

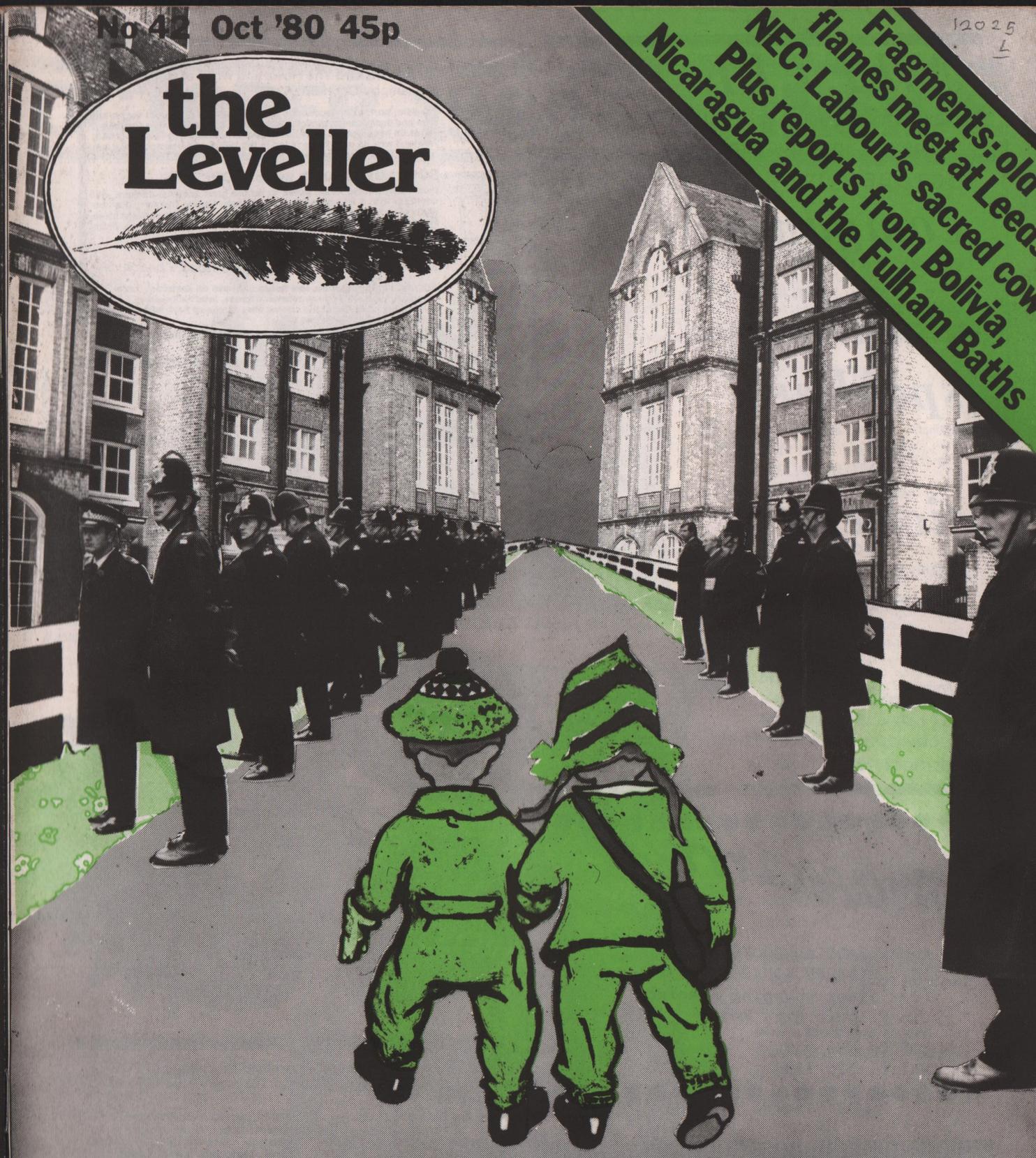
the Leveller



Fragments: old
flames meet at Leeds
NEC: Labour's sacred cow
Plus reports from Bolivia,
Nicaragua and the Fulham Baths

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monthly.**

**The first fortnightly
will appear on
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OCTOBER 1980

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BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS
Feminism and the making of socialism
Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright

the Leveller
TWICE AS OFTEN
TWICE AS GOOD

FORTNIGHTLY from October 29

Beyond The Fragments: The conference of the book of the pamphlet with a cast of 1,500 and an angry man in a leather jacket. Pages 14-16

The Last Monthly: We'll be back with you on October 29 with the first of the fortnightly. Further details Page 27

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Cover photomontage by Chris Schüler
Cover pictures by Angela Phillips,
Jeff Katz and Start-Rite Shoes Ltd

★ Apologies to Val Wilmer. The Contents Page picture last month of the London Women's Liberation Movement Conference should have carried her by-line.

WLM Conference

WE OBJECT to Liz Storey's article (*The Leveller*, September) 'Sisterhood or separatism' about the Third London Women's Liberation Conference. It was inaccurate in that she didn't explain (or didn't understand) how the conference came to have the workshops it did and it was a distortion in that she helps to perpetuate the myth that the Revolutionary Feminist position is the dominant one in Women's Liberation.

First of all, to explain about the content of the conference. All 43 workshops were the suggestions of individual women or women's groups who responded to the notices from the Conference Planning Group in the London Women's Liberation Newsletter and in WIRES. The opportunity was there for any feminists who chose to contribute workshop topics for the conference. However some women who attended may not have realised this since the notices we tried to put in *Time Out's* Agit-prop were altered in such a way as to say that the Planning Group had in fact, not only chosen all the topics for the workshops, but had written all the papers as well.

As for the report back session - there was no rigid three-minute rule and the decision to have no resolutions or voting was for exactly the opposite reason she suggests. This was clear enough from the paper produced by the planning group. The conference was meant to be a participatory one from the planning stages onwards and not something that was directed. And if, by the way, only ten Socialist Feminists did attend and none contributed any workshop topics in the planning stages, their absence/boycott/withdrawal/smugness is for them to answer.

We do not think the conference was a 'heavy dose of Revolutionary Feminism', but feel the selective-

ness of Liz Storey's reporting implied that it was. She did this by only mentioning some workshops and a few carefully chosen quotes. Since when have women who have attended Women's Liberation conferences and meetings felt entitled to write them up, particularly with quotes, for non-feminist publications? It would have been more honest to have said at the time that that was part of her purpose for being there, since women should be allowed to choose when and how they represent their politics to other people.

It seems that her obsession with Revolutionary Feminism made it impossible for her to acknowledge the presence of other women let alone to hear their views. Because a small group strongly believe in their shared political analysis and are honest about expressing it, this doesn't mean that the majority of other women have no views nor that the same small group oppresses them into silence. Most women in Women's Liberation are not aligned to any particular tendency and the views they express are very diverse. Obviously it's harder to write about them and also they are not such a convenient target for apportioning blame for any failings that are the responsibility of the Women's Liberation movement as a whole.

If we all, like Liz, become observers, will there be a Women's Liberation movement to participate in?

The Third London Area Women's Liberation Planning Group, London WC2.

We have received other letters which make the same points but have not been able to print them because of pressure on space

Open letter to Willie Black, SWP Edinburgh

Dear Comrade,

Monday evening, 25 August, 1980, is going to stick in your mind for a very long time. There, on the steps into Edinburgh Trades Council, you crossed a picket line of over 30 women and men protesting at the three-day visit by CAST which was sponsored by SWP Edinburgh.

You were very sore and very angry. 'Who,' you said, 'has done more to raise in the Trades Council questions of sexism, gay rights, factory-based struggles and opposition to Tory and Labour cuts' than you? Why, you and your members argued, did we not strike the picket and reassemble outside venues of other Festival Fringe events more sexist than CAST?

I, for one, recognise your anger. I was co-ordinator of the first International Gay Rights Congress (Edinburgh, December 1974). The event was soundly and effectively disrupted by women who had smelled a sexist rat while we (men) sailed on turning deaf inner ears to criticism. The lessons are still sinking in: revolutionaries must confront the power we inherit as men. Confronting that power, and understanding how it stultifies effective creative links between socialists and, in particular, relationships both personal and political between men and women, is a vital task. There is a gut fear in a lot of straight left men that modification of their toughness will cause them to flip into passivity or effeminate homosexuality. Or, rather, that it will be seen as such in other socialist men's eyes.

CAST is for lazy socialists, glad to have a dose of leftie humour which stops short of making demands on its audiences' sensibilities. The use of offensive sexism or racism in plays, television or cinema as *joke* is no

longer funny. We want - we demand - better than that.

Women who said they wished to work separately from men were accused by you of being non-socialist. This gave great offence to your highly political audience. What you said was little short of childish: 'I'm better (more socialist) than you are'. The confrontation could have been avoided and turned into something more valuable and of permanent benefit if you and your comrades had drawn some lessons from the disruption of CAST's last appearance in Edinburgh on May 1. You could have called an Open Day Discussion. Instead you cold-shouldered the issue, disciplined wayward SWP members, and simply hoped everything would be forgotten about.

Willie, it is precisely because you're anything but a moron that I'm writing this Open Letter (I hope you'll respond in *The Leveller*) in the hope that soon you'll start to explore the alienation you and your comrades cause in Edinburgh this summer.

Ian Dunn, Edinburgh.

Lord God Almighty Fan

THE ARROGANCE of religious people is sometimes almost unbelievable (Sherry Waldon's letter, *The Leveller* 41). Day after day atheists have to endure an endless barrage of religious propaganda, which we find nauseating, in all the media. Then when we attempt to answer back with lampoons or send-ups of religion, such as the highly amusing and entertaining *Lord God Almighty*, we have 'bad taste' flung at us.

'Taste', 'good' or 'bad', could only exist in bourgeois society. It is only one of many artificial mores imposed upon the majority by the minority, and is of no relevance whatsoever to the long, hard and ultimately bloody task of building genuine socialism, as opposed to phoney social-democracy.

We need a lot more material along *Lord God Almighty* lines to expose religion for what it really is: superstition.

Myra Childs, London SE1.

More on More Bad News

WE DIDN'T think a lot of your review of *More Bad News* and were surprised to see such a right wing statement in *The Leveller*. It took the same position on us as *The Times*. They too attributed the faults in TV production to the routine difficulties of journalists. News bulletins are changed and re-organised as your reviewer said because of constraints of time and boredom.

This is bullshit. After three years analysing the news we proved that such changes are in one direction and demonstrated links between political manipulation and the laying of blame for the economic crisis at the door of the working class. When a report of a speech is changed from one that criticises management and unions to being one which criticises the workforce alone and is then followed by 42 other references all of which blame the workforce, then this cannot be put down to the random con-

straints of time. It is simply not good enough to attack us (incorrectly) for not describing what newsrooms look like, and again to imply (incorrectly) that we don't have experience of working as journalists. This is again the sort of nonsense that was thrown at us by the right wing Press.

What we have done is to publicise alternative political views and to provide hard and irrefutable evidence which can be used in struggles to change the media. What else is the point of doing radical critiques or providing radical journalism? Why bother to write *The Leveller*?

This is a point we might take up with your reviewer. He says that our findings are insignificant because 'we all know what's wrong with television news'. Who is the 'we' that he is referring to? Does he mean everyone who reads *The Leveller*? What about the 68 per cent of the population (according to opinion polls) who believe that television is the most reliable source of news? A year ago *The Daily Telegraph* gleefully reported that 70 per cent of the population thought trade unions were the main cause of economic crisis. Let's be clear - many trade unionists believe this. We have done more than 200 talks at trade union schools and conferences over the last four years. People are really surprised and sometimes outraged when they see how this picture of the economic crisis is set up on television. For your reviewer to imply we needn't bother because everyone knows, is simply silly.

Finally, the worst thing about the review is the awful fatalism with which it ends. That 'television news won't ever do anything except underline the dominant view of society'. This is a terrible put-down of all the struggles which are going on inside and outside the media to change it. If there are not intense conflicts in the BBC and ITV over such things as the coverage of Ireland - then how come so many journalists have jeopardised their careers for better coverage? If media institutions in capitalism simply reflect dominant views then why did the Attorney General have to threaten the BBC, as it did recently, with the Prevention of Terrorism Act, to make it toe the line?

Our work is being used to press the BBC and ITN to fulfil their legal requirements to be balanced and accurate, and also to argue for the necessity of alternative forms of media. If our case against television news is accepted then either the media will have to change or else people will stop believing them. Either way that has got to be good news for magazines like *The Leveller* - why don't you recognise it?

Greg Philo, John Hewitt, Pete Beharel, Glasgow University Media Group.

Francis Cop-out

MORE INFORMATION on the BBC's shopping to the police of the journalist who got the interview with escaped gangster Charles Richardson (see last issue). When reporter Tony Van den Bergh turned up to see radio producer Hugh Purcell with his tapes of Richardson's impeccable sociologese, it was no surprise.

Purcell had given him the tapes and knew what Van den Bergh was going to do: indeed, Purcell had a solicitor waiting to see the reporter, whose advice - later overruled by the BBC's senior solicitor Tony Bostock - was that the tapes should be offered to the police. Purcell therefore contacted Thames Valley Police, having told Van den Bergh he was going to do so.

So much for the assertion from Dick 'Francis of the Yard' Francis, the BBC's Director of News and Current Affairs, that Van den Bergh had 'falsely said he was acting for the BBC'. Francis' remark was in the minutes of the senior editorial meeting. In any case, Van den Bergh has worked regularly for the BBC, as a freelance, for more than 20 years - including for Francis when he was a mere producer.

But the most intriguing aspect came later. The police were not in the least interested in the tip-off the BBC were so keen to give.

Van den Bergh was perfectly happy to meet the police, and arranged two meetings with them at his solicitor's office. Twice the police simply failed to show up. Only after persistent pressure from the solicitor did an inspector from the Kent Constabulary come along for a third meeting, and all he did was to ask: "Do the tapes give any indication where Richardson is? is?"

"No," said Van den Bergh. "In that case," said Old Bill, "We're not interested". And away he went, without even listening to the tapes, let alone seizing them.

The BBC hasn't listened to the tapes either. The magnetic record of what is probably, in straight journalistic terms, one of the most sensational interviews conceivable at the moment, lies gathering dust in Van den Bergh's home.

Nukes: their plans & ours

ON SEPTEMBER 19 there will be an atomic attack on this country. Breathe easy, they'll only be paper bombs. But Home Defence Exercise 'Operation - Square Leg', part of the massive NATO manoeuvres going on this month, isn't a joke.

For the week culminating in 'B' Day on the 19th, all

Armed Forces HQs, Sub Regional HQs, and County and District HQs will be activated and personned.

More interestingly, Army Field Force Eight, stationed at Bulford, will be practicing its home defence role, guarding strategic points throughout the country: NATO installations, radio and TV stations, microwave towers, food and fuel dumps, or anything else which might take the fancy of yer average nasty subversive. The main area of operations is going to be in Eastern and North Eastern areas with their headquarters at Colchester and York. If you see armed soldiers on the lurk that week, ask them how many subversives they've shot that day.



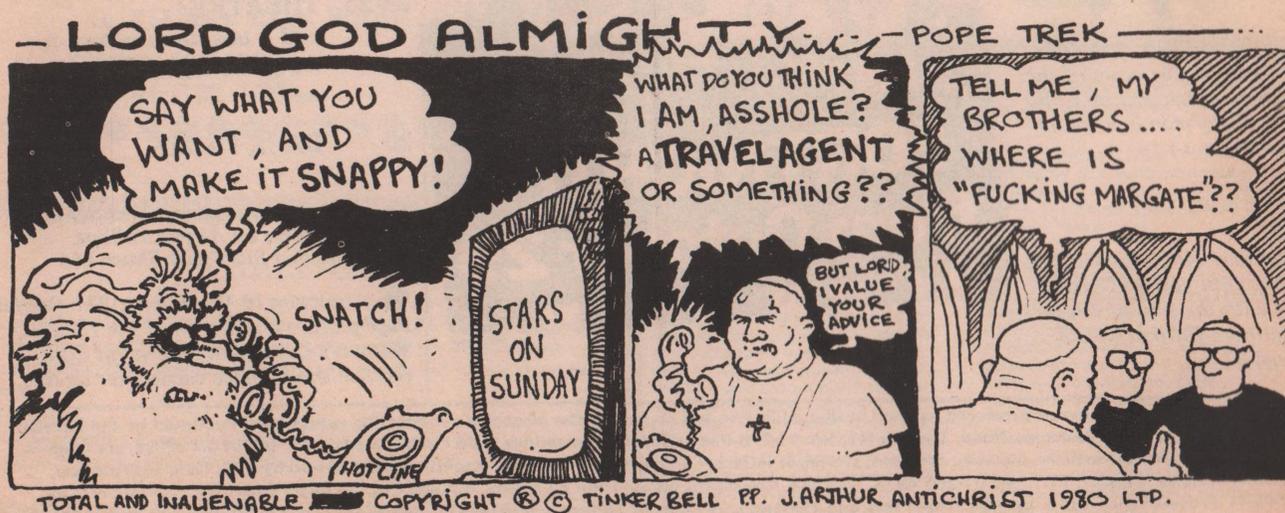
Nagasaki Day marchers passing through the centre of York. Later their rally attracted 800 people: up and down the country local CND groups staged similar events.

