

Labour & Trade Union Review

September-October 1990

No.19

Price £1.50 (IR£1.80)

Barbara Castle speaks

Labour and Northern Ireland

Archives and Labour History

Murder in Mesopotamia

A New Union? the
COHSE/NALGO/NUPE plan

plus

Notes on the News
The Bridgewater Four
The TUC Agenda
H.G.Wells & Socialism
Labour Party Review reviewed
Iraq and the New Right



Barbara Castle

describes what Labour did right
and what it got wrong. Begins on
Page 5.

Bull and Bush

British and American troops have been committed to an action which is tantamount to an act of war: a blockade of Iraq. The American President talks glibly of destroying the Iraqi economy and toppling its government, as if what was involved was on a par with swatting a fly. American military and naval officers interviewed on British television declare that they are straining at the leash and that they sincerely hope the war will not be called off at the last moment.

American veterans associations, rallying support for the President and taking their tone from him, say that Iraq should be 'nuked' and that its name should be wiped off the face of the earth. All of this is seen and heard on British television. Her Majesty's Government appears entirely happy with the course of events, apparently anticipating that in a week or two they will once again be able to cry 'Gotcha!'.

It is not surprising that the flippant ideologues in control of the Foreign Office, Thatcher's children, should behave thus. The Falklands won them their second election and they look to a victory in a Middle East war to win them a fourth. But it is amazing that Her Majesty's Opposition should go along with this warmongering. It is astonishing that the leaders of the Labour Party, who lost two elections largely on the issue of nuclear arms, should now be unconcerned about the escalation of a conflict in which there is for the first time in two generations a real prospect of nuclear arms being used.

With the silent approval of Neil Kinnock and the verbose approval of Gerald Kaufman, Thatcher has been allowed to commit Britain on a course of action likely to lead to war without even breaking her holiday, far less recalling Parliament. The only word of criticism heard from the Opposition front bench has come from John Prescott. He has disrupted the pro-Thatcher consensus to the limited extent possible as Transport spokesman. Apart from him, the Opposition has been in the pocket of the Government.

If the issue is so black-and-white that



discussion of it by Parliament is unnecessary, then what is the issue?

We are told that acts of aggression by one state against another must be put down. But everyone knows that numerous acts of aggression have *not* been put down.

It is said in reply to this that two wrongs don't make a right. The practical meaning of this maxim is that the United States may choose what wrongs are to be remedied. And naturally the United States does not choose that its own acts of aggression should be remedied by military blockade! Indeed, since it has the power of veto in the United Nations, it can make sure that its own acts of aggression are not even formally censured!

"The disproportion between the United States and Panama is very much greater than the disproportion between Iraq and Kuwait. And yet the United States encountered fierce resistance, resistance that took a week to break. While the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was complete and unchallenged within less than 24 hours."

The USA now purports to be acting in response to an invitation by the legal government of Kuwait. It did not invade Grenada on the invitation of the legal government of Granada, and it did not invade Panama on the invitation of the legal government of Panama.

The USA invaded Panama and overthrew its Government a month before the Panamanian Government was due to take over control of the Panama Canal from the USA. It invited itself in and then established a puppet government to give retrospective justification to the invasion. Just as the Soviet Union used to do.

The disproportion between the United States and Panama is very much greater than the disproportion between Iraq and Kuwait. And yet the United States encountered fierce resistance, resistance that took a week to break. While the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was complete and unchallenged within less than 24 hours.

The United States occupying forces in Panama violated the diplomatic privilege

of other embassies. At the time of writing, we have not heard that Iraq has violated diplomatic quarters in Kuwait.

With both Government and Opposition on holiday it has been left to the media alone to 'debate' the issue. In these situations it is always the *Sun* line that wins. The self-styled quality press will have the same line in a more sophisticated form.

What is at issue is the behaviour of the USA now that the Cold War has ended. And Britain under Thatcher has been behaving as a full-blown puppet of the USA.

Is the world going to be dominated by a United States with a vigilante approach to world affairs, picking and choosing its targets as a mix of mood and self-interest take it? This is the issue that Labour should be putting on the agenda, both in Britain and in the European Community. What are the rules, now that the Cold War has ended? Can the USA, as the only surviving superpower, simply make up those rules as it goes along?

What we have so far from Kinnock is total silence. In a crisis like this one, silence is acquiescence.

The basic fact is that the Arab World is developing into nation states. As with Europe in the past there are a number of odds and ends that do not fit in. City states, fiefdoms and tiny states held back parts of Europe for a long time. But the nation states will have their way with them eventually, and will protect themselves from each other by balance of power tactics.

European politicians who took their Europeanism seriously could make a great contribution by making the process of sorting out the Arab World as painless as possible.

The American approach is guaranteed to make it as bloody as possible, and as anti-Western as possible. Iraq's own monarchy fell after Suez, a similar intervention to stop a strong ruthless Arab leader who was widely compared to Hitler! If America does not finish what it has begun - as is very often the case with American foreign policy - every Arab leader who supported them will be at risk.

A bit of statesmanship is needed from Labour. We need a Bevin to do for the world after the Cold War what he did for the world after World War Two. And if Labour misses its chance, there are non-Thatcherite Tories who may do it instead, to their great benefit and Labour's great misfortune. Getting this crisis wrong could mean that Labour will spend another decade in the political doldrums.

Notes on the News

by Madawc Williams

The reposessed

In a system of free competition, there will always be winners and losers. But no one expects that they will be numbered among the losers, until it actually happens to them.

Pushing very large numbers of people into home ownership has proved a cruel trap for many of them. People were given larger mortgages than they could handle, the normal rule of two and a half or at most three times annual income was ignored.

This has now led to trouble, as it was bound to do. Britain's economic policy was messed up by Thatcher and Lawson between them: they had two incompatible ideas of the best way forward, and so ran into problems at a time when the world economy was doing fine. The end of it was inflation and increased interest rates, an impossible extra burden on over-extended borrowers. And since our legal system looks after money and property at the expense of people's needs, more than 14,000 homeowners have had their homes reposessed between January and June of this year.

Do the Tories care? Of course not. Small property owners suffer from the delusion that the Tories will look after them. They fantasise about being numbered among the really rich and secure - a status that a few of them will achieve, but only a few. The majority stay where they are, the unwise or unlucky go under.

It must be time to put socialist housing policies back on the agenda.

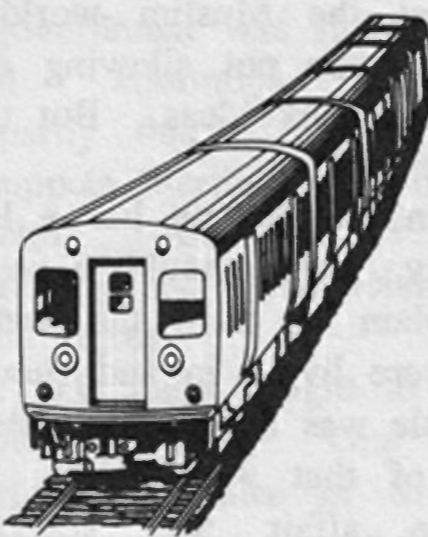
High-speed hopes

As the Channel Tunnel gets closer to being finished, the Tories continue to dither about how to tie it in with Britain's rail network. Thatcher does not like trains. She would probably like to see the rail network destroyed, as it was destroyed in the United States. Failing this, she would like to privatise it and let it go smash all on its own. She is certainly not going to help it adapt and modernise. Least of all will she let it



develop as a part of a West European network of high-speed trains.

That's why it is good to see John Prescott's scheme for a modern rail network in Britain become official Labour policy. Labour will not win the next election on the strength of negatives - not just by being non-Thatcherite, non-Militant, non-Bennite, not wanting to get rid of nuclear weapons, not wanting to undo privatisation etc. Some positive policies are needed. Transport is the best to date.



Labour & Trade Union Review

Volume I Number 19 September-October 1990 ISSN 0953-3494

CONTENTS

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|----|
| <i>Editorial:</i> | The Iraq-Kuwait Crisis | 2 |
| <i>Notes on the News:</i> | Housing; Transport; Bevin; Greenhouse Effect; Rushdie Video; Gow | 3 |
| <i>Interview:</i> | Barbara Castle on what Labour did and should have done in the 1960s and 1970s | 5 |
| <i>Analysis:</i> | The Bridgewater Four | 9 |
| | Iraq - don't forget Bazoft | 11 |
| | Labour and Northern Ireland | 15 |
| | Archives and Labour History | 17 |
| <i>Discussion:</i> | The TUC Agenda | 19 |
| | Socialists in Retrospect - Wells | 19 |
| | Looking at Labour Party policy | 21 |
| | COHSE/NALGO/NUPE - will they merge? | 22 |
| <i>Endpiece:</i> | Iraq and the New Right | 24 |

Editor: Dick Barry

Editorial Board: Andrew Bryson, Brendan Clifford, Martin Dolphin,
Jack Lane, Hugh Roberts, Madawc Williams, Christopher Winch

Address - editorial, advertising and subscriptions:
114 Lordship Road, London N16 0QP. Tel. 01-802-9482

Subscriptions: UK & Eire, £10.50 (individuals), £16.50 (multi-user).

Overseas, £12.00 (individuals), £18.00 (multi-user).

Back issues available at subscription rates.

Please make cheques etc. payable to Labour & Trade Union Review

Should Bevin be forgot?

The 1945 Labour government led by Attlee and Bevin was the only really successful Labour government we've had to date. The Labour movement has never been short of fine rhetoric and fine ideals. Success at actually achieving those ideals has been much rarer, and Labour has let the memory of how it was done slide from the general consciousness.

The Tories still seem to remember. At least, it is noticeable that the Tory borough of Wandsworth took advantage of a school reorganisation to rename the Ernest Bevin school as the Wandsworth Boys' School. They still care - but Labour doesn't.

The prosperity and unity of Western Europe owes more to Ernest Bevin as post-war Foreign Secretary than to any other single individual. But who on the Labour side reminds people of this? The success of West Germany is allowed to be

held up by Tories as a triumph for capitalism and the free market. The fact that West Germany rebuilt itself on a framework largely laid down by the British Labour Party gets overlooked. Likewise the fact that Japan was rebuilt by American New Dealers.

Too many people on the British Left have dreamed vain dreams of socialism being built in the Warsaw Pact countries, or in the Third World. They forgot their own successes, even condemned them. It should now be obvious that it's up to us: Western Europe will have to lead the rest of the world to socialism, if it is to be done at all in the foreseeable future. But a depressingly large number of people still don't seem to see it that way. Old and failed dreams still have a fatal attraction.

A green and pleasant greenhouse?

The Earth, Mars and Venus may have started out as very much the same. The most favoured theory is that Mars was just a little bit too cold, lost its 'greenhouse gases' and its oceans, and became very much colder. Exactly the reverse happened on Venus - it had too much of a Greenhouse Effect, so that the temperature became hot enough to melt lead. Only on Earth was the balance just right - or at least has been up until now.

This neat theory may not be quite right. Something else may have happened on Venus - the Magellan Probe that the American have just put into orbit round the planet should clear the matter up. Even our ideas about Mars could be wrong: spacecraft due to go there over the next few years should settle the matter.

What should not be doubted any longer is that the Greenhouse Effect operates on Earth, and is critical to our weather. The vast quantity of Greenhouse gases dumped into the atmosphere over the past few centuries have almost certainly produced a large and unpredictable shift in the patterns. Things may not be as bad as the forecasts say, but equally they may be worse. And it's long past time to stop changing something we depend on and don't understand very well.

Talking about spacecraft - the Hubble space telescope may not be the wash-out that the first depressing news of its bad focus seemed to indicate. It seems that someone made a ludicrous error that led to the mirror being very precisely ground to a slightly wrong curvature. But all is not lost. Useful results will be produced - indeed one has just been produced. An object called called 30 Doradus, that had looked like a single enormous star, turns

out be a cluster of some 60 massive hot stars instead. It was suspected that it might be, but it took the Hubble telescope to prove it.

Another salvaged mission has been Hipparcos, a satellite that got stuck in the wrong orbit. It was put up to make precise measurements of the positions of stars, and it now seems that it will do all that was originally planned for it.

Still on science, though away from astronomy. I expect a lot of readers will have heard of the discovery of the 'sex gene', the key gene that controls the choice between male and female in the developing mammalian embryo. But how many of you realise that it is similar to a gene for mating types in certain yeasts? Something passed down from a common ancestor we share with the yeasts, no doubt. Different types of life on earth are not so very different!

Revolting Muslims

A lot of the star-names used in European astronomy came from the Muslim world. It was only part of the very large body of knowledge that the Muslim world either created or preserved from the Greeks, while Latin Western Europe went through its dark age.

I'm not going to talk here about Iran and Kuwait - it's moving too fast for a bi-monthly magazine, and is anyway covered elsewhere in this issue. But it might make for better relations if people in Britain and in Europe generally understood that the Islamic world had a flourishing civilisation when Europe was only just above the level of barbarism, and that Europe borrowed a great deal from it. (It might then also be pointed out that the Muslim world wasted its advantage by not allowing enough room for unorthodox ideas. But that's another matter.)

Given that Britain has a large Muslim minority, steps should have been taken to explain to them the sort of society they were living in and should adapt to. But little was done along these lines, and much of that was wrong. The whole Rushdie affair was sparked off by Muslims in Britain, who had been advised that if they didn't like the book they should campaign for it to be banned. In fact British law does not allow books to be banned except for obscenity, libel *against living persons* or blasphemy *against the beliefs of the Church of England*. Since none of these applied to Satanic Verses, Muslims in Britain were encouraged to ask for something that no British government could give them. Banning books just because someone in government dislikes

them is normal in many other countries, but not here. The protest was bound to spark off something bad. The Iranians had simply denounced the book as blasphemous and then moved on to other matters, but when it became a big issue they were bound to do something.

The banned film *International Guerrillas* is another source of friction. Again, who has bothered to explain what the law is? Muhammed, being dead, can be libelled with impunity under British law. Rushdie, being alive, can not. Of course if some terrorist were to succeed in killing him, the risk of libel would be removed and the film that advocated his killing could be freely shown!

