

Labour & Trade Union Review

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Labour - The Long Road Back

Racism As Anti-Racism

Algeria

Labour's Maggie Interviewed

Reykjavik

Anthony Crosland

Northern Ireland

Socialism & Home Ownership

LABOUR & TRADE UNION REVIEW

January 1987

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L&TUR In Conference

The first in what will be an open-ended series of conferences to be sponsored by the *Labour & Trade Union Review* was held in London on Sunday December 7.

The aim of these conferences, which will be held at two-monthly intervals from now on, is to provide a forum for purposeful and concentrated discussion of issues in Socialist politics and policy. They are intended to play a crucial role in developing the thinking of the *Labour & Trade Union Review* itself.

The December 7 conference lasted from 11am to 5.30pm and covered three issues. In the first session, Chris Winch, a college lecturer from Wrexham, opened a discussion on the theme: "Who Controls Education?" The various conflicts in education - including Local Authorities and Central Government, School Governors and Head Teachers, Teachers and Parents, as well as the position of the various unions involved, were examined, and a lively debate resulted.

The second session was opened by Martin Vogel, a London-based journalist, who is also active in local politics. The theme was one central to the current controversy about the performance of Labour-controlled councils, especially in London: - How should local government efficiency be measured?

Labour & Trade Union Review will be publishing the main parts of the extremely interesting and iconoclastic discussions on these two important questions in forthcoming issues.

The third session was opened by Hugh Roberts, Editor of the *Labour & Trade Union Review*, who outlined the background to the the launch of the *Review*, and the main perspectives for its development as a major forum for purposeful thinking in the Labour movement.

It was agreed by all who attended that the Conference was well worthwhile and that further conferences should be held at regular and frequent intervals. The date for the next L&TUR Conference was fixed for Sunday February 8, 1987. For details of time and venue contact the editor at the address above.



Ulster Says Yes...

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is now one year old and - official optimism notwithstanding - has clearly failed to secure any of its objectives. Neither Thatcher nor FitzGerald can afford to admit that it has failed, but both have stopped behaving as if they think it can work.

But it would be quite wrong to think that the Agreement has done no good whatever. It has one major achievement to its credit. It has borne unintended and unexpected fruit. It has stimulated the emergence of an entirely new political movement in Northern Ireland, the *Campaign for Equal Citizenship for Northern Ireland (CECNI)*, now led by the dynamic Belfast barrister, Robert McCartney, QC.

The British government does not like this fruit. However wholesome and appetising people in Northern Ireland may be finding it, it tastes bitter to the palates of Tom King, Nicholas Scott and Sir Robert Armstrong. And that, no doubt, is why this development has gone entirely unreported by the media in Great Britain.

The *CECNI* is making one very simple point. It argues that, for as long as Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, its electors should have the same rights as their fellow-citizens in England, Scotland and Wales: the right to vote for, or against, their government, which means the right to vote for one of the political parties capable of forming governments at Westminster - the Labour, Tory and SDP-Liberal Alliance parties, and the right to join one of these parties.

At present, both the SDP and the Liberals accept members in Northern Ireland but they do not actively recruit and they never contest elections. As a result, their members have nothing of any political significance to do and membership of these parties offers precisely nothing to people in the province. The Labour Party and the Tories both refuse to contest elections and actually go so far as to reject membership applications from Northern Ireland residents.

The *CECNI* was founded on Belfast last March by a group of Catholic and Protestant activists who came from all points of the political compass but were agreed on one thing - that they were sick to death of the sectarian politics of the province and no longer prepared to accept exclusion from the party political system of the rest of the United Kingdom while waiting for some miracle solution to the Northern Ireland problem to be concocted by this or that coven of civil servants.

Their campaign has really taken off in the last six months. The Belfast papers are full of it and "equal citizenship" has already come to the fore as the slogan that makes most sense to most people. Well-attended meetings have been held all over the province, from Banbridge to Coleraine and from Ian Paisley's Ballymena to John Hume's Derry. The *CECNI* is the one political movement in Northern Ireland which can get a hearing in both Catholic and Protestant strongholds. And on a particularly foul night in Belfast on July 3, over 700 people turned out to pack the Ulster Hall from side to side and from end to end to hear Robert McCartney explain the new vision.

McCartney, who has recently accepted the Presidency of the Campaign at its first Annual General Meeting in Belfast on November 1, is a working-class Protestant from the Shankill who has made good by his own efforts and is now a highly successful barrister. He first made a name for himself in political circles as the representative of the most liberal and non-sectarian wing of Ulster Unionism, in sharp contrast to the fundamentalist Protestantism of Ian Paisley's political outlook.

A Member of the Northern Ireland Parliamentary Assembly until it was dissolved last summer, McCartney has emerged over the last year as the leader of the so-called "integrationist" wing of the Official Unionist Party. But, while continuing to emphasise his personal opposition to "devolutionist" schemes, he has made it clear that the integration he wants is essentially *electoral* integration, the admission of the electors of the province to the party political system of Great Britain on the same basis as everyone else.

The growing strength of his Campaign may be gauged from the fact that an "Equal Citizenship" motion came within a whisker of being carried at the Official Unionist Party Conference on November 8, and from the striking fact that not one of the better-known politicians on either side of the sectarian divide in the province has felt able to denounce the Campaign or its objectives.

It is beginning to look as if a democratic formula which can unite Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland in defence of their common rights as citizens has at last been found. The *CECNI* is taking up where the old Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association of the 1960s left off. NICRA's old slogan, "British Rights for British Citizens" is precisely what "Equal Citizenship" is about.

And if Ulster clearly says "Yes" to this, for how long can Great Britain say "No"?

Jack Rhys

EDITORIAL

The Long Road Back

The euphoria which began to develop in leading Labour Party circles following the Fulham by-election victory last April and which climaxed at the TUC and Labour Party conferences this autumn has begun to evaporate. It has not taken very much to put paid to it, only an opinion poll or two. Euphoria is by definition a flimsy thing. It is the emotion experienced by a gambler who, through no merit of his own, is enjoying a run of luck.

Labour has certainly been enjoying a run of luck these last twelve months. This has mostly been a matter of the government's bad luck or bad management. Labour's principal contribution to its own good fortune has been to smarten up its presentation of itself in the media and to cut out - or at least cut down - the own-goals. This is unquestionably an improvement upon its performance in every previous twelve-month period since the winter of 1978-79. But all this does is enable Labour to

enjoy the luck which comes its way.

A political party can conceivably get itself elected into office by means of a lucky break or two. But a party which owes its election largely to such things cannot be expected to do anything of note when in office. It certainly cannot be expected to do anything much in the way of promoting serious reform in the society. The most substantial reforming government the Labour Party has ever produced, the Attlee government of 1945-51, did not depend upon luck for its election in 1945. It represented a profound movement in the society, it had developed a major programme of fundamental economic and social reforms, and it entered the run-up to the general election in a mood of quiet confidence which would have enabled it to preserve its unity and collective seriousness of purpose had the luck all gone the other way.

A Fragile Unity

Labour's present unity is as fragile

as its euphoria. It is premised upon the prospect of office. It will not survive the disappointment of individual ambitions by electoral failure. It may even not survive the disappearance of the prospect of office in advance of polling day. A temporary congruence of interests is far less durable than a common commitment to a cause. There is precious little fellowship or comradeship in the Labour Party these days, because there is no shared purpose capable of transcending particular interests and inspiring a sense of dedicated service to a ideal.

These aspects of the current condition of the Labour Party have everything to do with the fact that the Labour Party ceased years ago to be the party of reform in British politics. Having been the party which pioneered the welfare state and the mixed economy, Labour settled down very quickly into the role of defender and would-be administrator of the new post-war status

quo. It was unable to accept that it was never possible merely to administer this new status quo, that the effective management of the new social and economic arrangements required a constant alertness to the need for modifications and reforms. Instead, Labour quickly developed a purely proprietary attitude to the welfare state: 'it's ours, we gave birth to it, change can only spoil it, it simply needs to be properly funded and you can leave its management to us.'

The Natural Party of Government?

This attitude severely handicapped Labour's bid under Harold Wilson to become 'the natural party of government'. It could have become this only if it had freed itself sufficiently from a sentimental, complacent and self-congratulatory attitude towards the welfare state to be capable of adopting realistic and responsible policies for its efficient management. Because Labour has not had it in it to do this, it has repeatedly made



a gift to the Tories of the claim to be the party capable of managing the welfare state properly.

