing, since it may at last stimulate thought within the trade union movement on an issue where mindlessness has prevailed for a decade.

Like Thatcher & Co., Kinnock & Co. intend to run the British economy on the basis of the free market and with little or no reference to a much weakened labour movement, and they intend to ensure that the unions know and remain in their place, within and subject to a set of laws which express the new and extremely unfavourable balance of class power engineered by the Thatcher government since 1979. That this is so was entirely to be expected. Kinnock, as we have said before, is *coherent.*

Labour in office in the 1970s did not have it in it to take political responsibility for promoting a radical structural reform in the working class interest when radical change of some kind or another was inevitable because the *status quo* was seizing up. The Conservatives under Thatcher took political responsibility for promoting a radical change in the capitalist interest and their success in doing this against the leaderless resistance of a disoriented labour movement has since justified the deed. The legitimacy of the Thatcher counter-revolution is challenged by this journal, but it is not seriously challenged by the Labour Party. The trade union movement has only issued strangled cries of protest, not a challenge that anyone else could take seriously because predicated upon a credible alternative vision. And, in view of the nature of the relationship between the unions and the party, Labour's leaders could not be expected to do anything much on an issue where the unions were chronically failing to get their act together.

So what is in prospect, if Labour wins the next election, is a conservative Labour government taking over and administering the new *status quo* established by a radical right-wing government. The rhetoric and the sentiments and the trimmings will be different, of course, and Labour's voters may take some comfort from this, but the substance will be much the same. We have argued in the past that Neil Kinnock must take his personal share of the responsibility for the failings of Labour politics in the late 1970s that has made this prospect likely today. But, at this stage in in Labour's affairs, to blame Kinnock would be beside the point.

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"Labour has now adopted Hammond's vision in policy, but the party is far from being Hammondite in spirit... The task for socialists is to develop a coherent alternative outlook that will be able to provide feasible socialist policies for when the limits of Hammondism are reached"

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Politicians must deal with what exists, and the rare kind of politician who can also conceive of a radical alternative to what exists and devise a strategy for realising this alternative is precisely the kind of politician that the Labour Party does not breed. Kinnock is dealing with what exists, and what exists is, on the one hand, an unpleasant but still functional state of affairs established by Thatcherism, which he proposes to make less unpleasant, and, on the other hand, a colossal vacuum where British socialism's brains used to be.

Until the trade union movement faces up to the fact that it threw away its massive power in the 1970s by failing to cope with its internal conflicts properly and by failing to recognise and act on the need for progressive reform of industrial relations in the working class interest, it will not recover that power. What Kinnock has now done is to state, very bluntly, that it can expect no presents from him. And that is fair enough. We now know where we are.

But, if British socialism is almost completely disoriented and mindless, the same is not wholly true of the trade unions. For there is one tendency in British trade unionism which has long envisaged the current perspective of Labour policy, and is comfortable with it. This tendency is led by the EETPU, which knows that its day has come.

"What are you all looking so unhappy about? This has been the best week of my life." With these words Eric Hammond began his annual fraternal greeting to the impotent socialists among Labour's Conference delegates, who responded with their traditional warmth. But, since the self-indulgent taunting of conference delegates is not the best way to get them to understand things, it is unlikely that the truth of what Hammond then went on to say has sunk in yet, that what the Labour Party has done is to come round to, and adopt, the economic and social outlook of Eric Hammond's union.

In the mid-1970s, when the British working class was at the height of its power, and the experience of the Heath government had demonstrated to all with eyes to see that the country could not be governed against this class for as long as its power remained intact, three coherent perspectives existed within the trade union movement. The first perspective was represented by Jack Jones and Clive Jenkins; it recognised that the workers could only preserve their power by using it constructively, and that this meant taking responsibility for production through a new framework of industrial democracy. This perspective bore fruit in the recommendations of the Bullock Committee on Industrial Democracy, which opened up the prospect of the greatest advance in democracy in Britain since the proposals of the Beveridge report were enacted by the Attlee government of 1945-51. This perspective was resisted by trade union conservatism, and the entire British Left (with the exception of the forerunners of the Ernest Bevin Society) united against this prospect of radical reform in order to preserve their utopian dogmas intact. It survives today in scattered impulses lacking organisational coherence or expression within the trade unions; as an organised outlook, it survives only in the Ernest Bevin Society and the columns of **L&TUR.**

Within the trade union movement, the Jack Jones perspective was opposed by an unholy alliance. Hughie Scanlon and

Arthur Scargill on the left, and Frank Chapple on the right, united to defend "management's right to manage". Scanlon was an unrealistic and confused conservative with leftwing sentiments; his outlook envisaged no change of substance when substantial change was inevitable in one direction or another. Scargill, on the other hand, was a radical who opposed Bullock because he wanted to preserve the workers in a state of class hostility for revolutionary purposes. This perspective was entirely coherent and absurdly unrealistic. Scargill acted it out to the bitter end in 1984-5, and in doing so destroyed the NUM and thus the basis for his outlook within the Labour Movement, leaving himself with no future except as a rent-a-demagogue would-be MP.

The defeat of the very different perspectives of Jones and Scargill has left only one coherent position functional within British trade unionism - the EETPU's position, which Eric Hammond has maintained intact since inheriting the union from Frank Chapple. Other unions do not admit to sharing this position, but it is clear that the AEU tends towards it in practice, except in matters of detail, while the GMB's purpose of acting as coordinator of trade union support for the Labour leadership naturally precludes it from identifying itself with this position explicitly. But, whatever their sentimental differences, they are all tending, willy-nilly, to revise their aims and behaviour along lines the EETPU has pioneered, the lines of business unionism, which accepts the framework of capitalism as eternal, has no will or desire to replace it with something better, accepts that the workers should not disrupt it and seeks only to take care of the workers' material interests within it.

This is the reality within the British Labour movement which explains the ascendancy of Kinnock's line within the Labour Party. Leftwing critics of Kinnockism who refuse to recognise its basis in this reality are wasting their breath.

It remains to be seen what the limits of what we may as well get used to calling *Hammondism* are in practice. But the general historic basis of Hammondism can be pinpointed fairly clearly: on the one hand, the success of post-war western governments in drawing the lessons of the 1920s and 1930s and learning how to minimise the crises and fluctuations to which the international capitalist system is prone, such that the assumption that the capitalist system will continue in being indefinitely is not an unreasonable one, and, on the other hand, the failure of the British working class to develop a coherent and clearly articulated will to power expressed in a practical programme of realisable reforms capable of promoting the progressive transformation of the welfare state/mixed economy established in 1945-51 in a socialist direction.

It was the Left's business to foster the development of such a will to power in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s. It shirked this business completely and is still shirking it.

And so the Labour Party is now committed to a Hammondite vision in policy. Ten years of futile turmoil inside the Party since 1979 have had this as their principal result.

But if the Party's programme is now a Hammondite one, it is very far from being the case that the Labour Party is Hammondite in spirit. Most active members of the Party will continue to adhere to socialist ideals and principles that will never be satisfied by the brutally materialistic adjustment to capitalism that Hammondism represents, and the same is likely to be true of the majority of British workers and trade unionists, whatever they may be induced to go along with, for lack of anything better, in the meantime.

Every dog must have its day, and today belongs to Eric & Co. The task for serious socialists in the Party and the trade union movement is not to rage impotently against the temporary ascendancy of Hammondism, but to develop a coherent alternative outlook that will be able to provide the Party with feasible socialist policies when the limits of Hammondism are reached. This moment may come a lot sooner than Neil and Eric appear to think.

But the Labour Left seems to be entirely oblivious to this, and as absorbed as ever in its favourite pastme, pursuing lost causes which have nothing to do with socialism. No wonder Eric Hammond is a happy man.

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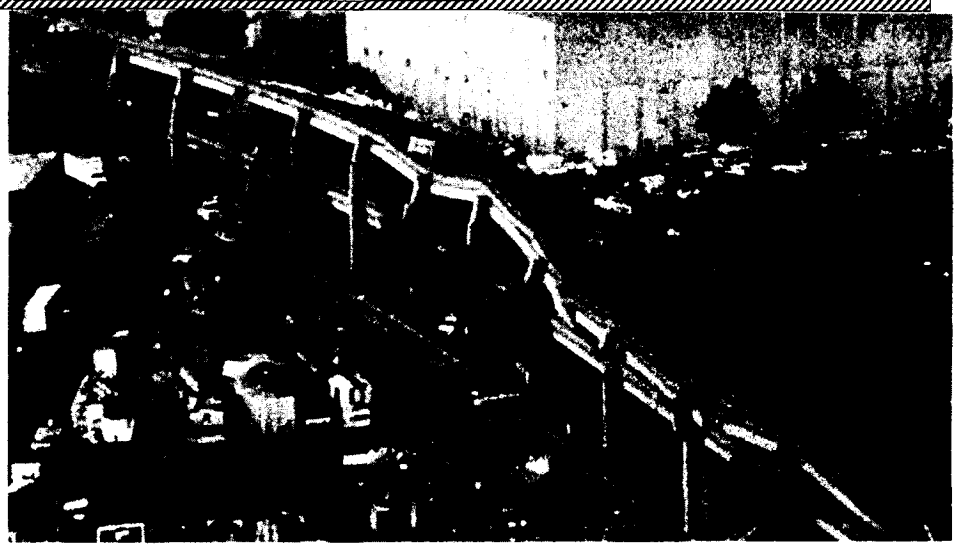
Notes on the News

by Madawc Williams



The sliding economy

Persistence is a virtue only when the basic course of action is sound. Thatcher made her own sort of politics effective by refusing to back down in face of some initial economic troubles during her first term of office. Now she hopes to 'tough out' the present difficulties. It looks less and less likely that she can.

At the time of the 1988 budget, I assumed that the Tories had got the economy under control. I still think that they could have kept things going their way by a few simple measures - credit controls, and probably membership of the EMS. Credit controls would clamp down specifically on consumer spending. Interest rates bear much more heavily on productive industry. Industrialists with shareholders to report to will react more swiftly to expensive money than the millions of moderately prosperous people who are spending their savings and running up as much debt as they can get away with. People with credit cards look at how close they are to their credit limit, not at the real rate of interest they are paying. The EMS, teaming up with the rest of Europe to defend exchange rates, would have put off the speculators. Since speculators do a lot more trading in the money markets than those who have a real need for any given currency, this might in itself have solved matters.

Thatcher resisted both these measures, because they went against her longer-term goals - further weakening of the state within Britain, and no diminution of British sovereignty in the wider world. But she has over-reached herself. Inflation now shows every sign of taking off and becoming self-sustaining. Trade unions are being pushed into larger wage demands by workers who have trouble meeting the mortgage repayments they took on during the Thatcher years. Thatcher is now hitting the very people who switched from Labour to Tory and put her into power in the first place. And the world market is adding to her troubles by going into another bout of share-panic.

The problem for Labour is that it can only hope to get back into power by attracting people who would have stuck with Thatcher had she been a bit wiser and more modest. There are no radical policies that Kinnock can propose that would not put off such people and give Thatcher a fourth term after all. Except, perhaps, for workers control.

Galileo on trial

In the 17th century, Galileo Galilei got into trouble because his observations - most notably of the moons of Jupiter - upset the Catholic Church's view of the universe. His views were seen as heretical, upsetting their dogmas. Now a modern Galileo, a probe designed to study Jupiter and its moons, is in trouble with modern defenders of dogma.

To do its job, the Galileo probe is powered by two small plutonium reactors. There is little choice - solar power would not work as far out as Jupiter. The risk is minimal - very small compared to the risk of travelling on the same road as tankers full of highly inflammable petrol and other even more dangerous substances. But it's *radioactive*, and therefore the modern dogmatists of the Green Movement put it in a special category all by itself. There were legal moves to stop the shuttle carrying the Galileo probe from taking off. Thankfully, these failed.

Remarkably enough, just a few weeks ago the Pope chose to state explicitly that the Catholic Church was wrong in its handling of the original Galileo. Resistance to Galileo's ideas has long been abandoned, but the matter is still remembered and remarked upon. Is the timing of the Pope's announcement just a coincidence?

San Francisco Quake

Shortly after the space shuttle carrying the 'dangerous' Galileo probe took off, a earthquake of middling size caused disaster near San Francisco. Most of the deaths came when a section of a double-decker motorway collapsed.

We live on the outside of a planet with an active crust. Chunks of the planet are still moving about - slowly on the human timescale, but quite quickly in geological terms. Earthquakes are one small part of this process, that happen to intrude on human lives.

Hopes that earthquakes could be predicted proved too optimistic. No one knows when San Francisco will get its next *big* earthquake. And no one feels like leaving the city empty until it comes. What should be happening is building techniques that will minimise the damage.

