Labour & Trade Union Review

March-April 1990

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Interview with Jimmy Knapp

Church & State in Eire

Will Labour stick with the Unions?

Eastern Europe - the end of Marxism?

plus

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Labour disconnects?

The signals coming from the Kinnock leadership of the Labour Party indicates an intention to disconnect the Party from the trade unions. The ending of the block vote would be tantamount to a severance of the connection.

The Kinnock leadership perceives a perception by the electorate that the trade union connection makes Labour unelectable. Time was when the Labour Party stood for something definite and sensible and applied its talents to persuading the electorate of the good sense of what it stood for. But in the Kinnock era the Labour Party stands for nothing definite. And so, instead of trying to persuade the electorate towards its views, it tried to perceive the perceptions of the electorate and fit in with them.

But that is about as useful an activity as a cat chasing its tail. The 'perceptions' of an electorate are infinitely fluctuating, unless they are given structure and stability by the purposeful activity of political parties. If that was not the case, then political parties would be dispensable, and we could have legislation by public opinion poll.

The political life of Britain has been distorted for the past ten years by the collapse into confusion of one of the major parties. The Labour Party, described by Harold Wilson fifteen years ago as 'the natural party of power', lost contact with the realities of power ten years ago. It degenerated into a Babel of private voices. That state of affairs had an effect on public opinion. And the Labour Party cannot now get back into power by making a bland adaptation to the state of public confusion which it created in the eighties.

Neil Kinnock does not bear the major responsibility for the decline of the Labour party, though he went along with it wholeheartedly. His chief virtue as leader is that he is single-mindedly intent on becoming Prime Minister. And in view of the cavalier disregard of power which has characterised ideological circles in the party during the past ten years, Kinnock's vulgar ambition to win must be seen as an invaluable asset.

He obviously reckons that his best chance of winning lies in having almost no policies, appearing sensible within the parameters set by Thatcher (in default of a coherent Labour presence during her first two terms) and thus helping her to lose because of the aggravation she is causing in her third term with the Poll Tax and the threat of privatising the Health Service. Kinnock aims to do in reverse what the Tories did in the 1950s, when they undertook to conserve the Welfare State (whose establishment they had opposed) while drawing the line at any further measures of socialism and ending a number of state restrictions on individual freedom. Kinnock aims to win by confronting late Thatcherism on the basis of early Thatcherism. And, given that much of the Labour Party is still lost in the ideological doldrums, we do not say that a more ambitious approach is feasible just now.

But the Labour Party is the Party of the trade unions or it is nothing. And a severance of the Labour/Trade Union connection would be an adaption to late Thatcherism in its most extreme form. Its achievement would not be a recipe for opportunist success, but for disintegration.

"During the 1980s the Labour Party alienated all the support that was capable of being alienated. But it easily remained the second party. It saw off the SDP challenge only because it was secured by the trade union connection. The SDP had a better 'image' and its leadership was more vigorous. But the Labour Party survived because it is the party of a great vested interest in society "

When the SDP was formed out of the Labour Party almost ten years ago it made an issue of the Labour/Trade Union connection. It formed itself as a free-floating party of individual social-democrats, and made a virtue of the fact that it was beholden to no vested interests, neither to capital nor the trade unions.

The Labour Party responded by exaggerating its trade union connection. It increased the formal power of the trade unions in the party by taking the election of the parliamentary leader out of the hands of the Party in Parliament and setting up the electoral college. Did those who now want to sever the trade union connection altogether then oppose that unnecessary and imprudent extension of formal trade union power?

During the 1980s the Labour Party, by advocating policies that were very widely regarded as frivolous and irresponsible, alienated all the support that was capable of being alienated. But it easily remained the second party. It saw off the SDP challenge only because it was secured by the trade union connection. The SDP had a better 'image' and its leadership was more vigorous. But the Labour Party survived because it is the party of a great vested interest in society -

a great 'corporation', as Hegel would have said.

A spuriously socialist radicalism which came to the fore in the closing years of the last Labour Government, and was given its head in **Tribune**, professed great apprehension about the dangers of 'the corporate state'. What they meant by this was the way Governments in the formation of economic policy take account of the two great interests in British society -the two great 'corporations' in the Hegelian sense - capital and labour. This was a bizarre expression of the influence of Thatcherite radicalism on radical socialism. And in the early years of the Thatcher government she was often praised in **Tribune** for breaking up 'the corporate state' by locking out the TUC from Downing Street.

That strain of anti-trade union sentiment survived the Thatcher decade and has become respectable. When Labour MP Frank Fields gave his lurid television interview about the diabolical methods by which he was deselected,it came naturally to him to mention the Militant Tendency and the trade unions in the same breath, as alien elements which had penetrated the Party.

The Labour Party was formed by a convergence of socialist groups and the trade unions. The decisive factor enabling it to displace the Liberal Party was that the trade unions decided that they needed their own party in Parliament. It was the trade unions which made it capable of winning the power of government in the state.

Thatcher's legislation has now gone beyond making the trade unions adopt democratic procedures in their internal affairs. Its purpose now is to subvert trade unions as bodies able to engage in collective action. She wants to put a finishing touch to the work of destroying 'the corporate state'. It would be sheer absurdity if the Labour/trade union connection were severed at the moment when the existence of trade unions as effective corporate bodies is being

threatened by a radical capitalist Government.

Why did trade unionism get a bad name in the 1980s? There is no doubt about the answer: because of Arthur Scargill. Scargill behaved exactly as Thatcher wished him to behave. Even so, he almost won his strike. But he insisted on snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory because he did not know what victory is in trade union terms. He was a bungling politician at the head of a great trade union which he led to disaster.

If trade unionism got a bad name it was because of the behaviour of this least typical of British trade union leaders. And those Labour Party leaders who now want to disconnect the Party from the unions because trade unionism has a bad name - did they come out clearly and forcibly against Scargill when he was conducting his strike as if it was a political revolution? Or did they help to bring about the situation of which they now complain?

Thatcher aims to undermine the trade unions as effective corporate bodies, and to atomise society - on the working class side. The corporate bodies of capital are not to be interfered with. And she has so dominated and demoralised the minds of many Labour Party bodies that they are preparing to help her in the work. They must be stopped, and brought back to their senses.

(In a future issue we shall consider why the American style of party politics - parties as assemblies of atomised individuals - has not developed in Britain and is out of keeping with the historical development of British politics.)

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Notes on the News

by Madawc Williams

Thatcherism versus Capitalism?

Mrs Thatcher likes to boast that she has single-handedly turned the tide against socialism and restored Britain to its proper Capitalist vigour. The truth is, a much deeper world-wide movement away from nation-state centrally planned forms of socialism was already under way in 1979, when she came to power. She was simply lucky. Most of her decisions have been wrong, and have helped continue Britain's decline among the capitalist democracies. Britain manufactures less than it did in 1979, and since a greater proportion of this is now owned and managed by foreign countries, British capitalism looks sick indeed.

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, socialism needed to go forward from central planning by technocrats to something much wider and more democratic. This didn't happen. Orthodox socialist opinion very deliberately stopped it happening, by suppressing, excluding or diverting the minority who did want it. Meanwhile, the growing capitalist world market brought prosperity to countries that were able to cope with it. Countries like Japan and South Korea, and most of the nations of Western Europe. But not to Britain. Britain has continued to flounder about, losing the superior position it once held as the creator of the industrial revolution. North Sea Oil gave us a boost, but it can't last for long.

Thatcherism was supposed to change this, and Thatcher certainly believes that she has. I used to think that she had - *world* capitalism was certainly doing fine, and I assumed that Britain would do O.K. as a part of it. But the vanity of Thatcherism - not just of Thatcher herself, though she is certainly vain enough - prevented Britain from being properly capitalist. Serious capitalists knew that some central planning was necessary, that education and training was essential in the long term, that industry must be protected by low interest rates and stable currencies, that major industries must be protected from cowboys who would make short-term profits for shareholders at the expense of long-term possibilities. Silly little Thatcherites, enthusiastically backing the 'iron lady' decided that we were much cleverer than the West Germans and

Japanese. The best brains were encouraged to go into non-productive speculation. Education was cut back. Any group of managers who tried to plan for the future would be liable to be thrown out after a hostile takeover by wheeler-dealers who could promise shareholders bigger profits for a year or three.

Thatcherism is now gripped by problems from which it may not recover. Some model Thatcherites are going bankrupt. Others have the sense to swim with the tide. Like Nigel Lawson, who after losing control of the economy has gone laughing all the way to the bank, where he has been given a job and a truly enormous salary.

License to kill - Alan Bond

Australian entrepreneur Alan Bond is currently fighting for his financial life. The people he owes money to no longer trust him with it. They want to break up his empire, to recover what they can. As I write, they seem close to succeeding.

The nature of 'entrepreneurship' makes such ups and downs inevitable. Alan Bond used to be regarded as a business genius. Now he's being presented as a wally who's only real talent was for winning yacht races. But if he pulls through, in a few years time they might start calling him a genius again.

Meanwhile, West Germany, Japan and similar countries have a much more stable business climate. Firms build up their power over the years, not by playing financial poker but by making useful products that people want to buy. Anglo-American culture has never really liked doing things this way. Hence the decline of Britain, the impending decline of America, and the status of Australia as an exporter of raw materials.

No licence to kill - the Channel Tunnel

The Channel Tunnel will definitely be built - too much of the government's prestige is tied up with it. Even though it has been packaged as private capitalist enterprise, it is immune to the normal sort of business logic which would have led its backers to pull out. Having chickened out on student loans, the banks can not fail her on another and much larger matter.

Worryingly, what's being trimmed is safety. To keep up some pretence of future profits, corners are being cut. Someone may have calculated that it's O.K. to kill as many people over the decades as might die taking the same trip by boat or aircraft. But we're not being told.

It's only words

A small apology, in response to a reader's complaint. In the last issue I referred to 'ambulance men'. Since not all of them are male, I should of course have said 'ambulance workers'. (Though not 'ambulance persons'. Nor will **Newsnotes** ever speak of Dustpersons, Conpersons or IRA Gunpersons.)

The **L&TUR** exists to get people thinking about the world. We accept the modern shift to gender-free language, since some people find it very important. Personally, I think that too much fuss is made about it. People can learn the jargon easily enough, without necessarily changing their underlying attitude. Since such shifts come much more easily to the middle-class intelligentsia than to manual workers, too much emphasis on 'sexist' terminology can be used as an excuse to freeze ordinary working people out of what is supposed to be their party.

I would also say that jargon is at least as much of a problem as 'sexist' language. There is far too much of it around. It can sound very grand and learned to use lots of rare words. It can be useful to some people to drop in a baffling term like 'oblomovism' to cover a gap in the logic. But it doesn't add meaning. To say *'In the absence of the feline predator,the rodent scavengers can engage in recreational activity'* is actually vaguer than saying *'while the cat's away, the mice can play'*. If you want to be understood, avoid sentences like *'A repair implemented at this point in time will yield a net saving of human resources of the order of 88.889 per cent'*. It's much better to say *'A stitch in time saves nine'*. And it's even non-sexist, it does not say who should do the stitching!

Prescott and publicity

L&TUR has finally begun to be talked about in **The Independent**, on television programmes and even in the House of Commons. Not, unfortunately, for our general view of the world. But any publicity is a start, especially because it's not for anything we regret.

I hope readers will remember the excellent interview with John Prescott that was in **L&TUR No.15**. Most of it, naturally enough, was about transport policies, Mr Prescott's area of responsibility. But this naturally had a trade union dimension, which led onto the question of the Tory laws. He expressed the view that Labour would have to repeal *all* the Tory laws.

The matter has gained such publicity because the Labour leadership has allowed an ambiguity to develop. Will the next Labour government do about the Tory legislation. The issue is a crucial one for Labour Party people, both as members of Trade Unions and as people whose lives might be disrupted by strikes. It needs to be debated and decided democratically.

Baptising the disobedient

If you live in England or Wales, you will be deemed to be a member of the Church of England, unless you positively assert that you are something else. Other churches and religious organisations have been built up by the dedication and self-sacrifice of their members. The C of E gained most of its very considerable wealth just by being the official and established religion of the kingdom.

There now seems to be a move to restrict the benefits of membership to 'active members' - people who will come on Sundays to be lectured at by the clergy. In particular, *"parents who do not promise to attend church regularly could find it increasingly difficult to get their children baptised."* (**The Independent**, February 2nd 1990).

If the C of E wishes to turn itself into a sect, it can do so. But this would logically imply giving up such privileges as Bishops in the House of Lords, and possession of large numbers of interesting medieval buildings (not all of which have done well under the C of E's stewardship.) In particular, it should in justice give up a huge chunk of the wealth that it was given on the assumption that it was a Church for *everyone*. Were the C of E to do this, it would obviously then be free to manage itself as it saw fit. But not otherwise.

Most Labour Party people have no personal need for such services as baptism. Neil Kinnock spoke for many when he said that his relationship with God was practically non-existent. But a lot of Labour voters do like to have the C of E as a church to provide ceremonials for life's special occasions, even if they don't otherwise go to church. If the C of E is seriously going to try to drop its obligation to the vaguely religious, while keeping all of its established privileges, Labour ought to raise an objection.