(The ban on the film has now been dropped on appeal - just when the British government urgently needed to win Muslim support in the Gulf crisis. Who says justice is blind?)

Gow

In killing Ian Gow, the IRA has achieved an outstanding success. It has achieved an outstanding success because hardly anyone has chosen to mention the probable reason that the IRA picked on him rather than some other Tory MP.

Gow was a right-wing Tory, an enemy of socialism. But although sections of the IRA will pose as leftist for the benefit of the British left, his general politics had nothing to do with the matter. People just as right-wing can be found among the members and supporters of the IRA - especially the Irish Americans, the main source of IRA funds.

In their statement after Gow's killing, various things that Gow did while in government were mentioned. But these were many years ago, and Gow was no longer part of the government. The real reason was something else, something the IRA were careful not to talk about in case publicity should help it.

Gow was killed because he was a prominent supporter of the Tory Party in Northern Ireland. The IRA know that once Northern Ireland has political parties that bridge the sectarian divide, once both Catholics and Protestants can get involved in issues other than Unionism or Nationalism and Republicanism, their cause is lost.

Gow was a particular danger because he was considering converting to Catholicism. He was doing it for reasons of personal belief - he was a devout man - but it would have made him even more effective in bridging the sectarian divide.

As it was, his role in promoting Tory candidates in Northern Ireland was mostly ignored. The IRA got just what they wanted, though naturally they won't be saying so. □

Barbara Castle speaks

Barbara Castle has recently republished her diaries and her memoirs will be published early next year. L&TUR spoke to her a few weeks ago about her time as a minister in the Labour governments of the 1960s and mid-1970s.

L&TUR Relations between the party and the unions form a very large part of your diaries, and as you were a central figure in the government in the 1960s and 1970s we would be very interested in your reflections on those times. For example, do you think that *In Place of Strife* was a lost opportunity?

B.C. I'd start by making one thing clear: I didn't set up the Donovan Commission. The Donovan Commission had been set up by Harold Wilson and my predecessor Ray Gunter, not by me. But I had the report and I had to deal with it. And that meant I had to sit down and study intensively what should be the relations between the government and trade unions. How far should we want to encourage confrontation in industry? What were the unions themselves looking for? What was the Labour Government wanting to get from the trade unions?

In thinking this through my philosophy developed. I wanted to strengthen collective bargaining. And, as Donovan himself had pointed out, this meant strengthening the trade unions.

First and foremost *In Place of Strife* was a charter of trade union rights. For the first time it gave a statutory right to belong to a trade union and did not give, as the Tory legislation gave, a statutory right not to belong to a trade union. It called for the legalising of the closed shop and sympathetic strikes which, in the context of trade union history, had merely been a form of 'borrowed strength', with the stronger being able to help the weaker.

"First and foremost *In Place of Strife* was a charter of trade union rights"

I was the one who introduced the concept of the right of appeal against unfair dismissal, and said categorically that sacking someone for belonging to a trade union would be automatically unfair dismissal. *In Place of Strife* proposed the setting up of a trade union development fund, to help unions to equip themselves with their role in society by, for example, training their shop stewards. It gave a union the right to take an employer who refused to

recognise it to the Commission for Industrial Relations for a ruling which would be binding on the employer and on the unions.

It also embodied the principle that not only had unions in the right circumstances the right of recognition but the right to bargain constructively. This was one of the things that George Woodcock had stressed the need for in the Donovan Commission. All these were in *In Place of Strife*.

"I wrote at that time that industrial anarchy never leads to revolutionary change. It is more likely to lead to counter-revolution. I wasn't an anarchist. I wanted to achieve profound revolutionary reform by democratic means."

L&TUR And they were the major things as far as you were concerned?

B.C. Yes, but I also stressed that the purpose was to strengthen conciliation procedures in industry, a point made in the Donovan Report. So if there were obstacles to this process on the trade union side they must be ready to adjust them in line with the new philosophy. From that came the concept of the conciliation pause. At that time the Labour government was struggling to cope with enormous economic difficulties, partly due to the mistaken struggle to support Sterling, but also due to world factors. And yet we had a massive outcrop of unofficial and unconstitutional strikes.

I never at any stage sought to put a curb on unofficial strikes. One of the key sentences in *In Place of Strife* is that the right of a worker to withdraw his labour is an essential freedom in a democracy. I was trying to deal with a wave of anarchy in industry, particularly in the motor industry.

I wrote at that time that industrial anarchy never leads to revolutionary change. It is more likely to lead to counter-revolution. I wasn't an anarchist. I wanted to achieve profound revolutionary reform by democratic means. There is a paragraph in my diaries, which are being republished, which sums it up and which I would like

to read to you:

*"Typical of the industrial anarchy we faced was the walkout of 22 machine setters at the Girling Brakes Works because as members of the AEF they refused to accept the instructions of an ATMS chargehand. As they were key men producing a key component for the motor industry their action led to 5000 workers being laid off and to growing public hostility to the trade unions. It was this strike in which a few men were able to do massive damage in a highly integrated industry which led to the concept of the conciliation pause I was later to employ in *In Place of Strife*."*

The strike was unconstitutional because the men had not followed any conciliation procedure. The point there was that I made this a political issue. I never believed that industrial relations matters should be handled by Courts. It is quite inappropriate, as Ted Heath's attempt to embroil the trade unions in a rigid legal straitjacket was to prove so dramatically. So we set up instead an Industrial Board and the decision to refer this dispute to this Board was to be mine as Secretary of State. There was to be no right by an employer or a worker to take a case to Court. The Secretary of State had to stand up in the House of Commons and justify the decision politically.

"Anarchy in industry was losing public support for trade unionism... I wanted to strengthen the power of the trade unions, but to make it a positive power and not a negative one."

And what did the conciliation pause involve? First it placed an obligation on the employer. And in all my legislation I laid the onus on the employer first, because I believe that the prime responsibility for good industrial relations lies with the management. So first the employer had to revert to the *status quo* if there had been a change in practice, for instance the arbitrary dismissal of an employee or a sudden change in working conditions.

It followed that if you bind the

employer to do something then you can't leave the workers or union free to continue striking against the employer who is obeying the law. That is anarchy. That never helps working people, only organisation helps them. So the Board could rule that there must be a 28 day conciliation pause during which an attempt would be made to use conciliation machinery that might not have existed before or which had not been used first. At the end of 28 days the men were entirely free to resume the strike. Yet that was called a penal power against trade unions!

Another problem I set out to deal with was trade union recognition. There had been many disputes for trade union recognition and **In Place of Strife** gave the union the right to take the matter to the Commission for Industrial Relations. You will remember again that it was not a court of law. It was composed of employers and trade unionists, and I made George Woodcock, General Secretary of the TUC up to that moment, its first Chairman. The Commission would rule whether a union should be recognised, or which of two unions should be recognised. The employer was under a legal obligation to accept the ruling, subject to a fine if he didn't.

L&TUR But what if another union challenged the Commission's ruling and went on strike?

B.C. You cannot have a situation in which having laid a legal obligation on an employer you leave unions free to strike against him to try to make him break the law. Now that was another thing that was held against me. The third thing was union ballots before strikes. And now the trade unions say they want to see that in Labour Government legislation.

L&TUR And the ballots have strengthened the unions?

B.C. They now appear to think so. So the talk that this was penalising on trade unions was a load of rubbish. Anarchy in industry was losing public support for trade unionism. I wanted to strengthen the power of the trade unions, but to make it a positive power and not a negative one.

I said to them 'Here you have elected a government with the help of a lot of trade union money to try to solve the country's economic problems and introduce social justice among our people. And you have got

to accept some share of the responsibility of making it economically possible for your government to carry out what you want it to.'

It is relatively easy to exercise negative power - to stop something happening. But what we need is for working people to use positive power to change society. And that means sometimes subordinating sectional interests to the wider interest. I saw this as the key to our problem.

"Jack Jones with his campaign for pensioners took the image of short-sighted selfishness from the trade unions and showed them as people who would fight for all who needed help."

Of course there could still be an argument, and still is an argument, as to whether my even mentioning penal powers like the conciliation pause encouraged the Tories to go ahead with their own legislation when they got their chance. But I don't believe that at all. They had their own legislation all ready and my aim was to stop them getting their chance. The wave of unconstitutional strikes was strengthening the standing of the Tories in the public mind. I was out to save us from Heathism and Thatcherism. So I have no apologies whatsoever to make for **In Place of Strife**.

L&TUR That's a good robust defence. So you would obviously regard it was a lost opportunity?

B.C. Yes

L&TUR Without getting hypothetical, can you see the the lost opportunity leading onto Thatcherism?

B.C. Well, of course we got Ted Heath first. And we got his **Industrial Relations Bill**, and I led the opposition from the Front Bench in the House of Commons against the Bill. It was the opposite of what I had been trying to do. He was seeking to weaken the trade unions, to tie them into a legal straitjacket.

We defeated the Heath policy in 1970 thanks to his total misreading of the public mood. His legal restraints and they had led to absurd situations and obvious injustices. And public opinion had swung back again, certainly to the miner's cause - remember Heath had said that he wasn't going to have a prices and incomes board then set up the whole machinery - when the *Relativities Report* of the Pay Board came out it showed that the miners were getting less than the Coal Board claimed and that they were right and had an injustice.

Public opinion was vital here and I think public opinion in this country is pretty shrewd, so that once the trade unions showed themselves in a positive light, of having a

sense of responsibility towards the public they will get the support of the public. This has been shown recently with the ambulance workers' dispute.

"Jack Jones played a magnificent part. He went to his own conference and he had to plead with them to show some restraint, on a voluntary basis, and we got it. The £6 limit, in which Jack played a key part, helped the low paid workers enormously. And it helped to bring inflation down."

Two trade union leaders stand out as examples of what I mean. One is Jack Jones with his campaign for pensioners. He took away the image of short-sighted selfishness from the trade unions and showed them as people who would fight for all who needed help. The other trade union leader who showed these qualities was Roger Poole during the ambulance workers' strike. The ambulance workers leaned over backwards to make sure the public did not suffer. There are of course others, but these two stand out. So the public will reward us if we show we care about them.

L&TUR The Party and the unions had another bite at the cherry with the Social Contract. Looking back would you say that the unions hadn't learned their lesson along the lines you have indicated, because that was another chance to get a good relation established?

B.C. I believe that the Social Contract grew out of this terrible argument and bitterness in the movement over **In Place of Strife**, because I had forced the unions to face up to the need to be constructive.

L&TUR To face up to their power and responsibility?

B.C. Yes, but the Labour Government too had learned from its mistakes. One of its profound mistakes in the 1960s had been the statutory prices and incomes policy, which again I inherited. That policy was one of the reasons why the unions were so bitter about my industrial relations legislation. They resented the concept of a statutory restraint of wages without any effective *quid pro quo* on the employers' side. There was effectively no real prices policy, as I show in my diaries. There are lessons for us all in that story, how I battled with the Treasury to get a fairly balanced prices and incomes policy, and they wouldn't let me hold prices down. So it became one-sided against the workers.

"We were putting great reforms on the statute book: the new earnings related pension scheme, child benefit... All these were anathema to Margaret Thatcher as steps towards a fairer and more integrated society. 'There is no such thing as society' she has told us. 'It is each man for himself'. So she was wanting to destroy them when she got to power."

After Labour's defeat in 1970 we set up the TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee to examine what went wrong, what mistakes we had made and how we could avoid them next time. I attended every meeting until I left the House of Commons in 1979. It was a wonderful meeting ground. We could be perfectly frank with each other and out of these discussion grew the view that in all these matters we had to win consent, that Labour could only govern by consent.

It was out of this that the Social Contract was born. Here again Jack Jones played a magnificent part. When Labour was returned to office in 1974, he went to his own conference as inflation went up to 20% and pleaded with his members to accept voluntary wage restraint, and we got it.

The £6 limit, in which Jack played a key part, helped the low paid workers enormously. And it helped to bring inflation down. At that time I was Secretary of State for the Social Services, and I used to plead with the workers, 'never forget the importance to your standard of living of the social wage'. I had some calculations made as to what the social services we were providing meant in cash terms to a working man and his family. And we found that even in those days it was worth £1000 a year to the average worker with a family. So I argued 'Don't jeopardise that by letting inflation rip'.

By that time there was the great oil crisis - oil prices had rocketed and we had a world problem on our hands. And nevertheless, we were putting great reforms on the statute book: the new earnings related pension scheme, child benefit, the protection of the N.H.S. against the encroachments of private medicine. All these were anathema to Margaret Thatcher as steps towards a fairer and more integrated society. 'There is no such thing as society' she has told us. 'It is each man for himself'. So she was wanting to destroy them when she

Derry and the Boyne

William of Orange's troops at the Battle of the Boyne were dressed in green, while the Jacobites wore red. The whole conflict was quite different from the present-day war between Nationalists and Unionists.

Just what it was is made clear by Brendan Clifford, in this new book available from the *Belfast Historical and Educational Society*,
33 Athol Street,
Belfast BT12 4GX,
£7 post free.

got to power.

L&TUR All this begs the question: 'What did the Labour movement do wrong towards the end of the 1970s that allowed Thatcher to come to power?'

B.C. Well, I was, of course, removed from the government when Harold Wilson resigned in 1976 - Jim Callaghan disposed of me - so I was just an outsider. Jim Callaghan tried to chop child benefit, so I got the trade unions on the Liaison Committee to work with me to fight him on it. And we saved child benefit. From 1976 onwards the government seemed to get in to the hands of the IMF. It failed to deliver its side of the Social Contract.

L&TUR This was in 1976?

B.C. There were cuts in public expenditure which cut the social wage. Then to cap it all we had the mad folly of the 5% pay limit, which led to the Winter of Discontent. I firmly believe that if Harold Wilson had not resigned in 1976, Margaret Thatcher would never have won the 1979 election. Why? Because Harold Wilson was what I would call an organic politician. He did not believe in rigid formulas but let a situation develop from its own inner necessities and he dealt with it as it developed.

"Jim Callaghan pounded ahead because he had accepted the Treasury orthodoxy... It was like Philip Snowden and the gold standard in 1924... You can't expect workers to accept 5% when inflation in running at 10% and over. It's cutting wages."

