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# Socialist OUTLOOK

## New Labour - the road to nowhere

AND FINALLY, in the full glare of the camera lights, Tony spoke the oracle and the New Labour manifesto was revealed.

Caricatured by the Tories as the "road to ruin", socialists might see it as more "the road to nowhere". It says nothing about ending poverty, nothing about full-employment, nothing about scrapping Britain's expensive and totally unnecessary nuclear deterrent. No wonder the Conservatives are so desperate to ridicule Blair and New Labour.

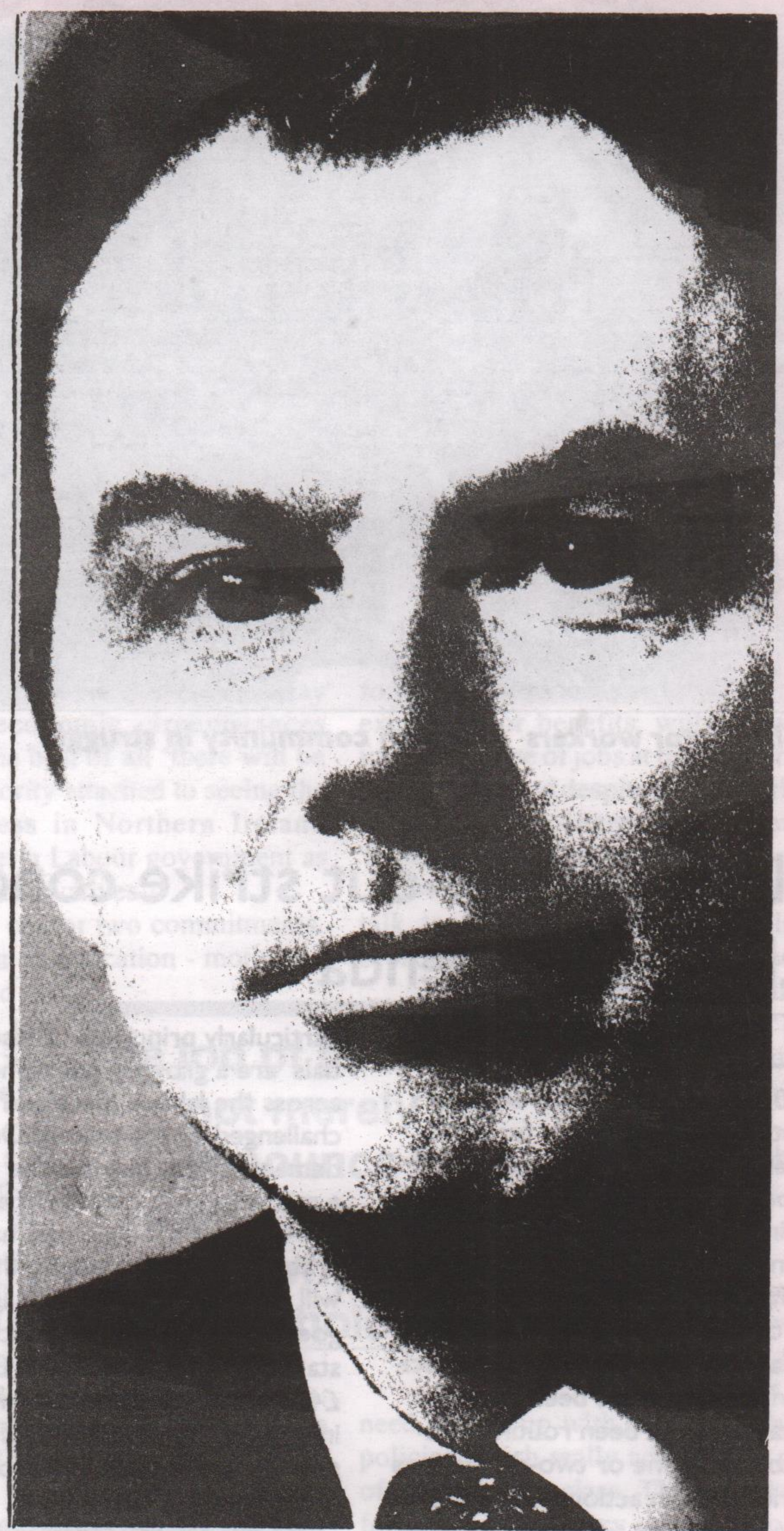
The manifesto makes it crystal clear just how far Labour has gone in hijacking the Tory agenda and on some issues going even further. The huge raft of anti-union legislation will remain in place. Party policy on crime scapegoats young people.

Even where hopes are raised the pledges are mainly about glitz nor substance. NHS red tape will be cut but Trusts will stay. Pensions wont rise but pensioners are promised "better value for money".

There will be a minimum wage but with the bosses playing a big part in the new "independent" Low Pay commission, it will be based on what they say they can afford.

Such PR successes - together with deep hatred of the Tories - may be enough to get Blair elected. But it wont reverse the damage done over the last decade and more.

Real socialists in the Labour Party must continue to fight for real socialist policies.



## Build the Euro-March for jobs

LATE LAST month the Intergovernmental conference took place in Florence and European heads of state came together to try to push forward the implementation of the Maastricht treaty. The fact drive for the convergence criteria is fraught with difficulty and this has meant that attempts to drive down public spending to the level of 3% of GDP have become more and more ferocious.

At the same time, in rather less plush surroundings, 24 delegates representing various trade unions and unemployed groups from most European countries came together to plan a Europe-wide campaign against unemployment and in defence of welfare provision.

Marches from across the continent will converge in Amsterdam in June 1997 to confront the final session of the intergovernmental conference. Over the last year, the discontent against the EC governments has been growing. Belgium was rocked by the

first general strike since the 1930s against austerity cuts and French workers organised mass strikes last winter.

In Germany, government cuts of 22 billion resulted in strikes and the 35,000 workers marched in the biggest demonstration seen in Germany since World War Two. The Euro march is a wonderful opportunity to link up those involved in these actions and to galvanise the working class across Europe.

In the run up to the Florence meeting, an initial appeal had been drawn up signed by prominent trade unionists across Europe. The appeal was endorsed in Florence. Maximum support now needs to be built for it at all levels of the labour and trade union movement. This will involve challenging those in New Labour and in the leaderships of the unions who support monetary union and who try to con working people that this will be in their interests.

British involvement in the campaign has got off to a good start. Glen Vorris attended the meeting on behalf of the Liverpool Dockers and the Welfare State Network and brought a message of support from the Merseyside Association of TUCs.

Linda Tuberville from South Wales represented the National Unemployed Centres combine, Wales Campaign against Unemployment and the European Network of the Unemployed.

Plans are afoot to organise an initial meeting in late summer of all interested organisations in Britain to discuss how to take the campaign forward here. A delegation of French trade unionists will participate in The Defend the Welfare State national march from Hull to Blackpool in October to build the Euro March and the official launch of the british campaign will take place at the final rally at Labour Party Conference.

While the political parameters for the campaign seem pretty clear, organisational details will require a sober assessment of the real resources available. Under the current proposals, the longest march would take 2 months covering approx 1500 km. The various marches would start from Gibraltar, Palermo, Athens, Istanbul, Kiev, Murmansk, Narvik (Norway) and Aberdeen, and would finally converge in Amsterdam on 27 June 1997.

Marching from the furthest reaches of Europe is doubtless a worthy ambition, but it is vital that dealing with logistical difficulties doesn't detract too much energy from the crucial task of spreading the political message as widely as possible.

Participation in the actual marches will remain a minority activity whatever routes they follow. What will be most significant is ensuring that, at every level of the labour movement, support is built for the demands of

the appeal. Financial support for the campaign will be important. Local meetings should be organised around the march and plans laid for the largest possible delegations for the final events in Amsterdam.

The next Euro organising meeting is planned for 21/22 September in Paris and a conference in Brussels of over 500 militants is scheduled for January 1997.

Socialist Outlook supporters and comrades from our sister organisations in the Fourth International across Europe will be playing a leading role in the development of the Euro march and building workers unity to fight the European bosses' draconian attitudes.