Hobsbawm's balm

During all the decades when Marxist Socialism needed to renew itself, Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm helped to ensure that it would not. He knew - he must have known - that Khrushchev had destroyed the logic of the Communist movement as it was under Stalin, and yet would not let it be reconstituted on some new basis. But he dithered and fudged.

He dredged up obscure facts to avoid coming to unpleasantly logical conclusions.

British Communism after 1956 had no idea what it wanted or where it was going. The one coherent thing it did was to hang onto, and even increase, its power in the Labour movement. But it had no idea of how to develop the Labour movement. Most of the things that were possible, it didn't like and was able to stifle. As Brendan Clifford put it, *"The forward march of Labour was halted by the Communist Party and its offshoots more than by any other influence"*. (**L&TUR No.10**). Hobsbawm was very much a part of this.

He's still doing it. In the **Independent of Sunday** (February 4th), he has the nerve to say: *"For about half a century, from 1914 to the aftermath of the Second World War, the world passed through a period of cataclysm, producing all manner of freak results, of which the Russian Revolution is probably the most long-lasting. Sometime in the 1950s, for reasons which historians are still arguing about, the world system appeared to get back on an even keel."*

Actually, world capitalism was under very heavy pressure in the 1960s and 1970s (as indeed it had been before 1914). But it was Hobsbawm and his ilk, in Britain and throughout the world, who failed to take advantage and made a right-wing solution inevitable. *Every* serious alternative they messed up.

Romania

Ceaucescu fell at just about the time our last issue came back from the printers. At this late date, there is little new to say. But there are some things that have not been given the prominence they deserve.

Ceaucescu had been useful to the West for two reasons. He disrupted the Warsaw Pact, and he was paying back Romania's foreign debts at the expense of his own people. But Gorbachev and the changes in Eastern Europe made Ceaucescu no longer necessary. And he had paid back his debts by the time he was overthrown. East and West were agreed that he should go, and Romania was in no position to stand alone. Therefore the army took advantage of a spontaneous popular revolt and got rid of him.

Western democracies tend to get rid of their leaders every few years, and are the stronger for it. Thatcher is breaking records by having lasted since 1979, and she's probably harming the Tory cause by hanging on. But Leninist parties can't get rid of their leaders except by extraordinary means.

If Ceaucescu could have been replaced after ten years, in the mid-1970s say, we might be looking back at him as quite a good and successful leader. He got Romania out of Moscow's orbit, backed the Prague Spring but avoided getting his own country invaded. But then he hung on and on and on, getting ever more eccentric and out of touch, till in the end he had to be deposed and shot. All of the old East European leaders hung on for long enough to mess up any chance of an alternative socialist development in their countries. It's all going to be drawn into the European Community. Which means that we in Britain must link up with other European socialists to make the new Europe as left as possible.

Turks and others

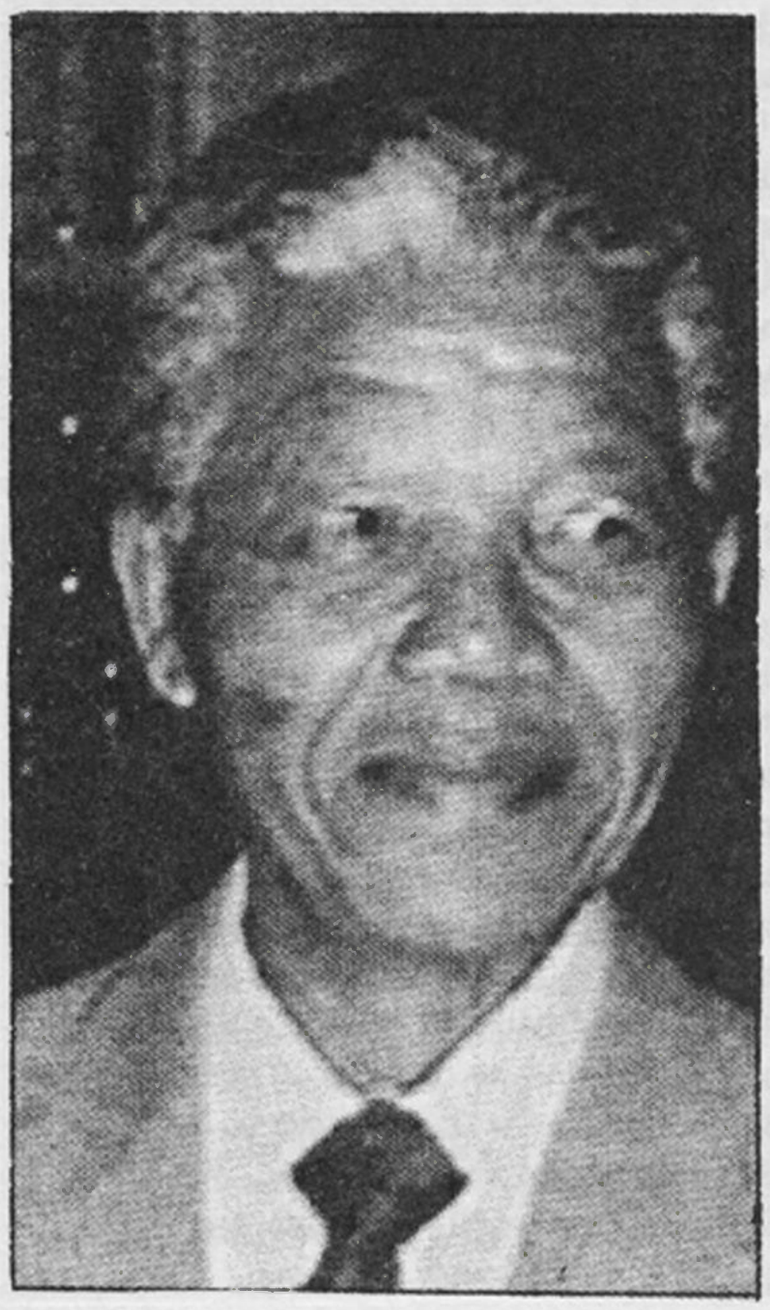
Speakers of Turkic languages have lived in various parts of Central Asia for as long as anyone can trace such things. One group came west, beat the Byzantine Roman Empire and established themselves in Asia Minor. This same group, as the Turkish Empire, later conquered large chunks of Europe, getting as far as the gates of Vienna until the Austrians and Poles stopped them. This same empire was gradually pushed back, losing territories where the majority did not regard themselves as Turks. Naturally, it was an untidy business, with minorities left behind in the modern nation-states.

Further east, other Turkic speakers were conquered by the Persian Empire, most of which was later taken over by the Tsars, and finally incorporated in the Soviet Union. Azeris were left partly in Iran and partly in the USSR. There are even some in Turkey, and these have expressed a wish to join an independent Azerbaijan if it should ever be established.

There are many different Turkic groups, and they do not necessarily like each other. Azeris are mostly Shi'ites, the rest are mostly Sunni. They have a more liberal understanding of Islam than the Shi'ite extremism favoured in Iran, and they will probably not be interested in joining in the Iranian 'Islamic Revolution', which in any case seems past its prime.

If this part of the world starts to untangle into nation-states, it is likely to be a bloody and prolonged process. The various Turkic peoples do not necessarily like each other, the Meshketian Turks were last year driven out in race riots by other rival Turkic peoples. A great variety of ethnic groups are scattered throughout the region, the proper boundaries for all the possible nation-states could and would be disputed. There are the Christian Armenians and Georgians, the Muslim but non-Turkic Kurds. To talk of the 'rights of nations' is all very well, but each nation tends to see its rights as more important than those of its neighbours. Hindu India will not give up its chunk of Muslim Kashmir. Iran would not be happy to lose its Azeris and the Kurds would have to carve a nation for themselves out of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. None of these states are likely to quietly accept such a thing. I foresee

decades of misery and warfare in that part of the world.



Freed Nelson Mandela

South Africa has been deliberately destabilised by its government. The release of Nelson Mandela means either serious negotiations in which Mandela and the ANC play a major role, or else a drift to civil war.

South Africa is not Eastern Europe. The government has the support of the majority of the white population, plus an unknown portion of the non-white population. The number of non-whites with guns, working as part of the police or army, shows that it is not a simple matter of racial polarisation. Nor is the black African population homogeneous. There are bitter rivalries between nations with very different languages, customs and traditions.

This means - what? Definitely not a continuation of apartheid. Almost certainly, no solution that has not been endorsed by Mandela and the ANC. No one can be quite sure how strong or weak the ANC's popular support is, but if a free election among blacks seemed likely to discredit them, the South African government would surely have contrived to hold one long ago. So whatever is patched up will have to be acceptable to the ANC. But it will probably not involve any immediate move to simple majority rule. The white population is not ready to accept it. They have both the will and the means - presumably including nuclear weapons - to prevent it happening.

Mandela seems well aware of the problem. Most of the rest of the world seems ready to write off the Afrikaners as a bunch of *laager* louts. Mandela and the ANC have (apparently) accepted the responsibility of trying to negotiate with them and take account of their fears, justified or not.

Can some compromise be found? Quite possibly. Zimbabwe found a compromise, in which the black majority got political power and the white minority kept most of its wealth. What emerges in South Africa is more likely to be something quite different. Assuming, that is, that some compromise can be found. Both sides are looking for one - but is there in fact any overlap between the worst that each side is ready to settle for? Time will tell.

Whither the weather?

With exceptional storms becoming much less exceptional than they used to be, a lot of people are asking if the world's weather patterns have shifted. Also if it's due to the Greenhouse Effect or something else.

I would say - possibly, and very probably. That's to say, the storms in 1987 and this year might be just a run of bad luck, but are probably not. There is now solid evidence that there is *much* more Carbon Dioxide in the air than is normal. Even as recently as ten years ago, there were grounds for legitimate scientific doubt. The *possibility* of a Greenhouse Effect has been known about for a long time, but no one was sure what the atmosphere had been like a hundred years ago. Now various tests have shown that it's happening. The exact effects can't be predicted. They are likely to be bad,they may turn out to be absolutely disastrous.

Meanwhile, Mrs Thatcher is being Macaws about the matter. Maybe we can do nothing and get away with it. Something's bound to turn up. Except that it almost certainly won't. We could have saved ourselves a lot of grief by acting 50 years ago, when the *possibility* of danger was known. Now that the danger is almost a certainty, urgent action is needed.

Literati and the Call of the Wild

In Jack London's **The Call of the Wild**, a dog that has had an easy life as the pet of a rich family is thrust unexpectedly into the harshness of Alaska. Ancestral instincts are awakened - the dog learns how to fight and how to survive, finally teaming up with a pack of wolves.

The Rushdie affair began as an incident in a conflict between two extreme forms of Islam. Supporters of the conservative version Sunni Islam favoured by Saudi Arabia were getting a lot of mileage out of protests against **The Satanic Verses**. They were calling for the book to be banned. Meanwhile the radical version of Shi'ite Islam dominant in Iran had suffered a setback after accepting that it could not crush secular-nationalist Iraq in the Gulf War. By calling for Rushdie to be killed, Khomeini scored a brief triumph. And since both sides are playing the game of 'more-Islamic-than-thou', neither can back down.

Rushdie is a worthless fool. He takes his understanding of the world from characters like Harold Pinter, who don't understand it at all, and have evolved the view that not understanding anything is the highest form of wisdom. This is the tail-end of the scepticism of people like Voltaire - having rejected conventional social values, they are left with nothing at all.

But Islam has never had a Voltaire. Muslims have not had their world-view pounded and shaken by two centuries of secular scepticism. Westerners have treated Islam as a sort of funny peculiarity that some foreigners engaged in. In the more tolerant climate of the past 40 years, they learned to treat such peculiarities with politeness. People stopped using the term 'Mohammedan', because Muslims disliked it. The small number of books that subjected the Quran to critical scrutiny were allowed to go out of print.

Many Muslims were willing to be equally polite. There was a perfectly sound basis for Muslims expressing a distaste for Rushdie's work and then ignoring him. It is recorded that Mohammed forgave various people who been grossly rude to him, who had even assaulted him or plotted to kill him. But the Muslim extremists were convinced that the West was weak and decadent, and would crack under a little pressure. Moreover, their own hard-line understanding of Islamic law would not allow them to be tolerant.

Remarkably, most of the light-weight literati rose to the challenge. Like the dog in **The Call of the Wild**, they have recovered a few of their old fighting instincts. Now if someone would only shoot Pinter, a real revival of serious secularism might occur. □

Interview with Jimmy Knapp

(General Secretary of the NUR)

L&TUR Labour's transport proposals are set out in **Moving Britain into the 1990s**. In your opinion are they adequate to deal with the problems facing British Rail?

JK Yes. I think Labour's transport policy recognises the need for major capital investment in new infrastructure. It recognises the fact that the transport infrastructure in its totality (not only the railways, but airports and motorways) is under severe strain. And I think the policy is responsive to the public demand for higher levels of capital investment and new infrastructure to deal with those problems. One of the problems with the present government's policy is that it is clearly hooked on market forces being the only answer; but you can never solve the problems of the transport infrastructure in the country, and the needs of the railways, by market forces alone, and I think Labour's policy defines a clear alternative, namely, that there is a role for public expenditure to play in paving the way for the type of major infrastructure projects that we need.

