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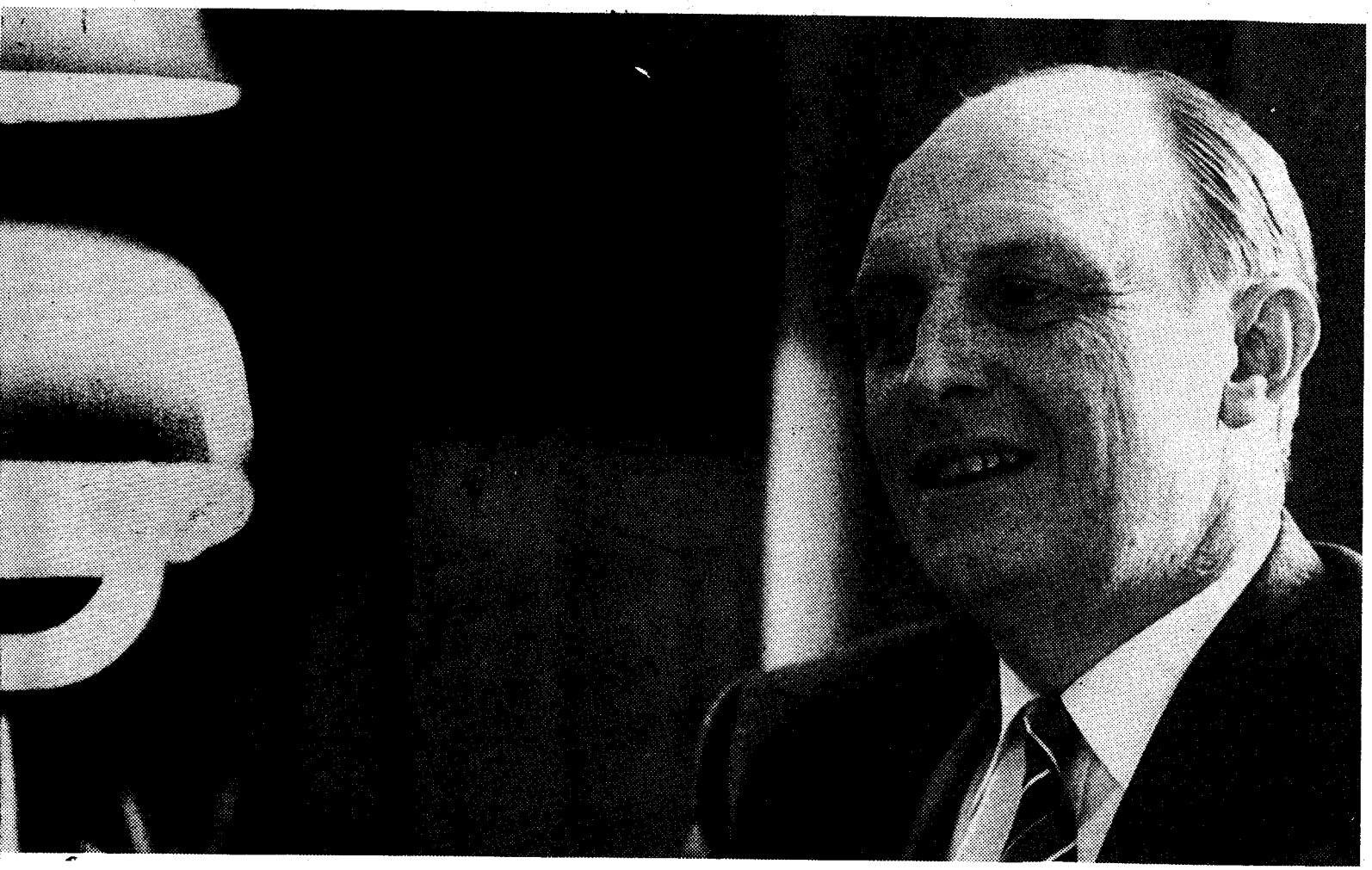

EDITORIAL

Labour in the cold light of Greenwich

Supporters of the Labour Party should resist the temptation to blame the media coverage of the Greenwich by-election campaign for Labour's disastrous result there. A generally hostile press has not prevented Labour from winning other by-elections. Nick Raynsford, Labour's candidate at Fulham a year ago, had little or no trouble from that quarter. Deirdre Wood was given a hard time because she was vulnerable. And she was vulnerable because her campaign was dishonest.

The Greenwich Labour Party insisted on selecting a candidate in its own doctrinaire image, a supporter of all the current leftwing fads, from the political fetishisation of homosexuality to support for Provisional Sinn Fein. It then behaved as though it not only knew that such causes would lose votes, but also believed that the voters could be conned into thinking the candidate entirely innocent of such damaging associations.

If Deirdre Wood had stood up for her beliefs, and then dared her opponents to debate them with her, she might not have persuaded any voters of their soundness, but she would certainly have impressed them as someone with the courage of her convictions. But she did the opposite. She endeavoured to conceal her opinions and left herself open to the charge of trying to con the electorate. She thereby gave the impression that her convictions were not really convictions at all.

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A representative disingenuousness

The idea that elections should be about policies alone, and that the personalities of the candidates are irrelevant, is absurd. Those who voice it betray their own incomprehension of the nature of representative democracy. Voters in general, and above all the floating voters who often decide elections, like to know where they stand in regard to their would-be representatives. They have every right to do so.

A candidate who has unusual beliefs is one thing. But a candidate who dissembles her unusual beliefs, who cannot even be trusted to admit to her own age, who has so low an opinion of the people she aspires to represent that she thinks that she can get away with this sort of behaviour, and who breaks down under the first bit of media pressure, is hardly likely to inspire confidence among the voters. And a party which puts up a candidate of this sort cannot expect the electorate to feel much confidence in its political judgement on other matters.

It follows that it would be equally wrong to put all the blame for the Greenwich defeat on Labour's candidate there. That Deirdre Wood fought such a pathetically disingenuous campaign is undoubtedly due in part to sustained pressure from Neil Kinnock and Walworth Road. While this suggests that candidates of the "new left" variety may prove willing to forego the championing of their views when leaned on, it also suggests that Kinnock and Walworth Road shared their candidate's belief that the electors of Greenwich could be conned. That belief was, after all, no more than a local application of their more general faith in image manipulation as an electorally viable substitute for serious politics. They, too, got the result they deserved.

A House of Cards

This result should have put paid to whatever illusions there may have been about Labour's prospects of forming the next government. An opposition party which, in the run-up to a general election, can contrive to lose a reasonably safe seat to a third party and by a very large margin cannot be taken seriously as a contender for national office.

Pending the outcome of the general election, Greenwich has to be taken as the British public's interim verdict on the Labour Party in its current state. And, more than anything else, it amounts to a judgement on Neil Kinnock's strategy for reviving Labour's fortunes by glossing over internal political differences and manipulating media images.

The house of cards has collapsed. It has taken only one vigorous rasberry from the electors of Greenwich to blow it all down. Neil Kinnock probably feels that he has no option but to try to put it all together again in time for the general election. In the short run that may be so. But in the long run, to try to resolve Labour's difficulties by such expedients is to mistake the disease for the cure.

Wood and Hewitt

Three different reactions within the Labour Party to the Greenwich defeat have made their way into the headlines in the last month, and it is worth our while to consider them all. Most attention has been paid to the notorious leaked letter from Neil Kinnock's Press Officer, Patricia Hewitt. But Ken Livingstone has had something of interest to say. And an interesting, and possibly hopeful, development has been the emergence of a new grouping called *"Londoners for Labour"*.

The Hewitt letter has been widely taken as expressing the determination of the Kinnock leadership to tackle the politically suicidal extremism of sections of the London Labour Left.

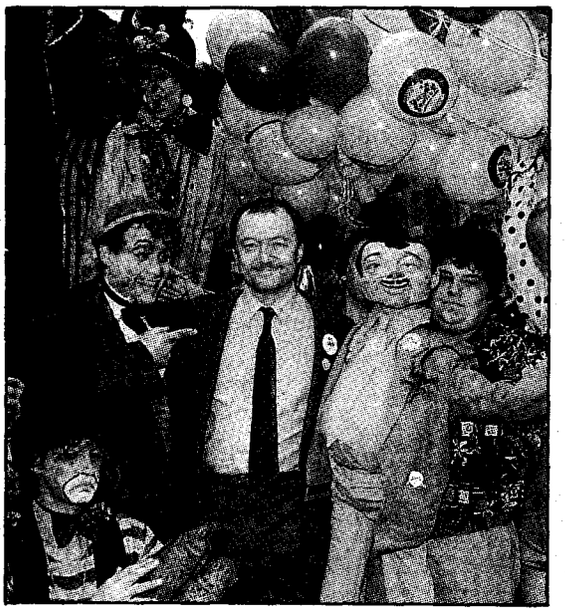
"...the 'London Effect' is now very noticable. The 'loony

Labour Left' is taking its toll; the gays and lesbians issue is costing us dear amongst the pensioners; and fear of extremism and higher taxes/rates is particularly prominent in the GLC area"

It is not surprising that one of Neil Kinnock's closest advisers should be concerned about the electoral repercussions of developments within Labour politics. It would be alarming if she was not. But the letter is none the less remarkable for the extent to which it suggests that the Kinnock leadership is hooked on media 'perceptions' of the problem. Those who employ the terminology of London Evening Standard headlines *("loony...Left")* may reasonably be suspected of sharing the London media's view of politics in general, and indeed to have become entirely dependent upon the media's definitions and presentations of reality.

And it is surely remarkable for a former General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties to speak in such a clinical, if not cynical, tone about "the gays and lesbians issue". Does Ms Hewitt believe in Labour's policies towards gays and lesbians or not? If she does, how does her attitude towards the business of explaining those policies to the electorate differ from those of Deirdre Wood? And if she doesn't, the question arises as to whether Neil Kinnock believes in them. And if he doesn't, why has he not fought to get those policies changed?

It is now becoming increasingly difficult to suppress the thought that Neil Kinnock only moves against a particular section of the Labour Left when the media has indicated to him that he should do so. And the rationale for doing so is invariably nothing more than electoral calculation, and calculation of a kind which strongly suggests a deep contempt for the electorate, the attitude of the marketing director of a company selling toothpaste.



Livingstone's Stand

The reaction of Ken Livingstone has been of a quite different order. He has vigorously defended the Left's policies towards blacks, gays and lesbians, and has continued to champion the cause of Provisional Sinn Fein. That is a political response. It is the exact opposite of cutting and running in the face of a hostile media campaign, and is far more likely to earn the media's respect in the long run.

Livingstone has built his career on these issues and the constituency they appeal to, and he is clearly prepared to weather a hostile press campaign in defence of his political base. While *Labour & Trade Union Review* makes no bones about the fact that we detest Ken Livingstone's politics as a brand of leftism that is profoundly anti-working class, we recognise that it is a brand of *politics*, not toothpaste, and that he has the political acumen and nerve to stick up for it.

"Londoners for Labour"

The third reaction of note has been that of *"Londoners for Labour"*, a new grouping within the London Labour Party which has been launched by a number of leading trade unionists. Its chairman is Brian Nicholson, the Treasurer of the London Region of the Labour Party and Chairman of the T&GWU, and it counts senior officers of NUPE, the GMBATU and other major trade unions amongst its leadership.

"Londoners for Labour" has made it clear that it aims to recapture the London Labour party for the traditional politics of the working class, and *Labour & Trade Union Review* wishes it well in this endeavour. But it remains to be seen whether it will prove capable of developing into a genuinely political response to the appalling state into which Labour politics have degenerated in the London area.

At present it runs the risk of appearing little more than a coterie of trade union fixers of the time-honoured variety, and it is unclear what it stands for over and above its hostility to the doctrinaire faddishness of the middle-class Left. It is going to have to develop politics around a *positive* programme if it seriously expects to regain ground within the Labour Party's rank and file.

Beyond London.

It is difficult to see how it can do this if its horizons remain bounded by the London area. For the malaise which afflicts the Labour Party is clearly national in scale. After all, London has always been a home to political extremism and faddishness of an outlandish character. In itself, there is nothing new about this.

What is new is the absence within the London Labour Party of a genuine orientation to the working class. It was because the London Labour Party in the past was seriously involved in promoting the interests of the working class that the faddishness and utopianism of the middle-class element of its membership could be tempered and restrained within politically tolerable limits.

But the London Labour Party is not alone in its lack of an effective orientation towards the working class. The Labour Party as a whole has lost its bearings in this fundamental respect. And that is why the current condition of the party is so critical. It demands far more than a purely local response.