What is true of the welfare state is equally true of the mixed economy. As John Papadopoulos points out in his article on Anthony Crosland in this issue, the optimism of *The Future of Socialism* concerning the prospects for uninterrupted growth in a mixed economy run on the basis of Keynesian demand management was in fact widely shared in the mid-1950s. Labour accordingly felt able to concentrate its attention on the question of distribution and continued largely to ignore the question of production. Having established a greatly enlarged public sector, it took little or no further thought for how this sector should be run, nor what its relationship to the private sector should be. The mixed economy was an accomplished fact, for which Labour sought to claim the credit while running rapidly out of ideas as to what should happen next. (The Labour Left managed to evade the issue of how the public sector should be run by concentrating its attention on demanding that what should happen next was that more industries should be nationalised.)

Wilson's Way

By June 1970, it was clear that Labour had failed in its attempt to become 'the natural party of government'. Wilson's style of party leadership had a lot to do with this. His predecessor, Hugh Gaitskell, had disliked the divisions within the party and had gone to great lengths during his first five years as leader to overcome them, but he had refused to fudge a conflict over matters of principle when this developed in 1960 over unilateralism. Wilson felt strongly that the party could not be led in this way. Instead, he not only tolerated the internal divisions in the party, but actually cultivated them the better to secure his own position as arbiter, and systematically ensured that every major issue of principle was fudged completely.

In this way did Wilson sabotage his own undertaking to convert the Labour Party into 'the natural party of government'. For this to happen, it was necessary that the party learn to handle its internal conflicts effectively, so that futile disputes were not engaged in and so that the unavoidable and necessary conflicts over matters of substance gave rise to real development in the party's policies or political and organisational capacity.

From Wilson's point of view, the only disputes which were tolerable, apart from personal intrigues, were the largely ritualistic and so familiar and correspondingly predictable bat-

tles between Left and Right. These were almost entirely futile conflicts. Nothing of any value to the party as a whole or to the social interests it represents came of them. They were a sink of energy for large sections of both Left and Right wings of the party. Their chief merit from Wilson's point of view was that they constantly reproduced the conditions of his own ascendancy. They made his leadership, combining as it did the manner of Stanley Baldwin and the techniques of Houdini, indispensable for as long as he wished it to be.

But of greater long term significance is the fact that Labour failed to become the natural party of government not despite its ceasing to be the party of reform but *because* of this. The dichotomy between 'party of government' and 'party of reform' is altogether misleading in the British context, and it entirely misled Harold Wilson. In Britain, effective government is reforming government, for much if not most of the time.

Trade Union Conservatism

The lack of reforming ambition implied by Wilson's rhetoric is not to be attributed solely to him by any means. It reflected the profound lack of appetite for reform of the main social interest represented by the Labour Party, the trade unions. The trade union movement had developed a powerful interest in reform during the 1920s and 1930s. There was widespread recognition of the fact that a fundamental change in the economic structure of society was necessary in the trade union interest. The economic and social policy implications of this were developed most fully by Ernest Bevin, who saw to it that, from 1940 onwards, Labour in government acted to bring about the changes in question.

These changes established a framework within which the trade unions could flourish as never before. It would be mistaken to say that the trade unions became a conservative force thereafter. They became conservative only in relation to the new framework. Within this framework, the trade unions did not merely prosper, they actively and militantly sought to advance the interests of workers with regard to pay and conditions and, above all, the balance of power at the point of production. For them to be able to conduct these activities effectively, they needed to be able to take the overall framework for granted for the time being. The problem for the Labour Party is that the conservatism of the trade union movement with respect to this framework left the Labour Party with little or nothing to set its reforming sights on,

while at the same time the militant activity of the trade unions was tending eventually to undermine the framework in such a way as to make some kind of radical reform necessary, a necessity which the Tory Party, unaffected by trade unionist conservatism, was better placed than Labour to recognise and exploit.

One consequence of this state of affairs is that Tory governments since 1951 have become more and more radical in their attitude to reform of the welfare state/mixed economy status quo. Heath was more radical than Macmillan, and Thatcher has been more radical than Heath. Another consequence is what has happened to Labour's reforming impulse in the absence of suitable targets for it to aim at.

The Reforming Interest

The fact that the trade union movement's needs were no longer furnishing the Labour Party with substantial targets for its reforming drive forced the Party back onto ideology and the self-interest of Party activists as substitute sources. The egalitarian element in Labour's ideology came to the fore in its activist, levelling, mode, and proceeded to concentrate its fire on what it took to be the key institutions of bourgeois power, starting with the education system and taking it from there.

The evil genie of middle class guilt was out of its bottle again and, in the absence of a working class interest in radical reform, Labour's radicalism became an increasingly middle class, guilt-ridden, conscience-salving affair, beginning with the Public School-educated element in the Labour leadership (Crosland and Shirley Williams) leading the attack on Public Schools and the drive towards Comprehensivisation, followed by the increasingly pathetic spectacle of men denouncing male chauvinism and championing feminism, heterosexuals denouncing heterosexism and championing homosexuality, and whites denouncing racism as a sin of which only whites can be guilty and no white can be innocent and championing "anti-racism", an ideology which, as Brendan Clifford shows in his article in this issue, is in fact itself a variant of racism.

A reforming impulse which is oriented to and informed by the interest of a rising social class is one thing. A reforming impulse which lacks any such orientation is liable to work out as the convoluted expression of a very different interest - the interest of the reformers themselves. The principal interest of the reformers has been to keep themselves in business. Like Sisyphus, their work

is never done, or rather, no sooner is it done, but it must be done all over again. Unlike Sisyphus, this is a matter of choice, or at least self-interest, on their part.

What this means is that the reformism of the professional reformers, the Reforming Interest, is in fact a variant of conservatism. It is pseudo-reform. True reform brings about a structural change so that a given interest may prosper thereafter. Pseudo-reform engages in a frenetic and never-ending pantomime of beating about the bush which creates a whirl of superficial changes while leaving the underlying structures unaffected. Its fundamental object being to render itself permanently necessary, it has an interest in inciting a widespread attitude of perpetual dissatisfaction with the status quo. It has no interest in promoting fundamental changes to the status quo, since these would render it redundant.

Where the Labour Party is concerned, the Reforming Interest, that is, the body of middle class (by origin or ascription), guilt-ridden, conscience-salving, minority-patronising professional pseudo-reformers, has subsisted and, indeed, prospered for so long without a genuine orientation to the working class interest that it has actually evolved into an anti-working class tendency in practice if not in principle. It has consistently promoted policies and adopted postures tending to fragment the working class along every possible line of cleavage (sex, age, colour, religion, locality, etc.), and when the question of a major structural reform in the working class interest was once again put on the agenda in 1977, the pseudo-reforming left united in opposition to it, and thereby helped to ensure that it did not happen.

A Missed Opportunity

The major structural reform which was on the agenda of British politics in 1977 was Industrial Democracy. It was put there by Jack Jones, operating through the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy, whose membership, terms of reference, chairman (Lord Bullock) and findings he had himself determined largely single-handed. (But let's not forget Clive Jenkins' role here; his consistent support for Jones in this endeavour was one of the most useful things he has ever done.)

This structural reform was made necessary by the extent to which militant trade unionism had undermined the post-war status quo in the two and a half decades since 1951. As the most purposeful post-war leader of one of the most militant trade unions (the T&GWU), Jones was well placed to gauge the transforma-

INTERVIEW



Maggie Cosin is Labour's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate in Chingford, Norman Tebbit's seat. *Labour & Trade Union Review* interviewed her to find out why Chingford picked Maggie to fight what must be the toughest Tory of all.

Labour's Maggie Takes On Tebbit

Maggie Cosin comes from an old Labour family in Glasgow - she was born and bred in politics and it shows in her quick thinking and sharp responses. She is an instinctive and articulate socialist.

Her first electoral activity was in the 1945 election when she handed out leaflets at the ripe old age of four. Her mother's family were Independent Labour Party, and John McLean - then Soviet Consul to Scotland - was a regular visitor to her grandparents' home.

