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Productive Socialism

1688

Labour and
the family

Loadsamoney

Vietnam in
perspective

Poll Tax

HOW - AND HOW NOT - TO FIGHT THE POLL TAX

Neil bach,

It is a very serious matter when the Labour Party contrives to turn a golden opportunity to put Thatcherism on the defensive into an occasion for internecine blood-letting.

I gather that you are preparing another purge of *Militant*, directed this time to the 'Tendency's' supporters in Scotland.

You may, or may not, be within your rights to do this from a strictly constitutional point of view, depending on how one interprets the party's constitution. But you know as well as I do that your reasons for embarking on this purge are political, not constitutional, reasons.

A diversion

If your reasons were merely constitutional ones, you would have no particular cause to focus on *Militant* in Scotland. You are doing this because *Militant* is mounting a challenge to you in Scotland. It is able to mount a challenge to you there because of your comprehensive failure to

provide political leadership to the Labour Party in Scotland on the issue of the Poll Tax.

You know perfectly well that you are simply using *Militant* as a diversion in this affair. If they are now making renewed headway in certain Scottish constituencies, it is merely as the local spokesmen for a mood which is very widespread in the Scottish Labour Party as a whole.

According to the MORI poll in *The Scotsman* last April, no less than 57 per cent of Scottish Labour voters (never mind party members, let alone activists) support a campaign of non-payment of the tax. And Robin Cook is no *Militant* supporter, let alone Dick Douglas!

The nationalist challenge

Because you and Donald Dewar have acted to ensure that the Scottish Labour Party has nothing to do with non-payment without offering a serious alternative to it, you have made a gift of the poll tax issue in Scotland to the SNP. There is now a real possibility of an SNP

victory in the Glasgow Govan by-election, despite the huge Labour majority they will need to overturn.

But even if this possibility does not realise itself, there can be no doubt that you have allowed the SNP to steal Labour's thunder on this issue, and have squandered the Labour Party's massive strength north of the border.

It is true that the Nationalists do not aspire to govern at Westminster, but to drum up separatist sentiment in Scotland, and that they have nothing to fear from an adverse reaction in England and Wales to their non-payment campaign.

Obviously you are not free to take this attitude. You are bound to view the anti-Poll Tax campaign in an all-British perspective. And this means that you are bound to give greater weight overall to public opinion south of the border in the long run. Fair enough.

But this is a point which would not be lost on our Scottish members and supporters if you were leading an effective campaign on this issue nationwide. You are doing

nothing of the kind.

There is now every reason to fear that the net effect of the poll tax controversy will not be to weaken the government, but to enable the SNP to make major inroads into Labour's vote in Scotland and to sow more bitter demoralisation within the party nationally, as if we are not demoralised enough.

A false antithesis

The line you have taken on the issue of campaign tactics has everything to do with this. You have allowed this issue to be polarised into legality v. illegality, payment v. non-payment. How stupid of you! Thatcher and Ridley must be having great difficulty in suppressing their glee.

Legality v. non-payment is what Aneurin Bevan would have called "a false antithesis". "*For heaven's sake do not get into a false antithesis*" is what Bevan told the 1957 Labour Party Conference in Brighton (but since this was when he finally came to terms with the realities of defence policy I suppose it is the one Bevan speech you never learned by heart).

The real divide in the Labour Party over the poll tax, south of the border as well as north of it, is between those who want a combative campaign against it and those who have not got it in them to mount such a campaign.

If you were able to offer a combative strategy which remained within the law, the idea of mass illegality would have far fewer supporters.

Simple-mindedness and dirty work

The position you have taken on 'illegality' is an extremely simple-minded one in any case. There are many different kinds of illegality, and the British are long used to distinguishing between them.

The Pentonville Five broke the law in 1972, but nobody in Britain regarded them as criminals. And because public opinion had been effectively persuaded by a combative campaign that the law in



question was unjust, it was the Tory government that lost that political battle.

People are going to break the law over the poll tax. Instead of behaving like a frightened sheep, desperate not to be associated with such dangerously criminal behaviour, the Labour Party should be putting itself into a position where this law-breaking rebounds against the government.

Instead, you are putting the Party into a position in which it can only echo the pompous platitudes that Thatcher and Ridley will inevitably use in order to discredit the spirited resistance of large numbers of honest citizens. Under your leadership, the Labour Party is actually doing Ridley's dirty work for him.

Legitimate civil disobedience

People are going to break the law. They will do so not with criminal motives, but as conscientious objectors. There is a proud and ancient tradition of civil disobedience and conscientious objection in this country. It is alive and well in Scotland, and it is far from dead in England. Are you so cocooned in the looking glass wonderland that you are unaware of this?

It is not necessary that the Labour Party urge people to break the law. In fact, there is every reason for the Party to urge poorer people, who are badly enough off as it is, not to do so. But the Party *must* say, loudly and clearly, that it refuses to condemn such acts of civil disobedience, and *that it is a scandal and an outrage* that the government should be driving honest citizens to resort to such acts.

You should make it absolutely clear that, whatever formal legality the poll tax legislation possesses, it does not possess the real legitimacy that a law which enjoys public assent will always possess in this country.

You should make it clear that, while not inciting such acts of civil disobedience, the Labour Party respects the honourable motives of those who commit them and will give them all the moral support at its disposal.

And you should make it

crystal clear that the first act of the next Labour Government will be the immediate repeal of this iniquitous legislation.

You could even take the lead in limiting the amount of non-payment which is likely to occur, by pointing out to people that it will be far more effective if a small number of well-known and well-heeled individuals refuse to pay, and face the legal consequences in highly publicised trials, than if thousands of ordinary householders put themselves in anonymous jeopardy in this way.

Such well-known and well-heeled individuals are not hard to find. Lady Antonia Fraser & Co. come immediately to mind. They need to be given something useful to do. And Mrs Thatcher will certainly hesitate to send such people to jail. It would make her law look ridiculous. And that is precisely how bad laws are defeated in this country.

Winning the battle in Scotland

Some of your Scottish colleagues have been bold enough to announce their intention of defying the law. This is very greatly to their credit, and it is undoubtedly to the credit of the Scottish Labour Party that it includes people of this calibre. The signs are you are determined to let them down, and to squander the political resource they represent.

Instead of letting the government embarrass you over this, you should be preparing the ground for embarrassing the government. And you should be doing this in such a way as to maximise the advantage to Labour in Scotland, instead of minimising it.

Scottish national pride is a force to be reckoned with, and its most militant expression can be channelled in this case into doing a great service to the rest of the United Kingdom. Because the future of the poll tax depends on what happens in Scotland in the next few months, the Scots can decide the future of British politics, because there is no doubt that if the poll tax is made unworkable there it will not work in the rest of the country.

In other words, Labour has a great opportunity to canalise the very forces in Scotland that the

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editor: Hugh Roberts

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SNP seeks to exploit. All it takes is a modicum of political skill and a bit of boldness. But if you fail, then few people in Scottish Labour politics will ever forgive you.

The signs are that you are determined to fail. Instead of doing the obvious thing, you are merely waging a new battle in your personal war against *Militant*. How much longer do you expect us to put up with a leader who indulges himself in this sort of trivial displacement activity when major issues are at stake?

Militant or militancy?

Militant is clearly a fixation for you. But you haven't a clue how to deal with them. So I suppose I had better tell you.

Militant can only be defeated politically in the long term. Administrative methods only work in dictatorial states, and they only work imperfectly even then. Although you seem to have the temperament of a dictator, you certainly don't have the political skills of a competent one. And the Labour Party isn't a state.

The best way of defeating *Militant* politically is for the Labour leadership to be sensibly militant when and where necessary.

Militant's militancy is fundamentally a dead-end because of its Trotskyist conceptions about the world. Hardly anyone in the party would be tempted to follow *Militant* if there was a better brand of militancy on offer.

The poll tax in Scotland at this time is the main opportunity you have for sensible militancy. If you do not take advantage of it, you will boost *Militant* in a big way, because you will have identified *Militant* with militancy in general.

In other words, Neil, your present behaviour is just what *Militant* want. And it suits Thatcher and Ridley down to the ground as well.

Are you never going to see this?

Yours fraternally,
Hugh.

PRODUCTIVE SOCIALISM

For once, Neil Kinnock has been proved right: the leadership contest has been a total waste of time. Labour politics have not benefitted one iota from it. There has been no useful debate at all.

But then it was absurd to expect anything useful from the challenge of a man with incoherent politics to a man with no politics.

There are a number of ways in which the fundamental problem of contemporary Labour politics may reasonably be described. One way of describing it is as the problem of how leftwing idealism is to be made purposeful.

Idealism and realism

One of the fixed ideas which has dominated the Labour Party for the last thirty-seven years is the assumption that political idealism and political realism are mutually exclusive, eternally and comprehensively opposed to each other. This fixed idea has effortlessly survived Mrs Thatcher's demonstration that it is groundless.

There is a very strong core of idealism in Thatcherism. Thatcherism has carried all before it since 1979 because it has combined a coherent social ideal with a highly developed sense of purpose, which has ensured that the pursuit of this ideal has taken due account of political realities at every stage. Mrs Thatcher has known when to retreat, when to stand her ground and when to pursue her advantage. Her ability to make the correct political judgements at every stage has been grounded in her determination to realise her social ideal. And this determination in turn has been made possible by the fact that the social ideal in question is both coherent and plausible.

Politicians who subscribe to incoherent and implausible ideals are unlikely to be determined in the pursuit of them, and when confronted with obstacles are more likely to abandon their ideals than conceive of imaginative ways of coping with the opposition which these ideals inevitably arouse.

The Labour government of 1945-1951 had to cope with enormous and sustained opposition to its policies. It was able to triumph over this opposition because it believed profoundly in its policies and had good reason to do so, because these policies embodied coherent, plausible and inspiring ideals which enjoyed considerable public support.

But the lessons of the Attlee-Bevin government were entirely lost on the Labour Party after 1951, and the purposeful idealism which animated it soon gave way to a purposeless idealism which never really believed in itself and which therefore allowed itself to be repeatedly subordinated to a superficial and ineffectual pragmatism in the name of realism.

Kinnock's displacement activity

An idealism which does not take itself seriously is a counterfeit idealism. Neil Kinnock made his way in the

party as a counterfeit idealist, cynically trading on the tradition of spurious idealism concocted by Michael Foot out of the erratic career of Aneurin Bevan. He has since made the transition from counterfeit idealist to ineffectual pragmatist. And this transition, like that of Harold Wilson before him, has been a virtually seamless one.

As we predicted in *L&TUR* No.6, the last thing which Tony Benn's challenge has done is to give Kinnock & Co. serious food for thought. Benn's defence of the rag-bag of doctrines and sentiments which preoccupy leftwing idealism these days has done nothing to shake Kinnock's belief in what he is doing. This is because, for all his shortcomings, Kinnock is actually addressing real political problems. A leftwing idealism which not only fails to propose superior solutions to Labour's problems but actually refuses to acknowledge these problems in the first place cannot expect to make any impact on Labour's leaders.



Last year in Brighton - going nowhere for lack of a guiding purpose

Kinnock cannot be blamed for refusing to identify the party with the mish-mash of contradictory dogmas served up by Tony Benn. But it is now self-evident that his strategy for leading the party involves him in the attempt to suppress its idealism altogether.

This strategy is terribly misconceived. It ensures that the leadership is continually engaging in trials of strength with the most enthusiastic element of the party membership. It represents a colossal diversion of political energy into a form of displacement activity which is as fruitless as the leftwing displacement activity it opposes. And it is a venture which cannot possibly succeed, no matter how relentlessly it is canvassed by Brian Walden and the like.

Necessary enthusiasms

Idealism is a necessary and inevitable feature of political activity. No political party can drain itself of its idealism and survive. And Kinnock cannot always expect to win these trials of strength, and is liable to lose some of them in the most embarrassing ways, as was demonstrated last June over defence.

The reason why Kinnock has embarked upon this strategy is that he can conceive of no other. He is the product of the same ideological outlook as that which orients his opponents, the superficial student leftism of the 1960s which was made possible by the incoherent Bevanism of the 1950s. He knows that the idealism in this outlook is futile.

But, because he has nothing to counterpose to it, he considers the enthusiasms which animate Labour's activists as a menace instead of a resource.

All effective forms of politics channel enthusiasms. A form of politics which has lost the knack of doing this has no future. British Toryism has been in business for so long because it has always known how to harness the wayward enthusiasms of the backwoods and direct them into purposeful projects. Thatcherism has succeeded magnificently in this.

Effective politicians channel enthusiasms by capturing imaginations. What is required

if Labour politics is to recover or even survive is that the introverted and hidebound idealism now prevalent on the Left be superseded by a leftwing idealism which is superior to it because more imaginative and more audacious as well as more realistic.

For this to happen, Labour politicians need to come to terms with the central reason for the remorseless decline of socialist politics over the last three decades.

Equality and utopia

This decline has been due to a fundamental philosophical and political weakness which has expressed itself in the persistent evasion of the central issue of British politics since 1951.

Having supervised the establishment of a large public sector and the welfare state, British socialism has refused to take effective responsibility for the management and progressive development of either. It has lacked a central idea to orient it in this undertaking and has therefore shirked it. Its policies have accordingly tended increasingly to superficiality and incoherence, and its arguments for them to unconvincing, because abstract, imperatives.

This weakness has its origin in an inadequate conception of socialism.

The British Left has overwhelmingly tended to conceive of socialism in redistributionist terms ("equality") and in utopian-millennarian terms (eternal harmony, "Jerusalem").

The redistributionist bias in its outlook has led it to ignore the problem of production and to justify redistributive measures in terms of abstract egalitarian imperatives, irrespective of circumstances.

The millennarian aspect of its conception has inhibited it from taking responsibility for governing the society at any stage short of the millennium on the grounds that to do so would be to take responsibility for "capitalism", and so prevented it from thinking about what progressive socialist reforms may actually be necessary and realisable in the short and medium term.

As a result, Labour

governments have been returned to power since 1951 only in exceptional circumstances - the aftermath of the Profumo affair in 1963-4 and the 3-day week in 1974 - with neither the bearings nor the mandate required for substantial social reform. And British society has been obliged to progress through the medium of Conservative politics for lack of an alternative.

Evading the issue

So far, Labour's response to the fact that it is fundamentally unelectable has been to continue to evade the issue.

It has spent a great deal of time in internal recriminations, the leaders blaming the led and vice versa.

It has blamed the British political system for its own failure, and has thereby set up an unending series of windmills to tilt at - the House of Lords, the monarchy, the electoral system, etc.

It has been tempted into a total capitulation to the gung-ho free-market ideology of Thatcherism at the precise moment that this ideology has begun to come under attack from Thatcher's Tory critics.

It has cast around for policy models demonstrated abroad, especially in the USA, without taking a moment's thought for the relevance of these models to the British context.

It has engaged in self-defeating day-dreams about an alliance with the even more incoherent and ineffectual SLD.

And it has allowed its crusading impulse to draw it into ineffectual displacement activities (CND, "anti-racism", "animal rights" and what-have-you) which marginalise it still further.

The revival of Labour's fortunes does not require the abandonment of socialist principles in an unconvincing espousal of the market, nor their replacement by American fashions, but the supersession of an inadequate conception of socialism by an adequate one.

An adequate conception of socialism in the British context is one which addresses the central issues of British society and is equal to the challenge they represent.

Productive socialism

The Labour Party needs a conception of socialism

(i) *which takes charge of the question of productivity (that is, the question of the relationship between technological change and changes in production relations) in a manner which radically distinguishes it from the Right in that it takes consistent account, as a matter of principle, both of the interests of the workforce and of the public interest;*

(ii) *in which redistributionist objectives are firmly allied to productionist objectives and so justified by them instead of by an abstract egalitarianism or a patronising "compassion".*

In the absence of such a conception,

(i) the question of productivity cannot be effectively addressed on a socialist basis, so that the general economic case for public ownership and public investment is critically vitiated, and the economic case for Thatcherite privatisation cannot be answered convincingly;

(ii) particular forms of state intervention in the economy, whether large- or small-scale, long-run or short-run, cannot be properly oriented by a clear strategy expressed in a set of definite priorities, and will accordingly tend to improvisation and incoherence;

(iii) the question of the relationship between state and market, and between public and private sector, cannot be thought about coherently except in the terms proposed by the Right, so that, in particular, the extent to which social needs fail to be expressed in the form of market demand cannot be accurately assessed or effectively counteracted, with all that this entails in terms of waste (e.g. of human resources: unemployment), inequalities and imbalances (e.g. the housing crisis in London);

(iv) leftwing idealism will continue to be channelled into an abstract and illiberal egalitarianism which is inherently incapable of imposing any limits upon itself and therefore inclined to be taken to farcical and literally indescribable extremes which rightly alienate public opinion and which the

merely pragmatic leadership of a democratically constituted Labour Party is badly placed to contain;

(v) working class energies will continue to express themselves in either a realistic but apolitical business unionism *a la* EETPU or the self-defeating defence of restrictive practices *a la* NUM, T&GWU, NALGO *et al.* and, outside the medium of trade-unionism, in either the retreat from public life or various politically disoriented forms of protest;

(vi) Conservative governments will continue to be elected indefinitely, and the Labour Party and trade union "movement" to disintegrate.