A double-decker motorway in an earthquake zone seems an inherently foolish idea - though apparently it was supposed to be strong enough to survive a quake. But if even half the energy that has gone into the anti-nuclear movement had gone into checking possibly unsafe constructions, a lot more lives might have been saved. For that matter, both cars and roads could be made a lot less dangerous. A death in a car-crash may be less newsworthy than a death from radiation-induced cancer, but it is no less tragic.

Don't send us your huddled masses...

In very ancient times - the Bronze Age and early Iron Age - travellers of all sorts were welcome, and there were laws of hospitality to make sure that they were looked after. Later, travellers got to be just too many. Hospitality broke down; it was replaced by paid lodgings or a thin and grudging charity.

A similar thing is happening with refugees. When they were only coming in small numbers, or from desired groups, they could be welcomed. But modern transportation means that millions of people can move round the globe in a very short time, and would do so if not prevented.

Prevention is a matter of local preference. East Germans - the most prosperous people in Eastern Europe - are welcomed in West Germany because they are seen as fellow Germans. The Social and Liberal Democrats would have us allow entry to some three million inhabitants of Hong Kong, among the most prosperous people in East Asia. Meanwhile, other people in much greater need are kept out. Chinese are kept out of Hong Kong, and Vietnamese who get there are being pushed back to where they came from.

The truth is, humanity is out-growing the nation-state. But politicians, rooted in the structures of the nation state, don't want to admit it. A world state could undoubtedly solve most of the problems of poverty and war that create refugees in the first place. Socialists should be considering how a world state can be created on a fair and democratic basis. Instead most people on the left treat it as an abstract and impossible dream, while trying vainly to build socialism in their own small part of the planet.

German re-unification?

People talk with either fear or hope about re-unification of the two Germanies. They forget that there are in fact four Germanies, and that the peak of their unity was when Adolph Hitler ruled the territories of three of them.

Switzerland has the longest continuous history. It was an association of German-speaking peoples that later expanded to include some French-speakers and Italian-speakers. Switzerland has proved completely stable in the face of the nation-building that occurred in France, Germany and Italy. They were happy as they were, and even Hitler didn't try to touch them.

Austria was carved out of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War One. It was the German-speaking remnant of that Empire after everything else had been removed. Hitler took it over as the first step in his expansion. The Allies re-constituted it as a neutral state after World War Two. And it seems very happy to remain just that.

Those Germans who were neither part of Switzerland nor part of Austria were conquered by the Prussian state in the 19th century. For centuries before that, they had been a collection of small states with no particular urge to unity. Their existence as a single state lasted only a few decades, and led to them fighting and losing two world wars. They could function as a Great Power only at the expense of the other Great Powers, which were not inclined to accept this passively. Since 1945 they have been split between East and West. Both halves originally had hopes of swallowing the other. Now the East German state is under pressure, while West Germany waxes stronger.

Changes in East Germany are inevitable and desirable. Given that they have had a fairly successful planned economy, what they need is a change to democratic socialism. The alternative - absorption by West Germany - would probably be bad all round. The EEC has worked in large part because no one nation was strong enough to dominate it, nor even looked strong enough to possibly be able to dominate it. A unified Germany might revive a great many fears and antagonisms in the rest of Europe.

Deadly uncertainties

Politicians have a way of plunging people into uncertainly about their future, and then blaming them when that uncertainty leads to violence. When Southern Ireland separated from the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland was left as a 'maybe'. British political parties said that it was for the local people to decide their future, even though they knew that this was the one thing

L&TUR £5,000 Appeal: Why we need your money

Anyone involved in left-wing politics soon gets used to continuous demands for cash from various people. But we think we have a better claim than most.

What we're doing is trying to shake up left wing politics - force it to shed some comfortable illusions, and develop a more adventurous as well a more realistic attitude. An attitude that will enable more of the fine old dreams of a just society to be translated into reality. Naturally, it doesn't make us popular. But it has to be done, if future generations of socialists are not to experience the same sort of heart-breaking failures that have been happening since the 1960s.

No one associated with **L&TUR** gets paid anything - except for the printer. Until now we have been able to rely on a special relationship with a printer who gave us a bargain rate. In effect, he was subsidising us out of solidarity, just as all the people who contribute hundreds of hours of unpaid labour time to **L&TUR** have been subsidising it.

Sadly, this arrangement has come to an end. We now have to pay for normal commercial printing and this has doubled our costs. We shall be able to survive on this basis in the short run only by raising the sales price to £1.50 (as from this issue) *and* considerably increasing our sales. We may or may not be able to do the second of these but, in any case, to guarantee our longer term future we need to be able to print **L&TUR** ourselves. Only in this way can we hope to keep costs to a minimum and maintain a reasonable price for the magazine.

We are therefore planning to obtain our own printing equipment, and we estimate that we could do this with £5,000. But neither **L&TUR** nor the **Ernest Bevin Society** have any financial backers. There is only one way in which we can hope to raise this money - from *you,* our readers. If you value what we are doing and want to see us continue the good work, you can help make this possible by sending us a donation - and please make it a substantial one! This is definitely an emergency and we don't have much time to reach our target.

But once we have reached it, with your help, we shall be able to do many things which we haven't had the resources for in the past. As well as the magazine, we could produce pamphlets on a wide range of subjects, developing the ideas put forward in **L&TUR** in greater detail and depth. And we could publish reprints of important articles and essays by earlier socialists and trade unionists which are still relevant to the British labour movement today, but which have been forgotten and allowed to go out of print - things that people need to be told about, and won't get from anyone else but us.

We're in our third year of operations, we've shown that we can develop our thinking, expand our sales network and improve the quality of the magazine. We have managed this without raising the sales price before now, and without asking for money from anyone. But we now need the active support of our readers. We would not be asking for it otherwise. So please send your cheques, large or small, to **Labour & Trade Union Review**, 114 Lordship Road, London N16 0QP...soon.

that the two communities could not possibly agree on. Violence might take Ulster into a United Ireland, violence might keep it in the U.K. So naturally there was violence between those who wanted the two rival solutions.

There have been other cases. Britain never had any clear policy over whether there was or was not to be a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The United Nations drew up a plan for partition as Britain was pulling out, but did nothing to enforce it. Israel survived by winning several wars against very heavy odds. Various bodies would say that they would guarantee Israel's continued existence if Israel were to allow a Palestinian state to be established on some of the territory that Israel now holds. But no one at all would actually guarantee it, in the sense of doing anything effective if such a settlement did not hold.

In the USSR, the relaxation of Leninist central control has also led to violence in areas that are disputed between different nationalities. Nagorno-Karabakh is a territory inhabited by Armenians but surrounded by Azerbaijanis. Before Gorbachev, it was assumed that Stalin's settlement, making it an autonomous part of Azerbaijan, was permanent and unalterable. But when the Armenians asked for this to be changed, Gorbachev dithered and let the matter become uncertain. It became a 'maybe' territory. Naturally, this led to outbreaks of violence between the two groups.

People do not arrange themselves neatly into nation states. Populations overlap. Nations do not take a detached and impartial view of their own claims, and therefore claims tend to conflict. The least damaging solution is usually to accept the *status quo*. This has more or less worked in Africa, where colonial boundaries are treated as sacrosanct. They are treated as sacrosanct because at least they exist and are definite. Trying to reshape the continent on more 'natural' lines would lead to warfare on an unprecedented scale, because 'natural' divisions can be and would be disputed. And if Gorbachev wants peace among the nations of the Soviet Union, he should say that all boundaries stay just as they are, even if they are not perfectly just.

Worse on Sunday

Businessmen tend to be Tories. So while newspapers are run as businesses, subject to normal business rules, it is only to be expected that the press will be more or less Tory. It was different in the days when the Liberals were the main opposition party; they had the wealth to run their own press. Labour party people tend not to have that sort of money.

Labour has never had any clear idea what to do about this situation. The correct answer would surely be some scheme whereby newspapers ceased to be businesses, and were controlled instead by their readers. There would still be Tory papers, of course, but only in proportion to the number of Tory readers. But this simple solution goes against the widespread feeling in the party that ordinary people can't really be left to decide what's best for them.

The Labour Left had one go at founding a national newspaper. **News On Sunday** was a tabloid run by people who didn't like tabloids, so naturally it failed. Meanwhile, a few new newspapers did manage to get established - most notably **The Independent**, which has taken over from the **Times** and the **Financial Times** as a newspaper of record, and one that can be read by people with widely differing political views. (But **The Independent** has started playing some strange games on a few matters which most of its readers wouldn't know much about. This will be dealt with in a future issue of **L&TUR**.)

The latest addition is **The Sunday Corresponent**. It is hard to see it surviving - nor does it deserve to. It's just another fat slab of stale Sunday news. It has run dire headlines like *Bomb 'lair' combed by police*, which made me think of a crowd of dedicated policemen taking out pocket combs to conduct a detailed search. It has even lost the support of **Private Eye**, which at first had supported it as part of their pointless feud with **The Independent**.

Television news bulletins are the main forum for serious news these days. Newspapers are secondary - yet still important. The Tories plan to make television more like newspapers - run as businesses and dependent on advertising. The next Labour government should reverse the process. A simple law saying that no one may own more than 10% of any one daily newspaper might work wonders. Or are the Labour leadership more concerned about pleasing Robert Maxwell?

The hackers hacked

If you walk on someone's front lawn, you are committing the crime of trespass. If you break one of their windows, you are guilty of criminal damage. But as the law stands, if you sneak into their computer system, pry about in their private files, or write a malicious little computer programme that will mess up work that they may have spent months or years on, you have broken no law at all.

The Law Commission has now put forward proposals to make 'hacking' and the writing of 'viruses' (malicious and damaging programmes) illegal. People who sneak into a computer system where they have no business to be could get up to three months. Those who go on to use this access to steal or do damage could get up to five years.

Some people have felt that these penalties are too severe. But they are only *maximum* sentences; it will be up to the courts to decide what penalties any actual hackers will suffer. People who actually work with computers - and whose work could be destroyed or made useless by a hacker or virus - feel that such laws are long overdue. If people want to be clever with computers, there are plenty of useful and interesting things that they can do, without invading someone else's privacy or destroying the fruits of their labour.

The Channel Tunnel - a modern fable

'In a hole in the ground there lived a Thatcherite. But not the sort of hole in the ground where people live because they like it. No, this was a Thatcherite hole, and that means profit.

'At least it was supposed to mean profit. The Thatcherite and all his friends and relations who had dug themselves into this hole were expecting to take more money out of it than they had put in. But the hole got more and more expensive, and they didn't like that at all. They complained to She Who Must Be Obeyed, who told them that it was all part of Free Enterprise. But when they asked Her if that meant that they were free to quit their hole in the ground and try something else, She got very wrathful.'

The fact is, the Channel Tunnel is needed as a piece of infrastructure. It will be of great benefit in the long run, but only the long run. This country only got decent roads when the government took over from the privately run Turnpike Trusts. It has an irrational railway system, with several unconnected stations for London, because the network was build by competing private firms. A railway entrepreneur called Cook gave us the phrase 'cooking the books'. Thatcherite ideas are failing all over the place, and nowhere more clearly than in the case of the tunnel. I just hope that it still gets completed, because it's long overdue. □

Conference Diary

by Hugh Roberts

Blackpool

This was the first time **L&TUR** has had the resources to peddle itself at this event. Interestingly, there was scarcely any competition. Neither **Marxism Today** nor **Living Marxism** sellers were to be seen anywhere. The only other magazine being seriously pushed was **Grey Power**, the voice of the Pensioners' Movement. The three indefatigable pensioners selling this had been at Blackpool for the Labour Conference last year, and we all remembered each other. Before long, **L&TUR** was selling so well to TUC delegates that the **Grey Power** brigade began to follow us around, as if we knew instinctively where sales were to be made. Not that they didn't have a thing or two to teach us about selling techniques themselves.

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Labour MPs were conspicuous by their absence. John Prescott was there, of course, addressing a very up-beat fringe meeting on transport in tandem with Jimmy Knapp. Michael Meacher also about, naturally. Not many others. Neil Kinnock arrived to have dinner with the TU leaders but was careful to remain out of sight. Peter Hain could be observed from time to time, trekking round the obvious places. You'll be buying **L&TUR** one day, Peter!

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The TUC fringe is a much smaller affair than that at the Party Conference. It is also far less well organised. There is no list of fringe events in the Congress Diary. You have to rely on handouts and word of mouth instead. But all the same, Blackpool is a much easier place to sell at than Brighton. The side entrance to the Winter Gardens and the big lobby leading to the Spanish Hall and other hallowed fringe venues is a seller's dream. Above all, the atmosphere is benign. The yuppies in the Labour Party set the tone in Brighton, it's their kind of town these days, but Blackpool belongs to the working class, and the working class is far more open to new ideas than the yuppies are.