One thing the Labour Party cannot do is rely on academics and journalists to recharge its batteries for it. The *New Statesman,* in its inimitably purposeless manner, has recently been musing on whether or not socialism has a future. This is the literary equivalent of fiddling while Rome burns. The question which faces British socialists and trade unionists in the light of the Greenwich fiasco is whether or not the *Labour Party* has a future.

LABOUR IN BELFAST

How many members of the labour movement know that the first Labour Party Conference was held in Belfast, in 1907. (Conferences prior to this were of the old Labour Representation Committee.) It is a sad state of affairs then that workers in this, the birthplace of the Labour Party, are forbidden membership of the Party.

Over the years Northern Ireland workers, Catholic and Protestant, have applied for membership and have been refused on grounds varying from constitutional difficulties to lack of money! If you are scandalised by this, as we were, you can help set things right by contacting:

The Campaign for Labour Representation, 98 Lansdowne Road, Belfast 15.

NEWS REVIEW

ZIRCONNED?

Secrecy and surprise have always been major weapons of war. Hitler's invasion of France and of Russia, the Normandy Landings, Israel's Six Day War, Egypt's early success in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 - all of these were made possible by secrecy.

Secrecy held, in all these cases, despite a few leaks and some hints that seemed obvious *with hindsight*. By contrast, Gallipoli is a good example of an operation that failed because it was expected.

What does this have to do with the Zircon affair? Clearly, the Russians would have known that it was there. They would have known that it was military - since commercial and scientific satellites are not kept secret.

But would they have known what particular military purpose it was for? (There are many types of military satellite). Would they even have known whether it was British or American? Had they received scraps of information about a project called "Zircon", would they have been able to connect it with an anonymous satellite sitting in space?

It seems likely that Zircon was leaked by people within the military and administrative establishment, who considered that it was costing far more than it was worth. (It is hardly worth keeping a secret, if the scheme itself is worthless).

If this view of the matter is correct, then Duncan Campbell, the *New Statesman* & Co have been going to great trouble , just in order to make Britain's military machine slightly leaner, fitter and more deadly. Have they stopped to think if this is their real role, I wonder?

Michael Alexander

From Red Guard To Old Guard.

Twenty years ago, China tried to break the mould of world politics, and failed. Mao made a serious attempt to build a society without the profit motive and without major inequalities. His plan was that the young "Red Guards" should attack and then regenerate the apparatus of the Communist Party. He never doubted that effective power should be in the hands of the Communist Party (ruling "on behalf of the broad masses", of course). But he suspected, quite correctly, that those in charge of the apparatus would be willing to allow private profit and inequality in the quest for economic growth. Therefore, he organised the Red Guards.

The result was chaos. Red Guards fought each other in a mad factionalism that defies any simple explanation. Everything was disrupted. Leaders appeared, disappeared, and sometimes re-appeared. Lin Piao went suddenly from hero to non-person, and then from non-person to arch-villain. (And this was *before* the fall of the "Gang of Four". Mao's politics were visibly getting nowhere. After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping rose to supreme power, and duly took the "capitalist road" that Mao had always been warning against.

One constant in all this struggle was the power of the Communist Party. Mao attacked the actually-existing party in the name of an idealised party. His opponents defended what actually existed. All factions agreed that those who had "correct ideas" had a perfect right to suppress those whose ideas were wrong. They just disputed which set of ideas were correct.

A few months back, some Chinese students tried to change the terms of the debate. They called for greater freedom of opinion - even, in a few cases, for a multi-party system. Since the official line on "correct ideas" had changed so many times, it might seem logical to allow open debate and free discussion. Logical - but not expedient. The latest movement for democracy has been suppressed, as previous ones were.

Power is in the hands of the Communist Party apparatus, and likely to remain there. At any given stage, those in charge reckon their own ideas to be "correct", and see no need to give freedom to their opponents. This is the sad legacy of Leninism and one-party rule. Ideas of equality have been toned down. Ideas of planned production - to be based on actual human needs, not profit - have been very much reduced. But the power of the Party apparatus remains.

This was shown in a drastic form by the sudden fall of Hu Yaobang, who had been second in command and heir apparent to Deng. It is widely assumed - though no one knows for sure - that he lost power because he had allowed protest to go beyond what the ruling party thought acceptable. It is uncertain if Deng chose to remove him or was forced to sacrifice him. Chinese politics are made by those in charge of the Communist Party apparatus, and they tend to keep their reasons secret from everyone else. Deng has now declared that the leadership crisis is over - but says little about what the crisis involved.

It seems that the economic changes will not be reversed. They have, after all, boosted production greatly. On the other hand, it seems absolutely certain that the Party apparatus will remain the only place where real politics occurs - and occurs quite secretly from the rest of the society. How such a system will evolve - if indeed it can evolve - remains to be seen.

Madawc Williams.

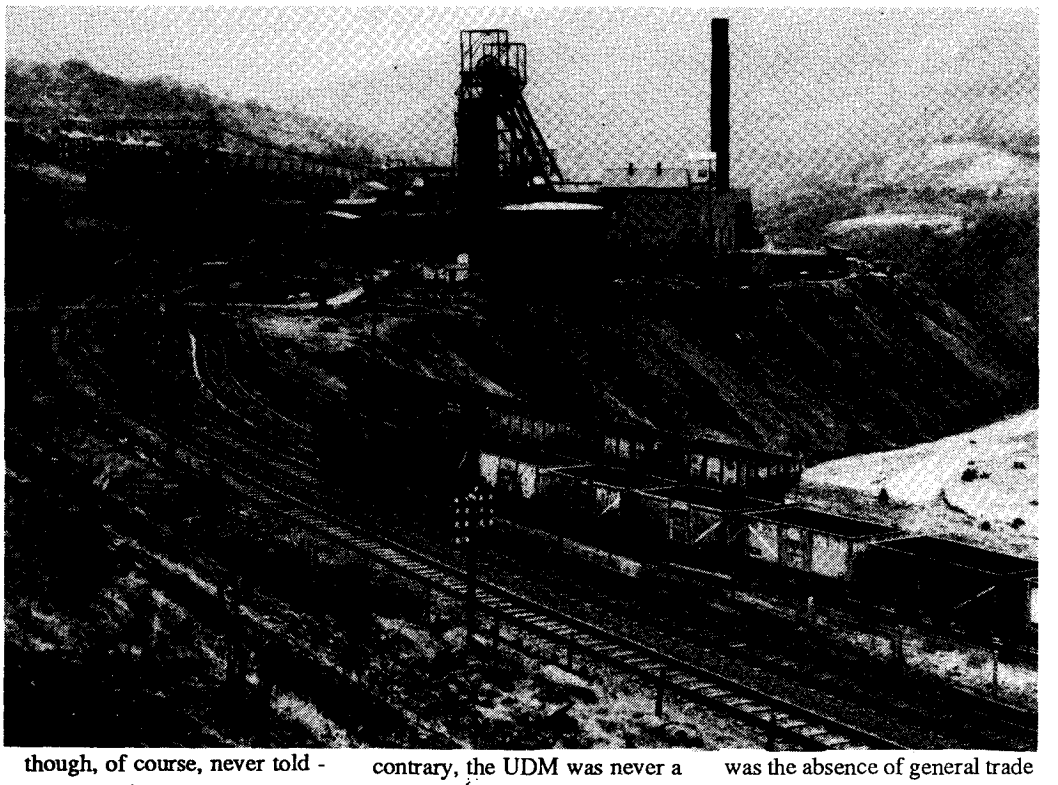
Trade Union Notes

by Dave Chapel

A month or so back, I was shown a draft guidline for writers for a proposed new left-wing newspaper. The gist of it was that this newspaper would respect the sacred cows of left-wing theology. Certain things, such as actions by a union, would not be criticised. *"Four legs good, two legs bad"* came to mind.

I feel, therefore, that I'd better begin this column with a bit of a health warning: it will seriously damage your prejudices. What the trade union movement desperately needs is a journal unwilling to spare its feelings. And its feelings will not be spared here. Life's too short and there's so much to be done.

So beware the red triangle, read on, and let's have your comments.



The miners

The NUM pulling itself together is an even less pretty sight than the NUM tearing itself apart. Still, the fact that it is pulling itself together at all is, I suppose, something to be thankful for. There isn't any sign of open and honest debate on the year-long strike. This would be a healthy thing, both for the NUM and for the movement as a whole. Instead, we are seeing a kind of falsifying of history. So I suppose it is no surprise that the practice is carried on in the NUM by CP members Mick McGahey and George Bolton. Whatever else one may say about Communist Party members, they have never been known to exhibit a death wish. They are survivors above all else - unlike honest revolutionaries like poor old Arthur Scargill.

We are given to understand - though, of course, never told - by the McGahey camp that the strike was all the fault of a certain Yorkshire megaolomaniac, and that now these CP "moderates" must pick up the pieces. In fact it was Mick McGahey, with his *"we will not be constitutionalised out of a strike"* speech, who stopped the union balloting its members and ultimately led to the break-up of the movement's vanguard union. Not Arthur Scargill.

McGahey's cover-up has been so successful that the media have been positively drooling over him and his protege, Eric Clarke, as Clarke has sought to succeed McGahey as NUM Vice-President. Fair enough! We are men of the world. If that's how things must be done in the NUM, so be it. And if it helps an accommodation with the UDM, some good will have come of it. I have to admit that such indecent behavour is likely to achieve far more than the wimpish whining of the union's "decent man", Peter Heathfield.

And what of the UDM? In spite of propaganda to the contrary, the UDM was never a Spencer Union, a Company Union. Its current confrontation with British Coal makes that clear. The UDM set itself the task of *replacing* the NUM. Any many of us, conscious of the mess the NUM was in, may have wished it luck.

It has failed. And, having failed, it has no further progressive role. The sooner it can re-unite with the NUM, the better. But to expect straightforward reunification is unrealistic, even with an Eric Clarke NUM.

Nevertheless, steps forward can be taken. The air of hostility from both the NUM and the Labour Party can be lifted. In the case of the Labour Party, this can be done by a recognition that the UDM was formed because of a reasonable grievance and not because of some inherent scab mentality in Nottinghamshire. (In 1972, 1974 and 1981, Notts was *100%* solid. No other area could make this claim.)

The idea for unity that I would like to float is an indirect unity. The single biggest block to victory in 1985 for the NUM was the absence of general trade union support - but especially the absence of support from the primary users of coal, the power workers. This happened because the power workers were not prepared to sacrifice themselves and the whole country for a cause which they saw was undemocratic.

A merger between the EETPU and the NUM makes great sense. Admittedly, sensible mergers in our movement are few and far between. But such a merger would ensure that any future miners' strike would succede while at the same time ensuring that no strike would occur without both just cause *and* the democratic decision of the members. It would also enable the UDM to come back into the fold.

Tory danger

Conservative trade union legislation over the last seven years hasn't done us any real harm. And much of it has done a lot of good. That's not quite the thing to say, I know, but

it's true. We all know that it's true.

Most of us knew it was true at the time of the legislation itself, but very few of us were prepared to say so. That kind of playing at ostriches has had unfortunate consequences and could have catastrophic consequences. It is the old story of the boy who cried wolf.

Mrs Thatcher shows every sign of winning the next election. As trade unionists we may not like this. But we do ourselves and our members no service by failing to prepare for the consequences of a Tory victory.

One consequence could be the proposed Tory trade union legislation. It is of an entirely new order altogether. Effectively, what is proposed is the ending of the right to strike collectively. The decision to withdraw labour is to be an individual decision.

Even after a ballot, the union will have no sanction against anyone who refuses to strike. There would be no point in even having a picket line

Now this *is* a serious attack on basic trade union rights. The earlier legislation was *not* such an attack. Unfortunately, we said time and again that it was. It was soon clear to our colleagues that their rights were under no threat. Why should they believe us this time? Have we cried wolf once too often?

If a new Tory government brings in its proposed legislation, it can be defeated only by a combination of intelligent public relations and massive (as well as intelligent) industrial action. Over the last seven or so years we have made both of these more and more difficult to achieve.

There is, however, one ray of hope. By some miracle, the movement failed to cut from itself its two strongest components. The EETPU and the AUEW are still with us. But it is ironic that we can only be saved by those who have been vilified and pilloried for the last seven years.

Wapping

While SOGAT and the NGA may not be exactly celebrating the end of the Wapping dispute along with Mr Murdoch, they are clearly damn glad it has ended. The Fleet Street chapels are roundly loathed in both unions and, among the rank and file at least, there is even a feeling that they have got their just deserts.

