

his bogeyman image as a blood-drenched hater of the police".)

Two recent editorials capture the essential *Economist* chutzpah. First, Ulster, and a prescription for alleviating its problems (even the *Economist* doesn't think it has a cure).

Of course, "No political initiative can succeed without economic change" (Marx would have understood). So this means equal job opportunities for Catholics, which means legislation - and "economic recovery". And the medicine for economic recovery? Currency union with the Republic and abolition of tax barriers. With some nasty side effects:

### Exploding wages

"Britain might detach Northern Ireland's pound from strong sterling, and peg it to the Republic's pound. To prevent this devaluation from prompting explosive wage demands from the north's powerful trade unions, welfare benefits should gradually be lowered (at present, they bump up against the north's low wages, creating the United Kingdom's worst poverty traps) and employers' national-insurance contributions should be scrapped. This last could be paid for by cutting the subsidies to lame-duck industries. Ulster would then be the low-wage, high-skill economy that multinationals like, and jobs would flower."

And in that last sentence lies the future for all of us in the *Economist's* best of all multi-national worlds. (I'd always thought that, if you were highly skilled, then by and large you'd be better paid, but I can quite see that employers would prefer their highly skilled workers to be badly paid. What I *don't* see is where all these highly skilled workers will suddenly come from.)

Naturally, this low wage/high skill nexus only applies to the workforce. For the other side of the coin, we need to look at another recent *Economist* editorial on the Lawson budget, with its massive tax cuts for high earners.

First, the *Economist* accepts the argument about incentives, though in the process it makes the employer class look a pretty appalling lot:

### Sorry catalogue

"Above all ... Britain's rulers resented the amount of tax that they paid, which made it hardly worthwhile to earn more. So they closeted themselves with their tax advisers when they should have been doing their jobs; and they spent more time on the golf course or at lunch than they might have done, because these were the things that gave them some status and were usually untaxed perks. In a dozen ways a month, they ducked the small but difficult decisions that cumulatively make the difference between a bad firm and a good one, between weak economy and strong."

And a sorrier catalogue of spineless, self-indulgent ineptitude could hardly be imagined!

But, says the *Economist*, pushing the argument a characteristic stage further, after the Lawson budget, "The last excuse has gone. From now on, the British economy can and should become as productive as any other. This does not mean merely that it should grow as fast; for many years it should grow faster than the others, until the gross national product of the average Briton (now

\$12,000) catches up with that of the average German or American (\$18,000 plus)."

So this isn't quite the same old upper-class cant - that the rich only work if they're overpaid while the poor only work (or *find* work) if they're underpaid. The *Economist* apparently believes it - and expects to see results. The boss class have been put on notice.

Moreover, there is a further dimension. We do not live by personal-income-after-tax alone. There is that wider social dimension which until the last few years had been usurped by the state:

"For almost 40 welfare-state years Britain's leaders have said that the government will do it. Education, urban redevelopment, theatres and museums, new or better hospitals - all were seen as the job of the state, paid for by those extortionate taxes ... (Now) the highly paid have a keener incentive to earn more; but they are also keeping more, and should be thinking of using some of the freedom that their extra money gives them to support charities, finance a small business, sponsor or employ bright kids, buy computers for a school."

There are two responses (at least) to this. The first is, pull the other one. As John Rentoul put it in the *New Statesman*:

"... as for the idea that people who are avoiding paying tax at 60 per cent will suddenly come forward with voluntary contributions to the general good at 40 per cent, probably the less said the better."

### Common interest

The second response is, who needs it?

As a socialist with anarchist leanings, I'm not in love with the state as provider of just about everything. But, as an expression of common interest, with its modicum at least of democratic control and commitment to social justice, the state is infinitely preferable to the self-interested favouritism of the corporate or individual rich.

Do we want vital aspects of our common life to be determined by the whims of the wealthy? The rational decisions of representatives of the whole community to be replaced by the commercial or personal predilections of the top ten per cent?

The *Economist* would say yes. After all, to privatise these functions would be to hand them over to people who think like the *Economist*, and would put them well beyond the reach of people with dubious political views who occasionally get elected to public office.

Then the only hope for socialists would be to hunt for the odd socialist millionaire. Our future belongs to Robert Maxwell!