The policy recognises the need to restore the cuts in public service obligation grants to the railways which would have the immediate and short term effect of creating a climate and an ability to meet the standard of service that people expect. So, that is recognised, and that would be a quick and popular change in my view, and a clear alternative to what the government is doing. I think we have now got the best transport policy document since 1947. The 1947 policy was very progressive in its time in creating the maximum co-ordination, integration and cross support, and I believe that the policy of the '90s has got the feel of using the resources that we have in the best interests of the nation as a whole, and is progressive in that sense. So I am very optimistic about it.

L&TUR The introduction of the market into British Rail's performance, it seems to me, leads inevitably towards privatisation. What do you think should be the main plank in the labour movement's campaign against privatisation of BR?

JK I think the public will recognise that the proposal to privatise is based on sheer political ideology, and I don't think the electorate will be convinced that it is in their interest to privatise. It will be viewed as a piece of political dogma. Concern will emerge over electricity privatisation, and the public will view railway privatisation in the light of that concern. It is no accident that the government have halted their privatisation programme at that point and that there are no plans between now and the next general election to carry on from where they are now.

L&TUR And you reckon they wouldn't put it in a manifesto...

JK I think they will. The Conservative party are like political junkies. They are hooked on their own ideology and they will need another fix, so to speak, to keep them going. But I think the main arguments against privatisation of the railways are the certainty that there would be closure of lines in rural areas; and that private companies would be very unlikely to sustain the level of late night services, weekend services and cross-country services that we have got at the moment. In addition to that the operational and technical problems associated with railway privatisation are quite horrendous. Devising an operational plan for example, that would allow competing companies to run over the same infrastructure would be horrendous.

L&TUR You don't think Labour's policy of giving responsibility for transport to regional assemblies might produce a certain lack of co-ordination that could encourage some of the arguments for privatisation, as it were, by the back door? You don't have any worries about that?

JK No. If the policy is applied in a socialist spirit in the sense of producing the best possible overall strategy for any given region, and in the best interests of that community, then I think it can be a positive move. With the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC we lost the ability to take a strategic overview of the needs of a geographical area of that kind, and I think people have lost out as a result of that. When there was a link between the metropolitan county set-up and the Passenger Transport Executives elected councillors were able to shape policy alongside the wishes of the voters. The regional assembly idea will be a positive move because it can provide a strategic overview of the needs of that particular region. If this is allied to a progressive central government policy of providing a proper level of public support for major capital investment projects, then I think it will work.

L&TUR The party's policy places some emphasis on consumer interests. Do you see any potential conflict between the interests of the travelling public and the transport unions?

JK No, not at all. The way Tory government policy has developed over the past ten years has, in my view, thrown public transport workers and the travelling public on to the same side of the argument. They are all suffering from the same disease of under-investment. That means low wages and pressures on conditions for the workforce, and high fares, overcrowding and congestion for the travelling public. And it came across in the rail strikes of 1989 that the public perceived the situation in the way that I have described, as a common disease affecting everybody, and that is why all the predictable arguments used by the government backfired on them. The last two or three years in particular have indicated that there is a great deal of common ground between the workforce and the people that use the industry they work in.

L&TUR The party seems to be keen on involving consumers in various services - housing, for example. How do you think that transport users can be involved in the decision-making process?

JK There is a possibility of linking that in with the question of regional assemblies that we were talking about earlier. You are going to have a democratically-elected authority that will

be taking a strategic view of their region. Part of that policy-making process would be to consult all the interested parties like trade unions and consumer groups.

I think the Transport Users' Consultative Committees that exist at the moment, for example, could be strengthened and widened to encompass all forms of transport (they only deal with railways at the moment). If the legislation that created those was extended, they could become an integral part of the consultation process that I think should evolve with the creation of regional assemblies. There was a half-hearted attempt in 1978 during the last Labour government when county councils were charged with the responsibility of producing transport plans,and a part of that legislation was saying to them that they should consult - though some of them didn't make much of an attempt. So I think it is possible, given the move towards regional devolution, to develop that type of consultation alongside it.

L&TUR Let us turn now to the Channel Tunnel, which has become topical again following the recent bickering between the banks and the contractors. Are you confident that it will go ahead as planned?

JK Yes I am. But what has recently been happening illustrates the folly of believing that the free market is adequate to sustain a project of that magnitude. We will not get the infrastructure that we need to serve the tunnel for the very same reason. Yes, it will be built, but the danger for Britain is that we will not have the high speed rail links that will connect us up with the developing high speed network in western Europe. We will become a poor, offshore relation of the mainland unless we get that right. Bob Reid, in his deathbed conversion,spoke out about the need for government support for infrastructure of that kind, otherwise we become the poor relations of Europe. That has got to be the big argument for us. I think Labour can unite the country behind the argument that the proper infrastructure has to be provided, east, west, north and south.

L&TUR You would obviously argue against privatisation of the railways?

JK Oh yes. John Prescott quite rightly last week called for the abolition of section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act, the section that lays down that no public money shall be involved in it. I totally support Prescott's call, and I think it is a good lead for the Labour party because it is a view that can unite the country behind the argument that says we need an infrastructure that can serve the whole country - and that if we don't get it industry will be going to northern France, and business, commerce and finance will be going to Frankfurt. It won't be an argument about whether an industrialist sets up in Kent or Lancashire, but about whether he sets up in the UK or France or Holland. I am much more concerned about that than about the actual physical act of building the Tunnel, because that will happen.

L&TUR Would you like to say something about open stations and driver-only operated trains?

JK The Union's view of driver-only operated trains is that we are not against it as a principle, as a method, but we feel that there should be some on-train presence which gives reassurance to the person travelling, as well as being able to provide a commercial service by way of revenue protection, and looking after the general comfort of the passengers. As regards open stations, the problem is that you can encompass the revenue elements of that by having an on-train presence. If you have no on-train presence and you have no one on the barriers at the stations, how do you protect your revenue? If you are going to have open stations, you must balance that by some on-train presence which deals with the revenue side of it.

The other problem with open stations is that I don't think the public likes to see station platforms late at night devoid of any presence at all. The public likes to see people in railway uniforms on the station doing a job in that way. Also, the fear of women travelling alone late at night is a perfectly genuine fear. So we have to be careful that we don't leave the system devoid of staff to the degree that the public lose that service and support that I think they want.

L&TUR According to a report in the London **Evening Standard** a single union for all transport workers looks increasingly likely. What will be the benefits of such a union both for the workers and the travelling public?

JK As far as the members of the unions are concerned, we've reached a point in history now where we have to consider the total resources that we've got and how they can best be used in the interests of the people that we represent. I think the time is right for developing closer working relationships between unions, and we have to try and stimulate a positive debate about how we use our resources in the future in a joint way.

The British trade union movement will have to find the way forward through mergers and amalgamations much more in the next decade than it's ever done. I think there will be benefits for the membership in the sense that we will be able to sustain and improve the work that we do by maximising the use of resources through closer working relationships, possibly leading to mergers. There is a whole range of activities such as trade union education, back-up for negotiations and research that I believe can be better sustained and developed under a closer working arrangement. It is the job of people like me to at least stimulate a debate on this and get rank and file members talking about it.

L&TUR Are the prospects as far advanced as the report in the **Standard** suggests?

JK No, I think that report is very optimistic. There is a long road to travel before you would reach the point outlined in that document, however, the part about the merger with the National Union of Seamen is very definite; all things being equal, that will probably be concluded by August of this year.

L&TUR The larger and stronger unions that would result from these mergers would clearly not be in the interests of the Tory government, which has sought to weaken the trade union movement over the last ten years. How do you think the Labour party would react to these new and larger unions, and, given the developments in policy regarding the anti-trade union legislation, are you happy with the party's attitude to the trade unions at the present time?

JK We have got to show a bit of pragmatism over the next couple of years in the sense that it would be political suicide, in my view, to repeal that part of the current legislation which deals with ballots before strikes. We have to make a commitment that that facility will remain - in a very different form, I might add. We don't want threatening questions on ballot papers, eg, if you vote Yes you will be in breach of your contract of employment. We do want facilities for the unions to present their case, in a ballot situation, in a proper manner. And most importantly in that area there ought to be legal protection against

workers being sacked for taking industrial action following a democratically run ballot.

L&TUR That is one of the main planks of the present employment bill going through Parliament...

JK Yes, but they always could be. Murdoch sacked 5000 print workers, and Parker threatened the same against drivers in the railway industry in 1982. So we have to deliver protection for people who take action, and it should be illegal for an employer to sack a worker who has taken industrial action in that context. We should not underestimate either - and I think this is where the party policy has got it right - the extent to which the rights of individual workers have been eroded during the past ten years, whether it is unfair dismissal, maternity leave, health and safety at work. The rights of the individual at the workplace, as opposed to the collective rights of the union, have been severely attacked, and I think we should present a positive platform of restoring individual rights in the way that is being proposed. So I think we have to come to terms with things in a way that we might not have contemplated ten or fifteen years ago. If you are going to accept strike ballots enshrined in law, you have to accept the responsibilities that go along with that.

L&TUR There seems to be a dilemma in the party about whether to get rid of most of the trade union legislation (except balloting), or to keep it all and make very small changes. The argument is that the legislation as a whole is so closely interconnected that you could pick a few bits out of it such as balloting, but retain very little else. Do you see this as a problem for the party?

JK No. I think we should start again, in the sense that we need to sweep away most of what is there and replace the legislation with more positive rights for people at the workplace. The law on so-called secondary action needs to be redefined and rewritten, and the legislation on compulsory postal balloting needs to be looked at. There is no doubt in my mind that the most democratic form of voting is the workplace ballot, which, if properly conducted, will give you the highest level of participation. So I think we need to start again in all those areas.

L&TUR Would you agree with the new proposal which is being debated in the party of enshrining positive rights for trade unions rather than this whole system of immunities. Ron Leighton makes a strong case for that approach - would you agree with it?

JK I think the old system of immunities was quite adequate, and I think we need to go back to it. We don't need a charter of positive rights in that sense - I think that is more relevant to the individual worker and what they should be entitled to expect: what protection they have got against unfair dismissal, the things I was talking about a couple of minutes ago.

L&TUR Could we move on now to the position of the unions within the party? What would your reaction be to the abolition of the block vote, for example?

JK Total opposition to it being abolished. I think it would be unjustified, and a totally wrong approach to take. My union, and I personally, would see the realistic way to deal with that question as an examination of how you can adjust the balance to an acceptable level between the percentage of voting prevalent in the block vote at the moment, and the percentage that is vested in the constituency labour parties. I think the imbalance is too wide, and I think that is the proper and sensible area of discussion that people could get into in a positive way. I don't know what the exact figures are at the moment - it is about 90% to 10% or something - but I would certainly be willing to get involved in that type of debate. Those who criticise us would see that as a positive recognition that we can make sensible adjustments to meet the reality of the situation.

But to contemplate abolishing the block vote completely would be a very wrong step to take. How can you argue, on the one hand, for the retention of union political funds - for the payment of a levy to give you a voice by way of sponsored MPs, etc - to preserve a political choice. What we were saying to people in those campaigns to preserve political funds, was that our opponents were out to destroy the Labour Party, thereby removing any real choice in the future - and people accepted that argument.

L&TUR Once you start opening up questions about the existence of the political levy, the labour movement as we know it no longer exists...

JK That's right. I would like to see the individual membership of the party growing. We ought to be able to amass a million members, as we had thirty years ago. It ought not to be beyond us. And that, in itself, would begin to adjust things a bit.

L&TUR The question of abolition of the block vote may be on the agenda of this year's party conference. Could you see it causing a lot of trouble for the party if they proceeded along the lines of abolition?

JK I don't think we should be contemplating an unnecessary constitutional squabble because I think there would be a reaction against abolition across a broad political spectrum. It would not just be the left of the trade union movement that would be making the sort of points I have been making. The concern that would be aroused would go much broader than that.

L&TUR Given that the Tories are arguing powerfully that the party is dominated by the trade unions, and that you yourself would like to see a shift in the balance of power between the unions and the constituency parties to make it reflect the membership more accurately, how do you see the future relation between the trade unions and the party? How can the unions continue to have a substantial input, not only into party policy, but into all areas of the party - eg how can they ensure that more of their members play a more active role within the party?

JK Well, we can never live without each other. As Jack Jones put it, there can be rows in the marriage, but we will never get divorced. I would vigorously resist any suggestion of that happening. I think there is a case for looking at the way we make policy, since that is what the argument is about. It may be that the Policy Review Committee is the first sign of a change in the way policy is shaped. It may be that this idea of policy commissions which could involve different strands of the party's membership is something we need to think about developing. I believe, too, that we have to be seen consulting our members more in some of the areas of policy that are being developed at the moment. I am not quite sure how you would go about it, but where there's a will there's a way.

L&TUR One gets the impression at the moment that policy is often made on

the hoof - I'm thinking of the way the recent policy towards the closed shop was adopted. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that I think it was seen not to be done in an open way that could be talked about by people. Would commissions not be seen to be 'behind closed doors' as well? The parliamentary party does not seem to be able to take on board all the different views and hammer out the policy, and the differences come up in parliament, as we have seen. Is there any more open way it could be done, safely, without giving ammunition to the other side?