For years the Fleet Street minority have dominated the print unions, ensuring that their own wages and conditions are second to none but doing nothing about the wages and conditions of the rest of the members - which in most places are pretty awful.

More than that, Fleet Street has never been afraid to rub its power in. In the London NGA, for example, it is common for Fleet Street representatives to catcall and make loud derogatory asides throughout debates which do not directly concern them.

It is understandable, therefore, that SOGAT and NGA members, for the most part, never supported the Wapping dispute and often gloated over Murdoch's victory. It may be understandable. But it is not good enough.

Fleet Street printers may be a bunch of arrogant, right-wing, money-grabbers, prepared to walk all over their colleagues. But if you let yourself be walked over, we live in a world where there is always a goodly crowd willing and able to do the walking.

The general membership of the print unions have only themselves to blame for their treatment in the past. Things have come to a pretty pass indeed when they need Mr Murdoch to sort out their lives for them.

There are, indeed, organisational difficulties for the majority asserting their power. Most are in small shops as against the mass concentrations in Fleet Street. But the unions *do* facilitate a change. Virtually every major position and proposal is subject to a postal ballot. And it isn't all that difficult for even a small shop to propose a candidate or a resolution.

The defeat at Wapping *could* begin a new era in the print unions. But only if the non-Fleet Street members get an injection of backbone and do something for *themselves.*

The policy without a party

Why do people associate the Labour Party with the 'loony Left' but fail to associate the Tory Party with *its* fringe? After all, the 'loony Right' is *by far* the craziest collection of freaks and nutcases ever to have entered politics.

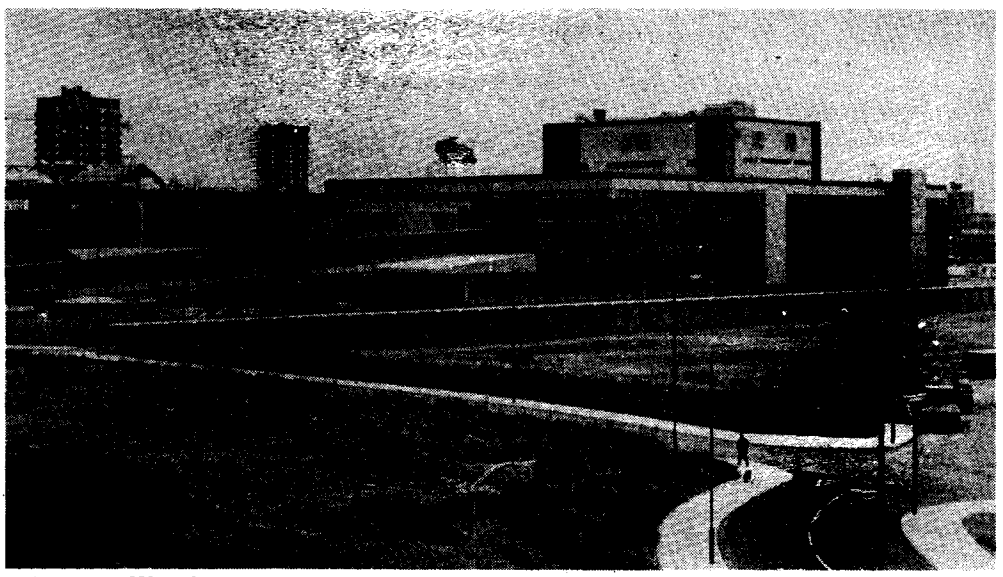
Some people blame the press. But TV and Radio, which are far more influential, devote a lot more time to exposing the Right - sometimes falsely.

The answer, I think, lies in the fact that there is in the Tory Party a solid centre which is absent in the Labour Party. Thatcher, Tebbit, Baker, Heseltine *et al.* have coherent policies on mainstream matters. And they have a coherent world view - minimum state interference but maximum effectiveness where the state does intervene.

Labour's policies on unemployment, housing, health etc. promise no more than those of the Tories. They merely propose to change the mix in the mixed economy a little bit. So the biggest difference perceived by the voters lies in the political margins.

Labour did once, for a brief period, have a very different solid core to its policies. Eleven years ago it opted for democratisation of a kind which made Tory schemes for profit-sharing and gambling with Telecom shares look silly. Labour opted for industrial democracy.

Ten years ago, the government-sponsored Bullock Committee recommended a total change in company law allowing workers an *equal* share with share-holders in the running of Britain's commercial and industrial enterprises. It put the people who do the work in



Fortress Wapping

TRICKLES OF BLOOD

A short time back, there was a wave of soccer hooliganism. Those involved were predominantly white, though some blacks were involved. More recently we have had a wave of anti-police riots. Those involved have been predominantly black; for the most part children of people who came here from the West Indies in the 1950s and 1960s. Inevitably, this second round of violence has been seen as indicating a "race problem". To what extent is this true?

We must also ask if the recent round of rioting is likely to prove profitable to the black community. Was it the start of a revolution? Or was it *"reformist rioting"* - rioting that is likely to force the government to do more for the black minority?

Or again, were we seeing the start of a destructive round of riot and repression? Will we see black communities urged to take an ever more alienated position by those well out of "the front line" - and then left in the lurch if serious repression should start?

These questions will be looked at in detail. But first, let's look at the history of the problem.

Immigration and Enoch Powell.

Britain acquired its racial minorities in a fit of absent-minded smugness by its rulers. During the 1950s, Macmillan's claim that "you've never had it so good" seemed to be absolutely true. Keynesianism seemed to have cured unemployment once and for all; indeed there was a labour shortage in some sectors. In these circumstances it seemed natural to try to find new workers from parts of the newly-freed empire.

In most other European countries (and most other parts of the world, for that matter) there is a definite idea of citizenship. No one receives citizenship automatically. You can live and work in a country for a long time without gaining the right to stay there indefinitely. Citizenship is only awarded after a series of quite strict tests and checks, if at all. None of those countries acquire minorities by accident or oversight. Most of them are very ruthless with illegal immigrants.

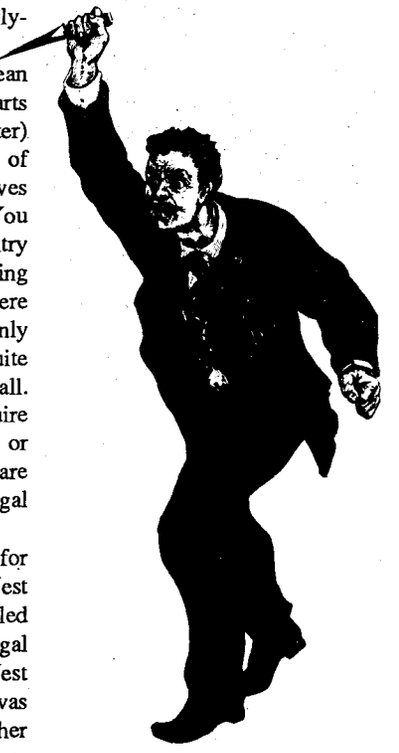
In the last few years, for instance, several of the West African countries have expelled huge numbers of illegal immigrants from other West African countries. Since it was black people throwing out other black people, the matter received far less attention than it deserved. Better remembered (because Britain was directly affected) was the expulsion of Asians from Kenya and Uganda.

In Britain, there was no such thing as citizenship. We were all "subjects of the crown", whether we lived in the United Kingdom or in the Commonwealth. In the case of immigrants from India or Pakistan, this meant that people could arrive with no knowledge of British culture or of the English language. And it was not up to anyone in particular to help them to settle down.

More importantly, there was no particular limit to the number of people who might choose to come and live in Britain. It had never mattered before - there had been small numbers of non-white immigrants for a very long time, and this had caused no particular problems.

But suddenly the numbers were no longer small, and it did begin to matter. Britain could absorb a few hundred thousand immigrants without much trouble, but how many more would want to come? A million? Two million? Five million? Twenty million?

Moreover, immigration did not occur evenly across the whole society. People like to make their home close to friends and relations, naturally enough. This meant that huge numbers of immigrants would arrive in a particular area in the course of a few short years. Suddenly Brixton became a West Indian area, Southall an Asian area, etc.



Trade Union Notes continued

control.

As these policies were debated, nothing was heard about Labour's lunatic fringe - and we've always been healthy enough in the past to have a lunatic fringe and to be able to live with it.

Had Labour gone into any election since 1977 on a programme of industrial democracy, the lunatic fringe wouldn't have got a mention - it would have been kept where it belongs, firmly on the margin - and I believe we would have won.

But industrial democracy was rejected by our very conservative leadership. They opted for class struggle when class victory was on offer. And it wasn't just the Frank Chapples and Arthur Scargills and Hughie Scanlons who rejected progress.

One of the first to rush into print, in the *New Statesman*, to attack the Bullock recommendations was our present leader, Neil Kinnock. The result is that his own policies are reduced to tinkering with this and tinkering with that.

Industrial democracy would have avoided the miners' strike. It would have avoid the never-ending teachers' dispute. And, doubtless, in its absence, there will be many more damaging and unnecessary disputes (as Arthur would say) in the years to come.

But that only means that industrial democracy is still on the agenda. The leaders may still be blind to its necessity. But the problems it alone can solve will still remain with us, until leaders of the required calibre come to the fore. Leaders who are prepared to march forward and not mark time.

Naturally, this was upsetting to people who had lived there all their lives. Racism began to spread among the white community, as non-white immigrants ceased to be an interesting rarity. There were the Notting Hill riots in 1958, in which whites led by fascists and racists attacked the immigrants. It became clear that unrestricted immigration would lead to the growth of a powerful racist right with support in the white working class, and to an ever greater cycle of violence.

In this context, restrictions on immigration began to be introduced.Some Liberals and Leftists called these measures racist, but in fact they were only bringing Britain into line with other nation-states, none of which allowed unlimited immigration. Moreover, these curbs were the only way of preventing the growth of real racism among the white majority.

It was in this context that Enoch Powell began to talk about race and, in 1968, to warn of **"rivers of blood".** At first he called for curbs on immigration - but curbs were already being introduced. On the other hand, it was plain that all those who had arrived before the curbs were here to stay. And their children would grow up knowing no other home.

In the face of this, Powell became disorientated. Even though no more immigrants were coming in, those who were already here spoiled his notion of what Britain *ought* to be. Had he been the sort of racist/fascist that many people accused him of being, he would then have gone on to found a far-right party based on nationalism and racism. He could have build on the widespread popular support he had at that time, winning support both from right-wing conservatives and fromracially-prejudicedworkers who would normally vote Labour.

Powell did nothing of the sort. Powell was and is a Tory and a nationalist of the old-fashioned sort. He will not break the rules of parliamentary democracy, *because those rules are part of the British tradition that he cherishes.*

Finding himself unable to make progress within the Tory party, he migrated to Northern Ireland, joining the more moderate of the two main Unionist parties. In two critical General Elections, he urged support for the Labour party. (He saw Labour as the best defence against the E.E.C.)

Powell's only new contribution to the race issue was a weak proposal for **voluntary repatriation.** He repeated this call after the first riots in Handsworth. But he seems to lack any strong belief in this "remedy". (In fact, it seems that a system of voluntary repatriation already exists. It is not given much publicity, and few people choose to make use of it.)

Powell probably knows that his solution is no solution. But he can find no other answer, without breaking with traditions in which he has a deep belief.

Powell and Fascism.

Powell is not a racist, in the strict meaning of the term. He is a nationalist, seeing certain British traditions as being supremely important. He does not see race as such as being a problem - he has gone on record as saying that had the immigrants been Germans, say, this might have caused even greater problems. Powell is not a Fascist either. The mainstream of British politics has utterly rejected Fascism as it existed in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

In the 1930s, there were elements in the political mainstream who admired Hitler and/or urged appeasement. I don't think Powell was one of these; in any case, that whole tradition failed and was rejected. Right joined Centre and Left in the war against Hitler. And they did so under the leadership of Churchill, the arch-imperialist, the man who was responsible for Tonypandy (generally regarded as the worst thing any British government has done in mainland Britain since the Peterloo Massacre of 1816).

British politics since 1939 has had no place for Fascism of the Hitler or Mussolini variety. And Powell was not the man to break with such a tradition. He was against immigration, against the Left, against a great deal of what was happening in the society, but he wanted nothing to do with the fascist-led National Front. He advised voters not to reject democracy in the hope of finding something better in the gutter. The comparison is of course very unfair to gutters, which have a useful social function; but at least Powell made his meaning plain.