A spirit and an ethic

At the heart of capitalist economic philosophy lies a spirit and an ethic. At the heart of productive socialism there must also be a spirit and an ethic: the spirit of cooperative enterprise and the ethic of public service.

The collectivist aspect of this conception is not at all opposed to individualism. Its purpose is to establish the framework for a more widely-based, creative and socially responsible individualism in place of the narrow, acquisitive and anti-social individualism promoted by the Right.

The purposeful idealism inherent in this conception will supersede the frivolous and whimsical idealism now prevalent on the Left only if it also supersedes the narrow sectionalism to which the trade unionist ethic has been reduced in recent decades. But, for as long as economic reality is mediated for British workers by managements which do not represent them, no substantive change in their outlook can be expected.

Productive socialism in Britain accordingly implies the advent of industrial democracy in some form or other and probably a variety of forms.

And the spirit and the ethic at the heart of productive socialism can and should be developed in both public and private sectors.

Public and private

The British Left has never

given much thought to the difference between public and private sectors. This difference is very far from being absolute or comprehensive. In fact, the only difference which generally obtains is in the nature of investment.

Public sector enterprises are financed by public capital and private sector enterprises by private capital. In theory, this fundamental difference might have been expected to imply or generate other differences, in the form of management, the quality of service, the degree of dynamism and so forth. In practice, it has not done so, because the Left has persistently failed to think about how it might do so.

There are enterprises in the private sector which are run on a genuinely cooperative basis. And most public companies are run in a very hierarchical way. Equally significant is the fact that plenty of private companies (whether cooperatives or traditional capitalist firms) operate with an ethic of public service while plenty of public companies fail to do so in the most flagrant and shocking fashion.

There are obvious limits to how far the ethic of public service can inform and determine the behaviour of private companies. These companies are self-evidently obliged to respect capitalist criteria of efficiency expressed in terms of profitability. (This is necessarily true of workers' cooperatives every bit as much as of conventional private firms.) But there are plenty of private companies which know that unless they offer a genuine service to the public they cannot expect to achieve the degree of profitability on which their survival depends.

In principle, the fact that public companies rely on public investment instead of depending upon the free capital market means that they are under no obligation to calculate profitability on the purely short-term basis of the financial year. This freedom should enable them to take a far longer-term view and to give a far more developed expression to the ethic of public service. In practice, it has failed

to do so but has encouraged inefficiency instead.

Public enterprise

Private companies - whether those of individual capitalists, or joint-stock companies, or workers' cooperatives - are obliged to be enterprising by the very logic of capitalist competition. Public companies are in principle insulated from this logic. Unless some other factor is present to ensure that they are run in an enterprising way, they are bound to be inefficient, and so a drain on public finance in the short run and a sitting duck for Thatcherite privatisation proposals in the long run.

The missing factor has been *the spirit of public enterprise*. It has been missing because the Left has done absolutely nothing to develop it. The tragedy is that elements of it were unquestionably present in the British public sector in the 1940s and 1950s, and even later in some cases. But they were allowed to wither and die.

The Left has often complained about the fact that many of the public companies set up after 1945 were run by managers recruited from private industry. In itself, this was a perfectly valid complaint. But it ignored two crucial facts: first, that many of the individuals appointed to run these companies were sympathetic to the principle of public ownership and genuinely anxious to make the public sector a success, and, second, that managers were bound to be appointed from the private sector for as long as nothing was done to develop a capacity for management in the public sector workforce.

The British Left has never had a word to say about how the public sector workforce might be encouraged and trained to take collective responsibility for management and thereby obviate the continued recourse to managers recruited from private industry. And, in practice, the Left has been hostile to any such development taking place.

Many of the workers in the industries and services nationalised after 1945 were subjectively ready for this development. They knew what

they had endured under private ownership, in the mines, on the railways and in many other sectors, and they experienced nationalisation as a historic victory for their class and one which potentially altered the relations of production in their favour and so called for a radically new attitude on their part. In place of the defensive and essentially negative kind of trade union activity which had been self-evidently necessary when they were up against capitalist management, they recognised that a new, positive, constructive and socially responsible attitude was called for.

This new spirit expressed itself in a willingness to take into account the long-term interests of the industry or service in question in negotiations with management. The behaviour of the NUM during the 1950s and 1960s under leaders such as Will Paynter was a vivid expression of this. But this new attitude could not sustain itself indefinitely.

Industrial democracy

The idealism of the generation of workers who had known the bad old days could not simply be transmitted to the next generation, which had never known anything but public ownership and took it for granted. The positive and constructive spirit could be sustained only if subsequent generations of workers saw that it was in their own interest to act in this spirit.

For them to be able to see this, it was vital that they begin to take actual responsibility for management, that they begin themselves to wrestle with all the complex problems of managing a public industry or service, acquire skill and self-confidence in doing this and develop a corresponding pride in their collective ability to ensure that their industry or service was run efficiently, so that their own interest in it was safeguarded by their success in serving the public interest.

In other words, for the fledgling spirit of public enterprise to survive in Britain's public sector workforce, it was

vital that it be *developed* in all kinds of practical ways. And the precondition of this development was industrial democracy. The Labour Party is clearly still light years away from appreciating this.

"Our goal is...to create a public enterprise culture" declare the authors of the section on "Consumers and the Community" in the First Report of Labour's Policy Review. But fine words butter no parsnips. There can be no such "culture" unless the spirit of public enterprise animates the public sector workforce. And the section on "People at Work" says absolutely nothing about industrial democracy.

Until Labour wakes up to this it will have nothing with which to oppose Thatcherism at the level of fundamental economic principles. For what Thatcherism is now doing to the British public sector is the inevitable consequence of the British Left's failure to understand the need for industrial democracy and to campaign for it when it was a possibility of practical politics in the 1960s

and 1970s.

Towards privatisation

Because the fledgling spirit of public enterprise in the public sector workforce was allowed to wither away, it became increasingly difficult to manage public sector companies on a non-capitalist basis. The failure to secure efficiency and productivity in a socialist manner made the pressure on management to revert to straightforwardly capitalist criteria of efficiency irresistible. This quickly set up a vicious circle.

The fact that public companies were increasingly being managed in the same way as private companies reinforced the tendency in the public sector unions to revert to the traditional, sectionalist and defensive, attitudes, to regard public sector management as indistinguishable from that of the private sector, and to conceive of their relations with management in terms of class conflict.

The principal effect of this was a widespread collapse in the

public sector workforce of any feeling of responsibility for the quality of the product or service in question. And as this quality remorselessly declined, the case for privatisation was correspondingly strengthened.

The terrible thing about the wholesale demolition of the public sector which is now taking place is that it is not being seriously opposed. Neither the trade unions nor the Labour Party are capable of opposing it with any spirit or conviction. They lack the conception of productive socialism on which they could base a determined resistance to Thatcherite privatisation. And had they possessed this conception and acted on it when industrial democracy was on the agenda in the 1970s, there would be no Thatcherite privatisation to resist, for Labour would still be in power and deservedly so.

From Bevin to Kinnock

As Brendan Clifford pointed out in *L&TUR* No.6, Ernest Bevin had a productive conception of socialism and acted with enormous purpose and determination to give effect to it. It was this which made the achievements of the 1945-1951 government possible. But because he never put this conception in writing, it was lost to subsequent generations of Labour activists.

Numerous individual trade unionists and Labour politicians have had glimmerings of this conception over the last thirty years. Harold Wilson subscribed to it in 1964, as did George Brown and Peter Shore and Barbara Castle. So did the young Anthony Wedgwood Benn, as is evident from the first volume of his diaries. But they subscribed to it in a superficial way, and in particular failed to realise its central implication, the need for industrial democracy as the indispensable condition of an enduring change in the outlook of British workers.

Undoubtedly, their essentially patronising attitude to British workers was one of the main reasons for this failure. But perhaps the main reason was, as Brendan Clifford argues elsewhere in this issue, their total lack of a sound historical

understanding of British society.

Benn eventually recognised the need for industrial democracy, at least up to a point, in the mid-1970s, as it began to be canvassed by influential trade union leaders such as Jack Jones. But he proved utterly incapable of developing the case for it within the Labour Party and accordingly failed to stand up to the conservatism of the Labour Left and that of the bulk of the trade union "movement" when the Bullock Committee's report brought matters to a head.

Benn did not have it in him to seize his one opportunity to make an historic contribution to the development of British socialism in 1974-1977, and has been little more than a political nuisance ever since.

Back in the 1950s, Aneurin Bevan made the occasional remark suggesting a vague understanding of what was at issue. But he never developed this understanding in any way. And so Neil Kinnock, having made a point of joining the Institute for Workers' Control in the early stages of his career, felt free to oppose the Bullock Committee's proposals on flagrantly dishonest grounds in order to bolster his credentials as a radical socialist while keeping in with the most conservative trade union bosses.

Kinnock is now paying the political price for his own cynical behaviour eleven years ago. He acted to prevent the idealism of the Labour Left from being channelled in a useful direction in 1977 and he is now trying vainly to cope with the futile idealism whose survival he helped to ensure. The chickens have come home to roost. And, although Kinnock is now in a position to make amends for that youthful mistake, there is no reason to expect him to do so.

But unless the Labour Party takes up the conception of productive socialism, and does so in earnest, there will be no reason to expect an end to the futile conflicts which are now paralysing it and paralysing the trade union "movement" as well. And there will be no reason to expect an end to the Conservative governments and the triumphant capitalist reaction which this paralysis make inevitable.



Images like this need to be more than mere window-dressing

Notes on the News

by Madawc Williams

Disorder in Kensington

Every few months, someone points to the large percentage of the population who do not vote, and argue that this means that a lot of people have rejected British democracy.

Actually, it means just the opposite. It means that a great many people have such a complacent faith in British democracy that they don't care who gets elected, assuming that nothing much can go wrong whoever gets in.

From time to time, people will campaign on the assumption that people are desperately seeking some alternative to the politics we have. In fact, hardly anyone is these days. A lot more of us were looking for alternatives in the 1960s and 1970s. But Labour wasted that opportunity, especially by ignoring the chance for workers' control in the 1970s.

In the Kensington by-election, the radical alternative was offered by *Class War*, a small group of politically-motivated louts who claim to be anarchists. In the event, "Class War" got only one third of the votes obtained by a classy whore, Mrs Cynthia Payne. She got 193 votes; they got 60. Even Screaming Lord



**Loser at Kensington:
Labour's Ann Holmes**

Sutch did better than "Class War".

For better or worse, serious left-wing electoral politics does not exist outside the Labour Party. And even the Labour Party needs to shake itself up, if it is to have a hope of being elected. And Neil Kinnock, a lapsed leftist who does not know the difference between practicality and cynicism, is probably not the man to do it.

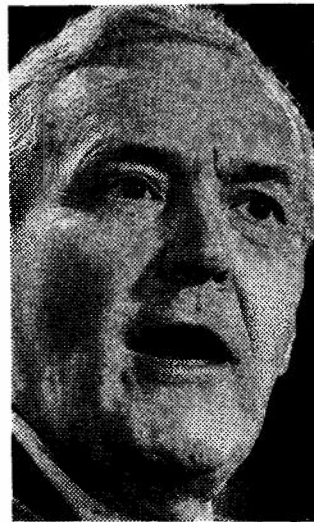
Benn's Blunder

Political democracy in Britain was firmly established in 1688. At the time, of course, it was democracy within a limited class who were interested in running the country. Benn is correct to say that the franchise was "limited to a tiny percentage of rich men". (*The Independent*, 7th July 1988).

But at the time, the broad mass of the population was *not* demanding a wider franchise. It was only in the late 18th century, with "Wilkes and Liberty", that a major popular movement began arguing that ordinary people were fit to govern themselves. Parliament was not actually reformed at all until 1832 -- and that reform reduced the franchise in some constituencies.

Mass democracy in 1688 would have been impossible. Only a few advanced radicals argued that it might be desirable. The mass of the population did not think itself fit to govern. Indeed, it is probable that they genuinely were not fit to govern even if the ruling class had wanted them to. A century later, the radical democratic movement led by John Wilkes was ruined by the Gordon Riots of 1780: mass protests against Catholic Emancipation. The ruling class felt that it was safe to treat the Catholic minority as equal citizens, rather than potential traitors. The bulk of the radical democrats of the time did not agree; they remained anti-Catholic bigots.

What 1688 created was a system that could start out as



democracy for a tiny percentage of rich men, and be gradually extended to more and more people. It managed this without the destructive factionalism that ruined both the Greek city-states and the Roman Republic. Socialists should be making use of the system, not sneering at it.

Leonid Who?

The latest stage in *glasnost* seems to be a suppression of books by former Soviet leaders. According to *The Independent*, "The writings of the late Soviet leaders Leonid Brezhnev and Konstantin Chernenko have been ordered to be removed from libraries.... librarians were also advised to remove materials about party congresses held under Leonid Brezhnev, and to tell readers that the documents had been borrowed" (17th August 1988).

This fits in with the whole way *glasnost* has been run. It is well known that part of the party hierarchy are against it. But no one is officially against it. The party line is for more openness, and let no one dare to be openly against this!

In 1917, Lenin was certain that Soviets and one-party rule would prove a much more democratic system than "bourgeois democracy". And despite everything, there are still some people who believe this.

Lenin's system excluded the idea of a "loyal opposition". When there were two rival factions, the losers automatically became villains, scoundrels, traitors and spies. He assumed that since the Bolsheviks represented the working class, and were committed to bringing

about a socialist utopia, opposition was of necessity treason.

In this context, it is interesting to note what the *Communist Manifesto* says about democracy. The *Communist Manifesto* says nothing at all about democracy. Even though it was written at a time when progressive left-wing thought was very much identified with the struggle for parliaments and constitutions, it keeps a judicious silence about such matters.

Under Lenin, and with Trotsky still very much part of the leadership, all rival forms of socialism and left-wing thought were rooted out. Russian anarchism and populism, which had survived the worst the Tsars could do, did not survive the Bolsheviks. There was also a small purge of Bolshevik dissidents, the Workers' Opposition. The pattern was set well before Stalin became Number One, and would probably have been much the same if one of his rivals had won out instead.

Khrushchev did not really change this system, although he undermined its logic. Up until his denunciation of Stalin, loyal communists could believe that the harshness of the system was justified. This was no longer a possible view. When a leader called his predecessor a madman and criminal, it was obvious that at least one of them was unfit to rule.



Chernenko - today's unperson

In the Soviet Union, you never know what is going to happen yesterday. Bukharin *et al.* were heroes up until the 1930s, and then became criminal. Under Khrushchev, they almost got rehabilitated, but not quite. Under Brezhnev, everything stagnated. Now finally they are rehabilitated, and Brezhnev, "the best leader since Lenin" while he lived, is denounced as a corrupt old man who hung on for far too long.

If this were the judgement of the Soviet people, openly arrived at after free debate, one might say that real democracy had arrived at last. It is not. It is just the latest party line, from the current Number One. And who can say that it will never change again?

Iran after the peace

In L&TUR 7, I said that Iran would soon have to accept that they'd made a mistake in thinking that God would grant them victory in the war against Iraq. Both sides had finally realised that the war was futile.

As W. H. Auden put it:

When statesmen gravely say "We must be realistic"

The chances are they're weak and therefore pacifistic

But when they speak of

*Principles - look out - perhaps
Their Generals are already poring
over maps*

Peace actually happened soon after the magazine was published. I was also not surprised that Iraq showed a reduced enthusiasm for peace, having just had some military success. The Iraqi regime is immoral, and the Iranian one operates on an unfamiliar and not very likeable system of morality.

The geo-political question has now stabilised. Iran is unlikely over the next few years to be able to carry its Islamic Revolution to the Arab states that lie west and south of it. The gamble of putting Western fleets into the Gulf has paid off.