JK The Policy Review Committees, the document that emerged at last year's conference, emerged in a way that was different from years gone by, where you had six or seven working groups, I think all of whom had a trade union representative. As far as I am aware it was the first time that this had happened. It seems to me that the policy commission's idea is a way of formalising that; it would allow that type of involvement, and would be seen by everybody that policy was emerging in that sort of way - subject at the end of the day to the overall authority of the National Executive Committee and the conference itself.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Bevin Society

Aims and Purposes

*The **Bevin Society** was set up several years ago, but lapsed as individual members became involved in other matters -- including setting up **Labour & Trade Union Review**. It has now been re-founded by some of its original members, and given a clearer statement of aims and objectives. We reproduce them here.*

The aim of the Bevin Society is to develop a programme for the Labour Party that will make possible a comprehensive collectivist reform as the framework for a more widely based individualism.

The Bevin Society is essentially a development from a group in the Institute for Workers' Control which actually supported workers' control when it was a possibility of immediate practical politics: when it was proposed as a radical economic reform by the Bullock Committee.

The leadership of the Institute for Workers Control opposed the Bullock proposals on woolly ideological grounds, as did Neil Kinnock and most of the trade union leaders.

The 'right to manage'

The "right of management to manage" was the conservative cry of both the left and right of the Labour movement, as well as of the budding Thatcherites. But 'management' is not a detached element operating between capital and labour. Management must be an agency of capital or an agency of labour.

Conservatism, or the continuation of the status quo, was not a practical possibility in the seventies. Labour had grown too powerful to enable the existing arrangements to continue. Both the leaders and the militants of the Labour movement lived in a fool's paradise, believing that the trade union movement could refuse to become the basis of management and yet retain the power to paralyse the management based on capital.

The status quo was doomed. The only question was whether Labour would become the basis of management, or trade union power would be weakened so that a management based on capital would again be effective. When the leaders of the Labour movement declined to enact a radical reform in the Labour interest, it was only a matter of time before a radical reaction restored the managerial power of capital.

The lost chance

If the Bullock Report had been adopted by the Labour movement it is likely that it would have become a watershed in British history comparable to the Beveridge Report (which established the Welfare State). It would have altered the framework of economics and politics, and opened up an array of new and stimulating conflicts and contradictions.

Because the Bullock Report was rejected by Labour, the Labour movement has ever since been disoriented in the face of successful capitalist reaction.

A static socialism

There were reasons of petty vested interest involved in the rejection of the Bullock Report. But much more important than these was the essentially static character of socialist ideology of all varieties in the movement. Socialism was a vaguely imagined eternal harmony, a secularised version of the state of affairs following the Day of Judgement. Some dreamed of a Leninist revolution as the means by which it would be established, while others imagined a systematic scheme of reform through social engineering. The Bullock Report was equally unacceptable to both because it was obviously not a recipe for eternal harmony.

A similar approach would have led to the rejection of the Beveridge Report in the 1940s. And there were those on the left as well as the right who rejected it.

Recovering the dynamic

But the Labour outlook in those days was not confined to visionary dreams of a final condition of things, and to empty rhetoric following from those visions. Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee were determined to enact the practical reforms of the day, and to develop through its conflicts while leaving eternal harmony to the metaphysicians.

The Labour movement is now in the doldrums because during the past two generations it has not developed out of the experience of that group of effective reformers who transformed the conditions of working class life when they came to power -- and who came to power because they had impressed society with their capacity for radical and realistic reform.

The Bevin Society intends to regain for the present generation the experience of the Bevin-Attlee era, and to develop out of it a capacity for thought and action in place of the slogan and the gesture which are now the stock-in-trade of the Labour leadership.

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*The **Bevin Society** is at present running on a fairly informal* ad-hoc *basis. If you'd like to see something established on a more formal basis, or if you'd just like a discussion, please contact us.*

Church-State problems in Ireland

People in Britain are too much inclined to see Southern Ireland as a quaint place full of shamrocks and leprechauns. In this article Dick Spicer, secretary of the *Campaign to Separate Church and State*, corrects this image by describing the struggle for a secular society that is even now taking place within the Republic of Ireland. Also at how it was sparked off by Vatican II, the liberalising Second Vatican Council of Pope John XXIII, which occurred in the early 1960s.

It is difficult for anyone outside the Irish Republic (and indeed for many within it) to comprehend the immense significance of Vatican II for Irish social development. It is from the time of Vatican II, or more precisely the run up to that event, that the mould of the Irish Catholic nation was broken and the diversification of Irish culture became possible. It is the diversification stemming from that time which is now placing the issue of church-state separation on the political agenda and fuelling current conflicts.

Viewed from a liberal standpoint, outside of the Catholic church, Vatican II appears as simply a feeble gesture by that organisation in the direction of modernisation. Reforms in liturgy and practice were brought about. But the church did not yield in the key issue of birth control. And this, coupled with the efforts of the current pope to retrieve even the modest concessions to modernity then made, can make considerations of Vatican II seem irrelevant.

The importance of Vatican II lies however, not so much in what it actually did, as in the manner in which it came about. The impetus behind the event was the feeling of many within the Catholic church internationally - and particularly within the developed democracies - that the church was increasingly at odds with the modernising 'progressive' rational ethos of the times. The Church's ban on contraception was the point around which the debate crystallised within the church. And issues like this were a matter of profound soul searching and debate by Catholics everywhere, in the run up to Vatican II.

The effect of all this on Ireland was shattering. Here we had a culture and church that was blissfully unaware previously that you could mention such things as contraception or sex. Here we were busy establishing the model catholic culture, enshrining canon law in our civil laws, and now suddenly the whole moral certainty of what we were doing was undermined by the very institution to which we looked for guidance. Here was the church debating publicly its view of the world, the Pope it seemed veering towards a liberal position and our sainted society forced to discuss and consider things the very mention or thought of which was alien to our whole outlook. As shattering as this was, the realisation that the church was divided on such matters - that the truth was not absolute - was devastating and propelled Irish society irrevocably into the 20th century.

True, Vatican II teetered on the brink of modernisation and then withdrew in the matter of contraception. The church has since tried to hold the line against creeping rationalism. Internationally the end of the 1960s cosy assumptions of economic and social progress have assisted the church in holding its own. But Ireland, like Humpty Dumpty, could never quite 'be put together again'. The unquestioning allegiance and orthodoxy of our people had been shattered by a church with international concerns,the quiet supine devotion of the Irish nation to the creation of a most Catholic state had been sacrificed in a half-hearted effort by the church at large to modernise.

[People outside Ireland are sometimes misled by the lack of any formal role for the Catholic Church in the Republic's state structures. It is not an established Church like the Church of England. But it is very much more influential in the actual decision-making process, despite its lack of a formal role. And everyone living there knows it, though some pretend otherwise to outsiders. Ed.]

Attempts were of course made to reestablish orthodox certainties. And it is in this context that the main events of church-state conflict since then must be considered, notably the referenda on abortion and divorce. It is a measure of how much things have changed,and how disorientated the orthodox laity of Ireland has become - that it was felt necessary to hold an abortion referendum at all. Abortion under any circumstances was already illegal under Irish law. SPUC and LIFE, (the two lay catholic groups who pressurised politicians into agreeing to hold a referendum,) had discerned, however, the fundamental changes brought about by the Vatican debate. On the surface, then as now, little might appear to have changed. Constitutionally we lived (and still do) in a society where the demands of the 'moral majority' were enshrined as law. Ireland had abortion and divorce outlawed under any circumstances. Homosexuality is illegal. Censorship of sexuality is total. Contraception is legally constrained. Education and health are largely under the control of religious authorities, yet funded entirely by the state.

Beneath the surface, however, the Irish citizen, having been forced by the Vatican to debate, consider and criticise what had previously simply been a received view of the world, was now developing an individualised or 'a la carte' Catholic outlook. It was in an effort to reestablish the hegemony of orthodox hierarchical doctrine that concerned lay Catholic groups mobilised for a referendum to write the equal rights of the 'unborn' into the Irish Constitution.

Abortion was seen as the soft underbelly of liberalism. It was felt that if a crushing verdict against it could be delivered, Ireland could be saved from the modernity into which it had been so rudely propelled. The ironic outcome of the abortion referendum was that in forcing the whole society to engage in a public debate about the rights and wrongs of abortion, and affiliated matters of sexuality and contraception, it furthered the disorientating effects of the Vatican II process. Respectable leaders of society were suddenly obliged to debate publicly matters which previously were only whispered about. The very fact of putting a matter of Catholic doctrine to a vote rather than simply acceding to Church dictate underlined the change. When the vote was taken, a third of the electorate who voted defied the instructions of the hierarchy and voted against the amendment.

Thus, although Catholic doctrine was further enshrined in the constitution, we now had the development of a substantial minority who even on such a delicate matter were prepared to defy church law and reject its enactment as civil law. Subsequently this minority went on the

offensive and launched a referendum on divorce which, if won, would have deleted the constitutional ban on divorce. Far from being cowed by the abortion referendum then, the whole process has lifted and strengthened liberal sentiments in Irish society. Too much, as it turned out - the voting pattern in the divorce referendum was very similar to that on abortion, and showed roughly the same balance of forces. To put it in a nutshell, those inclined towards a liberal democratic world view stood at roughly 33% of Irish society, a percentage developed through the Vatican debate and the two referenda. The experience of the divorce referendum showed that the task of developing this percentage further was going to be a long hard struggle of piecemeal progressive reform.

It was at this juncture, and with this realisation in mind, that the **Campaign to Separate Church and State** was formed. In the concentration on the major issues of abortion, contraception and divorce, the 'nitty gritty' areas, where church dominance of the state permeated the whole society, had been largely left to one side. In key areas such as health and education there had been no movement - indeed things had gone backwards in some ways. In the early 1970s, for example, a new primary curriculum was introduced which quietly eliminated the previous entitlement of parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction. The Republic's schools are (or were at this stage) all run by and owned by churches. The state had largely funded the building of these schools, and bore the running costs, salaries of teachers etc. But it did not actually own or run any schools itself. Minority religions also ran schools on the basis of state funding, but there was not a state sector at primary level. The consequence of this was that parents in many areas had no option but to send their children to a school of one or other religious denomination, usually Catholic. There was no non-denominational provision. The right to absent one's children from religious instruction was accordingly included in the Irish constitution, as a minimal gesture towards individual and minority sensibilities given the absence of state schooling.

The new curriculum instructed that all subjects at primary level be integrated, including religion. This now made it impossible to avail of the constitutional right to withdraw children from such instruction. Furthermore, new comprehensive secondary schools were established during the 1970s, and it only leaked out afterwards that the deeds of trust had been vested in the church. Teacher-training had been restricted to church-run training colleges (for primary schools) since the state was founded. Now it was recognised that schools could choose to hire only orthodox teachers in their schools. The extraordinary state of affairs in Irish education is due to the fact that the state has never enacted a comprehensive education act. That is, the entire system is run without coordinating legislation - in some cases even without enabling legislation. The practices which were now being authorised were seemingly constitutionally suspect, vulnerable to legal challenge.

The **Campaign to Separate Church and State** dedicated itself as its first task to highlighting this, and exercising pressure for change. Similarly, in health many areas of state acquiescence in the face of church control had come to light as citizens focused their newly awakened attention on the extent of the church-state interrelationship. Here too, state funds are used to establish and run hospitals and other institutions which supply health services in accordance with Catholic doctrine and hire staff according to their orthodoxy. Again, there is no avenue of training for a nurse which is outside of church-run institutions (which are however entirely state funded). In the state-run health sector, shadowy 'ethics committees' dictate the range of services and treatments according to Catholic doctrine. This has led to situations where state-run family planning clinics have not been able to supply contraceptives. One could go on at much greater length, outlining the full range of issues in which church dictate is reflected in state acquiescence. But enough has been mentioned here to give people the flavour of the situation.

The old saying that some things have to get worse before they get better gives us some hope for the future of Ireland. For we do not believe that things can really get any worse. And, unlike past times, we now have a solid block of citizens who have started to think independently and challenge the status quo in church-state relations. The issues will not go away either, and people are prepared to fight on every level. Students have recently defied the courts and published the address of abortion clinics in Britain. (Despite the abortion referendum, over three thousand Irish women per year go to Britain to terminate pregnancies.) The right of the Irish courts to ban such information

The Harp without a crown but ...

about facilities in another European state is now to be decided by the European court.

The European court has directed that Ireland change its laws against homosexuality, and the British journal Cosmopolitan is now to appear in its Irish edition with empty spaces where other editions have the advertisements and notices of pregnancy advisory associations and clinics. A major store has recently been prosecuted for selling a condom. Backed by the committed Richard Branson, they intend to fight the legal restrictions. The awareness of the need for an Education Act - i.e. the right of the state to control its own system of education - is becoming widespread,thanks to the activities of the Campaign. Several multi-denominational schools are now established, and although facing discrimination in respect of state funds are making tremendous strides. Others are to open. Pressure is rising for a reform of the marriage laws, which do not require a state ceremony in the case of the majority religions, and which condemn others to seedy inadequate facilities.