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As for the Congress itself, the main impression it left was that of a kind of groundless self-satisfaction. After ten years of Thatcherism we still exist! Bravo. *"Thatcherism is no longer setting the agenda"*, the delegates were informed by Tony Christopher. As if the TUC now is. In this context, it was difficult not to feel that the TUC's enthusiasm for Europe and Delors and the Social Charter is a superficial and slightly suspect affair. It appears to express the political exhaustion of the labour movement rather than a genuine conversion to a new, forward-looking and serious perspective. This may develop, of course, but it will take hard work. At present, the attitude of the rank and file delegates seems to be largely that of half-drowned men clutching at a straw, or perhaps rather the apparently doomed protagonists of a drama saved in the nick of time by the *Delors ex machina* in Brussels. This is not good enough by a long chalk.

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Brighton

And so to the Labour Conference. Again, interestingly enough, not much competition, unless you count the **Morning Star** and **Militant**. During Monday lunch-hour two of us had to share the entrance to the Old Ship Hotel with a couple of **Marxism Today** sellers: *"Buy **Marxism Today**, the house journal of the intelligent Left."* Truth. This is what they were saying, verbatim. The ribaldry and astonished guffaws this provoked in the objects of their attentions were too much for them. They soon disappeared, never to return.

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"It was Peter Mandelson's conference", the media wiseacres have been telling us, if not each other, in tribute to the way it outshone all its predecessors for smooth stage-management. But while this was the view that surfaced in print and no doubt on the air as well, it was not the consensus of opinion on Monday morning amongst those queuing for media passes inside the little portakabin outside the Brighton Centre's main entrance. The Party had booked a suite in the Grand Hotel for its press office, and it was to this that late comers were directed for their passes. Except that when they arrived there, it was closed, and a note on the door re-directed them to said tacky pre-fab, where a small and rather harassed group of Party workers were unable to help all but a lucky few. *"Don't know anything about it, sorry. Anyone for International or Visiters' passes? No,* not *Media."* In fact, to be fair to Walworth Road, **L&TUR** was one of the lucky ones, except that it took about two hours for this to be established. *"Same old Labour Party under the veneer"* murmured one of the unfortunate many as I at last made off with my plastic trophy.

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The main difference this year, of course, was that there was no maverick trade union leader to put the media-masseurs off their stroke at the crucial moment. Pity, really. Ron Todd was there, of course, and, apart from chatting amicably with **L&TUR** sellers about one thing and another, gave a conference speech that no one fell asleep in and an entertaining speech at the **Tribune** Rally into the bargain. But Party unity was an important sub-theme of the conference; *"we accept the decision, comrades, even though we disagree with it"*. And Ron himself was setting an example of this, if a somewhat ironical one, notably at the **Tribune** Rally when he reminded us that Labour is *"the Party of Love and Peace. Well, Love, anyway..."*

*

While the **Tribune** grouping is making a come-back now that the 'Hard Left' has shattered itself on the rock-like politics of the 'Soft Left', the **Fabian Society** is also trying hard to bloom, and stole a march on all and sundry (except perhaps Peter Mandelson) at its meeting on Sunday evening. This was devoted to the mechanics of the Policy Review and fielded Bryan Gould and Tom Sawyer among others. But the significant contribution came from **The Guardian**'s Martin Linton, who explained enthusiastically how the Swedish Social Democrats handle such matters. They have long since grown out of such proletarian antics as annual conferences. No, conferences are held only every three years, and are preceded by an extraordinary amount of tightly scheduled consultation of the party up and down the country, in what amounts to a triennial policy review and, more to the point, a bureaucratic marathon. The delegates then debate and vote on the various resolutions, a kind of pendulum arbitration system is employed, to force the formulators of resolutions to be sensible, and no amendments are allowed. And to ensure that delegates do not play truant from this serious business, no fringe meetings are allowed either. And how, you may ask, is this blissful state of affairs ensured? Simple, really. Conference sessions go on till 10 or 11 at night *and the delegates are locked into*

the conference centre. A programmed conference for a programmed party for a programmed society. **Fabians** appear to relish this prospect in Britain, if the placid reaction of the audience to this horrific vision was anything to go by. Meanwhile, the human beings in Sweden are queuing up to jump off bridges, aren't they?

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Perhaps the oddest fringe meeting, however, was that devoted to the theme of *"Breaking the Gentlemen's Club"* which was chaired by Lady Ewart-Biggs and featured an all-female line-up of Labour MPs and MEPs. There was nothing odd about the theme, of course. There are obviously not enough women in Parliament, and the failure of the two Houses to provide appropriate facilities for those who are there is deplorable. The speakers were raising a serious issue and deserve support. What was odd about all this is that it was held under the auspices of **Charter 88**, and that this was **Charter 88's** sole fringe meeting.

A year since its birth at the **New Statesman** fringe meeting in Blackpool, **Charter 88** has progressed so far and so fast that it has left behind the minor matter of promoting a constitutional revolution in Britain for the bigger and better business of securing more women's loos in the House of Commons. Wherever will New Leftism's revolutionary ambitions take it next? Perhaps the truth of the matter is a welcome one, that the Chartists are becoming sober reformists within the framework of the Glorious Revolution at last. But, if so, shouldn't they have wound up **Charter 88** first, before entering politics? If not, it is to be hoped that the modest but serious cause outlined at the meeting will not allow the pretentious and evidently lost cause of **Charter 88** to batten parasitically upon it again.

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How far the Chartists are from capturing the reflexes of the Labour Party was illustrated in the course of the conference debate on industrial relations or, as it is now known, "People at work". The Report of the Policy Review on this subject was presented by Michael Meacher in a vigorous and professional conference speech that went down well with the delegates. In the course of this he quite naturally invoked the spectre of judges using the law in a biased way against Trade Unions, and declared that a future Labour Government will put a stop to this sort of thing, by acting to ensure *"that the will of Parliament prevails."*

This last phrase was greeted by a thunderous cheer. But it isn't the correct position at all, comrade delegates. We need a written constitution, upheld and enforced by the judiciary, to ensure that the will of Parliament does *not* prevail. That is what **Charter 88** is all about. Re-read it and see. On the other hand, why bother?

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"So we're back to square one" was how Dennis Skinner drily summarised the position following the vote to reject the leadership's proposals for a black and white minstrel show in response to the demand for a proper Black Section. Exactly. Except that the collapse of the half-way house has strengthened both the pressure for the real thing *and* the case against any kind of racial segregation within the Labour Party. Long before **L&TUR** was started, one of the *Ernest Bevin Society*'s first pamphlets, produced for the 1984 conference, was **Black Sections in the Labour Party: an argument against their establishment.** This set out the principled socialist position on this question. The Party leadership has tried to compromise with the Black Sections demand and has failed; it must now either capitulate to it or deploy the principled case against it.

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Immediately after the Black Society vote, John Smith rose to introduce the Policy Review Statement on Economic Equality. For the first five minutes of his speech, the hall was in flux as delegates who had waited for the previous vote cleared off in all directions. How well this epitomised the spiritual state of the Party. A dust-up with the leadership on a side issue is one thing, definitely worth waiting for. A sober discussion on economic policy is quite another. The fact is that the Labour Party rank and file is no longer interested in economic issues. And no wonder. They are only interesting for activists if either the leadership or the Left have something interesting to say about them, and they haven't. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Smith carried on regardless of the milling throng below. He was talking to the camera, not to the delegates, as were Eric Hammond, Bill Jordan, Tony Christopher and (to some extent) Neil Kinnock when their turns came. 'Sound bites' or whatever they're called is the name of the game, it seems.

These days this is inevitable, it may well be said. But if the leaders of the Labour Movement will not talk to, and cannot hold the attention of, the rank and file delegates when they have at last shown a general inclination to be reasonable, something is wrong. Perhaps the truth is that the Labour leadership long ago gave up trying to educate the membership in politics. If so, the current generation of leaders has given up rather easily. Or perhaps a kind of passive gormlessness among the majority of activists is the very thing they want. Either way, the Party has got into a vicious circle in this respect. Next year in Stockholm? Or is it *three* years from now? □

The 1945-51 Government: For or Against?

A report on a debate between the **Ernest Bevin Society** and the **Socialist Party of Great Britain**

by Hugh Roberts

"That the 1945 Labour Government was of great benefit to the Working Class": this was the proposition defended by Madawc Williams on behalf of the Ernest Bevin Society in a debate with the SPGB held in Chiswick Old Town Hall on October 13. This is where the West London branch of the SPGB holds its regular meetings, and the room was accordingly full of SPGB members and supporters, about 30 in all, whereas only three members of the Bevin Society were present. But these easily held their own and it soon became clear that the four or five neutral members of the audience strongly agreed with the case which they were putting.

The debate had been arranged at the SPGB's initiative, but the wording of the motion was chosen by the Bevin Society. Although the SPGB had agreed to this, it became evident in the course of the debate that this agreement was purely a matter of form. Again and again, successive SPGB speakers returned to their principal theme, that the Labour Party is not socialist, and that true socialists should not expect any good to come of it or have anything to do with it, but should recognise that their place is in the SPGB.

In support of this point, they regularly quoted statements or referred to actions of Labour leaders in the 1960s and since then, up to the present day. The argument amounted to this: *"See how unsocialist Labour is today! Therefore of course the Attlee government didn't benefit the working class!"* The spuriousness of this reasoning should be self-evident, and was vigorously pointed out on the night. To defend the Attlee government in no way implies blanket approval (or belief in the socialist character) of the policies and behaviour of the Labour Party since then. The two things are quite distinct. But it was apparently essential for the SPGB to confuse the two.

This is because the 1945 government clearly poses an immense problem for the SPGB. Since the existence of the SPGB is predicated upon the axiom that the Labour Party has never been and can never become a socialist party, or a vehicle for the advance of socialism in any way, it is clearly necessary for the SPGB to belittle the achievements of the 1945-51 Labour government. This, of course, is not easily done. Hence the SPGB's tendency to wander repeatedly from the point at issue, to which they were relentlessly dragged back by the Bevin Society.

In so far as the SPGB speakers addressed the motion, they made three main points. First, they argued that, faced with the enormous problems of the time, and lacking as they did any real commitment to socialist principles, Labour's leaders in 1945 failed to enact socialism and actually made a conscious decision to this effect, and settled for managing capitalism instead. In other words, 1945 was the moment of truth for Labour's 'socialism' and it comprehensively failed the test. Interestingly, the SPGB could not provide any real evidence of this crisis of Labour's faith. The crux of the argument was that Labour "failed to enact socialism". It was taken for granted that this was due to a failure of nerve and will.

"If the potential created between 1945 and 1951 is yet to be realised by the British Labour movement, this cannot be blamed on Attlee's government, but on its successors."

Is socialism something that can be "enacted" by a Labour government within a few years? It took capitalism centuries to develop and fully supercede feudalism. Is socialism such a superficial thing in comparison that it can be brought fully into existence by a series of decrees in six years? The SPGB clearly thinks so. Attlee and Bevin knew better. And once it is acknowledged that socialism as an economic and social system is a profoundly complex affair which will inevitably take time to develop fully, it must be recognised that the 1945-51 government did not fail at all, but acted very energetically to promote development along socialist lines as far as this was possible at the time.

The second argument against the motion was that the 1945 Labour government benefitted capitalism; *ergo* it cannot have been *"of great benefit to the working class"*. The SPGB does not have a monopoly of this line of thinking, of course. Mountains of academic claptrap have been produced to this effect over the last thirty years. In support of this argument, the main SPGB speaker produced statistics of growth in capitalist profits between 1945 and 1951, which he clearly supposed proved his point.

The Attlee government was a socialist government operating in a democracy and inspired by democratic principles. It had a mandate to nationalise major sectors of the economy, but not everything. Its nationalisation proposals were strongly resisted as it was, and had it attempted to nationalise much more it would have had great difficulty in organising their effective management as public property. It had the sense not to bite off more than it could chew. It therefore settled for establishing the mixed economy as a first step. Many sectors of private capital which were not nationalised certainly benefitted from the new set-up. The massive reconstruction of the economy achieved between 1945 and 1951 laid the foundations for the subsequent boom. The achievement of full employment and the implementation of the Beveridge Report massively enhanced working class living standards and purchasing power, and so greatly expanded the domestic market. In these circumstances, profits were easily made by private capitalists. So what?

The SPGB clearly regards this as a zero-sum game. If capitalists benefit, clearly the workers don't. In fact, apart from those capitalists who were expropriated, both classes benefitted in economic terms. If you don't have a programme of liquidating the bourgeoisie overnight, then you must continue to live with them for a while, and that means accepting that they will continue to make profits. The point is, of course, that while most capitalists were able to continue to make profits, and therefore felt that their place in the scheme of things was still broadly secure for the time being, the working class was entering a new world. The material and political benefit to the working class was of a totally different order from the continuing benefits to capital. It opened up entirely new horizons. If the potential created between 1945 and 1951 is yet to be realised by the British Labour movement, that is not something that can be blamed on Attlee's government, but on its successors.