Jimmy Maxton was another friend. Maggie herself joined the Labour Party at the age of 16, and to say she has been active ever since is a piece of typical English understatement. Her curriculum vitae shows

that within a year she was secretary of the Young Socialists, a delegate to Glasgow Trades Council and a collector/representative for her union, the Association of Scientific Workers: she was a laboratory technician.

And ever since then, Maggie has packed in huge amounts of work for both the Party and her Union. By 1968, when students the world over were discovering 'liberation', Maggie had moved to Bristol and acted as a Ward Election Agent as well as CLP Social Secretary and delegate to Bristol City Party. On the trade union side she had become Negotiating Secretary of her Branch of the ASTMS.

In June 1970, Maggie won a TUC Scholarship to LSE, where she studied Industrial Relations in prep-

EDITORIAL CONTINUED

tion which had occurred in the balance of power on the shop floor. He recognised that reform was inevitable and sought to ensure that the reform which occurred was in the working class interest. He therefore proposed a structural reform which would have the effect of developing working class power instead of reducing it, by making it the foundation of a new system of production relations. This meant giving the workforce responsibility for running British industry, starting with the private sector. This is what he meant by Industrial Democracy and it is what the Bullock Report proposed in 1977.

In retrospect it is clear that the working class was not subjectively ready nine years ago for this reform. Industrial democracy enjoyed a lot of support in sections of the trade union movement, but there was also a lot of merely conservative opposition to change as well. Because the trade union movement as a whole had not made up its mind that it really wanted this reform, there was no real pressure on the Labour government to legislate along the lines Bullock had proposed, and so nothing came of it.

A Disorderly Retreat

The failure of the trade union movement to advance decisively in 1977 when it was no longer possible

for it to stand pat made its subsequent defeats at the hands of the Thatcher government inevitable. Because it had not realised the need to advance, it was equally unprepared to retreat in good order and in fact it was sent reeling in confusion and disarray by the abrupt and comprehensive character of the Thatcher counter-attack. And because the trade union movement has been in disarray since 1979, it has been unable to exert a steadying influence on the Labour Party over this period. Trade union intervention in the internal affairs of the Party has been erratic, self-serving and heavy handed - the very opposite of the coherent and purposeful guidance which Ernest Bevin brought to the Labour Party in the 1930s. And this state of affairs has lent weight to the arguments of those who have long wished to see the Party reduce or even cut its links with the trade unions. The vision of a Labour Party strong and independent enough to put a much diminished trade union movement firmly in its place has been actively canvassed by the more euphoria-prone elements in leading Labour circles in recent months.

Over The Rainbow

We do not share this vision. Even in its present reduced state, the Trade Union movement remains the principle social interest which it is the

business and one might even say the destiny of the Labour Party to represent. A Labour Party in which the trade unions had been reduced to merely one among a number of interests - like "Labor" in the Democratic Party coalition in the USA - would be a Party without proper bearings or sense of direction. This is indeed what the advocates of the "Rainbow Coalition" want the Labour Party to become - a kaleidoscope coalition of minority interests, whose minority status makes them easy prey for the professional patronisers of the Reforming Interest.

These people are the enemies of the Labour Movement, although they like to patronise this or that trade union from time to time - e.g. the NUM during (but only during) the Miners' Strike. They have taken over large parts of the Labour Party, much as the supporters of George McGovern took over the Democratic Party in the USA in 1972. McGovern's coalition of "the poor, the young and the black" took the Democratic Party to its worst ever defeat in 1972. (McGovern carried only one state, Massachusetts, thanks to the Kennedy machine; he even failed to carry his own state of South Dakota.) And the counterparts of the McGovernites in the British Labour Party took the Party to its worst defeat since 1935 in 1983.

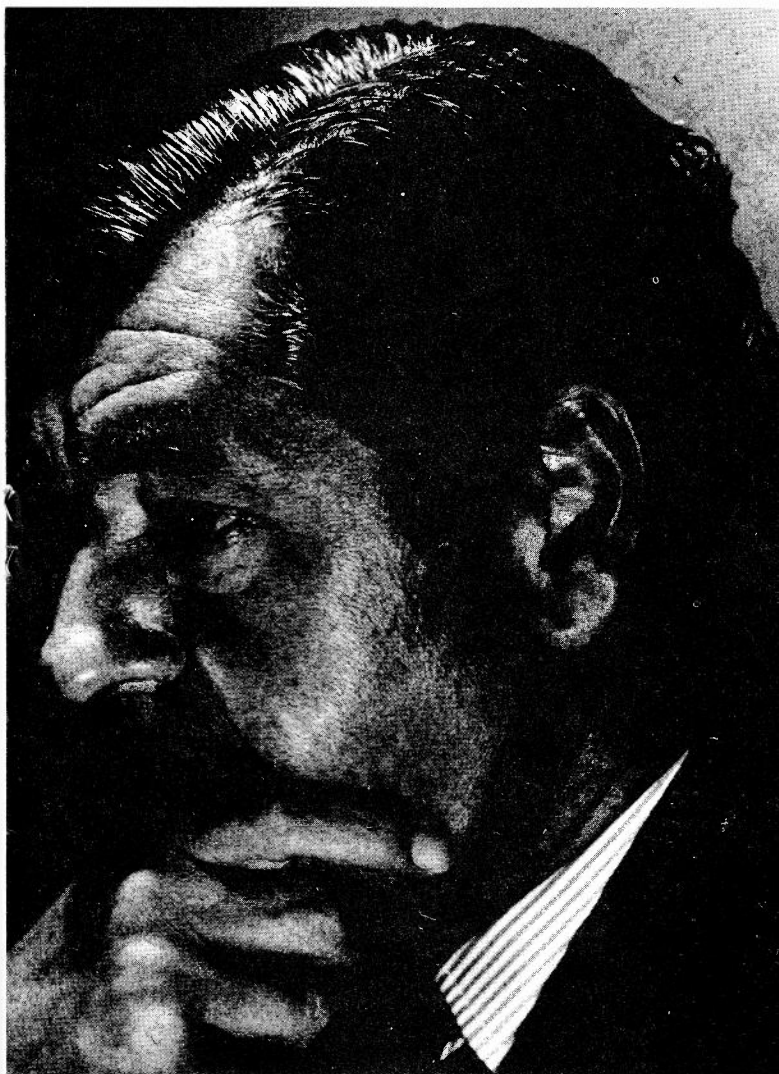
No Short Cuts

This Review stands four-square

against the degenerate politics of patronage and the pork-barrel implied by the "Rainbow Coalition" conception of the Labour Party. We agree very strongly with Maggie Cosin, Labour's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Chingford, interviewed in this issue, that the Trade Union movement will recover its strength and its sense of purpose. We believe that it has already begun to do so.

Rock-bottom was touched a couple of years ago, during the division and acrimony of the Miners' Strike and the wrangling over the state funding of union ballots. Since then a new seriousness has been gaining ground in the unions and this can only lead in time to a renewed interest in the practical but also inspiring business of working to secure fundamental structural reforms in the working class interest. And as this interest develops in the trade union movement it will work its way into the Labour Party and restore the Party's sense of purpose, as the Party which is fit to govern because it is the Party of serious reform.

This process of political renewal and regeneration will take time. There can be no short-cut for Labour as the party of radical but realistic reform in the working class interest. This Review will be supporting Labour in the coming election. Labour is *our* Party. But our horizon is not bounded by Polling Day, nor can Labour's afford to be.



Socialists in Retrospect:

Anthony Crosland

LABOUR AND TRADE UNION REVIEW believes strongly that an understanding of the history of the socialist movement is essential for the ability to act effectively in the present. Starting with our first issue, we shall be publishing a series of articles reassessing aspects of the history of socialism, including reappraisals of key figures. Today, John PAPADOPOULOS puts in perspective the late Anthony Crosland, whose work *"The Future of Socialism"* was published thirty years ago.

Labour in the 1950s

The defeat of the Labour Government in 1951 brought about a fundamental reappraisal of where Labour should go next. Due to the solid achievements of the Attlee government, most of the practical aims of Labour's programme had been realised.

Some leading figures expected a swift return to office at the next election, but others foresaw that the very changes the Labour government had brought about meant that Labour would return to power only if it adopted new policies.

In the resulting debate, it

is important to note, it was the Left - the Bevanites - who argued the conservative position and the Right who were the radicals. This conflict can be seen as the forerunner of many in which the Left increasingly came to depend upon a backward-looking, conservative approach to politics; its aim was to defend what it saw as fundamental to Labour's socialist credentials - principally Clause IV - and to argue for "real democratic socialism" (whatever that was).