This initiative has the potential to become the first genuine European wide campaign of the workers movement. The whole of the left and the labour movement should take up the challenge to build it!



Public sector workers link with community in struggle

## BALPA puts all-out strike concept back on the agenda

Alan Thornett

3,200 BA pilots and flight engineers have voted overwhelmingly for an all-out indefinite strike in defence of their conditions of work, for improved pay and against differential pay rates. This has an important significance for the trade union movement in Britain.

The concept of an all-out indefinite strike has been almost lost. Strike decisions, where they have been asked for and obtained, have been routinely reduced to token one or two-day actions or a series of such actions. Union leaders have insisted on telling the employers when workers will be back at work as well as when they are going out. Strike action has been reduced to a level the employers can cope with, or at least a level which poses no serious threat. This is currently the case in the PO and on LUL. This ballot by BALPA breaks this mould.

Of course BALPA have yet to carry out their decision, but their willingness to ballot and to threaten serious action should be noted by trade union activists across the unions.

The challenge to differential pay rates for the same jobs within BA is

particularly principled. These differentials are a growing phenomenon across the labour force and are rarely challenged by the unions. One major demand of this ballot is the defence of a minority of the workforce.

Although BA air crews have considerable industrial strength, the strike will be fought hard by management if it goes ahead. The strike which is due to start on 16 July could cost BA over £40 million a day and throw air traffic into chaos. This would be the first strike of British air crews for eighteen years.

BA are already threatening to bring air crews from abroad, hire them from other air lines or recruit alternative crews. They are reputedly searching their job application database for available pilots.

Management will attempt to operate as many services as possible this way if the strike goes ahead. If the strike goes ahead and scabbing takes place to any significant degree, it could be a bitterly fought battle. Whatever happens from here, however, BALPA will have done the trade union movement in Britain a service if it puts all-out strike action back on the agenda.

# Building a fighting union left

THE SOCIALIST TEACHERS Alliance's trade union left federation initiative continues to move forward.

The three meetings held so far have been attended by representatives of left formations including the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON, Socialist Teachers' Alliance (NUT), Communications Broad Left (CWU), PTC Broad Left, MSF Campaign for a Democratic Union (CDU), MSF Unity Left, RMT CFDU, NUJ Left, NATFHE Rank and File, Equity Left Alliance, CPSA Left Unity and active members of the TGWU.

This constitutes the big majority of known left trade union formations, although of course they represent varying degrees of influence and organised membership.

The most recent meeting agreed to organise a fringe meeting at the TUC, and a national conference to be held in London on 1st February 1997. It is hoped that the conference will be able to draw activists from different unions together to discuss their experiences and agree to a policy statement and plan of co-ordinated action.

This could begin to challenge the rapid rightward shift of most trade union leaderships at the level of the trade union movement as a whole. Left trade union leaders such as Bickerstaffe have totally failed to mount any serious opposition to that rightward drift.

Individual trade union formations, however militant and well organised, cannot defeat the TUC/Blair agenda alone.

How often have we heard our leaders argue against, for example, getting rid of the Tory anti-union laws on the basis that it would put our union out on a limb without the TUC? The need for co-ordination at the simple

level of TUC resolutions is cryingly obvious.

How many disputes have gone down to defeat in recent years because of our trade union leaderships refusal to generalise them for fear of the anti-union laws?

A Left which functioned as a co-ordinated solidarity network, which goes beyond asking us to dip into our pockets at union conferences could give greater confidence to those in struggle to demand more of our movement in terms of solidarity action.

A coordinated Left would also increase the attraction of its individual component Lefts to activists within each union because it could provide a coherent and practical perspective for responding to employer and government attacks which they cannot provide alone.

Previous attempts to coordinate across the unions have all failed in much more favourable circumstances than the present - The Liaison Committee for Trades Unions (LCDTU), the All Trades Union Alliance, the Rank and File Coordinating Committee and the Broad Lefts Organising Committee in the 1980s.

The central problem was the domination of such formations by one political grouping or other and the tendency of these currents to treat them as their private fiefdoms.

This alienated many ordinary non-aligned activists who, whether they agreed with the positions and actions of these bodies or not, had no control or say over them.

Their leaderships tended to turn them on and off according to the policies and alliances of the dominant group.

The Communist Party effectively destroyed the LCDTU through refusing to mobilise against the Labour Government's Social Contract because it was supported by their allies in the left bureaucracy, led by Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon.

The new federation, while starting from a qualitatively weaker position, has the potential to break with the mistakes of the past by being directly under the control of its component lefts who come from various political currents.

Certainly the tone and conduct of the meetings so far have been friendly and constructive and there is general agreement to proceed by consensus wherever possible.

The depth of the problems facing trades unions cannot be underestimated.

While there is something of a revival in strikes at present, such as in Royal Mail, London Underground and the threatened action by British Airways pilots, levels of action are still at an historical low.

Employers continue to downsize, outsource, lay off, break national bargaining, withdraw union recognition etc. And we can expect no relief under a Blair government.

We need a new Minority Movement, like the 1920s, within the existing trades unions, to renew them from bottom to top, independent politically and organisationally of the official apparatus, while avoiding the mistakes of that movement.

The new federation could just be the small beginnings of such a movement. Future issues of Socialist Outlook will discuss the minimum necessary policies and steps which can develop this initiative while maintaining the maximum potential left unity.

## London Underground - train crews hit back

By a London Underground Train Operator

THE TRIAL OF strength between workers and London Underground continues. While London Underground attempts to impose restructuring and productivity, the workers, especially train operators, are fighting for shorter hours and increased holidays.

Last year, ASLEF pulled out of a fight for shorter hours and claimed they had a deal with management to cut an hour off the working week. Many train operators switched to the RMT who continued the fight.

ASLEF have for several years attempted to collaborate with London Underground and arranged several such private deals. In return they have received favourable treatment from management for union activities and, to some extent, for their membership.

However, last year's deal fell through and the ASLEF leadership have been forced to fight to retain their members. Last month they called an

early ballot even before London Underground's final offer, and surprised everyone by calling strike action.