Rejected by Powell, the National Front made a brief showing on the stage of national politics. At one moment they looked like becoming a major political force. But they didn't last long. Their strongest and most effective elements turned out to be Fascists of a very crude Hitler-worshipping sort.

This crude fascism made them obnoxious to right-wing Tories. Racially-prejudiced workers who might have supported them turned away in disgust from such Hitler-worshippers. Both groups regarded the war against Hitler as Britain's "finest hour". Besides, immigration was clearly coming to an end. And it was generally agreed that those who were already lawfully in the country had a right to remain.

The National Front has split and lost support. It has gone back to being a nasty but not very dangerous fringe movement. At the moment, the far-Right seem to be concentrating on making random racist attacks on those who can't easily hit back at them. At no time, not even at the peak of their power, have they risked serious conflicts with any of the far-Left groups.

Today, there is no sign of the far-Right benefitting from the recent round of riots. The riots were in any case anti-police (and occasionally anti-Asian), not anti-white. The white majority, despite being a minority in some of the areas where rioting takes place, has not been a target and has not seen itself as such. The very opposite has happened; white youths have joined in the riots. An intelligent far-right organisation might have been able to exploit the situation. Fortunately, no such thing seems to exist.

Racist Britain.

Is Britain racist? There's no denying that British society is vaguely racist. Some degree of racism has always been there. Or rather, there has always been *a vague dislike of foreigners.* Non-white foreigners, being more obviously and recognisably different, have usually got a worse dose of such dislike.

Does this mean that Britain is racist in the same way as South Africa is today, or as the U.S.A. used to be? By no means. People often talk about racism as one and indivisible. Any trace of racism, however obscure, is identified with out-and-out blind prejudice. This is both foolish and dangerous. It is wrong to look at just the common element - discrimination according to race - and to ignore the different strengths of feeling.

There are degrees of racism. Britain has never had extremes of racism, and seems to be progressing slowly towards a general absence of racism. Large numbers of people may feel a little bit prejudiced, but are not likely to go to extremes.

A survey for Weekend World found that a majority of blacks felt that they personally had never been discriminated against over jobs. On the other hand, *a large minority* had experienced discrimination, and a majority felt that there were employers who would discriminate.

If racism in Britain is seen as part of a traditional prejudice against *all* foreigners, black or white, then it becomes clear that we're making progress. Typically, there is prejudice and hostility whenever large numbers of foreigners come into the country. They are seen as a threat. Thus it was with the Irish in the 19th century, with the Jewish immigrants around the turn of the century, and with the refugees from Hitler before World War Two. (During the first months of the war, many foreigners, including some dedicated anti-fascists, were rounded up as a threat and put in detention camps. Only later were they let out again and allowed to do their bit to defeat Hitler.)

Colour, of course, adds to the problem. Were it not for the colour of their skins, the children of West Indian immigrants would tend to blend

invisibly with the rest of the society (as have the children of earlier waves of immigrants). But the fact that they can be identified, and can identify themselves as a group, makes their position harder.

Even so, *on the whole integration has occurred.* A few "ghetto" areas get a lot of attention, but they are not typical. Inner-city streets are for the most part quite unlike areas such as Brixton or estates like Broadwater Farm. In general, black and white co-exist fairly peacefully. Even the riots were not black against white. They have been blacks plus a few whites against the police and firemen.

A style in rioting.

Some people have been asking if we have been seeing something like the riots in Northern Ireland, which led on to the present IRA campaign. Many seem to fear this; a few even seem to be hoping for it. In fact, what happened in Northern Ireland was very different. Riots there were highly structured, and followed a strict code of conduct.

Looting was rare or unknown. Arson was used fairly selectively (although the burning of buses caused bus services to cease in some parts of the city). Rape was unknown - had rapes occurred, as they did during the Brixton riot, this would have been regarded as an absolute disgrace, and probably dealt with quite swiftly and ruthlessly.

The northern Catholics who rioted had a clear end in view, one which they had held for many decades - they wanted a United Ireland. Protestant rioters had an equally clear aim - to prevent this.

The IRA re-appeared on the scene in much the same way as tulips appear in the spring. They had lain dormant since their last campaign, waiting for another chance. When the chance came, they had plenty of contacts and trained people able to take advantage of it. They organised and trained those who had rioted, and were able to start their war once again. For several years they made progress; since the mid-1970s they have been in decline, although they still have considerable strength left.

The riots in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham have been noticeably structureless. The rioters have burned and looted in their own areas; they seemed to be treating the whole thing as just a way to have fun. In each case,it has been a *local* incident that has sparked things off. The accidental shooting of a woman in Brixton caused a riot in Brixton, *and only in Brixton.* Each incident has been local, and has had local results.

Moreover, in each case it has been police attempts to curb drug dealing that seems to have raised tensions before the actual explosion. Thieves and drug dealers have played a major role in all the riots. Nothing stronger or more coherent seems to lie behind it.

The Left and the Police.

Riots are often encouraged and applauded by people who would themselves never dream of getting involved. A mindless hostility to the police has been encouraged. The police are seen as an enemy who must be attacked on all possible occasions.

This has been done at an intellectual level by people who mostly risk nothing at all - neither life nor limb, nor income, nor liberty. Naturally, discontented young men are likely to follow such a lead, to take the propaganda seriously.

It is reasonable enough to work for a better police force. Left to themselves, police may become corrupt or brutal, or both. They do plenty of things that deserve criticism.

But such criticism should be aimed at producing a better police force, rather than simply attacking what exists. By world standards, we have quite a good police force. In almost every other country, the police regularly carry guns. People from overseas, with experience of their own police, find British police far less violent and less likely to break the rules. The police are certainly imperfect, but any other police force is likely to be a great deal more imperfect.

Criticism of the police must be specific and detailed if it is to be useful. When public transport is criticised, for instance, one can point to many other countries where higher subsidies produce a very much better system. Some people say our businessmen should be more like the Japanese. Others would like to change our military/defence system to neutrality and a Citizen's Army, on the Swiss or Swedish model.

But which other police force should we be looking to as a model? In the particular respect of recruiting minority groups, it would be good to learn from the USA. But hardly in other respects.

Pc Keith Blakelock

In fact, most criticism of the police is in terms of an ideal which has never existed, and which no one claims ever to have existed. The police are expected to arrest all the murderers, burglars, rapists, heroin dealers, violent racists etc. On the other hand, police must never stop or search anyone who turns out to be innocent (or whoes guilt can not be proved). The police must be blamed for everything that goes wrong, and never given credit for anything they get right.

Of course, there are those who say a revolution is what they are after. The police are part of the old system that they want to overthrow. To be replaced by something like the police in the Soviet Union, perhaps?

No society can operate without some means of enforcing the law. Policemen may not on the whole be particularly likeable people. But the alternative would be something a great deal rougher, more violent and more likely to punish unjustly. The IRA in Northern Ireland has run such a system. Liberals and wet leftists in Britain have been careful to turn a blind eye to it. In the Lebanon, we have an even more drastic example of what happens when each local community tries to enforce its own law and order.

Reactions to the conviction of three men for the murder of PC Blakelock have been quite predictable. The cry goes up "Winston Silcott is innocent". Winston Silcott would seem to be an unlucky bloke - to be wrongly convicted of two quite separate and unrelated murders! It is true that some of those accused were set free, at the judges direction's. But someone can be as guilty as hell, and still be quite properly set free due to flawed procedures or suspect evidence. In Northern Ireland, the late Gerard Steensone, alias "Doctor Death", was held on suspicion of no less that six killings, and had to be released when a "supergrass" was discredited. His rivals in the INLA feud had no such problems; they held him responsible for the killing of their friends, and had no need to prove this to a jury!

It could be that the Blakelock verdict would have been different had the circumstances been different. Juries do take notice of the social context, even though judges tell them not to. For instance, in 19th century Australia, juries acquitted those involved in the "Eureka Stockade", even though no one doubted that they had done just what the prosecution said they had done. But in that case, it had been the rioters who had been massacred by the police and army. The juries felt that they had already paid the price. In the case of PC Blakelock, it seems that about 30 people were involved in killing him. At least 27 of these got away with it. That's the jury system - and it usually works against the police and for the defendants.

If we didn't have the police...

Supposing Margaret Thatcher were to hold a press conference and declare "we've just decided on a wonderful

Flashback: Riot police watching a car ablaze in Brixton during disturbances which followed the shooting of Mrs Groce last September.

new solution to prison overcrowding. Instead of putting offenders in prison, we're going to shoot them in the legs!" Even the most right-wing Tory would stand aghast at such an idea. Nor is it remotely likely that Thatcher would suggest it.

Yet the IRA has been doing just that for many years, and with surprisingly few protests. There are people on the Left who see no contradiction between protesting at police brutality and applauding the IRA. Maiming and mutilation ceased to be legal punishments in Western Europe a long time ago; the death penalty, too, has been widely abolished. Yet the IRA, which regards itself as the army of an alternative state, can maim, mutilate and kill without protests from Amnesty International or the National Council for Civil Liberties.

To be fair, the IRA would find it hard to operate in any other way. It cannot let the regular police and security forces operate freely in the areas it controls. But crime does not cease to exist in the absence of the police. To avoid a total criminal anarchy, the IRA has to enforce its own law and order.

To run prisons of its own would hardly be practical; nor could it give each case a proper judicial investigation. In practice, it has had no choice. If it is to carry on its war against the state, it must kill or maim those who seem probably to have done something to deserve it.

In the absence of the police, we would not have anarchy. Rather, we would have something like the IRA's system of criminal justice. (Indeed, we might have something a great deal worse. The IRA has had a long tradition of handling such matters).

A truly revolting alternative.

A few groups on the Left have actually tried living up to their words, treating the rioting as some sort of revolution. One of these is an odd bunch of anarchists who call themselves "Class War". As far as I can tell, their membership is mostly young, white and punkish. A number of them got involved in the Brixton rioting. They say *"We fully admit that many of us were there and took an active part in the proceedings...only a handful of us actually live in the area".* (**Class War**, 5th page, 3rd column. The newspaper has neither date nor issue-number, but has a large picture of a black petrol-bomber on the front).

"Class War" express pleasure at what happened to the police. Reporting a small riot in Toxteth, they say *"...unfortunately, only one pig was injured..."* **(Ibid, 2nd page 3rd column).**

About attacks on firemen, they prefer to say nothing at all. They could hardly applaud such attacks - after all, firemen are without doubt workers, not very well paid workers. They do a difficult, dangerous and very necessary job. They are trade unionists - many of us will remember the last firemen's strike. Any of us might need the fire service at any time of night or day, literally as a matter of life or death. That the rioters should have attacked firemen shows how mindless and short-sighted the violence really was. "Class War", like many others on the Left, prefer to ignore the matter.

On the other hand the "Class Warmongers" have no qualms about supporting looting. Thus *"As for the looting, Labour might, along with the rest of the Left, prattle on about the redistribution of wealth. The looters are actually practising it. Fuck all this shit about working class shops, there's no such thing, it's a contradiction in terms. Such things are inevitable in the early stages of a revolution. And it kept the cops busy too".* **(Ibid,** 5th **page 1st column).**

Actually, the rioters do not seem to have looted at random. In Brixton, at least, food shops were left alone - these were not the hungry mobs of earlier generations. Shops were looted if they had valuable goods in them - or, in some cases, if they belonged to Asians. And there is no sharp line that can be drawn between ordinary shopkeepers and other working people.

"Class War" think they know just what they'd do if they could push out the police. They speak with enthusiasm about a bit of popular justice done in Toxteth. Police pressure on the Croxteth area of Liverpool had driven out a lot of heroin dealers. Some of them tried to shift their trade from Croxteth to Toxteth. Reacting against this *"...a gang of 150 youths beseiged two houses....Both*

were the homes of known heroin dealers. Later in the week the gang, now 250 strong and calling itself "the anti-Smack Squad", trashed two more houses; the pushers were attacked and one hospitalised". (Ibid, 2nd page 1st column).

No one feels any sympathy for heroin dealers, of course. But supposing it had turned out they'd got the wrong people? That sort of thing does tend to happen, when an angry crowd is judge, jury and executioner. One name for it is Lynch Law - and, of course, it quite often gets people who are as guilty as hell. At present, it may be easy for local black youths to find and deal with the heroin dealers. The local pot dealers probably pointed them out - and quite possibly organised the whole thing. (Along-side the article is the slogan *"This is Toxteth not Croxteth. Strictly Ganja! No H".)*

But supposing another band of popular vigilantes were to decide they didn't want pot sold either? Is cocaine OK? Should glue-sniffing be rooted out? Just who decided what the rules are, and who has the right to enforce the rules? To get anywhere, you would need something like the IRA's system in Northern Ireland, where it is the IRA's Army Council that lays down what is and is not allowed. I really don't expect anything like that to develop in Toxteth.