The debate crystallised around the question of the importance of nationalisation. Bevan, for the Left, took the view that the point had not yet been reached when a halt could be called to further nationalisation:

"it is foolish of certain Labour men to preach consolidation at this stage. Before we can dream of consolidation, the power relations of public and private property must be drastically altered." [*In Place of Fear*, 1952]

The Argument was taken up in *New Fabian Essays* (1953), edited by Richard Crossman. In his own contribution, Crossman argued that the key question was one of power in society, rather than that of ownership:

"the planned economy and the centralisation of power are no longer socialist objectives. The main task of socialism today is to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of either management or state bureau-

MAGGIE Contd.

Nobody in this country wants that. What the Labour Party is offering is an expansion of conventional forces and this is needed if Britain is to stay in NATO.

"It is clear from the Reykjavik Talks that Gorbachev wants to pull back the Russians from an expansion of nuclear weapons: he wants to provide food for the people and expand the economy. After all, the Russians were our allies in the last war.

"The Russians are unlikely to be the first to use nuclear arms in the middle of Europe, which would damage themselves as much as Europe. Trident or Cruise do not make our life any safer.

"I refuse to deal with the hypothetical situation of the Russians putting pressure on a British Government with no nuclear weapons to act in a particular way. The Russians are acting defensively."

L&TUR: Doesn't Britain or Europe

need nuclear weapons in order to have a last resort weapon and a complete array of defences not only against possible Russian pressure, but also to guard against a possible right-wing American government or threats from a Third-World country which disliked Britain's foreign policy - towards Israel, for example?

"Nuclear weapons made no difference in the Falklands. Additional ships stationed there would have prevented war. Conventional deterrence would have made all the difference there. The ultimate deterrent made none.

"This is not a political argument, but a moral argument. It is naive of me to say I do not see the point of war, because war is going to be there in any case. I just don't see the point of nuclear weapons. Why have we stopped the development of bacteriological weapons? They make much more sense as a war tactic than a nuclear bomb. That is what I think will be used.

"Tebbit will try to make defence an issue, but it will be a side-issue. What is more important to the people of Chingford will be employment and the health service. A large number of youth between 16 and 25 have been unable to find work. They are still at home with their parents. There is also a substantial elderly population, who require a better level of medical services and more local clinics.

"The practical issues of everyday life, where the Tories have done so much damage and where Labour has the policies, will be decisive in the Election."

We wonder whether Maggie is right and the people of Chingford will regard defence as a side-issue in the next election. Be that as it may, *Labour & Trade Union Review* wishes Maggie well in her forthcoming David-and-Goliath contest.

(The interview was conducted by Angela Clifford)

cracy - in brief to distribute responsibility and so to enlarge freedom of choice. This task was not even begun by the Labour government."

Among the other contributors to the *Essays* was Anthony Crosland, who argued that Labour had failed to take account of the way in which capitalism had been transformed, and that the emphasis should now be on equality, not nationalisation.

Old Orthodoxies

Crosland developed his argument in what is widely recognised as a seminal work of post-war socialism, *The Future of Socialism* (1956). For Crosland, the old orthodoxies were no longer relevant to the post-war world:

"as society has changed since before the war, so again a restatement of objectives is called for. The matter can be put quite simply. Traditional socialism was largely concerned with the evils of traditional capitalism and with the need for its overthrow. But today traditional capitalism has been reformed and modified almost out of existence, and it is with a quite different form of society that socialists must now concern themselves."

Crosland identified certain moral values and aspirations which have been common to all schools of socialism:

1. a protest against the material poverty and physical squalor of capitalism;
2. a wider concern for social welfare;
3. a belief in equality and the classless society;
4. the idea of fraternity and cooperation;
5. a protest against the inefficiencies of capitalism and the tendency towards mass unemployment.

In Crosland's view, 1. and 5. had lost their relevance in modern Britain, while 4. was so vague that it could not be included in any statement of practical aims. But 2. and 3., which were concerned with a just society, had not been achieved.

Equality

The importance of *The Future of Socialism* was that

it restated that equality was the overriding objective:

"socialists seek a distribution of rewards, status and privileges egalitarian enough to minimise social resentment, to secure social justice between individuals and to equalise opportunities - this belief in social equality, which has been the strongest ethical aspiration of virtually every socialist doctrine, still remains the most characteristic feature of socialist thought today."

The means of achieving this was not more nationalisation but the promotion of economic growth, by the expansion of the public sector and regulation of the private sector.

Crosland's great achievement was to reconcile two different strands of thought which were normally mutually exclusive in the Labour Party, the outlook of those who placed the ethical claims of socialism first and that of those who regarded themselves primarily as technicians.

The Right had traditionally been seen as consisting of those politicians who got on with running the government but had no overall vision of a better future, but Crosland firmly placed the ethical side of socialism right back in the mainstream of practical politics.

Social policy was to be aimed at bringing about greater equality - comprehensive education, the use of public expenditure, higher taxes on the better-off and on unearned incomes, and a capital gains tax.

There should be less emphasis on public ownership, he suggested. The balance of power had so shifted from the private to the public sector that it was no longer necessary to further socialise the private sector.

Over Optimistic

What strikes one most about Crosland's analysis is the underlying assumption that the "economic problem" had been solved. This may, with hindsight, appear to have been wildly over-optimistic but it certainly reflected the general optimism of an era of rapidly rising living standards for

the great mass of the population.

The Left argued that Crosland had exaggerated the power of the socialist state vis-a-vis capitalist society and that public ownership was still relevant to control the excesses of the private sector.

Crosland replied to his critics in *Socialism Now* (1973). He accepted that economic failure had undermined the Wilson government and that it had not achieved what he had hoped for. He also accepted that *The Future of Socialism* had been too optimistic and that he had underestimated the difficulties in achieving the aims set out in it.

Emphasising that in his view these aims were still correct but acknowledging that he had not earlier foreseen the resistance which society would put up against certain of the more egalitarian of them, he concluded that a move to the left was needed.

Moving Left

But this move to the left was not to be confused with adopting the existing programme of the Left.

In Crosland's view the Left's programme - wage militancy, nationalisation, the pursuit of sectional interests - was not socialist, and the fact that Labour had moved in this direction made it more, not less, necessary to reassert the goals of a more just and more equal society.

In *Socialism Now* as in *The Future of Socialism*, he

correctly identified the Labour Left as a conservative force in society. Crosland's own outlook was always far more radical than that of the traditional Left, but such was the dogmatism of the Left that it was and remains incapable of seeing this.

Revisionism

The split in the Labour Party in the 1950s between the Gaitskellites and the Bevanites tends to suggest that "revisionism" became an issue only then. But this is to overlook that fact that the Labour Party had always been revisionist in practice.

It had always accepted that the reform of capitalism was achievable and that socialism could be brought about bit by bit within capitalist society.

British socialism has never been a revolutionary doctrine but a programme for legislative reform, and when the Labour government of 1945-51 had achieved its legislative aims new questions had to be posed.

Crosland's lasting achievement was that he managed to combine putting forward new practical objectives with a fundamental restatement of socialist objectives (equality).

What really angered the Left was that they believed that they had a monopoly of the ethical side of socialism and could not really accept that this was compatible with a practical programme for government.

Industrial Democracy

1987 is the 10th anniversary of the publication of the Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy. The Report, greatly influenced by Jack Jones and Clive Jenkins, proposed a radical reform of company control giving workers an equal share of both power and responsibility with shareholders' representatives. These proposals were defeated by an alliance of right-wing trade unionists and ultra-leftists. These people opted instead for free market industrial relations. This led to the 'Winter of discontent', the Thatcher government and the defeat of the miners. Ten years on we see more clearly than ever that industrial democracy was the way forward for British workers. In the coming year we will look back on the Bullock proposals and we will look forward to building a new and more successful campaign for industrial democracy.

RACE

Racism as Anti-Racism

By Brendan Clifford

Racism is, according to the most advanced definition of the Anti-Racist Left in England, something of which only whites are capable. And whites are not only capable of it, but are racist of necessity.

When non-whites identify social qualities with skin colour, that is not racist. And when whites deny that skin colour is of any social consequence, that is racist.