In this connection, it was remarkable how reluctant the SPGB speakers were to discuss such matters as the NHS and so forth. In so far as they were discussed, it

was as measures taken on capital's behalf, to make available a healthy workforce. As if capital ever bothered about having a healthy workforce before! As if the working class has no interest in its own standard of health!

It was also notable that the SPGB had no explanation of Thatcherism. If Attlee's government was doing capital a favour, why has Thatcher been doing everything in her power to dismantle its achievements? If nationalisation benefitted capital, why is Thatcher privatising? The SPGB gave no answers to these questions. It has none.

The third argument deployed by the SPGB against the motion was the clincher. It is obvious that the Attlee government did not benefit the working class from the fact that the working class was so fed up with this government after six miserably disillusioning years that it booted it out of power in the 1951 general election.

The Bevin Society speakers pointed out in reply that Labour obtained its highest ever popular vote in a general election in 1951. And it actually obtained more votes than the Conservatives. It was only the vagaries of the constituency boundaries that enabled the Conservatives to pick up more seats. Never before or since 1951 has the British working class been so massively solid in support of the Labour Party. It knew where its interest lay. The SPGB's view of the matter was greeted with astonishment and disbelief by all those present, except its own members.

Many other issues were touched on in the course of the debate. Madawc Williams made the point that the Attlee government's achievements in the international sphere were enormously significant. The granting of independence to India, the jewel in the imperial crown, made the subsequent withdrawal from Empire inevitable; Bevin's role in securing the Marshall Plan was crucial, and helped to make possible the economic reconstruction of the European democracies, while the foundation of NATO, again primarily on Bevin's initiative, established the basis of security upon which the democratic governments of France, West Germany, Italy and so on could rebuild with confidence. It was clearly in the interest of the British working class, given its attachment to a democratic conception of socialism, that democracy should be preserved elsewhere. Interestingly, the SPGB made no attempt to argue with the Bevin Society on this ground.

A good debate. We must have more. □

LABOUR & TRADE UNION REVIEW AND THE ERNEST BEVIN SOCIETY

will be holding a one-day

CONFERENCE

on

Industrial Relations and Economic Policy: Towards a Strategy for Labour in Government

in
The Hampstead Room,
The Y.W.C.A. Central Club
16/22 Great Russell Street, London WC1.
(Close to Tottenham Court Road Underground)

on
Saturday, December 2, 1989
11 am - 5 pm.

Session One
11am - 1pm

LABOUR AND THE ECONOMY

As the contradictions within the government's economic policy become more evident, is Labour developing a coherent alternative? What should this look like? How should Labour cope with inflation? What are the implications of joining the EMS? How do these and other questions tie up with a longer-term approach to solving the underlying problems of the economy?

Intermission
1pm - 2pm

Food and snacks should be available; there are also pubs and snack bars nearby.

Session Two
2pm - 3.30pm

LABOUR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The role of organised labour in the economy - the nettle that Labour's leaders must begin to grasp. Why industrial democracy is now necessary both economically and politically.

Session Three
3.30pm - 5pm

ORGANISING FOR THE FUTURE

The objectives of the *Ernest Bevin Society* and of **Labour & Trade Union Review.** The progress achieved so far and how we should proceed from here. How you can help.

Each session will be introduced by a speaker and then develop into an open discussion.

Conference fee: £5 (waged); £2.50 (unwaged). All welcome.

Soulmates in trouble

Economic determinism is in crisis and its political fruits are increasingly disconcerting its adepts in London and Moscow, as Jack Lane argues.

The Guardian reported that after the recent annual awards ceremony of **Good Housekeeping** magazine, Mrs Thatcher said:

"For years when I was young and in politics with all hopes and dreams and ambitions, it seemed to me and to many of my contemporaries that, if we got an age where we had good housing, good education, a reasonable standard of living, then everything would be set and we should have a fair and much easier future."

Instead she had come up against "the real problems of human nature". "Why is it that we have child cruelty in this age? Why is it that we have animal cruelty? Why is it that we have violence? Why is it that only a month after Hillsborough, which was a terrible football occasion, we had so many arrests and problems on the football field? Why is it that people take to terrorism? Why is it that people take to drugs?" **(The Guardian,** September 27, 1989).

This was an extraordinary statement. We have a Prime Minister in power for over ten years who is totally non-plussed by the problems around her. A Prime Minister, moreover, whose very appeal and whose boast were that she knew exactly how to sort out all our problems. Now she admits that she cannot understand why so many people behave as they do. And it need hardly be said that a person in this position will not have any realistic solutions to these problems. It is important to try to figure out how this situation has arisen.

Maggie was born again around 1974. If this had happened in a Christian sense she would be able to explain all these problems as variations on original sin and would have attempted to solve them by getting us all to concentrate on saving our souls. However, the light that she saw was that of economic determinism: everyone should look at their bank balance and the bigger it got the happier they would be.

Ten years on she is genuinely mystified that after all her efforts the problems of the 1970s are still around, everything from inflation to terrorism. Some of the problems are even nastier than they were in those dark and evil days.

Traditional Tories would never have been puzzled by the problems that Maggie now faces. They accepted that human behaviour was not guided by any predetermined scheme of things and that the job of politicians was to make the best, meaning the most feasible, arrangements that would facilitate constructive social behaviour. But there was no magic formula to do this and anyone who believed otherwise was, at best, a nuisance. Toryism was therefore infinitely flexible and adaptable.

This sort of Toryism is now R.I.P. We now have a 'Tory' Prime Minister who does not even believe in the existence of society and does not seem able to realise that that in itself could cause quite a lot of anti-social behaviour. Being an ideologue, she is likely to get more and more frustrated with the world in general and act accordingly. Fortunately as Kinnock & Co. are going in the opposite direction the consequences for the country will be minimised.

What is potentially of greater significance is the problem of her soulmate in Moscow.

Gorbachev obviously went through some sort of a 'born again' experience,

and though he did not become a free-marketeer he seems to have concluded that the key to all his problems lay with the economy. All the simpletons in the media were in total agreement. Get the economy right - whatever that meant - and all would be well. He set about doing so and has been taken aback by the fact that the prospect of lots of consumer goodies and the appropriate amount of freedom led people to want to be more Armenian, Latvian, Estonian, Russian, Ukrainean etc. etc. Clearly the peoples of the Soviet Union do not 'live by bread alone' and will not do so even if they have plenty of it. They could be happy with a bad economy as easily as they could be unhappy with a good economy. They would thereby deny all the laws of Marxism as known to Mikhail. And how in those circumstances can he solve their problems?

His predecessors understood these social forces better and developed a political force that overawed the peoples of the Soviet Union. It visibly transformed everyone's life and aimed to do likewise for the rest of the world. It appeared for a long time to be on the verge of succeeding. In these circumstances it seemed a bit silly and a waste of time to be consumed by one's local nationalism.

But Lenin's and Stalin's grand design has been abandoned and, in its absence, what else - other than nationalism - is there to get excited about? It is a situation where 'the centre cannot hold' except in the most precarious way. And it could mean some very erratic behaviour by the centre.

Maggie and Mikhail, since they can 'do business together' should have a lot to talk about. They should have an informal summit. Why not hold it after next year's **Good Housekeeping** awards? An agreed topic could surely be *'Why don't people know what's good for them?'* □

REALPOLITIK IN A EUROPE IN FLUX

*The recent developments in Eastern Europe and the USSR suggest that Europe may now be going into flux again for the first time since the Second World War. In this critical review of a new study of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, **Brendan Clifford** explains what was at issue in the realpolitik which was made necessary the last time Europe went into flux fifty years ago.*

Geoffrey Roberts: **The Unholy Alliance: Stalin's Pact with Hitler**, I.B.Tauris, 1989.

Eurocommunism has been grappling for a general sense of history for about twenty years. But such a thing is not easily come by from a starting point of systematic ideology. Scientific socialism is essentially unhistorical because history is characteristically unsystematic. Scientific socialism is a system of certainty, but history is a unique series of unrepeatable adventures. The scheme of scientific socialism could only correspond with reality by making reality correspond with itself and policing it so that it might become habitually systematic.

Marx made a few notional gestures towards reducing humanity theoretically to a system, but his human impulses got in the way. Engels, more human personally but less so philosophically, elaborated the system. And Lenin, the apostle of Chernyshevsky's icy vision of mankind as an orderly community of happy and industrious robots living in a Crystal Palace, made a valiant effort to realise the scientific system in a routine of actual human activity.

It would seem that the Leninist scheme for mankind is now crumbling from within, in the minds of its hierarchy. If Gorbachev is in earnest, and if the Central Committee is in earnest in support of him, that is what is happening. The human material which was systematically restructured by Lenin is being restructured back into subjective chaos.

If that proves to be the case then there must be an old-fashioned power of thought lurking within the Soviet intelligentsia. It must have become infected by the material which it attempted to control and homogenise: the liberal-humanitarian culture of Europe. And if that is so, a rich development out of Dostoevskian soil is possible - a development of which Solzhenitzyn will be the pioneer.

But the Western intellectual who grew up amidst the liberal heritage of Europe and rejected it in favour of the Leninist vision will have considerable difficulty in getting back on terms with the European heritage. There can be no exciting sense of discovery for him as there might be for the Soviet intellectual, only a retreat to the world-outlook of his father - or, in many instances, of his grandfather.

One feels that Geoff Roberts lives amongst fragments or echoes of Leninism. He gropes for the rich tapestry of life beyond Leninism and fishes the odd detail from it, but dogmatic echoes prevent him from flourishing in a medium of uncertainty. And his book has to do with the most uncertain of all mediums - the medium of states at war.

(The title of the book echoes very strangely. Given that the Holy Alliance is not usually considered to have been a good thing - it tried to bottle up Europe for the Bourbons and Hapsburgs after 1815 - an Unholy Alliance might not be a bad thing.)

The book begins with the war which Lenin averted in 1918 and ends with the war which Stalin failed to avert in 1941. In between there is much interesting documentation of detail. And the book is basically a defence of the Nazi-Soviet Pact on the old Comintern/Cominform line. But Lenin's Brest-Litovsk capitulation in 1918 is very inadequately dealt with. And the military outcome of the 1939 Pact is absurdly said to have been a "Disaster".

In the mid-1970s I could not agree with an academic expert (of Eurocommunist disposition) on Soviet economic history that the collectivisation was a "catastrophe", and he parted company with me. I could apply a word like "catastrophe" to an event which involved a collapse of the state.

Despite the ideology of economic determinism, the Bolshevik system gave absolute priority to politics. The structure of agriculture in the 1920s was out of keeping with the structure of the state. But Lenin had explained that he was establishing the "superstructure" first, and that the superstructure could later proceed with the establishment of the "base". If that was not done there would sooner or later have been an event of real economic determination, whereby market activity undermined the totalitarian state. In 1929 the state reorganised the economy and consolidated itself. It struck me as a devaluation of language to describe that as a catastrophe.

And likewise I can see no military disaster in 1941. There was a disaster in France in 1940. The front was broken. A German force went through the gap and took the main body of the Allied army in the rear. The Allied army, being properly mobilised for war, could not turn around to fight on its rear. When a strong German force appeared behind it the battle was over. And since the entire Allied army was in the one place, there was only one battle in that war.

Nothing like that happened in Russia. The front was never broken. There were numerous salients and encirclements - which in terms of miles were very great by French standards but which were small in terms of Russian space - but there was nothing equivalent to the Ardennes

breakthrough.

The Allied armies were fully mobilised in 1940. The Soviet Army was not fully mobilised in 1941.

Stalin is generally considered to have made a major strategic blunder because he did not have his army mobilised and at the front in 1941. His subsequent conduct of the war showed that he was a more than competent commander-in-chief. It seems to me that he must have looked at what happened in France and been puzzled as to how to fight a defensive war against Manstein and Guderian.

There was a purely military element in the affairs of 1940 and 1941 which ideological critics have never taken account of, or seemed to be aware of. There was something as new as the Mongols were in their time. The established maxims of war - with the superiority of the defence at the core - were suddenly set aside in May-June 1940 when an inferior attacking force paralysed a stronger defensive force. There was a Joker in the pack.

There was no agreement as to how the new tactic devised by Manstein and Guderian should be countered. And even if there had been agreement, the actual skill required to do it was undeveloped.

If Stalin had taken heed of warnings that Hitler intended to attack that summer, and had mobilised, very likely the same thing would have happened in Russia as had happened in France. In the event, because Stalin did nothing until Hitler invaded, the Russian army was not sitting at the front to be broken. And the effect of the rapid mobilisation following the attack was to produce defence in depth. There were open spaces for the Germans to drive around, and local encirclements for them to make - but the Russian front was always in front of them.

Whether entirely by accident or by partial design (because the mental reservations of a Commander-in-Chief are a military factor), Stalin found the counter to the new military tactic - the "expanding torrent", the flood through a breach made by the armoured spearhead. During the summer of 1941 his army was coming up piecemeal to meet the Germans, and therefore it was always in front of them.