"Class War" are honest in their opinions. They are also ignorant and short-sighted. Their idea of state repression is unarmed policemen occasionally hitting the wrong people (or else hitting the right people who aren't doing anything at that particular moment). They want to take things to extremes, but have no idea of what serious repression by an authoritarian state would be like. They probably think they've been through it all already.

For their sakes, and for ours, let us hope that they never see the real thing. Their minds do not stretch to the sort of repression that ripped apart the Left in Argentina. And the Argentine armed forces that did the ripping were themselves ripped apart and broken by the British military in the Falklands War. Do "Class War" have any idea of what they might be starting?

Black Power?

Is there a black community in Britain? There are plenty of black people here, certainly. But what do they really have in common, apart from the accident of skin colour? Asians (including Sri Lankans) are Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus or Sikhs. They come from four separate states, which have fought wars with each other and may do so again. They speak several quite different languages.

West Indians are very different from Asians, and not all that similar to each other. They come from a great diversity of separate and sovereign islands or island groups. Both their ancestry and their culture are as much European as African. They are Protestants or Catholics or Rastafarians. West Indian unity exists only for playing cricket. (And cricket, of course, is a legacy of colonialism).

Their African ancestry comes almost entirely from western Africa. West Africa itself consists of many different peoples, with quite different languages and cultures. None of them, however, greatly resemble West Indians.

At present, black people in Britain are represented by self-appointed "community spokesmen". Some of these are good people; others are not. Some outright swindlers and gangsters can be found among them. The late Michael Abdul Malik (Michael X) was an example of the bad sort of "community spokesman". For a time, he did very well out of playing on white guilt-feelings. Later he returned to Trinidad, murdered one of his own followers and was hanged for it. There are people around at the moment who are little better.

The trouble is, ordinary black people get little chance to say who does or does not represent them. It tends to be white politicians who choose who the "real" representatives are. They may get it right, but not always. There are black "spokesmen" who make a good living out of playing on the guilt feelings of the white establishment.

What is to be done?

The riots are a problem for society, not a crisis. If nothing at all is done,it is possible that riots could become a part of urban life. We could learn to live with them. People in Belfast have learned to live with much higher levels of violence, most of it orchestrated by a well-organised underground army that is committed to overthrowing the state.

And yet life goes on in Belfast. It was even drifting slowly back to something more normal, before the Anglo-Irish Agreement stirred things up once again. London itself carried on through the worst days of the Blitz, and has since re-built itself. There will be no race-war, and no rivers of blood. Trickles of blood, at worst.

Still, anything that can reduce riots is worth doing. There is racism in the society, - mostly not extreme or virulent racism, but it would be better to be rid of it completely. Even though most of the immigrants and children of immigrants have settled down quite nicely, it is bad that some have not. Things that could be done include:

(1) Recruiting more Blacks and Asians to the police. The police have made some efforts to do this, but more could be done. It would be wise not to insist on paper qualifications. There is a surplus of white police recruits, so they might as well take those with the best exam results. But there is hardly a surplus of non-white recruits. And success in exams has little to do with the qualities that make for good policing.

(2) It should be accepted that the police can go in hard when rioters start using guns or petrol bombs. A riot where lethal weapons are used deserves to be treated differently. A petrol bomb is not only a lethal weapon; it is deadly enough to be used in regular warfare. The Finns used them against the Russians in 1939-40 - which was the source of the name "Molotov Cocktail". Correctly used, petrol bombs can destroy armoured vehicles and tanks. When petrol bombs are being used, it would be absurd to deny the police the right to use plastic bullets. (There are stong indications that the police do intend to go in hard, next time there is a riot of the Brixton or Broadwater Farm type. This may be the reason why there have been no more such riots so far.)

(3) On the other hand, police should be far more careful about carrying guns. If they have to go after an armed suspect, why not send in police with full bullet-proof protection, instead of armed but vulnerable?

(4) The present half-legal status of marijuana is a constant source of friction. It would be desirable to prohibit it completely, but it does not seem remotely possible. In practice, use and sale in certain areas is not interfered with. It would be logical to formalise this, its sale should be licenced in the same way as alcohol, but with public use still banned. Resources could then be concentrated on other much more dangerous drugs.

(5) Architectural disasters like Broadwater Farm must be made less bleak and inhuman. Ugly slabs of concrete could be painted, for instance. Instead of endless mazes of interconnected walkways, gates should be installed to create clusters of flats with just one or two ways in or out.

(6) Various schemes should be set up to let unemployed workers be employed making our cities less dirty and more civilised and safe. Some schemes exist already, but many more are needed. They would cost money, but so does keeping people on the dole. A real system of social accounting should be set up, to support schemes that are profitable and economic from the viewpoint of the society as a whole.

Madawc Williams

Debate on Housing

Following the article on "Socialism and Home-Ownership" by Mark Cowling and Sue Smith in our first issue, ***Labour & Trade Union Review*** *is delighted to host a continuing debate on all aspects of housing policy, and invites further contributions from our readers. In this issue,* ***Dick Barry*** *challenges some of the main assumptions of Cowling and Smith's artice, and* ***Angela Clifford*** *points out the disasterous results of the Rent Act brought in by the Wilson government in the 1960's and argues that decisive action at a national rather than local level is needed to tackle the housing crisis in London and other big cities.*

London's property market is "buoyant" say the Building Societies. But, in the absence of effective government action on behalf of the working class, the market cannot resolve London's housing crisis, and is probably making matters worse.

Socialism and Home Ownership: A Reply to Cowling and Smith.

In *Labour & Trade Union Review 1,* Mark Cowling and Sue Smith argue that "ideally, socialist policy should be popular and should actually contribute to an election victory" and yet appear to accept Dunleavy's view that "home owners in each class are twice as likely to vote Conservative as council tenants". Their proposal that Labour should adopt policies which increase substantially the number of home owners is, therefore, like asking it to commit electoral suicide.

Cowling and Smith claim that Labour's perceived opposition to home ownership, or at least council house sales, is politically unpopular and was a major cause of defeat in the 1979 and 1983 general elections (which makes one wonder why housing is never seen as a major issue in opinion polls). It seems, therefore, that Labour is caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. If Labour is seen as opposing home-ownership or council house sales (which it doesn't, of course) its prospects of election victory will decline.

On the other hand, Labour's enthusiastic embracing of home ownership could lead to long-term victory but short-term defeat, as more and more home-owners vote Conservative. Following Cowling and Smith's logic, Labour should ignore these little complications and opt for housing policies that will bring short-term political gain (at the expense of possible long-term decline).

Cowling and Smith acknowledge that the present system of housing finance, whereby home-owners receive huge subsidies via mortgage tax relief, is unjust. But rather than argue for a redistribution of subsidies until there is parity of treatment between housing tenures, they advocate extending, and therefore increasing, subsidies to home owners. Under the present system about 750,000 high income earners, and tus high tax payers, receive *twice* as much subsidy as the remaining 13,250,000 home-owners paying the standard rate of tax; while council house tenants receive even less help than the majority of home-owners. What is socialist about giving the greatest help to those with the least need?

Cowling and Smith's proposal of "virtual universal home-ownership" is not practical, even if it were desirable. A number of building societies, including *Nationwide*, have suggested that the current owner-occupied housing market (about 63% owner-occupation) is near to saturation. What is required are policies which meet the many different needs of young single people, childless married couples and low-income families. These policies should actually increase housing choice - to rent short or long term, to share accommodation, to buy - rather than restrict it to the narrow field of owner-occupation. In a future issue I hope to set out these policies and in the process defend public sector housing from critics such as Cowling and Smith.

Dick Barry.

Low cost accommodation and the housing market: why central government action is necessary.

I read the ideas on housing put forward by Mark Cowling and Sue Smith in your last issue with great interest. The idea of making owner-occupation available to low-income families is a good one and should be followed up. However, I would like to point out that in itself it does not meet the whole problem, especially in big cities like London where the housing market has been put under additional strain by the economic situation, with people following jobs into the capital.

It seems to me that the housing problem has many aspects, one of which is low-income families who would like to own a home if they could, but another of which is the death of the private rented sector.

Twenty years ago many

workers in major cities like London lived in furnished rooms. It was only a lucky minority who had council flats. In those days there were almost enough furnished rooms to meet the demand for housing in inner cities - and they were cheap: a room costing perhaps £15 to £20 a week in today's prices. The inner cities were heavily populated because the Victorian houses were packed full of people.

Of course there were drawbacks. Most had cooking facilities in the room. You could hear your neighbours. Sometimes whole families were crowded into one or two rooms. There was no security of tenure. People could be evicted at a week's notice, and sometimes alternative accommodation took finding, especially for families. The situation was clearly unsatisfactory.

Harold Wilson's Labour Government brought in the Rent Act which changed the relationships in the rented sector and put the advantage with the tenant. However, most landlords were simply workers who had saved enough to buy a house, some of which they rented out as rooms. Rather than put up with the myriad restrictions imposed on them, which made it very difficult to evict tenants and which included rent tribunals which set very unrealistic rents, most landlords just gave up.

Others were driven out of the business by local councils who demanded substantial, costly improvements with compulsory purchase as an alternative. Landlordism was made unprofitable. The result is that rented accommodation has virtually disappeared in inner city areas.

London has been particularly badly hit. The Victorian houses have been converted into flats. And as there is an utterly insufficient supply of these, prices have become truly astronomical, with flats fetching far more than whole houses did three or four years ago. The mortgage payments on £40,000 plus are a terrible burden on workers who have, in many cases, been forced into buying because there is no rented sector to speak of.

Bed-and-breakfast "hotels" have sprung up in place of rented rooms. Hotels are outside the scope of the Wilson act, and so token breakfasts are distributed to what are basically people in furnished rooms. But whereas furnished rooms used to be miniature homes, these "hotel" rooms have the worst features of hotels exaggerated. They are also fairly dear.

Those families who cannot find, or afford, accommodation in this distorted market have to declare themselves "homeless". Local authorities have a statuory duty to house homeless families in their area. As they have insufficient accommodation, they put people up in over-priced bed-and-breakfast hotels.

Astronomical sums are being spent on the most unsatisfactory type of accommodation. At the end of 1986 there were 6,000 households living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London. Camden Council is sponsoring approximately 1,000 of these at a cost of £10 million a year! (It sounds unbelievable - over the whole of London that works out at £60 million per annum).

Furthermore, as an article in the Hamp stead and Highgate Gazette (21.11.86) points out, families can be forced to stay in the same room for up to three years until they are re-housed in slightly better conditions. It costs Camden an average of £280 a week to keep a family in bed and breakfast.

By failing to realise that a lot more housing was the key to changing the balance of power between landlord and tenant, the Labour reformers of twenty years ago made things a lot worse instead of better. And this will apply to any other attempt to change the housing market with "schemes" or by passing new laws.

Today's Labour reformers do not seem to have got on top of the problem either. Instead of providing desperately needed, cheap, basic accommodation, some local councils are demolishing tower blocks and replacing them with houses with gardens, which, they say, everyone "prefers"! Where the surplus homeless of London are to live is not their concern.

It is undoubtedly true that the housing problem has got far too serious to be left to local councils to solve, with their strictly localised responsibilities. On the other hand, the market and private enterprise have been unable to meet the huge demand for homes in the society either. All they are capable of doing is to tie up more and more capital in escalating house prices.

The market can only ration out the insuffucient supply of homes by pushing up the price. It cannot identify a social need and take proper steps to meet it. Only a political intervention at national level can sort out this serious problem.

A new **Ministry of Housing** is urgently needed. It should:

(1) take over empty council housing and "problem" council housing; the tower blocks which the councils are spending millions in demolishing can be used to house the homeless and single people;

(2) rapidly build basic accommodation for rent and for sale; there is a large demand for bed-sitters and flatlets in city areas; old industrial premises and such-like could be converted quickly to provide basic accommodation (the Ministry would employ techniques of proper sound-proofing between housing units in its operations - a thing which councils have signally failed to do);

(3) regulate the building society mortgage market, as Mark Cowling and Sue Smith suggest; building societies should make cheaper loans available to long-term savers and not behave like banks, lending to all-comers at high rates;

(4) Run a scheme for low income prospective property purchasers, as Cowling and Smith suggest; the price of mortgages will drop rapidly once there is an adequate supply of homes.

