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Blair's puppetmasters

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Marxism Today and tomorrow

On July 5 New Labour published *new Labour new life for Britain*, a document of glossy photographs, excruciating prose and a succinct statement of the Labour Party's ideological collapse which we have, sadly, been documenting for much of the last two years. New Labour combines a vicious, thought-stifling sectarianism on the minutiae of day-to-day politics (further evidence of this was provided before the Shadow Cabinet elections) with a complete void where any kind of inspiring vision of society should be. This lack of vision is part of a wholly successful campaign to create low expectations. It means that while the Tory Party continue to display a broad interest in ideas (eg Willetts and Redwood) the Labour Party appears exhausted, disorientated and brittle, as though *it* were the one ending 18 years in office.

The Labour Party activists in the country are feeling bewildered. Deep loyalties are being tested continually (because it plays well in Middle England, apparently) by a leadership which seems to have a contempt for the led. Just what the hell is happening?

The explanation from the Blair bunker is that the "revolution" in the Labour Party is an inevitable result of the Party being out of power for 20 years. (Sometimes they equate being in office with being in power; other times they believe that when they are in office something called the global market will be in power.) Having abandoned history as an aid to making sense of the world they cannot explain why they were out of office for so long. Implicit in this abandonment of history, though, is a conviction that they, and thousands led by them, have been wrong for their whole political lives. Hence the disorientation.

Being out of power might explain a rightward shift, but it does not explain the implosion that has occurred since Blair became leader; an implosion that did not occur under the rightwing John Smith before him. It does not explain why the Labour Party has become

Thatcherite at just the time when its social consequences, predicted by its opponents in the 80s, are becoming ever more apparent.

John ["we are all Blairites now"] Lloyd writing in the *New Statesman* (July 12) provides some clues: "The forward march of Labour - new Labour - has been so rapid under Blair that a whole series of positions that seemed amenable to its 'project' in its early stages - that whole age that was a year ago - have now been leapfrogged, and with them their advocates. Curiously, the developing work of another set of left intellectuals may prove more amenable: writers such as Martin Jacques, the former editor of *Marxism Today*, now writing about the success of the East Asian Tiger economies; Charles Leadbeater recently resigned as assistant editor of the *Independent*, writing about the company; and Geoff Mulgan, former adviser to Gordon Brown and the head of the Demos think-tank, who is developing ideas which, though sharing some of the themes of the stakeholder proponents, are more fluid, more 'company friendly' and less confident in their assumptions about the effectiveness of the state's existing machinery, let alone the new regimes imagined by the most ambitious proponents of stakeholding. These writers - the core of the *Marxism Today* crowd of the eighties who noted that the old Labour project had foundered and that Thatcherism was A Serious Project (and who now recognise it had features which they would, in retrospect, welcome) - reflect the fact that the left, for all of its life ignorant or bored by the details of the capitalist firm, now sees it as a locus of creativity."

"Thatcherism remains critically important. Where some at least of the 'gurus' - especially Gray and Marquand - see Thatcherism as pretty much a disaster, the inner circles of Labour's leadership see it less as a cruel visitation on an Arcadian Britain than as a series of responses that, in the main, had to be made."

At the last Labour conference we distributed an editorial which explained bluntly that there had been a coup in the Labour Party (L&TUR no 49). "... there never was an agenda for change. There was merely a mania for destruction coupled with personal ambition. None of this was an accident. It is a position worked out by the fag end of the Communist Party in its death throes. Martin Jacques and other ex-Communists who have had a profound

influence on Tony Blair propounded a theory that was anti-political. The death of their own Party coincided with a point in their lives where their personal ambitions were soaring. So they prophesied the imminent demise of party politics as such and the arrival of the era when the individual would be all; and they worked for the fulfilment of their prophesy. Tony Blair's office is stuffed full of them and their hangers on." No-one wanted to know. We can only hope that after a year in which evidence of the Labour Party's collapse has piled up with alarming speed that the reception will be warmer.

Karl Marx was a turning off the path of classical economics. The journey back to Adam Smith is a shorter one than it first appears. And for people clinging to the nipple of an all encompassing dogma it is better to find a new mother than undergo the shock of being weaned.

They ditched their allegiance to Moscow (or it ditched them), but crucially they kept their economic determinism. Lloyd explains, as if it were all the explanation required, that the Huttonite view of the world promoted by this journal is not possible because: "new Labour does not believe the world is going in the direction of strong stakeholding." An article of Blairite faith is the omnipotence of global markets. That is the way the world is going, they have decided. To resist would be as futile as King Canute's attempt to dissuade the tide from coming in.

The ex-Marxists ditched a commitment to state planning, but kept their contempt for civil society, discussed in the next editorial. Hence the abandonment of the trade union movement, which created the Labour Party. They kept their authoritarianism. They kept their "cult of the leader", something which is alien to British political culture, making Blair's bloated and egotistical comments seem particularly outlandish. They kept their hostility to Europe, or at least their failure to understand its subtleties.

John Lloyd again: "New Labour believes that the rethinking it has forced itself to do has given it the effective intellectual leadership of the Socialist International and that its example will sooner or later force the French, German, Spanish and other socialists to follow in its wake." In a subsequent ill-written sentence Lloyd reports: "New Labourites

tend to see the German social democrats as being stuck in an old social democratic agenda of protecting trade union rights and pension levels and job security, without success on any front... Sooner or later, says new Labour, they will have to learn: society is about which brand of capitalism you help to shape, not about clinging on to last year's model."

Having abandoned all they once believed in passionately, having been demonstrably and massively wrong once, you might think humility would be appropriate. Instead, with extraordinary arrogance, like Thatcher before them, they have the gall to seek to impose their nasty version of reality on the whole of Europe. But it can't really be any other way. Used to thinking on a global scale and childlike in their monolithic goods and bads - Anglo-American capitalism, in their view, has switched from being wholly black to wholly white. How Marx, whose work provided enormous potential for appreciating and manipulating the subtleties of capitalism with all its complexity, could have produced disciples so blinkered in their outlook is surely the subject of another article. For now, we will observe once again that the people running the Labour Party have capitulated to the caricature of capitalism they had in their heads when they wanted to destroy it.

Tony Blair, though the public face of New Labour, is not the driving force behind the "revolution." Not coming from a Labour background or being part of its traditions, (he had no interest in politics in his youth, preferring to play guitar for a band called *Ugly Rumours*) he is a sponge of influences, particularly from those more forceful than himself. His wife, Mandelson. Peter Thomson, the Australian minister. Reports about Blair talk of his "aides", his "kitchen cabinet", his "spin doctors", "his entourage". The ex-Communists did not promote Blair by accident. Other than having a Tory background he is a blank page to work on. And look how much has been achieved in such a short time!

It is painful for the Labour Party to accept these facts but if it is ever to get out of the hole it must first understand who pushed it in. If it does not have the strength to do so things will get worse. Lloyd explains: "Thatcherism, by being set in an international context, thus ceases to be demonised: it remains in the rhetoric of the leadership as a wasted period, but it sometimes seems that it is wasted for not being radical enough."

Editorial

Democracy & degeneracy

To misquote poor old Clausewitz again: democracy is the continuation of Civil War by other means. It is based on the conflict of parties representing real social interests. The party in power represents its social interests while taking care to include the other social interest to the degree that the other social interest does not feel so left out that it feels the need to overthrow the Government.

This is no longer understood by British political commentators, though they are continually forced to commentate on the fact of the matter. They accurately describe the Yeltsin having to take on board much of the programme of the Communist Party or the inability of governments in Rwanda to incorporate their opponents. Many journalists were much happier gloating over Yeltsin's shelling of Parliament and the BBC was more comfortable when it could take a side in Rwanda - it took the side of the Tutsis.

The failure of a democratic experiment in Africa results in the horrible suppression of a particular tribe. Where society is differently divided, the failure of democracy leads to social degeneration. That is what is happening in America and that is what looks like happening in Britain.

In America the fault lies with the Democratic Party. It believes in nothing. Clinton believes in nothing - or at least nothing that gets in the way of a second term. Hilary Clinton believed in giving Americans a National Health Service. She got herself in a position to deliver it. She was publicly crucified by the opposing vested interests. Her husband did not lift a finger to support her. Now, not only does he abandon her project, but he has signed a bill abolishing the rudimentary welfare system inaugurated by Franklin Roosevelt and defended by Kennedy, Johnson and Carter and never attacked seriously by a Republican President.

This is not just short-term opportunism.

Clinton believes in nothing. He just wants to be President. He is into the beauty contest form of politics. His philosophy is to pander to the lowest common denominator. His return to Arkansas in the last election to oversee the execution of a brain damaged black man demonstrated this. He now tells the world that whoever planted the bomb in Atlanta will be executed. He is slaver at the prospect of someone being caught and fried in the run up to the November election.