Because the Russian army was not mobilised, it could not be broken in one great battle. And as battle followed battle the Russian army developed to take on the Germans in great set-pieces.

I don't think it is reasonable, in the light of military affairs as they actually

existed in 1940-1941, to regret that the Soviet Army was not mobilised at the moment of the German attack. If it had been there might well have been a disaster.

Von Manstein in his memoirs repeated an evergreen military truth: *"the strategic aim of any war is to smash the military defensive power of the enemy"* (**Lost Victories**, 1958 edition, page 276). He repeated it because it was something he could not get Hitler to understand. Geoff Roberts does not understand it either.

The outstanding success of German arms in 1940, and the fact that a victory was almost gained in 1941, was due to the relative autonomy of the German military. It depended on strategic originality at the higher levels of command and individual virtuosity at lower levels. If the Army had been Nazified, as some of the Nazi leaders wanted, it is probable that German military success would have been much more modest, and that as a consequence the Nazi system would have survived much longer. That system was internally stable. (Stalin was among the first to understand that it was stabilised by the Night of the Long Knives.) It was broken from the outside after the military freak produced by Von Seekt, Manstein and Guderian united the world against it by bringing it victories beyond Hitler's wildest dreams, which he did not know how to consolidate.

Manstein's memoirs are entirely unapologetic. And nobody was better placed than him, subjectively or objectively, to see how that part of the Soviet Army which was mobilised in June 1941 was deployed. And, as he saw it,

"it would be nearest the truth to describe the Soviet dispositions...as a 'deployment against every contingency'.

On the 22nd June 1941, undoubtedly, the Soviet Union's forces were still strung out in such depth that they could then have been used only in a defensive role. Yet the pattern could have been switched in no time to meet any change in Germany's political situation. With a minimum of delay the Red Army - each of whose army groups was numerically, if not qualitatively, superior to the German army group facing it - could have closed up and become capable of going over to the attack" (page 181).

Because the military defensive power of the Soviet Union was not broken in 1941, the Red Army acquired sufficient military ability to bring the greater population and resources of Russia to bear on the German Army and to push it back into central Europe.

Geoff Roberts's book is chiefly an account of diplomatic manoeuvrings and alignments in the 1930s. In chapters 6 and 7 he describes Moscow's efforts in 1939 to make a hard military alliance against Germany with Britain and France, to become effective the moment Germany moved against any of the three or against a state which accepted their guarantee or against a neutral. And he describes how, when Britain and France refused to engage in serious negotiations, Russia made a treaty with Germany instead.

This was in accordance not only with Lenin's injunction that the Soviet Union should survive by exploiting imperialist contradictions as expediency dictated, but with the general *realpolitik* of international relations. And it seems that Geoff Roberts accepts the *realpolitik* of the matter - until he says abruptly in the last paragraph of chapter 7:

"Essential though it was in military terms, the inability of the British and French to satisfy the Russians on the question of troop movements through Poland and Rumania does not fully account for the Soviet Union's decision to break off negotiations. Nor does it explain the postive act of concluding a non-aggression treaty with Germany. The collapse...of any immediate prospect of an effective pact of alliance with Britain and France was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the Russo-German rapprochement. Indispensable to any understanding of the circumstances in which Soviet Russia opted for the pact with Nazi Germany is a review of the evolution of relations between these two states in the spring and summer of 1939" (page 142).

I searched the next chapter for the *"sufficient condition"* of the treaty with Germany, but I could not find it: unless it be that Moscow and Berlin needed to be in diplomatic contact if they were to make a treaty.

The difficulty about a Triple Alliance to defend Poland was that the Polish Government would not agree that the Red Army should have access to its western frontier. In this matter the Poles had a choice of evils: war with Germany or voluntary subjection to Russia. It would not have been sensible to suppose that the Red Army would have left Poland after defending it, as the British Army had left France in 1919.

"...the Leninist vision was in its prime in 1939, there was no common ground between the Soviet Union and Britain, and so no 'historic opportunity to forge an anti-fascist alliance with the West'."

The inherent logic of the book is that the treaty with Hitler was a measure of elementary prudence. Given what was going on in the world just then, it would not have been prudent to hang about. But the logic of the book is unacceptable to its author. Here is the final paragraph:

"Looking back after fifty years, the most striking quality of Soviet policy in the triple alliance negotiations is its political passivity. In April 1939 the Soviet leadership opted for a war alliance against Germany, made their proposals known, and then sat back and waited to see what would happen. They set the British and French a not unreasonable test of their intentions, but failed to intervene actively to shape the outcome. The result was that they found themselves faced with the choice of an uncertain alliance with the West or a desperate gamble on a deal with Hitler. This outcome was not entirely, or even mainly, of their own making. Perhaps no other outcome was possible. All we can be certain of is that, blinded by their own dogma, the Stalin leadership failed to make the most of an historic opportunity to forge an anti-fascist alliance with the West" (pages 225-226).

That paragraph strikes me as a retreat into the shreds of an ideological fantasy by a mind which has strayed for too long into the distasteful affairs of the real world.

In negotiations between two powerful states there is necessarily an element of *"political passivity"*: each, when it has made its proposals, must wait to see what the other will do. How does Geoff Roberts think Moscow might have *"intervened actively"* in the deliberations of the British Government?

As to the *"historic opportunity to forge an anti-fascist alliance with the West"*: no such opportunity existed. In order for it to exist, Stalin would have had to jettison Leninism and establish the Soviet state on a political philosophy which Lenin smashed, broke up, destroyed, pulverised, and did lots of other drastic things to. And although, as Althusser has told us, Stalinism was a humanist deviation from Leninism, it was not so deviant that it was prepared to adopt the liberal-democratic world outlook.

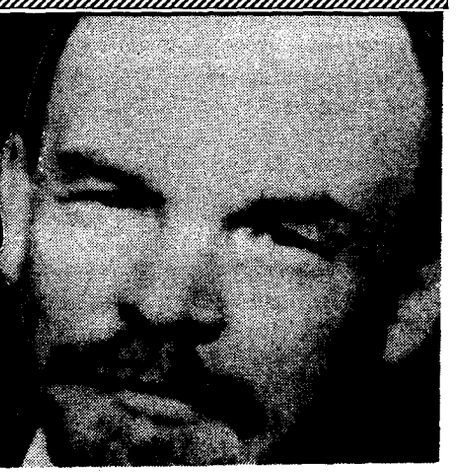
I pointed out about ten years ago that the Nazi-Soviet Pact did not destroy Poland or Partition it. It only made provision for avoidance of conflict in a certain eventuality which might occur during the collapse of the Versailles settlement. It was a prudent precaution. And if that prudent precaution camouflaged an ambitious intent, then such is the way of the world. Stalin learned from Lenin that defence is often the best means of attack. He might equally have learned that lesson from British history.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact was a defensive precaution which enabled Russia to tend to its interests in eastern Poland when the Polish state crumbled, without bringing it into the European war on either side. Geoff Roberts appears to accept this view on pages 158-159. But it leaves no lasting impression on his argument.

The Soviet occupation of eastern Poland did not begin until a fortnight after the German invasion, by which time the Polish state was in collapse. But if Germany had found itself engaged in a major war in Poland, it is far from certain that the Red Army would have moved in. The Pact was not a programme. What was actually done followed from the course of material events. Pact or no pact, the Red Army would have occupied eastern Poland when the Polish state was seen to be crumbling.

It was reasonable of the Polish government not to invite the Red Army in as a protection against the Germans because it did not wish to be a puppet of either state. And it was reasonable of the Red Army to occupy eastern Poland when the Polish Army proved to be incapable of sustaining a war with Germany.

70 YEARS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD



When moving into Poland, Russia declared itself neutral in the great war which had been declared between Germany, France and Britain. *"Molotov characterised the war as imperialist"*, says Geoff Roberts, and dressed up the situation in an ideological garb that was not new:

"the Leninist analysis of imperialism, the anti-Versailles tenor, the identification of Britain and France as the main enemies of peace, the characterisation of German foreign policy as essentially just and progressive, were all familiar fare for anyone cognizant of Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s and early 1930s" (pages 172-173).

And what else is to be expected but *"the Leninist analysis of imperialism"*? Lenin gave the Soviet state its internal totalitarian structure and the categories by which it understood the world. Having rejected liberal democracy in its own constitution, Bolshevism could only see the liberal democracy of capitalism in the era of imperialism as, at best, a weakness and, as a general rule, as a sham designed for wasting the energy of the masses in the pursuit of illusion.

Fascism was seen as the political norm of advanced capitalism, and as being, in that sense, more progressive. The Bukharinist conception of imperialism, with its admiration of German wartime economy, was the stimulus to Lenin's doctrine on the subject, and it always lurked beneath the surface of Leninism. In 1940-1941 **Labour Monthly** (conducted by that sternest and most rigorous of Leninists, R. Palme Dutt), accepted the Allied collapse in France as the judgement of History on liberal democracy, and it accepted the two forms of totalitarianism as the appropriate structure of the modern world.

The Communist world, being Leninist, could not regard liberal democracy as a social form in which it had any long-term interest. It mourned the passing of liberalism in Europe in 1940 as little as Lenin mourned the passing of liberalism in Russia in 1918. It is an inexcusable weakness in Geoff Roberts's book that he does not describe this state of affairs, or even give a hint that it existed.

He makes brief mention of Harry Pollitt's moment of folly in September 1939, when he proposed that the Communist Party should rally to the support of British imperialism. It was folly because it was not persisted in. It would have been a marvellous thing if a modern Cobbett had emerged from the ranks of the Comintern in 1939 - a radical of Merrie England who would spin his truth out of his own human impulses without regard for the orthodoxies of power or doctrine, and be the people's champion against Tories and scientific socialists alike. But Pollitt did not have the nerve or the heart for that. He went back to thinking correct thoughts according to the Leninist scheme of omniscience. The role of Cobbett - the radical who straddled the old and the new and reformed in the medium of tradition - was left to Ernest Bevin.

Given that the Leninist vision was still in its prime in 1939, there was no common ground between the Soviet Union and Britain. There was therefore no *"historic opportunity to forge an anti-fascist alliance with the West"*.

The active Anglo-Soviet alliance against Nazi Germany was formed only when the unsuspected military joker in the German pack had brought both states to the verge of the abyss. And given what both states were, I cannot see how else an active military alliance between them might have come about.

Leninism now appears to be in terminal decay, and an adventure which began in March 1918 seems to be at an end. At this juncture it is impossible to tell.

The adventure began when Lenin browbeat and blackmailed the Bolshevik party into capitulating to the German ultimatum. Geoff Roberts accepts Lenin's account that a defence against German arms was impossible. But it was impossible only because Lenin was against it. He was an ultra-defeatist for the purpose of securing a breathing-space under German protection for his new state. He gave Germany scope for a final offensive in the West. And Germany gave him the opportunity for statecraft. During the following six months he contructed the skeleton of the totalitarian state. But when Germany collapsed he was disengaged from Eürope.

If he had resisted the German advance in March 1918, he would have been amongst the arbiters of Europe in November (or earlier, since Russian resistance would have hastened the end).

But if he had been engaged in war with Germany during 1918, he would not have got the one-party state. It was the capitulation of March that caused the breach between his party and all other parties and enabled him to construct the streamlined totalitarian state. And if he had been involved in European reconstruction the pressure towards liberal diversity would have intensified.

Lenin's political triumph of March 1918 gained him the Bolshevik state in isolation. In 1920 he tried to break into European affairs by invading Poland, and was repulsed.

The Bolshevik state became a force alien to and at odds with the structure of Europe, in so far as that structure was democratic in the liberal sense - and fascism was a sort of imitative reaction against it.

It seems that the Leninist system is now crumbling from within, in the minds of the very people who operate it. Scientific socialism leaves the people at large with nothing to think. There might be a fair amount of culture in the arty sense, but there is no autonomous medium of human culture within which individuals might be spontaneously active. At the human centre of things there is nothing. And that condition is not one which can be remedied by economic policy.

It has up to the present been reasonable to suppose that Gorbachev is a very ambitious Leninist manoeuvring to take Western Europe off guard. If he is not doing that - or if in the process of doing it he became aware of the vacuum in the heart of Russia and was caught by the spirit of Solzhenitsyn - then Europe is going into flux. And if Europe is going into flux, the socialist movement will need to have more in its head than a muffled echo of Leninism. □

Twenty Years On
Northern Ireland 1969-1989

Denis Healey has recently been expressing his admiration for Ernest Bevin and priding himself on his role as "the man who did the dirty work" (by which he means the creditable business of taking responsibility for awkward necessities, as Bevin invariably did) on Labour's behalf. In this article, ***David Gordon****, a socialist who, as a Northern Ireland resident is banned from membership of the Labour Party, explains how the Labour Government consciously shirked its responsibility to the people of Northern Ireland in 1969, with Denis Healey to the fore in urging this policy of irresponsibility upon it. A piece of dirty work indeed, with no redeeming features whatever, of the kind that Bevin would never have touched with a barge-pole, and which the workers of Northern Ireland have been paying for ever since.*

On August 14, 1969 James Callaghan, as United Kingdom Secretary of State, authorised the use of the British Army on the streets of Derry to restore order. The following day, British troops were also deployed in Belfast.