Meanwhile.....

Plans for the major London CND rally, scheduled for Sunday October 26, are well-advanced and follow a summer of activity unprecedented since the heady days of the early sixties. Rally organiser Sally Davidson says that the level of interest is "far greater" than anything she's ever known at CND.

The rally will start from Hyde Park and march to Trafalgar Square. Sets by the Pop Group and Athletico Spizz will precede speeches from a platform which includes Tony Benn, the T&G's Alec Kitson, and EP Thompson, hotfoot from an American speaking tour. Other speakers include actress Susannah Yorke, Liberal MP David Alton and representatives of various CND youth groups.

Last year CND's October rally, timed to coincide with United Nations Disarmament Week, attracted little support or interest. This year, with campaigns against cruise and Trident mobilising across the country, the signs are that the rally should be enormous.





Photographer Jeremy Nicholls took this picture of a cameraman at the recent Notting Hill Carnival. Jerry was particularly interested in the man's badge, which proclaims him to be a supporter of the youth section of Jamaica's ruling Peoples' National Party. A few minutes after the picture was taken, Jerry saw him joining a group of other policemen arresting a youth

PTA charges dropped

THE ARRESTS of Mike Duffield and Kirstine Crosbie, two street sellers of the Revolutionary Communist Group's *Fight Racism !! Fight Imperialism !*, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Glasgow last month brings the total of RCG paper sellers held over the past 16 months to 22.

Arrested outside Celtic's ground on August 8, they were allowed home, with instructions to report to the Sheriff's Court two days later. Over those two days they were transformed into such threats to the state that they were remanded in custody, charged under Section 1(1) of the PTA with 'soliciting and inviting financial support for a proscribed organisation, namely the IRA', which carries a possible five years in prison.

Police opposed bail on the grounds of the 'nature of the charge', and the need to make 'further enquiries'. Strangely, however, they made none: no RCG contacts in Glasgow or anywhere else were visited at all, and the two themselves were never even questioned.

They were, however, held in appalling conditions. Mike, in particular, in Barlinnie Prison, was forced to wear prison clothes and refused some visits (completely against the regulations

for remand prisoners), refused showers and locked up as a Category A (maximum risk) prisoner.

In one peculiar incident he was 'planted' with evidence - a magazine with IRA slogans scrawled through it - by another prisoner. Luckily, by the time the screws arrived to search his cell to 'find' it, he had had the presence of mind to write, and conceal, not one but two letters about it to his solicitor, so on being told the screws had to shuffle away.

More peculiarly, when Mike and Kirstine came up in court again, they had miraculously transformed back again, to mere minor irritants. The charges were dropped and now they are only facing 'breach of the peace' and have been allowed unconditional bail.

The RCG are convinced that the affair has simply been part of an apparent state campaign of harassment against them. With no attempt at investigation to substantiate the charges, it would seem there never was any real intention to proceed with them. It was just a matter of using a conveniently draconian law to keep someone you find irritating in prison for a while, a bit of a frightener. The RCG, however, aren't going to take the message.

Tameside campaign let down at TUC

DELEGATES AND supporters from Tameside Trades Council's reinstatement campaign picketed the TUC conference earlier this month. But while Brighton's finest kept the chanting pickets behind the barriers and away from the delegates, a "classic mix-up" inside the hall ensured that the matter was never raised on the conference floor.

The same day a meeting of a few right-wing Labour councillors at Ashton-Under-Lyne Town Hall took the first tentative steps towards setting up a new 'official' Trades Council.

Tameside was thrown out of the TUC last March after they had refused to cancel a conference under the slogans of 'Bring the Irish War to Britain', and 'Troops Out Now' (see *Levellers* 37 and 38). The conference was organised after a speaker from the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign had addressed the Council and won their support.

Len Murray sent the Council a letter telling them that since they persisted in holding their conference against TUC wishes, they were no longer affiliated. The Irish conference took place in the Spring, and a campaign was mobilised which has so far gained the support of 50 Trades Councils and 30 union branches.

The matter was raised as an emergency motion at the National Union of Journalists' Annual Delegate Meeting, held last April in Portrush, Northern Ireland. The motion called on the TUC to reinstate Tameside. The TUC replied with a copy of the relevant circulars and the NUJ's General Purposes Committee decided to take no further action.

But the union's elected National Executive Committee opted to press for the relevant section of the TUC's annual report to be 'referred back' at Brighton. NUJ delegate meetings during August decided that Mike Bower, the Northern Organiser, should intervene at conference but, says Bower, who wasn't at the meeting, nobody told him.

NUJ Assistant Secretary Bob Norris says he gave Bower the Tameside file and asked him to raise it at conference: somewhere between the two men there was what Norris calls a "classic mix-

up". It wasn't until they signed the picket's petition on Wednesday afternoon that it occurred to either of them to find out what was going on.

That same night Frances Dean, Secretary of Manchester Trades Council, and North Western representative of the TUC's Joint Coordinating Committee, called a small meeting at Ashton town hall. Dean, who was not available for comment, had contributed much of the original report on Tameside which had led to the TUC General Council's decision to throw them out.

About ten local councillors turned up to the TUC-sponsored meeting, passing a picket as they did so. Only one of them was a Trades Council delegate. After a confused session they agreed to meet again in eight to ten weeks time. The old Trades Council, which had originally had delegates from 44 branches, now meets irregularly with about 15 branches present. Most Trades Union General Secretaries have sent circulars to their local branches telling them not to support the 'rebels'. But others, like Council Secretary Dave Hallsworth's own AUEW, are saying that even if the new Trades Council gets launched, then Hallsworth will still be their delegate.

Hallsworth says that the campaign to reinstate Tameside has had broad support from the labour movement - that was certainly the impression given by the friendly response of many of the delegates to the TUC picket - and that it has been most actively supported by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency and the Workers' Socialist League, together with some Labour Party members. He is critical of the Socialist Workers Party's apparent lack of interest, and scathing of the role of the Communist Party.

If the proposed new Trades Council is to have any credibility, it will need the support of local activists, something that seems unlikely at present. Indeed, if the NUJ hadn't got things so confused, the rebels might just have had the support of the TUC conference for their stand. Instead Tameside remains a challenge to labour movement complacency over Ireland.



To Stanton/the next step

Leeds poison scandal

TWENTY WORKERS are to be made redundant at the Leeds factory of Yorkshire Chemicals. Nothing unusual in that, these days, except that eight of them are shop stewards, and they include many of the health and safety representatives in a company which has become infamous through a number of poisoning incidents.

Last June *Leeds Other Paper* reported the case of Moses Prentice, a dye worker whose face and hands had darkened after he had been poisoned by mercury salts. Prentice worked in the company's 'Q' shed, but when he complained in July 1979 to the company doctor, she gave him a sick note but did not suggest that he seek specialist advice.

When the note ran out Prentice was offered work in other sheds that didn't use the mercury salts. He refused, saying he didn't want to work with dyes at all. So the company sacked him.

It wasn't until January this year that Prentice went for specialist advice to Leeds General Infirmary: tests at the hospital showed that he was suffering from Department of Health and Social Security Disease Five, mercury poisoning.

But the Leeds Industrial Tribunal decided that Prentice was fairly sacked because he would not do the work the company had employed him for. In June this year, following widespread alarm amongst the workers after the mercury poisoning had been made public, work was halted in 'Q' shed until the trade union health and safety representatives had taken urine samples for hospital analysis. And the Government's Employment Medical Advisory Service was called in for further

tests. The results were frightening. In one shed the amount of aniline - which may attack the liver and nervous system - was way above the official limits. In another shed acrylonitrile, which is believed to cause cancer, was reported to be at "alarming levels".

Workers staged a one day walk-out in protest at the danger, and were given a 'verbal warning' by the management for their behaviour. Management would not give them necessary information - even though they are obliged to under the Health and Safety laws - and the workers' representatives boycotted the factory health and safety committee as a 'mere talking shop'.

Two weeks later the convenor, Barry Windass, was rushed to hospital after he'd passed out while mixing sodium nitrite into an open pan of sulphuric acid. This combination produces the deadly gas nitrogen dioxide and should be removed by the extraction system: that morning, however, the system was not working properly. The emergency arrangements were so bad that it took some while for his condition to be diagnosed: he was then rushed to hospital in a company car whose brakes failed on the journey.

Now Windass is one of the 20 people declared redundant: Yorkshire Chemicals blame the recession for a fall in European demand for their dyes. But as we went to press there were protests against the sackings. Many of those involved would apparently prefer to take the redundancy money and seek work somewhere less dangerous.

Roger Andersen



Fulham Baths are still the people's !

ON THE WALL of the staff room at Fulham Baths, West London, there are pictures of all the Hammersmith Borough Council with names, addresses, and party affiliations. On the board are comments scrawled in, showing what the occupiers of the baths think of their councillors. In particular they are angry about Cllr. Fiona McGregor, chairperson of the Borough Services Policy Committee, which decided to close the baths on September 30 last year, and Cllr. Kim Howe, Deputy Leader of the Council and leader of the council side of the Joint Negotiating Committee responsible for making about 20 people redundant and transferring six other jobs.

The Tory-Liberal controlled Council claimed that the baths were unsafe, in spite of contrary statements by the Borough Architect and technical advisers. They want to redevelop the surrounding area and sell off the land to more profitable enterprises.

They propose to build a new swimming pool complex, which they plan to open in 1982, if it is ever completed. Until then there will be no baths in Fulham and while thousands of users will have to travel miles to get a swim, those who used the warm baths and the laundry will have trouble finding alternatives. In particular the old age pensioners, who live in houses without baths and appreciate the help available at the warm baths, will be deprived of a necessary facility.

A campaign was started, 'Fulham, Save Our Baths', or SOB. But they didn't mourn the loss of an historic amenity, they organised and occupied. The occupation was carried out by a group of local residents and trades unionists, with the support of many organisations including the West London Old Age Pensioners. Among those who moved in on September 30 last year was Alice Davies, a 75 year old

pensioner. She has been there ever since, leaving only to do shopping, pay her rent and clear her nearby flat. In June she celebrated her 76th birthday with over 100 people: the giant bottle of champagne they toasted her with is still in the staff room.

The swimming pool, warm baths and laundry have been used and serviced, despite the Council's attempts to sabotage



the machinery by taking out essential valves.

On August 26 Alice Davies was in court to hear Judge Russell give the Council an immediate repossession order. Her response to this is clear: "They can take me to court again but we won't give in. They'll have to carry me out." The committee is waiting for the bailiffs to come at any time, and when they do, they won't go quietly.

Alice Davies is sure that many of the present Tory and Liberal Councillors will be swept out at the next election, but that is not enough: "The only way to deal with this Tory government is for the miners to go on strike like they did when Heath was Prime Minister. My husband was a miner from the Rhondda Valley. He died in 1960 at the age of 56. I know something about the miners, they'll fight." Like Alice.

Roger Andersen

Coroner's courts: not good

WHEN RICHARD 'Cartoon' Campbell died at Ashford Remand Centre in Kent earlier this year, an inquest was held by the local coroner, Lt. Col. George McEwan. The coroner's officer - as always, a serving police officer - set about selecting a jury by the simple procedure of knocking randomly on house doors in the Ashford area and asking for 'the man of the house' to serve.

In one instance, the coroner's officer spoke to the 'lady of the house', who insisted that she had every right to be on the jury herself. The coroner's officer hesitated a moment and then agreed. She thus became the only woman on the Campbell inquest jury.

In Liverpool, when the Jimmy Kelly inquest was due, it was learned that juries at local coroners' courts had from time immemorial been composed of local publicans. The coroner's officer came from the same local police division - K - that was under suspicion following a campaign of brutality against local residents which had culminated

in Kelly's death.

The inquest on Blair Peach only went ahead with a jury following an appeal to the High Court by solicitors acting for the family. During proceedings the coroner, who has the right to call the witnesses, constantly interfered and gave the jury instructions. At the end of the inquest his summing up gave explicit directions on the verdict the jury could return.

The jury at the Cartoon Campbell inquest wished to bring in a verdict of 'neglect on the part of the authorities'. They were directed to record 'self-neglect' - a travesty in the circumstances, and one which disturbed some of the jury.

Campbell's family are suing the authorities for neglect and calling for a full public enquiry; Peach's family are to sue the Metropolitan Police for damages. None of this would be necessary if coroners' courts and their juries were empowered to investigate suspicious deaths adequately.



Michael Abrahams

I hate school

— it's just what I think prison would be — except that I'm lucky enough to be able to go home at 4 o'clock everyday. But I still have to spend 7 hours a day there, and nearly a quarter of my life will be spent at school. So I bunk off, a lot — when I was younger we used to go nicking during lunchtimes but now we just smoke round the back of the public toilets across the road. It's not that I don't like learning things (does anybody) — my parents are

'educated' so there are a lot of books at home for me to read — but what they teach is so irrelevant to my life. I'll be taking 3 CSEs and a couple of 'O' levels next year, the careers teacher says we should work hard to pass them — but even he admits that won't mean we get jobs. I don't really care at the moment — £15 social security and a squat sounds paradise compared to school. Better than being a secretary or a nurse anyway — the only girls' jobs the teacher seems to know about. Not all of them are that bad. Our English teacher's OK. She wears a feminist badge a lot and she's told us about some interesting books, like *The Womens room* and *Fear of flying*. If she's angry she'll shout at you — usually we're making too much noise — but she's never hit anybody. Unlike Mr — who indoctrinates with geography. He's hit me twice and

a friend of mine got slipped by the headmistress after he made a fuss about some homework not being done on time. Occasionally he's prepared to have a laugh with us, but not often — and even when he's alright we're still not equal with him. There's a couple of socialist teachers — as well as the English teacher. Both of them are better than most but the history teacher has still had kids caned and when some third year people wanted to get a union in the school he said they were too young. And they can be right hypocrites — I remember when they refused to let us have dinners some people went out to buy chips even though they weren't supposed to. A few got lines and the NUT branch didn't do anything. I just wish I didn't have to suffer when they have their off days.

Cathy

All the contributors to this theme agree that our education system is damaging to young people, teachers and parents. Everyone reading this has been through some form of schooling. If you've forgotten how bad it was, read on. When we've jogged your memory we present some ideas on alternatives - and a report from a different kind of school.

There is a lot we have not had room to say. You all know something about this subject. Let's hear what you think.

Who needs it?



Not Me!

"Which school are you going to, miss?" "They gave you all the rubbish classes (like us), didn't they, miss?" I'm not going to another school because I don't want to teach any more...and the 'rubbish classes' are only partly to blame. How to explain the degradation, humiliation and boredom of being in school on the side of the oppressors, when you don't believe in any of it?

Your time is parcelled into set volumes, between certain four walls regulated by the pips. There's no question of the odd phone call or cup of coffee — no desultory chats with other adults. Within those rigidly regulated volumes of time you are imprisoned — and you are also the jailer of others.

Several times I've been pinned against the door, preventing the children from leaving the room, praying, like them, for the pips to go and release us all. Several times I've taken this a stage worse by keeping them behind after school to 'establish control'. At such times the door is locked. They are released when all outward signs of rebellion have ceased i.e. they are silent and seated. Then when the door is unlocked and they flood out to freedom, they call out about prison and jailers over their shoulders. It felt like prison to me too.

You have keys — they must be used. Classrooms and storerooms must be locked when not in use (they're often locked when in use, keeping next door's troublemakers out or your troublemakers in).

I spent so much time locking and unlocking doors — at least quarter of an hour every day, often doing a balancing act with books at the same time. Laboratories doubled as form rooms, so at lunch time the kids would come rushing up, hoping to be in time to leave their belongings before I locked up. Or they'd wait hopefully outside their room, begging passing teachers to open the door for them. "No", I said, "I can't stand it".

Schooling today is still about showing who's boss, forcing conformity, breaking resistance. The child who craves individual



attention must be sat on; the child who talks too much must be silenced; the one who hates writing but loves fiddling must be prevented from doing the latter and forced to do the former. Magnesium burns with a bright flame so it must be rationed; the children love playing with the balance so we'll put it away.

A colleague, with whom I discussed these things, once said that when he looked back over a day at school, there was no gentleness or love to remember. It was all aggression, struggle, harshness, brutality, conflict. Those teachers who don't see it that way forget or ignore that they've already won the battle. They have established a power balance in their favour. They have become oppressors, blatant or benign; mind manipulators, rule enforcers. And in their turn they are manipulated and oppressed.

When I walked out of a class in tears, the only place to go was the women's toilets. One teacher I heard about spent all his free time locked in the toilet. He sat there, presumably the only place he felt inviolable, and read the paper. These experiences are not exceptional: they are commonplace. Every teacher I've spoken to knows how that feels.

The one thing all children hate is hypocrisy — and hypocrisy keeps our education system running. The trouble is, that teaching being a 'caring' profession, of which some teachers want to be proud, there's never any real, logical discussion, anywhere, about the awful things teachers must do every day. Things like admonishing children for fidgeting and talking during an excruciating assembly that the teachers themselves find embarrassing, or insisting that they pay attention and keep quiet during a film which is boring/unsuitable. Such as forcing a weakling or a fatty do to sports they dread or giving children something to do just to keep them quiet and insisting it's important. Such as implying a question is stupid/irrelevant because you don't know the answer or insisting children turn up to a sports day you wish to god you could avoid.