This policy should not cost very much. In fact, it should be self-financing. The aim is to provide low-cost accommodation quickly for which people will be paying sensible rents, or paying mortgages. The point is to provide basic accommodation to people who have none. When that is done, there will be time to bring in improvements.

Only national action pursued with vigour can make an impression on today's serious housing situation.

Angela Clifford.

In Our Next Issue

★ Martin Dolphin on Clement Attlee

★ Dave Chapel assesses the latest evelopments in the Trade Union Movement

★ Housing - The Debate Continues

★ Brendan Clifford explains why working class support for the monarchy has been well-founded

★ John Papadopoulos reviews *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton*

and

Why the Labour Party will not survive much longer without a coherent world view...

Does the Working Class have an interest in

Who Controls Education?

The Growth of Central Control.

One by-product of an eventual solution to the long-running teachers' dispute will be greater government control over the setting of teachers' salaries. A new Education Bill which will be introduced if the Tories win the next General Election will have the effect of putting the main descisions on what should be taught and when (known as the curriculum) in the hands of central government.

It is by now well known that the Government also seeks to set up a number of "City Technology Colleges" in the inner city areas whose main aim will be to stimulate the interests of inner city children in the process of education by providing a more relevant and interesting curriculum to that at present afforded by mainstream secondary schools.

These various centralising initiatives will continue a political process that started in the Heath era with the creation of the Manpower Services Commission (M.S.C.) and the responsibilities that fell to it for education and training. The Training Opportunities Scheme (T.O.P.S) was an early example of this movement, and the process continued during the Wilson and Callaghan years with the Youth Opportunities Scheme.

Subsequently, the Conservatives set up various initiatives designed to cope with the two related problems of low educational achievement and youth unemployment, notable the Youth Training Scheme (run by the M.S.C.) and the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (T.V.E.I.), both ultimately controlled by the Department of Employment rather than the Department of Education and Science.

Kenneth Baker: confident the Right has the answers?

The 1944 Act.

What was happening in the schools during these years? The 1944 Education Act gave local authorities control over finances and the curriculum, as well as the employment of teachers. In addition universal compulsory secondary education was to be provided by local authorities.

Following the recommendation of the Norwood Report of 1943, selective education was recommended on the basis of the view that there were three types of children with different kinds of minds. There were those children who were academically able, those who were technically able and those whose interests were predominently practical but were essentially rooted in their immediate environment. Respectively, these children were to be educated in grammar, technical and secondary modern schools.

Norwood was cautious about the nature of the sorting process, prefering selection to wait until 13, and being somewhat suspicious of the claims of the "science" of psychometry or intelligence testing, recommended long term assessment which would include reports from teachers as well as the administration of tests.

In practice, however, assessment was carried out at the age of 11 and was based very much on formal tests that bore the stamp of psycometric ideology. Basically, children were sorted into grammar and secondary modern schools, with very few technical schools being established. There just did not seem to be a demand for them; parents wished their children to go to grammar school if possible and did not see technical institutions as an equally valuable alternative.

Working Class Resentment.

The post-1944 system of selective secondary education caused a lot of resentment among the working class since it was seen to be unfair for a number of reasons. First, it was obvious that a lot of able children slipped through the net of secondary education and went to secondary modern schools, when their later careers showed an obvious ability. Second, because provision lay in the hands of the local authorities, different authorities made available different numbers of places in the grammar schools. This led to great variation in the number of places available in different parts of the country, and therefore to a sense of injustice in those areas that were comparatively badly served.

This sense of injustice was compounded by the fact that due to a population bulge during the 1950s and 1960s, the number of children who were eligible for selection for grammar schools was rising, but the number of grammar school places made available did not keep pace with the increase in population in all local authorities.

Third, a few local authorities had, with apparent success, installed systems of comprehensive education since the 1950s, notable Leicestershire and Anglesey. The Labour Government of 1964-70 compelled local authorities to re-organise their secondary education on comprehensive lines, although a few still manage to hold out (as does Northern Ireland).

Fourth, the idea of psychometry, which was so influential in the theory and practice of secondary education, was coming under increasing attack from liberal and egalitarian-minded scientists. The revelation in the mid-1970s that one of psychometry's leading gurus, Sir Cyril Burt, had engaged in massive long-term fraud in the production of corroborative evidence for the theory that intelligence was largely an inherited rather than an acquired characteristic, hastened the departure of "I.Q." as a serious actor on the educational stage.

The Plowden Report and Primary Education.

The installation of comprehensive schools had profound consequences for primary education. Now that the primary school no longer had to coach children to pass the eleven plus, they were free to experiment with different forms of primary education if they so wished. In particular, with forms of education which were no longer tied to grammar school curricula and which were more "child centered".

The Plowden Report of 1967, influenced heavily by romantic theorists of childhood like Rousseau and Froebel, and given apparent scientific support by the researches of Swiss child psychologist, Jean Piaget, led to something like a "revolution from above" in the field of primary education, with the revolutionary forces of Her Majesty's Inspectors (H.M.I.), academics and all manner of "experts" in teacher education and the para-educational services seeking to impose the new doctrine on the mass of school teachers and teachers in training.

The abolition of the eleven plus and the installation of a national system of comprehensive education should have increased the confidence of the working class in the education system. But the opposite seems to have happened, with all sections, including those in the the literate section of the population as well as the more traditional elements of the working class, apparently united in their dissatisfaction with the new regime.

Above all, there appears to be a deep distrust of the post-Plowden, post eleven plus way of educating children. It is evident that the changes that were made were not explained sufficiently (or, indeed, at all) by their protagonists in the D.E.S. for parents to understand and accept the new regime in the schools. This is one factor which has led to the discrediting of teachers as a profession within the population at large.

To a large extent, this situation is not of the teachers' own making, since (as the H.M.I. survey of 1978 showed) the Plowden revolution has only gone skin deep and most primary teachers continue to practise their trade on fairly traditional lines. The levels of inspection, administration, research, teacher-training and advice above the level of the classroom do exercise an influence on teachers' careers, and this influence cannot be discounted.

There is no consensus about what should go on in primary school classrooms. Very often, the fairly traditional work that goes on is not approved of in teacher-training colleges and in the advisory bodies of the local education authority and the H.M.I.

Children sold short.

On the other hand, parents very often feel that the education their children receive post-Plowden is not something that they properly understand and they have the obscure feeling that the children are somehow being sold short. Very often, this is due to ignorance and a lack of trust on their part, but there is more to it than that.

If the Plowden "revolution from above" failed to make a full impact on the teachers, it would be surprising if it did on parents, particularly when there was little or no effort on the part of successive governments to explain to parents the changes that were supposed to be taking place in the schools. Teachers find themselves caught between "progressive" superiors and "traditional" parents, neither of whom seem fully to trust and support them.

A similar situation exists in the secondary schools, which are now largely comprehensive. The demise of the eleven plus has led to the spread of "non-elitist" forms of school organisation, again under the influence of educational experts. Prominent among these is the extension of mixed ability teaching from the primary to the secondary school.

While this removes the "stigma" of being in a low ability stream, it means that teachers have to accommodate a vast range of ability in their class without being able properly to do justice to more than a fraction of the class. Once again this situation earns teachers neither the respect nor the trust of parents; nor are their superiors impressed when schools fail to deliver the goods.

The above problems are all self-imposed difficulties which those responsible for education have brought upon themselves. The working class demand for justice could have been met without the move towards romanticism and egalitarianism which has now become the ideology of the state school system.

The problem of discipline.

There are, however, other features of changing attitudes towards bringing up children which have big implications for the way in which schools are run. In the past, say thirty years ago, it was broadly true to say that there was parental consent for a fairly tough disciplinary system within schools, which fulfilled the minimum requirement of maintaining the order necessary for education to take place. Nowadays there is a more indulgent and hedonistic attitude towards children which tends to see discipline as, at best, a necessary evil.

It is important to distinguish between the expressed attitude of parents on discipline and the attitude they take to the disciplining of their own children. Many parents find it hard to accept even the minimal disciplinary measures that are imposed in today's schools, and are quick to complain if their child has been punished at school. Naturally children who are aware of such a reaction on the part of their parents are not slow to exploit it to their advantage.

They have their allies in various quarters. There are educationalists who, not actually having responsibility for a class themselves, pretend that discipline is nothing more than a by-product of good organisation and interesting lessons. There are pressure groups like the **Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment.** There are the Conservatives with their populist rhetoric of "parent power". There are "anti-authoritarian" Labour councils which go to extraordinary lengths to undermine the authority of teachers. One such was Manchester, which provoked the long-running dispute at Poundswick High School by refusing to back up the staff and governing body in expelling children who had written obscene graffitti concerning some of the teachers in the school.

The liberal press seems only too eager to pander to cranks and malevolent people who bear a grudge against schools and teachers. The Guardian even went to the length of publishing an article which accused teachers of being responsible for all criminal activity through their nefarious practice of victimising children.

Pay, Status and Competance.

On the Right, teachers are branded as subversives, on the Left as reactionaries and sadists. On top of this, theuyare low paid. Since status in a materialistic society depends very much on how much you earn, it is not surprising that teachers enjoy a low status. Years of being rubbished on all sides have put them in a stubborn frame of mind that explains much of their persistence in carrying on with the current dispute against an intransigent government.

Money is by no means the only issue, although it is part of the issue. Equally important is the feeling that people need to see the importance of the work of teachers through being deprived of part of it.

It will be said in reply to this, that some teachers are incompetent and that they should be "weeded out" of the profession. Then the teachers would be able to earn the respect of society once again. This was the view favoured by Sir Keith Joseph when he was Education Secretary and fitted in well with the ideology of "parent power". If you put parents on the governing bodies of schools, preferably in a majority, then they will be in a position to monitor and control the teachers.

The question of teacher competence has been treated in a demagogic way by politicians on the look out for a whipping boy. Actually, if looked at

closely, it goes close to the heart of what we expect from the education system.

Assessing the Teachers.

You would think that the question of how competent teachers are has to do with how well they teach what they are supposed to teach. But judgements of teachers are not made that way in this system.

In the first place, it is not always clear what teachers are supposed to teach, particularly when they are not working to a syllabus of one of the examining boards. Normally, the curriculum is controlled by the Local Education Authority and the governing body of the school. In practice, it is shared between the authority and the staff (particularly the head) of the school. In a badly run school, it will be individual teachers who construct their own curricula and hope to God that they work.

Secondly, since the days of Plowden, it is important not only what you teach but how you teach it. Someone who wishes to gain the favour of the advisors and inspectors would be wise to adopt (or at least seem to adopt) a "child-centered" approach; that is a non-authoritarian, discovery-based technique, based on the child's rather than the teacher's interests.

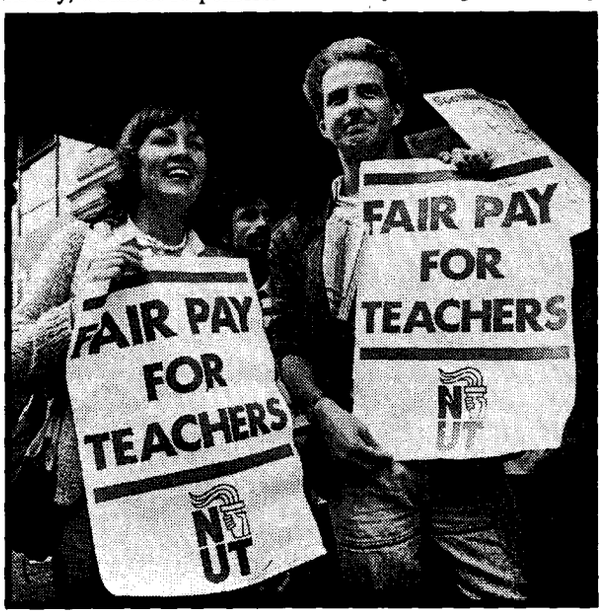
Any assessment of teachers that was in any way fair would need to deal with these points; ther ewould have to be a consensus about what is to be taught and what are the acceptable ways of teaching it. At the moment, there is not. Assessment in the present set-up would be a kind of "creep's charter", encouraging teachers to fawn over and to flatter whatever individuals and whatever prejudices happened to be responsible for assessing them.

This would be a corrupt system leading to extensive networks of power and patronage over classroom teachers. Those who did the job according to their own lights, even if these did not coincide with those of the head, inspector or advisor would find themselves in danger of being labelled "incompetent".