On the other hand, they may hope that chances are opening up both to the east and to the north. I doubt if the Afghan guerillas will be in Kabul all that soon; they are too factional. But a continuing war gives Iran the chance to go on building up its influence. And they need not

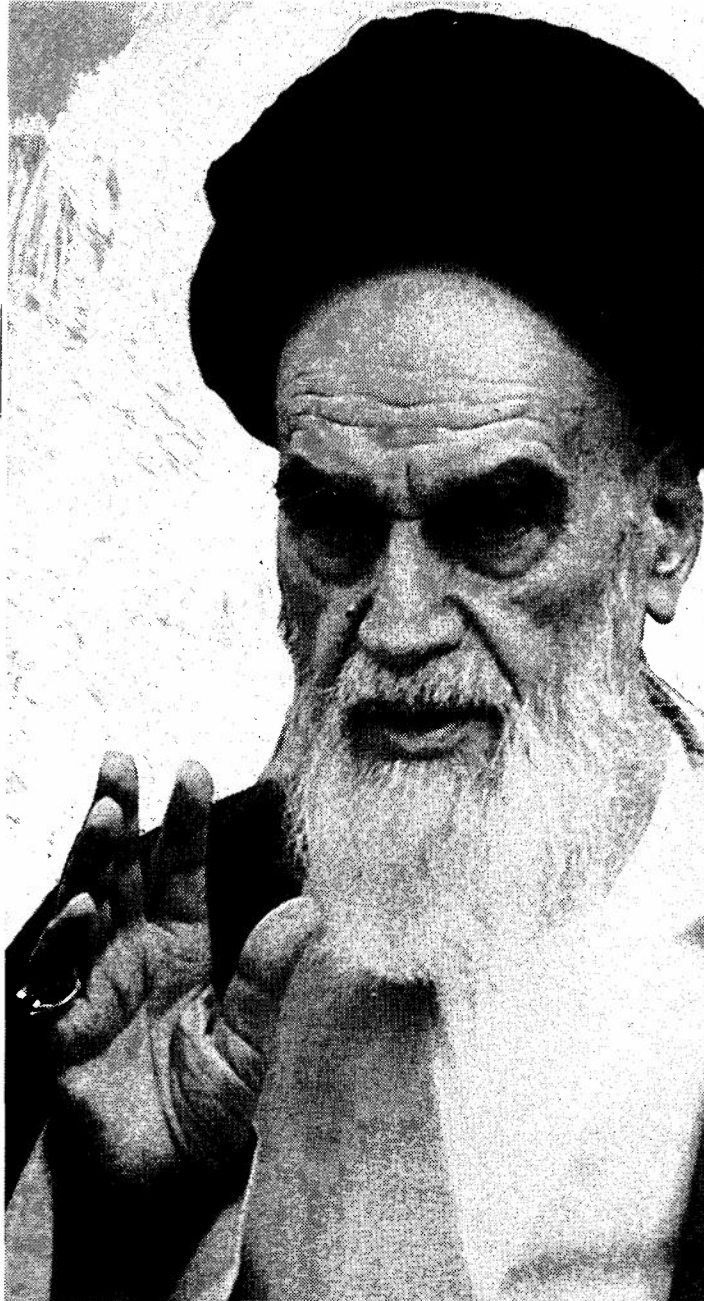
stop with Afghanistan.

The USSR has its own Muslim minority, large and badly under-represented in the corridors of power. It is not impossible that they might one day revolt on an Islamic-fundamentalist basis, particularly if the retreat from Afghanistan comes to be seen as a defeat for the Soviet system. Iran can hope for this, anyway.

There is also Pakistan. The late President Zia was a devout Muslim who promoted a form of fundamentalism. But he also had it very much under his control; it was fundamentalism dependent on the state power of the

President and his army. But this too could change. And even though the Pakistanis are mostly Sunni Muslims, Shi'ite Iran could play an important part if the country were to become unstable.

I would like to think that the end of the Gulf War would mean a pragmatic and non-missionary Iran. But I fear that this will not be the case. It is more likely that the Iranian leadership have been looking back to the defeats and strategic retreats in the career of the Prophet Mohammed. And that they have not yet lost hope of re-shaping the world according to their Islamic vision.



Heart to heart

Humans can live OK without eating meat. But meat eating is hardly likely to be forbidden. Thousands of lives could be saved by transplants from animals, if the technique should ever be perfected. But there is a danger that it may be banned.

Transplant surgery saves lives. But it depends on taking the organs of dead humans; usually after a sudden and tragic death. (Organs from the old or chronically sick are mostly not usable). There is therefore a chronic shortage of organs for transplants, even though the surgery keeps getting better.

Using animal organs would solve a lot of the problems. One would not have to upset grief-stricken relatives by asking if one could take a few bits out of the dear departed. Society already kills hundreds of thousands of pigs, cows, sheep etc. for food. To kill a few more for transplant organs should not offend any ethical principle.

The idea of putting animal organs into humans is an odd one, and a bit upsetting at first. But then so is the idea of taking bits of other humans for the same purpose. The human hand and brain are superior to those of the pig or cow; the other organs are very much the same.

Actually, the whole thing seems to have been a bit of a false alarm. The idea is still far from being proven or practical. And the surgeon who spoke to the press about it has now left the research programme. His colleagues were angry at him for generating so much unwelcome publicity without their knowledge or consent.

But I doubt if we have heard the last of it. It is almost certain that animal transplants will become possible, in due course. And I trust that those of us who eat meat will raise no objections to this life-saving possibility.

Jordan and the PLO

At the start of the 20th century, the territories that are now Jordan, Syria, Israel and The Lebanon were all part of the Ottoman province of Greater Syria. Jordan exists because King Hussein's grandfather swept in from Mecca and took that bit for himself. The Lebanon was created for the Lebanese

Christians, who did not want to be a tiny minority in an Arab state. And Israel was created by Jews who had good reason to think that they would only be safe in a state of their own.

Jordan was originally Transjordan. The West Bank was up for grabs when Israel took over the rest of the British mandate territory of Palestine. In a similar manner, the Egyptians took over the Gaza Strip.

The Gaza Strip remained as a left-over when Egypt and Israel finally agreed peace. Egypt did not want it; Israel was not going to let it go except as part of a wider peace. Their hope was always to be able to hand over Gaza and most of the West Bank to Jordan, since Jordan was willing to co-exist with Israel. But the PLO and most of the other Arabs rejected such a solution, and as time went by many Israelis became unwilling to hand over the West Bank on any terms.

Jordan has now pulled out. They are giving the PLO a chance to show what it can do. Perhaps King Hussein hopes that they will make a total mess and have to invite him back. Or perhaps he has just got tired of the stalemate.

What the Palestinians *should* do is to agree to co-exist with Israel, and then seek negotiations

about the borders. Co-existence is what they should have opted for in 1948, when the UN partition plan would have given them far more land than they could hope for now. The Palestinians were foolish then; unwilling to see that both they and the Jews had a just claim to the land. There is little sign that time has made them any wiser.

A skyful of planets

In the nineteenth century, it was thought that the earth and the other planets of the solar system were rare accidents. There might be life elsewhere in the Solar System, especially Mars. But the chances of planets around other stars seemed remote.

The old idea was that planets had been drawn out of the sun after a close encounter with another star, which would be a rare event indeed. But more modern theories suggest that stars and planets form at much the same time, condensing out of an original nebula. In this case, planets will be very common.

The trouble is, we do not know for sure. We see the other planets of our own solar system only because they are so very close to us, in astronomical terms. The outer three planets were not known about at all until the invention of the

telescope. There may even be a tenth planet, too small and dim to have been found yet. And it would be a close neighbour, compared to even the closest of the stars. If they have planets, we would not be able to see them.

But the evidence looks quite good. Astronomers have found clouds of dust and gas around a few young stars, just as the theory predicted. And other stars have "wobbles" in their motion; wobbles caused by something in orbit about them. The "something" could be a Brown Dwarf, a tiny and relatively cool star. Or it could be a large planet. Indeed, there may be no sharp distinction between large planets and Brown Dwarfs; the two classes of object merge into each other.

We still lack proof that there are planets like Earth round any other star in the galaxy. But it seems likely that such proof will be found over the next few years, especially when the Hubble Space Telescope is finally launched. (Being above the atmosphere, it will see far more clearly than anything we have now).

Salad Democrats

"The centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world". The anarchy is still very minor, mere fringe anarchy. But the centre ground of British politics is indeed failing to hold. A prolonged Civil War among centrists seems to have finally ended with David Owen as leader of a substantial SDP remnant and Paddy Ashdown in charge of something that calls itself the Social and Liberal Democrats for the present, but may very soon change its name again.

Political parties flourish to the degree that they can tolerate diversity and combine large numbers of people who are not entirely like-minded. At present, the Tories are much the most successful in doing this. Labour lost the SDP, and may lose more of its right wing after the TUC's expulsion of the EETPU. The Liberals ended up splitting the SDP and absorbing the worse half. They have lost the chance for a strong centre party led by Dr Owen, the only centrist who ever looked like a future Prime Minister. But the Tories have

avoided splits. When the National Front was flourishing, they managed to hang on to most of their right wing. When the SDP was formed, the Tory wets did not break away and join it.

The SLD, now nicknamed the Salads, are thinking of calling themselves the Democrats. They should take lessons from the US Democrats. Dukakis chose Benson as his running-mate, a conservative southerner to balance a semi-liberal northerner. Jackson spoke as if he were upset by the choice, but acted as if he knew it was the only way to put together a winning coalition.

Given an abstract choice between a Conservative, a Liberal and a Moderate, 41% of Americans chose the Moderate, 40% the Conservative and only 13% the Liberal. (*The Independent*, 24th August 1988)

Electoral politics are not worth bothering with unless you follow policies that have some chance of winning elections. But neither the Salad Democrats nor the Labour Party seem to have grasped this simple point.

Chess

With little publicity, and for no very obvious reason, Britain has become the number-two chess playing nation over the past few years. For the first time ever, Britain has a representative in the world semi-finals.

Everyone had been expecting that it would be Nigel Short. He is ranked as number three in the world. But unexpectedly, he lost the quarter-final match to fellow-Briton Jon Speelman, ranked number five.

The quarter-finals got little publicity; they were shown on television, but only after midnight. Let's hope the semi-finals get a bit more attention.



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Trade Union Diary

by Dave Chapel

The TUC - from power to oblivion

The TUC was once envisaged as a general staff for the entire trade union movement. It was accepted that in their day-to-day affairs unions, by their very nature, had conflicting interests.

But the TUC would draw out those aims that were common to the working class as a whole and organise the whole union movement to achieve them. Inter-union differences would be coped with along the way in the context of a programme for achieving the main goals - nationalisation, universal education, social welfare, or whatever was appropriate to the times and circumstances.

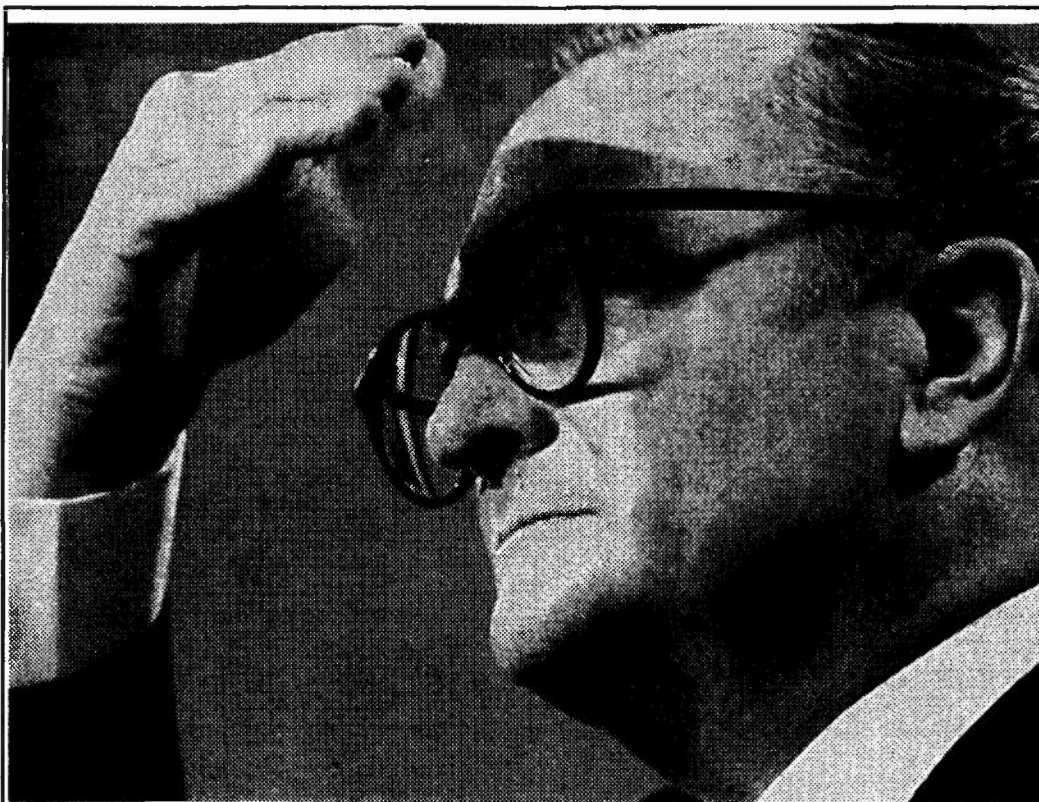
The TUC was enormously successful in this role. It became a vital component in the governing of the country. For almost forty years governments ruled in association with the TUC and the CBI, and often in association with the TUC alone. This was true of *all* governments - Churchill's, Attlee's, Macmillan's, Wilson's and Heath's.

The TUC was seen to speak with authority on a very wide range of issues affecting the lives of the majority of people - the working class. Leaders like Bevin and Citrine *earned* it this respect as they gave workers direction and purpose *as a class*.

The reforms enacted during and after the war, and consolidated by the Tories in the 1950s, had their origin in the great purposeful trade union movement. The goals set by Bevin's movement were achieved beyond anyone's wildest dreams by the 1960s.

The working class had become **top dog**, and needed to set itself **new goals**. It had destroyed its **inferior status**. It now needed to **shoulder the responsibilities of a ruling class** as it prepared to put a **reforming Labour government into power once again** in the mid-1960s.

The Labour government set up an **inquiry into the unions** which produced the **Donovan Report**. This proposed moving



What vision for the TUC today can compare with the industrial democracy reform which Clive Jenkins supported eleven years ago?

away from the confrontational industrial relations of the era when the working class was weak and divided, and towards developing an industrial democracy.

In line with this, Labour Minister Barbara Castle produced a White Paper, **In Place of Strife**, proposing a legal framework for the conduct of labour relations. This plan was open to almost any form of modification by the unions. But a new conservative breed was now in charge of most of the union movement, and rejected the proposals out of hand.

They wanted things both ways.

They wanted freedom to indulge themselves in class war battles with the employers and the state as if these were equivalent to the bosses of a century earlier. They maintained the mentality of the oppressed, and wanted to wallow in that mentality.

At the same time they wanted to swagger into 10 Downing Street at will for beer and sandwiches. They refused to recognise that their ability to do this was based on the fact that they were no longer representing the poor downtrodden underdogs

of the past, but a class which could have anything it wanted, and had responsibilities which went with that power.

This was the point at which the TUC began to lose direction, and therefore relevance to the needs and desires of the working class. The leaders may have wanted to live in the past. But the members were getting on with being modern men and women in a modern world - but as individuals. It would take a while longer before governments realised the growing irrelevance of the TUC, and the latter was to get many more undeserved chances to mend its ways.

When Heath came to power in 1970, he attempted to regulate industrial relations compulsorily, with the **Industrial Relations Act**. He did this in recognition of working class power and not as a means to destroying it.

The **Industrial Relations Act** was defeated by industrial action in 1972. Not as a result of a purposeful alternative being pushed by the TUC, but as a result of a squalid dispute between the transport section and the dockers section of the T&GWU over who should load containers onto ships.

Heath did his most important U-turn. He launched the Tripartite Talks, where domestic policies would be worked out on an continuous basis between government, employers and unions. The TUC liked the lunches at No.10, but were not interested in running the country. They helped bring Heath down during the miners' strike of 1974.

Labour got back in, and the TUC had its last chance. The opportunities for the union movement exercising power after a century and a half of fighting for it were seen and proposed by a few key figures: Tony Benn in the Cabinet and Jack Jones, Clive Jenkins and a few others in the union leadership. These men, at that time, knew that a whole era was long over.

The working class had got the vote, was educated, was organised in trade unions as never before. Over half of the economy was in the hands of the state. And, as Harold Wilson had stated, Labour appeared to have become "the natural party of government". The next great height to be conquered was control by the working class of their jobs and of the economy. Industrial democracy.