L&TUR What would Harold Wilson have done?

B.C. He was shrewd and flexible and he would never have painted himself into the corner of 5%. I remember at a meeting of TUC/Labour party Liaison Committee Geoffrey Drain leaning over the table and saying to me earnestly, 'Barbara, we can't deliver'. And he was hardly a red revolutionary.

But Jim Callaghan pounded ahead because he had accepted the Treasury orthodoxy that the main enemy was inflation. And he was determined to get it down to single figure before the next election. Just as Roy Jenkins had lost us the 1970 election because although as Chancellor of the Exchequer he had wiped out the Tory balance of payments deficit we had inherited he refused to accept that the time had come to give the lads a bit of a sweetener after the tough measures he had taken. 'We're going to win the election on financial rectitude'. My goodness, it was like Philip Snowden and the gold standard in 1924. In the same way Jim Callaghan insisted on his 5%.

I remember saying to Michael Foot at the time, 'You can't expect workers to accept 5% when inflation in running at 10% and over. It's cutting wages. You've got to do it more flexibly.' Harold Wilson would probably have asked for 10% and got 9% or something like that, and we would have taken the workers along with us.

So one of the big lessons we have to learn from our period in government is that Labour governments seem to go for financial rectitude of an orthodox kind more doggedly than the Tories ever do. Look at Margaret Thatcher and all the talk about 'the lady's not for turning'. She's been spinning like a top. She shrugs off a balance of payments deficit of £15 billion!

"Margaret Thatcher deals with the economic disasters she's created by ignoring them. Every time she opens her mouth she says 'We have made Britain great...'. And we're at the bottom of nearly every European economic league."

Mind you, I am not suggesting we emulate Mrs T's policies. They have not only been brutal in human terms, they have been economically disastrous. All I am pleading for is a little more flexibility - less pulling against the grain of human psychology. And we must not get hooked on narrow formulas. It's no use getting inflation down if unemployment goes up and growth and investment go down, and if we are left

with a shabby infrastructure and an ill-educated society.

Labour's aim must be to reconcile all our conflicting needs. And to do that we must win the co-operation and trust of workers and their unions. Unions must accept responsibility under a Labour government for helping to run the economy. After all, that is what industrial democracy means. The unions have asked for it and I set it out as one of my aims in *In Place of Strife*.

L&TUR Are you optimistic that the lessons have been learned by the current leadership in both the Party and the unions?

B.C. Yes I am. I think you do learn all the time. And you've got to remember this, that it is only in the last 50 or 60 years that workers have actually come to exercise power in government. The ruling class have been doing it for centuries. They assume they've got the right to rule - and there's still a deferential psychology in the working class that concedes to them their right to rule. And what Labour has been doing ever since 1924 is encouraging workers and their representatives in the trade unions to have more confidence in their own economic analysis and not to go down like nine pins when the first winds of economic adversity blow.

Margaret Thatcher deals with the economic disasters she's created by ignoring them. Every time she opens her mouth she says 'We have made Britain great. Britain is now great in Europe'. And we're at the bottom of nearly every European economic league table. But she really believes it - she's a brilliant illusionist - she gets people hypnotised.

"Neil Kinnock has got the Thatcher courage and more. She's only strong when she's winning. Neil has been strong all the time, even when it looked as though he was losing."

But I think the Labour Party is coming to terms with this. It is analysing things more in terms that people can understand, and spending more time getting in touch with people in their working environment. I'm a great believer in branches at the workplace, not expecting tired workers to turn out at night. We've got to be realistic. We've got to make life easier for working people. People can be aroused, as we've seen over the Poll Tax and the N.H.S. They will, if they are properly led, respond. They realise now that Margaret

Thatcher has been out to strengthen her class and its wealth at the expense of theirs.

We have a massive psychological backing in the bank now. I remember having a bit of an argument with Jim Callaghan at the time of *In Place of Strife* when he was going behind my back to the trade unions saying this is terrible and we won't let her get away with it. He said 'our job is to make the trade unions loved'. I retorted that it's the trade unions' job to make themselves loved. Unless the trade union movement gives the impression it loves working people as a whole and not merely members of its own union, it will not get their support.

"I want to introduce some irreverence into the House of Lords."

L&TUR It was the transfer the votes to Thatcher by trade unionists that was the turning point.

B.C. I believe it was, but the trade union movement has learned that lesson. At each stage we have all learned lessons, and I think we will have a Labour government next time. I admire Neil Kinnock enormously. He has got the Thatcher courage and more. She's only strong when she's winning. Neil has been strong all the time, even when it looked as though he was losing. I think he's shown great courage in trying to make the party face realities. I don't say he's always got the answers right and he is in danger of making the party too

bland. But he has saved the party for extinction and given it a new chance.

L&TUR Perhaps we should now go on to the House of Lords and ask what you plan to do to help a Labour government to come to power and stay in power.

B.C. One of my prime objectives is to reform the House of Lords. I believe very strongly that we need an elected second chamber. There is far too much feudalistic deference left in our society. I want to introduce some irreverence into the House of Lords.

"I joined the ILP Guild of Youth 64 years ago... I am one of the few survivors of the 1945 parliament."

I shall do my share of voting to defeat the most iniquitous parts of Thatcher's policies and I will continue to try and inflict defeats on the government. But I also want to discuss, and it's in the Labour Party's policy, what alternatives we will put in its place. There will be individual issues in which I shall care very much, of course. One is the environment. I think the Lords is a very good place to inflict environmental defeats on the government.

One thing that concerns me at the moment, living in a rural area, is the threat to common land. I want to strengthen the legislation on this. The advantage of being in the Lords is that I can keep in touch with my colleagues in the Parliamentary labour Party. I can go to their meetings, chat with them over a mean and I can use both the Lords and Commons libraries. All this is very important to me as I complete my memoirs.

L&TUR Do your memoirs cover your whole life?

B.C. Yes, from the time I joined the ILP Guild of Youth in Bradford 64 years ago. I want to trace as faithfully as I can all the stages of the development of socialism as I experienced them at first hand. The factual record of Labour Cabinets which I kept in my Diaries will be invaluable. And of course I am one of the few survivors of the 1945 parliament. I want to distil my conclusions about where socialism had got to today, what we mean by it and how we see it developing in the future. It's a tall order!

L&TUR When will your memoirs be published?

B.C. Hopefully, next year. And then with the republication of my diaries* this month, the picture will be complete.

* The Castle Diaries 1964-1976
Macmillan £14.95

The Crisis Over Iraq

An Analysis of Western Misrepresentations and Miscalculations

"We are told that acts of aggression by one state against another must be put down. But everyone knows that numerous acts of aggression have not been put down"

The pamphlet exposes in detail how appeals to morality are being manipulated. How Iraq was viewed as quite acceptable until it went against British and American interests.

Produced jointly by the Bevin Society and Labour & Trade Union Review.
£1 including p&p, from L&TUR. (Address as for subscriptions, see Page 3)

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

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

There were reasons of petty vested interest involved in the rejection of the Bullock Report. But much more important than these was the essentially static character of socialist ideology of all varieties in the movement. Socialism was a vaguely imagined eternal harmony, a secularised version of the state of affairs following the Day of Judgment. Some dreamed of a Leninist revolution as the means by which it would be established, while others

imagined a systematic scheme of reform through social engineering. The Bullock Report was equally unacceptable to both because it was obviously not a recipe for eternal harmony.

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

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

The Labour movement is now in the doldrums because during the past two generations it has not developed out of the experience of that group of effective reformers who transformed the conditions of working

class life when they came to power -- and who came to power because they had impressed society with their capacity for radical and realistic reform.

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

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

26 Aden Grove
London
N16 9NJ.

Hitler replies to Nicholas Ridley

The following document purports to be a commentary by Adolf Hitler to the *Spectator* interview given by the sacked minister. Its authenticity is of course open to question - we did ask distinguished historian High Trevor-Roper to vet it, but he was strangely reluctant to become involved in the matter. Anyway, for what it's worth, here it is.

To Herr Nicholas Ridley, minister of the British Tory government:

It is many years now since I have put my views before the world. I was awaiting some suitable moment to stage a public come-back. But having reached the advanced age of 101, and with world events going in a direction that I do not like at all, I felt that I should at least justify myself before history, and disassociate myself from things with which I am wrongly connected.

That little weakling Kohl is supposed to be like Hitler? Nonsense! Would Hitler have been willing to accept Germany's eastern border as it now is, an arbitrary line drawn by Stalin, that robbed Germany of territories that even the infamous Treaty of Versailles had accepted as German? Yet Kohl seems determined to accept the *status quo*.

Kohl likewise seems determined to dissolve Germany in a European Community, governed by democratic principles, which must of necessity be governed by ever-shifting coalitions of national interests. In a Europe of competitive nation-states, Germany could

expect to be the strongest. With Britain stripped of its Empire, and the nations of the Russian Empire on the verge of going their separate ways, Germany could hardly fail to be the strongest. But Kohl goes for just the opposite.

Herr Ridley, you share the common delusion of British Tories that Hitler was your mortal foe. On the contrary. Hitler was very willing to let Britain keep its sovereignty and its Empire, in return for a free hand in Europe. It was not in the interests of the British ruling class to fight World War Two. But they, like the vanished aristocracy of Poland, preferred to put honour above expediency. In fighting against Naziism, in alliance with Bolshevism, Britain ensured that the world would be restructured on more or less left-wing lines. A restructuring that your much-vaunted 'Thatcherite revolution' has left largely untouched.

Now you are offended by the logical outcome of the post-war order - a union of European nations on democratic lines, without regard to racial superiority or inferiority. And you associate this prospect with my vision of Europe, with a German master-race led by an absolute and unquestionable leader, a clear superiority of other Nordics over Alpine and Mediterranean types, with the Slavs reduced to helotry and undesirables like the Jews and Gypsies totally wiped out. What nonsense it is to associate this vision of Europe with what now seems likely.

The sad truth is, the European Community is likely to make permanent exactly the sort of softness and degeneracy that I tried to root out of the German nation. Given half a chance, Germans will always mix promiscuously into some sort of common European culture. Frederick 'the Great' of Prussia

made French rather than German the language of his court, and was a sodomite. Goethe remained to the end of his days an admirer of Napoleon, even after much of Germany had risen up spontaneously against the foreign invader. Nietzsche liked to claim to be Polish, and frequently sneered at the resurgence of German culture. He referred to Wotan as 'the god of bad weather', and to supporters of Wagner's operas as 'Rhinepests'.

(Although with hindsight, it might have been an error to make the Ring Cycle so central. Both my Third Reich and the Second Reich of the Kaisers showed a disturbing tendency to follow the pattern of the Ring Cycle, with a brief triumph ending in catastrophe and ruin. One of my old associates even suggested to me that Wagner - who may have had Jewish blood in him - was actually an ingenious secret agent of the Zionist conspiracy, implanting covert desires for ruin and death in all who experience them. This I reject, and yet...)

If the nations of Europe surrender their sovereignty to a European Community, then it will be a merger of nations. A European Parliament, based on assumptions of democracy and racial equality, will leave the Germans as no more than the largest of many minorities. Indeed, the very national divisions themselves may break down, with socialists of one nations combining with socialists of another, liberals with liberals, and so forth. The natural and healthy competition of nations, leading to the purgative bloodshed of warfare, will be no more. Block it if you can, Herr Ridley. But please do not associate the name of Hitler with any such new order in Europe! □

Murder in Mesopotamia

II: Internationalism or Barbarism

The Bazoft affair highlighted the reality of Britain's place in the world in 1990, the impotence of her foreign policy and the extent to which ignorance of and contempt for foreign countries has become intrinsic to the worldview of the British media and political establishment, as Hugh Roberts explains.

The article was actually written in June, since when a lot else has happened. Two English girls have been arrested for drug smuggling in Thailand. If convicted, the elder of them, aged 18, could face the death penalty. The release of nurse Daphne Parish, convicted along with Bazoft, clearly demonstrated Baghdad's interest in making humanitarian gestures when these can be presented as concessions to third parties (in this case, President Kaunda of Zambia) as opposed to concessions to the ex-colonial power. And Saddam Hussein, having tested Britain's government and found its responses ignorant and incoherent, grabbed oil-rich Kuwait.

Could Farzad Bazoft have been saved? Although his offence was a particular one, this is a question which not only journalists but any British citizen with an inclination to travel or do business in foreign parts has a material interest in asking. In the last few years, British citizens have been exposed to the full rigours of the law in a number of far-off places. British subjects have been flogged in Saudi Arabia and hanged in Malaysia and now in Iraq. A British woman who hosted an illegal private drinking party (at which a guest died) in Saudi Arabia some years ago was only saved from being publicly flogged by the energetic intervention of the Foreign Office. Such interventions cannot be repeated indefinitely and in any case most countries have less tractable regimes than the Gulf monarchies. It is probably only a matter of time before some unfortunate or unwary Brit is sentenced to have a hand or foot amputated or to be stoned to death or beheaded in Iran or the Sudan or Mauretania or somewhere.

We shall never know whether there was a chance of saving Bazoft. It is essential to the government which failed to save him to suggest that it was impossible to do so. But it is possible that the actions of the British government sealed his fate. The one thing that could not help Bazoft was public pressure on Saddam Hussein. The fact that the government put public pressure on Baghdad suggests either that it did not know what it was doing in this affair, or that it had written Bazoft off as a lost cause and was simply playing to the British and international gallery, in order to depict Baghdad in the worst possible light for other reasons. In other words, that it was using Bazoft's corpse as a pawn in its game.

The behaviour of the British media

immediately after Bazoft's execution supports this view of the matter. Suddenly, from nowhere, there emerged a sheaf of radio and television programmes as well as newspaper articles on Saddam's Iraq. The effect of this media barrage was, of course, to exonerate the government for its failure to save Bazoft ("See how awful this regime is? There is really nothing one can do with these people"), and to put Baghdad on the moral defensive for future reference.