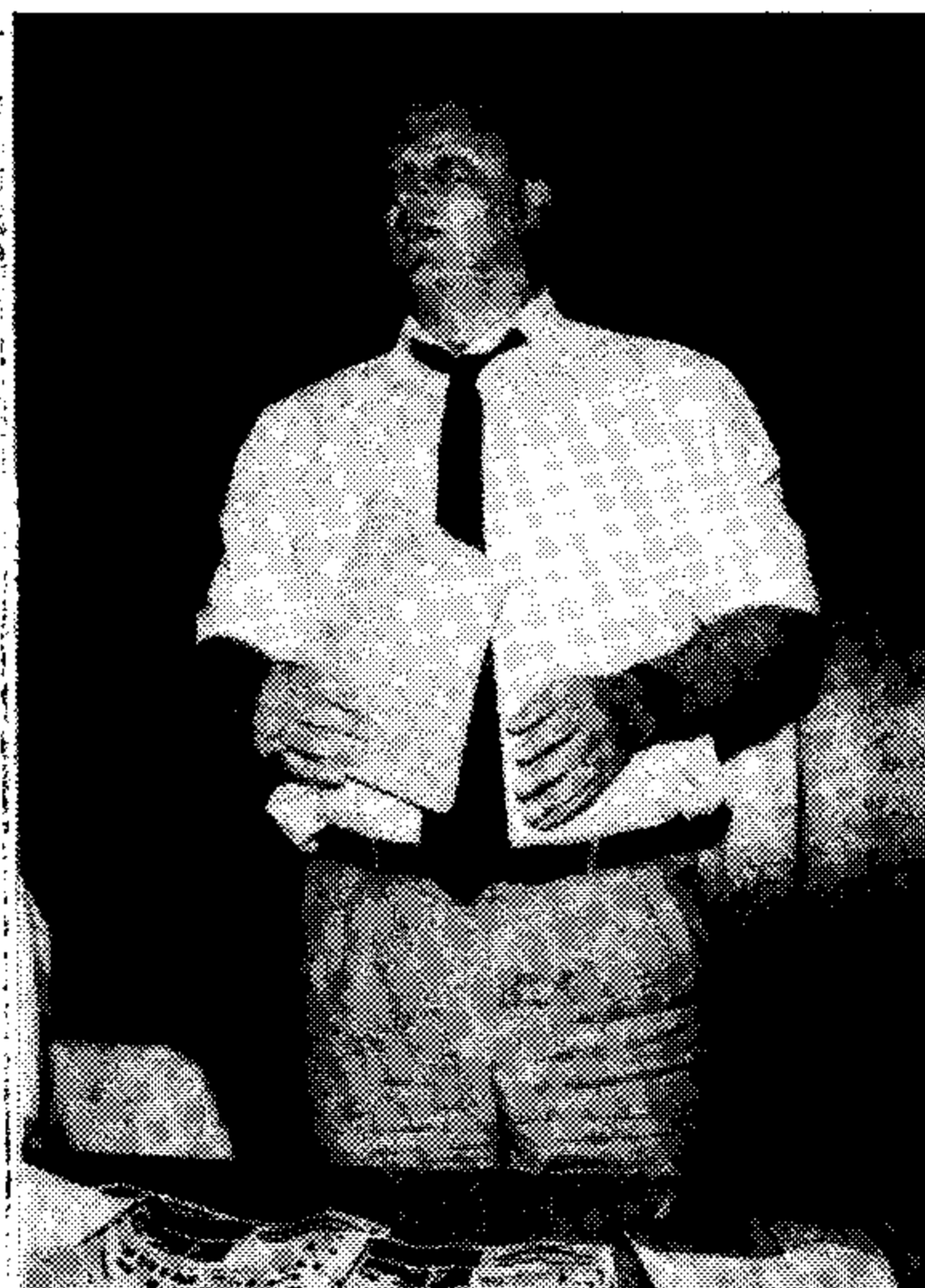
RMT activists are divided. The RMT ballot of train crew members is still not over, so once again, some train

operators are on strike while others work. Some of us are refusing to cross ASLEF picket lines. Others are afraid of dismissal if they strike without legal protection, or else take a sectarian view of the ASLEF strike.

Management have not carried out as much intimidation of ASLEF strikers, in contrast to their behaviour during last year's RMT strikes. Furthermore, ASLEF's demands are weaker and more acceptable to management than the RMT's.

All of us should organise to unite in strike action and insist on a veto of any deals with London Underground.

At present, management and the ASLEF bureaucracy have a few days left to do a deal. If this doesn't come off, both unions will be on strike together, the workforce will be united and the tempo will heat up. With the privatisation of British Rail, LUL is the largest railway company and a successful struggle would give an important lead to other railway workers.



## Close down Harmondsworth Campaign

# PICKET

Saturday July 27 12-2pm

The picket will take place outside the detention centre on the Coldbrook by-pass (A4). Transport: bus 81 from Hounslow west tube, or bus U3 from Heathrow Airport bus stop.

# Blair's road to where?

ITS BEEN A busy week for Blair. First the announcement of the ditching of policy on Scotland and Wales, then the attacks on trouble-makers followed by the big one - the much-hyped launch of the manifesto.

Time and again, Labour leaders have ditched policy with scant regard for party democracy. They have even shown little regard front-benchers who are expected to sell the new line. What is breathtaking is the speed and audacity with which the present changes are taking place.

Blair's 'modern', 'new' Labour is to be totally in tune with the requirements of modern British capitalism - an equal partner in the European imperialist block, in which the workforce is disciplined through a combination of social partnership or 'stakeholding' and a denial of basic trade union rights and destruction of the welfare state.

To achieve this Blair needs to overcome the resistance of sections of both the capitalists and the working class. The tensions in the Tory party over Europe reflect divisions between those who see their interests in the European Union and those who hark back to the glory days of empire.

Big capital is increasingly coming to see the Tories as an albatross round its neck. Desiring a real say in the shaping of Europe, they are increasingly looking to Blair - not only for his pro-European fervour, but also for his ability to restrain the working class.

To sell his project to the Labour Party, and the wider working class, Blair has one major weapon in his arsenal - the ability to win the general election. As long as that looks probable most Labour Party members - willingly or reluctantly - are prepared to go along with his jettisoning of policy. Union leaders will swallow things that are even unpalatable to them and do everything in their power to get their members to do the same. Vague promises that once Labour is in government they will exert more influence is enough to have them cheering Blair.

They too hanker after the Social Chapter which proposes that the unions should have a say in the running of companies. They seem not to have noticed the fact that in Germany, the home of such schemes, they are coming apart at the seams under the pressure of the recession.

Blair knows that the hard work will

## Those who vote Labour will expect Blair to reverse the damage done by the Tories. That is why he is trying to 'get his betrayal in first'

come after he's been elected. Whatever he says, he knows that those who vote Labour will expect him to reverse the damage done by the Tories. That is why he is trying to 'get his betrayal in first', making it as clear as possible that he has no intention of doing any such thing, and attempting to defuse and undermine support for any opposition in advance. The great Clause Four debate was not so much about the content of Labour's



Postal workers are not ready to go along with their leadership's line of waiting for a Labour government

constitution as Blair's ability to dictate to the Party. The much-vaunted great exercise in democracy is in fact it is in fact a travesty of democracy. In reality it has everything to do with marginalising opposition and attempting to commit Labour supporters to a recognition that they cannot expect to go beyond the manifesto promises.

Announcing the change in policy for Scotland and Wales a week before was intended as a diversion. It allowed objectors to let off steam well in advance of the launch of the manifesto, to avoid detracting from the great PR exercise. The fact that some had protested loudly at this sell-out was then used by Blair to float the idea of a centrally controlled register of 'acceptable' parliamentary candidates which would leave the awkward squad out in the cold. A sanitised Party for a sanitised manifesto.

The manifesto contains no great surprises. Most of the policy proposals have been public for some time - what is new is the synthesis.

It wants to 'restore a central role for Britain in Europe', 'keep key elements of trade union laws of the 1980s on ballots, picketing and industrial action',

introduce a curfew on young people, and turn the House of Lords into the biggest quango going by making membership by appointment only.

Then there are the 'promises' which aren't - 'create a publicly owned railway system as economic circumstances allow' and the best of all 'there will be as great a priority attached to seeing the peace process in Northern Ireland through under a Labour government as under the Conservatives'!

There are one or two commitments. Most of them on education - motivated by the need to improve the training and education of a workforce if British capitalism is to be competitive. The minimum wage is there, 'with the level decided according to economic circumstances and with the advice of an 'independent' Low Pay commission', i.e. with the bosses having a big say. None of these conflict with the needs of modern capitalism - which is why Blair is happy to spout them.

Then of course, there are the missing commitments which we never expected to see. No commitment to full employment, only to the long-term unemployed. Young people will be forced to do education or training in exchange for benefits, without even a vague promise of jobs at the end. Trident will be kept, and despite a lot of verbiage about poverty increasing under the Tories no measures to abolish it.

Over 100,000 people rang hoping to talk to Blair after his party political broadcast. A small indication of the gap

between socialists who reject 'New Labour' and the millions who will vote for it.

The job of socialists is not merely to denounce the manifesto, but to explain why we reject Blair's whole project.

We need to link up with those fighting for policies which really address the needs of the working class. The best way to force Labour to carry out such policies is by beginning the fight for them now under the Tories.

## The job of socialists is not merely to denounce the manifesto, but to explain why we reject Blair's whole project

## Reject Employee Agenda Mark 2

Jon Green

The postal dispute is reaching a critical point as *Socialist Outlook* goes to press. After two successful one-day strikes by the CWU, Alan Johnson, the general secretary of the union, has regained the initiative from branch activists.

The Executive called a truce with Royal Mail in order to explore the various issues in dispute. This period of truce has now been extended over the weekend in an effort to reach a negotiated settlement. This is despite the fact that there has been no movement on two of the central issues in the dispute, teamworking and protection of deliveries.