The government set up a Committee of Inquiry under Alan Bullock. Its terms of reference and its report were dictated by the trade union representatives - Jack Jones from the T&GWU, Clive Jenkins from ASTMS and David Lea, an official of the TUC.

The proposals went even further than any trade unionist had asked for. They gave real workers' control. But that meant control over *all* decisions, including unpleasant ones. The proposals were roundly defeated in the union movement by a majority of conservative leaders such as Hugh Scanlon (AUEW), Frank Chapple (EETPU) and Arthur Scargill (NUM).

Before the **Bullock Report**, the TUC was formally in favour of industrial democracy. But it gave no lead in demanding the implementation of the **Bullock Report**, even though not a lot of demanding was needed.

Instead, it ended up giving support to the conservative leaders who launched an orgy of self-destruction in the infamous

Winter of Discontent and brought an end to the Labour government in 1979. Then came Margaret Thatcher.

Thatcher's government, unlike Heath's, wanted to end TUC privilege. It also believed, rightly as it turned out, that the TUC was a "paper tiger". The TUC's response to Thatcher was disastrous. It opposed every measure of the government, effectively on the grounds that they were measures of the government.

Laws governing ballots on union elections and industrial action were opposed even though it was clear to most people that these were both popular and beneficial to our movement.

The TUC cried wolf so often that when the government finally got around to having a real go - in the recent Bill which refuses unions any sanction against scabs or other erring members - the TUC couldn't raise anything stronger than a whimper.

The TUC supported the totally utopian and undemocratic strike engineered by Scargill and

McGahey in the coalfields. A strike which destroyed what was once the greatest union in the country. And a strike which at this year's TUC resulted in the NUM no longer being represented on the TUC's General Council.

The TUC has followed along behind any and every dispute. It has given no lead. It has had no perspective. It has played into Thatcher's hands at every turn. It is irrelevant. On that, Eric Hammond is absolutely correct.

And now the TUC is observing its own dismemberment in the manner of a man celebrating his greatest achievement. It is entirely appropriate that this process is being presided over by a great ball of emptiness - Norman Willis.

The EETPU

Over the last decade, the smooth decline of the TUC into total irrelevance has been upset only by the behaviour of the EETPU. Eric Hammond has regularly told it what it was and

where it was going, and has made occasional efforts to stop it.

The TUC has not liked this. It has rejected all possibilities for change, for new directions, for purposeful policies. It has chosen dog-eat-dog free-market trade unionism of the worst kind. Hammond has acted consistently on this basis and become the Doberman Pinscher of the unions. The complaints against him are those of the dachshunds and the poodles.

During the Wapping dispute, it was common knowledge that the NGA wouldn't deal with the great ogre because they wanted **The Sun's** machine managers' jobs for themselves rather than letting SOGAT keep them, whereas SOGAT were angling for their own single-union agreement agreement with Murdoch. All that happened was that the rank outsider, the EETPU, pipped them both at the post. And aren't we all supposed to be in favour of free collective bargaining these days?

The EETPU got slung out of



Going his own way - but at least knowing where he wants to go

the TUC because they signed single-union agreements in two companies where other unions had members. This was interpreted as poaching. Under the *Bridlington Agreement*, unions are not allowed to poach. And if they do, the matter is referred to the TUC Disputes Committee. The EETPU deals were so referred. The EETPU was found guilty and told to withdraw from the agreements. It balloted its members and got a mandate to stick by the agreements. It did so and was expelled.

A few years ago, single-union agreements were considered bad form in the movement. This was a bit silly since the strongest forces in the formative years of trade unionism - syndicalism (NUR, NUM etc.) and craft unionism (NGA etc.) insisted on single-union agreements. But now they're all at it - AEU, GMB, T&GWU.

Given that this is the new "in thing", Bridlington surely has little relevance anymore. Unless the TUC was to be the arbiter of who got what - unlikely since the TUC is *in fact* regarded by all as irrelevant. Either single-union agreements apply only to "virgin" companies - which they don't - or Bridlington is dead. This is the basis of the EETPU's defence, and it is irrefutable.

Technically, the EETPU was guilty. But if the other unions were serious about TUC unity - which they were not - they would have revised Bridlington to accommodate the new practice of single-union deals which most of them were engaging in. They didn't, because their main aim was to rid themselves of their successful and ruthless rival, the EETPU.

However the proposed merger with the AEU goes, I predict that the EETPU will thrive as a result of its expulsion, and its detractors will decline. And that is no more than they deserve.

I feel it necessary to explain these matters to the Labour movement for the reason that no-one else will. (The so-called Tory Press certainly hasn't got a clue what is going on.) But a word about the EETPU itself is also in order.

It is a product of conservatism in the union movement.

Sometimes left conservatism. Sometimes conservatism of the Labour right. Since the war it has been dominated by ideology. It was purely its good fortune that it changed from a left ideology to a right ideology at the appropriate moment.

Under Communist Party control it was a bit of a thorn in the side of the movement until its leaders were caught fiddling the votes in the late 1950s. But the old TUC, which had real business to conduct, coped with this thorn well enough. Former Communists kept control as they dramatically switched ideologies and became premature Thatcherites. Frank Chapple was a leading force in defeating proposals for industrial democracy in the electricity industry in the mid-1970s and in defeating the Bullock proposals in the late 1970s. But he couldn't have done this if there had been a half-decent progressive body within the TUC as a whole.

At the fore-front of current EETPU policies is Roy Sanderson, who stayed in the CP long after the ballot rigging fiasco but is now an absolute free-market ideologist.

The L&TUR is a socialist paper. It favours industrial democracy and service-to-the-public socialism. It is highly unlikely that the Roy Sandersons of this world will be allies in this crusade. But our movement will get nowhere unless we understand that the EETPU is the most coherently representative product of trade union policy as it has evolved since the 1960s.

The postal dispute

At the heart of the postal dispute is the use of casual labour. Both seasonally and each day the Post Office operates in successive bursts of activity and periods of inactivity. Until now sufficient staff were recruited to cover the bursts of activity (with the exception of the Christmas rush) and enjoyed the periods of idleness.

The Post Office decided to maximise the use of labour by employing permanent staff to cover "normal" labour needs, and to employ casual staff to fill in the hours or periods of high activity.

Nobody could blame the

permanent staff for preferring the old system for as long as they could get away with it. It is clear that they could not get away with it any longer and will have to work like everyone else.

A proper trade union response in these circumstances would be to unionise properly the casual staff. Heaven knows, enough fuss was made at the TUC about recruiting and being relevant to part-time workers.

Casual staff should be snapped up by the unions. Their rights should be protected and they should be given first option on permanent vacancies. Instead, they are being treated as pariahs and alienated from the movement.

The *formal* reason for the latest dispute was the "over-employment" of casuals to clear up the backlog of mail after a one-day strike called because of the proposed payment of a bounty to new workers where there was a shortage - e.g. London.

It has been said that it was insensitive of the Post Office to offer this pay increase to new workers and not to established workers as well. Provocative even. Well, it is amazing how easily the trade unions rise to provocations - real or imagined - in recent years. In my opinion the current dispute is something of a trial run. The Post Office and the government cannot afford to be without the mail for very long. The union knows this as well.

But in the present climate the tendency is for serious disputes to throw up alternatives to the present arrangements in vital industries. Next time, TNT and other rival mail services will be better prepared, and the government more willing to allow the development of alternatives to the Post Office monopoly. Then a strike in the Post Office may be allowed to run its course.

Maybe this lesson will be learnt by the union. Unfortunately I doubt it.

Perks

One of the EETPU's selling points to new members is the range of "non-traditional" union perks it offers them. Now the TUC is on the same kick. No particular harm in this.

Home-loan deals, car deals, credit cards, etc. - these are all very well, and very modern. But they are being made out to be the essence of the new realism in the unions. In fact they are mere front.

Financial services is one of the greatest growth industries of our time. Excellent deals are on offer from thousands of experts. Workers are well advised to look at the overall market and compare what is on offer with the deals of their own unions.

Fringe benefits were once offered by unions - unemployment, sickness, funerals etc. - when they were to be had from no other source. The unions were the pioneers. That is no longer the case.

I fear that they are now offered as a *substitute* for, rather than an addition to, leadership on central issues facing organised workers.

Patriots and scoundrels

Before this year's TUC I would have said that at least a quarter of the affiliated unions had still not joined the ranks of the lemming faction. How wrong one can be! Only two affiliated unions refused to join in the hypocrisy which expelled the Electricians - the Engineers and the Civil Servants. (The latter are a pretty unstable bunch at the best of times.)

Among the rest, Ron Todd at least had the grace to do his bit more in sorrow than anger. The darling of the moderate press and Kinnock acolyte, John Edmonds, withdrawing his knife from Hammond's heart, plunged it with great satisfaction into the back of Bill Jordan - probably the only decent man in charge of a TUC-affiliated trade union today.

But the biscuit must surely be taken by Ken Gill of the Morning Star and the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union. Interviewed on BBC Breakfast Time the morning after, he waxed lyrical about the inherent Britishness of TUC traditions. (He actually substituted English for British on a couple of occasions.) The idea was that Eric Hammond was un- (or even anti-) British.

Nice one, Ken. Not bad for a man with forty years' dedicated service to Moscow. As they say - pass the sickbag.

1688

British Socialism and the Permanent Revolution

by Brendan Clifford

According to an authoritative rumour, Tony Benn made a contemptuous remark about 1688 at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, and Roy Hattersley rebuked him and launched into an animated defence of the Glorious Revolution as an inheritance of the Labour Movement.

In this incident it was Benn who, to some extent, acted in the spirit of the Glorious Revolution. He said in the privacy of an Executive meeting the same thing as he had said publicly.

Hattersley, to the best of my knowledge, has never said in public about 1688 what he said in private. Like a continental aristocrat of the 18th century, he has esoteric knowledge which he mulls over in secret conclave, but considers unsuitable for public circulation.

Those 18th century aristocrats came to grief. And so will the "dream ticket" if it continues to emulate them.

Thatchockism v. the Revolution

The Revolution of 1688 established a state which has endured for three hundred years. It endured because it was capable of development on the basis of its founding philosophy. But on its third centenary it is the subject of a combination of forgetfulness and ridicule.

Margaret Thatcher's Foreign Office decreed last year that 1988 should be a year of revolutionary amnesia. Neil Kinnock's Opposition was happy to agree that forgetfulness should be bipartisan.

A generation ago, the Labour/Tory consensus on the welfare state was given the disparaging name of *Butskellism*.

But that consensus between Butler Toryism and Gaitskell socialism was advantageous to

the working class. The *names* of Thatcher and Kinnock cannot be combined as euphoniously as those of Butler and Gaitskell, but a Thatcher/Kinnockism (*Thatchockism*?) exists in reality.

It is an absurd consensus, this rancorous complicity of Yuppie Toryism and the socialism of Michael Foot's protégé. But its existence is beyond dispute. The failure of Kinnock not only to contend for political power, but to mount even an impressive rhetorical campaign against the narrowly egoistic Toryism of the suburban *nouveau riche*, is an outcome of complicity on fundamentals.

The Thatcher government decided to use all its levers of influence to minimise commemoration of 1688. It did this for the trivial reason that it felt a celebration of 1688 would give a moral boost to the Ulster Unionists, whom it is intent on demoralising utterly through the machinations of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The triviality of the reason fitted the smallmindedness of the Thatcherite vision. None of the great politicians who made Toryism a historic force in the shaping of Britain would have acted out of such a petty consideration. Not even the vastly over-rated Churchill would have done so.

And Thatcher's reason was not only trivial, but misconceived. The Unionist population in Ulster has been rendered politically moronic by seventy years of exclusion from the political system of the state, and it is inherently incapable of taking advantage of opportunities. Its entire political capacity now consists of an anti-United Ireland reflex, and the obvious determination of the government to do nothing which might please it sharpens that reflex. What would have

bewildered and disoriented it was a good commemoration by the state of the 1688 Revolution.

The Labour Party discouraged 1688 commemorations for reasons which are more substantial than those of the government only in the sense that they are more perverse.

Labour's illusion

Thatcher Toryism is dominant only by default of the Labour movement. Because Labour would not come into its inheritance in the 1970s, a party of mere egoism has dominated the 1980s.

Alan Bullock confronted Labour with its destiny. The trade union leaders, living in illusion, decreed that the working class would not begin to act as the ruling class. And Neil Kinnock, a politician very obviously on the make, thrust himself forward in the campaign against Bullock in order to catch the eyes of the block voters.

He achieved a spectacular personal success through the catastrophe into which he helped to lead the movement. And the "dream ticket" has proved to be just that - a dream signifying nothing, and without a bit of sound and fury for entertainment.

The depth of pretentious vulgarity was plumbed at last year's Brighton Conference when Neil showed himself to the populace on the balcony of the Grand Hotel, accompanied by Glenys and the socialist millionaire press baron. Here was our own Royal Family, complete with fairy godmother - if not our Holy Family, complete with Holy Ghost!

Neil sees only the glitter of Thatcherism, and so he wants some glitter of his own. He has been conned by the idea that Saatchi and Saatchi brought Thatcher to power. But the

succession of Thatcher victories owes little or nothing to glossy images.

Thatcher has never engaged in the soft sell. She has never desisted from stating the brutal egoism of her position and that has been her strength. Brutal egoism is at least realistically intelligible. (And when Thatcher said the Health Service was safe with her, I would guess that most people understood this to be an admission that, much as she would like to dismantle the NHS, it was beyond her power to do so.)

On the other side there has been nothing but empty imagery.

The trade union leaders, in response to Bullock, decreed that the working class should not become the ruling class. The formal argument was that parity with the shareholders was not a good enough starting point. There should be a formal abdication of the bourgeoisie. Somebody else should legislate the working class into complete social power before it should be allowed to do anything for itself. In the meantime it was up to the capitalists to manage.

Thatcher said: very well, let's have capitalism in earnest, then. And it made sense to people.

The Labour leaders were acting within an illusion which they thought to be England. They thought they could reject Bullock and things would remain as they were. The triumph of Thatcher was inconceivable to them. Such things did not happen in England. They had an elaborately developed idea of England as a place where nothing happened. They could therefore bask indefinitely in the stalemate between unions and management.

This mad idea was a consequence of the comprehensive breach with the Glorious Revolution which was completed in the 1950s.

1945 and 1688

The effective radicalism of previous generations and centuries had its ideological source in the 1688 Revolution. The Labour movement was made effective by people who were saturated with the spirit of John Locke. And the fundamental reform enacted under the leadership of Attlee and Bevin in 1945-1951 was a continuation of the Glorious Revolution.

Bevin and Attlee spiced up the political philosophy of 1688 with an element of Marxism, as Tom Paine had spiced it up with an element of the French Enlightenment and John Stuart Mill with an element of German metaphysics. By virtue of what has recently been referred to dismissively as its "empiricist" character, the philosophy of 1688 has a considerable capacity for living off new surroundings, and for assimilating and making effective doctrines which if left to themselves tend to atrophy.

But in the Bevin/Attlee generation there was a powerful impulse within the Labour movement to make a clean break with the progressive political philosophy deriving from 1688 and to go over to a

comprehensive theoretical doctrine. In other words, there was a Marxist movement which resisted incorporation with the philosophy of Locke, and which became increasingly influential in the mental life of Labour.

Bevin was a reflective political leader, with powers of analysis and synthesis comparable to those of Balfour and Pitt. But he had no heirs. In so far as he had successors, they were merely "practical", meaning that they operated a routine. For a generation Labour conducted itself on "practical" lines while living its mental life in a different dimension. The practical was out of joint with the theoretical. And this incompatibility was eventually resolved in favour of the theoretical - which is what usually happens.

The establishment of the NHS and of National Assistance were the most fundamental alterations in the conditions of working class life ever enacted in Britain, and they were in both inspiration and substance a continuation of the Glorious Revolution.

Nye Bevan was given the job of establishing the NHS, and he did it well. But until he was

given that job to do he had been committed to an ideological stance which, if it had been dominant in the Labour Party, would have made the post-1945 reform impossible. It was Bevin who enabled Bevan to be effective. Bevan could not have established the political framework in which he became a highly competent administrator of reform. Bevin was his necessary precondition as architect of the National Health Service - and he hated Bevin with a profound, and implicitly suicidal, ideological hatred.

In that period, basically different world outlooks were manifested in different persons. But Bevin and Attlee had no heirs as reflective and practical reforming socialists within the political philosophy of John Locke.