But it was not always so. Until about twenty years ago, anti-racism meant a denial that race carried specific social attributes with it as a biological inheritance.

It was a denial of the validity of racial stereotypes, and it raised doubts about whether mankind could, in any meaningful sense at all, be divided into races.

Karl Kautsky, the chief theorist of the Socialist International in its better days, published a book entitled *Are the Jews a Race?* The answer which the socialist movement expected and which was given was that the Jews were not a race.

When Hitler categorised the Jews as a race that was taken as a sign of his inherent degeneracy.

Race & the Citizen

But under the Race Relations Act the Jews are a race. Race has been made a constituent element of citizenship.

Camden Council made a race survey of the Borough a couple of years ago. At least one woman refused to answer on the ground that her family had been racially assessed in Germany in the thirties and most of them had gone up in smoke a few years later.

Camden's race assessors assured her that their purpose was altogether different from Hitler's. But she told them to go to hell - once bitten, twice shy!

"Anti-Racism" is a movement which, on the old

socialist understanding of this matter, would have been regarded as racist. It is deplored by politicians of the establishment. But it is a product of ground which was fertilised with racial conceptions by the Race Relations Act.

Establishment liberalism, finding that it had brought about a situation in which

race was threatening to develop, sought to ward it off by legislation which gave official currency to racial conceptions.

(And this was compounded by an Immigration Act which was made indisputably racist by the fact that it allowed the large-scale immigration from a white foreign state - the Irish

Republic - to continue without restriction.)

Race Comes to Britain

The prospect of race war arose in connection with the West Indian immigration of the post-war years. It was not that the West Indians brought race conceptions with them and asserted them. Nor was the problem created by the pathetic remnants of Mosley fascism.

I worked on the buses in the late fifties, when London Transport began to be staffed chiefly by Irish and West Indian immigrants. The Irish knew they were immigrants - had we not fought a war to make ourselves a foreign state? The West Indians thought they were British.

They were British officially; they played British games; they belonged to British religions, or were religiously lax in the British manner.

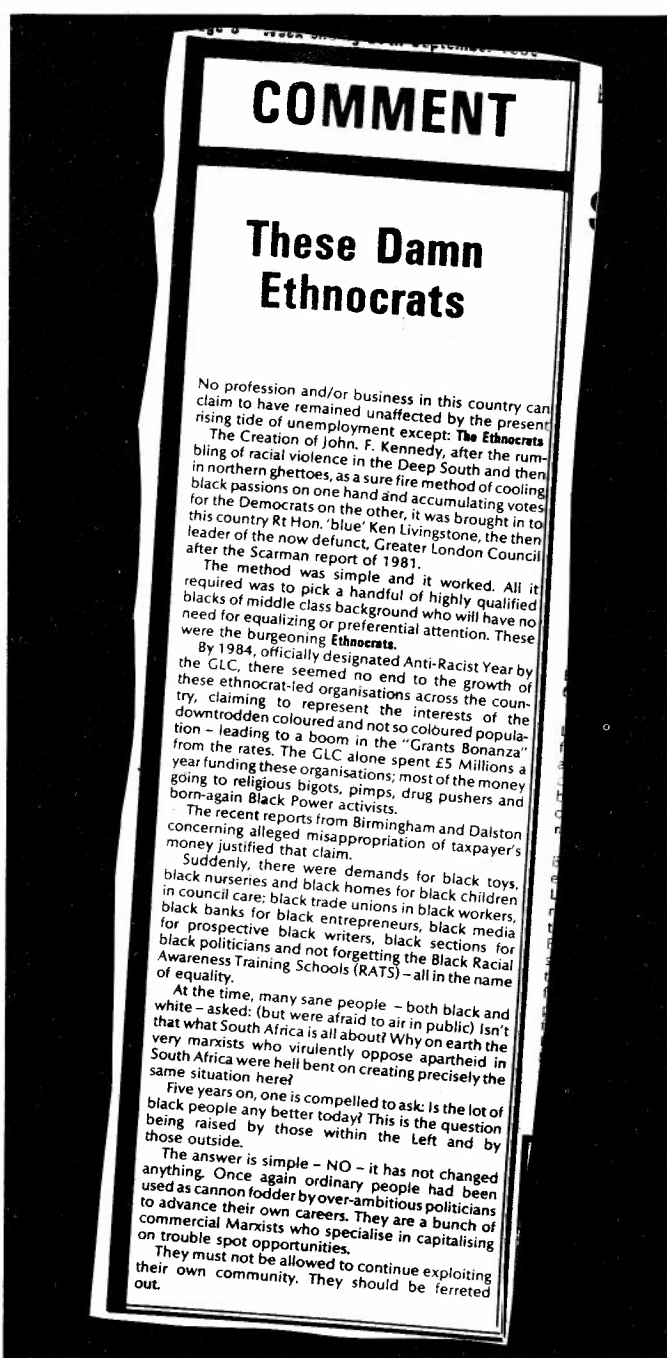
That generation of West Indians would have become black English as the Irish became white English if the liberal establishment which had encouraged them to immigrate had taken some steps to facilitate integration.

But the liberal establishment did nothing, and let the West Indian immigration become a race problem. It did nothing, not because it was racist, but because it was liberal and the thought of actively guiding a social development was alien to it.

Race & West Indians

The West Indians were the source of the race problem, not because they were black but because they were British.

Previous waves of immigrants, as well as the post-war Asian immigration, came from old and well established cultures. When they came to Britain they continued living to a considerable extent in their culture of origin while they made an adaptation to British cul-



Black people are not fooled: Editorial in Black newspaper *Weekly World*

After Reykjavik

Russia has enough atomic weapons to devastate America utterly, in less than an hour. America, equally, could do the same to Russia. Either side could choose to strike at any time, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Unlike a conventional war, a nuclear war could be over before most people knew it had begun.

But such a war is very unlikely. There is Mutual Assured Destruction (M.A.D.). Russia could destroy most of the American population, sink its surface fleet and destroy most of its army. But enough nuclear weapons would survive to wreck Russia in turn - even if not a single missile were launched before the enemy missiles had done their worst. Equally, Russia could still retaliate after any surprise attack that America might launch. Neither side is likely to start such a war, since both sides would inevitably be ruined by it.

This works as long as both sides have roughly the same number of missiles and warheads of more or less the same quality. If both sides have 1,000 missiles, say, neither can win. But if one side has 2,000 and the

other 10,000, then the stronger power could well hope to strike and win. It would be a dangerous gamble, but far from unthinkable. Knowing this, the weaker power would not dare to annoy the stronger, which would thus be able to dominate the world.

Previous agreements on nuclear armaments - SALT and SALT II - allowed both sides to build up their forces. Both sides now have huge numbers of expensive and more or less useless nuclear weapons - useless because both sides would be just as safe if neither had more than a thousand or so.

Will we see a new agreement, to limit or even cut the numbers of nuclear weapons? The agreement which was very nearly made at the Reykjavik meeting would have been good for both sides. Russia has a sluggish economy, America a record budget deficit. Both want to cut arms spending; neither dare to do it unilaterally.

The stumbling block at Reykjavik was "Star Wars", the Strategic Defence Initiative (S.D.I.). President Reagan's original idea was that the S.D.I. would eliminate the danger of immediate nuclear

NOTES

destruction by making a "first strike" impossible. This seems unlikely. To date, lasers and other beam weapons have destroyed only targets which had been specially set up to be vulnerable. Moreover, if space-based beams or lasers were built, they could be used to destroy missiles. Missiles can dodge or send out decoys; cities can not.

This does not mean that "Star Wars" devices would be useless, however. They could not prevent a "first strike", but they could help to make a "first strike" successful. First the missiles would devastate the enemy, then the space weapons would mop up his weak and disorganised retaliation.

At present, only the Americans have the technology to build a successful "Star Wars" system. This advantage has made the Russians very anxious to do a deal. But it has to include limits on "Star Wars". Reagan has said that he will not accept such limits - in the same way as he was unwilling to trade Zakharov for Danilov. I rather think that some sort of arrangement will be patched up soon.

Madawc Williams

Algeria: The Wind from the East

Independent Algeria celebrated its 24th birthday last July but the town of Constantine made 1986 a year to remember by hosting the most serious riots in the country's post-war history on November 8-10.