And what of the idle, greedy bunch of incompetents who, on the *Economist's* own evidence, have been running British industry for the past forty years?

"It they fail, they will open the way to an un-Thatcherite government, and should expect little sympathy from it. There is no excuse any more."

That could be the best news we've had for years. □

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# Flypaper

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## A Djanogly business

ONE OF THE FASCINATIONS of the city technology college saga is the pretence that it is mostly about education. On the contrary, it has been thoroughly political from the start.

The CTCs began, you will remember, as rabbits wrenched gleefully from a hat by Kenneth Baker at the Tory Party conference in October 1986. It was a personal triumph for Mr Baker, who was given one of those standing ovations which, as one commentator remarked, the Conservative Party reserves for speakers who know how to stroke its erogenous zones.

### Special stimulation

In unveiling the plan for twenty CTCs throughout the country, the zone Mr Baker singled out for special stimulation was the party's violent hatred of Labour councils. As the *Independent* reported the next day, "Mr Baker got his longest round of applause at yesterday's Conservative Party conference when he announced that there would be no local authority involvement."

In other words, the CTCs slotted neatly into the government's demonology of left-wing local councils. The proposals were less about education than about the continuing project to destroy Labour in local government (and local democracy with it).

Having started political, the CTCs stayed political, nowhere more than in Nottingham, where by no coincidence at all the announcement of the new CTC came exactly one week before the 1987 general election.

Significantly, the news appeared on the front page of the *Times* before it reached the local paper, the *Evening Post*. Local feelings, local considerations, local involvement were subordinate to central government policy - and the election campaign.

For his £1 million, Mr Harry Djanogly, the industrial sponsor, was given a photograph and a short article all to himself on page 2 of the *Times* under the headline, "Vision of a self-made man". Mr Djanogly, reported *Times* education correspondent, John Clare, "ascribes his success to three things: 'hard work, very hard work, and bloody hard work'."

Later that day, the *Evening Post* led with the story on the front page and included its own profile of Mr Djanogly inside, headed, "The reluctant millionaire".

"There is no reason to have a public profile," Mr Djanogly was quoted as saying. "... It is an investment in the future of industry and the future of our children. That is reward enough."

Others had more immediate rewards in mind. The three Conservative candidates for the city all welcomed the announcement ("delighted", "big boost

to educational opportunity" etc.), while Cllr Bill Bradbury, leader of the Conservative-controlled City Council, said: "I hope the proposal will attract bi-partisan support."

This, at the height of a general election campaign, could be described as a little disingenuous. Moreover, as Cllr Bradbury well knew, the Labour-controlled county education authority had almost completed a massive, expensive and highly sensitive development plan to meet the county's future educational needs in the light of rapidly falling rolls. Now, wham! - a 1,000-student cuckoo had been dumped in their nest.

So Cllr Bradbury asked for their support!

In fact, as the *Evening Post* reported, "Councilors and officers were stunned by yesterday's new college announcement by Education Secretary Kenneth Baker in Nottingham."

"They had been kept completely in the dark about the proposal and got first news of it from the *Evening Post*."

(Evidently nobody reads the *Times* at County Hall!)

Now this was true bi-partisanship, for, as the *Post* also revealed, the announcement was "the result of a six-month feasibility study by a 15-strong committee of local businessmen chaired by David Regan, Professor of Local Government at Nottingham University".

Six months during which the LEA had been allowed to prepare a major development plan in complete ignorance of a crucial new factor.

### Vocal ideologue

And such a bi-partisan choice of chairman! David Regan is Francis Hill Professor of Local Government at the University of Nottingham. He is also a well-known and very vocal right-wing ideologue, a prominent hardliner on nuclear weapons and the author of a number of pamphlets attacking Labour in local government. The latest, *The Local Left and Its National Pretensions* (published in December 1987 by the Thatcherite Centre for Policy Studies), is an interesting document, which I hope to look at more closely in a future issue. It is notable for its violent lurches from high-toned professorial exposition (Professor Regan has read, or at least mentions, Poulantzas, Althusser and Habermas) to repetition of the most discredited Fleet Street tittle-tattle on such hoary old topics as *Baa-Baa Green Sheep* and *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* (which, contrary to Professor Regan's assertion, was *not* "made available to even the youngest children").