Once, by way of advice, I was told, "In my first year I kept them behind and gave them detention. It didn't do any good, but I did it." The kids get that kind of reasoning all day, every day.

Children demand the jackboot, of course. They scorn a teacher who won't or can't fight. And the system has no way of supporting such a teacher. For education as cooperation — as a process of making decisions and taking the consequences, of learning to take responsibility for your thoughts, your learning, your decisions, your actions is — I have no doubt — education for socialism.

Selma James wrote, "The European working class child . . . sees in the teacher somebody who is teaching him or her something against her mother and father, not as a defence of the child but as an attack on the class. Capitalism is the first productive system where the children of the exploited are disciplined and educated in institutions organised and controlled by the ruling class."

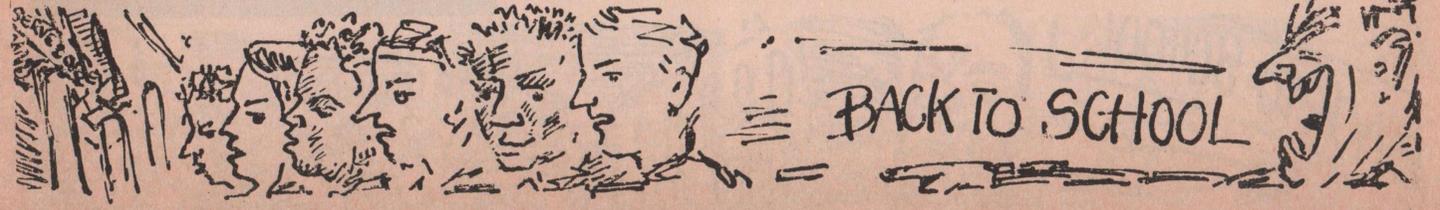
When I first went into a secondary modern school as a teacher, after a grammar school and university education, I was shocked to discover the extent of my ignorance about this country and its people. Here were the strivers after CSEs, the illiterates, the school haters, the rebels, the gentle oppressed, being despised, patronised, beaten and mangled by an education system catering for an elite of which I was a member. To quote my colleague again, "We go in there talking about their problems with work and behaviour when their problem is us."

I decided then, and several schools later I still believe, that children should control their own education — they should run the schools, they should learn what they want when they need/want it.

4th year boy, low marks: "You got 9 O levels miss? You could do anything, anything."

3rd year boy, high marks: "What you going to do then, miss, clean lavatories?"

Chris Stretch





What's oracy, Sir?

I USED to teach in a comprehensive school in the Dingle, Liverpool. During my first week in my first teaching job I met 4WD, a class of 14/15 year old working class lads. The first time I entered the room I was just in time to see every light bulb crashing and splintering on desks and floor. Twenty-five hard and ragged looking kids pissing themselves laughing, taking one dismissive look at me, sniffing me, weighing me, discarding me as another worthless twat.

The timetable read '4WD. English/Drama', one period a week. I tried drama at first, simple improvisation. No way. When they bothered to reply they said it was just for tarts. The location of the classroom meant that whatever went on inside could be viewed by anyone walking along the corridor. I didn't have the courage or the conviction to get them to improvise being trees in a swirling whirling wind.

A week later I gave out some sheets of paper. Immediate protests.

'I'm not doin' no fuckin' writin'.'

'Why?'

'I haven't got a pen.'

'What is the point of coming to school if you don't bring a pen?'

'Does that mean if we haven't got a pen we can go home?'

I just managed to intercept the stampede to the door.

'Here, I've got some pens, you can use these.'

'I don't wanna pen.' 'I'm not doin' no writin'.' 'I fuckin' hate writin'.'

And I didn't have the heart to summon up the authority and make them do it. I was looking at kids who felt exactly as I'd felt at school; cheated, conned in a way that couldn't quite be fathomed. So why didn't I just forget the timetable, get the ball, take them for a kick around on the field? Because I'd been a kid in one of those classes that had kicked a ball around a field instead of going on with the sham of a proper lesson. As a kid I liked my football but I always knew that a knock about on the field in place of the lessons was another expression of how little we mattered.

I began reading to them from a book, a working class novel. Another failure.

'It's bleedin' borin'.'

'I've seen the film of it anyway.'

'What did you think of the film?'

'It was alright.'

'You mean you liked it?'

'Yeh.'

'So why don't you like the book if you liked the film?'

'Cos the film doesn't have the bleedin' borin' bits in it does it?'

The problem was that I was on their side. Why couldn't I be like the monster upstairs who hasn't questioned anything,

the one who 'teaches' them French, who bludgeons them into submission and has never asked himself 'why?'

I could see their point of view. It was a cheat, a charade, a con. But at the same time I was beginning to worry about my own neck. I was beginning to dread Thursdays and 4WD. It was chaos for them and for me.

I don't know how it came about. I certainly didn't plan it but I found myself sitting at the desk, quietly talking, the edges returning to my own accent:

'Last spring it was..... about May or June. An' they were down there, at the corner, y'know, by the shop. One was called Billy and the other was called Icky..... an' they were dead bored.....'

The classroom chaos was beginning to subside. Barry Crotty, the hard case of the class was telling them to shut it. In minutes they were all listening, the only interruptions being,

'Did this happen?'

'Is it real or what?'

I didn't answer, just continued telling the story. I looked up towards the end of the period and noticed that Crotty and a few others were listening, eyes glazed, thumbs in mouths, like infants.

Week after week for six months I invented, as I went along, the story of Billy an' Icky - no boring bits, lots of action and humour. I loved it as much as the kids did.

Why did we establish something in this way when all else had failed? Certainly their identification with the two heroes of the story was total. The language in which I told the story was theirs. But all this was also true of the book I had tried to read to them so why should that fail where this succeeded?

What I had stumbled onto was something which lies at the very root of the working class culture - speech. The language of the working class is the language of the printed word, of literacy, and the gulf between the two enormous.

In my play *Educating Rita*, the central character, a twenty six year old working class woman tries to forge this gulf.

By the end of the play she has acquired a broader, blander language, a middle class tongue. She may have lost something of her intrinsic oracy but she has gained a literacy with which she is better equipped to cope with her life.

I wish that like Rita those kids had fought for literacy, an ability to synthesise, more power.

Willy Russell

The magic line

WE ALL BELIEVE we know a child when we see one. A child belongs to that category of people who have almost no say in the control of their own lives. Along with Prisoners, Mental Patients, and other groups whose fate is decided by others "for their own good", children are excluded from almost every field of decision-making, and their everyday 'rights' are negligible. They can be beaten, robbed of privacy, human dignity, and even of food, should the adults surrounding them so decree. Their every utterance (especially if it contains a protest) is considered 'irrelevant', because they are by legal definition 'too young' to be thought of as 'people'.

No child is permitted to acquire power of any real kind until her willingness to subject herself to the rules of society-as-it-is has been thoroughly tested. Those who won't or don't want to, are 'taken care of' with suspicious speed (i.e. put under more stringent control) via a battery

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of 'child-welfare' agencies, ranging from probation officers to child psychiatrists.

Should a child's parents (astonishingly!) also be anxious to avoid the ubiquitous indoctrination (e.g. by teaching at home), they too will suddenly find themselves under close, unwelcome scrutiny from education 'officers' and social workers. The entire family's 'reputation' will henceforth be publicly 'under suspicion'.

Boys and girls who 'get out of hand' are generally assumed to have little real justification for doing so. While it is admitted that bad housing, lack of recreational facilities, and sheer poverty might 'affect' a child's behaviour, the implication is always that these conditions are 'temporary setbacks' and no-one's fault. A 'properly brought up child' should realise that 'no-one' is responsible for the dreadful circumstances in which he finds himself! He is 'in the wrong' to expect anything better.

The fact that, as often as social conditions, it is the sheer obvious lunacy of today's mode of existence which 'drives children off the rails', is never even mentioned. Amidst the multi-variegated platitudes of assorted elders, the averagely sharp child has no difficulty in seeing that 'the rails' leads nowhere, except perhaps to atomic extinction. Being at 'street level', s/he sees society for what it is; and who can blame her for 'panicking', while those around her do an 'Emperor's New Clothes' on the appalling mess ahead.

Unlike most adults children still possess accurate instincts. Their senses are not atrophied, and they know when something 'smells bad', however strictly they are told it is 'good'. When the smiling man appears on the TV screen explaining how the kitchen table can be used to protect against nuclear devastation, at least one person in the household knows s/he is hearing utter drivel. S/he only has one choice, however, being a 'child'. To conform or to rebel.

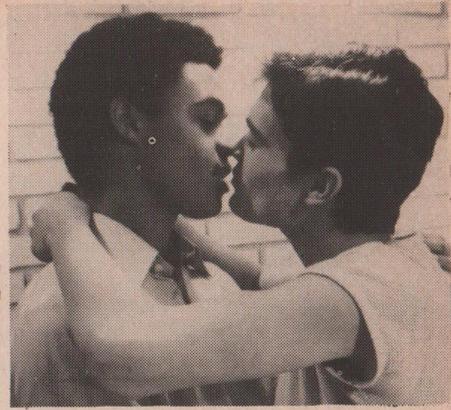
We live in times of 'double-talk', and as those times are made strategically 'harder', (to force the message that social rebellion will not be tolerated,) children are pushed more and more up against the wall. The existence of the 'disturbed' child is much publicised, no doubt in the hope that enough of the youngsters who are justifiably confused will assume themselves to be 'disturbed' by virtue of personal reasons alone (nothing to do with their society).

The purpose of this article is not to define or catalogue what the child 'should have', in the way of rights. Children haven't had a chance to even consider themselves as deserving of any, yet. By and large they accept the Law and the State's interpretation of themselves as 'enfeebled' by virtue of youth, and therefore 'unentitled' to a significant voice.

The great fear, on the part of those 'in control' of what they hope is our 'combined' destinies, must be that, given the chance to say anything about what is happening in society, the child might shriek out the truth, and the whole 'pack of cards' might come tumbling down. Whenever and wherever possible, therefore, children should be able to count on ACTIVE support from those who have crossed the 'magical' line of their 18th birthday.

Madeleine Schofield

They said you'd be embarrassed



In November 1979 the Royal Court Young People's Theatre mounted a Sexism Season. Gerald Chapman, the organiser, sent us a report on how it went.

THE TREMENDOUS sexual ignorance and fear revealed by the Sexism Season shows that homophobia is part of a general sexual oppression. The fact that 'poof', 'cissy', and 'girl' are often interchangeable as young people's insults shows that gayness is part of their total (mis)understanding of all social-sexual relationships as defined by prevailing concepts of gender. In tackling homosexuality, therefore, it was important to see it always in the overall context of Sexism.

The idiom of the play, the youthfulness of the performers (most were barely three years older than the audience) and the explicit realities of (gay) affection like kissing and cuddling were deeply embarrassing to most of the children.

If the experience had been substantially negative untold damage would have been caused: in the event the excitement and nervous tension led to a fruitful discussion that began after the lunch break and lasted all afternoon. The shock of discovering that the whole cast was gay was not alienating but a positive springboard into close questioning.

Those teachers who sent back reports emphasised two points:

1. The overwhelming emotional vulnerability of the children (and of the gay teachers who had not come out). It was a huge experience for them.
2. The complexity of the issue - the fact that the generally positive response to the "hugeness" of the experience released another "hugeness": a tangled skein of ignorance, misunderstanding, fear, prejudice... and sentimentality.

This extract from a taped classroom discussion on the following day may illustrate this and thereby warn us against complacency, against seeking any easy approval for what we did in this Sexism Season.

ALAN: I'm not saying that everybody should be the same, I'm just saying that they should all be straight and not gay. [Undecipherable commotion]

BOY: That's a load of balls. No way. Look, if someone wants to be gay they can be gay. You can't turn a person from gay back to straight again. If he wants to stay gay he stays gay. That's how it is.

GIRL: What is really troubling you is

that you're straight. They ain't troubling us. They ain't saying that we're wrong or nothing, so why should you really hurt... saying they're wrong.

GIRL: Long as they're happy.

[Silence]

ALAN: Well, they're wrong because...

[Pause]

TEACHER: Alan, in the society that we live in, men have a much more privileged position than women...

BOY: [Interrupting, mockingly] Hear, hear.

ALAN: Hear, hear.

TEACHER: Yes... would you say that women don't make as much of a contribution to the society...

ALAN: 'Course they do, don't they? ... They give us children and happiness... They give us our happiness.

BOY: [Interrupting] Hear, hear.

ALAN: Women give us our happiness and joy and pleasure and they help us keep running the family.

BOY: So can a man, though.

The Gay or Feminist alternatives to the dominant sexual attitudes are stigmatised as middle-class, and this notion is reinforced by the fact that most articulate spokespeople for these alternatives, - possibly teachers themselves - are also middle-class. But as we have shown few adults will dare introduce the subject, preferring to tackle it "as and when it happens to come up", even though this is the complete opposite of the way most things are taught. And we have also shown that the cultural background of children makes it very unlikely that homosexuality would be brought up as a serious demand on teachers' attention.

All the main homophobic arguments necessarily support the notion that young gays are, ipso facto, an impossibility: ie, people cannot 'naturally' grow up gay, they have to be 'corrupted' into it; or they suffer a 'passing phase', and if the 'phase' sticks then it becomes an unwanted affliction requiring ceaseless struggle to 'change back' - a complete failure of state. Given the complete failure of most adult teachers to produce teaching materials to oppose these myths the only alternatives left are for adult gays or young gays to do it for themselves. This is what we did in the Sexism Season.



The Habitat Consensus

IT'S NOW become a well worn cliché to say that British education 'is in crisis', and it's undoubtedly true that many of education's current problems are the direct effects of government cut backs, but the approach of Tory education ministers Messrs Carlisle and Boyson is far more sophisticated than it's painted by most of the organised left.

The problem is that most socialists have utilized educational perspectives of aggressively Leninist or purely liberal hue - and often both at once. Education is either seen as an 'ideological state apparatus' - determined by the interests of capital and basically a mere mechanism of 'social control' imposing false consciousness on children or as a neutral institution only governed by the needs of the 'ruling class' through economic control.

The reality is somewhat different. Even today schools are controlled by headteachers and LEAs rather than the Education Minister and universities still possess a remarkable degree of autonomy through the University Grants Committee.

But this is not to imply that schooling is neutral. Academics are recruited largely from the offspring of the rich and powerful, and have shaped an education system which corresponds with their ideologies and interests. Hence even left academics have a concern for 'rigour' which means that most of what they say is incomprehensible, whilst O and A levels (the major determinants of school curricula) are seen basically in terms of future degree level education.

The system acts as an incredibly regressive distributor of wealth (gleaned already from unfair taxation) through providing grants and places for post school education which goes almost exclusively to the middle class. In this context it's well worth remembering that a largely middle class left has 'defended' an education system which is basically theirs. Many working class students have known this all along, seeing education as irrelevant in terms of their lives and needs.

Which might sound very depressing. Fortunately this need not be the case. For the Tories have broken the 'Habitat Consensus' once and for all. But neither will their measures cater at all adequately for the needs of industry in terms of providing a labour force equipped with all the skills required to work in their factories. Given high rates of youth unemployment, a genuinely radical alternative could move on to the political agenda. It would however be unnecessary to argue for a vast increase in expenditure to finance the measures - what we need is a real shift in priorities from the (middle class) university sector to (everyone's) schools and colleges.

With more emphasis on learning real practical skills, which are in any case better taught in institutions than subjects like literature or languages (why not just have exchange trips and minimal previous instruction) right across

the non-academic divide, courses could be made more worthwhile, not only for us but for industry as well.

The idea of a core curriculum has been branded reactionary by teachers because it infringes their professional autonomy - but why shouldn't what we learn be under some form of democratic control? Surely the left should be using the idea to argue for more education in social skills (legal rights, etc) and better sex and political education.

Neither need cutting the school leaving age be a necessarily bad thing. Adolescence may not be the best time for learning for many people - and compulsory attendance is surely undemocratic in principle as well. Given adequate grants and a statutory obligation on employers to allow and pay for day release, a reduction to 15 (or even 14) could also do a lot to raise questions about youth rights and patriarchy's phoney concept of childhood.

And finally we need to redefine what progressive teaching methods are. Primary schools ought to be able to teach anyone to read in four months let alone four years - that they don't is scandalous and is more due to poor teaching methods than lack of money (pupil teacher ratios are the best ever). Rote learning can be useful for many things. After all what is the wonderful Sesame St. but imaginative and entertaining repetition?

Let's forget about always just defending the interests of teachers - schools after all are supposed to be for the students' benefit. By adopting a campaigning approach which puts our needs above those of the bureaucrats and vested interests in education, we might actually start getting somewhere. And it's worth considering that in the sort of world we want to eventually achieve there'd probably be very little institutionalised schooling anyway.

John Munford

Fear and Loathing on the Community High School trail

What alternative to the traditional school does the state offer? Ian Small, a teacher at Deans Community High School, Livingston, Scotland looks at one.

LOTHIAN REGION Education Committee have been largely responsible for pioneering the concept of community schools in Scotland. To date 4 purpose built schools have been opened in the region. One in East Lothian, one on the outskirts of Edinburgh, and 2 in Livingston New Town.