Clearly there is pressure on the union bureaucracy and Royal Mail management to achieve a negotiated settlement. The intervention of Michael Heseltine after the first one-day strike with a proposal to end Royal Mail's letter monopoly has pressed the panic button for those in charge.

But the settlement proposed falls well short of the aspirations of the CWU membership.

Alan Johnson will present a formula to the strike committee this week that he hopes will suspend the industrial action for a month.

The presentation will outline:

\* A 'new office environment' for sorting offices

\* Substantial improvements in the pay restructuring package

\* A new agreement on revisions of delivery duties that will provide safeguards for jobs

Assurances will be given that the union will not accept teamworking, however Royal Mail have shown tremendous skill in the past at repackaging the same old rubbish in a new form. The words will be extremely vague ('a new office environment') but the message is clear, a watered down version of the same issues.

It is not clear whether this will be enough for the strike committee. Alan

Johnson can not rely on it to endorse his manoeuvring and may prefer to press for a new ballot on the basis of a 'new' agreement.

To allow the dispute to be settled now would represent a real missed opportunity for the CWU in finally finishing off teamworking within the Royal Mail and protecting jobs within delivery.

Johnson wants to do nothing more than use industrial action as a threat. The Executive Committee has already shown that it can reject his tactics but in the absence of any independent organisation of left activists it has often been difficult for the rank and file to apply pressure.

The March conference of CWU branches organised by the London Divisional Committee, which was crucial in initiating the action in the first place should be reconvened as soon as possible to organise opposition. The latest offer must be rejected and the dispute escalated.

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## Prepare for the coming battles

THIS ROUND of trade union conferences will be the last before the General Election and the almost certain election of a Labour government. This fact was not lost on the major players at the conferences we look at below. The left pushed on key issues such as the anti-union laws and the minimum wage and top tables tried to avoid any firm commitments.

On some occasions the leaderships seemed to judge it better to dodge

fighters than to lose them. Different tactics were adopted on the minimum wage at different conferences - not because there are principled differences but because of differences in the balance of forces..

It was not only in terms of policy for the Labour government that the bureaucracy feared its hands being tied but on questions of industrial strategy in the here and now. The left's ability to test them in this regard was patchy - the mould has

not yet been broken. By and large this round of conferences saw small steps forward for the left - marking a clearly different relationship of forces than that currently at play in the labour party.

Some lefts are involved in campaigning - others are concerned mainly with electoral battles within the unions - not a sufficient basis to motivate members at the base to get involved. But even the strongest can't take on Blair or the TUC

leadership alone which is why the Broad Lefts federation conference in February 1997 is so important. But every nerve must be strained over the next months to prepare for the battles ahead. That is why arguing for action now and solidarity with disputes that do occur is key.

That is why every step must be taken to build strong, campaigning lefts in each union. That is why the Broad Lefts Federation conference is key!

## Unison Conference demands change from Labour

Fred Leplat  
London region delegate (in a personal capacity)

THE CONFERENCE OF Unison, Britain's biggest union with 1.5 million members, was dominated by the forthcoming general election and how the union should relate to a Labour government.

The two different approaches to a Labour government were expressed in the first major debate of the conference which was on the minimum wage.

General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe stated in moving the resolution that £4.26 an hour was a decent level and that the union would fight for it. However he opposed an amendment instructing the NEC to submit a resolution on the minimum wage to the TUC and called on delegates to "trust me, don't tie my hands".

Delegates voted by approx 620,000 to 480,000 to tie down Bickerstaffe and the NEC.

Other amendments calling for industrial action to force a Labour government to meet Unison's demand for a

minimum wage were overwhelmingly defeated.

A lobby of the TUC on Monday 9 September on the minimum wage is being called by the left and should be built for widely.

This was the pattern for the rest of conference. Policies to restore public services and the welfare state were adopted, but any specific proposals for action to achieve these demands were rejected.

Although the platform expressed clear differences with Blair's New Labour, it decisively appealed to delegates to reject calls for action which may embarrass Labour before or after the election.

The government's attacks on Asylum and immigration rights were the other main debate of the week.

Lola Onibayo, whose father and brother have been deported, spoke. Her father has disappeared since being sent to Nigeria. Now her mother and younger sisters face a similar threat.

Delegates rejected a motion calling for non-compliance with the new Asylum and Immigration Bill/Law by



Unison members demonstrate in defence of conditions at work

567,000 to 493,000. However, the NEC-backed motion which was eventually adopted did commit the union to continue campaigning against the bill and to consult with branches on "the practicalities of implementing a policy of non cooperation".

Disputes in branches around Asylum and Immigration are likely to erupt in the near future as employers ask staff to cooperate by carrying out checks on the status of their staff or "service users". Already Lambeth Council have instructed staff to co-operate or be sent home.

Unison branches should campaign locally with refugee organisations and support members who refuse to act as immigration officers.

The main opposition to the NEC and General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe came from the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Unison, which initiated a number of resolutions:

- \* For action around the Asylum and Immigration Bill
  - \* For opposition to the anti-union laws
  - \* For solidarity with the Liverpool dockers
  - \* For greater democracy in Unison through the election of regional secretaries
  - \* Against the witchhunt of activists in Liverpool Unison
- CFDU also organised fringe meetings with the dockers and against the Asylum and Immigration Bill.

A new left caucus was set up called Unison Labour Left. Many of its supporters backed Bickerstaffe in last year's election for General Secretary, and now pose this as the vehicle for organising supporters of the Socialist Campaign Group inside Unison.

The creation of yet another left formation inside the union is misguided when there are no differences on principles.

Co-operation on the left to commit the union to action in defence of its members such as at Hillingdon Hospital or to win the minimum wage will hopefully lead to a united left with those who want Unison to be a fighting union.

## Launch a fight on the rail

Greg Tucker

AT A LOW key Annual Meeting, the rail workers union, RMT, has made modest steps forward in elaborating a strategy to defend its members from the ravages of Tory transport policy. A right-wing backlash, expressed in a series of resolutions attacking policy put forward by the national executive, failed to materialise in a any significant vote. Instead key debates at the AGM were within the left, focused on how best to fight rail privatisation.

While reconfirming the resolve of the union to work towards a Labour victory, delegates agreed to fight inside the Party for a rapid renationalisation of the rail industry.

Waiting until "economic circumstances allow" would not suffice. At the same time it was resolved to do everything necessary up to and including

industrial action to secure a nationalised railway, regardless of the party in government.

Turning that policy into practice will, of course, be another matter. It was always union policy to organise industrial action in the first place - but that didn't happen and today we reap the "benefits".

Instead of a generalised campaign of action, the RMT has ended up being dragged into a series of small scale disputes around the country as different sets of workers come up against offensives by their new private employers.

Some of those disputes have been successful, but too often ballots have been lost as workers have doubted their ability to succeed in isolation.

This was highlighted in the case of First Engineering, the new company in Scotland responsible for track maintenance. Having decided to

withdraw existing messing facilities, they then sacked one of the union's reps, Joe Morrison, for trying to organise a campaign to defend existing conditions. The AGM pledged full support for Joe's campaign for reinstatement.

But a subsequent ballot has failed to produce a majority for action. A new

### Rank and file members need to be given the power to fight in their own areas

ballot is now to be held on a more restrictive mandate.

Facing up to the reality of the division of the railway into literally hundreds of new companies, the AGM took practical decisions, both to reorganise the internal structure of the union and to accept the devolution of some powers to representatives at the new companies' level.

While some on the left wanted to try and hold on to outmoded centralised structures, this is a positive move forward, but only if it goes hand in hand with a more forthright political campaign to build unity between the workers in different companies.

Rank and file members need to be given the power to fight in their own areas and we need to coordinate demands and timing of disputes at a national level.

A clear example of this is to be seen in the current train crew dispute, which this week saw the national executive sanctioning ballots for strike action to be held in thirteen train operating companies.

Over the last year, a propaganda campaign has been waged to popularise our two demands - for proper meal breaks and for an 11 percent pay claim to cover past productivity. It is clear that our demands are broadly supported by train

crews, but because of the division into several companies, over twenty different claims have had to be progressed.