Tony Blair is his equivalent in Britain. New Labour believes in nothing. It spends its time looking for individuals and minorities to persecute before a media circus - unmarried mothers, welfare claimants, beggars, squeegee merchants, children playing loudly in the street at night.

The forms of democracy are kept intact - even extended. For instance by the development of political correctness. But there is no social purpose. Just personal ambition. Appealing to the lowest common denominator is bad enough but by refusing to give a political lead via a commitment to social issues that common denominator is driven lower and lower.

That seems fine with the Clintons and the Blairs. They are clearly happy to wall themselves, their families and their friends off from the world around them. That was the essence of the Blair/Harman school issue. They are happy to see that world around them descend into savagery.

That is the travesty of democracy that Clinton is urging the "West" to join with him in defending against "international terrorism". There is no such thing as international terrorism. There are just a lot of people, including some Americans, who are sickened by the international decadence epitomised by the world view shared by Mr Bill Clinton and Mr Tony Blair.

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Is John Lloyd a conjuring trick?

Michael Morrison considers further developments in the stakeholding debate

On 12 July the *New Statesman* published an article by its Associate Editor, John Lloyd, whose subtitle posed the unwieldy questions: "Is stakeholding the idea whose time has come? Or is it just another conjuring trick to allow the left to avoid facing the unruly truths of market capitalism?" Insofar as he answered these questions it was to say that in the hands of some people stakeholding is a conjuring trick which must be rejected; while in the hands of New Labour it is a conjuring trick of another, but unspecified, kind which should not, necessarily, be rejected.

Rarely does a week pass without several thousand words of John Lloyd's appearing in the *New Statesman*, in addition to his regular column about Russia. Several more thousand words often appear in *Prospect* each month, in addition to his regular column about the media. He lacks George Orwell's commitment to plain English but surely he is one of the most important and prolific leftwing political essayists in the country at the moment.

He begins by observing that the stakeholding debate, or as he would have it: "discourse", "has been growing in importance - if not in clarity". We are encouraged to expect that he will provide some of this elusive clarity. The essay begins confidently: "Stakeholding is mainly about two things: how to make companies work better, and how to make societies less alienating and fragmented. The first is largely about management practice, the second about more or less "tough" versions of social engineering, constitutional change and fiscal and financial reform. A link is often asserted between the two. There is nothing new about much of this."

Later, he notes that stakeholding has been interpreted as standing for the current jargon-encrusted management orthodoxy. "The central perception is that companies must now be less concerned with financial capital, more with human

capital: that they must "move up the skills ladder" and "enhance the potential" of their workers "by adding more value" to products and services that must be increasingly "smart" in order to stay ahead of low-wage paying competition."

Later still, Lloyd defends Blair against those who have attacked his conception of stakeholding as being contentless (even though Blair himself has described it as a mere "slogan"). "Blair, and to a greater extent Gordon Brown, have been concerned to prioritise education and training... You can see populist-communitarian overtones in policies designed by the shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, both to make the community feel safer and to kick-start its own defence mechanisms out of a despairing passivity". Thus stakeholding, in Lloyd's view, is whatever managerial theories are in vogue and whatever happens to be Labour policy at any particular moment.

He assures us that "it is not true to say there is nothing there" [speaking of New Labour's conception of stakeholding], and then concludes with the following ill-written sentence, "in reality it is not much yet - save the repository of our desire for a more secure life, for a continuation of what comforts we have, for a chance to denounce and seek to depart from privation." He does not say who the "we" is or what privations he suffers.

In the second half of the essay Lloyd presents the arguments in dispute between New Labour and Will Hutton, who offers another, more well known, perspective on the stakeholding debate. We are encouraged to buy the magazine with a front cover which declares its contents as, "John Lloyd: the truth about stakeholding". Despite this, curiously, Lloyd has no authorial voice in this section of the article. For instance he reports the following gossip:

"The view that informs the economic thinking of the Labour leadership, in the entourages of Blair and of Gordon Brown,

is that the world can no longer be reconstructed with reference to any of the past verities of socialism." [my emphasis.] Can this really be true? In New Labour's new realistic world will those without sufficient capital - be it of the financial or human variety - be permitted to starve? Will the sick die in the streets? Just how cold will the winds of the market be? Lloyd passes no comment.

Less melodramatically, Lloyd observes: "The forward march of Labour - new Labour - has been so rapid under Blair that a whole series of positions that seemed amenable to its "project" in its early stages - that whole age that was a year ago - have now been leapfrogged, and with them their advocates."

In anyone else's hands this would be a damning criticism. With Lloyd the reader can't be sure. While not going so far as to delight in permanent revolution, as Mandelson has done, Lloyd makes this remark in the course of an article which is firmly pro-Blair, and against the background of a public assertion: "We are all Blairites now."

Blair is sometimes congratulated for a slipperiness which makes it difficult for the Tories to attack him effectively. It is less often noted that this makes it difficult to defend him on any basis other than one of unquestioning loyalty. Interviewed in the same issue of the *New Statesman*, Tom Sawyer, general secretary of the Labour Party, insists that this is the basis on which Blair must be supported. "The idea of seeing the government and the party being in conflict, of being a watchdog over the leadership, is not an available option." (As befits a man with a leading role in the new authoritarian Labour Party Sawyer subsequently wrote to the magazine complaining peevishly that "the tone and content [of the interview] was not quite what I expected" without saying what tone and content he did expect.) But even unquestioning loyalty is not easy. It demands a mental suppleness because, as Lloyd concedes, what you are being unquestioningly loyal to changes on a weekly basis. (Dr Kim Howells, in an article also in the *New Statesman* got round this problem by anticipating further shifts rightwards and preemptively adopting a position of Hayekian purity. It remains to be seen whether this tactic meets with leadership approval, or whether they jealously guard the right to capitulate personally.)

In general, Lloyd takes his Blairism so far as to act as a conduit for the opinions

of unnamed members, not of the Labour Party as a whole, but of the inner circle of New Labour. Before he took up the job as Associate Editor it was predicted by *Private Eye* and others that this would be his role. It should come as no surprise to anyone with a knowledge of his chequered past - as a Marxist of a variety of flavours, a Kinnockite and now a Blairite - that he supports the current fashion. Indeed his commitment to the prevailing leftwing orthodoxy is so intense that he has even publicly attacked himself. He wrote in May's *Prospect* about his previous Kinnock-supporting incarnation, during his first period as editor of the *New Statesman*: "The powers [Kinnock] turned out to be wrong about me [in supporting his candidature as editor]. I got up their noses by being too right wing (or too right wing too early) ... But, worst of all, I made a muck of the magazine and left it."

Lloyd reports that "new Labour is opposed to the most vivid and popular version of stakeholding, that elaborated by Will Hutton in his book, *The State We're In*". Once again Lloyd offers no personal comment about this. Hutton's book may be popular but nevertheless one of the reasons it has been rejected, Lloyd reports (uncritically), is "the perception ... that once social stakeholding goes beyond warm words to cold policies, votes could be lost." Other reasons are: "New Labour thinks much of [Hutton's analysis] is wrong. It thinks he has produced an account of Britain which is black when it should be grey; that he has attached himself to a German model now seen to be in trouble, even by the Germans; and that, translated into policy, it would produce a confrontation between a Labour government and business of the kind that mired both down during the workers-on-the-board debacles of the mid seventies. "We are on the sane end of stakeholding" says one leading Labour figure crisply, "not the Hutton end."

None of the criticisms of Hutton cited above were given in a public forum (the *Channel 4* television debate following Hutton's documentary) by Alastair Darling, a formal representative of the Labour Party. Darling confined himself to the depressing assertion that "you can take a horse to water but you can't, actually, make it drink" ie in his view changing company law to promote the social good is futile, presumably because the business interest is sovereign.

Given the public response to his book Hutton deserves to be taken more seriously

than he is by Lloyd here. To question the sanity of political opponents is an immature response which is best done from the security of an anonymous briefing to a tame journalist. To say that New Labour thinks that "much" of Hutton's analysis is wrong merely begs the questions: what parts are wrong, what parts are right and why? To say that Hutton's account is "black" rather than "grey" sounds to me like an appeal to confine the debate to the sort of waffle which safely commits New Labour to nothing. Lloyd later admits that this is what has happened. "It [Labour's use of "stakeholding", which he has defended] may be dropped; it may carry on as a warm and fuzzy word".

To say there was a confrontation between the Labour government and business in the 1970s is misleading - there was a confrontation between elements of the trade union movement willing to behave in a socially responsible, stakeholding, manner and elements who merely wanted free collective bargaining. It was in the name of free collective bargaining, that the rubbish piled up on the streets and the dead were left unburied.