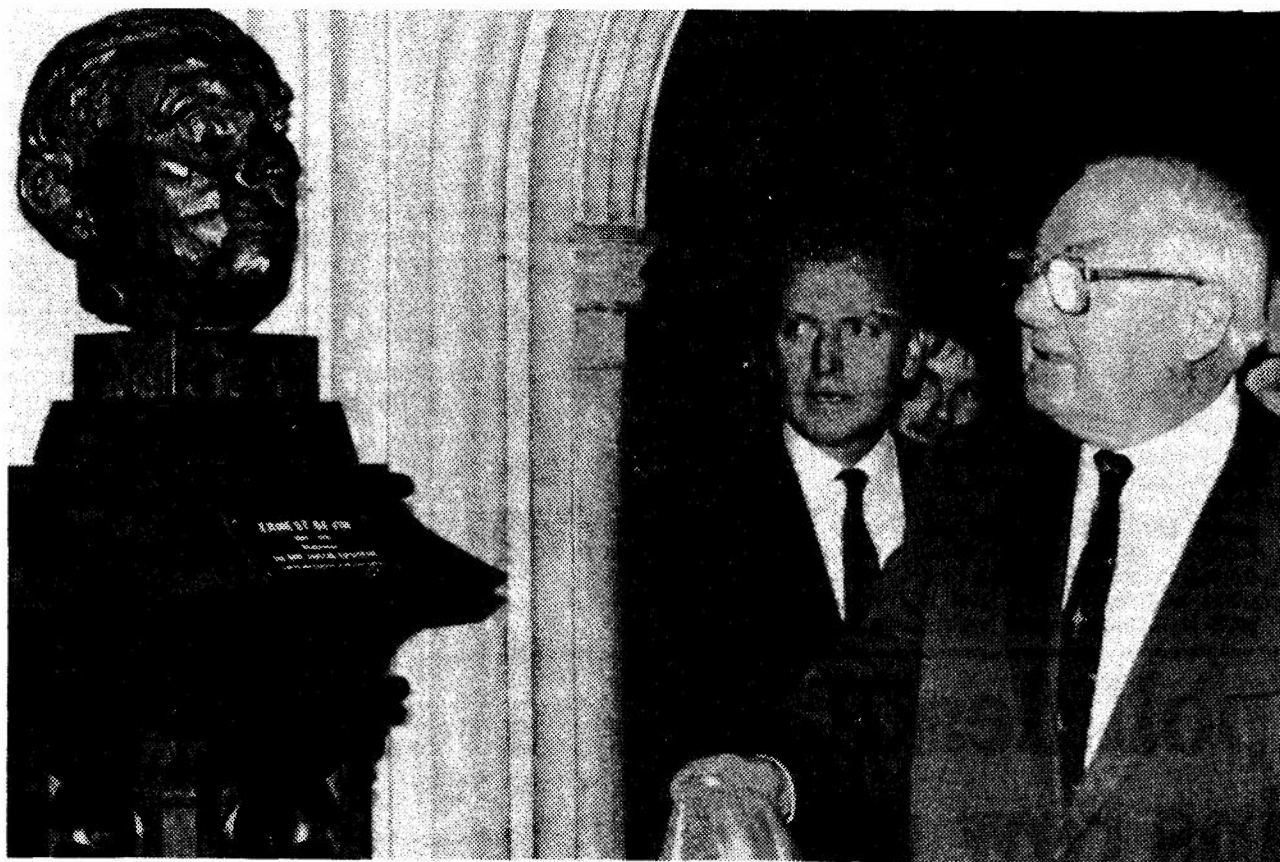
Bevanism and 1688

After 1951, two incompatible world outlooks jostled together within the same persons - within Brown, Wilson, Healey, Crossman, etc. (or, rather, a "practical" leftover from one world outlook was attached to the rhetoric of another world outlook).

The Wilson generation were one thing in words, under the influence of an elaborate but ineffectual rhetoric, and they were something else in deeds, under an inarticulate feeling of practicality. What they did was indefensible in terms of what their rhetoric said they ought to do. But what the rhetoric said they ought to do was incapable of being done - not because of the reactionary power of the bourgeoisie, but because it was inherently incomprehensible where it was not self-contradictory.

For a while, doctrinal purity was maintained apart from practicality by Michael Foot and his little band of verbose fence-sitters. But in 1974 Foot was lured down off the fence by Wilson. Bevanism became completely enmeshed in the apparatus of political power. And the fantasy character of its philosophy rendered it incapable of making effective use of its power.

The great reform of the Attlee/Bevin period still stands. The reforms of the Foot era have all evaporated. Attlee and Bevin knew what England was, and therefore they would have known



Callaghan unveils a bust of Ernest Bevin at Westminster. But honouring a past leader is not the same as being guided by his example

Aneurin Bevan



that you cannot get away with garlanding the trade unions with legislative privileges while they continue to behave as a protest movement, obstructing the managerial function which they have refused to undertake. Foot legislated for a ruling class, while his protégé put himself to the fore in demanding that the Bullock proposals be rejected.

A proletariat with the legislative privileges of a ruling class was not an arrangement England would stand for. Since the Labour leadership insisted that the trade unions should continue to luxuriate in a make-belief of capitalist oppression, Thatcher was given a mandate to end the make-belief and to introduce trade union legislation more appropriate to a proletariat.

Now, that strategic collapse of Labour politics into fantasy was not caused by the insidious "extremist" influence of Militant. In fact, the "extremism" of Militant is only the rhetoric of Bevanism taken in earnest.

In terms of rhetoric, Militant is more sensible than Foot was a generation ago. The difference is that Foot did not take his senseless rhetoric in earnest - he checked himself under the influence of a philosophy which he never admitted to holding in his head.

Bevin battered a bit of horse sense into the Foot generation.

But the Foot generation did not transmit a semblance of the art of British politics to the Militant generation. And there was something very unpleasant about the scapegoating of Militant by Foot's protégé, and especially about Foot's letter to *The Times* in support of the Militant purge.

The obliteration of history

1688 was, I think, the most idealistic, the most political, and the most competently conducted revolution that ever was. It was "revolution in permanence", while the affair to which Trotsky gave that name was an authoritarian straitjacket.

The history of Britain ever since, and of a great part of the world, has been a working out of the ideals of the Glorious Revolution.

And yet, if I had been present at the dispute between Hattersley and Benn, I would have supported Benn. Hattersley defended 1688 in a spirit which was alien to it, while Benn dismissed it in the spirit of the thing itself.

Hattersley is a schemer and his place is with the pre-Revolutionary Cabal. Benn sees that purposeful and effective political action is possible only in the context of a historic ideal. And if his history is groundless that is hardly his fault.

Comintern Marxism, in its numerous varieties, seized control of the academic life of Britain some time ago and has since obliterated history and replaced it with the schemes of pseudo-science. The obliteration of history was a major influence in guiding Labour into a cul-de-sac and preparing the ground for Thatcher.

But Comintern Marxism remains firmly in place in academia despite the catastrophe which overtook the Labour movement. It is not endangered by Thatcherism. Yuppiedom does not possess the internal resources necessary for recovering the history of Britain since 1688. In fact, Thatcherism has itself assimilated the essential Comintern dogma of economic determinism.

In March this year Radio Three broadcast what was advertised as a debate on 1688 between Tony Benn and a Tory historian, Jonathan Clarke. It

turned out that they were in total agreement. They tried to outdo each other in "debunking" the Glorious Revolution. And a few months later the *Sunday Telegraph* commissioned Clarke to do a debunking job for the Yuppies to read with their morning coffee (up-market instant).

Current egoism is the spiritual medium of life for Yuppies of both Thatcher and Kinnock orientations. And in a medium of current egoism nothing much can grow. As against that, Benn at least stands for a framework of historical misconception.

Morton's scheme

A short, crisp, coherent pamphlet, entitled "The Story of the English Revolution" by A.L. Morton, was published in 1949. The scheme of things which it set out has during the past forty years seeped through the whole of British academia. It is no longer clearly stated. And the elaborate statements of it all tend towards incoherence and internal collapse. But the ghost of Morton's pamphlet is triumphant everywhere.

According to this vision of things, the English Revolution culminated on January 30, 1649, when the King's head was cut off. Its Thermidor - to use an intelligible anachronism - occurred three months later, when the Leveller movement, which might have consolidated the Revolution, was suppressed by Cromwell. Since then there has been a long wait. But one of these centuries the Thermidorean reaction will end and the English Revolution will pick up where it left off in the late spring of 1649.

"On the face of it a gloomy story: so much heroism, so many sacrifices, so much glory, and at the end of it - capitalism," Morton comments. But the worst is yet to come.

On the understanding that Cromwell thwarted the people of England by preventing them from entering their rightful inheritance in March 1649 and consigned them to three and a half centuries of misery, we might at least feel a sense of apocalyptic rage against him and all his heirs and successors.

But Morton, and his

successors, will not allow that. But "scientific socialism" will not allow that.

A tantalising glory

Morton proceeds to tell us that Cromwell was probably right in his estimate that an attempt to implement the Leveller programme would have resulted in Royalist counter-revolution. And he requires us to think that capitalism was the right outcome:

"much as we hate capitalism,... we should remember capitalism is an advance on feudalism. We have to understand that what happened three hundred years ago was not a socialist revolution which failed but a capitalist revolution that succeeded. It was by their victory that the capitalists created the working class."

"So much glory: and at the end of it - capitalism." So why get us worked up about that glory if its outcome, so far as we are concerned, is a wait of 350 years plus? Why give us this knowledge, with its requirement of philosophical resignation?

There have been all sorts of glory in the history of mankind, so why tantalise us with the particular glory of the 1640s if its only relevance to us is that it was a fuss caused by the rise of capitalism, and was a necessary precondition of 19th century Manchester?

Why not treat that Puritan glory as we treat the Mongol glory of the 13th century? Capitalism would not cease to have existed if we refrained from exciting ourselves by contemplating the glory which preceded its birth. Why not simply treat Cromwell as a Genghis Khan writ even larger, who through the system he ushered in destroyed human life by the million where the great Mongol only destroyed it by the thousand in hot blood?

History is the imaginative basis of politics. What is assumed to be possible is intimately connected with what is assumed to have already happened. And to require the aspirant politicians of the working class to get their minds around a 350 year wait is to lay an imaginative foundation which stultifies all capacity for political action.

An imagination which learns to bear with scientific fortitude three and a half centuries of essentially static misery is so highly adapted to defeat that opportunities for victory must pass unnoticed by it. And that, I think, is why the Labour leadership opposed Bullock and prepared the way for ten years of Thatcherism.

A capitalist revolution?

On the "scientific socialist" view, the suppression of the Levellers, which was historically inevitable and objectively progressive, sapped the energy of the Revolution. Within three months of the execution of the King, regression towards monarchy began. Having curbed the democracy of the Revolution in the service of historical necessity, Cromwell in the ebb of revolutionary vigour established a personal dictatorship, which in turn accelerated the regression towards monarchy.

The Restoration was, of course, a very bad thing. At the same time it was nothing at all. Feudalism died with Charles I, and Charles II could not resurrect it. Capitalism not only survived the Restoration, but developed apace under it.

"The truth was shown in 1688 when James II, not realising the nature of the change that had taken place, tried to stage a counter-revolution. In a very short time and without serious difficulty he was sent packing." (Morton, op.cit., page 14.)

An ignorant and wilful king, who neglected to learn the phases of history, is replaced with a king who is wise in his generation. Capitalism, having abolished monarchy in its way onto the stage, is now in complete control of the theatre and chooses to retain a mask of monarchy for the purpose of popular mystification. And so it remains to this day, "essentially".

From the exciting days of 1647, when Cromwell was still discussing possibilities with the Levellers in the Army debates, to the dull "compromise" of 1688, political affairs are of steadily declining interest, according to the Comintern conception as expounded by Morton, Christopher Hill, and their

multitude of disciples who now dominate academia and publishing. Morton, in his **"People's History of England"**, does not even mention the names of Locke, Halifax and Burnet.

But, if one wanders out from the closet of systematic Marxist omniscience, one discovers that there was much more to the Puritan Revolution than "capitalism" - if indeed capitalism had anything at all to do with its conflicts and divisions.

And as you get your bearings outside, politics becomes of steadily increasing interest from 1649 to 1688, and becomes even more interesting in the generation after 1688.

The Puritans

When I left the closet of Marxist omniscience over twenty years ago (because I got claustrophobia almost as soon as I entered it), I could not see that the Puritan Revolution was about capitalism and feudalism at all. Whatever feudalism be, England was not it in 1640. Also I could not see any necessary connection between the fact that England became a liberal democracy and the fact that it became capitalist.

An intelligent and perceptive 18th century writer, Mandeville, said that illiterate ignorance was the proper condition of the proletariat in order to make life half tolerable for them and safe for their cultured masters. And it has always seemed to me that a culture generated by the requirements of capitalist exploitation would be precisely what Mandeville advocated.

The Puritans, having failed to make a go of their political revolution, became influential in the development of capitalist economy. And Puritan capitalists had the urge to enlighten the proletariat because they were Puritans and not because they were capitalists. They were momentarily in the business of making money, but fundamentally they were theocrats fighting the devil as agents of Heaven, with eternal salvation at issue. They introduced alien considerations into the mode of production.

(The argument that the workers had to be taught to read



John Locke

as an integral part of the process of exploitation is highly implausible. Very little reading was involved in the labour process of early capitalism. And other arrangements could easily have been made even for the reading involved in the labouring process of 20th century capitalism - e.g. the use of symbols, or the development of a caste of literate foremen.)

English capitalism, because of the Puritan yeast at work within it, did not act rationally in the social sphere for the purpose of maximising and perpetuating the exploitation of labour. The Puritans were wayward exploiters of labour because they were moved by theocratic passion to make Bible-readers of their workers.

The significant contribution of Puritanism to the development of modern Britain is the spiritual egalitarianism it engendered in the politics of the 1640s, and later grafted on to the capitalist process. But the Puritans lost political power in 1660 and they never really regained it (unless the alliance of Thatcher Toryism

and Ken Livingstone's GLC in a crusade against the pleasures of the flesh in the early 1980s be considered a restoration of the rule of the saints under secular camouflage).

Locke's subversion of theocracy

Puritanism was disabled as a political force by the philosophical aristocracy which took command in 1688.

Christopher Hill, in an Open University textbook, observes dismissively that

"Locke's philosophy was a workaday synthesis of the ideas of more creative, more revolutionary thinkers of the early 17th century. Locke was a Christian, and he favoured religious toleration; but his Christianity was shorn of everything that had made Puritanism revolutionary - of direct contact with God, of enthusiasm - and his tolerance was the rational calculation of the Toleration Act rather than the humanist idealism of Milton...He wrote in a lucid unadorned style, persuasive both

because it addressed itself to the man of commonsense, and because it side-stepped difficulties that have worried more profound thinkers." (The Century of Revolution, page 252.)

I suppose one ought not to say that the former Master of Balliol has what Lenin called "the itch". But I'm afraid all I can see here is the itch.

The Puritans who communed with God, and gave nasal expression to enthusiasm in every waking hour, did not succeed in establishing a functional state - not to mention a progressive one. They were fantasiers, as distinct from politicians, of revolution. And if they had managed to realise their ideals in a functional state, it would have been a theocracy.

Locke subverted theocracy. And by making enthusiasm devious and slow burning, he harnessed it to power a long, open-ended, liberal political evolution.

Milton's humanist idealism was not a guiding influence on

the Commonwealth. It flourished in the political conditions established through the 1688 Revolution. And the first life of Milton was published by Locke's colleague, John Toland.

England's philosophical aristocracy

Hobbes is presumably one of the "more creative, more revolutionary" thinkers Hill has in mind. He is undoubtedly a more doctrinaire thinker. His totalitarian scheme of things is more compatible with the dominant varieties of Marxism. And he is probably more easily lectured about than Locke. In short, Hobbes is more academic.

Now it is not difficult to spin out an abstract doctrine, or form a systematic set of ideas. It is what children are naturally inclined to do, and I suppose it is natural that academics, whose lives are spent with children, should keep on doing it.

The difficult thing is to produce a body of ideas which interconnects with a free society

(a society not formed by a state, which has representative government), in such a way that it orients society in changing circumstances, and thus facilitates evolutionary change (or "permanent revolution").

"Locke was a synthesiser, obscuring contradictions between the ideas he brought together", says Hill, imagining that is inferior to what Hobbes did.

The aristocracy which enacted the 1688 Revolution, and conducted the affairs of state until 1832, had sources in Puritanism, but had a political philosophy which enabled them to do what Puritanism proper could never have done - foster social diversity as an accepted state of affairs, connect it up with representative government, and thus establish the conditions for a democracy which was stable, liberal and progressive - a thing never before seen in the world.