The decision to hang Bazoft was a matter of *raison d'état*, which is virtually the antithesis of barbarism in the proper sense of the word. If Bazoft was a spy, he received the standard penalty for spying in Iraq and in most other countries. If he was just a reckless journalist, Baghdad evidently took the view that it was necessary to impress upon western journalists that they must not overstep the bounds, and that the defence establishment is out of bounds. (Now do you believe this?) Either way, it was a matter of policy to punish him severely. But, once the death penalty had been pronounced, it became a matter of policy to carry it out, for another reason.



The tough Iraqi strongman is an essential aspect of Saddam Hussein's image. And his image has a major role in his strategy for holding onto power, given the centrality of the personality cult in his regime. Because of this, he was bound to confirm the death sentence in defiance of British wishes, *the wishes of the former colonial power*, once these wishes had been stated in public. If Thatcher and the Foreign Office did not know this, British policy in the Middle East is being handled by appalling incompetents; if they did, it is being handled by appalling cynics.

It might be thought that once the sentence was passed, Bazoft was beyond saving. This may be true, but it is not certain that it is. In 1975, a British subject, Harry Colleila, was sentenced to death in Algeria for his role in a drug smuggling network. The late President Boumediène was a very humane ruler by Iraqi standards, but toughness and intransigence over Algeria's national sovereignty were as important to him as they are to Saddam Hussein, and he certainly knew that there are times when *raison d'état* requires someone to be put to death. Yet Harry Colleila was not executed. No public pressure was put on Boumediène by HMG. The affair was played down and forgotten by the media. And, after a decent interval, the sentence was commuted to imprisonment on the occasion of Boumediène's election to the Presidency of the Republic in January 1977 and Colleila was eventually released after serving a stiff term in jail. Who is to say that the calculating mind of Saddam Hussein would not have found a better political use to make of Farzad Bazoft in such a humanitarian gesture on an appropriate occasion than the use which he actually made of him? All we can be sure of is that the public pressure

put on him made it *certain* that Bazoft would hang.

In the anti-Iraq propaganda with which the British media were immediately awash after Bazoft's death, Saddam Hussein's rule was unanimously denounced as barbaric. In an article in the *Sunday Telegraph* (March 18, 1990), for example, Geoffrey Wheatcroft described Iraq as *"a tract of land inhabited for the most part by primitive tribesmen"* and said of Saddam Hussein that *"Morally, he lives in the stone age. Even to speak of Bazoft's death as judicial murder is to miss the point; it was human sacrifice, as practised by tribes just emerging from the other higher mammals."*

This article appeared immediately below an unsigned piece (*"Opinion"*) which acknowledged that the Iraqis had no reason at all to distinguish between investigative reporting of their military secrets and spying on same, but which could not resist concluding with the remark that *"None of this means that the Iraqi regime is not barbarous."* It is this remark which Wheatcroft then proceeded to amplify. That his article could be written, let alone published, is a measure of the collapse of the Tory establishment's worldview from an intelligent understanding of other countries to a mindless gibbering about them.

Is the *Sunday Telegraph* unaware that quite a few Arabs were casually hanged by the British between 1882, when British rule began in Egypt, and 1967, when it ended in Aden?

I know nothing of the detail of Iraq's history under the British mandate from 1920 to 1932. But I know something about Egypt under British rule. And I am sure that many Arab nationalists in Baghdad as well as Cairo have heard of the pigeons of Dinshawây.

One day in June 1906 a group of British officers rode into the village of Dinshawây in the Nile delta and started shooting at the pigeons there. Since these were domesticated and belonged to the locals, the latter protested. Their remonstrations were treated with contempt, at which point the confrontation turned into a small affray, in the course of which an Egyptian man was killed, an Egyptian woman was wounded, and a British officer ran off for help, only to be later found dead of sunstroke. In retaliation for this affray in which the Egyptians were the injured parties from start to finish, the British authorities held a summary trial of the villagers involved and sentenced four of them to be hanged, two to penal

servitude for life, one to 15 years, six to 7 years, three to one year and 50 lashes, and five to 50 lashes. The executions and floggings were carried out in the village in the presence of the victims' parents, wives and children. It took three hours to hang and flog them all.

This incident is obviously forgotten in this country, although there was a minor stink about it at the time. (George Bernard Shaw took the matter up, and Keir Hardie asked questions about it in the House.) But it would be unwise to assume that it is forgotten in the Arab world. In 1956 Muhammed Heikal observed, of Egypt's triumph over British arrogance and folly in that year, that *"the pigeons of Dinshawây have come home to roost."*

The moral of this story is not that the British today should feel guilty about the dreadful things that were done by their forefathers during the colonial era. That is the ludicrous mistake made by the middle-class left. The moral is that the British should remember these things when dealing with the countries which Britain once ruled, that they should think twice before engaging in fatuous moralising about the sort of thing that goes on there now, and that they do not have and will never acquire the right to accuse the rulers of these countries of *barbarism*. The citizens of these countries may have that right, and the substantial democrats among us may look forward to their exercising it to some effect before long, in Iraq in particular. But the British forfeited it decades ago.

Saddam Hussein's rule is certainly harsh, brutal and ruthless. It is also a formula which is yet to prove inadequate to Iraqi conditions. These conditions are not a function of tribal primitiveness, and British Toryism had a hand in creating them.

Iraq is not a nation-state. This does not mean that it is a barbaric place, on the contrary. But it does mean that it is a difficult place to govern. It has an old state tradition going back over 2,500

years. It left the stone age long before Britain did. In fact, it pioneered mankind's advance out of the stone age. But it does not have a *national* tradition. The society today is split into three communal groups, Sunni Arabs, Sunni Kurds and Shi'i Arabs. The latter are the largest element (c. 60%) but historically have been based mainly in the rural areas, whereas the towns, and so the centres of power, have been dominated by the Sunni Arabs. The Sunni-Shi'i division is politically septic, and the Arab-Kurd division is even more politically septic. There are also other minorities, including the Assyrians, who are Nestorian Christians, and an eccentric off-shoot of Islam, the Yazidis. And then there are other lines of cleavage, between the settled population and the nomadic Bedouin, and, among the sedentarists, between plain and mountain, and, among the lowlanders, between town and countryside (not to mention the vast marshlands of the Euphrates-Tigris flood plain). How is such a society to be governed?

The most natural formula would be monarchy. Monarchies have historically proved far more adept at accommodating cultural diversity than other forms of government. And in fact monarchy was the original formula promoted by the British, in this case with the Hashemite dynasty, which derived a unique degree of legitimacy from the fact that it can trace its descent back to the Prophet Mohammed (a pedigree which, unlike those of numerous pretenders in the Muslim world, is historically incontrovertible and accepted by all and sundry as such).

The formula worked for thirty-seven years (1921-1958), despite the fact that the Hashemites were outsiders in Iraq (they came from Mecca) and were not only pro-British but politically dependent upon the British to a considerable degree. This need not have doomed them; a Hashemite with a similar world outlook who initially was highly



The Bridgewater Four

- a miscarriage of justice

On November 9th 1979 Michael Hickey, Vincent Hickey, Pat Molloy and Jim Robinson were convicted of the murder of Carl Bridgewater, a fourteen year old newspaper boy, at Yew Tree Farm near Prestwood, Staffordshire. Dick Barry spoke to Ann Whelan, mother of Michael Hickey, and to Theresa Robinson, wife of Jim Robinson, who are convinced of their innocence and are campaigning for their release from prison.

The term miscarriage of justice has become almost commonplace in recent years: the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and the Broadwater Farm Three are all believed to have been wrongly convicted of their crimes, yet only the Guildford Four have so far been released. And now Lord Denning says that they were guilty after all. He goes even further and says that if Britain still had the death penalty they would have been hung along with the Birmingham Six and we would not be bothered by campaigns claiming their innocence and calling for their release.

Lord Denning had nothing to say about the Bridgewater Four - now three, since Pat Molloy unfortunately died in prison in June 1981. But if hanging had been the punishment for ghastly crimes of murder in 1979 then two innocent men might have been judicially murdered by the State. (Michael Hickey was just turned 17 when he was convicted and would have been too young for the death penalty. Pat Molloy was convicted of manslaughter, not murder.) Ann Whelan and Theresa Robinson believe so passionately that the men convicted were innocent that they devote most of their time to campaign for their release, with little practical support.

If, like the Guildford Four, the Bridgewater Four had been wrongly convicted of murder in pursuance of a political objective, the campaign would have received the support of a number of trade unions and Constituency Labour Parties. But the fact that their alleged crime was not political does not make them any less innocent, or the campaign any less deserving of support. A miscarriage of justice, particularly one with such serious consequences, should concern us all.

Ann and Theresa do not complain about the attention given to the

Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four. On the contrary, they are delighted that the Guildford Four have been released and look forward to the release of the Birmingham Six. Their own campaign, although organised from Ann Whelan's home with very limited resources, has the moral support of a great many individuals and a number of Labour MPs. Journalists have supported the campaign since its early days - including Paul Foot, who wrote *Murder at the Farm. Who killed Carl Bridgewater?*, the book that really drew attention to the miscarriage of justice.

Ann and Theresa do find it difficult, however, to get people to address meetings and usually have to share the burden between them. As Ann put it: *"Lots of people are now waking up to the miscarriages of justice that have occurred. We just want people to hear what we have got to say about our particular case."*

Paul Foot's book shows that they were convicted on evidence that could not even be described as circumstantial. Witness after witness lied, and if a jury is given wrong information it is bound to come up with the wrong verdict.

It was, according to Ann Whelan, an emotional verdict, and in fact their conviction originally arose out of circumstances totally unconnected with the murder. Vincent Hickey went voluntarily to the police about another crime in which he had been involved. During the course of the questioning he was lured, with the prospect of favourable

treatment, into pointing the finger at Jim Robinson and Michael Hickey for the Bridgewater murder. And Pat Molloy then made a statement under great duress which eventually led to the conviction of all four.

It is this statement which is being challenged by the defence lawyer, after new evidence suggests that an important part of it may not have been made by Molloy, but simply dictated to him by the police. Pat Molloy signed his 'confession' but did not go into the witness box in 1979 to be questioned by the defence counsel. Ann and Theresa believed that if he had done so the four might not have been convicted.

The new evidence is to be presented to the Home Office on September 17th after a 350 mile cycle ride by Ann and Theresa, which will take them from Ashworth North prison hospital (formerly Park Lane) at Magull, near Liverpool, where Michael Hickey is kept, to Long Lartin prison at Evesham, Worcestershire, where Vincent Hickey is imprisoned, and on to Gartree Prison, Leicestershire, the 'residence' of Jim Robinson. The cycle ride begins on September 3rd and is being made to draw attention to the new evidence and to publicise the campaign for the release of Jim Robinson and Michael and Vincent Hickey and to clear the name of Pat Molloy.

Anyone wishing to support the Bridgewater Four campaign should write to:

Ann Whelan
Houndsfield Cottage
Houndsfield Lane
Withall
Birmingham
B47 6LS

The Bevin Society

Statement of Aims and Purposes

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

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

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

The "right of management to manage" was the conservative cry of both the left and right of the Labour movement, as well as of the budding Thatcherites. But 'management'

is not a detached element operating between capital and labour. Management must be an agency of capital or an agency of labour.

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

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

dependent upon the British is still on his throne in Jordan. But the Hashemites in Baghdad were overthrown in the bloody revolution of 1958. This was motivated by the anti-imperialist feeling, especially in the Iraqi army, which developed after Nasser's successful defiance of the British over Suez in 1956. To a substantial extent, it was Eden's mixture of folly and irresolution in throwing British weight around in 1956 which undermined the Iraqi monarchy. This monarchy, and especially the very pro-British prime minister Nuri Saïd, had backed the expedition to Suez, because they felt threatened by the rise of Nasserism and were delighted that Britain should put a stop to it. But they assumed that Britain was in earnest, and would see the thing through. When Eden backed off under American pressure, they were left in an impossible position, and were done for.

After 1958, the only element in Iraqi society with both the ambition and the strength to govern the place was the Ba'ath. It did not have the advantages of the monarchy and had an explicitly nationalist vision. This vision was at odds with the socio-cultural reality of Iraqi society, which meant that the Ba'ath was inevitably led to govern the place by dictatorial methods. In addition, the Iraqi Ba'ath soon found itself bitterly at odds with both its main neighbours on its eastern and western flanks, Iran and Syria. Both of these have been willing and able to fish at frequent intervals in the troubled Iraqi waters, Iran exploiting the Kurdish and Shi'ite connections and Syria exploiting the Ba'athist connection. Because of this, the regime in Baghdad has also, unlike most other Arab dictatorships, become extremely brutal in its methods. It has ruled by terror, and terror has been a routine technique of government. Opposition is not even informally tolerated, as it has been in many other single party Arab states, and opponents are butchered *pour décourager les autres*.

As Saddam Hussein has found it harder and harder to realise the Ba'ath's original nationalist vision in the actual circumstances of Iraqi society, he has come increasingly to rely for support and security on people closely linked to him by family ties, people from his own home town, Tikrit, to the north of Baghdad. (This change in the internal structure of the Ba'athist leadership began under Saddam's predecessor, Ahmed Hassan Al Bakr, who was also from Tikrit.) And as the Tikriti mafia has emerged as the effective inner circle of the regime, Saddam has himself tended to

rule in an ever more autocratic fashion, in order to arbitrate the factional rivalries within this mafia, a role which has become more and more necessary as palace politics have displaced revolutionary party politics. And he has recently 'discovered' that his ancestry links him to the Hashemite dynasty.

And so, by a tortuous route, the form of government of Iraq has been reverting to monarchy. This strategy may not come off and it has its desperate side, but there can be little doubt that it has been thought out, and is intelligent. But it has involved, among other things, the consolidation of Saddam's control over both the Ba'ath party and the military

establishment, and this has been a ruthless and cruel business. And while the Ba'ath and the officer corps have been under the knife, it has been more than usually necessary to terrorise the rest of the population, because of the instability *within* the regime and its consequent inability to find political as distinct from physical solutions to all of its problems.