Constantine is the capital of eastern Algeria. But it is far more than that. It is the religious capital of the country as a whole and it is, above all, the centre from which the ideology of Arabo-Islamic nationalism radiated out in the 1920s and 1930s to sweep the country and prepare the ground for the revolutionary war of 1954-62.

The city is the birth-place of Abdelhamid Ben Badis, the leader of the Islamic Reform movement in the 1930s who is today one of the few uncontested national heroes Algeria has. But it is also the focal point, culturally and politically, for the whole of eastern Algeria. And practically all the leading figures in the regime of President Chadli Bendjedid, including Chadli himself, are easterners.

The rioters consisted of four groups: high school students protesting about the introduction of new subjects - "Islamic education" and "political education" - into the curriculum of the Baccalaureat, the exam which decides access to higher education; university students protesting about the inadequate living and working conditions on the campus; ordinary townspeople outraged by the indiscriminate brutality of the riot police (directed in particular against women students) and, finally, unemployed youths from the shanty towns taking advantage of the situation to make their own point.

Underlying all this is the Algerian state's retreat from the ambitions it nourished and the expectations it encouraged in the 1960s and 1970s. Falling oil prices and revenues have meant big cut-backs all round, but this has come at the point where the state, having already shed the socialist vision of the Boumedienne period, is increasingly dependent for its legitimacy upon its ability to deliver improved living standards. It is therefore running out of room for manoeuvre.

The Algerian government is a right-wing military dictatorship. It was a very peculiar and interesting left-wing military dictatorship ten years ago, one which had few if any counterparts elsewhere. But it proved unable to develop along socialist lines after Boumedienne's untimely death in 1978 and it has since evolved into a right-wing regime with more than a passing resemblance to the military regimes

RACE Contd

ture. Left to their own devices, they made a place for themselves in British society.

But the West Indians did not bring with them a well-established culture of their own. They supposed themselves to be British, and when they found that they were not treated as being simply British they were vulnerable to insult in a way that other immigrants were not.

That is why in the sixties they developed a racial hide to protect themselves against the world. (The Round House Conference of 1967 marked the conceptual appearance of the "black race" in English politics.)

Race Relations Act

The liberal establishment, having failed to do anything to secure the British identity with which the West Indians came to England, responded to the emergence of "black power" with the ill-conceived Race Relations Act, instead of with measures to deal with the specific problem of West

Indian accommodation to English society.

The absurdity of the Act was pointed up when, as I recall, the first conviction under it was for an expression of prejudice against the "scottish race".

The Act gave official currency to race conceptions, and religion and national differences were placed under the category of race. The racial form was laid on by the state, and became the raw material of a new radicalism.

The new radicalism has culminated in Anti-Racism. Anti-Racism defines racism as prejudice plus power. And since political power is controlled by the white majority in Britain, only whites can be racist.

Blacks - that is, everybody who is not lily-white - can be as racially bigoted as they please, but can never be racist.

Anti-Racism has this to be said for it: it ridicules the "racial awareness" courses of the multi-cultural wets. It says that whites who go on these courses just become more sophisticated racists.

That must be so in logic, since they cannot cease to

be white. And that is so in practice as a matter of experience.

Race Based Politics

Anti-Racism is the best thing that has happened since the Race Relations Act set race politics in motion. It is the consummation of racially based politics, and after a good dose of England might be ready to return to non-racial politics, and to become once more the mongrel nation that doesn't give a damn about biological breeding.

Either that, or it will become a carefully segregated conglomeration of racial thoroughbreds supervised by Mrs. Boateng.

And wher will the Irish fit in then? Ken Livingstone has made us an ethnic minority and declared us to be one of the great oppressed people of the earth. But anyone who cares to go to Ireland and take a look will see that we are whiter than the English.

And we can pass for English whenever we please - look at Callaghan and Healy. In a properly racial Britain we will have a real identity headache.

HOUSING

Mark Cowling and
Sue Smith

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Since Labour's massive defeat in 1983 many areas of its policy have been subjected to *ad hoc* revisions decreed by party spokesmen. Jeff Rooker, the shadow Housing Spokesman, has made himself particularly unpopular amongst Labour local councillors by insisting on maintaining the right to buy, engaging in a Dutch auction with Tory spokesmen in discounting council houses, and criticising various features of council housing.

One way of understanding Rooker's statements is that he is simply engaging in electoral realism: he knows that council housing is unpopular with the electorate, and feels that to defend it to the last is electoral suicide. It is, however, possible to defend Rooker in a more principled fashion by arguing that socialist housing policy in Britain should be orientated towards universal owner-occupation, which is what Mark Cowling and Sue Smith's article seeks to do.

Housing tenure is probably the hottest current housing issue, but whatever policies Labour produces on tenure must be coordinated with policies on the construction industry, town planning, labour mobility and industrial location, land availability, and several others.

The *Labour and Trade Union Review* will welcome further discussion of an issue briefly raised but not pursued in the article: what overall priority should a Labour Government attach to housing? Are current estimates of £30bn. backlog of housing repairs and of a need for 800,000 homes an indication of a crying social need which should come high on Labour's list of priorities? Or have the repair estimates been prepared by interested parties in the housing industry? And has the need for homes been inflated by a particular definition of homelessness, or by people who put themselves onto a council housing waiting list as a precaution rather than because they are desperate?

These are very serious questions, as a Labour government will obviously face enormous demands from the health service, all sectors of education, for some reversals of Norman Fowler's review of social security, for restoring Britain's run-down infrastructure and much else besides.

Labour urgently needs a properly thought-out set of priorities if its next spell in government is not to lead to enormous disappointments.

Socialism and Home Ownership



Going up: forecasts suggest 7m households by 1991.

Notes contd.

of Latin America.

There have been plenty of protests and demonstrations and even riots in Algeria since Chadli succeeded Boumedienne in 1979. But Constantine has been quiet until now. The recent riots there (for which, incidentally, at least 186 people have already been jailed for up to 8 years) were unencumbered by any particular ideological associations. They do not appear to have been an especially Islamic affair.

And that is why they are significant. Unless we are much mistaken, the heartland of the Algerian nation has at last begun to serve notice on its rulers, much as it took the lead in serving notice on the French 60 years ago.

Hugh Roberts

1. THE LEFT'S POLICY ON COUNCIL HOUSING: A CRITIQUE

Bevan's Vision

The Left's vision of council housing remains very much that of Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health (and hence Housing) in the 1945-50 Labour government. He decided to tackle the acute post-war housing shortage using the local authorities as his instruments, and placed severe curbs on private building for sale. [1] He rejected the pre-war system under which speculative builders catered for the middle classes and the local authorities for the working class and for their elderly:

We should try to introduce in our modern villages and towns what was always the lovely feature of English and Welsh villages, where the doctor, the grocer, the butcher and the farm labourer all

lived in the same street. I believe that it is essential for the full life of the citizen...to see the living tapestry of a mixed community.

In pursuit of this aim, Bevan insisted on maintaining high standards for council housing, despite the acute pressure of homelessness. [3]

This vision, of council housing providing for all types of people, is an attractive one, and is generally adhered to on the Left. We contend that this vision is now politically impossible and must be abandoned. The obvious problem with this vision is that the policies of successive governments have rendered owner-occupation a more satisfactory tenure, all round, than municipal renting. To realise Bevan's vision therefore requires the achievement of parity between council housing and owner-occupation.

The Labour Housing Group

This is one of the goals of the Labour Housing Group. Their main proposals for attaining it are:

...to remove the privileges of owner-occupiers, so as to separate the legitimate preferences of many people to own the homes they occupy from the web of tax benefits and status symbols which surround home ownership in contemporary British society. [4]

To remove these privileges, they suggest: paying mortgage interest relief only at the standard rate of taxation; introducing a tax on the income in kind from home ownership (a new version of Schedule A Income Tax); and levying capital transfer tax on profit from the sale of one's own house. [5]

Because of the current shortage of council housing in many areas, this would have to be backed up with a

massive programme of investment in council housing, which would in turn allow those seeking council houses to be seen as:

the customer whose needs and aspirations are to be met by the public authority providing the service, rather than as a supplicant who should be grateful for whatever home the authority has decided is appropriate for him or her. [6]

The Conservatives' 'Right to Buy' policy should be repealed, and only reintroduced if:

significant steps had been taken towards parity of treatment between owners and tenants and when public sector housing investment was running at a high and substantial level.