Livingston itself is situated roughly midway between Glasgow and Edinburgh, and was initially conceived as an answer to the overspill problems of both cities. Consequently, it was very much a community created by the planners, and the need for institutions to allow that community to 'find itself' and develop naturally was a problem uppermost in their minds. Multifunctional institutions, incorporating educational, social, and

leisure facilities seemed to provide the logical answer to the problem.

Deans Community High School was opened in 1978, and combines the most modern educational technology and facilities with a sports complex and a wide variety of community leisure services. It is open 16 hours a day, 360 days a year.

In educational terms, the structure of the school differs greatly from the traditional school. The working day is divided into three parts: a tutor period of 30 minutes and a morning and afternoon session, both of 2½ hours, both providing tuition for one class only.

Every class is allocated a tutor, who progresses through the school with it until the students leave. In this way it is hoped that a close relationship develops between the tutor and the student. Twice a year every subject teacher has to provide a written comment on the students' performance and this, in turn, is commented on by the student and his or her parents. Teachers are encouraged in their pastoral capacity as tutors to visit the homes of every student in their group, and to get to know the parents. On the whole most tutors find this impossible for one important reason, time. No time is allowed within the working day for these duties and to perform them adequately the tutor must give up sizeable amounts of free time.

The concept of mixed ability teaching was initially seen as integral to the ethos of the school, and is still adhered to by most departments, but some changes certainly have taken place in the last 2 years. A need to take into account the national S.C.E. examination system has meant that, in some departments mixed ability teaching is no longer applicable to years 4 and 5.

This is not to say that the school is exam oriented, it operates its own internal certification system, which is progressively gaining validity in the eyes of the local employers. However, the necessity of such concessions to the national system is felt to be unfortunate by the school management, who have done much to foster the concept of continuous assessment of the students.

The school day does not end at 3.30pm. From 6.30 to 8.30pm, the school operates a system of evening classes. These include both vocational and non-vocational classes, and are split into pupil follow up and community classes. However, the cut backs have meant that the education authorities have demanded block payments of £20 per adult for up to 3 vocational courses. This may well have an effect on the size of the classes.

The high attendance levels, the fact that students coming from other schools comment on the freer atmosphere and the approachability of the teachers, and the lack of vandalism and graffiti, all reflect the students attitude to the school. There is no system of corporal punishment, no end of class bells, adults and students study together in both day and evening classes and an informal atmosphere permeates the open-plan building.

However, the position of community education is a precarious one. Lothian Region Education Department, in the light of the present financial restrictions, have discontinued the community school building program. Deans now caters for 750 students, rising eventually to 1200. With its comparatively large budgetary requirements its opponents argue that it is not cost effective. In the present situation withdrawal of funds will only aggravate the growing problems of student/teacher ratios and tutor work load/pay levels.

Do it Yourself (a parent's dilemma)

MOST PEOPLE considering education for their children think immediately of school: to which school should I send my child (if indeed there is a viable choice) and at what age? Our experience with our first child since she was born 12 months ago, however, has led us to be more concerned about what she can find out for herself than what she can be taught, and about the best conditions for encouraging this learning. The more we think in this way the more we find ourselves moving towards a position we had never envisaged, of not wanting to send our daughter to school at all, at least not at the age of five.

We first thought of sending her to a state school, and I have always regarded free state education as a fundamental right of all citizens in the progress towards a just society. Now, however, we are having to consider the present system seriously as parents. Both state and private schools seem to us to be geared to grooming individuals to slot into the status quo. There is much in our society I would like to change in the direction of socialism, but even then a good socialist education should surely be as flexible and open-ended as possible. Can it not encourage learning (for example, lessons in politics that do not start with a description of the history and ideas of the main political parties in this country) rather than to set out to teach everything? Can it not allow for variety and individual initiative?

We do not want our child to be disciplined but would prefer her to learn how to discipline herself. We would like to see her build up that inner strength which comes from developing her own value judgements, rather than constantly having other people's values thrust upon her. We have strong feelings about the atmosphere surrounding her early years, and do not feel that schools usually foster this kind of awareness. We feel strongly about the lack of democracy in most schools in spite of the 1980 Education Act's provision for at least two parent governors.

At the moment, therefore, we are seriously considering the possibility of sharing the education of our daughter with other parents in a similar position. My main dilemma is this: if we do not send her to a state school, how far will we be undermining the nearest thing to socialist education that exists at the moment in Britain? By removing ourselves and our child even temporarily from the state system, are we thereby reducing the possibilities for change within that system? Do we have to expose our child to a school which we

Photo: Laurie Evans



think will be damaging in its effects, at the same time not being able to offer a positive alternative, in order to ensure eventually a system that is adequate for everyone? Or is there a middle way? Can we set up our own system and press for state recognition, or set up our own system *meanwhile* pressing for changes within the system? Or will our power be so reduced by having removed ourselves as to be negligible?

There is an organisation called "Education Otherwise" which provides information and encouragement for parents looking after their children's education themselves. The 1944 Education Act (and the Scottish Education Act is very similar) lays down compulsory education for all children, not compulsory schooling. This is interpreted variously by different Local Education Authorities and EO can offer advice to parents who look like getting into legal difficulties - though most don't. It does not, however, concern itself very explicitly with the political implications of education out of school and alongside schools broadcasts and correspondence courses mentions tutors' help with academic subjects: but how many of us can afford tutors? Even our projected system of sharing implies that between them the parents have the necessary time, energy and resources, which often somehow means money.

On the positive side, we would like our group to remain small, without fees, and to include children whose parents don't necessarily have academic qualifications, and perhaps some who have no available parents. Practical subjects for both sexes are vital to those of us who live on the land and are trying to make it more productive: maths, for example, can be taught through a productive activity such as building a wall as well as through sitting in a classroom. Also, it seems to us a waste of our country's resources to keep all our children locked up in school for ten to twelve years. Opportunities are needed for learning later on in life when a person has decided what he or she really wants or needs to learn, so why not engage in production for some

of our early years and come back to full-time learning later on?

But what are the implications for feminism? There are many women who don't want to spend all their time teaching or looking after their children. What about those who fight for free, universal nursery education? And single parents? And those who are very exhausted or ill? The answer must surely lie in choice and variety, but the question is how socialism is to provide sufficient of either.

The recently set-up Campaign for State Supported Alternative Schools agrees with the principle behind comprehensive education in the state system, but feels that it has a more logical programme for the realisation of these principles. Amongst its objectives are smaller schools, more democracy, and encouragement rather than coercion in learning.

As to how such schools might be part of the state system, the group are in favour of local accountability, and suggest that a satisfactory monitoring system is set up before a Local Education Authority parts with its money. They suggest that a school's Instrument of Government should consist of the consumers (pupils, teachers and parents) as well as representatives from the local community, the world of education (locally) and the maintaining authority itself. This last with the proviso that they should be intelligently sympathetic though not asking for a rubber stamp.

We hope that when she is older our daughter may be able to choose for herself where and what she learns. The general aims of the CSSAS, however, underline our own thinking that self-help and local responsibility must surely be as much a part of socialism as is the provision of certain basic rights by Central Government.

Sally Stockley

Education Otherwise. The Manor House, Theltham, Nr. Diss, Norfolk, IP 22 1 JZ. Campaign for State Supported Alternative Schools. c/o Advisory Centre for Education, 18 Victoria Park Square, Bethnal Green, London E2 9 PB.



BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS has come to mean all things to all people. Many conference-goers had modest expectations; it would be a place to meet people from other campaigns and parts of the country, and see whether a basis existed for political or organisational co-operation. But many others set themselves up for disappointment. There was an element of consumerism, so that *Beyond the Fragments* somehow became a clear-cut organisation which could be accepted or rejected.

The Patriarchy workshop was a good example of the kind of problems facing the event. In their opening talk, the *Red Rag* collective raised a central concern: on what basis can feminists work in a mixed socialist grouping, without feminism becoming incorporated into socialism? Left-wing groups have usually seen women's liberation as an 'extra' demand to be added on to others. Even those who accept women's autonomy can fall into the trap of thinking that it means leaving women to do their own thing, without changing their own overall analysis or practice.

The discussion showed that there is no obvious core of 'socialism' that everyone can decide to adhere to, and that unity, however urgently needed, cannot be honestly won if it papers over differences. An alliance with socialist men should be made on feminist terms, which include a demand for a collective response from men to sexism in other men and patriarchal institutions.

Many men were unsure about what such a response would consist of; anti-sexist men have often seen all male collective action as oppressive. But most women in the room felt impatience at this lack of imagination. Although feminists who are sociologists may analyse patriarchy as a system rather than biology, individual men are still responsible for confronting their own contradictions when they benefit from that system. The workshop ended with a resolution to strengthen the organisational power of women within any future BTF event.

I enjoyed the workshop very much, and think the conclusions reached were very important. But there is no reason to throw into question the organisers' commitment to women's autonomy or set them up as a polarised opposition. The *Red Rag* collective must see a place for some mixed work.

So why consider *Beyond the Fragments* premature for just wanting to discuss it?

I was a bit disturbed by the lack of urgency displayed by some participants. After all, we are facing a severe right wing backlash and economic crisis which needs some kind of collective fightback. 'Unity' and 'urgency' is often the clarion call of a socialism which only perpetuates differences by not recognising them. We should be motivated by two kinds of urgency: that of transforming socialism, by recognising those differences for what they are, and that of beginning to create unity, on our own terms, before we are pushed so hard against the wall that it will be too late.

Sue Greenberg
(Big Flame member)

NEARLY fifty came to the workshop on radical media. We split into two groups, one concentrating on print, the other on film, TV and radio. In the print half we started by discussing community access to our papers, moved briefly through the problems of distribution, wondered how we could break out of our small readership circle, and heard an enthusiastic introduction to the projected *East End News*.

A woman journalist objected that the way the discussion had been set up was male-oriented, and the subjects suggested for the agenda were male too. She was followed by perhaps half a dozen women who told of their experiences working in radical media: the relatively new *Bush News* from West London have adopted a policy of having at least 50 per cent of their collective female; women on Islington's *Gutter Press* have to approve all new collective members; the *Sheffield Free Press* appeared to have no policy at all.

Just over an hour had gone by the time we got on to skill sharing, the future of the *People's News Service* research facilities, and the possibility of setting up a conference for ourselves. The other comrades returned and gave a report on their half. Some participants were away to pick up their children and it was already half past one.

A few of us met outside the locked building at 5.30 to try to continue the discussion, but that wasn't possible. Instead, we swapped names and addresses and agreed to set up a radical media conference. For the moment, *The Leveller* will co-ordinate towards the first planning meeting of that conference, so at least one initiative has come out of that workshop. From my viewpoint, the meeting was helpful in putting faces to names or papers long admired from afar, and in sharply posing a question of my own style in co-ordinating a mixed workshop. It was worth going all that way for.

David Clark

BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS Live at Leeds

IF THERE is to be co-operation or unity beyond the fragments the meeting in Leeds on August 30 was the way to start. Most papers who have reported on it have tended to put it down, no doubt because they have axes to grind; that doesn't detract from the achievement in getting the thing on the road at all. Attracting 1,500, socialists, from so many fragments to one place at the same time must also mean there is felt some healthy need to get together on the left, and just because the event didn't end with a rousing chorus for a better future doesn't mean it is a hopeless direction to follow. In particular, many, both women and men, felt the infusion of feminist politics into much of the debate was extremely positive.

The Leveller isn't going to pronounce on the event. On these pages, for the benefit of thousands of comrades who weren't there, we print simply accounts of what was seen and heard by some who were.

Pictures by Roger Andersen, Susan Greenberg and Nick Oakes.

THE CULTURE workshop was oversubscribed, and unlike some of the other very popular workshops, not subdivided, which made any productive debate difficult, because not only were a wide range of art forms represented, but no specific approaches to being cultural workers had been tabled for discussion. There was just time (70 minutes) for a quarter of the group to pose personal positions, visions and clashing definitions of class based cultures.

There was one double theme that could be pulled out of these contributions: can a culture, in any sense, be given and if so, how best is this to be done? Views ranged from Van Gogh, Mozart and Bob Dylan being enjoyed by members of all classes, to art being elitist. Community theatre in Telford is not 'individuals doing their own things but getting a consensus view for dramatic presentation'; in Sheffield, community theatre had been 'a middle-class subsidised group', whose activities were totally isolated from its working class environment, and who vanished without trace once the money ran out.

Socialists have always been 'phillistines'; feminists have tried 'to impose an idea of what their perspective on arts should be', and agitprop 'is a deadening experience for the creative artist'.

Nevertheless, none of us is getting any younger and, as touring shows seem to leave such little impact, nobody seemed prepared to deny that the sooner all this confused culture has a permanent building in every village, the happier we all shall be.

Lloyd Trott

I'D LIKE to comment on one level that might be overlooked: the average age of those who attended workshops and plenaries was about 30, and the conference felt like a reunion of the 'class of 68'.

This showed in the content of the discussion. What ever happened to the principle of early feminism: express what you feel and speak from your own direct experience? Instead, people trotted out the same weary arguments about parties, socialism, imperialism, etc. Even discussion of sexism, hetero-sexism and patriarchy was predictable.

A sizeable minority, those of us under 25, tended either to keep quiet, or to mimic our elders, taking sides in disputes that date back to before we reached puberty. In the few instances that we tried to find our way out of the ideological boxes, what we said seemed somehow irrelevant or out of context. A few older people also tried; they seemed as out of place as we felt.

Perhaps it's all right to feel uncomfortable. As a first step towards something new, this conference was a necessary step. Those who felt uncomfortable should stick with it. As one of the last speakers said, new and unexpected things are likely to happen in future *Beyond the Fragments* events. New ideas, new disputes, 'new ways of organising and working politically'... let's hope so.

Kirk Wattles

EIGHTEEN out of the 28 people at the workshop on co-operative and collective working declared themselves as being or having been involved in some kind of co-operative (industrial/building, the official co-op movement, housing co-ops, lefty publishing enterprises for the most part), and only two or three felt totally positive about them. Most felt that the degree of self-exploitation involved was not worth it; or that, to make them work efficiently or even at all, they had to make concessions towards some kind of formal structure.

A couple of people tried to raise the positive side of working collectively, but this was not taken up with any great enthusiasm.

In particular, Andy, who had been involved in a building co-op in the North-East considered the experience had been completely fruitless. He said the toil and effort had been so great that there had been no time to work out collective relationships; that as far as spreading skills was concerned, the customers' rightful desire for a good job meant it was wasteful, costly and time-consuming. You wouldn't want people learning to be plasterers on your living room wall. In all, he said, they would have been better off working for Wimpeys.

This remark was challenged, on the grounds that capitalists too had been known to exploit people and even lay them off, but Andy grew more vehement about his experience as the workshop went on.

Russell, from a London-based publishing operation with 35 people, spoke of how it had had to adopt a more formal structure as it had expanded. It had a management team that was formally accountable to a general meeting. So, it was pointed out, do the John Lewis Partnership and the official Co-op movement. He conceded it could only work if pressure from the base was activated. Russell still felt much happier where he was, than he would be working for an employer.

In all, it was rather depressing. Asked repeatedly: 'But isn't it worth it, to build models for the kind of socialised production we'd like to see?' most people felt not. It was not possible under the existing order.

Tim Gopsill



THE *Red Rag* workshop was organised because many women involved in feminist politics felt that neither the book nor the conference addressed themselves to the central issue in feminism: the problem of women's personal and political relations with men (glossed here as 'patriarchy') but instead saw the issue in organisational terms.

This workshop expressed the need to clarify the real conflicts between the genders *before* alliances of the kind discussed could be put into practice. That is, feminists don't just disagree with the organisation of left political groups — we think a lot of 'socialist' policy is anti-women (housing kept coming up again and again).

The discussion was stimulating, informed, sore, and above all articulate. It did not suggest that there are clear answers and there was more than a little despair in the atmosphere ('nothing's changed, we were saying all this ten years ago...')

The workshop began with a prepared discussion on how (if at all) men have changed in the last ten years of serious work on sexual politics within the WLM. *Red Rag* speakers proposed two theories. I'll call them 'voluntarism' and 'crunch'.

The first says men will change through the power of ideas. This theory was easily satirised. The second (essentially a radical feminist approach) says men can be socialised so far... But they will only really change when they have to negotiate on equal terms with women and that day will only come when women withdraw their servicing and nurturing activities *in toto*. Surely these can't be the only two theories?

Anyway, no-one appeared to disagree that there is a compelling need for a *collective* response from men to the issue of patriarchy; that we should have had it *before* the conference took place; and that the individual response of sympathetic men (usually through their personal relationships with feminists) was not enough.

Hilary Standing

THE AFTERNOON workshops were assembled by random selection; people drew numbers at morning sessions. The one I attended devoted itself mainly to discussions of organisation and the exchange of information. A woman from a local Depo-Provera campaign spoke of the solidarity that grew up in single issue campaigns, despite the diversity of political opinions involved, but regretted that there was little opportunity for discussion beyond the immediate campaign, and hoped that the *Beyond the Fragments* movement might provide that.