These are the internal reasons (quite apart from the war with Iran) for the particular, extremely ruthless, style of Saddam Hussein's régime. No doubt Saddam Hussein is himself in his subjective nature a deeply unpleasant person. But 'nice guys finish last', as

The Ernest Bevin Society

Meeting at
The Labour Party Conference

FULL EMPLOYMENT
is still an issue for
socialists

Ruskin Hotel
Albert Road
Blackpool

Monday 1st October
12.30pm

Further information from High Roberts, 081 802 9482

The Iraqi view of Mr Saddam Hussein



Harry Truman once said, and if that was true of American democracy when it was at its most progressive it is most certainly true of a place like Iraq, whether Mrs Thatcher likes it or not. Mrs Thatcher has proved capable of sanctioning a number of pieces of extremely vicious and lethal behaviour, such as the Belgrano sinking and the Gibraltar murders, and does not feel herself to be, and is not generally considered, a barbaric politician. A man who did not have it in him to be ruthless would not last a day in Iraqi politics. These politics are the direct product of the collapse of the prospect of stability under the Hashemite monarchy and, more than any other force in the world, Great Britain under Tory misgovernment was responsible for this collapse in 1956.

The last time Britain had a coherent and defensible policy towards the Middle East was in Ernest Bevin's day. This policy was not a complete success because of the Palestine problem, which American interference for domestic electoral reasons in the USA prevented Bevin from dealing with effectively. But the policy was coherent and realistic, and allowed for the need for good government in the former provinces of the Ottoman empire, one of which was Mesopotamia, modern Iraq. It was the irresponsible adventure of an incompetent Tory prime minister in 1956 which undermined the British post-war position in the Middle East, because it enabled American power, which was viscerally opposed to Britain's imperial position for ideological and commercial reasons, to link up in an objective alliance with revolutionary Arab nationalism at the expense of the prospect of orderly political evolution within the framework of the monarchies fostered by British power after the first world war.

Foreign policy is a very complicated thing. Under Bevin and Attlee the Labour Party demonstrated its fitness to take charge of the foreign policy of a democratic socialist Britain. That legacy was squandered by the Wilson governments and remains to be recovered. As for the Conservative Party, the foreign policy of the Thatcher government has up to now been a miserable and disgusting affair, a mixture of atavistic irresponsibility towards the European Community, servile fawning on Uncle Sam, ludicrous presumption and posturing towards Eastern Europe and the Third World, and the abject pursuit of trade opportunities at any price everywhere. It may be possible for Britain to sink lower than this but it will

take effort and ingenuity.

There is absolutely no reason these days why any of the substantial states which have come into existence since 1945 should be in any way impressed by the private urgings or public pleas of Her Majesty's Government. Britain is not a force in the world. It counts for nothing. Who cares about it? Why should anyone listen to it? It is incapable of preventing its citizens from behaving badly or foolishly abroad and it is incapable of protecting them from the consequences of their own behaviour. And the rest of the world is waking up to this, from Saudi Arabia to Lebanon and from Malaysia to Iraq.

Iraq is a force in the world. It has fought a long and bitter war with the storm centre of militant Islam and held its own. It counts for something in the counsels of the Arab states. Its views are consulted in Caïro, Riyadh and Amman and taken into account in many other places, from Jerusalem to Moscow. And it has a large military establishment and an advanced defence industry which it

considers that it needs and which it does not intend to have interfered with by outsiders if it can help it. An Iranian journalist with a British passport working for a British Sunday newspaper which has been declining in seriousness for years broke one of the most elementary and fundamental rules of journalistic practice in the Middle East. He had no business going where he went and Iraq killed him for it. What reason did Her Majesty's Government give Saddam Hussein for refraining from doing what came naturally to him? Obviously it failed to give a satisfactory reason. That is a measure of the weakness of the foreign policy of Thatcher's Britain. But would Kinnock's Britain have a stronger foreign policy? Would Gerald Kaufmann have saved Bazoft? These questions answer themselves.

The execution of Farzad Bazoft was, among other things, an expression of Baghdad's contempt, not for civilised values, simply for the British state. It is time British politicians and newspaper editors stopped confusing the two, because this contempt is well deserved. And more British citizens and passport-holders in foreign parts and out East in particular are going to come to sticky ends until Britain is well governed again and has recovered its self-respect and a measure of real influence in foreign capitals.

Britain can only be well governed by a politics which faces up to the realities of British society and its place in the world, and treats the rest of the world with an intelligent and well-informed respect, and which by doing so gives its ordinary citizens and its journalists an effective orientation to local realities when they are abroad. The empirical socialism of Attlee and Bevin and the social-democratic Toryism of Macmillan and Heath are the only two forms of politics to have done this since 1945. Both were based on a conception of the British national interest which recognised the working class as the dominant class in society from 1940 onwards, and which promoted a consistently internationalist foreign policy. Under the vainglorious sway of Thatchockism British party politics have degenerated into insular ignorance and vulgar nationalism where foreign affairs are concerned and have lost track of the basis of an effective foreign policy entirely. The working class must reassert its empirical internationalism within Labour politics and reclaim its political inheritance in external as well as domestic affairs.

The Labour Party and its responsibilities in Northern Ireland

In this article Erskine Holmes explains why he fought the Upper Bann by-election on a *Right to Vote Labour* platform.

"All political parties in Britain that have pretensions to government have a moral duty to stand in order to make themselves accountable to their voters." (Irish News editorial on the Upper Bann by-election.)

"Democrats of whatever political hue will welcome the decision to set up a Labour Party branch in Upper Bann constituency which will seek affiliation to the British Labour Party... The pressure is really on British Labour to face up to reality." (Portadown Times editorial on the same matter.)

When the avowedly Nationalist Irish News and the Unionist Portadown Times unite in editorial demands for Labour to organise in Northern Ireland to give people here their civil rights to influence the policy making of the party I am satisfied that my decision to return to active politics was justified.

For fifteen years I have kept out of active politics to avoid any conflict with my job as Director of the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations. The promotion of local housing charities, community based housing associations, co-operatives and self help build societies has more than compensated for my premature retirement as a political campaigner. I felt I was serving my community in a different way.

In the previous fifteen years I had served the kind of apprenticeship that many Labour Members of Parliament would recognise as typical of their own. As a student at Queen's University, 1960-64, I was Chairman of CND, Chairman of the Labour Group and editor of a Labour Student Magazine published jointly with the Labour Students in Dublin. I was also an active member of my local Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) constituency party. After University I fought Stormont and Westminster Elections in the South Belfast constituency.

The Westminster Election of 1966 was a high point for Labour rank and file, relationships with British Labour were very close, the election was fought on the phony theme of 'Technological Revolution'. The IRA had not been heard of for ten years. Civil Rights would not emerge for another two years and all NILP candidates carried pictures of Harold

Wilson smoking a pipe and urging the electors to send NILP candidates to Westminster to support him. All NILP candidates were described as 'endorsed' by Harold Wilson and the British Labour Party.

We worked closely with the Labour Party in those days, with funds from Transport House to help with organisation, research back-up and other benefits. What we did not enjoy was the full commitment of Labour to active involvement in Northern Ireland. Labour continued to keep the NILP as a buffer between them and the Province, they supported the convention at Westminster that Northern Ireland affairs (the prerogative of Stormont) could not be debated on the floor of the house.

Labour always wanted to opt out of full responsibility and was only pulled in, kicking and struggling, by the Civil Rights explosion. When that happened they had to become involved as a Government. But they stayed out as a Party. And they will only wipe out the shame of that by facing up to their responsibilities now. Unfortunately the Tories have taken the moral position first.

For me the conventional political apprenticeship continued as I was elected to the Executive Committee of the NILP and elected Vice Chairman of the Belfast Branch of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions). At this time everyone seemed to think that community relations were improving, there was a kind of 'We Never Had It So Good' philosophy.

In fact we were about to experience a

'Revolution of Rising Expectations'. At a meeting of the NILP Executive I proposed we support the first Civil Rights Demonstration from Coalisland to Dungannon in the Summer of 1968. The NILP had its own policy on Civil Rights agreed with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, so it was wary of joining a protest with organisations who might appear under a Civil Rights banner as a flag of convenience. I was however delegated to participate and speak from the platform on behalf of the NILP.

The rest is history. The platform had to be abandoned shortly after I spoke and the next event was the 5th October 1968 in Derry when a police baton charge inaugurated a series of events leading to a British Labour Home Secretary putting troops on the streets of a United Kingdom city.

By this time I was trying to combine loyal service to the labour movement with membership of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Executive. For me it was purely a matter of Civil Rights and equality of Citizenship. For others equality was not the issue as their aspirations were to be citizens of another state and their excitement reached fever pitch when they thought Irish troops would cross the border following Jack Lynch's 'we will not stand idly by' speech. At this time I realised that I was fellow travelling with people who did not want civil rights from the same state as me and I returned to full and undivided allegiance to the Labour Movement.

In 1970 I was elected Chairman of the NILP and I also contested the Westminster Election as the candidate for Armagh against 'Union Jack' Maginnis and a Unity candidate who tried to jump on the same bandwagon as the Civil Rights activists like Bernadette Devlin. The Unity candidates in effect used the old fashioned Nationalist electoral conventions to try to avoid splitting the vote in a number of key constituencies. We scored a record vote for Labour saving our deposits for the first time in the constituency. However, the Unity candidate was well beaten by the Unionist candidate. It was only with the subsequent division of the constituency to create two seats that South Armagh returned an SDLP member and Upper Bann returned the late Harold McCusker.



Twenty years later when I returned to fight Upper Bann again it was a fascinating experience to contest an election where almost every shade of political opinion was to be represented by eleven serious candidates. Unlike the typical British by-election which attracts personal publicity seekers, self-styled 'loony' candidates, every single candidate had a valid platform. Sheena Campbell (Sinn Fein); Peter Doran (Green Party); Alistair Dunn (SDP); Tom French (Workers Party); Erskine Holmes (For the Right to Vote Labour); Colette Jones (Conservative); Gary McMichael (Ulster Democratic Party); Rev Hugh Ross (Ulster Independence); William Ramsey (Alliance); Brid Rodgers (SDLP) and David Trimble (Ulster Unionist Party).

My late entry into the election still did not stop the local papers headlining the question 'Where is Labour?'. The presence of the Conservative candidate guaranteed the maximum of local and national interest in a by-election which would otherwise have been a deadly, dull, non-event, as punters would have had little to speculate about other than the size of the Unionist majority. Those of us who took the gamble that it would be a high profile media campaign proved to be correct. The 'For the Right to Vote Labour' campaigners knew the vote would be small, but the real victory would be in column inches, TV and Radio time. We were right on both counts, edging the SDP candidate into last place and getting so much coverage on the need to have Labour organise in Northern Ireland that other candidates complained of unfair coverage.

The big disappointment of the campaign proved to be the 3% polled by the Conservative candidate. Realistic old hands in our camp had predicted at least 5% and a saved deposit. For some reason the saved deposit has become something of a sacred cow and the Tory failure has been a temporary setback for them. (The successful candidate David Trimble spoiled an otherwise impeccable campaign by crowing about the number of lost deposits rather in the manner of a football hooligan whose team has just won ten nil in a local derby.) The result was undoubtedly a disappointment to local Tories and the members of Peter Brooke's team who took time off from Northern Ireland Office duties to speak for the candidate and canvas the constituency. It must also have been a disappointment to the English Conservatives who flew over to join the hustings.

We hope that the Tories will continue to contest Northern Ireland seats, just as

they contest Labour strongholds in Britain that they have not the least chance of winning. That is the normal process of democracy, and the only long-term alternative to sectarianism and violence.

Our campaign successfully highlighted the fact that the Labour Party refuses to accept members from Northern Ireland or fight elections there. As a result many people are now aware, both in Northern Ireland and in the Constituency Labour Parties in Britain, that this is a wilful decision of the National Executive of the British Labour Party. There is no constitutional bar to British Labour extending its organisation to Northern Ireland on the same basis as England, Scotland and Wales. We can only hope that party organisations will follow the lead of the five Constituency Parties who have submitted resolutions to this year's Conference. (The five are South West Norfolk, Stamford and Spalding, Livingston, South Hams and St Helens South.)

It was the Tory rank and file that sympathised with the plight of Ulster Conservatives and forced the Party to organise. And it will be the rank and file of Labour who will tell the NEC that they should honour their own constitution. They must be made to recognise that they have a legal obligation to maintain a constituency Labour Party in every constituency in the United Kingdom and a moral obligation to allow comrades in Northern Ireland to join the Party which they support.

It may seem an unlikely source, but **Human Rights and Responsibilities in Britain and Northern Ireland** (published by Macmillan Press) has this to say on the issue:

"We consider that the political parties should review their policies and accept as a principle that membership should be open to all adults throughout the nation who genuinely subscribe to the party's objectives and who are prepared to be bound by the rules, regardless of where they may live."

The working party which produced this recommendation included two unlikely supporters of the rights of Labour supporters in Northern Ireland, Sean Farron (then Chairman SDLP) and David Trimble (the new member for Upper Bann).

It is extremely frustrating to know that you have rights and that these will continue to be denied to you. It is all the more frustrating to know that your rights are denied to you by comrades who

ought to be with you, who ought to support you through thick and thin. It is tragic to think that it is the Tories who are prepared to make sacrifices in Northern Ireland for democracy, and Labour who will not join in the process of trying to create normal politics by offering national politics to the people. Even if it takes twenty years to begin the process by which our local irrelevant political parties are destroyed, we need both Conservative and Labour to join in the process.

For our own part in Northern Ireland we intend to continue the campaign for the right to Labour Party membership and the right to a say in the affairs of the party which we hope will form the next government of this country. Our primary campaign will be directed at rank and file constituency Labour Party members who are unaware that our rights are denied to us. Simultaneously we will be advising the National Executive of what we consider to be our legal rights on the basis of a legal opinion taken by the South Belfast Constituency Labour Party from one of the country's most outstanding Civil Rights lawyers. Correspondence previously begun by that party will be reopened and if we cannot settle the matter of our rights in a comradely fashion then we will proceed to seek an injunction in conjunction with supporters in Britain to have our legal rights recognised in the Court of Chancery.

The prospect of a court battle after the election excited a lot of interest in the press during the campaign. Publicity is not what we seek, but publicity in itself will undoubtedly be necessary to mobilise opinion throughout the movement in the United Kingdom.