It is now universally accepted that Callaghan's decision had serious implications for the future government of Northern Ireland. For the best part of fifty years, the province had had its own devolved parliament located in the Stormont buildings on the outskirts of Belfast. Throughout the period, the Stormont Parliament had been ruled by the Ulster Unionist Party.

The intervention of the British Army in August 1969 dealt a severe body blow to the authority of the devolved administration in Northern Ireland. It was inconceivable that the sovereign British Government would grant the Stormont Parliament full control over the use of the Army. Thus, as Callaghan put it in his book about the event, it became inevitable *"that the Westminster Government would assume a close interest both in the executive actions of the Northern Ireland Government and in their general policy"* (**A House Divided**, Collins, page 45).

The Stormont Government was both legally and politically incapable of resisting the "close interest" of Westminster in its affairs and it effectively ceased to exist as a functioning political entity.

Nevertheless, it was not until March 1972 that the Stormont Parliament was prorogued and Direct Rule introduced. Why did this delay occur? Why did it take Westminster nearly three years to follow Callaghan's decision through to its logical conclusion?

This is not a merely academic question. For a start, it is clear that the Stormont set-up was at the root of much (if not all) of the trouble in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. The Ulster Unionist Party was (and is) an exclusively Protestant Party. One party rule in Northern Ireland therefore meant Protestant rule and left the Catholic community out in the cold. By the late 1960s, the civil rights movement had shown the world that Catholics had had enough of these arrangements, that they were no longer prepared to live as a permanent minority, cut off from meaningful politics.

Furthermore, the period between the arrival of British troops and the introduction of Direct Rule was of crucial importance to the future development of the 'Troubles'. By March 1972, the Provisional IRA had been in business for two years and the civil disturbances of the late 1960s had developed into a state of near civil war.

Why, then, did Harold Wilson's Labour Government not introduce Direct Rule in 1969? The answer to this question had been revealed by Tony Benn, who served in Wilson's Government at the time. In a section of his memoirs published in **The Independent** (December 14, 1989), Benn recalled a crucial Cabinet meeting held on August 19, 1969. According to Benn, Denis Healey advised the Cabinet *"to get Chichester-Clark* (the N.Ireland Prime Minister) *or another Ulsterman to carry the can"*. Later in the discussion, Jim Callaghan outlined the options open to the Government and asked *"But if all else fails what do we do?"* There then followed two highly significant comments

...Denis stressed again: "Let's keep Chichester-Clark carrying the can". Jim agreed: "Yes, I too want to avoid responsibility."

Seldom have two short sentences so accurately captured the essence of a government's policy. The Labour Government tried to preserve the discredited Stormont arrangement in order to "avoid responsibility" in Northern Ireland. In its eagerness to keep Northern Ireland at 'arm's length', it kept the Unionist Party in power.

There was nothing original about such an approach. The 'arm's length' policy was not an invention of Harold Wilson or Denis Healey. It was devised by David Lloyd George and enshrined in his 1920 Government of Ireland Act.

It was the 1920 Act which set up a devolved Government in Northern Ireland. This, incidentally, was done against the wishes of the Unionist Party leadership who argued that devolution would exacerbate sectarian tensions in the province. When the 1920 Act was going through its Committee stage at Westminster, Sir Edward Carson, the then leader of Ulster Unionism, had this to say:

It has been said over and over again, "You want to oppress the Catholic minority, you want to get a Protestant ascendancy over there". We have never asked to govern any Catholic. We are perfectly satisfied that all of them, Protestant and Catholic, should be governed by this Parliament, and we have always said that it was the fact that this Parliament was aloof entirely from these racial distinctions and religious distinctions, which was the strongest foundation for the government of Ulster."

Carson's advice was ignored and the

Unionists accepted this responsibility only because the alternative was Irish Unity. The Union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain was made dependent upon the periodic return of Unionist Governments at Stormont and the development of single-party Protestant rule became inevitable.

Instability was almost literally written into the political framework established by the Government of Ireland Act. The creation of Northern Ireland as a 'political entity' was followed up by a rigid boycott of the province by the British political parties.

The Stormont set-up - devolution plus exclusion from UK party politics - placed both communities in the North of Ireland in an intolerable situation. Unable to participate in the wider class-based politics of the UK, they stayed within their respective political ghettos. The Protestant community was put in charge of a devolved sub-Government it had never asked for, while the Catholic community was required to live as a permanent minority under Protestant rule.

Northern Ireland stayed, for the most part, in a state of suspended political animation between the 1920s and the 1960s. Unionist antipathy to the terms of the Government of Ireland Act lingered on and little use was made of the Stormont Parliament. Political activity in the province was kept to a minimum. (In the 1950s, the then Unionist Prime Minister, Lord Brookeborough, once spent an entire winter on holiday in Australia!)

In the 1960s, however, a decisive and disastrous change in Ulster Unionism occurred. The man chiefly responsible for this change was Captain Terence O'Neill, who became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in March 1963. O'Neill stirred up political activity in Northern Ireland. Unlike his predecessors, he was an active devolutionist who sang the praises of the Stormont set-up and claimed that it gave the province an "*in-built advantage*" over the rest of the UK. He also held Unionism up as a coherent political philosophy which was superior to the left-right politics of Great Britain.

The entire Unionist Party followed its leader in this new direction. It attached itself to the political framework devised by Lloyd George and set Northern Ireland on course for disaster.

As part of his strategy for enhancing the image of the Stormont Government, Captain O'Neill indulged in grand reconciliatory gestures towards the Catholic community. These gestures were without substance but they did raise expectations of change, expectations which O'Neill did not even try to accommodate. The resultant Catholic frustration produced the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960s. The Unionists were incapable of responding positively to the civil rights agitation and, by August 1969, the Stormont set-up had collapsed into sectarian chaos.

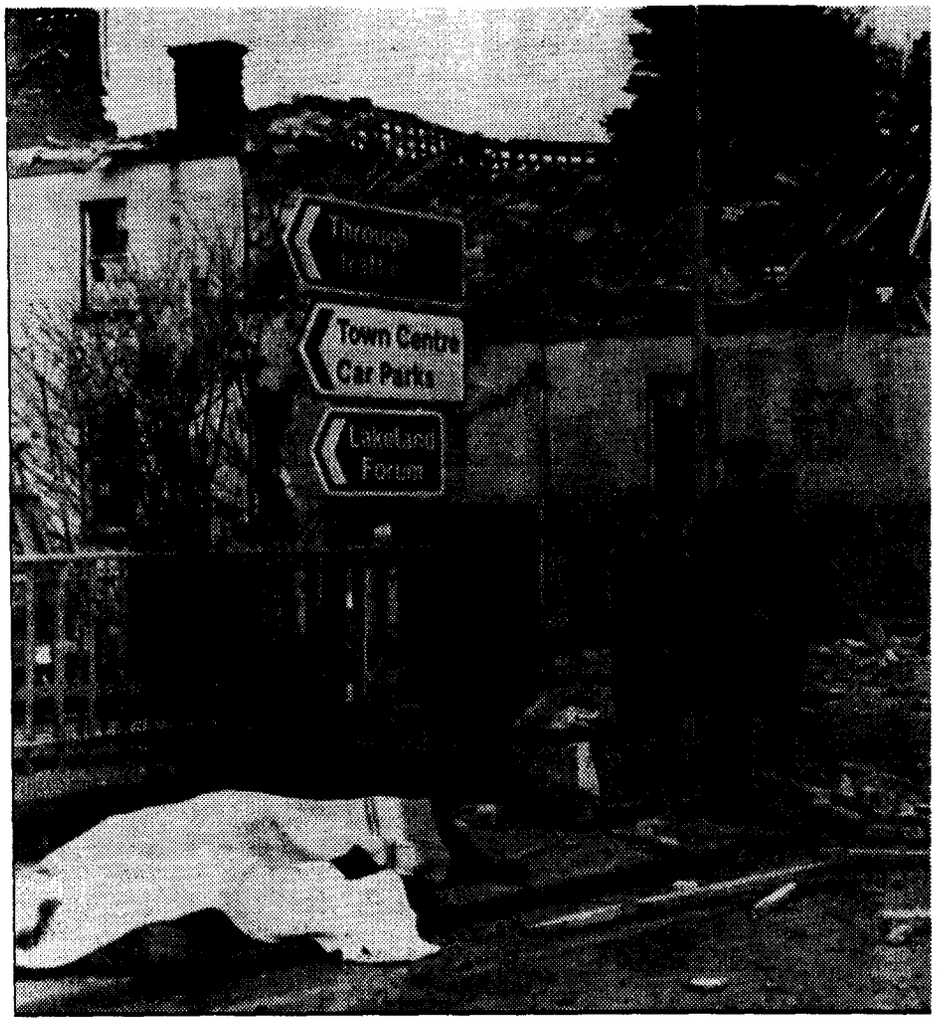
This was the time for Westminster to intervene. The devolved arrangements imposed on the province in 1921 had become unworkable; they should have been dismantled. But instead, Wilson, Callaghan & Co. tried to prop up Unionist rule. This refusal to accept responsibility undoubtedly got people killed.

Twenty years on, it is difficult to see exactly what has changed. The Catholic and Protestant communities remain trapped in their political ghettos. Although Direct Rule from Westminster has been in operation now for seventeen years, the people of Northern Ireland are still excluded from British party politics; they still have no say in the election of the Westminster Government.

The 'arm's length' approach still exists. The current Government's policy towards the province is based on a desire to get Ulster people carrying the can once more. Hence the bland calls on local politicians to 'get together and work out a solution'. Hence the references to the British Government 'holding the ring until the warring factions sort out their differences'.

Twenty years after the events of August 1969, Westminster is still trying to shirk its responsibilities in Northern Ireland. It is still refusing to govern the place in accordance with normal democratic principles. And this is still Labour's policy. Will this also be the case twenty years from now?

David Gordon is a postgraduate research student at the University of Ulster, Coleraine. His book, ***The O'Neill Years - Unionist politics 1963-69*** *was published in September.*



Enniskillen , November 1987: how clean are Labour's hands?

The Glorious Revolution - Back to Class Analysis

by Peter Brooke

What did the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 achieve? Or, rather, what followed it and may have resulted from it? England is distinguished in Europe as the only country which achieved the transition from a peasant/craftsman economy to an industrial economy without a violent transformation of its political structures. The Glorious Revolution instituted political structures which were sufficiently flexible to accommodate economic change.

There are many aspects to this question, but the one on which I wish to concentrate is the elimination of the idea of government as a spiritual authority. This is not exactly the same thing as the elimination of the Church as a political power in the land. That had already been achieved; it was the principle work of the Reformation. The whole thrust of Lutheranism and Anglicanism was the subjection of the Church to the national government. Calvinism attempted to reverse the process and reassert the independent authority of the Church but everywhere it was defeated. It came closest to success in Scotland after the Glorious Revolution, but the defeat of the Church of Scotland was a major consequence - and purpose - of the Act of Union with England in 1707. This was shortly followed by patronage acts which asserted the authority of the British parliament over the Church.

The subjection of Church to State, however, was not confined to Protestant countries. The dominance of the State over the Church had been largely achieved in Spain before the Reformation. It was the central tenet of the Gallican Church of the 16th century in France. The Middle Ages had seen a long struggle between two independent powers each with its own body of law. By the 17th century the struggle had everywhere been resolved in favour of the state. That is everywhere, other than the Netherlands and Switzerland, in favour of the King.

But in subordinating the Church to himself, the King was combining in himself the two roles of secular and spiritual authority. The spiritual authority was not eliminated. It was assumed by the King. Thus, the idea that government was a moral charge remained intact, together with the idea that the major agent for the moral authority of the government was the Church. It was this that was shaken fundamentally by the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89.

The theorist of the Glorious Revolution was John Locke and the most important of John Locke's thoughts was perhaps the following (from the **First Letter on Toleration**):

A church, then, I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining together of their own accord, in order to the public worship of God in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him and effectual to the salvation of their souls.