The discussion drifted rather when it came down to deciding exactly how this might emerge. The workshop agreed that *Fragments* could provide an opportunity for the exchange of information and ideas. There is certainly a crying need for such a network, but there were few specific suggestions. Ideas of a newsletter were dismissed as superfluous ('the left has more mags than it needs already') and of a central information bank as impractical.

This indecision stemmed from the fact that there was no discussion — let alone consensus — about the aim of such information. Were we seeking to publicise local campaigns more widely, to form a network to provide comradely support, or to draw the fragments together into a larger movement? Such questions invoke larger political issues which were carefully avoided. A woman from Gateshead SWP spoke of the need for a mass movement which would build class solidarity. The suggestion was politely passed over like an embarrassing social gaffe.

Chris Schüller

PERHAPS conferences have to end with plenaries. If there was one that shouldn't, this was it. Perhaps there couldn't have been a continuing dialogue; all there was was a chain of sentiments.

First came a statement from Poland from an invited Tribunit. Everyone wanted to hear it. The news from Gdansk was good that day; the Party bosses had been brought to an agreement with the strikers. But some of the tone made people embarrassed — particularly a reference to 'young married couples' in Poland being unable to get homes.

Then Gay Left made a statement. There had been no gay perspective in the discussions.

A statement was read from the women, men and patriarchy workshop, which had continued throughout the day. It made four principal points: we can't assume a basis for a unity that doesn't yet exist; any future conference should have at its centre the issue of patriarchy; men should take more responsibility for challenging sexism — it should not be the responsibility of women alone; and that positive policies should be developed by putting patriarchy at the centre of discussions on all issues.

Then a statement criticising the child care arrangements at the conference. The creche was overcrowded and understaffed, and too far removed from the rest of the meetings.

Reports back from workshops were neatly divided into two; one on issues raised, the other on ways ahead.

There was a vote on the possibility of a recall conference. After a good deal of confusion, the idea was overwhelmingly approved. So many people had felt the workshops had started to get something going; now it was slipping from their grasp.

After this the statements came thick and fast. Someone from the IMG on how there had been too little political perspective about the whole thing. An SWP Rank & Filer with a speech on the Right to Work march, and a crude declaration that Thatcher was enough to ensure unity.

By this time a petition was circulating on Poland, containing the simple demand for free trade unions. The gays refused to sign it and made a statement that they wouldn't unless it called for full rights for Polish gays.

The National Childcare Campaign then replied to the earlier statement on the creche. The unexpectedly large turnout of children had messed up the prior arrangements. But there was general assent to the statement: 'Childcare arrangements are an essential part of our vision of socialism'.

Chairing the session, Amanda Baird and Hilary Wainwright had asked for short speeches on how the *Fragments* initiative should be followed up. They didn't get them. Except for those from the gays and the childcare people, every one of the contributions could have been made any time, in any place, in any context. There was no relating.

At the very end, Sheila McCrindle from Sheffield attempted to keep things together with a fine speech that started: 'Surely we can organise with people we agree with...' while all around her things were falling apart. By this time, which was the time the session had to finish, 30 people were queuing up to speak. Among them an autonomist who insisted on getting his chance. There was a suggestion of violence as he gestured frantically to get the mike. McCrindle kept talking, very collected. Hilary Wainwright, in the chair, explained it had to stop, but there was a mounting edge of concern in her tone. The last image everyone had of the final plenary was the autonomist standing on the table, screaming that he *hadn't* intended violence but *had* to speak. A few people wanted to pull him down, but most just ignored him and drifted away.

Perhaps it was a more realistic ending than some comfy camaraderie to cover the cracks. But it left many people with the impression that the crusade was hopeless: a crash for those who'd made friends and contacts, or reactivated old ones; those who'd been in afternoon workshops that *had* been positive; those who'd simply enjoyed the day and its general atmosphere of benevolence.

It *had* been different from other conferences, precisely because there was no pressure to arrive at any kind of consensus or agreement, by compromise or force, at the end.

At least we now know where we stand.

Tim Gopsill

Bolivia: back in the right club

WITH ONE of its cabinet ministers as the guest of honour at a meeting of the World Anti-communist League in Buenos Aires, Bolivia is back again in the club of repressive right wing dictatorships. The junta that seized power in the coup of July 17th this year has set its sights on smashing popular organization once and for all.

The coup followed only hours after the announcement of the election results of the elections held on 25th April, in which the left won nearly 60 per cent of the popular vote. The new President, General Luis Garcia Meza, justified the intervention of the armed forces, claiming that the country was being 'subverted' by 'an extremist marxist plot' which aimed to establish 'another Cuba' in South America. He made it clear that he has no intention of returning to democracy. He will rule, he says, for twenty years.

The junta has reconciled itself early to rule by force alone. Trade unions and political parties have been banned, radio stations destroyed and the press put under control of the government's propaganda machine. More than 2,000 people are reported killed or missing, and at least 3,000 are in prison, many in hastily constructed concentration camps in remote parts of the country.

The coup itself was stage-managed by the Argentine dictatorship of Jorge Videla. Large sums were channelled to Garcia Meza before the coup, and an immediate loan was made afterwards of 100 million US dollars to tide the junta over the first few weeks. Interrogation and torture have been supervised by well practised Argentinian security experts. The only groups that have pledged their support to Garcia Meza are the extreme right-wing of the armed forces, the electorally insignificant fascist Falange party, and by the super-rich cocaine-trafficking mafia. Meza has failed to win over important sectors of the right. General Banzer, the military dictator who ruled the country from 1971 until he was deposed in 1978, was conspicuously refrained from giving it his blessing. Indeed, he has been involved in top level discussions for the last two weeks with the Argentinian and Brazilian governments to see to what extent they are prepared to go on backing the junta. At the same time there are serious rifts within the army itself, where some of the top military commanders resent the ruthless personal ambition of Garcia Meza and his clique.

The coup produced immediate resistance from the democratic political parties and the trades union movement. There was unanimous support for a general strike called by the central union confederation, COB, on the day

of the coup. The miners, traditionally the most politically conscious and best organized section of the working class, put up a heroic resistance to defend their communities from military occupation. At Sigües, the country's largest mine, they immediately set up barbed wire and manned the roads and bridges. A thousand of peasant volunteers came in with food and ammunition to help repel the army.

On August 1st Juan Siles Zuazo, the winner of the elections as candidate of the left and CDP alliance, proclaimed a clandestine government from his place of hiding in the capital city, La Paz. With the full backing of the COB, this government has been co-ordinating resistance work inside and outside the country. Siles also enjoys the support of the peasantry, which has become a particularly dynamic force in Bolivian politics in recent years, and which voted overwhelmingly for the left in the last elections.

Internationally, too, the junta faces formidable problems. Recognition has only been extended by a dozen countries, most of which (like Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Guatemala, and South Africa) share Garcia Meza's rabid anti-communism. Meanwhile, several foreign administrations have given a warm reception to the clandestine Bolivian government's roving ambassador, Jaime Paz Zamora, including the USA, Venezuela, Mexico, Ecuador, and Peru.

Several governments have expressed their displeasure at the coup by withdrawing aid grants: the USA cut \$100 million, the EEC countries \$80m, and Venezuela \$40m. More serious in the short term is the possibility that some of the international banks will refuse to continue of Bolivia's external debt. Bolivia currently takes up 68 per cent of export earnings.

Solidarity from the rest of the world is of supreme importance to ensure Garcia Meza's downfall and to guarantee that he is not simply replaced by General Banzer. In Britain, a solidarity campaign is being organized by the Committee for the Defence of Democracy in Bolivia, with the full backing of the trades union movement and progressive political parties. Its immediate demands are for stopping diplomatic recognition of the Meza regime by Britain, for a boycott of all trade between Britain and Bolivia, and the cutting of all further aid until democracy is restored. It is also appealing for donations which it will be channelling to the Bolivian trades union movement.

The address of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy in Bolivia is 1, Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.

John Crabtree

Nicaragua: no longer afraid

'The Loss of Fear': Education in Nicaragua before and after the revolution. By George Black and John Bevan.

FOR HALF a century Somoza ruled Nicaragua on behalf of the United States. Under his representative, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, military spending was more than 50 per cent higher than the national budget. No longer before he was overthrown, Somoza remarked to a journalist: 'We don't find it necessary to spend much on housing in Nicaragua. The climate is so good...'

Figures on expenditure, however, are only one side of the story: chronic structural distortions rendered even the available resources worse than useless in satisfying the needs of the people. To take a few general statistics: in 1979 only 37 per cent of schools offered more than the first three grades of primary education; in 1976 only 63 per cent of the 409,000 children in the 7 to 12 age group registered, and of these half had dropped out within a year, two-thirds of those registered were in urban areas (even though half the population was rural); the secondary school system was available to only 18 per cent of secondary school age children; in the Atlantic coast region, which holds about 10 per cent of the population there was no provision for any kind of schooling.

The subjects taught reflected the fact that education was exclusively limited to the sons and daughters (mainly sons, of course) of the bourgeoisie. Managerial and professional studies predominated, while agriculture was particularly neglected, although it accounts for 70 per cent of the country's exports. As for teaching methods, knowledge was treated as a commodity to be passed on from teacher to students, and there was no encouragement to develop self-directed study and enquiry. No student participation was permitted in the formulation of courses.

Since their victory over Somoza the Sandinistas have initiated sweeping changes in the educational field. Primary and secondary education are now officially 'free, compulsory and accessible to all', though clearly it will take time before facilities can be created to put the principle of accessibility fully into effect. This year alone it is planned to expand primary education by 58,000 places and secondary education by 23,000. New schoolrooms are being built throughout the country.

But it is not just a question of more resources. Aware that the old system was designed to serve a ruling elite and a dependent capitalist economy, the new government has overhauled it from top to bottom, changing curricula and

Living conditions in the Bolivian highlands. Photo: Sean Sprague





Photo: Rob

Holland may conjure up pictures of tulips and contented people pedalling to and fro, but *Dan Re'em* has discovered a few cracks in the shell of affluence and consensus...

No bed of tulips

HOLLAND has a large and very active squatting movement. This extends to provincial centres such as Eindhoven, which has about 200 squatters, four of whom I found on the first evening.

They were very suspicious at first, apparently thinking that I had been sent by the owner to spy in them. There are only a few houses in Holland under public ownership, so most squatting is in private houses or flats.

A couple of weeks before, the owner and some thug friends had gained entry in the early hours and attempted to evict the occupants. They were repelled, the owner was caught by the police and later imprisoned for a few days. Since then elaborate defences have been constructed. Metal grills have been placed over the windows, ammonia is kept to repel dogs and there is a stock of bottles ready to be hurled at any unwelcome visitor. Paradoxically, most of the squats are very luxurious, many of them having central heating. I moved into a squat the following day.

A few days later I arranged to meet a couple of people from the squat, in

Amsterdam. There were to be demonstrations against a new law — very similar to our own Criminal Trespass Act — which is about to be introduced. Unfortunately we failed to meet at the appointed time, so I decided to go and look for them amongst Amsterdam's 6,000 squatters. The response to these enquiries was very unfriendly.

When I at last found someone who would talk to me, he explained that the police had put many infiltrators into the large squats and in the circumstances talking to strangers was considered unwise.

I was very surprised at both the level and informality of organisation of squatting in Amsterdam. They have set up bars, cafes and even their own radio station. The radio station is in the most famous squat in Amsterdam, the Groote Keyser or Big Emperor. It is a huge building fairly near the centre of the city, which the occupants have turned into a fortress with windows up to the third floor covered by metal plate at least one inch thick. There is barbed wire everywhere. Fireworks and barrage balloons

school-children as rural literacy teachers, plus 40,000 part-time volunteers in the towns, it has been brought down to around 12%. No country had ever attempted such an ambitious project so soon after achieving liberation, but the Sandinistas saw it as essential not only in educational but in political terms. By sending out tens of thousands of young people from the cities into remote rural areas they have not only made sure that the revolutionary message reached even the most isolated villages — many of which had heard only vague stories about a 'change of government' — but brought city-dwellers face to face with the absolute poverty many had never imagined existed.

are on the roof to stop a helicopter landing. Spotlights and spyholes are used to vet all visitors. If you are not known, you certainly won't be let in.

The main function of the pirate radio station is to disseminate information to squatters. It proved very useful during the large police operations — so useful that police jammed many of the frequencies used. There is also a CB radio in the studio, which means that if there is an attempted evictions, all of the squatting movement there will know of it within a few minutes.

The next morning there was a demonstration to support six squatters who had been charged with throwing bricks at policemen. Apparently they had been beaten up while in custody. One had a fractured skull and a couple of the others had broken limbs.

The six were taken to court for further remand. They had already been in custody for two months and the police wanted to extend it for another 90 days. Parents of the six and a couple of hundred squatters protested and they were released a few days later.

The second demonstration that day was a protest against the new anti-squatting law. There was very little trouble compared to what I was expecting.

The police in Amsterdam don't go in for saturation coverage of demonstrations, they just call the riot squad in when the going gets tough. Many squatters carried gas masks on the demonstration, and I was advised to take a wet handkerchief.

The demonstration finished outside another of Amsterdam's famous squats, the occupants of which were due for eviction the following day. Eviction actually took place about six days later. Two thousand armed police turned up for the fun, the equipment used was spectacular. The squatters had dug a tunnel through to the church next door. Only one squatter and nine journalists remained inside, which made the police look very foolish.

● *More details of squatting in Holland and other countries will be given in 'Squatting: the real story', edited by Nick Waites and Christian Wolmer, published by Bayleaf (Bailiff) Press later this year.*

Attempts are being made by some on the right, mainly outside Nicaragua, to portray the Literacy Crusade as an exercise in indoctrination, aimed at producing mindless, pro-Sandinista robots. If so, it would be the first time in history that a government placed in power by a popular insurrection, mobilised immense human resources on a volunteer basis to teach its people to read and write, merely in order to control them. That there are much simpler ways of staying in power the Somozas demonstrated for 50 years, during which they held the mass of the population in enforced ignorance. *The loss of fear* is an important weapon in the fight against those who would happily see a return to those days. *Phil Gunson*

The Labour Party Conference is set up as a great battle by Left and Right alike. Callaghan and Benn. Reactionary party bosses against true democracy.

Not everyone sees things that way. There are people on the left who reject all the terms of the debate. *Julian Brennan* is an activist, a member of the executive committee of the Hampstead Labour Party in London. He has published an independent proposal for the party structure, challenging the 'sacred cows' of the left (such as the NEC), as well as the mechanical grip of the right, and the power trips of both.

A different way...

OVER the last few months, I have been questioning the reasons behind my membership of the Labour Party. While committed to the ideals of the party, I have this love-hate relationship with it. My dilemma, and I suspect it is shared by many, is caused by the party ignoring in practice the principles it expounds. This betrayal by the parliamentary leadership and certain prominent members of the party must be halted. It not only goes against conference decisions and party policy, which is bad enough, but represents a denial of the fundamentals we are supposed to hold true.

Of course, the obvious reason is that for too long the status quo has been maintained to preserve personal and/or sectional power and prestige. We've never had a leader prepared to recommend that he be accountable to, and elected by, a representative body of the party.

Unfortunately this opportunism often applies to the Left as well. One of the slogans of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee is: 'Defend the NEC'. Quite what renders the NEC free from criticism and its structure worth defending escapes me. A cynic might think it had something to do with the NEC being left-dominated.

All that the various proposals seem to have in common is that they are being made on the basis of their outcome in relation to political influence and the balance of power within the party. This is not only wrong but serves little purpose. The party's political complexion could change for any number of reasons in the next two or three years, thereby leaving us with even greater constitutional and structural anomalies. Change must be proposed on a principled basis.

But even local parties are being eaten up by cut-throat politicking, and it would seem that to show any ability or political intuition you have to adopt the very tactics which we should be trying to eliminate. It has been to our detriment that so many (not all) affiliated bodies made submissions to the Commission of Enquiry, based on arguments of one side or another depending on the political composition of their governing bodies. Too much has been left to the professional politicians/experts/leaders/democrats. Everybody who's active in the party should have joined in. The constitutional debate could have established democracy in the party, not necessarily by the end result, but by the way in which the debate had been carried out.

The constitutional proposals I advocate are an alternative to, not a compromise between, the two main positions. Constit-

utional reforms should not favour one particular political position, but ensure that the party implements its principles in practice. This could start to facilitate the realisation of our commitment to radical change in society.

I would therefore hope that this year's annual conference would pass motions that:

1. Allow all sections of the party to participate in the election of the leader;
2. Reaffirm that our MPs should be subject to mandatory reselection;
3. Give the right to the Parliamentary Labour Party to elect the members of the Parliamentary Committee and Cabinet;
4. Reform the annual conference, doing away with the undemocratic block voting system;
5. Change the structure of the NEC so as to give direct representation to all sections of the party;
6. Give total authority to the annual conference, which would then delegate responsibility to the NEC to act on its behalf.

I would propose that the annual conference should consist of:

1. All Labour MPs, each with one vote;
2. All endorsed prospective Parliamentary Candidates, each with one vote;
3. One delegate from each affiliated CLP, with one vote. Those CLPs which, at the time of Conference, have not selected a candidate would have the right to a further delegate and vote;
4. Delegates representing all other affiliated organisations, who would have a total number of votes double to that of the CLPs, those votes divided in proportion to their affiliated membership, each organisation to have at least one vote.