A mass meeting of train crew representatives has forced the national executive to call ballots to go out from 17 July, but many companies will still not be affected and RMT drivers are yet to be involved.

A positive vote in the ballots is vital, with a rapid call to action needed to tie in action with the existing LUL dispute.

But the key to success lies in ensuring that those companies not yet involved are rapidly brought into the dispute and that the drivers are balloted.

While this is clearly the intention of the national executive, the level of coordination and planning necessary to achieve this is not yet apparent.

Transforming the structures of the union and creating the political climate where this becomes possible must be a clear priority for the left leaders of the union.

# Stepping up the fight in MSF

Jennie Twydell/Glenn Sutherland,  
St Pancras Branch.

THE CONFERENCE of the Manufacturing, Science & Finance Union (MSF), held in Llandudno from 15-18 June, took place against a financial crisis, the effects of which have been ravaging the union for the last year.

The leadership of the union, Roger Lyons and his hit-man — Assistant General Secretary John Chowcat, have managed to sack a quarter of the unions' workforce — over 100 full-time officials and administrative staff, as well as off-loading a number of important MSF office premises.

Together with a massive hike in subscriptions this improved the balance sheet for the first quarter of 1996 but the net loss of members still continues, making it certain that the financial position will deteriorate again under this leadership.

At the conference, the NEC managed to get approval for its so-called 'Strategic Plan' which centralises power in Head Office at the expense of Branches and Regions. The leadership will be able to introduce sweeping changes with even less reference to the lay members than before.

A motion severely criticising the leadership's handling of the financial crisis was amended to mean its exact opposite by a majority of only two votes. This debate provided outgoing President, Dave Minahan, a solid Lyons supporter, with the opportunity, rarely used at MSF Conferences, to rule out of order an amendment calling for the resignation of Lyons and Chowcat — after conference had voted it on to the agenda.

This manoeuvre, requiring a two-thirds majority to overturn, was later used to kill off an emergency motion calling for the reinstatement of left

official, Dave Peters, sacked on trumped-up charges of ballot-rigging.

The conference was pretty evenly divided between right and left, with a number of important votes being very close. This meant that no clear direction came from conference and partly reflected the paralysis at the top.

A number of good left policy motions were carried, some against the advice of the NEC — including ones on pensions, against NHS trusts and generally on the welfare state. For the third year in a row the report of the MSF delegation to Labour Party Conference was referred back, this time on the abstention of the delegation on the issue of the de-selection of Liz Davies.

A motion on Ireland from Belfast Central Branch was passed calling for all-party talks without pre-conditions and the release of all political prisoners.

An Irish branch moving such a motion is unprecedented in the history of the union. The motion's success was perhaps even more remarkable given the debate took place the day after the Manchester bombing.

Conference voted to support a national minimum wage of half male median earnings (currently £4.26 per hour), although Lyons announced that he saw this as a figure with which MSF would go into negotiations with Tony Blair.

Three motions on union legislation included policy to scrap all the anti-union laws, legalise solidarity action and to allow unions to write their own rule books. Unfortunately none of this policy is included in the MSF motion to the 1996



Roger Lyons has managed to sack a quarter of the union's workforce

In terms of the organised left this conference represented a small step forward. The newly named Campaign for a Democratic Union organised two very successful fringe meetings at which the level of support for left organisation in general and the CDU in particular was shown to have increased.

Steps were taken to improve collaboration with Unity Left, which tends to operate mainly as an electoral machine. Hopefully these will be built on in the months to come.

Some of the stranger antics by the platform as well as the apparently 'left' face Lyons has presented to the media since conference can be explained by the fact that the election for General Secretary will be held early next year.

The left has already selected its candidate — Joe Bowers — a full-time official from the Irish Region. He represents, among others, Shorts Belfast Branch.

The branch organised a fringe meeting, inviting both Bowers and Roger Lyons to give their views on the future of the union. Lyons declined the invitation, cancelled the room booking and instructed Bowers to keep his

contribution to the policies in the Strategic Plan.

In the event London Region came forward with a replacement venue and with Joe Bowers giving a brilliant and hard-hitting speech, this packed fringe meeting developed into one of the highlights of the conference. The forthcoming election campaign will be the key test as to whether the stalemate of this conference can be broken by the left.

To contact the Campaign for a Democratic Union write to:  
MSF CDU  
c/o Leonora Lloyd  
27a Myrtle Road  
London, W3 6DY.

## A motion on Ireland from Belfast Central Branch was passed calling for all-party talks without pre-conditions and the release of all political prisoners.

Labour Party Conference, which describes union legislation in terms that the most ardent 'stakeholder' would find acceptable.

# Resistance grows on post

Pete Cooper

The announcement of the successful Royal Mail industrial action ballot result at the beginning of Conference dominated the mood for the rest of the week though the postal committee took no decisions about action until after the end of conference. Nevertheless the Broad Left organised a successful fringe meeting on the issues and a postal branch organised another well attended meeting on teamworking.

Despite Alan Johnson's clear ambition to be Tony Blair's right hand man in the union, he is not getting things all his own way, either in the current postal dispute or on policy issues at annual conference. The conference represented a small step forward, although the lack of left organisation on the postal side remains a major problem which remains to be overcome.

Conference reaffirmed last year's policy of calling on a Labour government to repeal all Tory anti-union laws which had been ignored by the union leadership at 1995 TUC and Labour Party Conferences. Subsequently the left won a bitter battle on the Executive that the motion on anti-union laws go forward to this year's Labour Party conference. The leadership are profoundly unhappy about this and are ma-

noeuving to overturn the decision. They will continue such tactics up to Labour Party Conference - but may have to rely on agreeing a soft compromise rather than actually dumping it.

Conference also agreed a minimum wage of half male median earnings but also passed an NEC motion supporting the Labour leadership's position.

## Asylum and Immigration Bill

Lee Jasper, Harry Cohen MP and Lola Onibiyo addressed a well attended fringe meeting in support of the Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill. The NEC accepted a motion opposing the Bill and calling on a Labour government to repeal it and conference voted to affiliate to CAIAB.

## Liverpool Dockers

Conference gave a standing ovation to a speaker from the Liverpool dockers and voted to donate £35,000 to them, against platform opposition.

## Ireland

Conference carried a vaguely worded motion calling for "inclusive dialogue and negotiations" and for "a just and lasting peace...underpinned by a Bill of Rights". Nevertheless, this is the first time any motion on Ireland has been discussed

## Telecom

The separate telecom conference discussed BT's move to downsize, to outsource to lower-paid contractors and to increase productivity from its remaining core workforce.

BT has reduced its workforce by over 100,000 since 1990 to its present level of about 130,000 by voluntary redundancy, with unfortunately no union resistance. There is no sign of any attempt to slow the pace, although target reductions were not met last year.

There has been increased use of poor performance and attendance and of disciplinary procedures to get rid of people who don't shape up or whose faces don't fit.

A motion was carried condemning the use of performance review markings which make black people more vulnerable to being disciplined/sacked for poor performance.

Conference reaffirmed its opposition to performance related pay. But BT has now put in place enabling mechanisms for its introduction. Motions were carried calling for withdrawal from agreements on performance measurement and opposition to secret monitoring. These put staff under constant pressure to meet quantity and quality targets.

Conference opposed BT's programme of closing large numbers of buildings and relocating staff, particu-

larly out of Central London to the M25 ring. This enables it to save on London Weighting payments and to force redundancy on staff unwilling to travel large distances to work.

## BT Pay

Telecom conference also voted to support the £18 per week pay claim, to oppose BT's intention to force all staff on to monthly pay and to oppose differential pay within the same grade. Since conference the Telecom Executive has recommended a pay deal for

acceptance, including a 3.8 per cent increase, differential pay within the same grade and acceptance of compulsory monthly pay.