That, the view that religion is a private matter and, consequently, that there is no spiritual authority in society, is at the heart of the Glorious Revolution. This was not immediately obvious. The reign of Queen Ann marked an apparent comeback for the idea of government as a moral authority. But the Anglican hierarchy had already been filled by people who shared Locke's view of the matter and, with the Hanoverian succession in 1714, the new idea was openly proclaimed by the Bishop of Bangor, Benjamin Hoadly, the court theologian, and the authoritative assemblies of the lower clergy of the Church of England were suppressed for over a century to prevent them from censuring him:

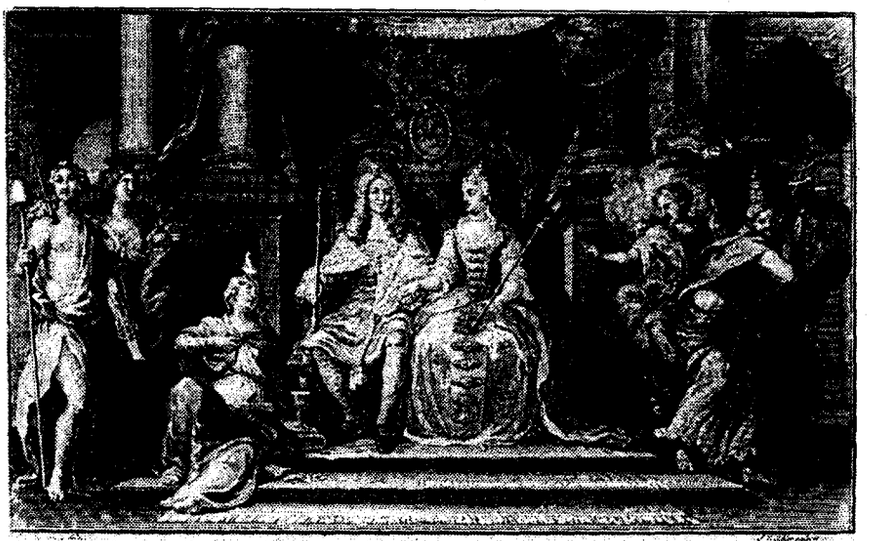
He (Christ - PB) *hath...left behind him no visible authority, no vice-regents who can be said properly to supply his place, no interpreters, upon whom his subjects are absolutely to depend; no judges over the consciences or religion of his people* (Hoadly, **The Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ,** London, 1717).

Thus the 'Whig oligarchy' - the aristocracy which triumphed with the accession of George I - were free to regard government as a matter of purely secular material interest. What did they do with their freedom from the contraints of any moral authority other than that of their own consciences? They set about turning agricultural production into a business enterprise. The Glorious Revolution was followed by the agricultural revolution. No longer restrained by the moral responsibility imposed by the old order, they set about throwing the peasantry off the land and turning themselves into large scale capitalist farmers.

It was the same process of social engineering that Stalin conducted in five years of the 'liquidation of the Kulaks'. If it appears less brutal it is largely because it was comparatively prolonged. But it *was* brutal (its most obviously brutal point being the Highland clearances in Scotland - where incidentally, the militant end of the Church of Scotland which opposed the domination of the state sided with the peasants). Huge numbers of people were driven away from their homes at a time when there was no industry to absorb them. The process was resisted in Ireland by agrarian terrorism practised against a weak and insecure upstart aristocracy, who have gone down in history as particularly brutal precisely because they did not manage (or even try very hard) to eliminate their peasantry altogether. (America is built on the recent - 19th century - massacre of the Indians. We all know it but we do not hold America culpable for it. Doubtless had Hitler succeeded in eliminating European Jewry our grandchildren would have regarded him in the same light. Nothing succeeds like success.)

By the end of the 18th Century, British agriculture was established on a sound basis of large scale production capable of feeding the huge populations gathered in the towns (largely as a result of their expulsion from the country) who in turn provided the human material for the rapid expansion of the Industrial Revolution. This was the basis of Britain's 19th Century prosperity. In the account books of the political economist, the whole thing was a miracle. It was a miracle in which virtually every single human manual

ability of any value was systematically destroyed; mankind was reduced to the status of a minder of machines; cheapness and quantity became the only values recognised in society; and the market became (as Hobbes, the great opponent of the authority of the church, had foreseen and desired) the only ground of human association. And we may add that war inevitably and irresistably became 'total war': it is in war more clearly than anything else that we see the murderous consequences of an industrial production that goes far beyond our human nature; the best description of all this is still Marx's **Capital.**



An allegorised depiction of the accession to the throne of King William and Queen Mary

The course of events was not the same in France, where the King continued to have absolute authority, including a spiritual and moral authority which was necessarily conservative in tendency - conservative of the existing rights of his subjects and therefore of the *status quo*. England in the 18th Century was in a state of class war - landlord v. peasant - with all the power in the hands of the landlord. While the same economic forces were at work in France they did not have the same liberty to develop. They came up against moral and spiritual concerns which were personified by the Church but which, it should be said, were not intelligent. The Church, subjected to the King, did not have a mind of its own. The King in turn knew very well that he was not a real minister of God and that his authority was usurped. (We may compare the King of Morocco. Does he really believe in his heart of hearts that he is the 'Commander of the Faithful'?)

The great work of the French Revolution, as of the English, was finally to do away with the idea of government as a spiritual authority and thereby - as in England - liberate commercial interest as the single overriding authority in the state. The King of France was executed because he refused to accept the reduction of the Church to *"a voluntry society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord..."* and wished to maintain at least the form of a Church with a divine authority to command the society as a whole (though the substance of this had already been destroyed by the King's own forebears).

The consequence of the French Revolution, however, were not the same as those of the English Revolution. The latter was effected by the aristocracy who established the principles of industrial production in agriculture and destroyed the peasantry. In France, the Revolution turned against the aristocracy (for no very good reason that I can see). As a result, a greatly weakened aristocracy became identified with reaction. But although the immediate result of the Revolution was that land passed into moneyed hands, this did not bring about the rationalisation of agriculture. The moneyed hands were urban and incompetent in agricultural matters and, as a result, instead of expelling the peasants, they sold to them and in a very short time the peasantry was established as just about the most powerful economic - and political - force in France. Agriculture became capitalist, but on the basis of relatively small-scale individual production which prevailed (and maintained in existence the related artisan-scale production) until the Second World War.

Thus in contrast to England the economy was retarded by the Revolution, and one of the consequences of this was the difficulty of organising France on a military basis to meet the crises of 1870, 1914 and 1939. Marx thought that the market was sufficient to turn small-scale agricultural production into large-scale agricultural production. He was right but, as always, he underestimated the amount of time it would take. (The same phenomenon of the predominanace of small-scale agricultural production can of course be seen in Ireland).

What was specific to the English Revolution of 1688-89 and marked it out as the most successful of revolutions in establishing stable political arrangements to enable economic change was, then, largely that it was achieved by the aristocracy and squirearchy - the existing ruling class. It removed the limits on their freedom of action which had previously been imposed by the King and Church and thus put them in a position of absolute power over the peasantry.

Margaret Thatcher has talked about 'our peaceful revolution', thus showing her usual disregard of Scotland, where it took the form of a civil war that only finally ended with the massacre at Culloden. Also of Ireland, where it took the form of a conquest and the final destruction of an entire national culture - a national culture that had no objection in principle to being ruled by a British monarch. It is only in England that the Glorious Revolution can be called a peaceful revolution. And in England it was not until the Hanoverian succession that it was consolidated and that what it was (the final reduction of government from the status of a moral charge given by God to a matter of arranging things between the various vested interests in society) was clarified.

And what *that* meant - a political framework in which the English peasantry could be destroyed, peacefully, was revealed only slowly throughout the century and has now, just as peacefully, been forgotten again since we are all - management and workers - beneficiaries of the crime.

Peter Brooke is the author of **Ulster Presbyterianism: the historical perspective 1610-1970,** *Dublin, Gill and Macmillan; New York, St. Martin's Press, 1987, 259 pp.*

The Past Persistent

by Madawc Williams

Raymond Williams: **People of the Black Mountains,**
Chatto & Windus, 357pp., £13.95.

When people look at the past, they tend to look at a few dramatic events, and from the viewpoint of the rulers and the privileged. This is not easily avoided - those are most of the written records we have. But archeology has been tending more and more to look at the everyday lives of the ordinary people. This book expresses the same thing as a series of interconnected short stories. It goes from the most remote human past to the Roman occupation - the point where a lot of conventional histories begin.

Starting with hunters before the last ice age, around 23,000 BC, the book describes the sort of lives those people might have lived in a single area, the region of the Black Mountains in South Wales. Around 5400 BC, when climatic changes mean that 'the trees are eating the people', we see a youth work out the beginnings of agriculture - yet fail to get his kin to accept such a drastic change in their way of life. In 3400 BC we see shepherds coming in from the European mainland, with sheep that looked more like modern goats, and the trouble they had getting hunters to understand that these animals were not to be hunted. We see the fringes of the culture of the people who build Stonehenge. Later - from 650 BC - we see the early Celtic upper class. Readers will probably be surprised to see them presented as a sort of cross between Punk Rockers and Hells Angels - but the records we have indicate that this is just what they were like in those distant times. We also see Caesar's invasion of Britain as the Celts might have seen it, and the first stages of the later Roman occupation. Interwoven with these are chapters that give the background - geographical, climatic and historical.

Historical novels are the easiest way to get a sense of history without reading large numbers of heavyweight academic books. But the sense of history is sometimes a false one, or at best limited. Writers identify with the upper class and ignore the rest. Or they concentrate on something like the building of Stonehenge and ignore the context in which it was built. The Black Mountain communities would have been typical of the actual basis of the societies that created such things. The exact history will never be known. But fiction based on a good knowledge of archeology can fill the gap and give us an idea of what the ancestors of the British were doing. (Most of the cultures shown were spread across the large parts of the British Isles, and indeed over large parts of north-western Europe.)

This is the first volume of the work. The author's plan was to take it right up to the present day, but he died before completing it. The second volume will have the rest of what was completed - going right up to the time of Owain Glyndwr.

At £13.95 the book is a bit too expensive for most individuals to buy. But if you can persuade your local library to get a copy, you'll find it a worthwhile read. And in due course there should be a paperback version.

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Animal Rights

Dear Sir.

In **L&TUR No.12 (July-August)**, Madawc Williams described the keeping of a dog in a human-sized dwelling as "cruel". Whether or not everyone would agree with this view, few I think would object to the use of the word "cruel" in relation to the treatment of a dog or cat. Cruelty is the deliberate inflicting of unnecessary pain. To say that it's "cruel" to pour petrol over a live spaniel and then set it on fire (as was done recently by a group of boys in Belfast) is to imply that moral concepts aren't exclusively applicable to our treatment of and dealings with other human beings.

This is implicitly acknowledged by British law: various statutes prohibit certain activities such as cock-fighting and dog-fighting, and ostensibly seek to regulate the conditions under which domestic, farm, and laboratory animals are kept. A few weeks ago, a woman whose dog died as a result of having been left in her car on a particularly hot day was fined something in the region of £300. The legislation under which the prosecution was brought, and the comparative severity of the fine, would appear to reflect a serious concern among the British public for the welfare of animals.

In fact, it doesn't. On the farm, on board the trawler, in the zoo, and in the laboratory, acts of cruelty are perpetrated daily and *routinely*; and the small number of people who protest against them are ignored or dismissed as silly, sentimental or eccentric.

On the farm, animals and chickens are deprived throughout their lives of natural light, fresh air, exercise and natural relationships with their own kind. The only necessity of life which is not denied them (because it simply can't be) is food, and even this has been and often still is adulterated - with antibiotics, steroids, and, as in the recent 'mad-cow-disease' incident, with the unmarketable bits of the dead bodies of other animals. Milk is extracted from cows by machine, copulation is replaced with a syringe. The battery chicken suffers burns to, and often actual mortification of, its feet and anal area as a result of prolonged contact with its own excreta, while its bones degenerate through lack of exercise to the consistency of a potato crisp. The veal calf ends its short and joyless life by staggering on atrophied legs to the slaughterhouse. On board the trawler, thousands of fish, which contrary to popular misconception have highly sensitive bodies, thrash and gasp as they slowly suffocate.

In the zoo, animals large and small drag out their days in an artificial environment, in unsuitable climatic conditions, deprived of the stimuli vital to their mental well-being. (Animals share with us not only the ability to feel pain and pleasure, distress and contentment, but also the ability to go mad.)

In the British laboratory, millions of animals every year have shampoo poured into their eyes and oven-cleaner applied to their shaved skin, are forced to inhale cigarette smoke, and have new drugs pumped into their initially healthy bodies. (The only object of the LD50 test is to establish the lethal dose for 50% of a control group.)

Every day in Britain, millions of conscious, sentient animals are quietly and routinely subjected to every form of indignity, distress, anxiety, pain and death. On the odd occasion when this subject is raised, the defence usually offered for all this suffering is that it is unfortunately necessary. If this were true, then the activities causing the suffering might not meet our definition of "cruelty".

So is the suffering of animals necessay for our well-being?

There can be no question that for most of our history the consumption of meat has been necessary for survival, and in many parts of the world today it still is. Where there is no choice, there is no moral choice either. In the Western World, in the second half of the 20th century, however, it is not only easy, but cheaper and healthier, to choose a well-balanced diet that excludes all forms of flesh and involves a minimum of animal exploitation. Exceptionally, the free-range egg costs a few pence more than its battery counterpart. The cost of a battery egg to the chicken that lays it is a lifetime of unrelieved misery.