This reformed conference would determine policy and elect the leader, deputy leader treasurer and NEC (except Women's and LPYS section representatives). As policy, conference decisions should be adhered to by all party representatives in public office.

The NEC, having received its authority Conference, should be recognised as the leadership of the party. It would determine policy where conference had been silent and should draw up and publish a party manifesto annually in accordance with conference decisions. The party leader should no longer have the right of veto.

The NEC should consist of 29 members in six divisions (including the leader, deputy leader and treasurer *ex officio*):

1. Trade unions (12 members);
2. Constituency Labour Parties (4 members);
3. Parliamentary Labour Party (4 members);
4. Women's Section (4 members elected by the National Conference of Labour Women);
5. Socialist societies (1 member);
6. LPYS (1 member elected by the LPYS

national conference); Each section at conference would elect, from their number, the representatives for their division on the NEC. Whilst parliamentary candidates would participate in the election for members of the PLP division, MPs would not be restricted to standing for election in that division. The Shadow Cabinet should be elected annually at conference, by the PLP. Although the election of leader, deputy leader and treasurer would also be held annually, conference should be able to waive the right to hold elections for the leader, deputy leader and Cabinet when the party is in office.

This year's conference should also reaffirm last year's decision to extend the right of re-selection to the general committees. The CLPs are the backbone of the party and no other level of the organisation can properly serve our electoral needs, offer a forum for debate, and make a coherent political contribution in the local community. The GC must remain the body that (re)selects parliamentary candidates and MPs.

However, it must be said that they often fail to realise their full potential. An enormous amount of time is spent on internal wrangles and discussing meaningless resolutions of little consequence to, or effect on, real life. We have become increasingly satisfied with form instead of results. The constituency parties should be responding to local needs and taking our arguments out into the community. To assist this and to enrich the quality of debate, I propose the number of delegates branches may send to their General Committees be doubled. This would not only allow more members to participate, but ensure that the GCs are more representative of the membership. For too long ensure that GCs are more representative of the membership. For too long GCs, of the right and left, have been the domain of a local elite.

Mandatory re-selection should be a good thing for the party. It should open up debate, involve members in meaningful discussion and activity and increase contact between the GC and the MP. An MP must not however become a puppet of that body and fearful of doing anything and saying anything. If there is any difference between the two, it should be established in debate. In this context I think it is worth remembering that GCs often change their position on certain issues. The whole exchange must be based on mutual respect. I do not think reselection should be used as a means of ousting an MP because of differences of opinion or for political ends. Anybody who attempts to use it as such would be doing untold damage to the party. However if a CLP finds that its MP is failing to represent his/her constituency properly, ignores or defies party policy, then it should not hesitate in choosing another candidate.

It is time to get Labour on the move again as a cohesive political force. By making these reforms we would go some way to doing that. Hopefully some people involved in decision-making will be honest enough to put forward, or accept, recommendations that may well weaken their power base within the party. If they are prepared to do this, we will be able to ensure that our political work can be carried out effectively in unity. If they can't — and continue to refuse to recognise the majority view — then it's time they left.

News: censorship by supply

ABOUT two years ago my husband, Tony, was made redundant. At that time I was six months pregnant and working in an office. As chance would have it at this time, we saw an advert for a man and wife team to run a newsagent's shop for a large chain. After much discussion and an interview, we found ourselves at the other end of the country — and the counter!

Now although I can't say it was a prime reason for our decision to accept the job, nevertheless I have to admit that at the time it did cross my mind that I would

at least have no difficulty in getting the magazines I like to read, being 'in the business' as it were.

In Liverpool I had been fortunate that our local newsagent did stock *The Leveller* and other 'minority' magazines, but here, out in the wilds of Hertfordshire, I was to find it was a different story indeed.

When I phoned our wholesalers to order my copy of *The Leveller*, the girl I spoke to hadn't even heard of it! So, undaunted, I asked for my other magazines. I was met either by a complete lack of knowledge or

an outright refusal to supply. I was amazed — was I some sort of freak? Didn't anyone in Herts read?

The answer is that some of the major suppliers of magazines and papers operate a system of selectivity regarding what can be obtained by their customers (newsagents in this case). They just cannot be bothered with 'minority' magazines, either because they disapprove of the source or because they are not commercial enough.

What I find really sickening about this form of censorship is

that my oh-so-puritanical wholesalers can supply me with *Fiesta* or *rapier* without any difficulty at all.

Since Tony and I became newsagents we have had difficulty obtaining some of the magazines requested by our customers, despite intensive efforts on our part. So next time you ask your local newsagent for a magazine and are told that it's unobtainable, don't necessarily think s/he's being destructive — s/he really may have tried to get it for you. The best thing to do is to subscribe.

Carol Boardman

THE WELSH radical magazine *Rebecca* is one of the most successful non-capitalist papers in Britain. The latest issue's sales of 9,000 dwarf the circulations of London-based current affairs magazines in Wales — *Now!* sells fewer than 4,000 copies, *Private Eye* 1,800, *New Statesman* 1,200 with 750 copies apiece for *New Society* and *The Spectator*. *Rebecca* is now looking for £40,000 to re-launch the paper as a monthly with ten full-time staff.

THE ELEVENTH and latest issue of *Rebecca* casts light on the small fortune that Leo Abse, Labour MP for Pontypool, made from land deals in his constituency during the Sixties. Much of the profit Abse made came from ground rents on the 500 houses that were built on the land. Yet in the same period Abse was a key figure in framing the celebrated 1967 Leashold Reform Act.

The paper dragon of Wales

Abse is the latest in a series of major Labour politicians whose 'free enterprise' personal and business lives *Rebecca* has contrasted with the 'socialism' that finds its way into their political speeches. It was

Rebecca that analysed the extraordinary friendship that exists between James Callaghan and George Thomas with the Welsh merchant banker Julian Hodge.

Callaghan and Hodge were somehow able to ignore the suffering that followed the Hodge group's rapacious second mortgage operations. Both helped to set up the Commercial Bank of Wales, founded by Hodge in 1971, and became directors and shareholders.

Rebecca argues that the blatant self-interest of men like Callaghan, Thomas and Abse continually undermines the growth of socialism in the Labour Party. The reason why they are allowed to get away with it is simple: there is too much loyalty to leaders and too little democracy in the movement.

The disease doesn't just affect major political figures. Since 1976 there have been 21 corruption trials in South Wales in which six Labour councillors were convicted. *Rebecca's* 'Corruption Supplement' articles foreshadowed many of these trials. In the May 1976 district elections concern about corruption was a major factor in the party's worst-ever election defeat.

Investigative reporting of this type is both expensive and time-consuming. With few resources and only one full-time member of staff, *Rebecca*

could only appear infrequently. Since 1973 there have been eleven issues, including six 'Corruption Supplements'.

This publication schedule was adequate in the Seventies when politicians like Callaghan presided over a long-drawn economic decline flavoured by concern about Wales. With the Conservative election victory, and the defeat of the Devolution Bill, it quickly became obvious that an irregular *Rebecca* was obsolete.

The new *Rebecca*, although based on the old magazine's special brand of journalism, is a completely different paper. The 'Corruption Supplement' is re-absorbed back into the main paper which will cover all of Wales, north and south, and in both its languages. To make sure it will be effective on the same scale as the old *Rebecca*, the new paper needs five reporters and five back-up staff providing intelligence and library facilities. The new organisation will be run on co-operative lines.

With a target circulation of 15,000, the new *Rebecca* should break even financially. But the re-launch will be expensive — enough money is needed to guarantee a full year's operations and pay for the cost of promoting the venture. Something like £40,000 is needed.

The magazine almost persuaded the Welsh Arts Council which badly wants a regular current affairs magazine in Wales to finance *Rebecca* to the tune of £31,000. In a three-cornered battle, *Rebecca* was chosen by the council's literature committee but their recommendation was rejected by an establishment-dominated and hostile council.

The magazine now faces an uphill struggle to raise the £40,000. But if the target is reached, then a unique experiment will take place. If *Rebecca* is right and its new journalism succeeds in attracting a large circulation, there is no reason why the idea cannot be adopted in other areas of Britain.

Ms Magill - a bitter pill for Haughey

A PERSONAL advert in last month's *Irish Times* provided an intriguing insight into the State of Mother Ireland 1980. This ad proclaimed the intention to set up a news magazine for women that would report on 'feminist issues, politics, women in sport, business issues affecting women, the arts, entertainment, fashion and interior design'. Let's quickly pass over those last two categories, and return to the ad.

'It will break away entirely from the stereotype women's magazine and appeal directly to the thousands of Irish women who have been influenced by the women's movement in the last decade.' The ad further said the mag was aiming at a sales figure of 30,000 per issue and a readership of 150,000 women.

Behind all this is *Magill Magazine*, a monthly glossy colour news mag, and its editor, and part-owner, Vincent Browne. The reason for this expansion in *Magill* ambitions lies in its last three issues.

After weeks of what seemed like hype, *Magill* appeared last May with what it billed as 'at last the real story of the Arms Crisis'. The crisis in question came exactly ten years ago when the then Irish Prime Minister Jack Lynch sacked two members of his cabinet, Charles Haughey and Kevin Boland, with Neil Blaney resigning in anger, and then initiating a 'conspiracy to import arms' trial against Haughey and three others. All four were cleared, and Haughey left the court carried on the shoulders of his supporters, but doomed to spend years in the political wilderness.

Now of course Haughey is prime minister, an election he won last year because of the widely held assumption he had the 'right hard line' on Northern Ireland after years of Jack Lynch waverings. With his election, the Irish public was faced with a re-run of those heady days, only in great detail. In essence, the *Magill* story, based on the detailed diaries or the period kept by the late Peter Berry, then top civil servant in the crucial Justice Department. They stated clearly that all the top politicians at the time

knew what was going on, on the arms import; that from the top, i.e. Jack Lynch down, they all agreed that the beleaguered minority community in Northern Ireland needed assistance rather more tangible than verbal messages of support, and that Haughey had been 'fingering', 'set up' by a government unwilling to face the full implications of its actions.

Magill normally sells around 35,000 each month. Its first Arms Crisis piece, printed in England because of fears of legal action, sold over 80,000. Browne stretched the story over three issues, each time more than doubling its circulation. But in general the Irish public just regarded it all as old hat — everyone knew about Haughey's form.

Then, bit by bit, the saga seeped through the body politic. Opposition party politicians were the first to gripe. Then however, members of Haughey's ruling party, Fianna Fail, famous for its monolithic-like solidity, started to break ranks. Jack Lynch issued a statement, then Des O'Malley, currently an anti-Haughey minister, and then Jim Gibbons, Haughey's leading party opponent, the man who gave evidence against Haughey during his trial. In short Gibbons said Haughey was a liar then, and a liar now.

The significant silence on all this is of course Haughey himself. He has snubbed journalists trying to ask questions about the affair, deeming, and probably quite rightly, that the Irish public were more worried about their falling standards of living, increasing unemployment rates, and the first signs of the EEC-bubble bursting. Haughey is having his own troubles anyhow. A 'self-made millionaire', he was somehow thought by Irish people to have a Midas touch and could make them all rich. He had charisma and a certain style of government, very PR conscious and almost American in its quasi-presidential style.

Things have started to go wrong however. Haughey fucked up over trying to change the Irish Ambassador in the USA in July, he has failed to get his own party men into top jobs in embarrassing

circumstances, and the public is beginning to strongly suspect Haughey after all is more style than substance.

The whole *Magill* saga on the Arms Crisis will be debated in the Irish parliament come October, and it is impossible to see how Haughey can avoid at last 'going public' on the issue, which brings us back to *Ms. Magill*. It is ironic how the oldest kind of Irish issue — guns not butter — is so interlinked with something so new for the country as feminism, all because *Magill* magazine has made some money and now has 'surplus capacity' for just one publication.

The general state of women and feminism in Ireland is embarrassingly backward and primitive, no disrespect intended to the brave but small group of women who are trying to do something about it.

Contraception will be controlled by a cowardly new Government Act (drafted by Haughey himself when Health Minister) that comes into force this November. Contraceptives will be available only on a doctor's prescription and then only for what is termed 'bona fide' family planning purposes. Even this is considered Satanic by the still powerful Catholic Church. Divorce is not possible, gay rights are negligible — the result of an important constitutional case asserting the right to be homosexual is due this October, and abortion, of course, is absolutely the end, really devil's work, even though an estimated 10,000 Irish women go to Britain each year for abortions.

To Choose Campaign on abortion started up in Dublin, and they face a bitter battle. The Contraceptive Action Programme (CAP) still sell condoms each weekend openly on a Dublin stall, but they fear the legal consequences of the new Act this November. *Spare Rib* has been banned on two occasions.

It's all a sorry picture, and never was a magazine focussing on feminist activity and thought more necessary, even if a 150,000 readership seems optimistic.

David Brazil

No. 8
Summer
1976



Rebecca

EQUAL PAY: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: EQUAL POWER.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy National Women's Meeting, Saturday October 11, 11am - 4 pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. (Creche and overnight accommodation on request). Free to all CLPD registered women supporters; men will not be excluded. Labour Party women are warmly invited to join the Campaign (£3.00) or to come along as observers (£1.00).

The meeting will draw up a plan aiming at ending the male domination of the Party, and the male orientation of its policies. One demand will be that half of the places on representative and decision-making bodies in the Labour Party be taken by women. We hope to have speakers on positive discrimination and trades unions. There will also be discussion about co-operation with other Labour Party groups such as the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign and Fightback.

Details, and free copy of *Women's Action Committee Newsletter* from: Heather Gaebler, Lower Flat, 10, Park Drive, London NW 11 7 SH. Telephone: 01 458 1501 (day); 458 1984 (evening).

CIVIL SERVICE CRECHE CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE

2-6pm, October 11 at Kingsway Hall, Kingsway, Holborn Tube. Creche provided. Contact Danny Friedman 274 9553. All Civil Servants Welcome.

Accommodation Address

businesses or individuals. Instant re-mailing. Write for details to D.F. Wing, 5, Tippendell Lane, Chiswell Green, St. Albans, Herts.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER, the fighting left-wing paper produced by rank and file Labour Party and trade union members has been relaunched as a twelve page fortnightly.

Our contributors include: Vladimir Derer, Graham Norwood, Ken Livingstone, Patrick Kodikara, John Bloxam, Ernie Roberts, Rachel Lever and Frances Morrell.

We will now also have a wider coverage of our work in the **MOBILISING COMMITTEE FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY, WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK**, against the cuts and in the factories.

For a sample copy send a stamped addressed envelope to: **SOCIALIST ORGANISER** 5, Stamford Hill, London N 16

Babylon and Heartbeat : Two new films



TWO NEW FILMS first shown at the Edinburgh International Film Festival look at contemporary and not so contemporary sub-cultures. *Babylon* looks at Rastas in London and *Heartbeat* at the post-war beat generation in America.

Harrassment of black people in Britain is not a new theme, and *Babylon* directed by Franco Rosso, who made the Omnibus film about Linton Kwesi Johnson, breaks no new ground or makes any original point, nevertheless, coming a couple of years after *Blacks Britannica*, it goes on to

examine and develop in a much more sophisticated way some of the same issues.

The film follows Blue (Brinsley Forde as Aswaa), a young Rasta who initially appears to have it made: a job, a girlfriend and 'Ital Reggae' an elaborate sound system which he tours around Reggae clubs with his fellow brothers. He loses his job, gets up the noses of some local racists, gets picked up on a SUS charge and in anger and frustration lashes out at the racist Babylon he finds himself in.

The character of Blue prov-

ides an artistic vehicle for exposing how thinly racism is disguised in British Society, and how any illusion that it is otherwise simply evaporates when held up for examination.

Rastafarianism is seen as a source of cultural identity and black pride in a hostile white world and its attraction to young blacks is made obvious. The film is clearly committed but at the same time critical of the culture it's describing - Blue takes out his anger by beating up white gays, *Heartbeat*, on the other hand, directed by John Byrum, manages to effectively evoke the early beat era, but fails to question the ideals upon which that 'alternative' lifestyle was based.

Its the story of the legendary triangle formed by Jack Kerouac, the prophet of Beat: Neal Cassady, its folk hero (the fictional Dean Moriarty of *On the road*): and Carolyn, his wife. The three move in together and form a ménage a trois.

Part of a genre of American cinema including *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*, it lacks the hard edge of either of these. Its almost idolatrous in approach, and with hindsight this is hardly sufficient. Carolyn (Sissy Spacek), is portrayed as a perfect backdrop for the two men (Nick Nolte, John Heard), providing a kind of conservative point of reference for them.

She voluntarily gives up her dreams of being an artist to live out the American dream in suburbs where every family has a barbecue pit and 3.2 kids. But while this life is shown to be stifling for Neal (the likeable, freewheeling, out-of-his-head drifter) Carolyn herself expresses no discontent although objectively, the situation is considerably more oppressive for her.

The film is as one would expect, well made and watchable, but disappointingly over-romanticised and glossy.

Joanna Blythman



Nick Nolte as Neal Cassidy in 'Heartbeat'.

Choosing to be childfree

Why children? published by the Women's Press, £3.75

THIS BOOK doesn't lend itself to cool analysis and theory, with cut and dried answers to the question in the title. It defies that. Instead it is the passionate eloquence of women talking about their children and their childlessness, ultimately about themselves.