The need for a National System...

If you are going to have a national system of assessment, it would be wise to have a national system of education. Then you could have a national curriculum and an agreed set of guidelines as to teaching methods. Then everyone would know what was expected of them, and it would also be possible to calculate what resources were necessary to make the programme work.

We would then know who was responsible for what in education - something that we do not know at the moment. Teachers would be responsible for delivering the goods, as laid down by society. Society, as represented by the government of the day, would be responsible for providing the resources and training necessary for the effective delivery of those goods.



Come to think of it, this sound like quite a good way of running an education system, quite apart from the issue of teacher assessment. A lot of the problems faced by teachers would no longer be there, since they would only be responsible for carrying out what they are employed to carry out, and to tender advice as to what is and what is not practicable with children in a classroom or, for that matter, outside a classroom.

... and a Pay Policy.

The sorry state of the dispute over teachers' pay is symptomatic of another failure of the labour movement, not to mention the Tories; that is, the need to find a rational way of determining wage levels according to social need and to sort out material disputes within the working class; namely some form of incomes policy.

One would not expect the Tories to be interested in this, of course, so they can hardly complain if public sector pay bargaining is in a mess when you have a powerful and determined group like the teachers determined to see some form of justice available to them when no other methods than sanctions are available. To its credit, one of the teaching unions, the NAS/UWT, has seen this clearly and has for some years argued that only an incomes policy will secure a just means of remuneration for teachers.

The responsibility of the State.

The implication of what has been said so far is that someone needs to take education by the scruff of the neck and sort it out properly. Parents are not competent and not interested enough to do the job. It is not the responsibility of teachers; anyway their material interests and their prejudices will not necessarily coincide with those of the society.

Business and industry make noises off stage but do very little; for instance, Baker's initiative in providing City Technology Colleges with funding partly from private sources has been met with a deafening silence from the captains of industry. Local authorities are incompetent and in some cases megalomaniac in their treatment of education which is, after all, their main responsibility.

That leaves the state as the only body in society with the interest and the resources to develop education. The Tories partly recognise this, but do not relish the fact. They do not like the state education system, and would like to run it down. The Assisted Places scheme is a good example of their ideological attitude . It is a way of rescuing able but poor children from state education and putting them in independent schools. In practice it has tended to benefit the children of "fallen" middle class parents who can then give their children the kind of education which their class background says they should be entitled to, but which their pockets says they should not.

A Socialist Idea.

The state has taken over large chunks of post-sixteen education and has intervened within the state school system to develop particular projects on which the government has been keen and which it has not trusted the local authorities to develope on their own. The Tories do not like state education enough to do anything really good for it, though we are likely to see more moves towards centralisation if the Tories remain in power after the next election.

A lot of the impetus for this comes from Mrs Thatcher's dislike of the abuses of the education system by some Labour-controlled local authorities, rather than from the desire for a nationally-run education system which is, essentially, a socialist idea and therefore anathema to her. The Labour Party's spokesman on Education, Giles Radice, has also promised that Labour will introduce a national curriculum and curriculum development body if the party forms the next government. Now only the "decentralisers" of the Alliance are left out in the cold on this one.

There are many socialists who will deny that it is a socialist idea and and will point out the dangers that will result from a nationally controlled education system. In particular, there is a danger that state control will make schools even more effective purveyors of "bourgeois ideology" than they are already. There is an irony in this complaint; it is, after all, the attempts by some councils to indoctrinate children with what passes for a socialist ideology that prompted Mrs Thatcher to support calls for a national curriculum which were then taken up by Mr Baker.

The need for a National Curriculum.

A national curriculum need not and should not imply a curriculum written in Whitehall or Number 10 Downing Street. What it implies is a consistent and coherent framework in which education can develope and in which the lines of accountability and responsibility are clearly drawn. This can be achieved through a national curriculum council drawn from the various interest groups in society and subject to oversight from a parliamentry select committee.

Such a body, with a plurality of interests represented on it, would do much to prevent the harmful "revolutions from above" described earlier which depend on influential informal networks of people holding fashionable, but not necessarily well founded, ideas about education, who are then able to exercise an influence on education out of all proportion to their merit.

The Scots have had a central curriculum for decades and they reap the benefits of efficient response to change, consistency and justice for pupils, clear lines of responsibility and a greater respect for education in society at large.

If a national curriculum, controlled in the way suggested, could cure our educational system of the galloping neophilia * it has suffered from for so long, and introduce instead serious and practical reforms where necessary, then the country and its children, not to mention its long suffering teachers, will all have been rendered a signal service.

What the Trade Union movement could do.

The Trade Union movement could play a significant part in shaping the education system by setting out the priorities for a system which would seek to tap the full potential of the working class while accepting and rejoicing in the diversity of talent (not necessarily "academic" in nature) which lies within it.

One way in which it could do this would be by taking advantage of the Tories' attempts to revive technical and vocational education by getting involved in sponsoring some of the City Technological Colleges that have been proposed. It is clearly in the interests of the working class to have an education system which is responsive to its needs and which can help in the development of the working class in a fast changing world.

Grim-faced teachers hear details of the Baker deal

Kenneth Baker: Imposed the pay settlement

If the wooley egalitarianism so dear to the hearts of some socialist intellectuals could be set aside for a moment, the trade union movement could assist in an important educational experiment which would not involve massive disruption of the education system but which might help to provide the effective technical education system for the working class that has been absent from this country since the Tories under Balfour abolished the technical and vocational functions of the elementary board schools under the 1902 education act.

In this way, trade unions could show in a practical fashion that it is they rather than capital which is the force in the society apart from the state which has a serious interest in developing education. That would do wonders for public perception of the trade unions and their role in society.

Christopher Winch.

(* **Neophilia** - an irrational love of new things, for no better reason than that they are new and different - and without regard for their worth or for who (if anyone) is likely to benefit from them. A dedicated neophiliac will run through a whole series of ideas, discarding each as it ceases to be fashionable. Neophilia is at home in the Paris rag trade. But it is now rampant in the London Labour Party, with predictable results. Ed.)

READER'S LETTER
CofE Racism

As a footnote to Brendan Clifford's article on Anti-Racism in the last *Labour & Trade Union Review*, I would like to add the following.

A Barbadian friend told me she came here in the 1960s clutching a letter of recommendation from an Anglican priest back home saying what a good church-going girl she was, and addressed to the priest of whichever parish she might find herself in.

Such was common practice. However, West Indian Anglicans like her inevitably found that on reaching the "mother country" they got a cool reception at the local church. They found themselves being told by the local vicar that perhaps it was not necessary for them to come to church *too* regularly. No doubt this was because their presence upset the old dears who made up the bulk of the congregation.

Not surprisingly, many West Indians went elsewhere, set up fringe churches and effectively ghettoised themselves.

A Trinadadian Community Relations Officer told me in confirmation of the above that he knew of a Vicar in Bristol who refused to bury a West Indian until the friends and relatives of the dead person dumped the coffin at the church entrance and refused to take it away!

Such experiences left a nasty taste in the mouth of precisely that section of the West Indian community most inclined to a realistic attitude towards integration. They quite rightly felt let down and lost the initiative to the Black Power faddists of the 1960s and 1970s, and the so-called "community leaders" (i.e. hustlers) and Ethnocrats of the 1980s.

John Clayden
Newcastle upon Tyne.

(How typical of the Church of England. Nowadays, when it is both fashionable and unimportant, they are splendid anti-racists. When it would really have mattered, they failed. Ed.)

Socialists in Retrospect

R.H. Tawney

R.H. Tawney was a man who held impressive credentials within the Labour Movement. Described by Hugh Gaitskell as "a man of such stature that anything one says about him must be inadequate", he accomplished far more of a positive nature for British socialism than most of the pseudo-intellectuals upon whom the modern Labour Party bestows its favours.

Tawney was an economic historian who rose to become a Professor Emeritus at the University of London, but he was more than just a Leftist academic who gave lectures and wrote books (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* was probably his best known work).

He was also an influential member of the Workers' Educational Association, and served on the University Grants Committee, the Education Committee of the LCC, and the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education.

Just as important, he was a member of the Sankey Coal Commission which in 1919 reported in favour of the nationalisation of the coal industry.

Tawney therefore possessed substantial knowledge of the workings of industry, and placed his intellectual weight firmly behind the demand for the nationalisation of major industries in the interests of the people.

Industrial Democracy

However what is probably not as well known is that Tawney also advocated industrial democracy. He felt it was not enough merely to nationalise industry in order to make it responsive to the needs of the community. Tawney was actually in favour of **workers' control** of industry.

In recent years Tawney's memory has been more cherished by the SDP than by Labour. And the SDP have used his writings to provide support for their own wishy-washy schemes for industrial democracy.

This is part of the present-day problem regarding industrial democracy: almost everyone from the Tories to the Labour Party is in favour of it, but very few are actually in favour of *real substantial* industrial democracy in the form of workers' control.

Heroes and Villains

Like Ernest Bevin, Tawney was a committed socialist and like Bevin he has now become the hero of those opposed to the Labour Movement, mainly because today's Labour Party is no longer concerned with individuals who made positive progress in the working class interest.

Phrasemongers and rigid ideologues are much more popular on the left these days, and the left is very resistant towards learning anything from those whose pragmatic contribution to politics has established the workers as the most important class in modern British society.

Few remember who in practice were the real revolutionaries.

Tawney's Vision

It can be seen from an article written by Tawney in 1918 entitled *The Conditions of Economic Liberty* (reprinted in a collection of his essays, *The Radical Tradition*, Pelican Books 1966) that he held a similar view of the transfer of industrial power from capital to labour as do the producers of *The Labour & Trade Union Review*.

That is to say that he believed that the workers should actually *control* their industries, not be content just to be consulted by management, but should actually run it for themselves.

He could see that if they did not assume responsibility for themselves nothing approaching an economic revolution would occur in Britain.

Instead the division between management and unions would merely stifle movement towards socialism perpetually, and the capitalist would continue on top for evermore.

The whole thrust of Tawney's vision is that the kind of values which dominated thinking on industry before the First World War had to be replaced by newer ideas which transferred power on the factory-floor, and in society at large, to the proletariat.

He felt that after the experience of a global conflict in which the importance of the worker at home had been underlined, and in which working men had proved themselves on the battle-fields of Europe, there was no way in which the pre-war status quo could be restored.

In fact he was ahead of his time in his call for the Labour Movement to reject its old policy of class struggle and adopt new tactics, the object of which would be not simply a recognition of the workers as a force, but their ascendancy to become the leading class in British society.

It was only after the *Second* World War that Bevin succeeded in establishing a new modus vivendi for Labour politics. Clearly, therefore, Tawney was nearly thirty years ahead of most of his comrades when writing *The Conditions of Economic Liberty* in 1919.

The Revolutionary Intention

What is, however, disturbing, is that after Bevin's death, the Labour Party and the unions became the epitomy of conservatism, and a great deal of what Tawney advocated as sounding the death-knell of capitalism has yet to occur.

Tawney describes the "fundamental grievance" in our society thus:

> *"the government of industry and the utilisation of both capital and land are autocratic. From men's exclusion from control* [my emphasis C.R.] **over the organisation and apparatus of industry flow the particular grievances which are the spur to their discontent."** (p.106)

However, this analysis did not develop into some tame argument for increased collective bargaining powers for the unions.

Tawney, had he been leader of the NUM in our own day, would never have turned down the opportunity for workers' control as Arthur Scargill did, and then whined about the effects of his accepting management's "right to manage".

The thoroughgoing revolutionary intention behind Tawney's ideas can be gauged from the following extract:

> *"'What touches all should be approved by all.' It need not be denied that an authority which is irresponsible is nevertheless often humane and far-sighted. But the claim of the employer, as it is sometimes interpreted, 'to manage his business as he pleases', not only involves in effect a demand that he should be free to impose upon men conditions of work against their will, but can also be used to undermine the control by trade unionism over wages and hours of labour in which most employers have at length, after a century of struggle, acquiesced. If a firm can introduce into the organisation of its work what changes it will, if it can alter piece rates as it pleases without having to justify the alteration to those affected by it, if it can rearrange processes and introduce new machinery without the workers being consulted, if it can dismiss whom it chooses without being obliged to give any account of its decision, it can, in effect, stultify trade unionism, even while according it a nominal recognition."* (pp.109-110)

> ***"What is required is not simply to limit the power of Capital to impose terms upon Labour, but to make the worker not the capitalist, the centre of industrial authority subject to such limitations upon their sovereignty as may be imposed in the interests of the community as a whole."***
> **R.H.Tawney.**

It is a pity for the NUM that Arthur Scargill's pre-Second World War mentality did not lend itself to reading up on Tawney's writings of the period, around the time of the NUM's Harrogate debate on workers' control.