Being essentially philosophical in outlook, that aristocracy could use its levers of influence as a ruling class to take

the heat out of theological division. Since it was itself divided into parties and conducted its disputes in public, secular political divisions gradually superseded theological divisions in the popular mind. And, since it was an aristocracy (with, as the saying goes, independent means of support), it was not tied to the capitalist economic form, and was not under pressure to shape society into a streamlined adjunct of the capitalist process of labour exploitation.

The real England in history

With this ruling class, and with a capitalist class saturated with Puritanism, the actual history of Britain in the past three hundred years becomes conceivable. If the assumptions of the Labour movement had been formed through an understanding of that history, it would now be in the process of taking its place in the succession of ruling groups since 1688.

Because "scientific socialism" disconnected the mind of Labour from the real process of British history, and paralysed it with the idea of three and a half centuries of nothing, the Labour movement is now being fragmented by the shallowness of all Tory Prime Ministers.

The mandarins of Labour in the 1970s had exactly the wrong idea of England. They thought it was highly resistant to change and that they could therefore continue indefinitely in the stalemate they had achieved. The historical truth is that under the process set in motion in 1688 England became highly adapted to change, and of all societies in the world is the one least likely to continue indefinitely in stalemate.

Therefore, when the Labour movement would not set about enacting the progressive change which was on the cards, Thatcher was given a mandate to restore the power of capitalist management.

And a large part of the working class agreed in giving her that mandate, because the working class at large continues to be part of the historical reality of England even though the leadership of Labour emigrated to wonderland as soon as they got free of Ernest Bevin.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

I found your analysis of events in 'Neil the Party' (L&TUR No.6) ingenious but not in keeping with my own recollection of events.

To attribute all the virtues to the Parliamentary Party, when their detachment from the party in the country was the main cause of the hiatus, is particularly perverse. An analysis of the 'activists' would be much more valuable, but you merely repeat the old cries of 'unrepresentative' and 'extremism'.

What are we expected to do? You might give some thought to it!

My experience is that of one of a small group meeting at times when we have plenty of other things to do and desperately trying to raise money, anticipate what our inert members would like us to do, and finally avoid criticism from all those above us. We usually end up being out of pocket and receiving more kicks than halfpence from those who should know better.

As we are about the only

obvious representatives of the party in the south, if Labour is really sincere in its wish to make some headway in this region it is about time someone really thought out what our relationship and role ought to be. Perhaps you might undertake the job?

Yours sincerely,
Jack Horn
Abingdon.

(Editorial reply: In 'Neil the Party' we certainly did not attribute "all the virtues" to the PLP. And its "detachment from the party in the country" certainly made the constitutionalist reaction against it possible. The point is that this reaction was misguided in taking the constitutional position of the PLP as the root of Labour's problem, instead of addressing the political bankruptcy of both Left and Right within the party as a whole.

There was no reference to "extremism" in that editorial. But party activists are certainly unrepresentative of Labour voters in general. This is as it should be. The problem arises out of the fact that 'mandatory re-

selection' has had the effect of obliging Labour MPs and local councillors to represent their constituency and ward party activists instead of Labour voters.

The unrepresentative nature of party activists would be an entirely harmless thing otherwise, and potentially a valuable thing, as a source of radical pressure and ideas from below. The point about the constitutional reforms is that they were a substitute for developing new political thinking. They put the PLP into a position of unprecedented weakness without giving it a coherent new political orientation which would get Labour somewhere. And they saddled it indefinitely with an incompetent leader.

That apart, we very much agree with the spirit of your complaint. A party which neglects its most dedicated activists and treats them with contempt is bound to decline and deserves to do so. The editorial in this issue addresses this question. We warmly invite our readers to join in the debate which we have launched.)

Vietnam - triumph and tragedy

by Madawc Williams

January 1988 was the 20th anniversary of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. It was the Tet Offensive that settled the issue, even though the war was fought for several more years. It was the Tet Offensive that destroyed America's belief in its ability to win.

The anniversary of Tet passed with very little comment, at least in the British media. Most people wanted to forget about Vietnam. The Right because their side lost. The Left because the fruits of victory were quite different from anything that Hanoi's supporters in Western Europe and the USA had been expecting.

But the issue cannot be evaded for ever. Not if one would make sense of the world. Washington losing the war changed America for ever. Hanoi losing the peace - in particular the whole Cambodian mess - was one of the factors that discredited Leninist socialism and brought about the world as it is now.

Had anyone in 1968 given an accurate forecast of the world as it is in 1988, they would not have been believed. Not by the Left, not by the Right, not by the Centre.

The strength of the Left lies in theory, and in sometimes being able to use theory to produce something that the "practical men" had never believed possible. Unfortunately the dominant forms of Left theory have refused to adjust to the world as it has changed since 1968. Indeed, they were not entirely realistic even then. But since the 1960s, it has been a case of "there is a fault in reality; please do not adjust your mind".

Labour & Trade Union Review has been trying to correct this, arguing that there are alternatives both to comforting fantasies and hopeless cynicism. But I think that we are very nearly the only people who are

doing this. Elsewhere on the Left, endless cleverness and ingenuity is wasted in trying to prove that nothing important has changed over the past 20 years. Meanwhile, the Right has pragmatically adjusted to what has been happening.

This article will try to sort out what the Vietnam War was all about, and why it ended the way it did.

A war of endurance

Wars tend to carry on until one side or the other decides that it isn't worth it - or until one side collapses completely. If both sides have an equal willingness to suffer, then the result is a simple product of the initial strengths and the damage that each side manages to inflict on the other. But the key to understanding what happened in Vietnam is to realise how very unequal the "willingness to suffer" was.

US military theory was obsessed by firepower and the technical and logistical side of warfare. Up until Vietnam, this approach had served them well enough. In both world wars, they joined in only after the contending powers had already very nearly exhausted each other. The US intervention produced fairly quick and decisive results. And as a result, they got a completely unrealistic view of what wars were like.

Hollywood war films may also have played a part. They glorified war. And in so doing, they left the youth of America quite unprepared for the suffering and horror that a real war would involve. Other societies had a more general experience of wartime suffering, which was

reflected and expressed much more strongly in their own war literature.

The US military had a firm belief in a system of warfare that was often highly successful. It was only a matter of time before they would get drawn into a war that would expose that system's limitations.

Korea

Korea was an indecisive war. It was also a fairly conventional war, with a regular front-line where almost all of the fighting was done. Moreover, the Korean communists were not of the same calibre as the Vietnamese.

Korea had been a Japanese colony for many decades; after Japan's defeat, the Russians occupied the North, the US occupied the South, and each created a regime that was to its taste. Korea was a "blank page" which was torn in half and filled with two different sorts of writing.

The North Koreans, unlike the Vietnamese, had not built up their own army from scattered guerrilla bands. The Russians had largely created it for them. Their attack on the South was a fairly conventional invasion by tanks against the badly-equipped South Korean army.

Still, Korea should have taught the US that a lot of their basic philosophy was wrong. The war could be viewed as having been fought in three "rounds". Round One - North Korea versus South Korea - ended with the North Koreans capturing everything except a small enclave in the south. Round Two - with the Americans present in force - ended with their recapturing the south and capturing all but the

northernmost part of the north.

Round Three, when the Chinese also joined in, ended with a stalemate near to the original border. Thus the portion of the war that was fought between the Americans and the Chinese ended with a limited but definite Chinese victory.

It is also notable that Americans taken prisoner didn't cope very well. In the dominant American system of values, to be a "loser" was the ultimate sin. This left their young men badly prepared to cope with captivity.

The Americans should have learned from Korea, but did not. Rather, they learned only those lessons that could be easily fitted in with their world view, even though the gaps in that world view had been exposed.

Armies are run by people who have spent twenty, thirty or even forty years getting to the top, doing things in the way their own army thinks proper. Armies seldom change their ways unless defeat and disaster make change a clear necessity.

"Back in the World"

In the US forces, the fighting men served their year in Vietnam. After that year, they were "back in the world" - as their own slang put it. The war was something to endure, for a strictly limited period of time. Officers, in fact, served for a mere six months. As one US soldier put it:

"One of the first things you realised when you got to Nam was that you weren't going to win this war. There was no way we could win doing what we were doing. After the first month, me and everybody else over there said, 'I'm going to put in my 12 months and then I'm getting the fuck out of here'". (Mark Baker, NAM. ORBIS 1988, p21).

This was very different from the situation in the two world wars, when everyone knew that they were in it for the duration. It was also very different from the attitude of the Vietnamese. For the Vietnamese, there was no other world to go back to.

From Isolationism to anti-Fascism

Americans up until the 1940s had been predominantly isolationist - they reckoned that



(This cartoon comes from *Snapshots of an Aggression*, published by Hanoi in 1965 for their friends abroad to read)

they need not care what happened on other continents. Roosevelt had to use a lot of ingenuity and subterfuge to get them involved in World War Two. And he might not have succeeded in getting America fully involved, had not his enemies helped him by unwise strategies.

The Japanese brought America into the war by attacking Pearl Harbour. Up until then, the US had simply given aid to Japan's enemies. And the damage that the Japanese were able to do in their surprise attack did not make up for the cost of having America fully committed to the war.

Fully committed to a war against Japan, that is. There was no guarantee that the Americans would also join the European war. Roosevelt wanted it, but it could easily be argued that Germany should be left alone, at least until Japan was defeated.

Roosevelt's enemies again made it easy for him. Hitler chose to back the Japanese, and declared war on America. It would have been wiser of Hitler to have pretended that the European War and the War in the Pacific were two quite separate wars - as in a sense they were, since the Japanese never attacked the Russians.

How Hitler lost from a winning position

American isolationism was selfish, but not foolish. Given the progress that Hitler had been making during the 1930s, it would have looked wise to avoid making him an enemy. The reasonable expectation was that he would win his war in Europe.

Very fortunately, Hitler suddenly got too confident and started making serious errors of grand strategy. After about 1940, he seems to have scorned to manoeuvre or to be creatively dishonest, as he had been up till then.

All through the 1930s, he had been cautious, taking on one enemy at a time. Italy had blocked his first attempt at taking over Austria. Therefore he made an alliance with Mussolini - which involved, among other things, dropping any idea of including the Germans of the South Tyrol in the Reich.

With Austria secured, he went

after Czechoslovakia. He was able at length to carve it up in alliance with several other East European states - including Poland. But then Poland became his target. Ignoring ideology, he did a deal with Stalin, giving him the non-Polish territories, and implicitly agreeing that the USSR could take over the Baltic states. This achieved, he was able to take the great gamble of invading France. And again, this worked brilliantly.

He then tried to make peace with Britain, declaring that he was willing to let Britain keep its Empire provided that it kept out of continental Europe. Unlike his other promises, this one was probably genuine. His racist theory led him to see the British as potential allies; if he could have Europe, Britain could keep its Empire.

But his earlier lies and broken promises had undermined his credibility. Moreover, many in Britain were unwilling to abandon their friends and allies in continental Europe. In any case, the British under Churchill turned this down. It was the start of his downfall, but might not have proved fatal had he been cleverer in his attack on Russia.

Hitler's long-term plans certainly involved destroying Russia as a political entity, and even the Slavs as an ethnic group. But -- being a basically dishonest person -- he could and should have concentrated on overthrowing the Communist government of the USSR as an immediate task.

There were plenty of anti-Communist Russians who might have supported a puppet anti-communist government. There were plenty of nationalists among the non-Russian citizens of the USSR who would have fought for the Germans in return for a promise of independence. Hitler would not have kept such promises, of course. But that hadn't stopped him before.

Fortunately, Hitler badly underestimated the USSR's capacity to survive and recover. Meanwhile Stalin was able to make concessions to Russian nationalism, and strengthen his position. The tide began to turn against Hitler, even before he compounded matters by declaring war on the United States.

America in the post-war world

America entered the war at a time when Hitler had blundered into a very bad position. Russia was growing ever stronger, and recovering its lost territories. The main land war was on the Eastern Front; the war in the West was fought with whatever the Eastern Front could spare.

America - the only Great Power whose home territory was perfectly safe, even from hostile aircraft - had a war which was very nearly a continuous string of victories, ending with the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan.

After World War Two, America could have slid back into isolationism. This was what happened after World War One. To prevent this, a Cold War ideology had to be constructed very quickly, by those who wanted America to remain an active world power.

Having been constructed quickly, this ideology was of necessity very crude. It was in fact something of a copy of the left's anti-Fascist propaganda of earlier years. Communism was depicted as diabolical, and Communist regimes as ruling by terror with no real popular support.

Testing the ideology

Korea could be fitted into cold-war ideology. Korean communism had no very deep roots - the majority of Koreans would go along with whoever seemed to be winning. Vietnam was another matter. The Vietnamese Communists were also the oldest and most hard-line Vietnamese nationalists, who had fought against both Japanese invaders and French colonialists. Hanoi had huge numbers of loyal supporters in areas which were under Saigon's control.

American soon learned that the people who smiled at them during the day might be trying to kill them during the night. They knew that a lot of the ordinary Vietnamese, perhaps a majority, were hostile to them. There was no easy way to tell friend from foe. And even their allies didn't always like them very much.

This didn't match up with what they'd been told. Moreover, they regularly heard the military high command

saying things that they knew to be untrue, and denying things that they themselves had done. Like most liars, the High Command won short-term benefits and paid for it in the long term.

Under this sort of pressure, the cold-war ideology came apart. Americans fighting in Vietnam began to doubt if what they were doing was just - even if it had any sense in it at all.

The world wars settled the shape of human destiny, and most of those who took part in them knew that this was so. But Vietnam was very much a limited war, and a war in which few outsiders cared much about the Vietnamese as such. The anti-war protest was mostly a protest about the values of US society as it then was. "Vietnam your latest game", as a contemporary song put it.

Trusting the Americans

This does not in itself explain why the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces were so much more effective than the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam). But the fact was that the Vietnamese communists had better credentials as Vietnamese nationalists than any of the pro-Saigon forces.

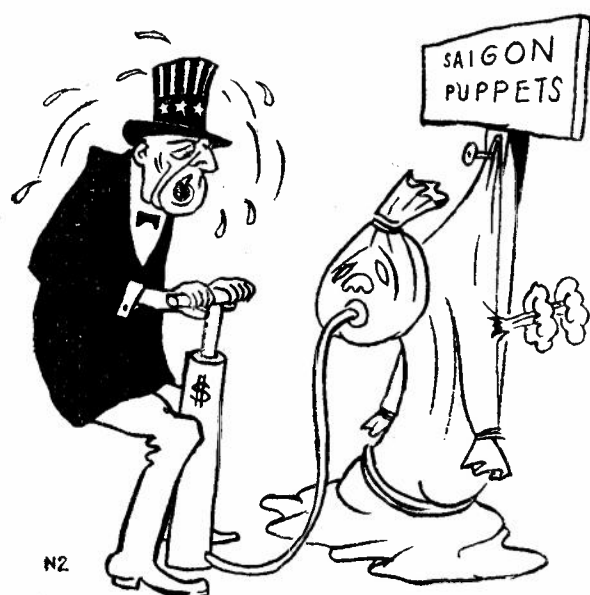
The non-communist element had nothing stronger or more definite uniting them than the simple fact that they were non-communist. They were deeply divided - between Catholic and Buddhist, between simple nationalists and former collaborators with the French and/or Japanese, between military and civilian elements and between different factions fighting for power.

One American observer found an apt metaphor - he compared Saigon politics to a bucket of worms! Corruption was massive and blatant.

US troops had to be brought in because the Saigon regime was on the verge of collapse. But the way it was done lacked subtlety. Supporters of the Saigon government found the US presence overwhelming and demoralising. They suspected - quite correctly - that the ordinary American cared very little for them.

Even in Britain, with a common language and culture,

Also from *Snapshots of an Aggression*. Hanoi had no doubts about its superiority to Saigon.



There seems to be a leak somewhere
 Nguyen Nghiem

US troops during World War Two were widely condemned as "overpaid, oversexed and over here". But not even the most chauvinist American regarded the British as "gooks". "Limey" does not have the same racist overtones.

In the end, when the US fled Vietnam, they ruthlessly abandoned most of the "friends and allies" whom they had encouraged over so many years. They even cut off air support, in the last days of the war.

It is by no means impossible that Nixon's policy of "Vietnamisation", returning responsibility for the war to the non-communist Vietnamese, could have succeeded. The ARVN did perform quite creditably in some of their battles. Had they been able to hang on, they might have ended up as a prosperous "little dragon", on the pattern of South Korea and Taiwan.

Alternatively, they could have made a decent peace, with a neutralist regime. But the ebb and flow of domestic American politics prevented either of these things from happening. Very few Americans really cared about their "friends and allies". The war had been a disaster for them; they wanted to get out and forget about it - and to hell with the gooks!