The title is a neat inversion of the question always flung at women from their mid-twenties onwards: 'Why aren't you having children? Too wrapped up in your work/self/(etcetera)?' Here the implication is: why have children in the first place?

But the book certainly does not go to the other extreme and negate the value of motherhood. This negation was an unfortunate by-product of the liberation movement early on, with the creativity of childbirth and creativity in other areas of life held to be as mutually exclusive as the male status quo would have it, albeit taken from the opposite standpoint. Here these artificial distinctions between women are broken down, and femaleness in all its diversity comes through. Brook D'Abreu talks about this in her contribution when she says that she (and the rest of society) needs to 'acknowledge that the capacity to conceive is non-

definitive of femaleness, both for mothers and non-mothers'.

Some contributors are passionate in the defence of their childlessness, and are devoted to their work, art, lovers, or themselves. Others are just as passionately defensive of their lives as mothers to children. But my favourites are those who have not quite worked it out yet and who thereby defy the idea of motherhood being an easy and natural choice. Firstly Judith Barrington, who as a lesbian probably has the most charges of 'unnatural' behaviour flung at her, but who carries on, battling constantly against the accusing patriarchal voices in her head, and trying nonetheless to help bring up her lover's two daughters; then Spes Dolphin, also gay, who totally ignored her pregnancy as she went horseback riding and marched against the Vietnam war. She did everything but sit and rest and accept in 'motherly' fashion the coming birth; Anna Wileman, who really wanted her children, but now, surrounded by demanding young triplets as well as an older daughter, says: 'Maybe this will turn out to be the happiest time of my life. But I don't really believe that'. Kathy West sums it all up as she describes her conflicting emotions on being a mother and says: 'We've got a right to be ambivalent about such a complicated decision as this'.

The book is fine and strong and joyful, I shall turn to it again when I feel hemmed in by too few choices in my life. But I can't help thinking that these women

are the fortunate ones. Either by life-style or attitude, they have broken free from the constraints of a society where women are all seen as potential mothers, and mothers are expected to behave in a certain narrowly defined and self-sacrificing way. Where are the voices of women still bound by these constraints? As editors Stephanie Dowrick and Sibyl Grundberg say: 'We found unhappy mothers unwilling to say so in print'. They really would have a story to tell.

Barney Bardsley

Learning to lose



Dale Spender and Elizabeth Sarah, *Learning to Lose: Sexism and Education*, The Womens Press, £3.95.

"MOST EXISTING work which sets out to criticise the position of women in education is mainly concerned with the removal of sexism from the classroom, and that is not enough. What is needed is the development of a theory of education based on co-operative learning and an educational practice which does not take gender inequality as given."

So write Dale Spender and Elizabeth Sarah, the editors of a new book *Learning to Lose* on sexism and education. Despite the claim to be breaking new ground, the analyses produced in the initial feminist critiques of education are not noticeably different from previous work in this field and there is an inconsistent and rather muddled treatment of issues like what ideology is, and how patriarchy actually works so that the book is theoretically weak.

The last sections of the book on curriculum and the classroom are the most practical, although there is perhaps too little treatment of how to deal with resistance from pupils, especially male ones, to talking about sexism. There are useful bibliographies at the end of the book on materials for classroom use and resources for women's studies as well as a more general bibliography.

The book would certainly be helpful to teachers anxious to adopt a feminist and non-sexist classroom practice, although the main emphasis is on secondary pupils; it is a pity more could not have been said about primary school children.

But it is doubtful whether the collection, which (rightly) is heavily based on personal experience, has enough basis in research to achieve its aim of further developing a feminist theory of education, an area in which much work remains to be done.

Rosemary Deem

Jean Luc Godard: Slow motion after all these years

A new season of Jean Luc Godard films will shortly open in London to accompany a major biography of the French director. Here Nick Grant casts a critical eye over his work.

JEAN-LUC GODARD. The name will mean nothing to the youth of the eighties. It will mean nothing to most film-goers and socialists. Yet for anyone both socialist and interested in film, the news that a new feature opens a Godard season at the National Film Theatre on October 1st — before going to the Camden Plaza for a season — should arouse great curiosity. Godard stands unrivalled as a political film-maker. Any discussion of politics and the cinema, which has been a growth industry around European campuses, has to encompass work that he has been involved in simply because his Hollywood-derived practice, when lumped together with Truffaut *et al* as part of the French New Wave, changed in response to contemporary (mainly French) political developments.

The politicisation was rooted in Maoist thought but his commitment to "making films politically", rather than exploiting revolutionary events as yet more Hollywood digestible subject matter, means that any appraisal from a Marxist base, Stalinist, Leninist, Trotskyist, or whatever, must refer to him. No other director has been as tenacious in trying to reconcile questions debated on the left with the means of their expression under capitalism. No other film-maker has been as rigorous in active criticism of the forms and technology through which capitalism represents itself, not only in the cinema but also in the general field of

image production.

Symptomatic of this is the fact that since 1968 Godard has not taken sole credit as director for films with which he has been involved. In 1969 he was part of the Dziga-Vertov group. Vertov (real name Denis Kaufman whose translated pseudonym means Spinning Top) was a prolific Soviet film-maker of the 1920's whose experimental and documentary approach in recording post-revolutionary events was in stark contrast to the epic reflections of his contemporary Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein prefigures the orthodoxy of Mosfilm production, which in turn is as hegemonic in the eastern bloc as Hollywood is for the west. Vertov on the other hand has remained a minor figure in the Soviet canon.

The films under this group authorship marked Godard's break with the commercial distribution circuit to which he has never really returned. Other film-makers however have claimed Vertov as part of their pedigree. In contrast with Godard, these can be characterised as essentially formalist. Their most ardent (and mystifying) adherent in Britain has been Peter Gidal whose writing and film work has resulted in the most excruciating brand of solipsism and purity imaginable. His milieu, most often referred to as structural cinema, derives from Vertov an interest in experimentation, but banishes any kind of subject matter or content in a search for formal ideals.

Gidal has described "narrative" as fascist. Godard, for his part, has retained an interest in trying to combine political struggle — be it in Dagenham, Italy, Palestine or Portugal — with a struggle against oppressive forms of expression.

Since 1974 his collaborator has been Anne-Marie Mieville with whom he moved from Paris to set up the Sonimage production company in Grenoble. Their only work to appear in Britain has been *Numero Deux* from 1975. This was a transfer to film of video material broadly concerned with women at home. His first acclaimed feature *A Bout De Souffle* (1959) has, in retrospect, much to connect it with recent work. The equation of women with sexuality and little else now appears thematically to link most of his early work with current preoccupations. The latest, *Sauve Qui Peut (Slow Motion)*, is the first Godard related work since his collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin on *Tout Va Bien* in 1972 to use stars in a narrative. It is almost as if Godard is coming back to repent. Prostitution is again a theme as it was in *Vivre Sa Vie* in 1962. But that's not all. There is a contrast between city and country life which appears to have biographical importance for Godard.

Godard with be in London for the *Slow Motion* premiere and will speak at the NFT on the night. There will then follow a total of thirty works which will provide a unique opportunity to assess the course of his work, which in recent years has meant TV work. Not since the then Hull College of Art held a three-day forum in October 1973 will there have been the opportunity to debate the political and cinematic merit of Godard.

As an excellent lead to the debate the British Film Institute has brought out the first of a new series of publications called: '*Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*'. Co-ordinated by Colin McCabe, it attempts an evaluation of Godard, particularly with reference to women and sexuality, and his political battles over technology. Such battles are often submerged in the end product but are crucial to Godard's attempts to free film from capital's oppression.



"And to counter the government view we have one of the grand old troopers of the Labour left who was bought out so long ago that he's always ready to come on and pay lip service to his opposition to the Tories while conceding that a socialist state can never be attained, isn't desirable and would be ultimately unworkable anyway."



"And whether or not you fall into enemy hands, men, you'll have to swallow a whole lot of this."

Stick ya bills

TO COINCIDE with the silly season, Edinburgh once again transformed itself into the festive city - tinged with madness, och aye. Anybody who thinks it is possible or even desirable to stage over 600 'cultural' events in three weeks can only be proved

wrong. Everything becomes a manic rush in the name of art: can't get a meal, can't walk down the street, can't find anywhere to stay. The only thing you can do is drink: not only are the taverns open especially late to cater for the visitors (who are



Alex Marenco

they kidding), but all the fringe events seem to be sponsored by the beer and whisky manufacturers... no Chanel or Durex up here.

Since he was last year's Fringe First winner (with *Heroes*) it seems only fair that Doug Lucie should have another sell-out on his hands with *Poison* this year. The resemblances, however, are more uncanny even than that... this is another house hold, in Kensington rather than Oxford, but similar in age to the first, a similar spectrum of backgrounds and interests to make the melting pot all the more tasty. A loves B who loves C who loves D who wants A and so on. All the changes are well and truly rung as each possible couple takes the stage to sort out their differences and share their secrets - while we of course build up an impression of who the real cad is! It's a work which needs a fuller assessment than this, but in its present stage it looks dangerously like the 'well-made play', with a conclusion, a family guilt and a seance. Lucie has unusual flair for accurate characterizations which are absolutely contemporary (*Poison* is set in July

VIEW

WHILE I sympathise with Dave Rimmer's comments in *Leveller* 41, about the failure of *Short sharp shock* to rise above anything more than a satirical level, I don't believe that the 'counter-culture' he calls for will be created by attacking Left theatre as he does. Precisely because, as he says, 'people live their lives in and through culture of one sort or another' socialist criticism needs to go beyond the level of splenetic outburst we are familiar with from bourgeois culture. The Left has criticised its own theatre for decades for presenting 'caricature' without 'historical, political or economic background' with no noticeable effect on the product - possibly because its own understanding and presentation of that product is no less caricatured and lacking in background. Until as audiences the Left can wean itself away from receiving its own culture merely as a product, separate and outside itself, reified like bourgeois culture, until it recognises that its criticism can only be materially effective when it engages with the conditions shared by both practitioners and public, it will have no productive effect.

Politics and theatre, as Dave Rimmer suggests, share many common features. But not the least of these is the difference between analysis and action. In our increasingly atomised society we are becoming increasingly unaware of each other's lives and increasingly quick to analyse and interpret each other into the ground. Meanwhile socialism, increasingly, takes on the appearance of ideological rigidity crumbling in contradiction at the first sight of action. Simply by pointing out what is wrong with the world you don't immediately change it. In this respect both the kind of political theatre Dave Rimmer criticises and his criticism itself are lacking in an important ingredient: close and detailed understanding of the subject they deal with.

For far too long 'political theatre' in Britain has meant any show that knocks the Establishment, slings mud at leading politicians and trade unionists or points out the inadequacy of working-class or left activists' consciousness. All of these are essentially critical stances. Often they are no more than satirical. But if one accepts that durability of large sections of 'Capital' is the result of painstaking study of how things worked then, then not only what we produce as culture but also our critique of it needs to take greater account of how things work now.

The problem with much political theatre is that it doesn't do that. Like *Short sharp shock* or Howard Barker's *The loud boy's life* (about a Powell-like figure) at the Warehouse, recently, it relies considerably on the juxtaposition of images - often of decay or corruption - in order to create a kind of moral shock-effect. The structural problem with *Short sharp shock*, common to a lot of contemporary theatre, is that it had no action. Its politics weren't translated into a story which could engage the audience's involvement and interest at a level of

political activity and choice.

The great danger with theatre reviewing is that traditionally it has been done by those with little experience or insight into the business itself. Other fields of journalism would demand rigorous investigation of background information before delivering judgement. Even a sports writer will go into considerable detail - for example about the physical and psychological circumstances surrounding the failure of Bob Willis against the West Indies. But theatre is fair game for anyone, so ignorance and prejudice are acceptable. But what's worse, the consumerist, quality-control function (checking the value of goods on their way to the public) goes unchallenged, even on the Left, by any other consideration, particularly those which might improve the production process, the performance of those doing the work, or the conditions under which goods change hands.

Since about 18 months B.T. (Before Thatcher) there has been an increasing and continual bashing of 'young' writers and directors (most of them now balding, greying or paunchy) in and out of mainstream theatre, with its consequent conservative effect on theatre managements, big and small. That this is not unconnected with the chase by our 'young' reviewers (some of them extremely paunchy) to fill the current brains-vacuum amongst our leading national and Sundays reviewers has not gone unnoticed. But protestations that individual critics' notices are dismissed or ignored cannot hide the fact that their effect as part of a conservative tide throughout dominant cultural opinion as a whole has been considerable. The most recent bid for Gouty Guru of the Sundays could be seen in Michael Coveney's *Observer* diatribe against 'Fringe' theatre for supposedly rejecting the values of classical productions.

To counter that kind of attack effectively, not only our practice has to be better but also our thinking, in that we relate it to the arena which affects all theatre workers, namely the production relations of the business and their relation to the broader political context. For as Dave Rimmer rightly points out 'our problem isn't one of individuals', nor is it 'to echo the shortcomings of our fractional movement' but to find something 'to put in (the Tories) place... a counter culture, combative, a place for drawing strength, an area for strategic retreat, something that would make the idea of struggle attractive.'

To do that we first have to understand how things work, and to base our criticism on that constructive principle: for it's only by understanding present activity fully, warts and all, that future activity can begin to be successful. Then, with an army of administrators able to forge the direct and close links to working-class organisations which are necessary, the ultimate judgement - that of a conscious, mass, working-class audience - might become a reality.

Steve Gooch



WIELOPOLE WIELOPOLE

1980) and very accomplished dialogue. For the sake of the future of English drama, I hope he doesn't write merely to formula and go the way of all Pinter.

More and more women's plays seem to be advocating that women live in isolation from men. Now, while this is easier than trying to integrate men into the sensibility of women, it is surely less desirable in terms of the positive outcomes of any struggle. *Calm Down Mother* (Collective) is self-confessedly hermetic; three women come together and splinter

over and over again in a series of tableaux which express facets of the multi-spatial California playground mentality. There is pain, there is fear, there are several ages of woman facing death and menstruation; and yet the improvisational form sounds like a therapy session which comes close to being stage. When the aleatory structure falls apart again and again it gets harder and harder to stick it back together. It would be exciting, though to find a new critical language for work with no barriers, presented as images of harmony and conflict.

Senior man of the Polish alternative theatre (now voluntarily resident in Italy) Tadeusz Kantor, like all men on reaching sixty has mellowed a little, though not a lot. *Wielopole Wielopole* borrows its name from Kantor's birth-place, but from there onwards any resemblance with real events or imagined is purely imaginery. Now, if Kantor's symbolism is in some way familiar, his images and composition in no way are. His dramatic poem comprises shards of autobiography, as any poem must; and in common with poetry, the symbols of religion and the army are less important than the way the chronology is adjusted and the facts fictionalized. Kantor sits or stands on stage the whole time - ostensibly conducting the actors, their movements and the structurally important background music; but, in effect, he resembles a Proust figure, conjuring up images from his memory and translating them into stage presence. What is remarkable is Kantor's now familiar use of dummies, moulded in latex, who resemble exactly the actors on stage, to suggest that life and death are interchangeable: neither in fact has any 'meaning' or lasting 'significance' for art or the world. Everything is the subject matter of art, not its end product. Though, as one elderly Scots lady said to me as we left the theatre: 'Well, it's given us all something to think about...' Yes, something indeed; one doubts whether even Kantor knows or cares what it might be.

David Roper

on the move

IN *Trial Run* Nigel Williams took a simple idea and let it evaporate in gusts of rhetoric. In *Line 'Em* he has taken a simple idea and - albeit with the aid of rhetoric once again - has polished it until it glistens. A picket line of eight men is confronted by a detachment of eight armed soldiers: who will reach breaking point first? Anybody reading *The Leveller* would prefer to



Peter Machin
Phil Daniels

think that solidarity was something germane to strikers, and enforced for soldiers...but this may not be so. When it is laid on the line (in both senses) the personal fears and interests may be too strong to be overcome by the group's policy of 'all out for an extra fiver'.

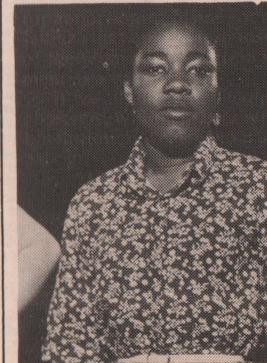
Phil Daniels plays a bullying agitator who puts everything where his mouth is - the performance is priceless. And though the play captures the spirit rather than the letter of revolution, it is simple without being facile. The details are occasionally overlooked - no TV crew, no police - but this is a play of commitments that is suffocatingly effective: no one is at risk of misreading the message, that the Army comprises bigoted nitwits from the upper-class, and, from the working-class, men who have learned to grunt and obey. Their mistake is to obey the man with the gun, instead of the man with the force of history. The new disenchanted sons of the workers have been in the struggle since the day they were born; anybody can find an escape route in jokes, songs, or sitting by the river, but as the union co-ordinator, Sam, says: 'In our movement you do not do anything for yourself.'

David Roper

CAST
From one strike to another is a play which poses a series of crucial questions about the role of trades unions, theatre groups and the law, and could, in itself, become a test case under the government's new Employment Act.