Form and Content

Tawney realised that the situation would not change overnight. For a start, the Labour Movement would have to be won round to this dramatic new concept (and it was *new* in 1919, aren't we today vacillating just a little?), and the values of a reformist Labour Party and Movement would have to be challenged by a serious revolutionary programme, as opposed to the imaginary programmes which are sadly still with us.

(These just concentrate on power for the Labour Movement without any accompanying sense of responsibility or purpose.)

I apologise for the length of the following quotation, but I

feel it is necessary to demonstrate in full the revolutionary content of Tawney's scheme:

"The details of the transformation may be complex, but the principle is simple. It is that, instead of the workers being used by the owners of capital with the object of producing profits for its owners, capital should be used by the workers with the object of producing services for the community. At present, the power of directing industry rests with the owners of capital and their agents. The measure of their success is personal gain; the method by which they attain it is the organisation of power, power which is mechanical and power which is human. Reformist movements, whether on the part of the workers or of the State, have acquiesced in that situation and conformed to the strategy which it imposes. Accepting ***as unalterable the mastery of Capital and the subordination of Labour, they have aimed at limiting the former, or at making the lesser less intolerable, by fixing a minimum of wages, sanitation, and education, and a maximum of hours, beyond which the workers should not be driven.***

"Such a policy is sound in what it attacks and mischeivous in what it accepts. For it assumes the relationship between capitalist employer and hired waged-worker, and that relationship itself is a vicious one. It is vicious because it classifies human beings as a part, and a subordinate part, of the mechanism of production, instead of treating that mechanism merely as an auxiliary to the labour of human beings. As long as that postulate is maintained, it serves as a permanent force to override and pervert all individual reforms which, while leaving it undisturbed on its throne, seek merely to curb its excesses by incidental and external intervention.

"What is required is not simply to limit the power of Capital to impose terms upon Labour, ***but to make the workers, not the capitalist, the centre of industrial authority*** *[emphasis added], subject to such limitations upon their sovereignty as may be imposed in the interests of the community as a whole. It is to employ things in the service of persons, instead of employing persons in the service of things and of the owners of things. The character of the modern reformist legislation is, indeed, an indication of the perversion of the relationships to which it is applied. If the human element occupied in industry the position of supremacy and direction which should belong to it, it might be necessary to fix a minimum wage for Capital. It would certainly not be necessary to fix a minimum wage for Labour. For Labour, in conjunction with the community, would determine what part of the product of industry it was worth while to pay in order that sufficient capital might be hired.*

"Such a reorganisation of industry would obviously involve fundamental changes in the relation of employer to worker, and of both to the owner of capital. The employer would cease to be a capitalist or 'master', and would become an organiser, who, as organiser, would take his proper place as one ***worker among others, and would be, with them, a fellow-servant of the community. The workman would cease to be a 'hand', and would become a citizen of industry, who, like the organiser, had his own special work, and, like the organiser, had a voice in industrial policy and administration. The workers*** *in each industry, including craftsmen, organisers, officials, and scientists, would be responsible to the community, through their representatives, for the service which the whole industry supplied."* (pp.113-5)

It is rather questionable, given the implications for capitalism in that section of the essay, whether the nice reformist devotees of Tawney in the SDP actually realise what an extreme piece of left-wing work he really was beneath his academic qualifications.

Can you seriously imagine Shirley Williams advocating anything like that?

Trade Unions' Role

Tawney's other condition for the implementation of workers' control was that some kind of concrete plan of action should be drawn up in which the unions would be the basis for moving towards industrial democracy:

"The alternative to industrial autocracy must be found in the development of associations through which the mass of the workers, in each industry as a whole, and in the units which comprise it, can take part in its policy and organisation through representatives whom they choose... The starting-point for such a development must obviously be trade unionism. A beginning would be made if the principle of trade unionism were applied not merely, as at present, to questions of wages and hours, but to all questions of industrial policy and work-shop organisation. Such a change involves a readjustment of the fluctuating boundary which at present separates 'labour' from 'management'. The readjustment will often be difficult, but it is imperative. It is imperative not because management is unimportant, but because its importance is so crucial that it is vital that it should have behind it the confidence of all who are affected by it." (p.109)

Obviously Tawney, as a pragmatist, had his own reasons for weaving his plan into the frameworks then popular within the Labour Movement, but he pointed out that no perfect scheme had as yet been designed, and that movement towards workers' control should be vigorously maintained, and not allowed to freeze in its tracks:

"If mutual confidence is to be the basis of industry, the organisation of industry must be such as to deserve it. It must be based on some kind of constitution. Precisely what form an industrial constitution should take is a question which will be answered differently in different industries. Nor will any one answer be final." (p.110)

Chances Missed

In our own time the Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy (1977) provided an excellent starting-point for workers' control with its proposals for worker directors, but, just as the Labour Movement proved resistant to change between the World Wars, the proposals never got any further than the drawing-board due to the objections of a timid left.

A conservative ethos which is at times more reactionary than even the Tories seems to permeate the Labour Movement and prevent progress towards further socialist measures.

What is even more disheartening is the fact that nationalised industries exist which would, if a Labour government had the gumption to make them, provide ideal piloting grounds for workers' control.

The State & Workers' Control

Certainly that was Tawney's idea. He believed that when an industry like coalmining, upon which the community depends, was nationalised, the workers ought to be running it in everybody's interests, instead of just being consulted about only some aspects of their work.

And as to the hoary old myth which is always thrown up against workers' control, namely that workers would not actually know how to manage, Tawney believed that free access to the information which is necessary to administer any enterprise would make all the difference in that respect.

Indeed he felt that the government ought to ensure that this was the case:

"If the conception of industry as a social function is to be effective, it must, then, be a spirit working within it not merely a body of rules imposed by an external authority. But in the revolution needed to make the development of that spirit a possibility, the State can, if it pleases, play a considerable part. In the first place, it can insist that industry shall be conducted upon a basis of complete publicity, except in so far as paramount national interests make publicity undesirable in exceptional cases. If industry is carried on to serve the public, not merely for the personal profit of those who supply the capital for it, the community has the right to satisfy itself that the service is faithfully discharged. Unless there is complete publicity with regard to profits and costs, it is impossible to form any judgement either of the reasonableness of the prices which are charged or of the claims to remuneration of the different parties engaged in production. In the present ignorance of these crucial elements in the economic situation, most industrial disputes are battles in the dark where 'ignorant armies clash by night'."(pp.117-8)

Liberty & Workers' Control

Industrial democracy was to Tawney about more than collective rights, it was about indi-

Charlie's Last Chance

Last January, the Irish Labour Party precipitated a General Election by voting against the proposals of its Fine Gael partners in government to cut back on social welfare payments.

The election campaign took place against a background of record levels of unemployment, the return of the spectre of emigration and a national debt of 148% of GNP, constraining any possibility of growth.

With the understandable hostility of the electorate to the government parties, the main opposition party Fianna Fail decided to run a low-key campaign, believing that only a massive cock-up could prevent it from returning to office. But as the campaign wore on Fianna Fail looked less and less convincing as an alternative government. Its policies consisted of generalities rather than specifics. There was much talk of "raising national morale and confidence". The main plank of Fianna Fail's campaign was that it was the only party government. In an era of unstable coalitions, this had some appeal to the Irish electorate.

Fianna Fail also stressed that under the strong leadership of Charles J Haughey it was a *united* party. In its election broadcasts, it pointed out that Fianna Fail was a democratic party but it had always recognised that democracy without "discipline" was meaningless.

The reference to "discipline" was an allusion to the expulsion by Haughey of the long-standing front-bench spokesman Desmond O'Malley, the leader of the anti-Haughey dissident wing within Fianna Fail. (Neil Kinnock could take lessons from the present Fianna Fail leader.)

O'Malley formed a new party called the Progressive Democrats around the dissident wing of Fianna Fail. But during the election campaign it showed that it was not just an anti-Haughey faction. It adopted right-wing policies such as cuts in taxes and public expenditure so that it could eat into Fine Gael's support.

In the event, the Progressive Democrats managed to pick up 14 seats, a remarkable achievement given that many of the successful candidates were unknown before the election.

The Labour Party managed to win a derisory 12 seats out of 166. Throughout the campaign, it looked like a tired old party with few new ideas. Its election campaign was based on the conservative (albeit very necessary) policy of defending the level of social welfare payments. But the effectiveness of even this message was undermined when Fianna Fail said it too would defend the interests of social welfare recipients.

The problem with the Irish Labour Party is that it has been damaged by a debilitating internal conflict over the tactical issue of coalitions with the larger right-wing Fine Gael party. And in the meantime, politics seem to have passed it by. Despite having a few excellent individuals, notably the outgoing health minister, Barry Desmond, it is in danger of being overtaken by the Workers Party (a pro-Soviet Leninist party with its roots in Irish nationalism: figure out that one if you can!)

Fianna Fail succeeded in winning only 81 seats, three short of an overall majority. In 1982, with the same number of seats, it made a deal with a few independants and lasted in government for only nine months. But this time it has decided to go it alone and defy any party to bring it down. This is a gamble, but Fianna Fail and everyone else know that the country is in such a mess that the Irish people will not thank anyone for bringing down the government. It is generally accepted that any government is better than no government at all.

For the next few years, Charlie Haughey as Prime Minister will be walking a political tightrope. This is his normal state of being. Throughout his controversial career, he has inspired fanatical loyalty from his supporters and barely concealed hatred from his opponents. It is unfortunate that the Labour Party leadership should be among those who dislike him intensely. This personal antipathy, which has nothing to do with politics, has prevented an alliance between Fianna Fail and Labour; an alliance which in political terms would be a far more natural affair than Labour's recent coalition with the right-wing Fine Gael party.

It remains to be seen whether Haughey can tackle the dire economic problems of the country. Fianna Fail's non-ideological approach to politics makes it the least predictable of Irish political parties. It will also be interesting to see how it deals with the enormous power of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland.

Whatever happens, Haughey has enough vanity and realism in him to know that this will be his last chance to make a lasting impact on Irish politics. It is almost certain that Haughey will do *something*, and anything will be better than the vacillating, woolly-minded nothingness of the FitzGerald years.

John Martin.

TAWNEY: continued from page 17

vidual liberty too.

To him socialism was the fullest form of democracy, and socialists ought to introduce democratic procedures into every walk of life, including the work-place.

To continue to do otherwise was an abrogation of the individual's civil rights:

> *"...freedom of management carries with it a control over the worker which is incompatible with civil liberty."* (p.110)

The only way to guarantee that "civil liberty" was to extend the worker's voice into the corridors of industrial power:

> *"The conditions of economic liberty require, in fact,...to be restated... Economic freedom must develop, in short, through the application of representative institutions to industry."* (p.107)

A Message to Kinnock & Co.

Socialists these days often prattle on about developing a positive philosophy of rights in the workplace, and so on. Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis - if they really want to guarantee the rights of workers - should simply opt for workers' control.

That particular option would accomplish a great deal in furthering the development of socialism.

I could write volumes on the subject in an attampt to persuade them, but I feel that if I leave the last word to R.H. Tawney, he can explain to them quite adequately, and concisely, how the demise of capitalism and the rise of the proletariat might occur:

> *"A negative voice in matters of workshop management is better than no voice at all. But there is no finality in the mere systemisation of the right of criticism, and its value consists in the opportunity which it offers for a more radical transformation of industrial relationships. That transformation must be found in substituting a relationship of coordinate service to the community, for the present subordination of the hired wage-earner to a master who employs him for the purposes of profit. The work of the community must be done, and it ought to be done with the aid of the ever-changing improvements made possible by science and invention. If, therefore, the workers are to be able to veto the solution of industrial problems propounded by the employer, their status in industry must be such that they can offer an alternative solution themselves. If they are to resist effectively the types of organisation which menace them, they must not merely resist; they must take their part in discovering equally effective types of organisation which do not. If they are to exercise corporate freedom, they must be ready to undertake corporate responsibility. The truth is, that both the industrial tyranny denounced by the workers, and the industrial friction and inefficiency deplored by the public, are inseparable from the system under which the employer, instead of being with the workers a fellow-servant of the community, has a direct interest in extracting the maximum of profit from the latter and the maximum of work from the former."* (p.112)

Colin Robinson