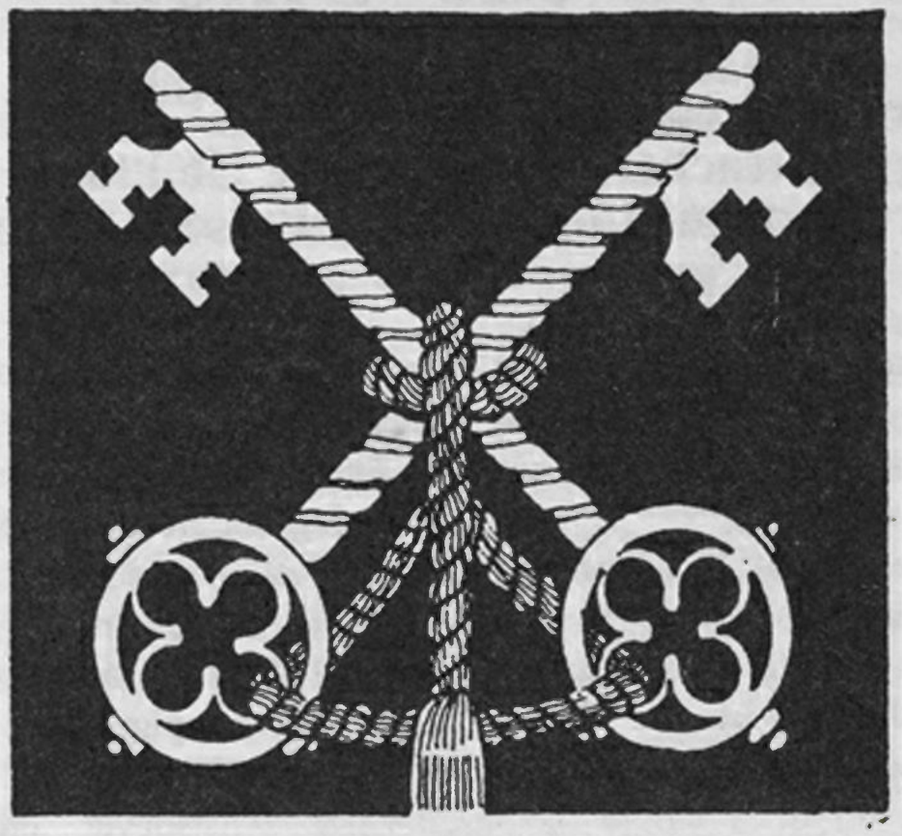
Thus, within a context which justifiably appears from outside to be so bad in terms of church state relations, there is in fact within the society a great deal of movement taking place. Issues are, like never before,being fought out on the ground in myriads of ways. There is a battle royal being fought out in Irish society which will no doubt occupy the **Campaign to Separate Church and State** for years to come. Victory is by

no means assured for either side. But the influence of organisations and societies other than our own can play a considerable role in encouraging progress. Some of them have briefed all members of the European Parliament on the situation in this country. The UN has questioned the situation here in education and health. Donations have been received from concerned democrats throughout the world.

None of this however will be sufficient in the long run without a fundamental change in the democratic perspectives of the Irish people. These perspectives are at heart flawed in so far as they demonstrate a pervasive ambiguity about the virtue of democracy itself. It could be said that Irish citizens - or at least the majority of them -have grasped but one side of the democratic equation. They are often unable to perceive the totalitarian consequences of concentrating entirely on the matter of majority rule. In some ways the Irish understanding of democracy is closer to that which prevails in Islamic societies than to the European democratic tradition. If we take the commitment stemming from **The Rights of Man** by which the French and other peoples are oriented, we can see just how great a change must yet be brought about in Irish society. The principle that 'freedom is unlimited except where it imposes on the liberty of another' is quite foreign to the majority of Irish citizens. That society has made moral issues the subject of majority rule, imposed the doctrines of the majority church as civil law, and outlawed practices which that majority disapproves of and simply finds distasteful. The consequently expanding role of the Catholic church as a guide to permitted legislation and behaviour has restricted the role of the state.

It is this circumscription of the state's role, stemming from this theocratic world view, which has emasculated Irish democratic potential in the ways outlined. The absence of a comprehensive health service, or indeed a system of legislatively controlled state education have to be seen in this overall cultural context. Even where individual rights do feature in the Irish Constitution,they have rarely been given legislative effect. Indeed, prior to Vatican II, the whole direction of judicial interpretation of that constitution was towards a correspondence with the canon law of the church. The promise by the non-Catholic party to a mixed marriage to bring up the children as Catholics, for instance, was seen as legally enforceable by the state even though merely an

... who holds the keys?



undertaking given to a priest at a certain time.

The failure of Ireland's elected assembly, the Dail, to legislate in areas which could conflict with church teaching or control has left a vacuum at the heart of the democratic structure, which has impelled the judiciary in a quasi-legislative direction. Indeed, what modest reforms have come about have largely come through the courts. That such a supine assembly or restricted state was not originally expected to develop is manifest in the ironic fact that provisions in the Irish Constitution which were originally inserted to protect Christian (Catholic) families from the possibility of a secularising state - i.e. the rights of families to decide what properly constitutes education - are now being used by secularly minded individuals to educate their own children at home. The state has no role in judging whether these children are being 'educated' and lacks the power to intervene in any way.

The democratic advance of the state is now being made necessary by the enormous decline in religious vocation in Ireland, which has deprived the church of the necessary man and woman power to maintain its all-embracing structures. Religious personnel are retreating from the front line into managerial positions - for which they are often not qualified. Tensions are evident throughout health and education as lay control inexorably expands. The development of a principled democratic political culture is clearly tied in with the question of state-church separation. Reform will hopefully come about as the state is forced to extend its area of competence. In this respect the **Campaign to Separate Church and State** has, through a legal action, compelled the state to recover investments of funds in religious run education institutions which are withdrawn from the provision of a particular service and then sold by the religious owners. In the secondary sector alone the savings to the state have been put at over £150 million. Moves are now well afoot to impel an education act and to bring about a legislative ban on religious discrimination. But the success of these can only be predicated on the development of a redefined popular conception of our democratic obligations to individuals and minorities.

The acid test at the end of a long struggle in which secular forces must remain on the field after the smoke of particular skirmishes clears will be the recognition that matters of a moral nature must be removed from the dictates of 'majority rule'. This is so at odds with our Irish cultural ethos that it will be at least the work of a generation. We in the **Campaign** are but a small pressure group, drawing strength from the willingness of a substantial minority of the electorate to defy hierarchical instruction. We are not pessimistic, but realise the uphill nature of the task ahead of us. We embrace citizens and public representatives of all political and religious persuasions, and look to the international community to be aware of our circumstances and assist where possible. We are a warning to others of the perils of neglecting the principle of church-state separation, and of its fundamental importance to democracy and progress.

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Sticking with the Union

Writing in a personal capacity, Eamonn O'Kane, deputy general secretary of NASUWT (the second biggest teachers' union in the UK) looks at Labour's attitude to the unions, the 'can of worms' opened up by John Prescott in the previous issue of this magazine.

The **Labour and Trade Union Review** interview with John Prescott (**L&TUR No.15**) has opened up a can of worms as far as the Labour Party's attitude to the trade unions is concerned. Asked about the intention of the next Labour Government on the trade union legislation carried through by the Tories over this last decade, John Prescott robustly replied that all of it would have to be repealed.

This startling candour is in stark contrast to the obfuscation that is practised on this issue by Labour party spokespersons at Walworth Road. And there is real sense in what Prescott says. This government has passed more legislation on the trade unions than on any other subject, with the result that the unions are more legally prescribed than almost any other institution in civil society.

Much of this legislation, including nearly all the most recent acts, has been designed to cripple the effectiveness of trade unions in pursuing their primary aim of advancing the material interests of their members. Some of it, on the other hand, has actually helped the unions in their relations with their members. Whether this effect was intended or not is immaterial. The legislation on secret ballots for strike action and the election of union leaders has been undeniably popular and has increased, rather than diminished, the confidence of members in their unions. Even the feared ballots on unions' political funds have proved to have been an unqualified success with some unions recording massive majorities in favour of a political fund, and none registering a defeat on the issue.

But the humorously entitled Employment Act 1988 and the Employment Bill presently before Parliament are exercises in mere vindictiveness towards trade unions by the Government. The 1988 Act has the infamous clause which removes from a trade union, a right exercised by every other voluntary association in the country, to expel from membership anyone who fails to abide by a majority decision. This applies even to a decision taken after a secret ballot, in the case of someone who flagrantly breaks the strike or industrial action decided upon by his colleagues.

There might be some justification for this legislation if it related only to the closed shop situation, where expulsion from the union might conceivably have meant the loss of your job. But this legislation applies to all unions where the loss of a union card imposes no penalty whatsoever on the member - indeed quite the contrary, since ending of union membership might possibly ingratiate the ex-member with the management.

The latest and apparently last batch of union legislation is contained in the Employment Bill. As well as outlawing the pre-entry closed shop, it includes some pretty draconian measures designed to make unofficial union action virtually impossible.

The Bill widens unions' liability for damages caused by industrial action and lays down very stringent steps that must be taken if the union is to repudiate the action of its members and thus save itself from a costly suit for damages. In effect, the Bill will mean that any action taken by union members on an organised but unofficial basis will result in the union being legally liable for the results of that action unless the union repudiates it.

The test for deciding whether a repudiation has been effective will cause more than a few headaches for unions. First, written notice must be given to the committee or official organising the unofficial action. Second, the union must have shown that it has 'done its best' to give individual written notice of this fact to every member involved and thirdly, the notice to members *must* contain the following statement: *"Your union has repudiated any call for industrial action to which this notice relates and will give not support to such action. If you are dismissed while taking unofficial industrial action, you have no right to complain of unfair dismissal."*

The reference to unfair dismissal in this cheery missive from the union to its members is the real sting in the tail contained in this latest Bill. At the moment, a person who takes part in industrial action and is sacked can take their employer to an Industrial Tribunal for unfair dismissal. This will apply unless the employer can show that it did not discriminate against that particular employee, but had in fact sacked everybody who took part in the industrial action. From now on, anybody who takes part in unofficial industrial action and is consequently sacked, will have no grounds to claim unfair dismissal. Not even if they are the only one sacked in a situation where hundreds had gone on strike.

That will mean, of course, that the leaders of the action can be identified and dismissed by the employer. Or they can be dismissed if they have been mistakenly identified as leaders of the action, even if they can later prove that they were not. And an even better refinement has been introduced by the Government. If the union subsequently organises official industrial action to secure reinstatement of the sacked employees, duly authorised by a secret ballot, such industrial action will not have legal immunity. The union will be open to punitive damages in such a case.

Finally,the sheer spleen which this government shows to trade unions is taken to absurd lengths in one of the clauses in the Bill. Seeking to define an unofficial industrial action, Clause 62A(2) states:

"Provided that, a strike or other industrial action shall not be regarded as unofficial if none of those taking part in it are members of a trade union." So, a distinction is drawn between union and non-union members. And if the latter go on strike, wreck untold damage to the company, are accountable to no one and organised by no one, their action is held to be the same as that officially organised by a union which has gone through all the tightly prescribed legal rules governing ballots etc!

This must surely be the apotheosis of Thatcherite individualism. So long as people act as entirely disconnected atoms whose actions coincidentally have a common purpose, then the law smiles benignly on them. But enter the dread word collective, and such action will be met by the full rigour of the civil law.

So what should Labour do about all this? John Prescott is right when he says that the whole lot should be

repealed. For it would be virtually impossible to disentangle the web created by the legislation of the last decade. However, it is clear that something must be put in its place, once legislation has been repealed. The question is, what?

The answer to that question has not yet been given by the Labour Party. There have been suggestions, hints and half-promises - but nothing coherent and sensible. Now is the time when the Party should be conducting the widest possible debate about the future nature of trade unions and what should be the legislation within which they should operate. Should there be a positive right to join a trade union or go on strike? Or should we maintain the historical position of simply giving to trade unions immunity from legal retribution for their actions so long as they conform to certain rules and standards? These are serious questions, but there is little response from the leadership of the Party.

It would be a great mistake to think that bluffing one's way through on this issue will work. The Tories will regard their legislation on trade unions as one of their major achievements. And it has been the unthinking reaction of the Labour movement which branded every piece of legislation as anti-union, no matter what its intrinsic merits were, which has allowed the Government to get away with really horrendous measures on the unions. The unions cried wolf so often that the people, rightly, came to regard their warnings as so much hot air. Now when the danger is real, public reaction is totally apathetic.

The Labour Party has to explain clearly how it views the unions future functioning in society, and what legislative framework they should operate in. John Prescott will have done the Party a great favour if by his frankness he has forced it to face up to that. □

Bedtime Stories

By Jack Lane.

Once upon a time a good man came to power in his country - which lay in the West, and was very very small. All of his predecessors had been very bad. They had oppressed the people, imprisoned them, not allowed them to vote properly and had done lots of very bad things *especially* to people of another nationality.

But this man said he would stop all this. All the politicians said he was good. And that included all in the House of Commons who are always disagreeing with each other. But they all agreed about this man.

All the church leaders said the same.

So the people expected great things from him and everybody was happy.

But there were some baddies. There always are. In fact there were two lots of baddies. One lot said he was too good and the other lot said he was not good enough. After a while they started fighting and the good man kept repeating that he was good and had the best of intentions for everybody. But that did not stop them. In fact it seemed to make them worse. He and all the other good people implored them to stop but they started killing and bombing each other. The good man got very sad.

More and more people got involved in the fighting and the good man despaired and he became convinced that such people did not deserve him as their leader.

God intervened and decided that this man deserved to go to heaven even before he died. So he put him in the House of Lords where he lived happily ever after.