For my part I believe that the establishment of full democratic rights, equal citizenship and parity in all respects between Great Britain and Northern Ireland can best be achieved by extending the politics of the Labour Movement to Northern Ireland. The Conservatives have made the principled decision to come and stay. People will continue to ask 'Where is Labour?', 'Where is Neil Kinnock?'. Until the choice of Labour or Conservative is offered we will not have real politics. If Labour finds itself bargaining with the SDLP in a hung parliament after the next election then they will discover that they are dealing with 19th century nationalism. Socialism has still to be offered to the voters in Northern Ireland. It should have been offered by Labour many years ago. But it is not too late.

The Tools of the Trade

Archives and Labour History

In the last issue of *L&TUR*, we gave details of the newly reopened National Museum of Labour History. In this issue, Stephen Bird, the Museum's archivist, talks about the usefulness of such institutions.

Archives are the tools of the Labour Historian. Whatever theories he or she may hold and whatever method he or she may apply to his or her research, methods and theories have no basis unless they are based on facts. And facts are found in the historical material of the Labour Movement.

Unlike historians of the aristocracy or historians of government, Labour historians are at a disadvantage, as there is no systematic policy of archive conservation. When Winston Churchill wrote the biography of his ancestor the first Duke of Marlborough, he had all the papers for his research in the vaults of Blenheim House. Whilst our nation's public record policy is, in my opinion, not as thorough or as open as say that of France, government papers are preserved and used. Local record offices have for a long time collected manorial and parish records. Working Class records however are only a recent concern for archivists. You might trace this concern to the publication of Edward Thomson's *The Making of the English Working Class* and Asa Briggs' *Chartist Studies*. The Communist Historians Group History Workshop and the Society for the Study of Labour History have also increased the study of the working class movements over the past forty years. And labour records have been deposited in national, academic and municipal archives.

The archives of the working class movement then will lie deposited all over the country. As well as the large collections in the *Warwick University Modern Records Centre*, the *British Library of Political and Economic Science* and the *Brynmor Jones Library* in Hull, there are very good local collections in

the *Mitchell Library* in Glasgow, the *Liverpool City archives* and the *Greater London Records Office*. In fact the vast majority of British municipal archives have some sort of Labour History collection.

However, it is more by fortuity that such records have been preserved. More often than not the death of a prominent labour man or woman has meant the burning of his or her papers. There are a number of horror stories of people arriving after someone has died only to find that the nearest relative has destroyed some valuable material that was known to be in the deceased's possession.

"The collection contains letters from Eleanor Marx, Prince Kropotkin, William Morris, Walter Crane and Annie Besant amongst others"

The same applies to working-class organisations. Unions merge, local Labour Parties disappear in boundary re-organisations and regrettably in the office clear-outs minute books going back for decades get thrown away. Whilst the Duke of Marlborough can keep his family papers safely and securely stored over the centuries, the records of the working class get lost in a matter of years.

I have found that my work sometimes has to involve playing the part of a vulture. One morning Michael Foot's secretary phoned me to tell me that H.N.Brailsford's widow had died. This meant my having to go to Brailsford's Hampstead home and rummage through the debris of the deceased's belongings, where I managed to find a collection of correspondence as well as some manuscripts. How preferable it would have been if arrangements had been made before Brailsford's death for the deposit of such material. There is also, unfortunately, a tendency amongst some

Labour Historians to be secretive about their sources. I do know of one academic who

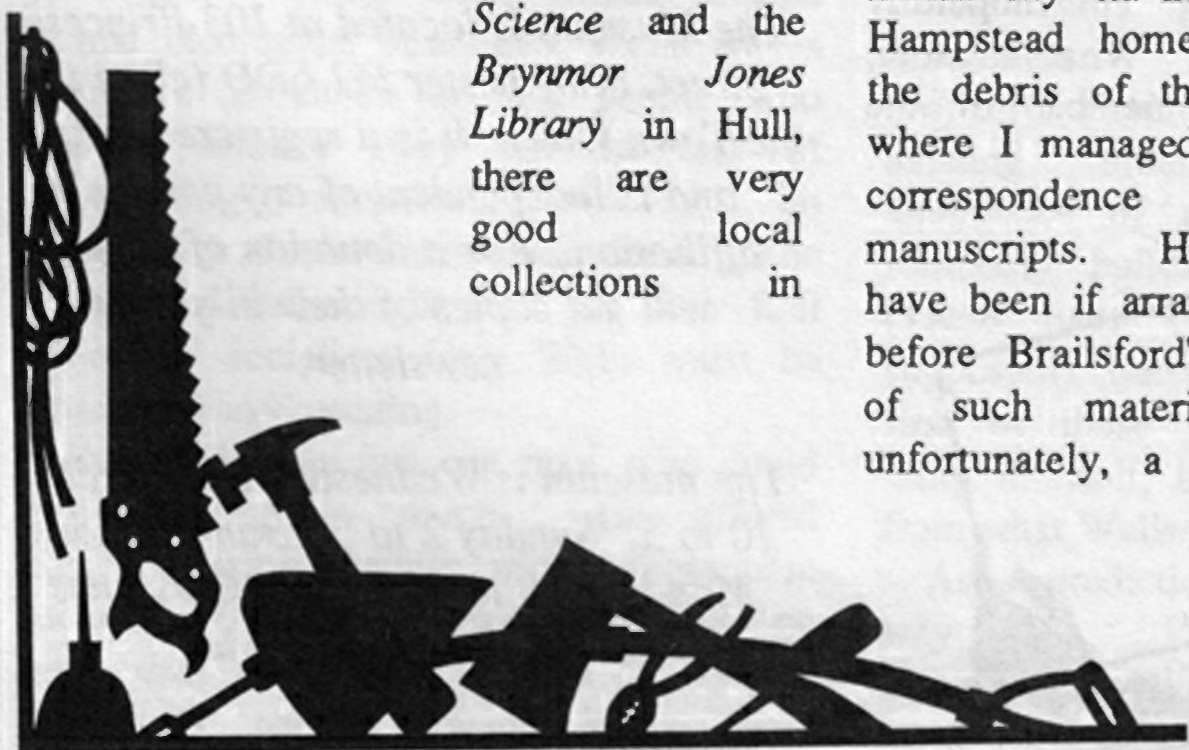
collected local records of the AEU and would not inform anybody about their existence, when they should have been deposited in a recognised archive for anyone to study.

What is needed, therefore, is a co-ordinated policy for collecting archives. The Working Class Movement may not have its palace vaults, but it should have the collective consciousness to preserve its historical material. As the only archive centre, specifically established for the collection of working class materials, the *National Museum of Labour History* could be the place for this policy. Its proximity to the *Working Class Movement Library*, with its priceless collection of publications should assist in this process.

The main collection will be the archives of the Labour Party. These contain not only a complete collection of the National Executive Committee Minutes, but the extensive correspondence from the foundation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 to the correspondence of the Labour Party Research Department in the 1970s. Various other collections have been donated, purchased or acquired over the past ninety years.

The most valuable records are the Henry Vincent papers. These contain letters written to his cousin John Miniken (some from prison) from 1837 to 1842 and a complete set of Vincent's journal, *The Western Vindicator*. Another useful collection are the papers of Frederick Pickles. Pickles was Kier Hardie's secretary and *de facto* editor of the *New Leader*. This contains letters from Eleanor Marx, Prince Kropotkin, William Morris, Walter Crane and Annie Besant amongst others. There are also Ellen Wilkinson's press cuttings and some late papers of Bronterre O'Brien. A recent acquisition are the H.N.Brailsford papers. The Labour Party archives therefore not only contain the organisational papers of Walworth Road, Transport House and Eccleston Square, but also a lot of other records that relate to the history of the Labour movement from its early organisations.

When the Labour Party moved its premises from Transport House to Walworth Road some useful papers were



rescued. These included the papers of John Hatch, who was at one time the Labour Party Commonwealth Officer, which contain some interesting correspondence with African leaders in the 1950s. They were subsequently photocopied by the National archives of Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. There was also a box containing papers on the Spanish Civil War which included a letter from the front from a young international brigader, a Liverpool councillor by the name of Jack Jones.

However it has not entirely been a success story. It was not until the 1960s, when Irene Wagner became the Labour Party librarian and Henry Pelling and David Marquand were undertaking their historical research into the origins of the Labour Party and the life of Ramsay Macdonald that the Labour Party archives came to the surface. It was lucky that the party's most faithful servant, Jim Middleton, ensured that the early correspondence survived the moves prior to arriving in Transport House in 1926. However, the Party did have in its possession valuable Marx-Kautsky correspondence, rescued by William Gillies, the International Secretary, on a journey to Prague in 1938. Between that date and 1960, that correspondence disappeared. In the Morgan Phillips papers there is a reference to a letter from James Connell about why he wrote the Red Flag. That letter, too has disappeared. All this underlines the importance of having purpose built archives with a professional archivist to look after archival materials.

It is unfortunate that the *National Museum of Labour History* did not employ an archivist for any extensive period of time in the previous period of its existence. It is also unfortunate that no collecting policy was undertaken. However, in spite of these defects, two valuable collections have found their way to the Museum. The first are the records of the Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers. These cover practically the whole of its history from its foundation in the 1870s to the disputes a century later. Whilst they relate only to the London region, they nevertheless belong to one of the most important organisations in the history of the Labour movement. The other valuable collection in the Museum are the records of the Socialist Sunday Schools Movement.

The Labour Party archives should form the basis of an historical institute for Britain's most important political party of the 20th century. Other Social Democratic parties have their archives

and history centres. The German SDP has the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*. The French Socialists have the *Organisation University de Recherche Socialiste (OURS)*, based on the Guy Mollet papers. The Spanish PSOE has the *Pablo Iglesias Institute*. Michael Foot is due to deposit his parliamentary papers with the Museum. Hopefully at some future date we will be able to acquire the papers of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Space permitting, the archive centre could be the future recognised repository for the papers of the national Labour Party man and woman.

I am currently re-accessioning local Labour Party material in the Labour Party archives and the Museum to local municipal record offices. The Labour Party has had records from the Labour parties of Faversham, Brixton, Hammersmith South, Darlington, Newark, Henly, Dulwich and Holborn and St Pancras. The Museum has records of the Labour Parties of Woolwich, Tower Hamlets and North Somerset. The relocation of local parties to the appropriate municipal record office was the policy recommended some years ago by the Society for the Study of Labour History and the Labour Party's history society, Labour Heritage. It is only fair that Party activists in their respective area can have easy access to the historical sources of their own branch and constituency party and it makes more sense to place the history of the grass roots of the labour movement as near as possible to their actual location.

Apart then from collecting labour movement records, specialising in those of the Labour Party, the archive centre can become an information centre for the location of labour movement records throughout the country. The various societies, the Society for the Study of Labour History and the local ones, like the North West History Society and Llafur have discussed archives, but unlike many other countries there is no specialised archive centre for the history of the labour movement. This hopefully has now been remedied. What is more, as the Museum is a member of the

International Association of Labour History Institutions, we can gather information about labour records in other countries. If at some future date we can build up a microfilm collection of the labour history material in other archives then so much the better.

The location of the *National Museum of Labour History* with its archive centre along with the *Working Class Movement Library* should make the North-West the awareness point for the study of Britain's Common People. It is therefore important to publicise the existence of these institutions, so that working people and their organisations know the importance of preserving historical artifacts and published and unpublished material. It will be important to work with other record centres and labour history societies to ensure archival material gets preserved.

When I was asked to set out a collecting policy for the Museum's archive centre, I advocated that the national archive of the Labour Party should go to the Museum, Trade Union records to the *Modern Records Centre* in Warwick and all local material go to the appropriate municipal record office. (I also suggested that the records of the revolutionary movements should go to the *Working Class Movement Library*, but Eddie and Ruth Frow told me that that was not the library's purpose.) I still believe that this should form the basis of a national archive policy for the records of the labour movement, if just to make people aware of the importance of preserving their historical material. We may not have a Blenheim Palace, but we must have an historical consciousness to ensure that we have the vaults for our historical evidence.

For information about the National Museum of Labour History please contact

*Nick Mansfield or Myna Trustram
061 228 7212*

The Museum is located at 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD (close to the Town Hall). It is a registered charity and is independent of any political affiliation. For a donation of £2 you will get copies of their bi-yearly newsletter.

The museum is Wednesday to Saturday, 10 to 5. Sunday 2 to 5. Bank Holiday Mondays 10 to 5. Closed Christmas Week and Good Friday.

Admission Free.



The TUC Agenda

Tom Burke looks at trade unions' attitudes to Labour's shifting view on replacing the Tory union laws.

The prediction of Labour & Trade Union Review a few issues ago that the Labour party's attitude to union legislation would soon assume centre stage, was well founded.

A quick glance at the TUC Congress agenda for this year confirms that interest in new employment laws form the biggest item in an otherwise fairly boring programme. Not just slightly bigger than other matters on the agenda, but bigger by a very large margin.

The union resolutions demonstrate the less-than-rapturous response the Labour party proposals on union legislation have received so far. The Party's proposals appear to have been couched in a seemingly apologetic and half-hearted manner. It is as if the author or authors were dealing with something which was vaguely unpleasant but necessary, like sanitation plumbing.

The unions' proposals are a lot more vigorous and self-confident. They range from Equity's demand that the European

Social Charter be changed in order to accommodate the closed shop - the successful achievement of which you would not bet your life savings on - to an entirely sensible motion from the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), which points out that not all the trade union legislation passed since 1979 should be thrown out.

The CPSA suggests a new Act which would retain the right of members to vote for their leaders by secret ballot and before embarking on industrial action. However, the right of trade unions to discipline members who have ignored a majority ballot result for industrial action should be re-instated. The new law should include the right to belong to a trade union. It would also forbid the sacking of workers taking part in official or unofficial industrial action.

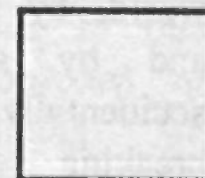
Furthermore, the CPSA argues that the new law should allow for reasonable and peaceful pickets to be mounted. Unions should have the right to take sympathetic

action where there is an industrial link between the relevant group and where the outcome would affect them both.

This last proposal should excite a bit of controversy, since there are plenty of people in the union movement who argue that union members should have the right to withdraw their labour in sympathy action, whether there is a direct connection or not.