The zoo, it is argued, both provides entertainment and serves an educational purpose. If the spectacle of captive animals in a more or less advanced state of mental derangement in entertaining, it is so in the sense that Bedlam was. It is difficult to see what educational value there can be in a stroll around a collection of cages and enclosures that house animals exhibiting abnormal behaviour in unnatural conditions. The average natural history TV documentary is incomparably more informative. Tacitly admitting the weakness of their own defence, supporters - i.e. owners and employees - of zoos have recently come up with the the claim that they are saving certain species from extinction. But of course a species that existed only in zoos would already be extinct.

The testing of drugs, cosmetics and other products on animals is both unnecessary and worthless. (Indeed, many of the products are unnecessary and worthless). Alternatives, such as tissue culture, are now available, and several renowned research institutions, including the Curie Institute, have completely abandoned the use of animals. A number of disasters, of which thalidomide is probably the most notorious, have proved the dangers of extrapolating from results obtained from animal 'models'. Many laboratory experiments are not simply unnecessary and worthless, but senseless. Anyone might have predicted that a baby monkey confined in a metal cylinder would eventually go mad. It did.

What we are dealing with here are real moral choices. Even if animal experiments did result in tangible benefits to the human species, would this in itself be moral justification for them? That is to say, can the improved well-being of one species justify the inflicting of suffering on another?

Anyone who would say it can and does, on the grounds that the human species has reached a higher stage of evolution than the others (a slightly modified form of an argument Dr Goebbels would have recognised), might consider the following hypothesis. If the Earth were to be colonised by a species from elsewhere in the cosmos, a species which had reached a higher level of development than ourselves (i.e. a higher level of intellectual development, because that's what we're talking about), would that species be morally justified in using human beings for medical experiments, or perhaps only human beings with an IQ of less than 100? If not, why not? Or again, if the suffering of one species can be justified by the benefits derived by another, may not the suffering of one individual, one social class, one race, be justified by the benefits derived by another?

The fact is that we are prepared to extend our moral system to the other species as long as it suits us. We condemn those who organise illegal dog-fights, who enjoy galloping about the countryside on big horses with dozens of dogs in pursuit of a miserable skulking fox, who spend fortunes breeding and protecting birds to be slaughtered by the hundred in a single afternoon for the tables of the rich and privileged. On the whole, we're rather concerned about the threat to the African elephant and the

Black Rhino. We can do without fur coats and ivory chess-sets, and there's not a great demand around here for grouse or pheasant or rhino-horn aphrodisiacs. We can take a really lofty moral position on all these things - in the sure knowledge that it will cost us not the slightest inconvenience or discomfort. We can still abhor the exploitation of the weak by the strong, as long as "the weak" only means our own kind.

Some years ago, a company which makes vegetarian "burgers" tried to advertise its products on commercial TV in Britain. It was prevented from doing so, on the grounds that the advertising would be objectionable to the meat industry. Animal exploitation is Big Business. The more merciless the exploitation, the more money there is in it. And animals will never 'organise'.

So long as we continue to countenance the unnecessary suffering of animals for profit, or to gratify our cultivated preference for cooked flesh, or to provide an afternoon's entertainment or a new deodorant, our use of words like"cruel" in connection with blood-sports, or with the fur industry's use of iron leg-traps for wild animals, or with the hunting to extinction of the African elephant, let alone with the keeping of domestic animals in a city environment, will continue to ring hollow. A moral system which is confined to my family or my class or my race or my species is not a moral system, but self-interest dressed up in fine words by self-deception.

E. Hewitt
Lisburn
Northern Ireland

Labour and the Farmers

Dear Sir

I am writing with regard to the article on the environment, **Green and Growing**, written by Madawc Williams in the September-October issue. Most of what appears in **L&TUR** is good stuff, food for thought at least, and I hope it's being read by the Labour leaders. I can imagine it puts the wind up any Tories who read it; your ideas might catch on in the Labour camp *and* be popular with the voters. Some of your articles are a bit simplistic though, and seem to ignore the facts, and do an otherwise decent journal a disservice. The article on the environment is a case in point - simplistic, selective, and the stuff on handling the farmers missed much of the point.

To be sure many of the Greens' ideas give you the shivers, especially as articulated by Jonathon Porritt, and are inherently authoritarian. Didn't he say in his book something like *'There are too many people in the world - especially the third world - and it's got to stop. I don't want to be authoritarian, but someone has to do something about it.'* I remember something like that.

Where the article was a bit off-beat was in its simplistic view of modern farming, and its assumption that the Labour Party has yet to concern itself seriously with the environment. It is at sea at the moment, sure, but it's made some fairly serious attempts in the past. The introduction of planning legislation in 1947 was an attempt to get some sort of social control over the environment, and some gain for society at the expense of property speculators. But it's never as simple as just formulating the 'right policy' is it? Before 1979 there was a serious attempt by the then Labour government in the form of the Countryside Bill to do what you suggest - to compensate farmers for farming with conservation in mind. The Bill fell when Thatcher was elected, but was resurrected as the Wildlife and Countryside Bill. And what happened? The NFU, one of the most powerful employers' organisations in Britain, got to work with the Tories. Clauses to support conservation-minded farmers were redrafted as clauses to support destructive farmers, who would be compensated if they agreed not to carry out destructive operations. The compensation reflected 'profits forgone' which would have accrued to the farmers if they had carried out their destructive operations. Farmers who were genuinely concerned about conservation got nothing (unless they threatened a destructive operation)!

Not only was the NFU able to make sure that this idiocy was grant-aided. It insisted that farmers could carry out destruction first and claim grant aid afterwards. Before that there had been a sytem of 'prior notification' whereby MAFF could refuse grant aid on financial and/or technical grounds. One of the implications of turning this on its head was that for the first time farmers had a statutory right to grant aid; if they were refused a grant to carry out a destructive operation they were automatically entitled to compensation. Some farmers thought this was great stuff, but most will tell you privately it's nonsense and should never have been allowed to happen. In any case it's no surprise that their image suffered, particularly when the sums being lavished on all this nonsense were contrasted with the peanuts thrown at the conservation groups. On top of that the polluters weren't paying to clean up the mess - the taxpayers were. At least the British public isn't taken in any more by notions of independent yeomen farmers battling single-handed against the elements to bring us our food, as Madawc Williams seems to be. He didn't even mention the NFU in his piece on farming, never mind look at its role.

The other thing he thinks is that farmers 'control the land'. I know a lot of farmers in Britain and *they* don't think they control the land. They think it's controlled by the banks, whose lending policies and interest rates force them into particular farming strategies. It's a bit like a treadmill - running faster to stand still, and that has to mean more intensification, more money coming in to go out, and so on. They also think it's controlled by big business like the fertilizer giants and the food processors. Many of these giants get involved with farmers in package deals and contracts - the classic case being Bird's Eye and the pea farmers (there are many other examples). The farmers are told on what date the peas have to be ready, what shade of green that have to be, and how many have to be in each pod. Fertilizer companies and machine producers can offer them deals which enable farmers to churn the right peas out. Where's the local controlhere? If Madawc Williams talks to farmers he'll find that many of them think that decision making lies as much in the boardrooms of the banks and big business as on the farm. They don't like it and neither do the conservationists. It seems pretty fundamental to me but I didn't see much of it in the article.

What does all this mean for the Labour Party? You suggest 'teaming up with the farmers'. Sure, and Labour has tried this in one way or another since 1945 much more than the Tories - ask any farmer. They'll tell you reflectively that they've always been better off under Labour than the Tories, even if they did still vote Tory 'because their dads did'. This last point has something to do with the ideological myth about independent yeomen controlling the land, which suits Tories, banks etc. very well. I'm surprised to see Madawc Williams fall for that one.

Labour has got to put its weight behind the economic interests of smaller

farmers rather than larger, and to less capital-intensive, environmentally sensitive agriculture. And the tax payer has to support that. Sure, small farmers can be as destructive as large ones, but that mainly happens where they're up against it financially. It should support a greater degree of localism in food production and consumption, to benefit both farmers and consumers, and stimulate local employment. It should support worker-controlled enterprises in rural areas to increase rural employment and reassert community control over resources. The thing is this assumes an alliance of different classes - the working class, petty bourgeois farmers, and 'independent' businessmen and women - and different party political allegiances, so there's nothing particularly straightforward about it. And that's without facing up to the opposing interests of the big farmers, the banks, the merchants and the NFU.

The Green view of the world may well be pretty technocratic. But that's hardly the same as involving a 'basic rejection of life'. I don't really understand what Madawc Williams's hang-up is. He slates the Greens, then says that debt-for-rainforest swaps are a good idea. Where does he think that idea came from if not from the Green camp? The point is that there may be some benefit for Labour in looking seriously at some of the Green thinking.

Another thing. Saying most Greens are city-dwellers and therefore ignorant of the natural world (there's not much natural about modern farming!) sound to me a bit like saying Welshmen couldn't possibly understand the Northern Irish question, but I know several who have had a good stab at it.

Jack Eldon
Gweru
Zimbabwe

P.S. As a Brit temporarily exiled in Zimbabwe I am acutely aware of the silence from **L&TUR** on Southern and South African issues. Why the silence?

South Africa was discussed by Walter Cobb in his article Nations in Conflict (L&TUR No.7, July-September 1988). We should be happy to consider further articles on this subject if they were submitted to us. **Editor.**

This article was written by an Irish supporter of the Bevin Society, who lives in Dublin. It first appeared in an Irish newspaper for Christmas 1988.

It is well established that the Winter Solstice was a celebration long before Christianity. No one has any idea when Jesus was born, but if the story about the shepherds is true it could not have been so late in the year. Christmas as we now know it evolved in the 19th century, out of a variety of Christian, pagan and folk traditions.

Merry Paganmas!

by Anne Spicer

I am a firm believer in the traditional Christmas celebration - that is the celebration before the Christians got at it. The turning of the year, the fertilization of mother earth as the rays of the new born sun strike into her womb at Newgrange and other places seems far more appropriate as a metaphor for renewal and a celebration of the cycles of existence than the joyless Christian conception.

I suppose the sight of Cliff Richard this year singing of the joys of children when he's an avowed celibate himself must be symbolic of where the original meaning has been lost or written out of the books.

We do our best, we fill the house with holly and ivy, male and female symbols respectively, the evergreen standing tree gets pride of place and we feast and make merry. The opportunities for ritual fornication are sadly reduced in modern life but it is good to see that many people are rediscovering in varied forms the roots of the festivity.

The queues of men and women at the lingerie counters is the most cheering sight and here I must register a vote of thanks to Penneys. They have never been given full credit for the democratisation of sexuality they have brought about. Working class women can now deck themselves out in the most erotic gear at a fraction of the cost of such things in up-market stores, and whoever says its only the men who care for such frills should think of getting out a bit more.

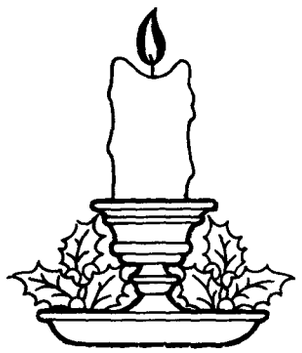
This is also boom time for the blue-movie trade - along with films for the kids. We can't have gangs of men (Cock Robins) rambling around chasing women (Jenny Wrens) - or being chased - as the case may be, the neighbours would think it was a cider party or something. The modern substitute is the frills and the blue movie, the whiskey and the beer, and indeed the festivities go with a bang none-the-less.

We are a family of free-thinkers so Santa gets great publicity in our house. Apart from supplying the magic children need, we feel that the day of reckoning when Santa is seen through adult eyes is a valuable psychological lesson for life and superstition generally.

My husband does most of the cooking while I do most of the tidying up. I am not at all sure I get the best end of this arrangement mind you, and the less said about his carving the better. No sacrifice is spared to tire the children out during the day so we can have the evening to ourselves, although this backfired one year when he fell asleep putting the baby off to sleep anyway.

We don't believe in this bull that Christmas is just for Children; mind you, I'm not sure anyone else does either. Even those who load up their trollies with toys etc. had the gleam of a lost childhood in their own eyes. I think that many of them enjoy the whole thing as much if not more than the ultimate recipients.

At least this Christmas there is another female in the house. My husband got me a kitten as a present, and we are all busy trying not to say 'he' all the time, its difficult in a household with husband, three boys and myself. We will not neuter it till it's had offspring. I question those people who call themselves animal lovers and yet deny their perpetuation; a teddy bear would suit them better. They remind me of the vegetarians who wear leather shoes (and they all do).



As for the New Year, our household looks forward to it with our usual optimism and holds out great hope in the good nature of humanity. The seasonal wishes of our good pagan ancestors expressed in the version of the carol *'The Tree of Life'* be with you:

O the rose, the gentle rose,
The prickles strong as the thorn!
O may maids find true hearts to love
So their children can be born!