(Adult readers will probably recognise that this is based on the life of Terence O'Neill, the Ulster Protestant Prime Minister who came to office at a time when Northern Ireland was peaceful, and left behind a war that no one has yet been able to stop.

As this first fable will probably not be enough to send your child to sleep you will need another story. Here it is.)

Once upon a time a very good man came to power in a very big country in the East. His predecessors had been very very bad. In fact they were horrid. They did all sorts of awful things to all sorts of people for as log as anybody could remember. Especially to people of other nationalities.

But this man said he would change all this. All the politicians - not just in the House of Commons but all over the world - agreed that he was a very good man. All the big Church leaders, even the Pope, said the same. So all the people of the world expected great things from this man.

But some baddies appeared again. Not the same ones as before, but they were saying the same sort of things. One lot saying he was too good and the other lot saying he was not being good enough.

Again they started fighting. And some wanted to leave his country altogether, and he could not understand why people would want to leave a country that he was in charge of.

More and more fighting developed and more joined in and even some other countries got involved. He got sad and sometimes he got cross and sometimes he also despaired of his people.

God decided to intervene but...

(Hopefully your child is now asleep.) □

The End of Autocracy

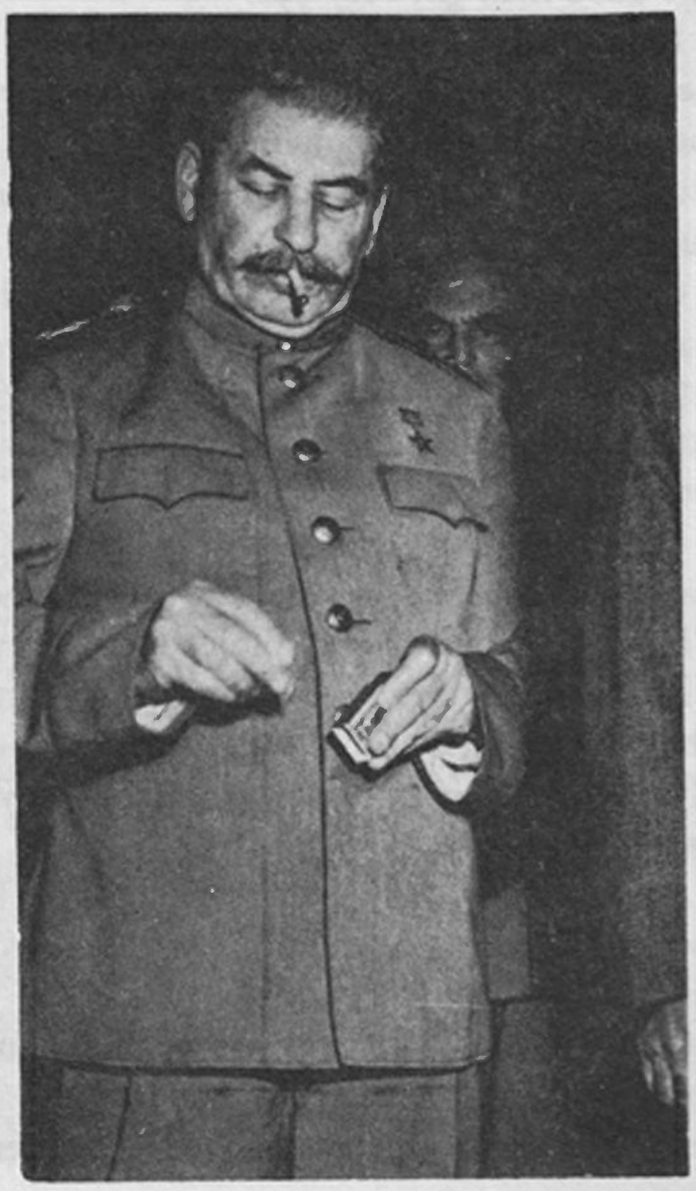
In this article Madawc Williams argues that the set-backs suffered by Marxist parties East and West have the same root cause - a feeling among far too many socialists that working people can not be trusted to build socialism, and need to have it imposed on them.

Joseph Stalin acquired a mixed bag of East European countries as a result of World War Two. There is little doubt that he intended to incorporate them as soon as possible in an expanded Soviet Union. (See Djilas's **Conversations with Stalin**, for instance.) Stalin's successors never quite knew what to do with these nominally independent states. Mostly they preserved the *Status Quo* - Khrushchev in Hungary in 1956, Brezhnev in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Now Gorbachev seems to have decided that they are more of a liability than an asset, and cut them loose. He may also hope to disrupt the development of the European Community, but mostly I think he wants to get out before the whole system comes apart.

We will have to wait for the various promised elections to know how much socialist idealism there is left, after several decades of repression and stagnation. Had Eastern Europe been allowed to go its own way in the late 1960s, had the Prague Spring not been crushed, then the end result would surely have been something much more favourable to the left. Now, a lot of them look likely to reject socialism in general.

People talk about present events as 'the end of Stalinism'. In fact, Stalinism effectively ended with Stalin's death. Stalin built a repressive state apparatus in order to promote rapid social change and an economic system not based on markets or the profit motive. The post-Stalinists let things drift. Since they were preserving the *status quo* they could usually use repression in a much milder manner. But it should be remembered that Berlin Wall, symbol to 'Stalinist tyranny', was not built until 1961, several years after Stalin's death. Khrushchev and his successors partially restored markets and the profit motive, ending up with a hybrid economy that grew much more slowly than it had under Stalin, and could not compete with an expanding world capitalism. They borrowed massively, and frittered away the money on foolish and unprofitable investments. They kept the repressive state apparatus. Mostly, they let things drift.

The late Andrei Sakharov was one of those who knew that this sort of drift would end in disaster. His manifesto of June 1968 is far-sighted. He even speaks of the problems of pollution in a way that has only just become popular in the West. Thus "*Carbon dioxide from the burning of coal is altering the heat-reflecting qualities of the atmosphere.*" (This is the process more commonly known as the Greenhouse Effect.) And in 1970 he and his associates warned about errors such as the failure to make sufficient use of computers. They told the leadership that the problems of the economy ".. *cannot be solved by one individual or even several individuals who possess power and who 'know all'. They demand the creative participation of millions of people on all levels of the economic system. They demand a wide exchange of information ...*". (**Sakharov Speaks**, Vintage Books [New York] 1974, p122.)



The post-Stalin leadership had the option to keep the non-market economic system and to allow a much greater degree of political freedom and control to ordinary people. They chose to do the opposite. This was the start of the downfall of the East European Leninist system.

People *knew* that the USSR under Stalin was carrying out repression and social engineering on a massive scale. They also saw concrete results, like the industrialisation of the USSR and the defeat of Nazi Germany. People like Roy Medvedev suppose that the same results, or something even better, might have been achieved without the cost in repression, death and wrecked lives. People can suppose anything they please - that they are Jesus Christ, or that they can fly, or whatever. But suppositions are tested by what people can actually achieve. Leninism after Stalin has had very little to boast about - only a steady downhill slide.

This does not mean the end of Marxism. Marxists since 1956 have mostly confused themselves by supposing that Stalin had messed up Lenin's ideals, instead of realising that the limits of Stalinism are the limits of Leninism. But this would not have prevented the Leninist system from evolving in the way Sakharov was urging, along the lines of what was actually happening in Czechoslovakia. It was Leonid Brezhnev who guaranteed the system's eventual downfall, by preventing it from evolving while its prestige and power were very largely intact.

Mind you, there was a time when the Brezhnev option looked like coming off. When it was flourishing, I never felt that its triumph was inevitably. Now it has fallen, I reject the fashionable view that it was always bound to fail. To a large degree, the West saved itself by absorbing as much as it could of the youth revolt of the 1960s. With just a slightly different line of development, the Brezhnev option might still be

flourishing, although I doubt if something so static could ever have won out in the long run. What really messed up the Leninist states way the way the capitalist West manages to have a period of peace and continuous growth unprecedented in history.

It is also notable that Marxists and other socialists are suffering setbacks at a time when the working class is stronger, more prosperous and more independent-minded than ever before. This is basically because most socialists have not adjusted to this greater strength. They still think in terms of benevolent autocracies, at a time when such are no longer likely to be useful to the development of the class. But the underlying concepts of Marxism does not compel anyone to such a view - rather they point the other way. This is something I'll deal with elsewhere, in a detailed study of the **Communist Manifesto**.

I strongly disagree with the line taken by Peter Brooke in **The End of an Illusion**. (**L&TUR No.15**). He treats Marxism-Leninism as if it was something continuous between 1917 and 1989. Indeed, he slides from talking about Marxism-Leninism to talking about Marxism in general, as if it contained no other possibilities. Nor does he express any reservations when quoting Berdyaev, who is clearly condemning socialism in general, not Marxism in particular.

I think that it is to the credit of Marxism that it has not proved viable as the ideology of autocratic states. Marxists, like Christians, can do terrible things to impose their faith on an unwilling population. (What the Christianized Roman Empire did to pagans, and to heretical Christians, was vastly worse and on a much larger scale than the worst that the pagan Roman Empire had previously done to Christians.) But unlike Christians, Marxists could not be happy with maintaining a static autocratic state. Unlike Christianity, Marxism could not give rise to a conservative or reactionary faith that would drop the original social radicalism and push potential rebels off into harmless mystical frenzies. It could not produce something like the Orthodox Christian Church, which over the centuries was to be the faithful lackey of some of the worst despots in history.

Orthodox Christianity had in fact become a fairly faithful lackey of Leninism in those states where it was the main religion. Some dissidents are Orthodox in faith, but the Church itself did nothing to undermine the system. Provided that they had freedom enough to develop an apolitical spirituality - perhaps an exalted spirituality, but certainly an apolitical one - they were content to be obedient and even cooperative. In the Ukraine, the Orthodox Church cooperated with Stalin in the suppression of the Uniates, Eastern-rite Roman Catholics - for which it is suffering now that Gorbachev has unbanned them. And it is no accident that in Romania, mostly Orthodox despite its Latin-derived language, it was a *Protestant* pastor and his followers whose protests triggered off Ceausescu's downfall.

Peter Brooke asks *"What, then, does Marxism lack that the great religions possess?"* My answer is - it lacks the ability to twist its original ideals into an ideology that would stupefy people and make them accept autocratic rule. When Christianity took over the Roman Empire, it became something utterly unlike the faith of the authors of the Gospels. Islam degenerated from a radical faith concerned with social justice to a collection of kingdoms ruled by arbitrary despots. Buddhism too became a reliable faith for a variety of static despotisms - and Hinduism, at least in its popular forms, was never anything else.

I suppose we should be thankful that no one has been able to successfully blend Leninist state structures with Orthodox Christianity, to produce a really stable and self-confident despotism. Such a mixture might seem impossible - but how likely would it have seemed that Christianity would become the ideology of the Roman Empire, before it actually happened? (Indeed, it may have happened on a small scale in Serbia. Certainly Serbian nationalism, which includes Orthodox Christianity, looks set to bust the previously-successful Yugoslav federation.)

I found some of Peter Brooke's earlier articles interesting, though not without errors. But he now seems to be going off in a totally eccentric direction, with no interest in either socialism or democracy. His tone is indeed becoming somewhat reactionary. Instead of trying to work out how the emerging pattern of world-wide capitalist democracy can be nudged in the direction of more socialism and a fuller democracy, he rejects the whole thing for the worst of reasons. Thus *"But all this brings us to the question: what are we? ... Our 'culture' is nakedly cynical and I believe that the last shreds of the religious spirit that enabled us to fight the last war have fallen away from us. I doubt if we could fight another war now."* **(The End of an Illusion, L&TUR No.15).**

I would not have thought that the ability to fight wars was a particularly good indicator of religious spirit. In fact Christianity was strictly pacifist for its first few centuries until, like Buddhism before it, it adapted to social necessities. But, for what it is worth, I think that the present generation are just as willing as previous ones to fight a war *for a good cause*. The main difference is that they are more intelligently critical of the wars that they might be asked to fight in.

The truth is, everyone in Britain and the rest of the NATO countries has been within a few minutes of death for the past three decades and more, in the front line of a possible nuclear war. Yet the majority of the population has been willing to put up with this. And the minority who reject NATO and/or nuclear weapons usually do so for idealistic reasons, not because they are any less willing to die for their beliefs.

Religions are founded by dedicated people, on the basis of true belief. But their spread has mostly been on a superstitious basis - they replace some less adequate faith as the mediator of social ceremonies and superstitious dread. People are in the habit of having a feast on the 25th of December, priests representing Mithra or Osiris or Jesus Christ claim it as the birthday of their god. People fear for what will happen to them after they die, the Church tells them that they will go to heaven if they don't sin too much and are sure to confess it to a priest. Confession is a wonderful cure for guilt, provided only that you are quite certain that the priest has divine authority to forgive your sins. Religions may start out as a way of bringing people into a closer relationship with God, but they survive and flourish only in as far as they find a role for themselves in day-to-day human society.

There is an incident in **Hamlet** that illustrates the popular attitude. Hamlet sees Claudius kneeling down at prayer, and considers murdering him. He decides not to, on the grounds that if he killed the guilty Claudius while he was praying the man might go straight to heaven. Claudius, meanwhile, concludes that his prayers are not working because his thoughts are still sinful. Matters are postponed until the final slaughter. Neither man pays much attention to Church-taught morality - Claudius keeps the fruits of his crime, and Hamlet plots deadly vengeance. But both take for granted the standard Christian teaching about prayer and the fate of souls. You could not put such a scene into a modern-day soap opera without being laughed at. Yet Shakespeare's audience would have seen it as perfectly normal and reasonable behaviour.