Under CPSA's proposals and, it appears, the Labour Party's, industrial unions would not be able to strike, say, in support of the nurses whose right to strike will always necessarily be in the realms of theory.

Nevertheless, the CPSA motion, and a similar one from the Furniture Trade and Allied Trade Unions, promises at least a debate that will get away from the hand-wringing, doleful and apologetic stance of Labour Party spokespersons, who still seem mesmerised by the success of Mrs Thatcher in apparently throwing the trade union question off the political agenda. The most urgent political task of the trade unions appears to be that of putting some backbone into the Labour Party. Let us hope they succeed.



Socialists in Retrospect VI

The Way the Future Was

H.G.Wells and the Shape of Things to Come

Michael Alexander looks at the ideas of H.G.Wells, and how they influenced the development of socialism.

20th century socialism has in large measure followed the ideas of H.G.Wells, and gone off the rails when things went outside the framework that Wells envisaged. While other minds created formal ideological structures, Wells was a formative influence on the people who had to actually carry out the task of constructing socialism, whether on Leninist or Social-Democratic lines. The number of individuals who got their first notion of socialism from Wells must be almost beyond counting.

But Wells was just one man, who could only foresee so much. He offered positive visions, while many subsequent socialist writers of fiction could do no more than point out faults in the system that most people already knew about

anyway. But we have to go *beyond* Wells, whose ideas remained 19th-century even though he lived till 1946.

Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come* is a good place to start an assessment. Written in 1933, it basically envisages a break-up of the existing order, followed by the emergence of an 'Air Dictatorship' that ruthlessly builds a rational world state. (There have been a couple of films supposedly based on Wells's book. The first of these is worth watching as a thing in itself, but is quite a bit different from what Wells wrote.)

As a prediction of actual events, it is way off. President Roosevelt (just elected when Wells wrote) is expected to be a very minor and unsuccessful figure.

(p144). Though he supported sexual equality, he did not expect women to contribute much after getting the vote. *"Outside that sexual vindication, women at that time had little or nothing to contribute to the solution of the world's problems, and as a matter of fact they contributed nothing."* (p141).

Blitzkrieg is not taken seriously. The *"British dream of the next definitive war"* involving *"a torrent of ironmongery tearing triumphantly across Europe"* is a "genial absurdity" in an obscure corner of a war museum in the future Wells imagined. (P 187). Wells, even though he had invented the tank in his story *The Land Ironclads* - the direct inspiration for the actual machines that the British first introduced into World War One, had a very poor understanding of their possible use. He contributed a little to the general British attitude that ensured that it was *German* 'torrents of ironmongery' that tore triumphantly across Europe.

The Wellsian vision is explicitly totalitarian. *"This Communist Party, like the Italian Fascisti, owes its general conception to that germinal idea of the Modern State, the Guardians in Plato's Republic. For if anyone is to be called the Father of the Modern State it is*

Plato." (Page 154, Corgi SF Collector's Library 1974.) But actual totalitarian systems fall short of his ideal. "There was a heavy load of democratic and equalitarian cant upon the back of the Russian system, just as there was a burden of patriotic and religious cant upon the Italian Fascists. Even the United States Constitution did not profess democratic equality and insist upon the inspired wisdom of the untutored more obstinately than the new Russian régime." (p 155). "Except for the fundamentally important fact that these Fascisti were intensely nationalistic, this control by a self-appointed, self-disciplined élite was a distinct step towards our Modern State organisation." (p 239) Wells's schema is indeed quite close to that of his early novel *The Sleeper Awakes*, except that the wicked oligarchs of the earlier book are now the admired Fellows of the Modern State Society - an elite of about a quarter of a million, later rising to some five million or more, who run everybody else's lives.

The ideal totalitarian elite reshapes the world, by smashing all overt opposition, and by suppressing religion. After accidentally killing a priest while breaking up a combined Fascist, Monarchist and Catholic demonstration with a non-lethal gas, it decides to go the whole hog. "It had gripped that vast world organisation, the Catholic Church, and told it in effect to be still for evermore. It was now awake to its own purpose. It might have retreated or compromised. It decided to go on. Ten days later guards descended upon Mecca and closed the chief holy places... An Act of uniformity came into operation everywhere. There was now to be one faith only in the world, the moral expression of the one world community." (pp 382-383.)

The new order then consolidates itself by educating the young to its own ideals. Its education expert "restored again to credibility what Plato had first asserted: that, however difficult, it was possible to begin again at the beginning with uninfected minds." The older people die off, and their children grow up properly trained for positions in either the elite or the rank and file of the new world state.

It should be added that Wells seems to have had mixed feelings about the vision in *The Shape of Things to Come*. "I feel that, but for the 'accidents of space and time', I should have been one of the actively protesting spirits who squirmed in the pitilessly benevolent grip of the Air Dictatorship." But this sentiment is no more than a sentiment -

the implication of the book is that the ruthless benevolence of the Air Dictatorship is the best we can hope for.

A sort of resolution comes at the end of the book, with a relaxation of the system after it is solidly in power. A sort of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, as the ruling elite in the Soviet Union must have hoped they would happen. Totally unlike what has actually happened and is still happening, of course.

The Wellsian vision of the future must have looked reasonable, and even attractive, when set as an alternative to the actuality of the 1930s. The brief capitalist prosperity after World War One had fallen apart. There was little reason to think that it would come again, or that it would last very long if it did.

From probably the 1950s, and definitely from the 1960s onwards, the Wellsian vision became obsolete, 'the way the future was'. Ordinary people had gone beyond the point where they would be likely to accept something like Wells's benevolent Air Dictatorship. People were educated and prosperous enough to want to run their own lives. Kids showed a vast degree of resistance to being processed and standardised by a well-intentioned education system.



In the Soviet Union, the chosen solution to the new situation was the exact reverse of what needed to be done. The Stalinist state planning system had been highly successful, and had gone a long way towards catching up with the West. It was disorganised and partially dismantled, and the Soviet Union and its allies promptly began falling further and further behind the West. Censorship and the one-party system were no longer needed in a nuclear-armed superpower, but were retained despite some small measures of liberalisation. But the 'democratic and equalitarian cant' that Wells had been critical of, were still at the core of the official ideology. The obvious gap between ideology and reality, combined with relative economic failure, led inexorably towards the present bust-up.

In the West, things were more complex. There were old democratic and populist traditions on the left that had always co-existed uneasily with the Wellsian vision of socialism as efficient management by technocrats. Marx could

be quoted by both sides, since he was neither definitely for nor definitely against it.

In Britain, the two visions clashed in the debate over Workers Control in the 1970s. It was there for the taking, the capitalists were more or less resigned to it. But a society in which ordinary workers control their own workplaces would be a society that could never be dominated by a technocratic elite. The proposals of the Bullock Committee were never implemented, and a few years later Thatcher came to power on a wave of anti-technocrat and anti-state feeling.

Possibly the world today would be a happier place if something like Wells's Air Dictatorship had emerged out of World War Two. Certainly, a Wellsian World State would have suppressed war and provided a decent life for the impoverished masses in the poorer parts of the Third World. The present-day pattern of food surpluses in Europe and America combined with mass starvation in Africa would be impossible with any sort of World State. The world would not have lived for more than four decades with the prospect of global nuclear war, nor would it face the continuing risk of a limited nuclear war, which at the time of writing is a very real possibility in the Middle East. (By the time you read this article, Iraq may be using chemical weapons against either Israel or Saudi Arabia, and Israel or America may be retaliating with small nuclear weapons.)

Anyway, the Wellsian vision did not happen, and almost certainly can not happen in the future. As socialists, we should purge our minds of it, and of the Marxist-Wellsian mix that was Leninism. If this is done on a wide enough scale, the prospects are by no means bad. The peoples of Eastern Europe will learn over the next few years that many aspects of capitalism are quite as bad as the discredited 'Communist' regimes told them they were. In Western Europe, we will no longer suffer the stigma of being seen as a potential fifth column, as sympathizers with a foreign enemy power.

The New Right has no clear vision of the future, only a vague notion of a world in which everything is for sale. Disgust with such a prospect is very widespread. Socialists, if they will only stop being nostalgic about the way the future was, can offer the only positive alternative. Peace, rational planning and co-operation, as Wells envisaged it. But also based on democracy, not on any self-appointed elite. That could be the real shape of things to come!

Looking to the future?

David Seale looks at the Labour leadership's summary of their policy review.

Looking to the Future is the name of the document which was published recently by the Labour Party to popularise the conclusions of the policy review work published as **Meet the Challenge, Make the Change**. It is unclear just at whom the document is aimed. At 50 pages it is far too long for any but the most enthusiastic general members of the public so I assume its main readership is perceived as the party member to whom it presents the policy review conclusions in a more readable form. The document is divided into 5 main sections with lots of subsections. The organisation of the subject matter is unusual. Instead of having the usual main sections on the economy, the NHS, Education, etc it deals with these topics as parts of the broader themes which form the main sections: Creating a dynamic Economy, Bringing quality to life, Creating new opportunities, Freedom and fairness and Britain in the World. I find documents like this very boring to read in any detail. Perhaps that is just in the nature of the subject matter. I prefer just to skim through them looking for the political positions taken on what I consider to be the crucial issues. For a future Labour Government the crucial issue will be its relationship with the trades unions and its managing of the economy within that relationship, its relationship with local government and its relationship with the rest of the world. Of course many other things are important like education, the NHS, transport and the party must come up with the right policies in these areas but they are unlikely to engender political crises in a short space of time.

The section on the economy starts with a statement of Labour's economic philosophy. It restates a belief in some sort of macro-economic management coupled with the benefits of a mixed economy which appreciates the need for investment decisions which will be many years in coming to fruition. Take for instance the following statement in the section Creating a dynamic economy:

"We know that Britain's industrial future cannot be left to chance. Government has to take responsibility

for creating a framework in which industry can succeed. This is the difference between Labour and the Conservatives. They worship the market: we use it. We back industry: they turn their back on it....."

"Investment flourishes when there is confidence in the future. That is why we need a stable economic framework. There will be no irresponsible dash for growth under Labour, no return to the Conservatives' stop-go-stop policies. Instead, we will pursue a policy of sustained and balanced growth."

All this sounds remarkably like the type of statement which was very prevalent in the 1960s. Macro-economic and industrial policies were actively pursued by Labour and Conservative governments. For how many years did UK governments try to develop car, steel, shipbuilding industries with little success. Why should it work now when it collapsed in the 1970s? Unfortunately the document gives no direct answers to these questions. Nevertheless the document does boldly state that public expenditure is a good and necessary thing and that a Labour government would restore public investment and services. I found this encouraging since for some time now it looked as though the general propaganda approach was to minimise the differences between themselves and the Tories.

The section on taxation reflects this lack of confidence of the party in its own political philosophy. The Tories have been allowed to get away with the myth that the lower the tax rate the more taxes people pay. This would be a truly remarkable state of affairs but it is glibly trotted out by every conservative politician at the slightest opportunity. It is surely obvious that if a person's income remains constant and the tax rate goes down then he must pay less tax. If he is paying more tax than previously then it must be because his income has increased at a faster rate than the tax rate has declined. The Tories have reduced the top rate of taxation from 60% to 40%. This is a small reduction compared to the annual salary increases which those from middle management and above have been giving themselves. No wonder the total tax take has been going up. Labour proposes to raise the maximum tax rate from 40% to 50%. The upper limit on national insurance is to be abolished also and this represents an extra tax equivalent to 95 on incomes above £18,000. So the effective upper tax rate is being moved from 40% to 59%. There is a good case for saying this is still much too low for those on ridiculous

salaries like £250,000. In any case Labour should announce their plans boldly and without any sense of guilt. The Tories clearly see the taxation issue as Labour's Achilles heel and will make it the main area of attack in their election propaganda. We must publicise and defend our taxation policies not try to hide them.

The section on controlling inflation is one of the most crucial because there is no doubt that many workers, who have had their livelihood squeezed under Thatcher, will be aiming to make hay under Labour. There is no doubt but that the success or failure of the next Labour Government will hinge critically on its ability to handle the questions of wages and income. The document rejects outright any form of statutory incomes policy. Rather:

"We propose to develop regular discussions between government, employers, trade unions and others about Britain's economic prospects and the competing claims on national output, taking account of the need for investment, exports and public spending. The government will contribute to this process by a more open approach to economic management, outlining, for example in the Autumn statement, the likely course of the economy and the policy options facing the nation. A new independent statistical unit will provide detailed information on pay and prices in Britain and other EC countries. The central aim of providing this information will be to develop a broad understanding of what is feasible in the light of economic realities. This will be an important element in collective bargaining and other decisions on incomes, taxation and spending."

This reads nicely but it is putting a heavy reliance on the rational behaviour of the various participants in the system. The last Labour Government under Callaghan was brought down by the very short sighted behaviour of the trade unions. The next Labour Government will require a very strong moral authority if it is to succeed, a moral authority which derives from being able to argue its case in public and win the argument. Unfortunately moral authority is severely lacking in the current Labour Party. There is authority certainly but it is of a bureaucratic rather than a moral sort.

The sections *Bringing quality to life, Creating new opportunities and Freedom and fairness* have a very romantic ring to them. There is even a sub-section titled "A green and pleasant land". I suspect that these sections are written mainly for

the benefit of the Green vote since they emphasise the priorities of that part of the electorate - clean streets, fresh air, clean beaches etc. When the document was written the decision to go back to the rates does not appear to have been taken as the document is unclear on what will replace the poll tax.

Tucked away in the section *Bringing quality to life* is a discussion of the all important question of Trade Union legislation. In the LTUR we have argued in the past that it might be better to totally scrap the Tory legislation and replace it with Labour legislation rather than try to amend it piecemeal. This document suggests that a future Labour government will follow the latter approach.