And for this little baby, with such a midwife and such an unsavoury mongrel ancestry of playing to the Tory Party gallery, poisonous hatred of Labour councils, clandestine plotting and artfully

stage-managed electioneering - for this supposedly bi-partisan project local socialists were expected to swallow their principles and extend a (non-political) glad hand!

Moreover, in considering the politics of the CTCs, it is important to understand that the government does not see them as twenty separate units. On the contrary, they are a co-ordinated national project, the strike force in Conservative plans to dismember local authority control over education, an implantation with potentially far-reaching effects on the host organism. The *Times* reported on the day of the Nottingham announcement:

### Driving force

"The driving force behind the scheme is Mr Cyril Taylor, an educational entrepreneur who heads a newly formed umbrella organization, the City Technology Colleges Trust. He has worked closely with Mr Baker.

"Mr Taylor believes that the Conservative plan to allow schools to opt out of local authority control will encourage many comprehensives to become city technology colleges."

It is in this context that we should interpret the comments of Mr John Ramsden, project director of the Nottingham CTC: "If we set the pace and experiment and grow, other schools will see what

it is possible to achieve."

This is a frank insult to financially starved local authority schools which are capable of achieving a few things of their own, given a fair share of the seven or eight millions being lavished on the CTC.

But we are not talking about fair shares. We are not even talking about education. We are in a world of "educational entrepreneurs" and of schools controlled not by the local community but by an alliance of national politicians and local businessmen. Mrs Thatcher, in a sinister echo (presumably unconscious) of Joseph Stalin, has said that her aim is to "change souls". The CTCs can be seen as assembly lines for the new product.□

### FOOTNOTE

What nobody seems to have noticed is that the reticent Mr Djanogly is not entirely unknown as a benefactor of local education. Stand outside the Arboretum Hotel on Arboretum Street and look across the road at the lettering above the door of the High School's shiny new, very expensive-looking science block. Yes, it says: "The Simon Djanogly Science Building". And, yes, Simon was Harry's father. So, you see, the CTC is not a completely new departure. The Djanoglys are long-standing supporters of technological education in the inner city.□

## Merger most foul

WHATEVER NEW THREAT to left/liberal values and the sanity of the nation emerges from the Murdoch empire's mega-expansion at Wapping in 1989 (see last issue), things are already looking down in the world of left/left-leaning periodicals.

Following the death of *Labour Weekly* and the enforced relaunch of *New Socialist*, *Tribune* has been appealing desperately for money (cheques to "Tribune Publications Ltd" at 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DY), while the *New Statesman* and *New Society* are to wed under (it is predicted) the brand new name *NS* - which, presumably, is meant to suggest either or neither, whichever you prefer.

The *NS* episode has produced some entertaining high-grade bitchery between the revamped *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*, with a few shovelfuls chucked in by *Tribune* for good measure.

The *New Statesman* started it off on 12th February with a beady-eyed piece by Jolyon Jenkins on the restyled *Guardian*. Jenkins suggested that, far from being the latest and greatest step in the upward march of the *Guardian*, the rejig had more to do with recovering lost readers from the *Independent* and (!) the reinvigorated *Daily Telegraph*. Could the *Guardian* adapt to a new, less liberal age "without selling out on its traditional concerns - poverty, social justice, the third world, the peace movement"?

Jenkins concluded, generously enough, that "there is no outward sign that the editorial line has shifted rightwards" and "no reason why the *Guardian* shouldn't continue to annexe the entire

liberal-left ground". But a few hurtful phrases were cast on the way - "embourgeoisement", "yuppification" (quoting the editor denying it), and, most painful of all perhaps, a *Guardian* journalist's world-weary remark that "there is less excitement than you can possibly imagine about the redesign".

(On the subject of embourgeoisement and yuppification, incidentally, recent *New Statesmans* have carried the following subscription advert:

"A special offer for those who know that there is more to French wine than Bordeaux, Burgundy and Champagne, and more to the news than you get from the papers.

### Fresh and sharp

"Subscribe now to the *New Statesman*, and be assured of a different perspective on current events each week - fresh and sharp, full of character and with a touch of acidity.

"In addition, we will send you this invaluable pocket wine guide (worth £4.95), which covers nearly 1000 winemaking estates in every corner of France."

Now I know socialism is also about the quality of life. But really!