People blame the decline in morals on the decline of religion. Of all the nations of the West, the United States has the highest level of religious belief, and the worst morals. It is also a society which has continuously disrupted whatever it had in the way of settled and stable ways of life. It tends to be societies with a fairly settled and stable way of life that have low rates of crime and an agreed system of morality that almost everybody accepts and tries to live up to.

Contrary to what Peter Brooke says, Marxist socialism does have plenty of aims higher than individual comfort and consumption. Marxism looks forward to a classless society full of superior personal and scientific development, where each individual can follow their own interests. This is at least as sensible and realisable a goal as those held out by the world's religions. (Nor would such a system prevent people trying to develop a closer relationship with God, if that was what interested them.) Marxism set out to end poverty and exploitation, of the sort that existed in the deeply religious England of the mid 19th century. (I trust that Peter Brooke would not use the shoddy trick of confusing *consumerism* with philosophical *materialism*. Consumerists are often religious, and Marxist materialists are frequently self-sacrificing.)

Marxism does not concentrate on incomes or consumer goods. It simply insists that a reasonable level of comfort and consumption are the right of each person in the society. Religions have mostly had the function of reconciling the poor to being squeezed for the excessive comfort and consumption of the rich and powerful. If you like, you can say that those who keep down the poor are not the true representatives of their religions, and that the truly religious are those who support the poor and call for social justice. But to say this would be to write off maybe 99% of actually existing religion as something other than true religion. The power and persistence of Christianity has been based precisely on its willingness to work with the rich and powerful and to defend their interests. Marx remarks somewhere that the Church of England would be less upset by an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than on 1/39th of its income. And this is still true today.

(To be continued)

Counter*Blasting* Mrs Windsor

The Monarchy, by Christopher Hitchens.
Chatto & Windus, Counter*Blasts* No.10.
42pp. £2.99.

Reviewed by Brendan Clifford.

Counter*Blasts* is a series in which, according to the blurb, *"Britain's finest writers confront the critical issues of the day. In the best tradition of pamphleteering,* **Counter*Blasts*** *offer new perspectives, fresh ideas and differences of opinion."*

The publicity material informs us that this particular Counter*Blast* *"dares to break the taboo surrounding the most sacred of British institutions, exposing the true impact of the Royal Family on the nation's life and thought."* And it tells us that the author lives in Washington DC, where he is a columnist for **Harpers** and **The Nation**. He has been the American columnist for **The Spectator**, **The New Statesman** and the **Times Literary Supplement**. But it said he would be in Britain for publication in January, and a phone number is given at which he could be contacted for an interview.

The Counter*Blasts* are quite beautiful productions. They are the most beautifully produced pamphlets I have ever seen, and I have seen a great many pamphlets. The thoughtfully designed cover is both striking and tasteful. The text is perfectly laid out in large clear type on big pages with extensive margins. (I seem to recall a character in a Swedish play who 'meanders in a meadow of margin'. If paper ever got scarce one could write a book in the margins of these Counter*Blasts*.)

In short, what we have got here are not pamphlets at all. I know something of 'the tradition of pamphleteering' in England, and it is obvious that these productions are not pamphlets in either format or content.

English history is in great measure the history of pamphlets.

What happened in England in the 1640s is one of the great divides in history. The modern world begins there. And the reason is not because the King's head was cut off, because a King complete with head was restored eleven years later with apologies from the nation. Nor is it because Parliamentary government was established then: it was not.

Hitchens writes: *"without Oliver Cromwell there might not have been a Parliament to which our Sovereign Lady might make her gracious address"*. (p13). That is absurd. Parliament and the Crown had lived together for centuries. But Parliament and the Lord Protector were essentially incompatible. The Long Parliament was purged and purged again until finally, as the Rump, it made Cromwell Lord Protector for life, with the job to run in the family. And the Parliaments which he assembled as Lord Protector, and whose members were vetted by him, were not trusted by him to engage in any extensive debating. If Cromwell had lived ten years longer, and if his son Richard had been up to continuing the Protectorship, it is very doubtful indeed whether England would have got Parliamentary Government. In actual history Parliament and the Crown make a pair. And the decades when there was no Crown was not a happy or fruitful period for Parliament.

The 1640s in England is the great divide between the middle ages and the present day, because of the explosion of pamphleteering which happened then. I have followed the course of the Civil War and of the Republic from the pamphlets of the time (having given up as a bad job the attempt to understand the period from the books of 20th century historians). I have read hundred of pamphlets from that time. And Carlyle (who edited Cromwell's speeches for early Victorian England,when according to latter-day political mythology Cromwell was taboo), claims, if I remember rightly, that *50,000* pamphlets were produced in that great upheaval. England was a nation at war with itself, and in the midst of war great multitudes of people felt free and able to publish pamphlets on vital issues of state. Nothing like that had ever happened before in the world - not in a big, complex society. And the medium of politics was thereby altered for good in England, regardless of what happened in the narrower sphere of government.

There was little pamphleteering under the Lord Protector or in the early years of the restored monarchy, but gradually it resumed and became the accepted medium of political thought in England until the 1960s.

I have done a bit in the way of pamphleteering during the past twenty years. And a couple of those pamphlets have had a perceptible effect on the course of the world - at least the two Irish bits of it. In the same period many beautifully produced books by successful academic socialists have been published without affecting the course of the world in the slightest degree, even though the various writers of them reviewed each others' emissions in prestigious periodicals. About ten years ago, a lavish press conference in Dublin to launch one of these academic products, somebody asked why my pamphlets were treated by the mandarins of the publishing world as not existing. The explanation was that they were held together by staples. If an item is not held together with paste it is presumed not to exist. (Counter*Blasts* are bound with paste, and though a mere 40 pages long they contrive to have their names on a spine.)

Another piece of relevant information came my way. A left-wing editor of one of the main socialist weeklies, who in the mid-1970s denounced socialism and took up a position on the right wing of Thatcher Toryism, brought up his son very carefully to be a proper intellectual. And one of the basic maxims he drilled into his son is that an article which is not paid for at the going rate in Fleet Street is of no value. And this maxim was not adopted in the leap to Toryism - it was held at least as firmly when the father was a left socialist.

In my naive way I got it fixed in my head that commerce and truth were largely incompatible, and that put me completely out of court with the socialist intelligentsia of the 1960s and 1970s. Christopher Hitchens was never naive in that way. From his earliest times as a revolutionary Trotskyist he carefully

tended to useful commercial contacts - as in my experience did all Trotskyists except the Militant Tendency. And now the publisher of his revolutionary pamphlet on the monarchy gives as his credentials that he is a columnist for **Harpers, The Spectator** etc.

It is as if Tom Paine had been paid by **The Anti-Jacobin** and commended by **The Times.**

It so happens that when Hitchens was making it into the big-time I was offered a column in **The Spectator.** This came about because of my pamphlets on Northern Ireland. There was momentarily an appearance of compatibility between what I was publishing and what the late T.E.Utley felt. And in the late 1970s the Thatcherite militants were full of apostolic zeal, like the Cominternists in the early 1920s, and they believed that everything of substance could be drawn into their movement.

Their proposal struck me as bizarre, but I let them buy me a few lunches in order to explain to me why it was sensible. Their point was that I was tearing the socialist movement to shreds and so were they. There was an appearance of truth in that. But we were doing it from opposite poles. I saw that British socialism from top to bottom was lost in verbiage, that in so far as it had any definite ideas they were wrong, and that it was heading for catastrophe. I was attacking a misconceived socialist ideology in order to conserve the inheritance from Attlee and Bevin. The Thatcherites wanted to develop a meritocratic capitalism in every sphere of life.

I put this to them, but I could see that it struck them as being no more that an evasive debating point. It was their experience that people didn't reject lucrative journalistic offers on theoretical grounds. Your proper socialist took the money and made mental reservations. They were entirely convinced that human nature was Thatcherite.

On my side no virtue at all was involved in not doing what made no political sense. Over the years I had seen enough of Fleet Street to know that it consisted of self-important windbags who were permanently sozzled and who were satisfied with each other's company because they knew no better. I quickly grew tired of my avant-garde Yuppies, stopped having Soho lunches, and got a job on the buses. If only I had had a higher threshold of boredom, and had been prepared to sacrifice pleasure for money, it might be that I would now be the author of one of these coffee-table 'pamphlets' that nobody in the real world will ever read.

Insofar as Hitchens's effort has a gist, here it is. *"The British monarchy inculcates unthinking credulity and servility. It forms a heavy layer on the general encrustation of our unreformed political institutions. It is the gilded peg from which our unlovely system of social distinction and hierarchy depends. It is an obstacle to the objective public discussion of our own history. It tribalises politics. It entrenches the absurdity of the hereditary principle. It contributes to what sometimes looks like an enfeeblement of the national intelligence..."* etc. (p19).

It is of course a fair thing for somebody to show his personal disdain for *"an unlovely system of social distinction"*. But I have always thought that it would have been a much more impressive egalitarian gesture if, for example, Tony Benn had given up his great wealth rather than his hereditary title. In relinquishing his title he sacrificed nothing, but freed himself from an obstacle to ambitions.

Of course the republican spirit needs to be kept alive in this republic with monarchical and aristocratic trappings. But John Mortimer does that much more effectively for the public at large than the likes of Hitchens could ever do.

Tom Paine himself recognised that, even before the 1832 Reform, England was a republic within a monarchy. Today, what we have is a monarchy within a republic.

The *"unlovely system of social distinction"* keeps a lot of jumped-up tradesmen happy. And it puzzles me why socialists, who disdain the Queen's Garden Party and the honours system, imagine that the people who do not disdain them would be socialists rather than fascists if they were deprived of them.

I'm not sure I know what tribalised politics means if it does not mean class politics. And it probably does mean class politics, because there are distinct signs that Hitchens is going American.

It is true that something like *"an enfeeblement of the national intelligence"* has occurred in recent times. Within the national intelligence there used to be a functional Labour movement, capable of winning elections and enacting durable reforms. What happened to it? It was destroyed from the inside by a plague of trendy lefties on the make. The monarchy could not have destroyed it. And what is needed to get Labour back in shape is not the abolition of the monarchy, but a revival of determined working-class socialism out of the trade unions. □

HEW REID

Published by Malthouse Press.

Reviewed by R Gunn
(President of the Furniture, Timber & Allied Trades Union).

This excellent book is a must for students of Trade Union history. It traces the development of those small craft unions whose coming together over the years has created today's Furniture, Timber & Allied Trade Union. (Which, since the transfer of engagements in 1983 by the National Society of Brushmakers [founded 1747], can proudly claim to be the oldest Trade Union in the world.)

During the late 18th century, local journeymens' clubs led a shadowy existence. The semblance of Trade Union organisation began to emerge in the early years of the 19th century. As the century progressed, these local societies sought solidarity through amalgamation with other societies. Following the First World War, we read of the flowering of enormous talent and vitality within the Union. During that period the old N.A.F.T.A Union gave the Labour Movement three MPs. Also the General Secretary and the President of the T.U.C and the President of the Scottish T.U.C.

There is also some excellent work on the history of furniture making in the British Isles. From the bespoke trade to today's mass production. The author quite rightly identifies the problems associated with new technology. These problems continue to be addressed by those who wish to see the old crafts and skills retained for future generations, whilst recognising the necessity to be competitive in the market place.

Dr Hew Reid captures the essence of the book in his introduction when he states *"The history of the furniture union is the story of the people, of politics, of pride and prejudices and of common sense. It is a story of men and women with a vision of the future which they pursued against all obstacles."*

To them we owe an incalculable debt. □

Letters to the Editor

I was disappointed to read Madawc Williams's comments on the Palestine-Israel conflict in **Notes on the News** in **L&TUR Nos.8, 9 & 10.** I was surprised to find that rather than using **L&TUR** space to explore recent events (namely those revolving around the Palestinian *Intifada* - an event which was not even alluded to in the columns), Williams instead chose to rehearse time-worn arguments on the Palestine-Israel conflict which increasingly bear little cognizance with realities on the ground.

My concern with the coverage given by **Notes on the News** to Middle East events rests on three points. First, much of what was written was counter-factual, that is, it can be applied as equally to the Palestinians as it can to the Israelis. Second, the argument was presented in such a way as to suggest that the Jews or Israelis have in some sense a prior claim to a state, that Jewish rights automatically (and inevitably) cancel out Palestinian rights to a homeland and state. Third, there was a basic lack of consideration of Palestinians as people, they were simply 'the adversaries of Israel' (with a lot of other imperfections thrown in). What has been absent from the columns of **Notes on the News** is a view of Palestinians suggesting that they might also be deserving of rights. It goes without saying that Palestinians have human qualities like the rest of us. There is no reason why basic rights should not be established to allow Palestinians to build their own democracy and state and choose their own representatives.

My first point concerns the counterfactual nature of some of the points raised by **Notes on the News.** **Notes on the News** chooses to argue that *'a neighbour who has several times tried to murder you; who declares that he has a perfect right to murder you; and who has been indirectly responsible for the deaths of many of your relatives'* is reason enough for not negotiating with the Palestinians. However, the same argument applies as much to the Palestinians as it does to Israel, Palestinians like Israelis have much to fear from their adversary, it takes courage to move beyond a simple knee-jerk reaction of violence and to actually want to negotiate with your adversary. This is what the Palestinians have actually done over the past two years.