The fact is, the Americans got into a land war in Asia without having the least idea of how bad it would be. After their departure, Mao Tse Tung is said to have commented that they obviously had not been serious in their involvement, since they left after suffering only 46,000 casualties.

Death or victory

For the Viet-Cong and North Vietnamese, the issue was much simpler. There was a hard core of dedicated communists. But for most Vietnamese, resistance was a way of asserting that they too were human.

Hanoi's soldiers endured far more than the US ground troops, and they withstood it much better. They knew that they were involved for the duration of the war, and would then have to live with the outcome.

It might have been possible for troops from the North, a long way from home, to have decided that the war really had nothing to do with them, that reunification just wasn't worth the price. Except that the US made that impossible; their bombing campaign extended the war to the North. Like it or not, every Vietnamese was a part of it. The war became a long drawn out test of endurance.

Hanoi also engaged in a fair

amount of intelligent duplicity. Most of the US duplicity was foolish and short-sighted. Either no one at all was fooled, or those who had believed felt terribly let down when the truth became known.

But Hanoi played it better. Even though they were fighting what was basically a civil war in a divided country, they pretended that it was basically just a conflict between South Vietnamese, with the North Vietnamese providing some "fraternal support".

"Every top leader, virtually every member of the Politburo, went on record as flatly denying that Hanoi and PAVN were participating in the war in the South. After the war came a great reversal and floods of histories, anniversary messages, and memoirs that recount in great detail the deep involvement of PAVN and the North, and, in some instances, far earlier than anyone had realised." (Douglas Pike, *PAVN - People's Army of Vietnam*, Brassey's Defence Publishers 1986.)

The US told many small lies, and lost. Hanoi told one big lie, and won.

The terrorist option

It is also worth noting that Hanoi never allowed their side of the war to spread beyond the confines of Indochina. They could strike even at the US embassy in Saigon, as a demonstration that their reach was long. But they never attacked a US embassy in any other country. Nor did they strike at US bases outside Indochina, nor at any target, civil or military, in the USA itself. America dropped bombs on them, but they never let off any bombs in America.

Why was this? They certainly had the capacity and the military skills. They were much better fighters than the Palestinians, or the rag-bag of terrorists that the Iranians and Libyans sponsor. Nor did they lack flexibility and imagination. When the need arose, they were able to switch their tactics completely. For instance, the US "Special Forces" tried to organise counter-insurgency, training their own guerrilla fighters, particularly among ethnic-minority mountain peoples. Hanoi decided to

complete the switch. They brought up tanks, which had not been expected by the Americans, and overran the "Special Forces" camps before enough air-power could be assembled to counter them.

But a terrorist campaign outside Indochina would have been very foolish, and Hanoi must have known it. The "Silent Majority" in America was probably a myth, but the sluggish and inert majority was certainly real. So long as Vietnam remained a nightmare war in a far distant country, the temptation simply to walk away from it was very hard to resist. Terrorist attacks on Americans elsewhere in the world, and above all in the American homeland, might have changed all that.

Some overspill did occur of course - marches, riots, attacks on embassies. But these all came from home-grown protestors; it was certainly not Hanoi that was organising them. The war remained something external, something alien that the politicians had foolishly gotten involved in. And in the end, during Nixon's presidency, the US *did* walk away from it all. They even abandoned the possibility of a limited victory through Vietnamisation.

After victory

And yet - in the end, the US was able to learn from its defeat, and recover from it, while the Hanoi leadership contracted a bad case of *hubris* after its triumph, and is still paying the price.

Hanoi did not reduce the size of its army. It was estimated as 650,000 strong in 1975, and 1 million strong in 1983! (Pike, pp.187-190). Having achieved peace on their own terms, after decades of warfare, they then went on to start another round of fighting, with the Cambodians and the Chinese. To understand this, one must look far back into Vietnamese history.

The Chinese Empire originated in North China, and only gradually gained control of what is now South China. The Vietnamese, though their heartland was the Red River Valley in North Vietnam, had many connections with what later became South China. In the 2nd century BC there was the

state of Nam Viet, which was a mixture of Chinese and Vietnamese elements. Its capital was close to where Canton now stands, and it ruled both the Red River Valley and much of what is now Southern China.

Later, the Chinese Empire expanded southward and took over both Southern China and the Red River Valley. The Vietnamese were ruled by the Chinese for a thousand years, from 111 BC to AD 939. But unlike the peoples of what is now Southern China, they were never quite absorbed by them.

In due course, the Vietnamese recovered their independence and began to make their own conquests. They could not expand north - the Chinese Empire was far too strong. The sea blocked them to the east, and high mountains restricted them in the west. Therefore they pushed south, conquering, absorbing or replacing the peoples who stood in their path. The Champa state was simply wiped out and the Cambodians and the various mountain peoples were pushed back. The result was a very long thin country, extending south from their heartland in the Red River Valley.

Khmers and Vietnamese

The big losers in this process were the Cambodians (also known as Khmers), who used to

possess a great deal of what later became South Vietnam. The very territory where Saigon now stands was taken from them as late as the 18th century. Nor has the process ended even now. Most Vietnamese, whatever their politics, thought it natural for Vietnam to have hegemony in Indochina. And most Khmers, whatever their politics, viewed the Vietnamese as a deadly peril.

The right-wing coup that overthrew Prince Sihanouk drew a lot of its popular support from anti-Vietnamese feeling. But Sihanouk was hardly pro-Vietnamese - he simply preferred to avoid a showdown with Hanoi. And when the US pulled out of Indochina, the Khmer Rouge government that took over was no less determined to remain independent. The Laotians were willing to accept Hanoi's hegemony; the Cambodians were not.

The Hanoi leadership should have had the wisdom to stop and enjoy the fruits of victory, but in the event it did not. Ho Chi Minh was dead by this time. Far from running down the size of the army after the fall of Saigon, the Vietnamese actually increased it. Though the army as such does not rule, there seems to be no political leadership with separate interests from the army, that might put the case for running it down. The leadership at all levels had been involved

with warfare. Since the army was kept in being, and expanded even above its wartime strength, making use of it was almost unavoidable.

It is rumoured that the idea of a direct intervention in Cambodia was opposed by General Giap, who had been Hanoi's chief strategist over several decades. He had been organising a guerrilla army of left-wing Khmers opposed to Pol Pot, and hoped that they might achieve victory in the long run. But, so the story goes, the majority of the leadership wanted quicker results. Giap objected to this, but was overruled and removed from the ruling circles (Pike, pp.261-262).

In any case, Hanoi decided to complete the conquest of Indochina by going into Cambodia. They had defeated the mighty Americans. Surely a small enemy like Cambodia would present no problems?

The ground had been prepared by a long propaganda campaign against the Khmer Rouge government. It was suggested that their rule was something uniquely harsh and terrible. Perhaps the stories are fully accurate; it's hard to be sure. The much-publicised piles of bones prove very little. One could assemble quite as grim a display by digging up the churchyard in any quiet English village. And Hanoi's own rule was harsh enough to induce tens of thousands of "boat people" to flee, and very often perish in the attempt rather than go back.

Malcolm Caldwell

The late Malcolm Caldwell used to argue that the Khmer Rouge were nothing like as bad as was claimed, and he showed that at least some of the stories were pure inventions. As a respected left-wing academic who had been prominent in the opposition to American involvement in Vietnam, his opinions carried weight. He would have been the natural leader of left-wing protest against Hanoi's invasion.

Malcolm Caldwell was killed during a visit to Cambodia, just before the Vietnamese went in.

It has never been proved just who killed him. It could be just a coincidence that he was killed at precisely the moment when

Hanoi had very good reason to wish him dead. But frankly I doubt it.

In any case, Hanoi sent its troops in, and overthrew the Khmer Rouge. But they very noticeably failed to "win hearts and minds" among the Cambodians themselves. People in other parts of the world may have seen it as an altruistic act to save the poor Khmers. The Khmers themselves have tended to see it otherwise.

Even if the conduct of the Pol Pot regime provided the *pretext* for the invasion, it was most certainly not the *reason*. The Vietnamese were out to take over. A less controversial regime might have made their task harder; it is doubtful if it would have changed the course of events.

And the war goes on

And yet the Vietnamese seem to have bitten off more than they can chew. For the first time, they face an entirely foreign nationalism on its own home ground. There is continuing resistance from an alliance of the surviving Khmer Rouge, centrists under Prince Sihanouk, and right-wingers from the regime the Khmer Rouge overthrew. Essentially, it is a broad political alliance against a foreign invader.

There is also the antagonism with China. As I mentioned earlier, the Chinese had once ruled the Vietnamese. During the years of the war against the Americans, the Vietnamese stayed neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute. But since then they have been asserting themselves. China wants to keep Cambodia as a counter-weight against Vietnam, and Vietnam is in alliance with Russia against China. Essentially, it is a matter of rival nationalisms; "socialist internationalism" no longer counts for very much.

Vietnam seems thoroughly stuck in Cambodia, just as America was once stuck in Vietnam. It is possible that they will be able to do a deal with Sihanouk. But nothing is yet certain. Nor is it clear that a peace acceptable to the Vietnamese and to Sihanouk would be acceptable to China, to Thailand or to the Khmer Rouge. The road to peace may not be easy.



Indochina in the 12th century A.D.

Labour and Family Policy

by Christopher Winch

"The market is horrifically anti-family. The market is a world of competing equals in which children are a cost, not an asset."

This sounds like yet another left-winger sounding off against the iniquities of capitalism. But if you thought that the author was on the Left, you would be mistaken. There are few on the Left today who are prepared to defend the principle of the family and its value to working class life. Even those who believe in it have more important things on their mind, politically speaking. There are a few honourable exceptions, but only a few.

In fact the quote comes from Patricia Morgan. She is a writer for the Social Affairs Unit, a right-wing 'think tank'. She goes on to point out that families on low incomes are particularly badly affected by market forces.

"People have got to have the choice of being able to bring up young children on one wage. At low income levels, where small amounts matter, that is not now the case. The woman is better off being single than married." (The Independent, 13th June 1988).

The Left's failure

This is a matter that left-wing people need to think seriously about - though it is unlikely that anyone on the Left will be expressing any such serious thinking outside the pages of L&TUR. Sections of the Right are prepared to confront the unpalatable consequences of their policies. And they are prepared to advocate realistic measures to render those consequences less harmful.

In other words, they are doing the sort of thing that the Labour Party and the Trade Unions ought to be doing in order to present themselves as fighters in the working class interest. Yet there seems to be a lack of will to fight on this issue, as on so many other important political issues.

The standard response is "spend more". Yet previous Labour governments have spent

more without solving anything, and then have had to make cuts as the economy got out of balance. Fundamental issues are left alone.

There are two important reasons why this is so. One of them is the tunnel vision of the Labour leadership, which seems incapable of looking beyond day-to-day politics and identifying issues that are important to working people. (And this is not necessarily the same as what is important to Westminster politicians and North London political salons).

The second reason is that the Labour Party is held hostage by ideological forces within it that are deeply antipathetic to families and family life. Here I am talking about that North American import called feminism which has so besotted the 'intelligent' left since the early 1970s. It induces among the rainbow variety of left politicians reflexes which are, in many respects, hostile to the working class.

In defence of the family

Government statistics suggest that the number of children born out of wedlock is rapidly increasing. Even when such children are born to couples, the chances of their ending up in single parent families are three times those of children born in wedlock¹. Children born outside marriage tend to suffer disproportionately both economically and emotionally.

One response to this might be to say that money directed to one-parent and low-income families will solve these ills. Indeed, inadequate financial support is one important factor which is contributing to the decline of family life.

It is an illusion, though, to think that it does not matter whether children are reared with mothers or with both parents, or even, as many feminists appear to think, that children are better off without their fathers.

Children need the different emotional, intellectual and

disciplinary contributions that mothers and fathers bring to their upbringing. And they need to be acquainted closely with adult members of both sexes in order to achieve a proper maturity.

Child rearing is also a fraught and long term occupation which requires strong bonds of attachment. It needs reserves of physical energy and patience which are best supplied by a man and a woman in a happy relationship with each other.

There are unmarried couples who have planned and have happy families, but they are a tiny minority of all families. For most people, the visible sign of commitment through a marriage ceremony is a prerequisite for a lifelong attachment, even when such a commitment no longer has much of a religious significance.

The idealism of most young people, men and women, is invested in the idea of a happy family life. Not everyone can get excited about politics or wish to devote themselves to the community. But most people wish to devote themselves to someone other than themselves and to share their lives and possessions with someone else.

This is an important feature of life in a democratic society. People are not just a collection of atoms to be manipulated by the state, but genuine and spontaneous associations of people with their own perceptions and interests.

Thatcherism against the family

We all know of Thatcher's belief *"that there is no such thing as society, only individual men and women and their families"* (L&TUR No.7). In fact families come in as an afterthought in her philosophy, as nine years of Thatcherite government show readily enough.

Not only are markets anti-family, as Patricia Morgan suggests, but families are not particularly pro-market either. They rely on deeper motivations than material advantage or personal ambition. They need connections with particular places and communities to thrive. And above all, they are long term projects which are not expected to stand or fall with the

movement of market forces.

It is therefore not surprising that the worship of the market brings in its train policies which are indifferent or hostile to family life.

The record speaks for itself: the erosion in the value of child benefit (resisted more vigorously by family-minded Tories than by Labour), the indifference to a housing market boom which increasingly puts a home beyond the reach of young couples, and the poll tax, which reverses the fiscal bias towards families which is one of the virtues of the rate system. The poll tax is likely to encourage the break up of families with older children still in the household.

The cost of neglected children

If the upbringing of a child goes wrong, that is not only a disaster for the child. It is ultimately a disaster for society as well.

Even if we are not involved in bringing up children ourselves, self interest should make us see that a failure to do this job properly spells problems for everyone in society, including those without children, in the form of crime, social problems, unemployment and ultimately depressed economic performance.

Changing patterns of population, employment and morality are inevitable in a competitive economy in a state of rapid change. But they bring a heavy social cost in terms of disrupted communities (and the break up of the extended family and the invaluable support it gives to young and inexperienced child rearers), moral uncertainty and confusion and the desire to acquire more and more goods in order to maintain one's status and esteem in society to the exclusion of less tangible goals.

The socialist answer

These are precisely the sort of questions that the Labour Party should be addressing. Socialists cannot wave a wand and make everything right for the working class family, but they can adopt a commitment and policies which will begin to restore the prestige and fortunes of family life.

If the Labour Party does this, it will receive the thanks and votes of the people whose

support it once had, and which it needs if it is ever to return to power.

Earlier this year, in **L&TUR No.5**, Angela Clifford traced the decline of the family wage and the rise of the movement for equal pay, and drew the consequences for a socialist family policy, which recognises and is prepared to pay for the cost to families of bringing up children. This involves increasing child benefit as the family element of the wage and, if necessary, taxing away part of a substantial child benefit when it goes to higher income earners.

These measures should be adopted and given a high priority by the Labour Party. As well as being progressive in themselves, they would prove highly embarrassing to the Conservatives, particularly in the light of recent tax changes which now put an even greater burden of taxation, proportionately, on low and middle income families than ever before.

Lifelines

I would wish to go further than Angela Clifford and advocate that those families who wish to devote one of their partners to the rearing of children, to the exclusion of participating in full-

time work, should receive particular recognition and reward in the form of greater tax allowances and/or greater child benefit. This policy is recommended by Patricia Morgan as a lifeline, particularly for low income families where one of the partners wishes to opt out of full-time employment.

Margaret Thatcher is unlikely to implement such redistributive policies, for all her humbug about family life. This is an occasion for Labour to reappropriate socialist clothes which the Social Affairs Unit was happy enough to steal from socialist thinking in the first place. Jack Lane pointed out in the the last issue of **L&TUR** that there are many opportunities for Labour to form alliances with traditional Tories as part of a strategy for defeating the real Thatcher agenda. Such a move will go some way towards helping working class families to realise some of their ideals.

More pragmatically, there is a social benefit in the form of early educational experiences which are difficult to reproduce in a school or nursery and which are of lasting value. There is evidence² which suggests that all families make a large contribution to the knowledge and skill of young

children through the strong emotional bond and sheer amount of time that is spent together in the years before school. A further benefit is that parents can do some educating away from the clutches of the educational 'experts' who have done so much harm to the educational system.

All parents deserve a break from their children, but they should be given the resources to decide for themselves how this should be organised. Municipally run nurseries may help to play this role, but their pretensions as educational establishments are hugely over-rated. What would be of greater value to parents bringing up their children on a full time or part time basis would be further assistance and advice so that they can continue to do better what many already do well. This is an area where teachers rather than educational experts might be able to help.