To say that the Germans are having doubts about their system is a more serious question and one which deserves greater thought. Recently a South Korean company set up a plant in Wales because of the low wages. Perhaps this makes workers at BMW or Audi envious, I don't know. Personally, I think it unlikely that the Germans should want to ape the social destructiveness that characterises capitalism in this country. But if Lloyd is correct and the Germans do look admiringly at our short termist, financially orientated system it is puzzle why his article ends so bleakly with complaints of "the radical fragmentation of contemporary economic and social life"; it is a puzzle why Blair has advocated the creation of a "new social order". It turns out we are already living in the highest form of capitalism! (which is itself the highest form of economic system). It is therefore fortunate that Lloyd failed when he was advocating its destruction.

"Blair's aides worry that in adopting the stakeholding slogan he has blundered into Hutton territory, where the left once again appears to be seeking either to deny, subvert or remodel the core principles of international market economics," Lloyd reports loyally. But how can it be that stakeholding, according to New Labour, represents the German model and it

represents a subversion of international market economics? That means that the most powerful economy in Europe is subverting market economics! Perhaps the laws of markets aren't written on tablets of stone after all.

Let me remind the reader that at the beginning of his essay on "the truth about stakeholding" Lloyd characterised it as nothing new; as merely the managerial classes' version of common sense. By the end, and without any reflection on the distance he had travelled, stakeholding had become a subversion "of the core principles of international economics." Here is his clarification. "It [the word stakeholding] may still be used as the framework for the Big Idea, even be proposed as the Big Idea itself" or "It may be dropped."

Stakeholding could be everything. Or it could be nothing. Or, just perhaps, it could be something in between. Surely only a training in dialectical materialism could produce such a relaxed conclusion. And one that is so unquestioningly loyal.

In his final paragraph Lloyd concedes that the Labour Party has abandoned its past orientation and has refused to take up a European social orientation, not because it has a better idea, but without having any other idea. Lloyd is now not even sure whether having ideas is a good idea. He wonders "whether any idea can act as a spur to new relationships." [his italics] This leaves me with a sense of being cheated. Do we need spurs to have "new relationships"? Have ideas had this role in the past? Do we need ideas to have "new relationships"? Do we need "new relationships" at all? etc.

Comment: Shadow Cabinet elections

It is impossible to know whether Alastair Darling, personally, has any worries about the huge concentration of private power present in the City of London. It is impossible to know whether the posture of complete submission to this power is one which frustrated him. It is impossible to know whether the social costs of a financially orientated capitalism bother him. It is impossible to know whether the "vision" of the stakeholder economy and society, the "Big Idea," initially inspired him. Or whether, like John Lloyd, he is unconcerned if it amounts to nothing much despite the, now long forgotten sound and fury. What is certain, however, is that if he had any doubts, his unquestioning loyalty has been rewarded with a seat in the Shadow Cabinet. He did not stand for election.

Evil armed and disarmed

Below Walter Cobb considers the social basis of the gun culture while on the facing page Dave Chapel argues that the Dunblane tragedy has been exploited for narrow political purposes.

In the 18th century, much the same people had political rights and the right to carry lethal weapons. The Americans decided that these privileges were to be extended. Theoretically to the whole male population, in practice mainly to whites. US independence was very bad news for Blacks and Red Indians.

If an Englishman's home is castle, then the rest of world is assumed to be a wilderness. This form of individualism was preserved in America but dwindled away in Britain itself, with people becoming more social and concerned. America is turning a rich and potentially excellent society into a paranoid wilderness, because it has these hang-ups on the effectiveness of personal violence.

It is true enough that guns do not kill people, people kill people. But people with guns kill other people much more easily than people without guns. A very good brawler may occasionally be able to take on as many as four determined foes: beyond that there is only the rubbish of popular fiction. But guns and especially automatic weapons create a total lack of balance.

People can be violent for what they see as good ends - as with the IRA and the Protestant paramilitaries and many others. Or they can be violent for selfish ends, as with professional criminals. Or they can be violent as a general protest at a world which displeases them, which seems to have been Hamilton's motives at Dunblane. You could call the last of these evil if you like, and find any explanation for it you like. What I observe is that an unstressed and visibly just society will be far less plagued by such characters than the self-righteous hypocritical mess the New Right have built.

With hindsight - and much against what I thought at the time - Martin Luther

King with his non-violent methods had the effective method for curing America and raising up African-Americans. Whereas the Black Panthers were disastrously wrong doing things the American Way. They made it easy for "conservative" politicians to stop caring what happened in Black areas. They helped identify Black self-assertion with the crazy American notion of liberty through personal violence. And so the young Blacks enthusiastically kill each other with sophisticated weaponry and the culture as a whole remains downtrodden.

Americans increasingly like to blame criminal genes for crime. Now it does seem to be true that some people are more inclined to crime and violence than others. But is it not odd that these criminal genes only manage to express themselves in America, and in other fluctuating unfair and overstressed societies?

In the early 20th century, there was a very unexpected outbreak of violent crime among the Jewish immigrants who had fled persecution in Eastern Europe. And while it was mostly chance which country the various refugees ended up in, their pattern of crime was in each case the same as the host population. Razor gangs in London's East End and cold killers with machine-guns in the United States. And in both cases, this pattern ended as soon as Jews moved up the social ladder and had other safer and more respectable ways of getting ahead. Arguably, the same genetic factors enabled the Bugs-and-Meyer gang to levy protection on other bootleggers as allowed the Israeli armed forces to dismember vastly larger Arab forces. But the expression of such potential obviously depends on the social context. The Israelis showed their commitment to public

morality by kicking Meyer Lansky back to the USA, the land that had made him the clever cold thug he was.

Is an armed population a protection against tyranny? The evidence from America is that their gun-mad culture cannot fight wars very well or cope with loss, hurt, defeat or the fact of death. Most citizens of Ancient Rome were armed and trained for war. They turned their elections into battlefields and created such disorder that Republican forms were discredited. Even wicked emperors like Caligula were tolerated, because the sum total of their killings was much less than the organised destruction of civil war.

An effective electoral system is a means whereby the society can fight a bloodless civil war every few years, and sort out any shifts in mood or balance of power. The Swiss were and are free because they had politics, not because they had weapons. Since mediaeval Europe was a cruel barbarous place - well behind contemporary civilisations in China and India and the Islamic world - the Swiss had to be armed and had to fight wars. But they were successful because they accepted the rules of the democratic game.

Let me repeat my serious proposals for minimising the risk of another Dunblane:

1. Aim to disarm the entire population, with no one at all holding a gun unless they are also under public supervision and control. Pragmatically, it would be unwise to try to disarm existing gun holders. It would be far more likely to spark violence than to prevent it. But the whole business should be rejected culturally as primitive and distasteful. And such an attitude might even filter through to professional criminals, who in Britain used not to use guns and are still much more careful and cautious than their US equivalents.

2. Make teaching and child-care well-paid professions that would attract the best and most talented people. Children get their characters formed by their parents and by school, and we can at least ensure that the schools are good. They should be a natural place for the best rather than a refuge for people with no ideas after they complete their own education.

3. Strict and intrusive checking over everyone who will be trusted with power over children.

Milking Dunblane

The decision by the Home Affairs Select Committee to oppose a *total* ban on the private ownership of handguns is entirely reasonable as a rejection of knee-jerk reaction prior to the publication of the Cullen Commission Report on the Dunblane massacre.

The decision of the five Labour members to produce a minority report (two weeks before the Committee Report is due) smacks of populist opportunism. The press coverage must have gladdened their hearts. And they knew that the Dunblane parents - quite naturally - would denounce the Tories.

The Opposition correctly criticised the Government for instant and ill-thought out legislation eg the Dangerous Dogs Act. But the opportunism on guns bodes ill for the behaviour of a Labour Government.

The five Labour members of the Select Committee certainly had a precedent to follow. When the Dunblane killings occurred, the Prime Minister made a statement to the Commons, including telling MPs that he was about to set off for Scotland. Speakers from all parts of the House, including Mr Blair, made sympathetic contributions and agreed that it was right and proper that the head of the Government should go to Dunblane. On such an occasion it was only right and proper that the head of the Government should go to Dunblane. On such an occasion it was only right and proper that the *Prime Minister* should visit the scene of the tragedy.

A little later it was announced that *both* John Major and Tony Blair would go to Dunblane together. This meant that it was no longer a visit by the *Prime Minister*, but a visit by the leaders of the two political parties competing for power.

The only conclusion is that Mr Blair did not see Mr Major's visit as the representative of the British people giving support to the parent, teachers and children of Dunblane in their grief. (And this is a role for which Mr. Major is almost uniquely suited - he is no Bill Clinton.)

Instead, one must conclude that Mr Blair saw the occasion as a photo-opportunity being hijacked by his political enemy. He wasn't having that. He wanted to be part of the action and the occasion was therefore cheapened.

"Keir Hardie was New Labour"

David Blunkett (May 18, 1996) speaking at a *Road to the Manifesto* political education conference

Keir Hardie was born illegitimately on 15 August 1856, in a one-room house in Lanarkshire, the eldest of seven sons and two daughters. He wrote of his childhood: "I am of the unfortunate class who never knew what it was to be a child - in spirit, I mean. Even the memories of boyhood and young manhood are gloomy."