Although the Telecom Exec is right wing dominated the decision was supported by two Broad left supporters at a poorly attended meeting. However there has been a vigorous campaign for a no vote led by left branches and supported by the broad left. A successful campaign on pay would be a major boost for the BT membership and additionally increase the likelihood of action on other issues.

## A programme for the Irish Revolution

Two years in the writing, and recently adopted at the founding conference of the new organisation Socialist Democracy, this programme is the most extensive Trotskyist analysis of Ireland since the 1940s.

We are offering a special pre-publication price of just £4.50.  
Send Postal Order, or cheque payable to SOCIALISTOUTLOOKFUND, to:  
PO Box 1109, London N4 2UW

# Irish talks shore up partition

Following the start of the so-called peace process and the bombs in Manchester and Osnabruch, Brian Gardener spoke to Paul Flanagan, a supporter of *Socialist Democracy*, the sister organisation of *Socialist Outlook* in Ireland.

**SO: Does the most recent spate of IRA bombings signal a break with the peace strategy?**

PF: The bombings do not indicate that the republican movement has abandoned the peace strategy. The reasoning behind the Manchester bombing is to try and get Sinn Fein into the talks process on terms acceptable to the IRA, ie. inclusive talks without a surrender of weapons.

There are stresses and strains within the republican movement but as yet, no obvious split between the political arm and the military arm. A genuine break from the peace strategy would come in a much more dramatic and violent way, possibly with internal feuding.

**SO: How should socialists react to these latest bombings?**

PF: We believe the tactic of armed struggle is

counter-productive, though we uphold the basic revolutionary right of parties representing the oppressed to choose their own means of struggle.

We must point out to the republicans the utter futility of their bombs. But we do not join the pro-imperialist media-led campaigns that insist that only the IRA give up their right to use armed means. As revolutionaries we reject the

suggestion that only the capitalist controlled state has a right to a monopoly on the use of force.

**SO: Should socialists back Sinn Fein's demand to be included in all-party talks?**

PF: Sinn Fein has as much right as any of the other parties to be included in the talks process. The party gained 15 per cent of the vote and this represents almost 42 per cent of the nationalist vote.

We should join with Sinn Fein in exposing the crass hypocrisy of the 'acceptable' parties which all claim to be non-violent. If the guiding principle for admittance to these talks was a record of non-violence then there would be barely anyone left at the table.

Having acknowledged Sinn Fein's right to inclusion, we must argue strongly against Sinn Fein taking up that right. The talks process can have only one political outcome - the stabilising of a partitioned Ireland. That is what both Westminster and Dublin want.

At this political juncture Sinn Fein does not have enough weight to tilt the talks process in a 'progressive' direction. The republicans would be compelled to accept an anti-republican agreement by

the other parties to the talks. This could only result in a tragic setback for the oppressed.

**SO: What is the likely trajectory of the talks process with or without Sinn Fein?**

In the short term nothing is likely to develop out of the process. The Tory government doesn't want to make any strategic decisions on Ireland in the run-up to an election.

However a 'frame-work' for agreement between the British and Irish

states is already in circulation - The 'Frameworks for Agreement', 1995.

The unionist parties have already denounced that agreement so it will have to be diluted to meet most of their objections. What will then be on offer will be portrayed as the 'only solution' on offer to Irish nationalists. They will be told to take it or risk going back to the 'troubles'.

It will be based on a stabilized partition; the Irish government will amend its sovereign claim over the whole of Ireland and a local assembly will be given low status powers to begin with. The hope is that the main unionist party will agree to work with the SDLP.

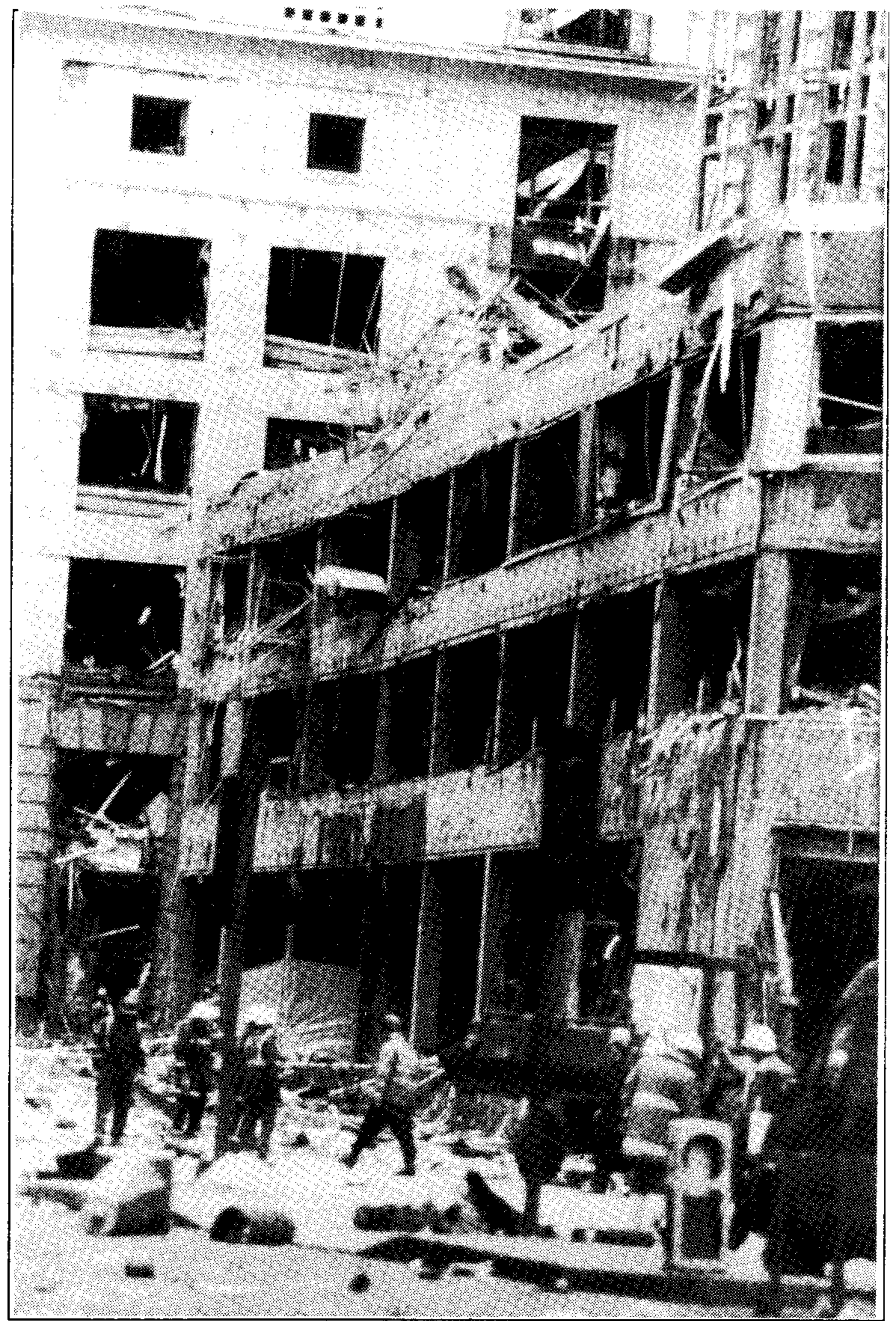
Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party will be kept out of the new arrangement until they moderate their opposition to this new improved Stormont.

The imperialist dream is of a peaceful conjuncture in which unionists may even to agree to operate some small-scale cross-border institutions.

The biggest obstacle to this schema is of course the reactionary essence of unionist politics. Unionist public opinion, as evidenced by the recent elections, is hardening to the right. The unionists may refuse to have talks with the Dublin government and may refuse the SDLP a junior role within the executive level of local state power. The unionists can destroy the process, something which Sinn Fein cannot pull off.

**SO: On what principled grounds should socialists oppose the prospective solution now being prepared by the two governments?**

PF: Self-determination for all of the Irish people is the only framework that



The day after an IRA bomb

would produce a democratic settlement. We object to the suggestion that it is up to the British state to decide the framework for Irish talks. The present talks have started out from a position of accepting partition and a guaranteed unionist veto over change.