PLYMOUTH: Thurs 18 Sept
College of St Mark and St John, Derriford Road

EXETER: Wed 17 Sept
Exeter College, Hele Road
BATH: Fri 19 Sept
St James Theatre, Lower Borough Walls.
BRISTOL: Sat 20 Sept
St Werburgh's Centre
Horley Road, St Paul's.
CHELTENHAM: Sun 21 Sept
The Centre, 57-59 Winchcombe Street.
PORT TALBOT: Mon 22 Sept
Four Winds, Princess Margaret Way.
PONTYPOOL: Tues 23 Sept
Trosnant Youth Centre
Trosnant Street.
PONTYPRIDD: Thurs 24 Sept
Regent Ball Room
Hopkinstown.
MAERDY: Wed 24 Sept
Miners Welfare Hall
CALDICOTT: Sat 27 Sept
Lower School Hall,
Caldicot College
Newport Road.
EDINBURGH: Mon 6 Oct
Piccadilly Club
Piccadilly Place
DUNDEE: Tues 7 Oct
Royal Centre Hotel
Union Street.



CARDIFF: Fri 26 Sept
The Morrland Hotel
Morrlands Road, Splott
CUMBERNAULD: Wed 8 Oct
The Village Community
Hall, The Wind.
GLASGOW: Sat 11 Oct
Star Club, Carlton Place.
NEWCASTLE: Mon 13 Oct
HUDDERSFIELD: Tues 14 Oct

COUNTERACT THEATRE COMPANY

Never mind the ballots The so-called 'Employment Bill' is on its way through Parliament and the Tories plan to have it on the statute book by the summer. The TUC has described it as unnecessary, unfair and dangerous. It is worse. It is an attempt to smash the trade unions by preventing effective industrial action and making it easier for the bosses to 'shake out' their workforce. The show is an entertainment for meetings organised to smash the Act, and takes a light-hearted look at the way some of the clauses might operate. It is available for booking from

14 Sept. Details from: Counteract Theatre Company, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AT (01) 251 4977

The show can be seen in
LONDON: Fri 19 Sept
Jackson's Lane Centre
Archway

HAYMARKET THEATRE
Belgrave Gate
Leicester LE1 3YQ
(0533) 52021

If winter comes by Janos Nyiri is a searching and critical comment on socialism, communism and freedom in Eastern Europe, based on the writer's own experiences. Set in a state-run drama school, the play looks at the lives, loves and fears of a group of students, working under the guidance of the charismatic tutor Moroi. Each student acts out his fears and fantasies to create a complex picture that contains both their dreams and realities. Janos Nyiri left Hungary after the revolution in 1956 and since 1973, with the publication of his novel, has been refused permission to visit his country again.

LES OEUFS MALADES
The family album by Bryony Lavery takes six children growing up in the fifties and traces the relationships and tensions within their family through to the present day.

CROYDON: 16-20 Sept
Croydon Warehouse
(01) 680 4060
CHELTENHAM: 23-27 Sept.

Cheltenham Arts Centre
(0242) 27168

SHREWSBURY: 30 Sept
Shrewsbury Priory
School

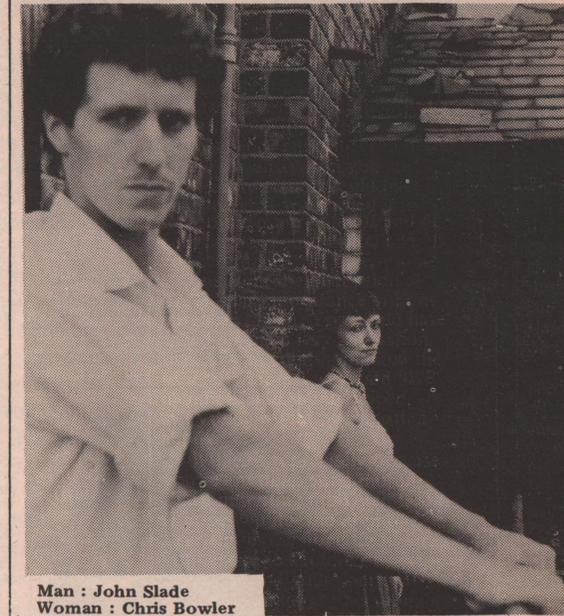


Bryony Lavery

LICHFIELD: 3 Oct
Lichfield Arts Centre

LONDON: 14-19/21-25 Oct
ICA Theatre, The Mall
(01) 930 6393

MONSTROUS REGIMENT
begins its season of foreign plays with Dacia Maraini's *Dialogue between a prostitute and one of her clients*. It has been translated by Regiment member Gillian Hanna. It is not a documentary about prostitution but an exploration of sexuality; a demanding play both on the integrity of the two



Man: John Slade
Woman: Chris Bowler

actors and a very personal participation of the audience. The action breaks off in various places to incorporate discussion between audience and company. This promises to be a more fulfilling experience than Crystal Theatre's voyeuristic approach to the area it presented in Jeremy Sandford's *The fatted calf*: simply dividing the evening into play and discussion, with an approach that invited polemic about prostitution rather than a willingness to relate personal sexuality to the characters on stage.

It was originally performed at the Madalena, Rome - the only women's permanent theatre space in Europe. It has toured throughout Italy, Belgium and France. A German version is being prepared. The week it was staged in Genoa, the theatre had to be cordoned off to prevent destruction by an angry riot.

BRISTOL: 30 Sept - 4 Oct
Bristol Arts Centre
(0272) 45008
YORK: 10-11 Oct
York Arts Centre
(0904) 27129
LONDON: 13-14 Oct
GLAA tour

BIRMINGHAM: 20-25 Oct

OVAL THEATRE
and Matchbox Purveyors present *Moby Dick* or *For those in peril on the sea*. A jazz production, tickets £2.00 including food. Theatre membership 50p.

LONDON: 19-21 Sept
Oval House 7.30 pm.

En Algun lugar te espero (A literary cabaret based on erotic poetry). Tickets £1.20 plus theatre membership 50p.

LONDON: 24-28 Sept
Oval House, Upstairs
Theatre at 9.00pm.

From 21 Sept Oval House offers workshops in Tap, Modern, Gymnastic and Disco Dance, Acrobatics, Movement and Voice, Theatre Games and Epic Acting. If interested ring (01) 735 2786.

UNITY THEATRE

The ragged trousered philanthropists. Unity revives the original 1920's Tom Thomas adaptation for the Communist University, but will be available for hire thereafter and should play at Teatro Technis later in the Autumn Autumn.

LONDON: 20 Sept
Goldsmiths College.
Box Office, SE 14.
Box Office: 698 5053

WAKEFIELD TRICYCLE

Space Acne
Snoo Wilson's new play is set in the future. The heroine, an unemployed school-leaver, chooses to take part in an unreliable government cryogenic freezing programme, be stored in a canister and sent on an indefinite journey through space. Amidst amnesiac crew, exploding cannisters and rare astrological configurations the spaceship lands in Neptune. The heroine's journey takes her through the sexual delights of Neptunian arcades of moushies, and to surgeons selling limbs to millionaires. On return to earth she decides to confront the harsh realities awaiting her there.

CHELTENHAM: 14-15 Oct
St Pauls
FROM: 16 Oct
Merlin Theatre

BRIDGEWATER: 17 Oct
Arts Centre
BEAFORD: 18 Oct
Beaford Centre
BIRMINGHAM: 23-25 Oct
Midlands Arts Centre
NORWICH: 29-30 Oct
Premises

PUBLICATIONS



WITH A collective composed of a 'coalition of revolutionary socialists, anarchists, drag queens and radicals' a new newspaper Gay Noise hopes to provide news of and thoughts by people who prefer 'Gay

Noise and hell' to 'Gay News and Heaven'. This 'dangerous, politically-motivated rag' is available from 149, Ralton Road, London SE 24. The next issue is due out on September 12.

THE MAGAZINE Local Socialism has been launched to provide a forum for discussion of issues relating to the cuts, community groups and local trades unions, and particularly linked to the 'development of concrete local alternative economic strategies'. Number Three contains articles on rubbish, free enterprise zones and employment in Lambeth. Available from the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA), 9, Poland Street, London W1. Single issues 10p, a year's subscription £1.20.

Campaign for the combat the fouling of the environment of natural to all individuals or SERA 9, Poland Street, London W1, 749

THE NCCL HANDBOOK Your Rights at Work by Bill Birthes and Patricia Hewitt has been re-issued and updated to cover the 1980 Employment Act, the first book to do so. It has sections on 'You and Your Union', 'Your Contract', 'Dismissal and Redundancy', 'Health and Safety', 'Maternity Rights', 'Police in the Workplace' and 'Immigrant Workers' amongst others, and lots of cartoons. Price £1.50 in paperback.

WILL THE Government outlive the people? The current Peace News gives the most accurate and up-to-date list so far of the secret bunkers to which the lucky one per cent will retire if the bombs fall. 'Spies for Peace' are called for to research and draw attention to the shelters and underground shelters near them. Peace News is at 5, Caledonian Road, London N1.

WALKING A TIGHTROPE the new Big Flame Women's pamphlet, is packed with excellent photographs and has one of the most thought-provoking and jargon-free overviews of women's oppression that has surfaced for a long time. Much of the text is direct personal testimony: 'Many women speak of how they came to see their lives not as their own private nightmare, but as an experience mirrored in home after home. We have to work hard to overcome that separation between public and private, without denying the importance of our private lives'. Walking a Tightrope is available from 43a, Hardman Street, Liverpool 1. 60p +15p post.



CAMPAIGNS

MANCHESTER AGAINST THE MISSILES AND NORTH WEST CND are organising a march at Blackpool to coincide with the start of the Labour Party conference. This is to show support for a campaign to stop Cruise missiles being sited in Britain and to commit the next Labour government to cancel the Cruise and Trident contracts. More information from: 20, Greystone Lane, Failsforth, Manchester 35. Tel 061 236 4905



SAVE OUR NURSERIES (SON) in Nottingham is appealing for £15,000, particularly from union branches, to run a cooperative nursery. If elected in May the local Labour Party has promised it full funding. The building was won as a concession from the Tory-controlled county council when they sacked 140 nursery nurses and closed down facilities run by the social services. "We fought like hell but we lost - help us to win this little cuts battle: victories are few these days". Cheques and postal orders to: S.O.N. c/o 118, Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

A DEFENCE COMMITTEE has been set up to investigate and publicise the methods used by a special police unit which has arrested 135 mostly black young people in Hornsey since October 1979. There is a growing resentment in the community about the way the youths are often held for several days without being allowed a phone call, and are encouraged to implicate friends. Bail is hard to get, with thousands of pounds asked for surety, while those who do get it usually have curfews from 9pm to 6am imposed on them. The Defence Committee say 'the operation has all the hallmarks of a trawl'. Police seem to be taking the chance to clear their books of unsolved crimes by picking up likely 'bodies' to pin them to. We suspect that convenience is taking precedence over accuracy'. Hornsey 70 plus Defence Committee can be reached at 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

ORGANISATIONS

MESSAGE FROM ABERDEEN: 'The Aberdeen and Lothians Trades Unions Gay Rights Group exists to support local gay workers in difficulties. If you feel we can be of any assistance contact Jim at 0224 693493 or Ian at 031 557 1662 (late)'.



MAJOR ISSUES of gay politics will be discussed at gay workshops being held throughout London between September and December. The first two are 'Fighting Thatcher' on September 18 and 'Gay Help Groups' on September 25. For details contact Gay Workshops, 5, Caledonian Road, London N1.



Photo: Laurie Evans

EVENTS



NO NUKES MUSIC, South London, has two gigs this month at the Old Queen's Head, Stockwell Road, Brixton, SW9. 'TV Personalities' on September 19 and 'Essential Logic' on September 26. NNM says 'Ready to get those stamping feet and shaking bodies involved in the growing clamour against the Nukes. We intend to stop the nuclear menace and have a noisy good time doing it. South Londoners take heed'. NNM can be contacted at 12, Kestrel Avenue, London SE 24. 01 737 4977.

POLITICS OF ENERGY Group seminars, taking up issues which arise in the anti-nuclear struggle, will be held on Saturday Afternoons (18 Oct, 22 Nov, 13 Dec) at Action Space, Chenies Street, London WC1. The first seminar, a historical critique of nuclear management's risk and safety assessments, will be introduced by Dave Rosenfeld, and followed by a social at the Roebuck pub. Further information from Peter 01 986 5286 (evenings).

IF SEPTEMBER makes you think of going back to school try one of the 14 different evening courses on women's studies offered by the University of London's Dep of Education of Extra Mural Studies. There are also five marxism classes, and workshops discussing housing, Latin America, and the economic arguments behind unemployment. Cost is 50p per session. Contact the department at 26, Russell Square, London WC1 B 5 DQ, 01 636 8000.

OVER THREE hundred original photographs from public and private collections in Poland, almost none of them seen before in Western Europe, have been brought together at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London E1 for an exhibition which will run from September 17 - October 26. 'A History of Photography in Poland' gives a picture of life in Poland over 140 years, including reportage, photographs from the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.

As part of our plans for going fortnightly we're intending to build up the Back Page into a comprehensive national survey of what's going on in and around the Left. And we're dependent for our information on your press releases. So please send details of events, plays, street theatre, agitprop, community papers, books, appeals, nity papers, campaigns, summer schools, demonstrations, pickets, demonstrations, petitions and all other acts of subversion throughout the country to: Back Pages, The Leveller, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1. COPY DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: OCTOBER 18th



Going Fortnightly

"Dear Collective, The proposed changes in Leveller are very good, and I wish you the best of luck. I would like to be a local correspondent... I am involved in the NCCL, NUPE, the Trades Council, CHE, Rock Against Sexism and the Hunt Saboteurs' Association... I keep an eye on Local Government affairs and other local issues, particularly those that are hushed up... It might be an idea if you could give me some idea of how local correspondents can best contribute to the magazine... All the best etc etc."

That extract from a reader's letter — one of seven offers of help we received that day — just about sums up the fortnightly Leveller for us. The previous day's mail included an offer to be our correspondent for the Ipswich/East Suffolk area from a Tax Inspector who also wants to write about how taxation fails to redistribute wealth, while the day after someone wrote from York to ask about doing record reviews. Every day someone calls up or writes in to offer help or advice. Virtually all of them have been supportive and there has been little critical correspondence.

A lot of readers obviously share our own feeling about the problems we'll face. One staunch subscriber who's been with us since the earliest day spoke to us at the Fragments conference about his worries that we wouldn't be able to sustain it. He wanted to know whether we'll be able to finance the fortnightly, and some insight into the debates within the collective on the format and content of the new magazine.

On the finances: it isn't going to be easy, and we don't have any illusions about it. We've raised over £3,000 on Launch Subscriptions so far, and we hope to double that by October 29 when the first fortnightly appears. Much of the initial financing has gone back into promoting the fortnightly — we've issued 65,000 leaflets, sent out hundreds of personal letters, taken out paid advertising, — and the main work has been done during the summer, traditionally our low period. But the money is now coming in at a healthy rate, and we're hoping that by the end of October we'll have enough to sustain the first three issues.

On the debates within the collective, it's harder to summarise. Most of the work of planning for the fortnightly has taken place, but we've still got a lot of details to agree on. It'll be an A4 magazine — the same format as now — and will probably start with about 28 pages. It will be tightened up internally, with more news. We'll continue to write about developments in the debate about personal politics, we'll have a new emphasis on culture, Back Pages will remain as the national left notice board, and we'll be stepping up our investigations. The exact ways in which we present that material will be resolved at a weekend school to be held after this issue has gone to press.

The collective has now adopted a General Statement of aims — a restatement of our socialist commitment

which we'll be printing in a future issue — together with a simple constitution which we hope will hold us together when the going gets rough. The debates around the magazine's content and organisation have been sharp but always conducted in a comradely fashion. And the collective has grown too, with new members coming in and having a much clearer idea of what the magazine is about and how they fit into it.

We're still keen to have readers write in as local correspondents for us: we're preparing a set of notes for local correspondents and these will be available shortly after this issue comes out. And we'd like to see more specialist correspondents writing in — particularly in the fields of finance and the economy; science and technology; the state; law and education. (We want correspondents on every aspect actually, but we're particularly keen on those.)

There's bound to be a problem with distribution, particularly in the early stages. Readers could help us by constantly asking their newsagents to stock us (they can get supplies from Moore Harness at 01-251 9224) but it's going to be hard work to improve distribution. The best way of seeing every issue (and helping our cash flow) is by taking out a Launch Subscription.

The fortnightly Leveller will set itself high standards with an avowed aim of breaking out of the small circle of the left talking to the left. It will be hard to do, for the odds are all stacked against us. The first few months particularly, when our finances are going to be extremely shoe-string, will put tremendous pressures on us and we'd like you to stay with us even when it looks gloomy. For ourselves, we've all agreed to work on the fortnightly project for six months and then review the situation. Next March we'll be presenting a full report of what's happened. In the meantime October 29 will be the date to remember!

The Leveller Collective: September 1980

Subscription Details

A Launch Subscription costs at least £10 (£5.00 — students, claimants, OAPs) and will last for six months.

NAME
ADDRESS

I enclose cheque/PO for
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