At the age of eight he worked in a print shop. At nine he worked twelve and a half hour days in a bakery. At ten he went down a Lanarkshire pit. In the next thirteen years he learnt how cheap the life of a miner was. He taught himself to read and did so widely. Brought up an agnostic, he converted to Christianity which greatly coloured his later socialism and his rhetoric. "Communism" he wrote was "a form of Social Economy very closely akin to the principles set forth in the Sermon on the Mount."

In 1878 he was involved in trade unionism for the first time (his early public activity being in the Temperance Movement) organising a 6 week strike during the summer of 1880 which was broken by blackleg Irish labour.

Expelled from the pits, he became a journalist. For the next six years he wrote numerous columns and pamphlets, many of which were about the mining industry. But he also developed ideas more widely. He had little interest in institutions. He was not influenced by the doctrinaire creed of scientific socialism. He attacked those who were so certain that socialism would inevitably come that they felt able to abstain from day to day political activity. Yet his longterm goals bordered on the mystical. Socialism meant a time "when all the people shall be employed as Comrades in providing for every human need and increasing the sum total of human happiness." Elsewhere he wrote: "I am a socialist because socialism means fraternity founded on justice, and the fact that in order to secure this it is necessary to transfer land and capital

from private to public ownership is a mere incident in the crusade." Elsewhere, he explained, "Socialism is not a system of economics."

While he hoped that state socialism would evolve into "free communism" based on the principle of "from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs" he was anything but a dogmatist or a sectarian. He fought to make the Independent Labour Party, which he helped to establish, a broad, tolerant and gradualist movement, capable of cooperating with other radical reformers, including the Lloyd George Liberals. He argued that while the ILP was for the working class it should be able to accommodate middle class members sympathetic to the cause (blending "the classes into one human family"). Kenneth O Morgan explains in his excellent biography, "Keir Hardie: radical and socialist," that Hardie "often argued that any manifestation of socialist or working class consciousness was desirable in pushing the cause forward. Since there was no ultimate blueprint of socialism, no finite form that the socialist society might assume, all the varied approaches within the British Labour Movement - the gradualism of the Fabians, the Marxism of the SDF [Social Democratic Federation], the "Free Communism" (as Hardie termed it) of the Socialist League, the syndicalism of the Plebs League, all had their value".

Morgan concludes a discussion of Hardie's role as a political theorist with the observation that "Hardie's political theory, however crude, stood the test of a crisis in the forging of a Labour alliance, while the Fabian's prescriptions, however articulately expressed by its well-educated advocates, proved empty and unreal ... detached as they were from the trade unions whose history they studied."

Gwydion M. Williams

Notes on the News

Till almost anything
doth us part

The Latin Christian position on marriage was always a very great oddity. It was declared absolutely indissoluble, whereas the more traditionalist Greek Orthodox tradition would allow divorce and remarriage as a concession to human weakness. But the Latin church was also very flexible about granting annulments, mostly on quite dubious grounds. They chose to subvert their own law in such a way that they could pretend not to have done so. And this was seen as virtuous. This same tricky pseudo-morality has been inherited by the modern Roman Catholic and Protestant offspring of the mediaeval Latin Church.

Despite having come into existence because of Henry the Eighth's need for a divorce, the English Protestant tradition was solidly hostile to divorce. For as long as it seemed to be defending some coherent moral code, this was as big an impediment as any law. People used to submerge personal interests for the sake of a respectable position in stable social set-up. And now they no longer bother.

At the same time as the finalisation of divorce of Prince and Princess of Wales and US passes Defence of Marriage law, which does nothing except pointlessly kick gays who are trying to be somewhat traditional. Marriage is of course mostly under threat by the unstable self-indulgent heterosexual majority, who will not make the same sort of sacrifices their parents made, but also want the traditional order to hold intact. They are to blame. But they are also the voters, so someone else is picked on.

America was of course the "weakest link in the chain". Out of all of the cultures derived from the Latin Christian tradition, it talks the most about religion and practices it the least. The main theme of Jesus's original teachings, forgiveness of injury, is not even abstractly admired. A purely pagan joy in savage revenge is the

dominant theme of American culture, under a thin respectable Christian gloss.

Even more than the British, the American want freedom to live their own lives as they please, but are offended by other people doing exactly the same thing.

Not in front of the adults

Prostitution in Britain is legal but cannot operate legally. Magazines and adverts that rouse sexual passions are legal. Modest unobtrusive magazines to put men in touch with ladies who will satisfy those passions are not legal. They have also been successfully driven out of existence, unlike the uncensored uncensored sex videos which are openly on sale in Soho shops. Prostitutes' adverts, many of them offering something other than straightforward sex, are not legal but also are not controlled. They are all over phone-booths in Charing Cross road, upsetting the 99 per cent of the public who would just as soon not know. Yet anything more sensibly targeted would be prosecuted as an offence against public morals.

British culture is rooted in decadent puritanism. The original serious puritanism did intend to bend the whole society to its ideals. Had Cromwell had a competent heir, they might have succeeded. But the monarchy was restored instead, under a King who had no intention of letting puritan rules be applied to him and his friends. And that remained the rule, with the seriously puritan middle classes skirmishing with both upper class and the various working classes. From the 1960s, the culture stopped bothering to pretend to have puritan values.

But then along came the New Sisters of Chastity. Middle-class feminists were keen on the various sorts of freedom that were of benefit to them. Freedom to divorce. Freedom of abortion. Freedom to be openly lesbian.

Freedom to publish high-brow but very sexually explicit literature and art. Freedom to be sexually active with more than one man without being treated as public property.

All of the new sexual freedoms were of benefit to many other women besides the Middle-class Feminists, of course. But when it came to helping other women with no benefit to themselves, that was another matter. Since they had no need to sell themselves at ten quid a time or dance naked in front of drunken strangers so as to earn a modest living, they decided that such activities were not allowable. They seemed to think that the bodies of all women everywhere were legitimately the property of the Middle-class Feminists!

There is currently another big push to tidy up the lunatic laws concerning prostitution. One option would be to make prostitution as such illegal, instead of just making it impossible for prostitutes to trade legally. Someone seriously wanting to end prostitution would be demanding just this, but no one is as far as I know. Curbs on kerb-crawlers are another matter: they are quite genuinely offensive and even frightening to women who just happen to be in an area where prostitutes are operating.

Much more sensible is a simple decriminalisation. Prostitutes could legally advertise. Legally work in brothels if that was their choice. This option is being strongly pushed by the police, who currently have to waste time enforcing laws than no one particularly believes in.

Legalised prostitution would legitimise the view of women as sex objects, we are told. Actually this is done far more through advertisements. A man who goes to a flesh-and-blood prostitute is far more likely to be made aware of her human needs and feeling than someone who sees only the deeply improbably fantasy women the media provide.

USA rules the world, maybe

The US is using its own laws to arbitrarily push into other country's jurisdiction. First Panama, using drug smuggling as a local US ruling as a pretext to invade a sovereign nation and keep control of the Panama Canal in defiance of treaties the US should have been bound

by. Then a private war against Iraq, which was going to be fought whatever the United Nations might have said on the matter. And now an attempt to force companies all over the world to observe whatever trade boycotts the USA may arbitrarily decide are necessary.

The USA exploited Cuba brutally for as long as it had the power to do so. Castro was and is popular, because Cuba under Batista was being used for all of the prostitution and sex shows and Mafia-run gambling that the US public wanted to enjoy out of sight and well away from their own home neighbourhood. Whereas Communist rule in Eastern Europe was an offence against national pride, in Cuba it is an affirmation of national pride.

Private property is in its very nature subject to risks. If you want to do it your way, you should not also go running to the state every time you have a little trouble. If your luck is good you grow rich. If your luck is bad you lose everything, and revolution is one of the hazards.

No one tried reclaiming all of the private and public British property seized in rebellion of 1770s. The Loyalist element who remained true to their original allegiance lost everything and were driven out, and none of the citizens of the new USA seemed bothered at benefiting from this "stolen" property. But the reality of US life has always been a pattern of subsidy and protection for anyone with enough political pull. A few rich people, or a lot of ordinary people banded together.

Anyone who invested in Cuba knew they were taking a risk in a traditionally unstable part of the world.

The Cold War was won because the USA acted modestly, First Among Equals in the Western Alliance. The USSR blundered by trying to impose "limited sovereignty" on its allies. China was alienated by Russian arrogance and forced to seek anti-Communist allies. Eastern Europe was not allowed to go its own way, not until the USSR abruptly decided it too was going that same way.