The imperialist inspired agreement being considered is merely an 'improved' version of the old sectarian system. It is not even a 'reformed' union that is on offer. It cannot even guarantee

a short-run period of peace, never mind a lasting peace. The settlement on offer is nothing but a dressed-up imperialist offensive.

**SO: How does the revolutionary left in Britain and Ireland respond to the 'peace process'?**

PF: Militant Labour has accelerated in its opportunist trajectory during the 'peace process'. They support the principle of consent championed by the imperialists - the sectarian Unionist veto dressed up in democratic garb. Militant stood in the recent Assembly

elections on the principle of consent. They hoped that their two 'labour' candidates might be elected to an assembly with a massive unionist majority.

Even though they acknowledged socialist representatives would be helpless in such an assembly, they still demanded 'real powers be devolved to the Assembly, something even the ultra-loyalists don't demand.

Militant reacted furiously to the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire. They have been organising a strident political campaign against the threat of more IRA violence - 'No Going Back'.

The SWP began by saying they would stand by the slogan 'for the peace but against the process' yet when the IRA ceasefire ended, they broke from being opposed to the talks process and pleaded for Sinn Fein to be allowed into the talks.

They refused to warn Sinn Fein about the reactionary trajectory of the talks because they were afraid of being seen to be against peace.

It is tragic that the largest currents on the British left have been exposed during the peace process as singularly unable to stand the test of Ireland - the acid test for British revolutionaries.

**Self-determination for the Irish people is the only framework that would produce a democratic settlement.**

**Unionist public opinion is hardening to the right, as evidenced by the election**

## Partisan video service launched

Terry Conway

VIDEO NEWS is a new resource for the labour movement by Pat Edlin and Pat Byrne which is both politically valuable and technically competent.

The weakest section of the first issue is the first main piece, which looks at Labour's move to the right since the death of John Smith and the launch of the SLP.

The problem is not primarily political - though it is rather soft on the late John Smith who is painted as a bit of an angel - as if everything was fine in the Labour Party before the demon Blair. Rather what is much more unsatisfactory is that the authors don't express any opinion of their own as to whether the left should stay in the Labour Party or leave to join the SLP.

Rather they pose only a weak comment that history will decide. Dramatically this is totally flat and undermines the whole section.

This is followed by a more powerful critique of the right wing policies being followed by Housing Associations - which the Tories have pushed as the alternative to council housing. Focusing on Circle 33, it shows how a swathe of Labour MPs who are friends of Mr Blair's have combined vicious attacks on workers jobs and conditions with attacks on tenants rights. The sheer hypocrisy of people who claim to be in favour of 'stakeholding' - so long as it is by yes men

and yes women is graphically demonstrated by the dismantling of the democratically elected tenants representatives committees at Circle and the handpicking by Hodge and her

cronies of their puppets to replace them. The views of the film makers are certainly clear on this occasion.

The review of 'Land and Freedom' is not just another opportunity to watch that glorious footage but a discussion with Loach about how he sees the focus of the film and how it has been received in Spain.

The film has proved extremely popular among Spanish youth who have been deprived of this aspect of the history of their country. 'Video News' takes up the debate with those

who have been critical of 'Land and Freedom' for its view of the International Brigade - previously the most well known participants in the Spanish Civil War. Loach's rebuttal of these complaints is concise but convincing.

A powerful finale on the evolution of South Korean trade unions combines inspiring footage of huge demonstrations with savage attacks on them by riot police. Some of the voice-over commentary is rather glib here but it

is still worth watching for the sheer size of the actions and the discussions with those involved.

All this is interspersed with extremely witty send-ups of TV ads and apposite but rather too wordy comments on the need for partisan media to combat the rubbish put out by the multi-nationals.

Overall its a high quality product, with some imaginative use of technology and stimulating content. Subscribe - and more importantly get your trade union or Labour Party to do so.

**VIDEO NEWS**

Contact:  
PO Box 10395, London N7 7HY.  
Subscriptions: Individuals 10 per issue, 30 per year (4 issues).  
Trade Unions etc 20 per issue, 60 per year

**It is a high quality product, with some imaginative use of technology and stimulating content**

## FEEDBACK

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We are on the web at [HTTP://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/so](http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/so)

### Defending Marxism

Gerry Foley's article in Socialist Outlook 104 makes serious errors. He implies that capitalism has been restored in the CIS.

Various statistics can be quoted to demonstrate that this is not the case. One is the 20% increase in investment for education and the continuation of free education.

Panorama a few weeks ago showed that 90% of the farms are state owned and that they provide free education, health care and the right to work.

On May Day the Russian Army carried the Red Flag - not something I've ever seen a bourgeois army doing. This illustrates that the army is part of the state apparatus which defend the workers state.

Foley fails to follow Trotsky who explained in the Transitional Programme

that when the bureaucracy went into crisis different tendencies would emerge. Instead he talks about Zyuganov representing a 'state capitalist' tendency within the bureaucracy. This is not a class analysis. Where are the capitalists who support Zyuganov?

Imperialism was hostile to Zyuganov's election because the promised to defend and increase state subsidies. He represents in my view a section of the bureaucracy based on the Military Industrial Complex.

They want to keep their caste privileges and want to settle accounts with the layers of the bureaucracy who have enriched themselves over the past period. They, as well as the working class, have suffered over the past period from the plundering of the workers state by the dominant layers.

The Communist Party have been calling for a coalition government. They want Yeltsin to pick a third of the cabinet, Zyuganov a third and the other parties the same. This represents a very strong fear of a serious confrontation between these wings of

the bureaucracy, in which the working class could come through the middle and overthrow the lot. They want rather to develop a bonapartist figure who will arbitrate between the different wings and create stability.

Revolutionaries are in favour of exploiting the divisions within the bureaucracy as Trotsky explained in 'In Defence of Marxism'.

But we would be in favour of destroying the rapacious elements through independent mass mobilisations. This could then be used as a springboard to overthrow the rest of the bureaucracy. Only if that is not possible would we give any support to these elements being destroyed by the Military Industrial Complex. The fight for the programme of political revolution must continue.

Alan Barnett,  
Birmingham

## WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

**UP AGAINST** mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won public services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis - an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

*Socialist Outlook* exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism. The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command. The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism. We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism. Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing the working class. We are a marxist current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

**OUR SOCIALIST** alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

*Socialist Outlook* is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises in over 40 countries. Unlike some other groups on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism. But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as racism and fascism - in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate differences. If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in cities across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

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Please send me your introductory pamphlet: 'Socialism after Stalinism'. I enclose a PO or cheque for £1.00 payable to 'Socialist Outlook Fund'.

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Post to: *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

## Dock strike updates:

### International solidarity brings successes

The international boycott by the International Workers and Longshoremen of America has been successful in persuading the Atlantic Container Company Ltd to pull out of the port of Liverpool. They have moved to the Thames Port in Kent albeit only temporarily, as they have said they would return to Liverpool if the dispute is solved within the next 2 months. The Canadian CAM Line Shipping Company are also threatening to pull out of the port if the dispute is not resolved.

This is putting massive pressure on the employers with the value of Mersey Dock and Harbour Company shares dropping by 25 percent. The Port Users of Liverpool have called a meeting to discuss how to deal with these problems.

### National Dockers Support Committee

Following a successful demonstration in support of the dockers in Liverpool on 29 June, a meeting was held to discuss the setting up of the National Dockers Support Committee (NDSC).