There should be no discounts and no special privileges towards securing a mortgage for council tenants wishing to buy. (7)

The standards of the new public sector housing need to be high. For example:

The Parker Morris standards are too low in several respects...In the medium term, a standard which offers a separate bedroom to every household member who wants one should be aimed at...Individual household members should be able to invite their own friends into part of the house without inconveniencing the rest of the household...All rooms should enjoy an attractive outlook. (8)

In addition, it is widely recognised that the management of council estates leaves much to be desired, so part of the programme calls for more democratic accountability of councils to tenants and an effective right to repairs. (9)

These proposals from the Labour Housing Group are the logical implications of pursuing Bevan's vision for council housing in the Britain of the mid-1980s. Further to the left, Norman Ginsberg provides us with a souped-up version of the package, with more emphasis on democratic control and a harder line on owner-occupiers. (10)

Housing Tenure and Voting Behaviour

Let us now see why a programme of this sort, whatever its merits in the abstract, is politically impossible. Although some socialist policies can be pursued by local authorities or other groupings, it is obvious that policies of the kind needed to make council housing and owner-occupation equally attractive would have to be initiated largely from Westminster. Their minimum prerequisite is, therefore, the election of a Labour government.

It is, of course, possible that a Labour government might get

elected in spite of its housing policy and then find itself in a position to implement the Left's programme. But, ideally, socialist policies should be popular and should actually contribute to an election victory. In dealing with housing in particular, there is every reason to think that housing policies are important in electoral terms. Housing tenure influences voting behaviour. As Dunleavy puts it:

...over the whole period of the 1970s, people's housing tenure continued to be closely associated with voting. After occupational class influences have been controlled for, home owners in each class are twice as likely to vote Conservative as council tenants.

Indeed, he suggests that tenure may have become a more important influence on voting behaviour than occupational class. (11) Mrs Thatcher's victory in 1979 was partly attributed to her promise to sell council houses, of which 75 per cent of Labour voters approved. (12) Many people deserted Labour between 1979 and 1983 but the most dramatic figure must surely be the Labour voters who bought their own council houses, of whom 59 per cent switched away from Labour in 1983. (13)

It makes good sense to vote according to one's housing interests, because housing policies have very direct effects on individuals. In the 1983 election, council tenants aspiring to buy their own homes and people on mortgages of over £25,000 could expect the Conservatives to favour their interests and Labour not to.

More generally, council tenants can expect to get a better deal from Labour than from the Conservatives, while the reverse applies to owner-occupiers. In contrast, with any luck, the rival policies on defence or the European Community would have little impact on most individuals.

Compared to its 1983 performance, Labour needs a swing of 1945 dimensions to win the next general election. (14) Thus the chance of Labour carrying an unpopular housing policy with it as it surges to victory on other issues is remote. Let us now examine the likely contribution of the Left's policy on housing tenures to Labour's election chances.

An Assault on Owner-Occupiers

Owner-occupation has been rising steadily since the early 1950s, when it accounted for 29 per cent of tenures, to 55 per cent in 1980 and at least 60 per cent today. Over 42 per cent of owner-occupiers are manual workers. (15) Council housing has now declined to 28 per cent of tenures

from a high of 32 per cent and private renting is down to 12 per cent. (16)

So reducing the privileges of owner-occupiers means reducing the privileges of a clear majority of householders. Nor can it be assumed that all council or private tenants support an attack on the privileges of owner-occupation, for many of them seek to become owner-occupiers themselves.

The statistics here are less reliable because they depend on hypothetical circumstances, but according to one poll 90 per cent of people under 35 expect (not hope, *expect*) to own their own home within the next ten years. (17) 45 per cent of council tenants want to buy, although only 14 per cent of them want to buy their current dwelling; 70 per cent of people under 60 want to become home owners.

Of course, the popularity of owner-occupation is partly an artificial popularity based on government policies which favour this tenure against council housing. However, to win popular consent for measures to equalize the tenures, over 60 per cent of the electorate have to be induced to vote against their own interests as they currently see them.

Obviously some owner-occupiers are stricken with guilt at what Chris Holmes of the Labour Housing Group describes as their '*unjust privileges*' (19) and will support the Left's policies for altruistic reasons, but it would be unwise to depend much on altruism.

To selfish owner-occupiers the Labour Housing Group offers some improvements in mobility using measures which the Conservatives might adopt, some help with repairs, a simplification of flat leaseholds and - the only substantial carrot - some help to people on low incomes to become owner-occupiers. (20) But overall they rightly say that:

it is almost inevitable that the proposals outlined for the reform of housing finance will be seen as a sectarian assault on owner-occupiers. (21)

By voting Labour, an owner-occupier or aspiring owner-occupier is quite possibly voting for additional limitations on mortgage interest relief, a tax on home-ownership, capital transfer tax on the profits of selling one's own house and a halt to council house sales.

2. SOCIALISM AND HOUSING TENURE

The picture painted by the Labour Housing Group and others is that massive spending is needed on council housing to make it as attractive as owner-occupation, to deal with an estimated £30bn backlog of repairs

and to make up the shortfall of 800,000 or more homes. (22) Against this approach we want to advance three arguments.

First, the approach tends to conflate the basic human need for shelter, which socialists should obviously wish to fulfil, with our desire for attractive housing.

Many middle-class people with adequate incomes choose to have relatively cramped accommodation or an unattractive view from one or two rooms or to fall a little behind with repairs in order to go on a foreign holiday or buy a better car. Their basic housing needs fulfilled, they choose to meet their wants for things other than housing.

The Labour Housing Group's programme effectively says that housing must come before these other aspirations. There is no Labour plan to meet people's wants for foreign holidays.

Second, if we make European comparisons, Kilroy makes the point that:

Many other European nations now have a higher standard of living than the UK. However, by conventional standards, the UK is the best housed nation in Europe, with on average more rooms and more amenities (inside WC, bath, hot water) per person than elsewhere. (23)

Further, if more housing is available, the 'need' for it increases: people living fairly comfortably with relatives experience a 'need' for an independent dwelling, etc. (24) This problem of the overlapping of basic human needs with wants which should probably be left to market choice is particularly acute in housing and has not been seriously addressed on the Left.

Third, whilst in the abstract most writers accept that no particular tenure is socialist, in practice the Left identifies council housing and socialism. (25) Undoubtedly, council housing has met and meets much need which would otherwise be unmet under current arrangements.

However, council housing is by no means necessarily socialist, as can be seen if we consider the following extreme case: imagine the possibility of a direct labour organisation building a house which is then sold to a family on supplementary benefit whose mortgage repayments are subsidised by the DHSS, under a scheme to be discussed below.

This appears to be a much more socialist arrangement than one where a council borrows money on the market, puts a housing contract out to a private builder and then lets its houses at economic rents to 'desirable' tenants whose housing need is relatively mild.

3. UNIVERSAL OWNER-OCCUPATION?

A Bad Deal

At the beginning of this article we argued that the Bevan vision of council housing for all was now politically damaging to the Left, because it involves an assault on the most popular and widespread tenure. We now need to say a little more about the drawbacks of council housing.

There is no doubt that council tenants are getting a bad deal at the moment, compared to owner-occupiers. Kilroy calculates that indirect subsidies, from a position of rough parity in 1978/79, will have moved by 1983/84 to a position where tenant householders will have got 33p of subsidy for every £1 of subsidy received by owner-occupiers.(26) The better council properties are being sold and are not likely to be replaced at anything like the same rate by new building. Owners are acquiring an asset, whereas tenants are not.

Kilroy estimates that an average tenant in 1982 who remained a tenant for 25 years would have to be given an asset worth well over £24,000 at the end of the period to attain a position of parity with the average housebuyer.(27) The owner can make repairs at will, assuming the money is available. The tenant is dependent on the will of the council, which tends to carry out repairs according to its own schedule rather than the perceived needs of the tenant.(28)

An owner who wishes to carry out innovative improvements (e.g. total open plan living or stripping out the plaster throughout) is at liberty to do so; his or her own money is at risk. A tenant who does this is affecting the rentability of the property and is liable to be stopped by the tenants' collective or the Housing Department.