The USA under Bush had the chance to establish a New World Order that would have been very favourable to US interests. This was rejected, because it would in some small ways have curbed the US sovereignty and freedom to act. President Bush invoked God to justify settling the matter of Iraq / Kuwait according to his own arbitrary acts of will. Interestingly, he then lost an election that looked eminently winnable. Thatcher who had probably put him up to it suffered an

ignominious fall from power. So too did Gorbachev, who abdicated the USSR's former position as an occasional curb to US excesses. President Mitterand, a more reluctant ally, nevertheless saw his own party loose power in France and got an heir he would not have wished for. And the Saud dynasty, the most reluctant ally of all, look to have been separated from the traditionalist religious people who used to be the basis of their power. If all this is not just coincidental, then Someone up there was well and truly pissed off at the pompous false pieties of George Bush.

With the heirs of George Washington repeating the arrogant errors of Britain's George the Third, it is perhaps time to play back some of the original Revolutionary slogans against the present day bloated monster. Do not expect us in the non-American world to be bound by rules we did not make and cannot get rid of.

No legislation without representation!

Sinking Atlanta

Atlanta hates quietly and segregates unofficially. The original US constitution said nothing about race, yet it was always understood that the US was to be a predominantly white nation. But then the southern states insisted on importing huge numbers of Africans, keeping them in slavery because they were wanted only as labour and definitely not as people. Slavery was unnaturally prolonged long after Britain had rejected it, because a black man born in the USA was either a slave or a citizen with full formal legal equality.

The northern states of the USA were unable to stomach slavery. But they were by no means ready to accept Blacks as citizens after they had ceased to be slaves. The logic would have been some official legal form of racial grading and discrimination, a formal Apartheid that would have harmonised the legal and the actual position. It is odd that this did not happen, at a time when most of the world did accept racist doctrine. I suppose the difference is that the Dutch-descended Afrikaners were fairly straightforward people, whereas all varieties of Americans tend towards pomposity and shysterism.

Since the lower position of blacks was never legal, it was open to overturn in the 1960s by the Civil Rights Movement. But as before, the North broke down an existing system and

then expected a new harmony to pop up spontaneously. What actually happened was another dumping of responsibility, with an informal segregation that looks likely to lead to ever more trouble.

Human Reverse Development

The recently published Human Development Report reveals some interesting truths. Eastern Europe and the former USSR were doing quite well until broke up their economic system. They trebled their wealth between 1960 and 1990. They were second only to the OECD countries, and by no large margin if factors such as education and health are taken into account. Measurements based just on income are misleading. A larger income which also has to cover things the state used to supply free may mean the same or even a lower standard of living.

"Only in Eastern Europe has the quality of life fallen since 1980, by 7%." (*The Economist*, July 20th, p 52). Those countries badly needed to change their politics, but should have kept their economics the same. *The Economist* does not try to explain how 'wealth-creating' measured managed to knock those countries back by a decade or two.

Just as interestingly, East Asia does not rate very highly yet. They are still below the world average and well below Eastern Europe. Their remarkable growth may mean nothing more than that they have learned to copy European methods with great efficiency. And it is interesting to note that the first and best, Japan, found itself unable to go any further once it had raised itself to an approximation of Europe's best.

If you think of economic growth in terms of people rather than abstract numbers, there is no surprise that most of the world seems to be tending towards the same economic level. It means that a real world community is no longer a completely utopian dream.

Shangri-La-de-da

Tibetan tiffs have been making their way into the more serious parts of the media recently. Two men, the Dalai Lama and a Western-based monk called Geshe Kelsang, are in conflict over

concluded on
page 15

Dave Chapel

Trade Union Diary

Are the trade unions facing up to life under New Labour?

Two welcome developments are occurring in the trade union movement. First, it has at last dawned on union leaders that fringe perks which were so emphasised in the last ten years are not why workers want to be in trade unions. Mortgage packages, travel discounts, etc. are OK in their place. But workers want a strong union at work. That fact had been lost sight of.

Secondly, and related, the unions are recognising that there is no point hanging about waiting for a Labour Government to change things. Coming to terms with this is a painful process. They're not quite there yet. However a Unison spokesman on ITV's *Agenda* at the end of June said:

"I think that in the last 25 years there's certainly been a complacency, that we've not made an effort to change our ways, and that's what we're doing now. We're going back to our organising roots."

The *Agenda* presenter commented that union organisation was not unlike that of 100 years ago where organisers faced new and hostile workplaces. The GMB among others recognises this. GMB organisers now approach, for example, dustmen in the street as they work to check if they are in the union and to recruit them if they are not.

A GMB organiser said: "The issue that unions must address is they must make themselves available to workers in order that workers can actually join. What trade unions have patently failed to do is make themselves available to these workers in private sector services."

Unions had by and large lost this habit. An exception necessarily being UCATT - but UCATT's got its own problems, not least of them being the predatory activity of other unions.

A "discussion" took place between TUC General Secretary, John Monks, and Alan Walters, Mrs Thatcher's former advisor. Walters' contribution was facile and I ignore it here.

Monks: "It [the perks policy] wasn't a mistake. The services that the unions provide on the edge of their activity are useful and they certainly help retain members. But I think we realise that's certainly not the leading edge of why people join unions. They think a union can help them with a problem at work."

"The labour market today bears very close similarity to the mid-Victorian labour market in terms of its inequality and its insecurities. It's the conditions that bred trade unionism in the first place. The reforms which the Tories put through have created a world where most people perceive too many employers as behaving very badly."

John Monks has clearly recognised that he will get nothing from New Labour. He hints at it but can't quite bring himself to say it. At a conference on recruitment at the TUC, Mr Monks said:

"Anyone who believes that union fortunes will improve overnight if Labour gets into power is living in a fantasy land. The fate of the union movement lies in our own hands."

He described Tony Blair's statement that the London Tube workers should end their strike as "unhelpful". In the inner circles of the labour movement that comment was probably a declaration of war. But the average trade unionist who speaks average English would have been none the wiser.

The Chairman of the *Agenda* discussion put Mr Monks on the spot:

"You say most people want unions to be stronger. But a very important person from your point of view doesn't seem to want that and that's Tony Blair. He says you're going to get nothing from a Labour government."

Monks: "Well, we're not going to get nothing. If Labour get in there's quite a substantial package of proposals, including the Social Chapter, the minimum wage, rights of representation

at work and a range of other things. I don't regard those as nothing. I regard those as a significant change. The presentation might be harder than the reality."

Chairman: "Only in the past week Labour has been watering down these claims, particularly on job security. For instance there was a commitment that people would have statutory rights even if they worked for somebody for less than 2 years. That's not there. They're selling you out really aren't they?"

Monks: "Some change has been made. Things have not improved from our point of view in one or two respects but let me say there's a very solid raft of proposals from Labour which if they're elected nobody should underestimate what effect they'd have on the labour market. They would help redress the balance towards the workers."

Chairman: "How solid is that proposal for the minimum wage, for instance, when Labour won't even put a figure on it?"

Monks: "No. But they've got a procedure where they've got a low Wage Commission which would be a negotiating forum for setting it. We would take our case to that Commission."

Chairman: "Are you going to establish in the Autumn at the TUC Congress what you want that figure to be?"

Monks: "Yes. That's almost certainly going to be the case. We're going to put a bid in. We haven't done it yet. We're working on that over the next months."

All this shows that the unions and John Monks, while not really expecting anything from a Labour Government, continue to speak in such a way that the message reaching their members is still that their interests will be looked after by Labour.

I wish that it were so. It is not. Ken Clarke is light years to the left of Gordon Brown. That is a fact. It will remain a fact so long as the unions continue to give unconditional de facto support to the Labour Party. It will only cease to be a fact if the unions wield their considerable power - both political and financial - to change the direction of Labour policy. Mr Blair has made it quite clear that that power will be curtailed as soon as possible. Time is running out.

Who is Right now?

"I believe most strongly that Conservatives have a settled obligation to administer the welfare state - not to abolish it" Alan Clark
source: DTelegraph (3.7.96)

What will become of the Social Chapter?

Labour spokeswoman on the social chapter, Joyce Quin, wrote in the *Times* (June 26):

"Member States shall implement measures that take account of ... the need to maintain the competitiveness of the Community economy in such a way as to avoid imposing administrative, financial and legal constraints in a way which would hold back the creation and development of small and medium-sized undertakings."

This modest caveat was best (or worst) that she could find. And even there the passage refers to the "Community economy." Mr Blair has made it abundantly clear on many occasions that the "Community economy" has no existence or interest for him.

In the beef crisis he supported Douglas Hogg's nonsense in what he called the "national interest". He talks constantly about Britain competing with the low wage economies and opposes any form of protectionism at a European (or a British) level.

On the *Record* (June 30) carried a report on the Social Chapter. First off the mark was a Mr Brown from the leisure group Center Parks: "Our concerns are that we're effectively signing up to a blank cheque." (Center Parks are hardly thriving in Britain's Social Chapter free zone, and their parent company, Scottish and Newcastle, are predicted in the City to be on the point of selling them off and cutting their losses.)