Many of the issues described in these sections relate to local government. Having lived in Hackney in the 1970s which was then under and uncapped Labour council I feel that Labour councils need considerable improvement before there would be much change at the local government level. One of the main calls by local labour parties is for the protection of jobs and services. It would be far better if Labour councils concentrated on providing services. But they are afraid of the unions and drag their feet in phasing out redundant work through retraining programs. This does

The Campaign for
Labour
Representation
in Northern Ireland
Public Meeting
Tuesday 2nd October
5.30pm
End the ban on Northern
Ireland membership of the
Labour Party

Bramlea Hotel
36 Charnley Road
Off Coronation Street,
Blackpool
Speakers:
Kate Hoey M.P.
and others

no one any good in the long run because you just end up with a large but very poorly paid workforce. But the document makes no reference to these problems. It is as if a thing merely has to be decided for it to be

implemented.

The section Britain in the World is one that might have quickly skirted over if we were not in the midst of a major crisis over the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Despite all the nice phrases in the document when it comes to the crunch we have the spectacle of Gerald Kaufmann trying to out Thatcher Thatcher in exactly the same way a Roy Hattersley tried to outdo the Home Secretary at the time of the Poll Tax riots. One does not even get the impression that Kaufmann is taking this position out of a deep sense of disgust at the behaviour of Saddam Hussein rather it is as if he is terrified that he will be branded with an unpatriotic brush if he does not go along with Bush and Thatcher.

I feel that I have carried out a duty in reviewing this document. Perhaps it is in the nature of these documents to be tedious. It does puzzle me for whom it is intended. Perhaps it is supposed to be a reference work for journalists. In terms of propaganda for the next general election what is needed is a document of no more than ten pages which emphasises the differences between Labour and the Tories. The electorate have reached that point of exasperation with the Tories where they are prepared to give a party which looks anyway decent a shot at government.

New Union?

A summary of the report of the COHSE, NALGO and NUPE National Executives to the 1990 Annual Conferences.

A few years from now, given the support of their respective memberships, COHSE, NALGO and NUPE will come together to form the largest trade union in Great Britain. It would also be the largest public service union in the world.

The report approved by the three unions' Annual Conferences this year sets out, in a tentative yet persuasive fashion, the arguments in support of the merger. In the opinion of the unions' National Executives, these greatly outweigh the difficulties which the process of amalgamation will create.

"The acid test of the New Union", the report says, "will be that it must properly represent and defend its members' interests, and do this even better than is currently done". Yes, indeed. Unfortunately, the unions' members will not be able to assess the performance of the New Union until after the amalgamation has taken place and it has faced its first real challenge. A lot

of faith is therefore required.

One of the difficulties which amalgamation will create concerns political affiliation. All three unions have established political funds. This was done with the support of a substantial majority of their members, as required under the 1984 Trade Union Act. But only COHSE and NUPE are affiliated to the Labour Party. NALGO remains independent of any political party, although it has access to 'consultants' in both the UK and European Community Parliaments.

The report offers no immediate solution to this problem. It says that informal talks are being held between the three unions "to try to develop mutually acceptable proposals on how members can maintain their union link with the Labour Party whilst not intruding upon the wider New Union or the wishes of NALGO to retain political neutrality and independence."

NALGO would have to retain its own separate political fund to keep faith with its promise to its members that the fund would not be used for any overtly party political purpose. More than one political fund would, therefore, have to be established for the New Union, as the report recognises.

A puzzling aspect of the report involves the geographical organisation of the New Union. COHSE and NUPE are organised in Northern Ireland, but not NALGO, where the equivalent union is the NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance). It would surely make sense for NIPSA to be amalgamated with the other three unions to form a single public service union throughout the UK, but the report fails to address this question. However, this may have something to do with the abnormal system of local government in Northern Ireland, or the political nature of this problem.

Nevertheless, apart from this omission the authors of the report deserve to be congratulated for presenting the case for a New Union in such a clear and readable form.

Ill fares the United Nations

Ill fares the land. by Susan George. 261pp. £5.99.
Reviewed by Michael Alexander.

When I saw that the author had been a consultant to Unesco, I had a feeling that this wasn't going to be a very good book. Unesco was notorious for not doing its proper job particularly well, and for creating a huge nest of useless bureaucrats at its Paris headquarters. And this is indeed a really dire book.

The title comes from Oliver Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village*. It could form the starting-point for a serious analysis of the English Agricultural Revolution, which largely destroyed small-scale farming and laid the basis for the subsequent Industrial Revolution. Nothing of the sort is to be found. Instead, you get the odd thesis that ordinary people were better off under patron/client relationships in traditional societies. Since these have largely broken down, "hunger is increasing in both scope and severity." (page 8).

This is just not true. Traditional societies of every sort suffered from famines, which were often made worse by the greed of landlords who hoarded grain and governments who continued to demand taxes. And even with the best will in the world, traditional societies could not have avoided famine completely, given the unpredictability of the weather and the great expense of moving food supplies. Even ancient China, which was perhaps the best organised of all the traditional societies, suffered periodic famines which are recorded in their histories.

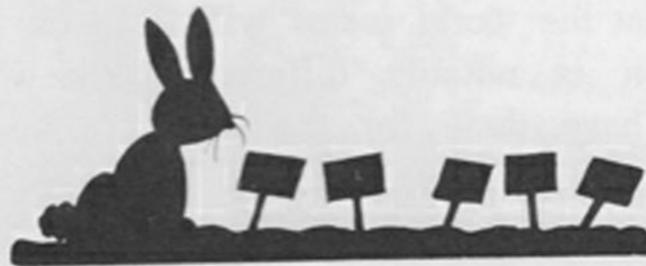
In several other places, the author shows a complete indifference to facts. She speaks of the "consumption of highly processed junk foods with little or no nutritional value.." (p96). Now one might well object to 'junk food' on aesthetic grounds. But the typical Wimpy hamburger actually provides an excellent mix of everything the body needs.

The author remains locked into the United Nations view of the world, which splits humanity into an arbitrary collection of states and then asks the separate units not to behave as separate units always do behave. When outlining a utopia (chapter 10), she supposes that humanity need not and should not come together as a unity. The popular feeling is undoubtedly there - look at the response to Band Aid, for instance. The nation-state is really a fairly new

formation, stemming from the Napoleonic Wars and only one of many possible systems. And most of the members of the United Nations are not even true nation states, but rather accidents left behind by the collapse of European colonial empires.

Famine in the modern world is largely results from the political problems caused by weak states trying to consolidate themselves. Ethiopia is a case in point. Its traditional political structure, restored after the Italian invasion and occupation, was quite unable to cope with a famine that it hid from the outside world from a curious sense of pride. Subsequent famines have been made much much worse than they need be by the wars between the governments and the separatists, with both sides using famine as a weapon in the war.

The world has more than enough food for everyone. Let it be *one world*, as a political fact rather than just a pious aspiration, and there would be no more famine. That would be the socialist answer, and the answer that *Ill fares the land* has no interest in.



The European Community & 1992

With this publication, NALGO have provided a clear guide to the workings of the various Community institutions and how they interact - where power lies and where it does not. In a sense it is regrettable that such a publication is necessary for British trade unionists in 1990. But better late than never. NALGO is to be congratulated for providing it.

There is one appendix that could and should be developed. It gives details of Lesbian and Gay Rights in the various Community countries. A detailed comparing and contrasting of other issues in various member states could be very useful. Trade Union rights and practice, social policy, taxation policy and policies relating to contraception and divorce would make a good publication in itself.

It is to be hoped that NALGO will carry on the good work and produce more on the Community.

(Continued from Page 24)

Grabbing Kuwait was a calculated risk that still has a good chance of coming off. America's way of dealing with him has made him a hero to a large part of the Arab world.

We need not panic even if the end result is a unified Arab West Asia. Such a state would only be a middling-strong power on the stage of world politics. It might even be able to make peace with Israel - if Palestinians can merge in with their fellow Arabs, then the vexatious issue of a Palestinian State vanishes. And since most of Arab West Asia's wealth would come from selling oil to industrialised countries, co-existence would be the natural option. British troops should not be asked to kill or be killed, just to stop this happening.

Saddam has offered to let free the hostages he holds if the troops will get out as well. But the British government, which did nothing to discourage a lot of ordinary Britons from going to work in the Middle East, now seems to regard them as expendable. The skilled workers and small business persons whom the Iraqis hold may think that they are the sort of people a Tory government will look after. In fact only the big rich are looked after, and the Kuwaiti royal family are among the biggest rich of all.

"Britons were fully prepared to flee Kuwait on the day the Iraqis invaded, but were told to stay by the British embassy, said an expatriate who had recently escaped". *The Independent*, August 21st 1990.

No one should be asked to die for a low oil price. Indeed, the long-term interests of the whole world might be better served if the price were to rise still further. Cheap Arab oil will run out within the foreseeable future, but governments prefer to leave it to future generations to sort out.

Oil prices are unrealistically low, since renewable sources of energy are still noticeably more expensive. Moreover, oil adds to the 'greenhouse effect', whereas solar power or wind and wave power do not. By the time the cheap oil has all been used up, and alternatives have to be slowly and painfully developed, there may be other problems. A rising sea level, a vastly reduced ozone layer, unpredictable and costly changes in world weather. Who knows?

Though I doubt very much if such matters enter into Saddam Hussein's calculations, if he manages to raise the oil price and keep it high he will be doing humanity a great favour.

Iraq and the Wealth of Nations

Madawc Williams argues that the differences between Iraq and the tribal rulers of the Gulf states are not worth the lives that are being put at risk by British and American policies.

The quick success of the Iraqi invasion proved that Kuwaitis were mostly not ready to die for Kuwait. But as I write, huge forces are being massed to do the job for them. Thousands may die, for the sake of a greedy little city state. And the Labour leadership are going along with it!

Saddam Hussein must have known what sort of state he was invading. The people there were not so very different from the people all around it. Had it not been for British protection, either Iraq or Saudi Arabia would certainly have swallowed it up. The Independent mentioned in passing that *"Iraqis in towns such as Zubair, south-west of Basra, normally dress like Kuwaitis.."* (August 6th). The paper tried to minimise the importance of such facts, adding that *"Baghdad evidently wishes to blur the distinction between Kuwaitis and Iraqis."* But it was blurred already.

The New Right likes to pretend that wealth comes from hard work and intelligence within the framework of a free market. But this is obviously untrue. Some people work hard and stay poor, others grow rich while doing hardly any work at all.

Without oil, Kuwait and the other Gulf Arabs would be as poor as the Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the world. Yet the Gulf rulers are neither generous nor far-sighted.

No one seriously disputes that Kuwait was cheating on its oil quotas, at the expense of other states that had much less money and far more need for it. The ordinary Kuwaiti soldiers who decided not to die resisting the Iraqis must have known that they were protecting nothing worth dying for.

Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* assumes that capitalist prosperity comes from large numbers of people separately pursuing their selfish interests, each seeking to grow rich. But the simplest way to grow rich is to steal. Theft of all sorts has increased vastly in those societies where New Right principles have been applied. It happened in Britain in the 1980s, and is still going on. The newly liberated countries of Eastern Europe are having just the same problem, because they can offer nothing higher or more noble than the selfish struggle for wealth.

The New Right try to find differences between theft and other methods of growing rich. But these are doubtful. What is a stock market take-over, after all, but a sort of legalised breaking and entering? The victors of a take-over battle grow rich on what they have looted, and are called far-sighted entrepreneurs. But when Saddam Hussein launched his own take-over bid for a rich but poorly managed enterprise, everyone was supposed to feel indignant.

"'Britons were fully prepared to flee Kuwait on the day the Iraqis invaded, but were told to stay by the British embassy, said an expatriate who had recently escaped'. The Independent, August 21st 1990."

What the world seems willing to do for Kuwait is notably different from what they have done for the Kurds. Kurds differ as strongly from the Turks, Arabs and Iranians as those three peoples differ from each other. Saladin, the Muslim warrior who drove the Crusaders out of Palestine, and who never the less earned their high regard by his nobility of character, was a Kurd. They are an ancient people who have been very badly treated in the modern world. Yet who shows an interest in giving them the sovereign state that strict justice would entitle them to?

When it became known that Saddam Hussein's army was slaughtering the Kurds with chemical weapons, they told him he was being very naughty and then forgot about the matter. It is only now that he has offended against one of the rich and well-connected that things are being done. But only for the Kuwaitis - to help the Kurds would not be at all expedient.

People are talking about the UN's actions in defence of Kuwait as a triumph for international law. They are instead a clear demonstration that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. Kuwait was considered important because it was rich, and because its rulers had used this wealth to integrate socially with the Western establishment. Small nations full of poor people are exactly as vulnerable as they ever were. West Irian has little hope of escaping from

Indonesia, nor Tibet from China.

The Arab world is less than indignant with Iraq, because they know how arbitrary the division between Arab states is.

The role of King Hussein of Jordan is especially interesting. He ought to be a bitter foe of all Iraqi Ba'aths, because of their overthrow and massacre of the Iraqi royal family, his close relatives, back in the 1950s. He has no links with the Kuwaiti royal family; having forgiven what the Iraqi Ba'aths did to his cousins, he is hardly worried what they do to strangers. (A point that the interviewer on Channel 4's *Newsnight* of August 4th seems not to have understood.)

King Hussein has good reason to hate the Saudi rulers. His ancestors were the traditional guardians of Mecca and Medina, until the Saudi dynasty drove them out in the successful war of conquest that created Saudi Arabia. It is not a nation state: it is a collection of conquered tribes that may now feel that the Saudi dynasty has discredited itself.

American intervention could create exactly what their propaganda warned against. If Saudi Arabia broke up, or if a pro-Iraqi faction staged a coup, something new could emerge. Possibly a Federation of Arab West Asia, with the PLO taking over Jordan and King Hussein's dynasty returning to Mecca and Medina.

What should socialists feel? The Iraqi Ba'aths are much closer to Fascism than to Socialism, but the alternatives are not noticeably more pleasant. A unifying secular Arab nationalism is the only serious force that can compete with Islamic extremism. People compare Saddam Hussein to Hitler, but he is actually much more similar to Franco. He doesn't want to conquer the world, he just wants to build up a strong state for his people, and will kill anyone who gets in his way.

Iraq is less dangerous than Iran was during the Gulf war. Iran's leaders thought they had a direct line to God, and were capable of almost anything. Saddam Hussein has no such belief. He is coldly and unpleasantly ruthless, and brave enough to gamble for high stakes.

(Continued on Page 23)