It was no surprise when the *Guardian* retaliated a fortnight later with a sly look at the forthcoming *NS/NS* merger by John Cunningham. Like the *NS*, the *Guardian* also featured a photograph of the editor. The battle of the captions was probably a draw ("Grim-faced editor Peter

Preston: 'no sell-out'"/"*New Statesman's* new editor Stuart Weir ... more republican than socialist") - *NS* brutality countered by *Guardian* insinuation.

Overall, the *Guardian* piece was less sympathetic and less subtle: "The *New Statesman* has, in the past decade, gone through more than enough changes to damage its credibility with readers. Who cares any more? ... With their functions usurped, and their talents appearing in other forms of media activity, there isn't much of a role for the leading weeklies, as they used to be called when they mattered."

### Ailing leftie

Ouch! But it was left to the other ailing leftie paper, *Tribune*, to state bluntly that "The *New Statesman* has decided to part company with Labour. It is an extremely sad occasion. The *New Statesman* and *New Society* are to merge, with the Rowntree Trust having a large shareholding and providing money for expansion. The paper's editorial line, we are told, will be 'Lib-Lab'. Effectively, the *New Statesman* has been bought on behalf of the Liberal Party ... The merger represents another step in the quest of the British political Centre to marginalise, suppress and ultimately to destroy the Labour Party ... it will no longer be possible to tell how to judge advice to Labour offered by or through the *New Statesman*. Readers will not know whether it is really directed towards strengthening the Labour Party, or to furthering the interests of the Centre." (*Tribune*, March 4th)

This drew blood. A fortnight later *Tribune* published a short reply from *New Statesman* editor Stuart Weir. It read: "You really are a shit. Your leader (*Tribune*, March 4) is utterly ill-informed, inaccurate and opportunistic. Please don't ask me to rally round to save a newspaper which can behave in so uncomradely and vile a fashion. By all means print this."

### Something in it

So violent is the protest that one begins to wonder whether there isn't something in it. After all, Stuart Weir was sacked as editor of *New Socialist* for advocating tactical voting, and, as the *Guardian* pointed out, he has identified himself as more of a republican than a socialist.

But what vile, uncomradely thoughts! The proof of the pudding will be in the mixing.

My own feeling, as a reader of both *NSs*, is that they're too different for a successful merger. Although *New Society* has some affinities with sections of the left, its chief commitment is to wider social reportage and commentary, with no preferred ideological bias. Its appeal, therefore, is to the wider community of social concern of which socialists form only a part. (In a recent issue, one of its regular columnists, Sean French, wrote enthusiastically about Edmund Burke - hardly a guru for the *New Statesman*, whose writers would be more likely to quote Burke's great adversary, Tom Paine.)

The *New Statesman*, for all its recent leanings towards tactical voting and agreement, if not coalition, with the Democrats, is still a socialist paper. It also has a range of reporting and analy-

sis, including much improved arts coverage, not found in other journals of the left. The merged paper is bound to lose an essential quality of one or other of its parents. It's hard to see how it can keep both the *New Statesman's* political commitment and *New Society's* sociological breadth. I'll miss them both.□

## Answer to a prayer



IN THE LAST ISSUE, I reported the disappointment of William Waldegrave, Housing and Planning Minister, that the Age of Thatcher had found no appropriate "monumental expression". His own suggestion was that Docklands would be a suitable site. His prayers have been answered. On 29th March, the design for Canary Wharf was unveiled (above). With a pyramid-topped 800-foot, 49-storey tower at the centre, it will be the biggest, the tallest, and probably the ugliest, group of buildings in London. What could be more appropriate?□

## Economist with the truth

FOR AN UNDILUTED PICTURE of how the great capitalist world works, it's always worth reading the *Economist*, which has been proselytising the free market since it was founded during another great heyday of liberal economic theory in 1843.

Not that it is always predictable. For example, whatever the present government thinks, liberal economics do not necessarily go with political repression. After the Broadwater Farm riots, the *Economist* published a stinging attack on racism in the Metropolitan Police which, it said, had driven even such a moderate man as Bernie Grant to talk about them getting a "bloody good hiding".

(This view would surprise readers of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, but was endorsed recently by *Private Eye* - no apologist for the hard left - which, in one of its "New Boys" profiles, described Bernie Grant as essentially a "cuddly, gentle, favourite uncle type, whose true character belie-