The following contributions were then made to the programme.

G. Brown: "I agree with the CBI that regulation must be used to enhance competitive behaviour and not inhibit it."

Joyce Quinn: "Labour will look carefully at the legislation and at the details of every clause in every directive. That makes perfect commonsense, because obviously, as in any agreement we have to look at the details as well as the generality."

"Labour doesn't want to burden business with unnecessary rules: I'm sure that industry will understand that Labour having lived under a government where we have very high unemployment - a lot of that affecting areas which Labour MPs represent - will certainly not want to cause higher unemployment or cause further industrial decline. The contrary is true."

Adair Turner (CBI): "I think there are signs that the Labour Party is more aware of the requirements of the market economy and of competitiveness. We certainly have a lot of discussions with them on those

issues."

Labour's policy statement *New Business Agenda for Europe* states: "The Social Chapter should not impose a large amount of regulation. Business will be consulted on all decisions and most importantly all proposals will be measured against their impact on competitiveness."

On that document John Edmonds said: "I was a bit concerned if the Labour Party is saying we are in favour of the Social Chapter but of course we've got to examine each measure critically. No one can argue with that, but I would hate to see the Party drift away from that major plank of the Party which is that we are going to change the way that British people are treated at work. We have to improve their social protection. We have to give them rights."

J Quinn: "Labour doesn't accept that there's automatically a clash between the search for competitiveness on the one hand and the need to treat people decently at their place of work on the other. Indeed we believe that giving people decent treatment and rewarding them for their efforts, particularly after they've worked for a company for a number of months or a number of years, makes good competitive economic sense."

A Turner: "The key issue of course, is how in practice the trade off is made between competitiveness on the one hand and improving employment and social provision on the other. So, as always, the devil is in the detail."

"Tony Blair's suggestion that they will pick and choose on what are acceptable social policies is very much welcome. The problem is will they have the clout to then make sure that elsewhere in Europe we will not have imposed upon us unnecessary and over-prescriptive regulations in this field? Until they make a statement which gives some concrete assurances there must be some degree of doubt about whether they can actually deliver what they say ... So it's not really a matter of whether one believes they're sincere or not. Unless they take that sort of step things which are anti-competitive could be imposed upon them by other people."

"If the Labour Party were to say that they had dropped a commitment to the extension of QMV to what are the really important categories of the Social Chapter,

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Barbara has costed it!

Old social democrats are a trusting bunch. John Monks (see above), Will Hutton and Barbara Castle have constantly given New Labour the benefit of the doubt. Mrs Castle, at least, seems to be the end of her tether. Interviewed about her recent pamphlet *We can afford the welfare state* on Radio 5 Live (July 16) she said:

"I believe that he [he G. Brown] secretly agrees with me. But what the Labour leaders are currently running scared about is any mention of any spending that the Tory lie machine will seize upon and distort."

"Now I've every sympathy with that. And I think they're right tactically to be extremely careful. But we have been extremely careful in this pamphlet. We costed everything and we costed the alternatives. And what one discovers is that we can actually save money by having the restoration of the system of state insurance, as of right, that we introduced in '74-'76."

"And I'll give you just one example. Do you know how much it costs to administer income support? It costs £5.45 per individual per week. State insurance basic pension costs 35p. We're spending at the moment £2 billion a year administering income support."

"Now if you got a pension that lifted people above that level you'd have a saving of over £1 billion. This is what we want the Labour Party to do. Not to throw money about."

Q: "Are you worried that New Labour is to some extent fighting shy of these sort of issues which are the bedrock of the Labour Party?"

Barbara Castle: "Well I think they are. And you know I do understand"

An unstable playing field

Clare Short's "compensation" for her demotion is a place on a committee drafting Labour's "welfare to work" policy. Also brought onto the committee is Frank Field, whose latest proposal is to DNA test all babies at birth to somehow make Housing Benefit fraud, a matter which he is obsessed with, more difficult. Since DNA testing has already been discredited can we expect more "radical" proposals? Post-natal abortion, perhaps?

Happy birthday

The diary would like to wish Jack "squeegee" Straw a belated happy 50th birthday - I understand that this was a joint birthday party with your old friend Robert Ayling - Chief Executive of British Airways.

Doubtless you discussed Bob's plan to use the proposed pilots' strike to smash the unions in BA by importing scabs [surely responsible foreign workers - ed]. Unfortunately for Bob, the pilots settled their dispute before this cunning plan could be implemented. What disturbs, however, is the reported presence at your party of that crazed leftie, John Redwood.

Labour's contract for a new Britain

"What the people want for our country, we want for it" (p6)

On July 5 Labour published its draft manifesto. It contained a great deal of information about itself. For instance:

"Though this document is not the final manifesto, it provides the foundations for that manifesto" (p1) It is "uncompromising" and "unhesitating" (p4)

"We set out our clear principles followed by a clear, specific programme. At each stage it is properly costed..." (p6); "we provide costings to match" (p7)

"We are setting out in this document the clear direction in which we want to take the country" (p7)

It "Sets out .. our strategic priorities for government" (p7)

"It is accompanied by specific pledges, the "early" pledges that are hard, practical and simple and will make a real difference to people's lives" (p7)

"Our programme is specific. We believe you, the people, would prefer clear, practical promises that the government actually fulfills" (p7)

"Before this document has even been published we have taken difficult decisions on a series of policy areas" (p7)

Readers may judge for themselves whether these promises have been kept:

New Labour's economics

"We are not a tax and spend party. " (FT July 5 - T Blair.)

We "set out our principles on taxation and spending". (p7)

"We will be wise spenders, not big spenders" (p12)

"Our public services are failing" (p1) we want "to know that if we are ill, we will be treated on the basis of need not wealth" (p6)

"The problems of Britain are not ones that can be solved simply by spending more". (p6)

we will "tackle crime", "improve our education and health services" (p6)

"The principles that will underpin Labour's tax policy are clear" (p12)

- a tax system with "work incentives" and which "encourages savings and investment" (p12)

the Manifesto "is not a shopping list of demands, nor should it be." (p6)

"We will put this programme to our membership and to those affiliated to our party... This will not be a formality" (p7)

"Every Labour member - however new - will have the chance to agree our plans" (p40)

In favour of Newness

"This country can't get new life from old politics, from tired and outdated ideological arguments that have nothing whatever to do with the realities of a 21st century almost upon us."

"we offer a different approach consistent with the theme of New Labour" (p6)

"Yet our aspirations remain the same" (p6)

New Labour will bring to the country the "same process of change we have brought to our party" (p6)

"There has been a fundamental reconstruction of the party - its ideology, its organisation, its policies" (p7)

"Our aim is no less than the fundamental reconstruction of a Britain" (p7)

"The public mood is one of desire for change" (p7)

"The new global economy requires a different and modern approach" (p10)

New Labour's agenda: "It's objectives and values would strike a chord with Labour's founders..." (p17)

"There has been a revolution inside the Labour Party" (T. Blair, July 5)

"There is no room in serious politics for nostalgia." (p20)

On New Labour:

"We have sought a new path between and ahead of the old left and the new right" (p5)

"We are back as the party of the people" (p6)

"We should make one thing clear. The Labour Party exists to further the interests not of the few, but of the many, the broad majority of British people." (6)

"The old ideologies are dead" (T. Blair, July 5)

"This is the New Labour approach ... It is a new agenda, and it is a full one." (p17)

New technology is good to "prosper in the new information age" we need to invest in "new technology" (p10)

"We have too little investment in the application of new technologies" (p10) we need a new partnership "in developing new technologies" (p11)

"we will help small business access new technologies" (p14)

"the government has been hopelessly slow to recognise the potential of new technology in transforming the availability of high-quality education" (p16)

Class war is bad:

"skills must be improved to build a workforce that can be flexible and adapt to these new economic conditions" (p10)

demands: "a new partnership that ends destructive conflict in the workplace". (p11)

"Foreign investors do want a flexible labour market" (p15)

John Redwood or New Labour?