It is tricky, but quite possible, for an owner to move from one part of the country to another. Because of a widespread feeling that council housing should be reserved for local people, it is very difficult for a council tenant to do so, despite an official desire to facilitate this.(29)

Fulfilling Bevan...

To fulfil the Bevan vision of an organic community, council housing will have to be massively expanded, involving an unpopular redirection of resources, or doctors and butchers etc. will have to jump the queue into council housing - assuming they can be persuaded to live in it... Council housing is, in any case, well on the way to residualisation. In 1982 61 per cent of council tenants received rent and rates rebates or Supplementary

Benefit housing assistance, and around a fifth of council tenants are dependent on Supplementary Benefit.[30]

The Bevan dream is increasingly distant; the requirements for its implementation are becoming increasingly heroic. What is worse, in order to pursue the dream it is necessary to antagonise the increasing proportion of the working class who are owner-occupiers. The split between council renting and owner-occupation has become a major split in the working class, and a serious obstacle to socialist housing policies.

The Alternative

What we now want to advocate is that a version of Bevan's dream should be pursued, but in a different way. The Left should pledge itself in favour of virtually universal owner-occupation. Let us consider how this could be achieved.

The obvious obstacle to universal owner occupation is that many council tenants are too poor to buy their own homes. Even continuing with the Tories' discount scheme, they would be unable to find a deposit if one were needed. Moreover, if they expect to be dependent on state benefits, they face the problem that the DHSS currently does not make capital repayments on mortgages.

We propose, therefore, that the rules be changed, and that the DHSS, within limits to be described, make payments for house deposits and for capital repayments on mortgages. Tenants on Social Security could then raise a mortgage in the normal way, and the DHSS would make the repayments. At the end of, say, 25 years, the house would become the property of the former tenant, although the DHSS would perhaps retain a claim to a percentage of the value of the house when it was sold.

People who were on a DHSS-sponsored mortgage but then got a well-paid job would be able to repay the deposit and any DHSS stake and become normal housebuyers.

People who took out their own mortgage but then became unemployed would be able to get the DHSS to make the capital repayments, but presumably with an upper limit similar to the current upper limit on Supplementary Benefit assistance with rent.

The Implications

Obviously such a scheme has many implications, and our aim in writing this paper is partly to invite other, more expert, people to help think these through. We have, however, some ideas about the immediate implications of the scheme and also about policies in other areas which

would be needed to make the scheme work.

Let us start with the immediate implications.

What would the scheme cost? This is rather difficult to say. The Department of the Environment was asked by the last Labour government what would be the cost to the public purse of selling a council house at 16-17 per cent discount, and reported that losses would vary between £2735 and £8535 per home, averaging about £5000. In 1980 the DoE told the Conservative government that the *profits* per house would reach up to £9218. This at least leaves us feeling better as we flounder!

What categories of people need to be excluded from the scheme? One category should probably be people needing heavily sheltered housing, for example people who are severely handicapped. Another is those on short-term contracts. Even if the formalities of purchase were simplified, people on very short-term contracts of employment in a particular place, students in halls of residence and others in analogous situations should not be expected to buy; for such transient people not already catered for, municipalised ex-private rented lettings might be ideal.

People currently living in private rented accommodation with non-resident landlords could have a right to buy on the same lines as council tenants; those with resident landlords would be eligible for the DHSS waiting list (see below).

What about failure to maintain mortgage payments? This would lead to much more complex proceedings than does council eviction at the moment, and it might be attractive for both purchaser and building society for the DHSS to make mortgage payments directly on behalf of people in difficulties.

What about people living in property such as high-rise flats? The normal position of leaseholders in such dwellings is that they have to pay a service charge; in flats with severe structural problems this would be unreasonably high. There seems to be a good case for putting such service charges down to the costly mistakes of the past, and paying the bulk of the service charge from public funds.

Some other immediate implications relate to more general housing issues which are affected by the universal mortgage scheme. A number of policy areas would need to be rethought.

4 RELATED HOUSING POLICY ISSUES

Housing Allocation - a National Points System?

First of all, what about housing allocations? At present we have a market system for owner-occupiers and a system at least partly based on need for council tenants. The obvious procedure would be to represent the needs of those below a set poverty line (which might be above Supplementary Benefit level) as a cash sum available from the DHSS as a deposit.

Thus more children or medical problems or a longer time in overcrowded or unfit accommodation would represent a larger cash sum. This would mean that it would be easier to get a house in Middlesbrough than in London, which is also the current situation with council housing. But there would now effectively be a national points system, not a series of local ones.

As Bryan Gould comments, a lack of houses can only be solved by building more houses, not by changing the tenure system.[31] There is obviously a danger of stoking up too much demand for houses in a scheme such as this, and the DHSS allocations would have to be balanced against the supply of housing.

Similarly, there would have to be (locally set) limits on the amount of mortgage repayment the DHSS regarded as 'reasonable'. Families on a DHSS mortgage wishing to move would be able to do so, but might have to go back onto the points system queue if they wanted more expensive accommodation to meet extra needs.

Aid for First-Time Buyers

Those using DHSS deposits would be rivals to more normal housebuyers at the bottom end of the market, and the introduction of the scheme should therefore be coupled with an increase in aid to financially conventional first-time buyers. A possible carrot for such buyers might be the opportunity to purchase hard-to-let council property as a starter home. Many owner-occupiers would accept as reasonable a shift in the subsidies currently offered away from tax relief for second- or third-time buyers and towards aid for the two types of first-time buyer.

Various schemes to aid first-time buyers have been tried in recent years, and we are simply proposing their extension. Such schemes should be particularly geared to older housing in inner-cities; the scheme already used by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, where building societies lend in bulk to the Executive for on-lending, would be a useful measure, suitably adapted for local authorities.[32]

There is an obvious danger that our scheme would inflate house prices at the bottom end of the mar-

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ket, and a Labour government should consider stimulating the labour-intensive construction industry to build more low-priced dwellings.

Stabilising Mortgage Interest Rates

Another important feature of socialist policy on owner-occupation, which could be widely popular, yet is barely hinted at in *Right to a Home*[33], is the stabilisation of mortgage interest rates. This is important in its own right, in that the housing expenditure of housebuyers can suddenly rise by an alarming amount, and people like to be able to plan ahead with some security.

A government-controlled stabilisation fund could be set up to iron out the peaks and troughs in building society net receipts.[34] In this respect Labour's interventions with the societies in 1974-5 and 1978 are a prototype to study.[35] Such a policy should be pursued by socialist governments in any case, but would become particularly important with the large numbers of low-income borrowers who would result from a universal owner-occupation scheme.

Enhancing the Local Authorities' Role

Several authors advocated an enhanced role for local authorities for assessing local housing need and trying to fulfil it.[36] Given that the current housing shortage is much less a gross lack of shelter of the kind found in the immediate post-war period, and more a question of local shortages of particular types of housing, this makes excellent sense. This role fits admirably with a universal owner-occupation scheme. It would also help to solve two problems not raised above.

First, what should be done about repairs for owner-occupiers too poor or too frail to carry them out? The obvious solution is a local authority repairs service, offering advice, maintaining a register of approved local builders, giving improvement grants and doing much of the improvement work through the direct labour organisation. In some

cases, this might involve the local authority in taking a stake in the equity of the house. Many current owner-occupiers would welcome the advice such a service could offer, or a maintenance contract with the direct labour organisation.[37]

Second, what about people who are now council tenants who would find difficulties in dealing with the complexities of ownership, grants etc. ? (Don't we all ?) Again, a unified local authority housing service could help out.

Another important role for the local authority would be in providing incentives to people to move into areas which it thought were in danger of running down - perhaps by offering to guarantee mortgage lending which the building societies were otherwise reluctant to provide. Thus, rather than disbanding the council's current Housing Department and direct labour organisation under universal owner-occupation, they would have a somewhat different, but enhanced, role.

5 CONCLUSION

A universal owner-occupation scheme obviously has vast implications, many of which would emerge only in practice. It would also, naturally, become something of a political football with the Conservatives trying to manipulate it to aid their supporters and Labour (one hopes) skewing it towards assistance to the poorest.

But we argue that it offers the prospect of healing the great rift in the working class between owner-occupiers and council tenants, that it would promote social mixing of the kind Bevan sought and that it holds out the possibility of escape for those currently caught in less desirable council property.

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37. cf. Daniels, 1984, *op. cit.*

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