Child sex abuse

Just how fragile the modern family can be has been illustrated recently by the horrific events in Cleveland which have been documented by the Labour MP Stuart Bell³. Here is a Labour MP who has been courageous and devoted in his attention to

his constituents and their children, and for his pains receives scorn from the "progressive" establishment within the Labour Party.

The events in Cleveland, which are probably taking place on a smaller scale in other parts of the country, show how fragile family life is in the face of attacks from the child care establishment.

Child sex abuse is a horrific crime which, where suspected, should be properly investigated and treated according to the criminal law. The great majority of the Cleveland families who had their children taken away from them, have had them returned with no proceedings brought against them.

The diagnostic technique used to detect sexual abuse in Cleveland is both inadequate in itself and inappropriate for what it was intended for. As Bell points out, anal reflex dilation, if it is taken as a sign of abuse, would suggest sadistic rather than sexual abuse of children.

The Cleveland social worker principally involved in the case apparently thinks that this sort of abuse is a natural by-product of power relations in the family, and something nearer the norm than the exception.⁴



Turning their back on Labour? A Cleveland family recovers its children

Wicked fathers?

If such views are anything like the norm among professional social workers, namely that as a matter of course a substantial minority of fathers sadistically abuse their children on a regular basis (there is of course no evidence for this view presented by its proponents), one is led to wonder about the suitability of mainstream social workers for dealing with this problem.

The problem has arisen out of a misplaced confidence in the views of experts who do not really have a body of expertise at their command, coupled with the feminist belief that men are innately wicked and unsuitable for the upbringing of children.

This opinion may be found in many academic departments of

sociology and social work. It is an ideological, not a scientific, opinion and one which finds great favour in the milieu where social workers receive their education and professional training.

If many social workers hold such beliefs, then involving them on this issue seems about as helpful as leaving a fox in charge of the hen coop.

Alternatives

A better approach would be to set up a national investigative agency, independent of generic social work, which would provide specialist expertise for and assistance to the police in their work on sex abuse. Sex abuse is a very serious crime indeed, but false accusations are also no light matter. A national investigative agency would be better able to catch the guilty and to spare the innocent.

This is not, unfortunately, a recommendation made by the Butler-Sloss enquiry, and so a large part of the problem will remain.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the Cleveland scandal only came to light because parents and children were lodged together in the same hospital, and parents came to realise that they were there for the same reason. Where this condition does not obtain, parents will not have the opportunity of redress and will be presumed guilty of abuse until they can find some means of proving their innocence.

What the episode illustrates is the low esteem that family life now enjoys, especially among the highly educated professional elite, and the fragility of families in the face of ideologically motivate 'experts'. Stuart Bell writes:

*"When these parents took their story on to the streets they began their own social revolution; a revolution that would swing power back to parents and their families, that would check social services, that would make consultant paediatricians and their employers more accountable to the public, and would restore to government and Parliament a proper interest in family life. Indeed, the government promised new child care legislation in 1988-9. Paradoxically, a proper balance between the family and the state would enhance rather than detract from the rooting out of child sexual abuse; for with the help of nationwide guidelines, applicable from John O'Groats to Land's End, with the help of multi-disciplinary proceedings, whereby police, social services and health authorities worked together by consensus rather than confrontation, children in need could reach out for protection; and families concerned with their children's health need not worry that a random check at the hospital would see their children taken from them."*⁵

One can only hope that Stuart Bell's optimism is justified and that the Labour Party will help



Stuart Bell MP

to ensure that child abuse is stamped out while the rights of families are protected. One suspects that imported ideological baggage among the 'intellectuals' may make that difficult.

- 1 Regional Trends, HMSO, 1988.
- 2 Tizard B., Hughes M., *Young Children Learning*, Fontana, 1984.
- 3 Bell S., *When Salem came to the Boro*, Pan, 1988.
- 4 Bell, p.179; also *The Independent*, 7th July 1988, p3.
- 5 Bell, p.340.



Dr Marietta Higgs

Review

What future for Labour ?

by Martin Dolphin

What future for Labour? by Eric Deakins, London, Hilary Shipman, 1988, 215pp.

Eric Deakins was the Labour MP for Walthamstow from 1970 to 1987, when he was defeated in the general election. This book is one of the good outcomes of that defeat.

The book is divided into four sections: an introduction, a section on the Labour Party

structure, a section on policy issues and a conclusion.

Missed possibilities

The introduction sets the tone for the rest of the book because in it Deakins refuses to paint a picture of the labour movement as a downtrodden exploited mass (an image beloved of Tony Benn and his ilk), with no control over their own destinies. Rather he argues that the pre-1979 period

was full of possibilities which if taken up could have transformed the situation in Labour's favour:

"When the economy was growing before 1975, circumstances were never more favorable for advancing the interests of trade union members at work, yet throughout this halcyon period the trade unions had narrow aims..."

Lip service was paid to the idea of the social wage. No

serious attempt was made to deal with the problem of wage relativities. Fringe benefits and class divisions in the work place were ignored. There was no interest in the effectiveness of management. No serious attempt was made to achieve effective industrial democracy.

Failure to address these issues could be tolerated while the economy was growing (up to the late 1960s). In the succeeding decade the inadequacies were to become painfully apparent, culminating in the 1979 winter of discontent, and were to result in a political reversal of immense proportions - the election of the Thatcher government.

Party structure

On organisational questions Deakins strongly recommends the reduction of the membership fee from the current £12 to less than £1 and welcomes the moves towards greater democracy, particularly of the form whereby all members of the party are given the right to vote in certain elections and not just those who attend meetings. Deakins feels that the party has been hijacked by extremist activists who indulge themselves in political debate while participating little in the boring but necessary work which keeps the party going.

My experience of the party is limited (one ward over several years) but I do not find that the activists are not prepared to share the work load. On the contrary they appear to be prepared to take on every conceivable task and to have limitless time on their hands for party activities.

But to some extent I can sympathise with Deakins' opinions. Having had to sit through many long meetings where the most outrageous and tenuous political ideas were accepted as self-evident truths, I do understand how many ordinary members of the party were driven to despair.

However it equally depresses me that these ordinary members of the party were unable to defend their political positions against the activists. It suggests to me that their political positions were received from a previous generation and had become stale, complacent and ossified. The moderates are to this extent little better than their extremist counterparts.

Going back to Deakins' general analysis of the decline of the Labour movement, one can see that it was precisely these moderates who presided over that decline. Having carried out the 1945 manifesto they had little idea how to proceed from there. In the 1950s this was reflected in the split between the consolidationists (those who did not know what to do and therefore favoured doing nothing) and the advancers (those who did not know what to do and therefore were prepared to accept any mad scheme).

So although therefore I would not oppose the recent extensions of internal democracy I do not

feel that it is any guarantee that good policies will prevail.

Policy issues

The third section of Deakins' book deals with major policy issues. He has chapters on economic growth, poverty, pay, education, defence, the Falklands, the EEC and Labour and the third world. I found myself agreeing with much in these chapters but also in strong disagreement with some of them.

The chapter on the Falklands is one of the best which I have read on Labour's total confusion at that time.

"If the issue of colonialism is at all relevant in the Falklands dispute, it must be an apt description of the Argentine claim to sovereignty, since Argentine occupation would mean one state holding an overseas territory against the wishes of a majority of the people living there!"

In the chapter on poverty he looks at the problems associated with viewing poverty as a relative state and argues that those who insist on viewing poverty as a relative state carefully avoid the logical implication that relative poverty will always exist as long as there is inequality of incomes and wealth.

"In a rich country like Britain relative poverty results from bad distribution of income and wealth, not from too low a GNP per head... The argument that people should have whatever consumer goods and services they want is not acceptable. If an anti-poverty policy is based on more growth without redistribution and without a recognition that average living standards cannot go on increasing, it is immoral and unacceptable to socialists. To pretend that there is a painless remedy for relative poverty is disingenuous; Labour must accept the electoral consequences of its objectives."

This is good plain talking and there is plenty more of it in the other chapters on economic issues.

In dealing with the issue of economic growth, Deakins shows that a change took place in the party's approach to the economy in the 1960s.

Whereas previously the

emphasis was on redistribution and the need for a collective approach to society, now the emphasis was on progress through economic growth. Everybody would become better off through an almost natural process of limitless economic growth. Unpleasant issues like redistribution and social priorities could be avoided.

He attacks the idea of limitless growth because of the rat race effect on those involved, because of the effects on third world countries and on the environment and demands a return to the emphasis on redistribution, collectivism and national planning.

This is clearly a massive task both culturally and logistically and Deakins realises this. I do not particularly disagree with Deakins' aims though I feel he may be underestimating the amount of growth which may be achieved through technological change and better organisational structures at work (e.g. industrial democracy).

In his chapter on Pay, Incomes and Incentives Deakins gives a good socialist critique of the policy of free collective bargaining so beloved of our trade union leaders. The very firm attachment of the trade union movement to this policy (emphasised yet again at the 1988 TUC) is a good indicator of the poor state of the movement. As long as brute force is the main criterion for the division of the national cake the socialist objectives of equality and collectivism will take second place.

I disagreed with two chapters in the book: the one on the EEC and the one on defence.

The EEC

I was actively involved in the pro-EEC movement more because of what I saw were its political benefits rather than its economic benefits. I felt the UK had a lot to offer Europe in the early 1970s and also that membership would be useful to puncture that very peculiar sense of British insularity.

The Left at that time felt that membership of the EEC would restrict their moves towards socialism but in fact the opposite has happened and the rest of Europe is far more

socialist than the UK.

Deakins makes a valid point when he says that the socialism of the Left in Europe is quite different from what the Labour Party's view of socialism. But this is only true because the Labour Party has so disastrously failed not only British socialism but also European socialism.

If the Labour movement in the UK had grasped the nettles of industrial democracy and national pay agreements we would be pointing the way for Europe, not being described as suffering from the English Disease.

It was not the EEC which prevented us from moving in those directions. If now we wanted to move in those directions they might try to stop us but so what. It will be a good thing if we fight the EEC bureaucrats and point the way for the rest of European socialism. If we have the wit to accept all the ideas that Deakins is proposing then we will have no problems taking on the EEC bureaucrats and European socialism will be the better for it.

Defence

I had great difficulty relating to Deakins' chapter on defence. In the first place I do not agree with him that the USSR would never have attacked western Europe. The only limit to Stalin's ambitions was the limit to his power. Deakins says that

"the post-1944 occupation of Eastern Europe and the creation of a Soviet sphere of influence were in accordance with the Yalta agreement between the USSR, USA and UK, as was the Soviet failure to help post-war Communist rebels in Greece, part of the American sphere of influence."

I find it quite astonishing that Deakins can believe that Stalin felt himself strictly bound by agreements which he had made.

The Yalta agreement was merely a ratification of a temporary status quo. Had the USSR had the power I have no doubt that other countries would have fallen by the wayside in due course. Equally I believe that had the USSR not had the power then the USA would have been encroaching on the countries in the Eastern Block.

It was the uncertainty

surrounding the outcome of any military engagement which prevented that engagement. The super powers prepared to engage each other indirectly in countries like Korea, Palestine, Vietnam etc.

Second, I agree that the likelihood of an attack is less now than it has ever been. However I have no idea what the political composition of the USSR is going to be in five - let alone ten - years' time. Deakins is asking me to give up a means of defence because he can see no immediate need for it. I like to think of the future.

"A defence policy which accepts that what is to be defended should be destroyed is irrational. People may wish to choose death rather than face conquest by an aggressor, but NATO defence policy allows them no choice. Suicide must be an individual decision; no majority view can justify imposing this on everyone. At the heart of the policy of nuclear deterrence is the denial of a basic human right."

I find this argument difficult to grasp. It seems to suggest that wars are fought by individuals acting totally on their own behalf rather than by nation states.

In the modern world it is nation states which wage war and if you do not happen to agree with the war which your particular nation state is waging you are in an unenviable position, as thousands of young Americans discovered when they fled to Europe to avoid conscription or no doubt as thousands of young Russians found to their cost in Afghanistan.

In his discussion Deakins tends also to assume that a nuclear defence policy will be based on an independent deterrent. This is clearly the case at the moment but it is not a necessary implication of the policy and is certainly not a position that I find convincing.

Overall, however, I would strongly recommend this book. It provides a much more substantial consideration of the issues which are relevant to the Labour Party than anything the current policy review has produced.

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.

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 c/o 26 Aden Grove, Stoke Newington, London N16 9NJ.

Analysis

Loadsamoney! by Jack Lane

Inflation is on the political agenda again.

Thatcher came to power on an anti-inflation programme with a monetarist solution that was hailed as the key to solving the problem once and for all. Cut back the money supply and all will be well. If there is no superfluous money produced then there will not be any about to mess up the economy.

Nothing could be simpler. It had all the simplicity of the appeal that the CND has for some people about nuclear war. Stop producing the weapons and there cannot be nuclear war, and other methods of war may well disappear as well.

But of course the problem is that it is simply impossible to wipe out the forces that give rise to such an endemic phenomenon as inflation. As impossible as trying to wipe out the developments that have produced nuclear weapons in the first place.

Inflation and social forces

Inflation occurs when the pressures of demand on an economy are greater than what the economy is able to produce, when consumption tends to exceed production. This is an inherent tendency in all economies, even the most primitive. In fact, there would be no economic progress without this tendency. When it gets out of hand inflation occurs, and this can occur for all sorts of reasons.

Roman emperors debased the currency to increase its supply, usually to finance a war or two. After World War One the allies squeezed Germany like a wet rag, reduced it to a state of nature and inflation raged.

In the UK in the 1970s the unions were able to put the squeeze on the economy.

In all cases matters are put

back into a balance of sorts. The Roman emperor might win his war and get enough booty to 'balance the books'. Or he might lose it and a stringent regime would be imposed by him or his enemies. Hitler was the solution in Germany, and Thatcher in the UK.

One thing is obvious - whoever or whatever causes inflation is the most powerful element in a society. And the only element more powerful is that which conquers inflation.

It was a great compliment to the unions to be accused of causing inflation, because it was an acknowledgement that they were running the country. It was a great pity that the unions and the Labour movement generally could not accept the compliment and plan to be the cure as well as the cause of inflation. That would have been a historic and unique achievement because of what it would have entailed for the movement.

Maggie Frankenstein

Now the UK faces inflation again and nobody even contemplates the idea that it has anything to do with the unions. They obviously have enough on their plates running themselves and surviving.

But all the inflationary indicators are there - record bank lending, record mortgage lending, record consumer credit spending and record social problems that follow inevitably from all this.

The government increases interest rates to try to cool down the economy, which attracts more money from abroad, so there is even more money sloshing around trying to sell (loan) itself. The UK is a much safer bet for doing this nowadays compared to "third world" countries, which have got into the habit of giving their creditors a Harvey Smith.

In other words, Capital is causing inflation now. The Thatcherite myth of the self-interested individual economic man who can do no wrong has

A HOLSTEN Pils PRODUCTION HARRY ENFIELD presents



LOADSAMONEY

become a Frankenstein's monster which is wrecking the Thatcherite economy.

The 'logic' is that it is a wonderful achievement to lower taxes with one hand and raise interest rates with the other. There is an attempt to prove that tax cuts are good for the country and then that it is also good for the country to have to pay more to your Bank, Building Society, creditor and/or your local friendly loan shark.

It cannot be sold as a policy that makes sense for very long.

Higher interest rates across the board are a crude and counter-productive way of tackling excessive credit, because of their effect on industrial performance. The explosion in consumer credit could be dealt with in a much more discriminating and effective way by having compulsory deposits on consumer goods. Thatcher abolished these in the early 1980s as ideologically unacceptable. After all, the individual can do no wrong with his own money.

The situation now is that there is a growing lack of awareness of the real price of consumer goods. The only consideration is their credit cost per month or per week. A deposit establishes and maintains some concept of the actual price.

The present situation is a

creditor's paradise and it is the engine of the present inflation. It is the result of the freedom of Capital that Thatcher has brought about.

Social Enfieldism

We are now promised a big campaign by Thatcher on social responsibility. This is an admission that her policy in this area has been a failure. It is going to be extremely difficult even to talk about a social policy when she is failing in purely economic terms.

Even if the economy was totally successful she has an insoluble problem in dealing with social issues because her philosophy is based on the individual economic man doing his own thing. Individual economic man is an asocial entity and it is impossible to base a coherent social policy upon such a concept. It is building on sand.

The only social philosophy that is consistent with it is that expressed by Harry Enfield's creation, Loadsamoney. He has done more to bring home to people what Thatcherism can generate in social terms than a thousand speeches by Neil Kinnock.

It is a sobering thought that it might be better for Labour if they exchanged jobs.

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