"Our vision of Europe is not that of a federal superstate, but an alliance of independent nations choosing to co-operate with one another to achieve the goals they cannot achieve alone." (p35)

We should participate in Europe if: "we succeed in restoring a central role for Britain in shaping the direction in which we want Europe to go" (p36)

On the Single Currency: "We will reserve our options on it" (p35)

On defence:

"The defence industry is a strategic part of our industrial base" (p37)

"In the post-war world Britain faces a new range of security threats - proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" (p35)

"Our politics produce meaningless confrontation rather than serious debate" (p28)

On British history:

"after almost two centuries of world dominance" we seek a new role (p6)

Number of times the following words appear in the draft manifesto:	
new	107
change	36
security/insecurity	20
lead/leadership	18
partner/partnership	14
deal	8
challenge	8
tough	6
the once fashionable stake/stakeholder	8
but not as infrequently as the unfortunate socialism/socialist	1
source Guardian (July 5)	
agenda	dozens
full employment	none at all
clear	loads
radical	repeatedly
hard choices	several
easy choices	none at all

Transport policy

"In our transport policy, we have proposed a national integrated transport system - which cannot be left to the market" (p24) (Good point, Clare)

Things New Labour is not going to do:

"go back" (p5)
"flinch from ... hard choices" (p6)
have "boom-bust, stop-go economics" (p10)

"Governments should not try to run industry or second-guess commercial decisions" (p10) ["we favour an active industrial policy" (p13)]

"take a laissez-faire approach - the belief that markets are always right" (p10)

"return to penal tax rates" (p12)

"We will never recreate the Britain of the perceived "golden age" - uniformity in families and stability in our communities" (p20)

use verbs in sentences

Perceptive observations:

It is nearly the end of the century. And the next century will be the first of a of a new millenium. (p4, p7 (twice), p31)

Medium-term growth strategy:

"Our medium-term growth strategy will encourage long-term investment and increase sustainable growth" (p11)

Things New Labour is going to do:

"consider the introduction of a new Individual Savings Account" (p12)

"we will see how we can simplify and quicken the planning process" (p12)

"we stand firmly against prejudice" (p20)

"establish a Royal Commision to work out a fair system for funding long-term care of the elderly" (p23)

Policy on babies:

Labour will help them reach their full potential (p20)

On Britain today:

"at the same time has come greater crime - not just theft, vandalism and robbery - but sometimes crime so evil we can barely comprehend it. Drug abuse is widespread. Families breakup. The harm to children is severe." (p21)

Number of times the following photographs appear:	
Tony Blair	14
of which, smiling	6
statesmanlike	8
John Prescott	2
Robin Cook	1
Clare Short	0
Bill Clinton (with TB)	1
Keir Hardie	0
Clem Attlee	0
featuring children	23
of which babies	7
poor people	0
WASPish families with really nice toothy smiles	2

If you would like to find out more about Labour's detailed policy programme contact their information line on (0171) 277 3346.

Trade Union Diary continued from page 11

that would be a significant shift in their policy. We would be prepared to stay opted out entirely. But that that would be a more significant shift than simply nice words."

Edmund Berry: "I think, frankly, an extension of Qualified Majority Voting in the social area is essential. Qualified Majority Voting is very important because if you say that every one of the member states has to agree to everything, then that's really a recipe for no movement in any direction ever."

J Quinn: "The Inter Governmental Conference has only just begun. And we'll want to see what kind of direction it takes before committing ourselves in any more detail than that which we've already done. That makes perfect political sense."

I have quoted these people at length. One purpose of sound-bite politics is too mask the truth. The truth as far as the Social Chapter is concerned is that New Labour has inherited a policy from the John Smith era which was designed to enhance the quality of life for working people. New Labour despises working people - to the point where it will not let its children sit next to their children at school.

So New Labour turns the Social Chapter on its head and makes it subject to a veto by employers. And the employers that New Labour knows are not even the paternalistic kind. The ones it knows are spivs, serial downsizers and anti-unionists.

New Labour, New NEC

New Labour's housekeeper, Tom Sawyer is proposing changes to the structure of the Party's National Executive Committee supposedly to make it more friendly to a Blair/Prescott Government and not an alternative centre of power. The main proposal so far is to radically reduce the number of union representatives and replace them with MEPs and Councillors.

For good or for ill it has always been the union representatives who have been (and are) most supportive of Labour leaderships.

So the reasons given for the changes are downright lies. (If Councillors and MEPs were on the NEC in any numbers, they would make Tony Blair's life a misery. So that won't happen.)

Tom Sawyer, once a fine trade unionist himself, is doing the bidding of the ex-Communists around Blair, and taking a further step in breaking the connection between the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Kevin Brady

Parliamentary Diary

Minimum Ways

Tessa Jowell, who apparently is a nice New Labourite, opened a debate on "Family-friendly Employment" on 9th July in which she reeled off a list of "positive proposals Labour has put forward to support working parents". One of the proposals she mentioned was a national minimum wage.

Labour's positive proposal on this amounts to no more than setting up of a review body to examine the feasibility of introducing a minimum wage, which would be set at a level "the economy can afford". Trade unions like the GMB and UNISON are calling for this to be at least £4 an hour; in UNISON's case it is a specific £4.26 at current rates.

It is difficult to imagine a body, upon which will sit business representatives, recommending a level that will satisfy the unions. The level set will almost certainly be one which will not "damage" British business competitiveness. All the old clichés about the need to compete with the tiger economies etc will be trotted out and enable Labour to override union criticism. Which probably explains the proposal to have a review body.

Never mind the quality

The debate about MP's salaries could not have occurred at a more inappropriate time for MPs themselves. MP's standing is at an all time low and yet on 10th July they voted themselves a rise substantially above the rate of inflation. Inevitably, this led to widespread criticism from the electorate, if not from the press who generally argued that British MPs were underpaid and that a "decent" salary would increase both the quality and quantity of applicants.

Chris Mullin (Old Labour, Sunderland South) had the answer to this when he remarked, "I have heard it said that we must raise salaries in order to attract better quality candidates. The truth

is that all parties are heavily over-subscribed with applicants for winnable seats. That is especially true of the Conservative Party. If it was left up to the free market on which Conservative Members are so keen, we would be paying ourselves less, not more."

I have always been puzzled why so many people want to become an MP. All the more so with the advent of New Labour. No intelligent, independent-minded person should want to belong to a group in which open, unfettered debate is discouraged by the leadership. Democratic centralism is alive and well in today's Labour Party.

About three years ago this magazine argued that the Parliamentary Labour Party should set up something similar to the Tories backbench 1922 Committee, to further democratic debate and increase the influence of the ordinary MP. No one took up the suggestion at the time. Now Ken Livingstone and Paul Flynn are advocating just that. Ah, well, there is hope yet if it only takes three years for our ideas to get through.

The Price of Power

Last month a substantial part of Britain's nuclear power industry was sold for less than half the cost of building the Pressurised Water Reactor at Sizewell, Suffolk. The sale was opposed by Labour, although no commitment was made to take the 7 Advanced Gas Reactors and one Pressurised Water Reactor back into public ownership, even though the older Magnox reactors remain in government hands. This was more or less confirmed by Labour's John Battle during a debate on nuclear privatisation on 16th July.

The Government, for its part, took the opportunity to sing the praises of electricity privatisation claiming yet again that customers were benefiting from lower prices. It took Nigel Griffiths, Labour MP for Edinburgh

South, to point out that the claim was misleading. Although there has been no noticeable rise in consumption, or in the number of customers, he argued correctly that "since electricity was privatised in 1990, the average bill has increased by 21 per cent, yet the cost of coal has decreased by 20 per cent and the cost of gas has decreased by 9 per cent."

In his reply, the Minister for Small Business, Industry and Energy, Richard Page, accused him of being "a little short on reality", but failed to elaborate; no doubt because he would have had to deal with some uncomfortable facts concerning basic fuel prices. In case the message has not yet got home, here it is in again.

The main reasons for the fall in electricity and gas prices since the industries were privatised in 1990 and 1986 are the substantially lower labour costs due to massive job losses and the collapse in world oil prices in the 1980s and 90s influencing the price of other fuels. Almost 100,000 jobs have gone in both industries, while oil prices fell from just under \$35 a barrel in 1981 to a little over \$12 a barrel in 1994. If an electricity or gas company cannot reduce prices given those circumstances, it has no right to be in business.

Northern Ireland: New

Labour, No Rights

During the debate on the renewal of the Northern Ireland Act 1994 on 19th June, Labour's Mo Mowlam admitted that the principle of consent, whereby there would be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of its people, meant that Northern Ireland "will continue as part of the United Kingdom for a long time in the future."

Since she took over from Kevin McNamara as Opposition spokeswoman on Northern Ireland she has been at pains to emphasise the huge areas of agreement between Labour and the Government on the ways to achieve a peaceful settlement.

It is interesting, therefore, that in admitting that Northern Ireland will continue as part of the United Kingdom for a long time into the future and that consequently new arrangements and structures will be needed, she said nothing about the people's (political) right to vote for or against the political parties that govern them.

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which has the greater authority. Since some of Geshe Kelsang's supporters have been hailing him as the 'third Buddha' who will bring Buddhism to the Western world, hostility from the "pope" of Tibetan Buddhism was to be expected. It took the form of an attack on the worship of a Tibetan Buddhist deity called Dorje Shugden. I have not yet seen a straight answer to the charge that the Dalai Lama upset tradition and attacked what had been seen as a very normal form of worship within the rather eccentric and superstitious Tibetan version of Buddhism. He seems to have stirred up a conflict where none was really necessary.