We are told that Palestinians do not even have the intrinsic skills required to govern because 'a *nation by default is not a nation that can necessarily build a stable state'*. Yet elsewhere it is argued that *'the displaced Jews of the world had to go somewhere'*. Is this perhaps not also a case of counterfactual argument? Clearly in both respects, Jews and Palestinians have been 'nations by default' at various times in their history. The Jewish experience was galvanised by the holocaust as a result of European, not Arab anti-semitism. Zionism and the idea of an exclusively Jewish nation-state is rooted in late nineteenth century European religious nationalist thinking. Likewise Palestinian nationalism is marked by a similar experience of dispossession from the 1940s onwards. Its roots lie in an Arab nationalist movement which dates back to the turn of this century. Perhaps it is the case that dispossession and suffering breeds people with a desire and interest in a state.

This brings me to my second point. It came as some surprise to find **Notes on the News** arguing that - *'had their been no Zionism, it is doubtful if there would have been a modern Palestine'*. The truth of the matter is, and it is surely self-evident, that today there is 'no' modern Palestine, although there is a Zionist ideology, a Jewish state, occupied Palestinians territories and a dispossessed Palestinian people. It is the absence of a modern Palestine or a Palestinian state

which has been the most enduring feature of the Palestine-Israel conflict. It is also the similar absence of any positive concept of a Palestinian identity which underpins much of the **Notes on the News** argument on the Palestinian state which follows.

We are told that it is not in Israel's interest to countenance a Palestinian state, because if it is democratic is is likely to be *'worst governed; and most prone to civil war and chaos'*, by inference we are also led to assume that if it is not democratic then this must be because of its Arab character - *'Arab states seem unable to achieve stability except under some sort of authoritarian rule. Not one has a political system that would in practice allow orderly transition between government and opposition.'* Would the same advice be proffered to white South Africa in view of the prevalence of one party states in black Africa? I think not, black majority rule in South Africa and Namibian independence are deemed to be different. **Notes on the News** also side-steps the very important issue of Palestinian democracy which has thrived despite very difficult conditions.

Notes on the News also offers more advice which brings me to my third point. The column suggests that the Palestinians should 'agree to coexist with Israel and then seek negotiation about the borders'. While this is good advice and it is exactly what the Palestinians have been trying to do, **Notes on the News** is not even handed in the giving of advice. It suggests that the Israelis should set up a large number of Palestinian mini-states - *'they could pull out of one little bit at a time, giving each its own administration and armed forces. Palestinian factionalism would probably guarantee that these mini-states would never be able to get together into something dangerous.'* Factionalism whether promoted or unintentional has inevitably marked history with human disaster. Israel has tried it before in Lebanon and it has failed. I was disappointed to find **Notes on the News** seeming to endorse the view that certain groups of human beings have superior moral claims to peace and security, while others deserve nothing more than factionalism.

Lastly, if the Israelis are looking for a way out of the occupied territories (and we assume that nobody has an interest in maintaining the current situation) why does **Notes on the News** not advise the Israelis to go for a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement? The PLO have been saying it for some time, at least since 1977, while the Israelis have both refused the idea of a comprehensive Middle East peace and talks with the PLO. The extraordinary 19th session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) - the Palestinian parliament-in-exile in Algiers - recognised Israel explicitly, although **Notes on the News** would have us believe otherwise. It was suggested on the question of recognition of Israel that Arafat came close to saying it, but that the PLO as a whole did not say it and that Arafat may still change his mind. The PLO recognised Israel "... not because this [is] the simplest interpretation' [sic], but because this is what the PLO actually said. Moreover it was not Arafat, but the PLO as a whole that said it, they said it quite explicitly at Algiers and said it again at the UN at Geneva.

For the record, the PLO acknowledges the right of Israel to exist through its democratic institutions on the basis of a democratic vote, 253 for, 45 against, 10 abstaining. The vote was for a communiqué which was quite unequivocal in its acceptance of Security Council resolution 242 and 338. The Declaration of Independence which went along with the communiqué provided for an Arab state and a Jewish state in Palestine and the right for Israel to live in peace with secure borders. It took courage for the PLO to recognise its enemy and to state publicly that it wished to negotiate with its enemy. The Israelis have so far failed to show the same courage. It is for this reason that **L&TUR** should begin to listen to what Palestinians are saying, rather than tarring them with a rejectionist brush which could more appropriately be applied elsewhere.

Richard Sexton

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I would like to make a commentary on E. Hewit's letter about cruelty to animals. **(L&TUR No.14)**. I don't deny that animals have rights of a sort. Maybe we should be doing more for them. But are her answers the best ones? The simplest and most philosophically concise way of preventing cruelty to animals would be to abolish animals completely, which would be the likely result of some of the programmatic measures that the animal-lovers are proposing. Indubitably, if no one ate meat there would be far far fewer farm animals. Some breeds and species would vanish completely. Fair enough, farm animals deserve more kindness. Capitalist farmers treat them as badly as they can get away with - just as capitalist industrialists treated workers as badly as they could, before workers learned to organise. But the answer is new laws and a consumer insistence on a genuinely humane form of meat production, not dogmatic vegetarianism.

Laboratory experiments are mostly carried out on specially bred lines of rats and mice - lines that would not exist at all if they were not needed for science. The LD50 test was introduced as a result of a well-intentioned desire to protect human lives. Few tests are on cosmetics: most are on drugs that have a real prospectus of improving human health. Or else they elucidate basic facts about living organisms.

I have no information regarding the experiment concerning the mad baby monkey. I do have a memory of reading about some in which monkeys were kept warm and well fed, but deprived of their mothers. They grew up healthy but very unhappy - to be precise, they showed notably disturbed behaviour patterns. When some became mothers themselves, they badly neglected their offspring. We might have guessed at this from human examples, but it would have been only a guess, and not everyone would have agreed. The experiments on monkeys provided solid evidence. They helped promote such humane practices as making sure that human babies have plenty of contact with their mothers. There was a time when new-born babies would be put away in a separate room, shielded from their mothers in the first few crucial weeks. This was formerly done, please note, in the sincere but mistaken belief that this was best for their health and well-being.

One should also remember that animals are often extremely cruel to other animals. Anyone who has seen a cat with a mouse should know this. But cats are by no means the worse. Foxes are brutal killers, a fox in a hen-house will kill far more than it can possibly eat.

One difference of large magnitude between humans and other animals is that humans will sometimes act for the benefit of other species without any obvious benefit in return. Dolphins also seem to do this - at least they will sometimes help humans who are in danger of drowning. This is one of the best reasons for regarding them as an intelligent or semi-intelligent species. There *is* a hierarchy of life, and anyone who refuses to recognise it should logically start defending the rights of mosquitoes, malarial parasites and the AIDS virus!

John Burton

For Madawc Williams's information: the ideas of Jonathan Porritt do not "*dominate the whole outlook of the Green Movement*". And while Labour's 'Green' heritage is indeed "much older than the modern Green movement", there is less substantial antagonism between it and the modern movement than their is between those with a leg in either camp and the Party 'faithful' who prevent relevant debate on the matter by chanting that magical mantra 'economic growth equals Socialism'.

I sometimes feel that **Labour & Trade Union Review** represents an unrealistic yearning to recreate the Labour Party in Bevin's image despite the fact that objective social and economic conditions which pertained to his time (and informed his strategy) no longer exist. Madawc Williams's repeated slagging-off of the Greens confirm me in this view. I certainly feel that someone more confident of what they were about would not need to write in such a defensive and reactionary manner about a movement which is an increasingly effective recruiting agent for the necessity and inevitability of Socialist solutions.

The reason that 'Labour Party people' have been "*tail-ending the Green Party lobby*" is because the predominant rump represented by Madawc Williams 'and his ilk' leaves them nowhere else to go. My hope is that there are many Greens who in turn will mature to become Socialists, if not because of the Madawcs, then in spite of them.

Alan Tait.

Madawc Williams replies:

Alan Tait starts off by saying that Porritt's ideas do not dominate the Green Movement. The rest of his letter shows how thoroughly he himself has been dominated by them. Porritt is quite clear that he wants a Green movement than is anti-growth and non-socialist. This is also the dominant view in the Green Party, which is in electoral competition with the Labour Party. Individuals can choose, like Alan Tait, to have "*a leg in either camp*". But such a strategy is unlikely to get any good results

There is no automatic link between economic growth, the preservation of the environment and socialism - which I would define as social equality plus working class power. People and parties can be for or against any of these separate goals. The Green Party does call for social equality, but has no interest at all in working class power. It has a totally middle-class view of the world.

L&TUR has no "*prominent rump*" within the Labour Party, nor are we advocating that the strategies that succeeded in 1945 be tried again. What we do say is that Ernest Bevin *knew how to win* - not just how to get into power, but how to use that power for socialist ends. We advocate a new mix of policies, one that has not previously been tried. At first most Labour Party people ignored us, but these days a growing number are starting to listen.

(A reply on Palestine has had to be held over for lack of space.)

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

Thanks to all those who have sent something to our appeal. But we still need more.

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 recently we were 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 came to an end. We now have to pay for normal commercial printing and this has doubled our costs. We have been able to survive in the short run only by raising the sales price to £1.50 *and* considerably increasing our sales. We may or may not be able to continue 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 now begining our fourth 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.

Hong Kong

Angela Clifford argues that both Thatcher and the Labour Party are being dishonest - ignoring the responsibilities that Britain has as a former imperial power.

Labour's policy on Hong Kong has been based neither on practical politics, nor on principle. It is not surprising that right-wing Tories, such as Norman Tebbit, felt able to support it.

In a Commons division, the Party proposed that *no* British citizens from Hong Kong should be allowed entry into the UK in the event of repressive measures by a Chinese Government when the area is given back to their rule. This was in opposition to a Tory proposal that only middle class Hong Kong residents be given a right to enter the UK. However objectionable the Tory proposal was, the Labour proposal was worse. It amounted to a Pontius Pilate-like washing of hands of a problem for which Labour bears a responsibility.

Labour is responsible for what happens in Hong Kong on two counts.

The first is that it is responsible for devising policy for a country with an imperial past: the UK. That past had its black spots. But it also had its positive side, which was to bringing modern culture and liberal values to societies which had never had them before. Hong Kong is one of those societies. The people of Hong Kong have been made different to the people of China by decades of British rule. They cannot simply be abandoned to be reprogrammed by a Communist regime which is primarily geared to governing very different peoples in the largest state on earth.

Labour likes to make liberal noises about the Immigration Act as regards people from the India sub-continent. It has pretended that such an Act is not necessary. But at least these peoples have democratic state structures of their own and political parties. Those peoples demanded - and got - an end to British rule. They may wish to leave their countries, but at least they are leaving countries of their own.

The position is absolutely different in Hong Kong. Its status as a colony has never been the same as that of other colonies, in that democratic structures have never been developed there, and the people have been excluded from self-government. Labour in power has been as much responsible for this state of affairs as the Tories. Labour governments have been as content to practice anti-democracy with regards to the Chinese in Hong Kong as South African Governments have been with regard to the blacks in South Africa.

If the people of Hong Kong had their own democratic institutions, they would have some organised form with which to combat uncongenial policies which may be enforced by their new rulers.

It is the fault of British administrations that they do not have such structures with which they can defend themselves. It is therefore the responsibility of the British Government of the day to defend the liberties of the people of Hong Kong.

> ***" Labour likes to make liberal noises about the Immigration Act as regards people from the India sub-continent. It has pretended that such an Act is not necessary. But at least these peoples have democratic state structures of their own and political parties. On Hong Kong immigration, Labour is afraid of a racial backlash in Britain, which it will not admit."***

Mrs Thatcher has decided on a despicable policy of giving entry permits to the elite who can make Hong Kong function until the Chinese Government takeover. Once that takeover happens and they leave Hong Kong, society will be even less able to defend itself against repression.

The official reason given for this policy of Mrs Thatcher's is that the Chinese will not dare to treat people badly of they have somewhere else to go. These entry permits will never have to be used, they say.

There is some truth in that argument. But where it falls down is that the repressive measures can be freely used against the huge majority of the people who have no exit option. The numbers who have that option will be insignificant to a future Chinese Government. Only if all British citizens in Hong Kong could leave if they are mistreated will there be real pressure on the Chinese Government to allow freedom to the Hong Kong Chinese.

Labour funked making that demand - though the Salad's Paddy Ashdown had more guts. Presumably, it is afraid of a racial backlash in Britain, which it will not admit. And presumably, like the Tories, they want to keep open their access to the Chinese market.

But Labour will never win the hearts and minds of the British people with that kind of realpolitik.

If it advocated justice for the Hong Kong Chinese, it is quite likely that we won't soon have them all over here. And, if treatment from the Chinese Government was bad enough to force a mass exodus, it must be remembered that Britain is no longer alone. It is part of a Commonwealth and of a great European community, and its problems would be faced in common with its allies and co-members.

PS. Just as the British are responsible for the welfare of the people of Hong Kong, so are the Americans responsible for the Vietnamese boat people. These should be given entry into the USA as they arrive in Hong Kong.