As political leader of Tibet in the 1950s, the Dalai Lama bungled a difficult position. Tibet has gone its own way after central government in China had collapsed after the 1912 revolution. Arguably it was a colony that had now won its freedom. Equally, it was arguably not, and it never was formally recognised as a separate state. And International law accepts no right of succession, no matter how distinct.

If the Dalai Lama had stuck to his claim for separateness, he would still have been in quite a strong position. He did not do this, but for a time accepted the status as a regional leader in Mao's China. Understandably, this relationship failed, after which he talked of independence. But he was in the same position as any other would-be secessionist: No one wanted to support him in a world full of potential ethnic separations and civil wars.

Tibet was always backward and out of touch, and never was what romance made it. It was for a time the one part of the 20th century world where something hidden and significant might conceivably lurk. Though Shangri-La in the original book was basically a Western colony, composed of superior long-lived persons. The book says that candidates for this superior status were not found at all among Tibetans and only occasionally among the Chinese. Such racism used to be the standard Western attitude, until the Left challenged and overthrew it. Since the establishment does not wish to credit the left, such views are now written out of history. The romance of the imaginary Shangri-La is transferred to real-life Tibetan Buddhism. But, as the recent odd controversy shows, real-life Tibetan Buddhism does not come up to expectations.

letter from
Hungarycontinued from
back page

such that, driven into the back streets, it was difficult to locate restaurants selling Hungarian food. Eating is a cultural as well as a biological matter. The Hungarians, supposedly, have a distinctive national cuisine, involving the liberal use of paprika. What does it mean if a keen, McDonald's-averse diner struggles to locate it? The bookshops offered Stephen King, Agatha Christie, Jackie Collins and Ken Follett novels. All may be pleasantly diverting. None have any connection with Hungary. Turning on the radio and flicking through several stations the songs from non-Anglo-American artists were a rare exception. In addition to Tina Turner's heavily promoted appearance, Bon Jovi (sponsored by Volkswagen) and Michael Jackson were also in town. It will come as little surprise that film-going Hungarians were being entertained by Steve Martin's "Sergeant Bilko" and that film with Nicholas Cage and Sean Connery in it. The blandness and manipulateness of Hollywood product is a complaint of film enthusiasts the world over; perhaps it is no worse for the Hungarians.

Personally I think Tina Turner's finest hour was her appearance in *Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome* with Mel Gibson, and that "Simply the Best" is banal and irritating. (Also surrealistically, I noticed that the Orangemen at Drumcree were filmed singing it in their lighter hearted moments). Which is not say that I am anti-American. American culture's return traffic back to Europe has a lot more to offer than what was being vigorously sold to the inhabitants of Budapest. And that's my point. When culture is just another multinational industry what sells is what is large, powerful and safe. The fact is that Tina Turner is simply not the best. McDonald's is not the best and it won't be no matter how much marketing effort is expended in implying that it is. (The Labour Party's draft manifesto's

comment on the subject is "Art, sport and leisure industries are vital to... the renewal of our economy. They are significant earners for Britain." (p25) I find this a depressing and soulless vision.)

But neither do I wish to overstate my case. The modern artist who rejects the opinions of anyone other than himself, or perhaps of a grant awarding committee, is no improvement on the manipulations of corporate art. For there to be a culture there has to be a community and an audience of some kind.

I write, conscious of my limited knowledge of contemporary Hungarian politics and a knowledge of their non-Indo European language which is limited to the point of not being present at all. I also accept that there are a great many Hungarians who are happy to pay their hard earned forints (though earned doing what I have no idea) to listen to Ms Turner, Mr Bon Jovi or Mr Jackson. However it did not seem to me that the Hungarians, confident of who they are and what their culture is, were choosing to dip into what Anglo-America is offering in the way that happens in Germany or France or Japan. The multinationals were there on their own terms. Hungary looked like a country too tired to go on trying to be itself, which is ironic, given the struggles they engaged in to slough off past and more oppressive imperialisms. It surprised me that there was little record of these waves of invasion - Ottomans, Habsburgs, and Germans. The Romans seemed to have left more behind than the Russians, who had left a mere six years previously. There was no sense of a complex multinational state with a rich history of external influences. There was only the current dominant culture.

I have no idea whether this situation is sustainable, whether it is the resting point. After centuries of being invaded maybe you become stoical about it. But at the very least, a country without a domestic culture or even a record of a past domestic culture cannot, after the initial swarm of people ticking another country off their lists, support a tourist industry. Tourists are parasites and they need something to feed off.

Budapest
July 96

Letter from Hungary

Recently, I visited Hungary for 12 days, staying mainly in Budapest. My guidebook told me it is a city of two million people "worthy of comparison with other great European capitals."

What it didn't say was that Budapest is ugly. Not in the way a smoke clogged steel town might be ugly. After all, it is divided by one of the great rivers of the world, it boasts many fine century old buildings, sweeping boulevards and generous parks. It is ugly because a once grand and imposing urban environment has been colonised by the neon and billboards of multinational business. This may appear to be a minor charge. It is what we have come to expect in almost every Western city, (which post Cold War has come to mean almost every city). But the scale and intensity were overwhelming. Tina Turner's long legs straddled practically every lamppost. (She is appearing in concert in late August.) Signs on every urban street marked the pedestrian's nearness to a McDonalds, Burger King, KFC and Pizza Hut at intervals of 50m. Many suburban streets contained similar indications of a vehicle's nearness to a "McDrive". Practically all stationary objects (and some mobile ones) - umbrellas, shop awnings, fridges, bicycles for hire, declared their allegiance to either Pepsi or Coke. The windowless sides of even the grimmest tower blocks were covered with freakishly large Coke bottles. (Can there be any sighted person now unaware that they can, if they wish, buy one of two brown, fizzy, sugary liquids?) Naturally, there were ads in the Metro stations - on the walls, in the trains. There were ads on the handles with which passengers (customers?) retain their footing. There were Big Brotherish screens on the tunnel walls tempting passengers with goods. In the countryside there were huge billboards in the fields by the

roadside. As I was relaxing by a lake, a plane flew overhead surrealistically trailing a banner which read: "Lipton's Iced Tea".

But it was at night that battle really commenced. The tallest of Budapest's once beautiful buildings have become sites for giant neon declarations of corporate virility. Samsung, Philips, FujiFilm, Coca Cola and the golden arches of McDonalds tower over the Danube. The whole city centre glows like Times Square and Piccadilly Circus.

By the time an average television watching citizen reaches adulthood in Britain they have seen perhaps one hundred thousand ads. This leads to a certain jadedness, perhaps even cynicism, about the claims of health and wealth and sexual attractiveness, available for a small price, routinely made by advertisers. This leads to ironic ads, soap opera ads, ads where you have to struggle to figure out what the product is and finally, ads as a cultural phenomenon reviewed in the Sunday papers along with that week's books and films. A more innocent public in Eastern Europe makes do with much cruder, bolder, primary coloured statements of the appropriate brand name. Perhaps that's why I noticed it so much.

So what's so terrible about all this? That the Eastern Europeans are enjoying the fruits of free markets can't be regretted. I am not the first to observe that there is no need to advertise food to a hungry man or clothes to a naked one. To the extent that advertising is a problem, it is one of affluence. But surely who manufactures these goods must also be a matter of concern. Visiting supermarkets, I recognised the great bulk of the branded goods for sale - they were Anglo-American or German.

A Foundation set up by Margaret Thatcher, bearing her name, laudably

distributes money to teach the Eastern Europeans how to be capitalists, confident in the belief that the market is a natural, asocial process. There was some evidence of individuals, perhaps taking advantage of the cheap and efficient transport system, coming in from the countryside with pathetically small bunches of flowers or peppers. This was the market red in tooth and claw; the Thatcherite dream. These women had probably never read *Privat Profit*, (sic) a magazine offered on the top shelf of some newsagents. It featured pictures of smiling businessmen on its front cover. They were probably uninitiated in the mysteries of total quality management. But the brand names I have cited so far are not Hungarian. The only bright lights in Budapest generated domestically were those in the quarters frequented by the prostitutes, another business requiring very little capital, and probably one which flourishes under any economic system.

When "history ended" the *Economist*, the journal of those people who see the world as a huge blank, asocial, acultural, ahistorical group of people available to have things sold to them, used to complain that it was really rather difficult establishing capitalism in Russia. The Russians didn't have a proper legal system or didn't understand banking or accountancy. Western economists arrived by the plane load suggesting that they should establish a stockmarket. The market, they discovered wasn't the natural phenomenon a rigid adherence to their own dogma would lead them to believe. In the time it took Western firms to establish themselves, hire people who spoke Russian, figure out who required bribing and what the going rate was, domestic entrepreneurs had some kind of breathing space. Hungary, in contrast, had been adapting gradually to the market for years before the Russians were finally kicked out. This made it possible for those firms used to operating internationally to take over smoothly and rapidly.

And this is a problem which, I believe, is about more than balance of payments or economic welfare. The dominance of the American fast food chains mentioned was

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