It was agreed:

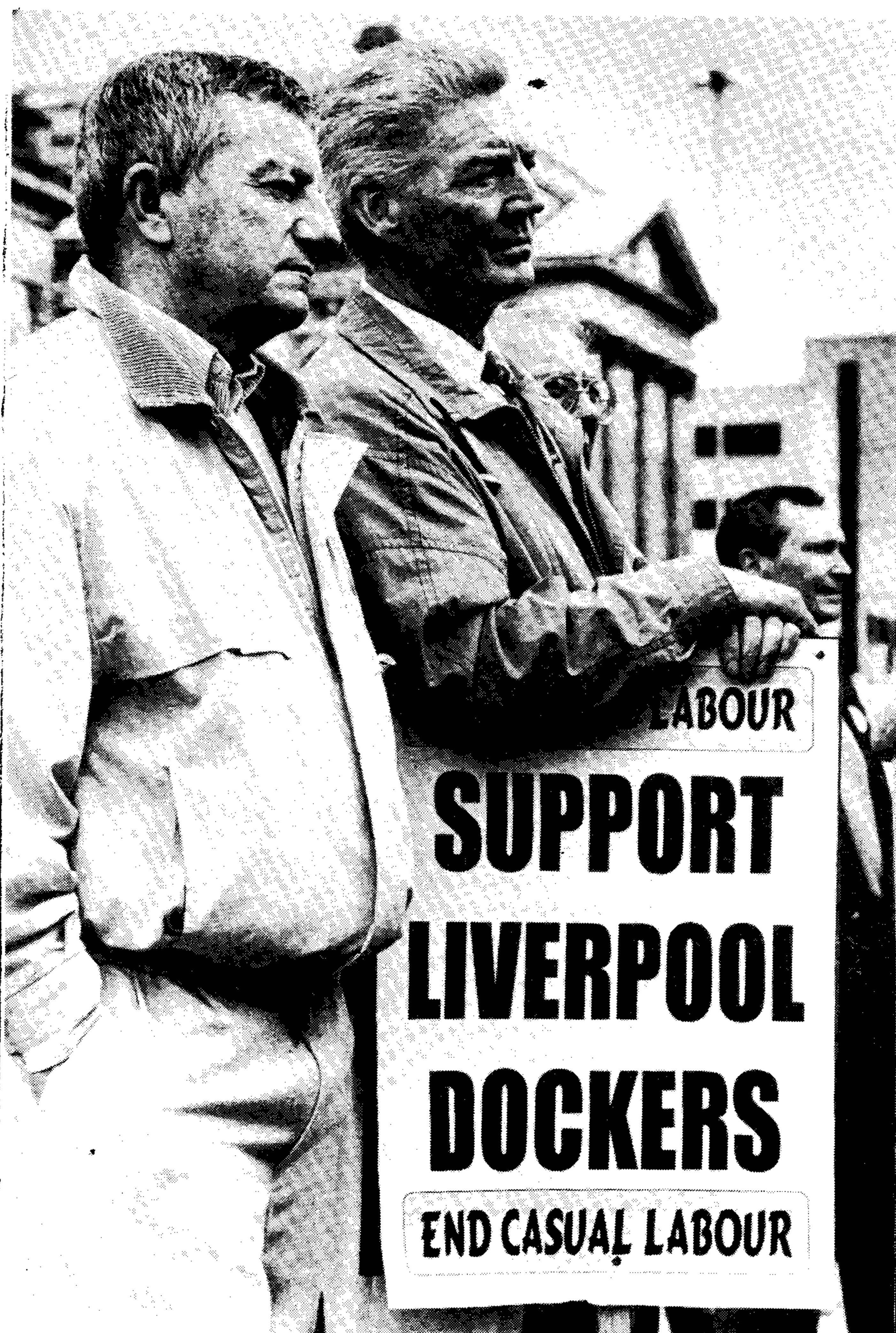
\* That the first meeting of the NDSC will be held on July 20th

\* That all organisations should send 2 representatives to attend the NDSC. (This was controversial because the SWP wanted to elect the delegates there and then from a meeting they had packed. This was rejected by the dockers as it would exclude many organisations.)

\* To call a major lobby of the TUC Conference in September to demand that the TUC:

- Organise a national levy of all TUs to support the dockers
- Oppose the anti-trade union laws
- Allow the dockers to address the TUC conference

The dispute could last several months yet and still needs your support. Invite speakers to your meetings and organise regular workplace collections.



# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Pall Mall strikers fight on

Elkie Dee

**STRIKERS AT** Hillingdon Hospital in north-west London have been campaigning for reinstatement with reasonable pay and conditions for over nine months. Unison, their trade

union has called a demonstration for Saturday 13 July.

They were sacked last year by Pall Mall, the private company which won the tendered contract for catering, cleaning, portering and sterile supplies. Pall Mall was quick to

announce a "rationalisation" package of changes to pay and conditions for its 200 new employees, including an overall cut of around £1 an hour. 56 workers who refused to accept were sacked - including some who had worked at the hospital for over 25 years.

This crucial dispute is part of a much wider struggle against privatisation as hospitals, councils, the civil service and colleges put services out to tender. The conditions at Pall Mall will be replicated elsewhere if privatisations go ahead.

In December 1995, Pall Mall was known to hold 21 public sector contracts, 17 in the NHS, and to be tendering for contracts with a number of other hospitals and Haringey Council.

Pall Mall and its parent company, the Davis Service Group, are known for a short term view on maximising profits at the workers' expense. Management are hostile to trade unions and have actively campaigned



against TUPE, which requires successful contractors to maintain the conditions of an existing workforce inherited from their previous public sector employer. This has led to previous disputes with health workers in East Kilbride, Basildon and Southampton.

Particularly under threat are those services not generally regarded as part of the central function of an organisation, such as catering and cleaning, security and clerical work. These jobs are very often low-paid and already part-time or casualised. Pall Mall workers earn an average of only just over £5,000 a year - compared to the average £53,000 paid to each of the six directors.

The courageous battle at Pall Mall represents a new mood amongst layers of workers whose conditions are under

brutal assault. These struggle will be as vital for the future as those in traditionally stronger sectors.

Women and black and Asian workers make up a high proportion of those employed in such jobs: they are particularly vulnerable to the privatisation of the public sector and the deterioration in working conditions and employment rights. They are also vulnerable to sexual harassment. In 1992 Pall Mall was forced to pay a female manager £10,000 compensation when she was sacked after spurning the advances of her regional manager. So much for Equal Opportunities!

**Send donations to: Unison Greater London Industrial Action Fund, Civic House, 8 Aberdeen Terrace, Blackheath London SE3 0QY**

### SUPPORT THE HILLINGDON STRIKERS

## DEMONSTRATION

**Saturday 13 July**

**Assemble 11 am Colham Green Recreation Ground Colham Green  
Road Opposite Hillingdon Hospital, Uxbridge  
Nearest tube: Uxbridge  
March to Hillingdon Civic Centre**

## Step up the campaign in defence of asylum seekers

Derrick Colbert

**THE LAST WEEK** has seen yet another blow to the Tory government's plans to withdraw social security benefits from asylum seekers. The House of Lords, on a knife edge vote of 158 to 150, extended from one to three the number of days for asylum seekers to claim asylum.

According to this ruling, any person applying for asylum during these three days would remain entitled to benefits.

This is contrary to the original proposals, rejected by the appeal court two weeks ago, for any person not claiming asylum at port of entry to be refused benefits.

The Tories have pledged to overturn this change to the Immigration

and Asylum bill when it comes back to the House of Commons.

However, the withdrawal of benefits if a claim is made after three days and while waiting for an appeal on an original application, will still have a devastating effect on asylum seekers and refugees entering Britain.

The resolve of the Tories to push through these vicious proposals speaks volumes for their overall agenda.

A clear attempt is being made, as on countless other occasions, to link massive expenditure on social security, almost entirely created by Tory policies of high unemployment, with a tiny minority of people - most of whom happen to be black.

While they wait for the return of the feelgood factor, the Tories are happy to trawl for the votes of racists and xenophobes.

The effect of the benefit withdrawals is to condemn asylum seekers and

### **Benefit withdrawals will condemn asylum seekers and refugees to a life of homelessness and poverty while they appeal for asylum or refugee status.**

refugees to a life of homelessness and poverty while they appeal for asylum or refugee status.

Some councils, such as Wandsworth and Hillingdon in Greater London, have responded to

these earlier changes by enacting sections of the Children's Act which oblige local authorities to care for and house children (under 18s), along with their parents.

However, this provision has not been used by all local authorities and does not help the many asylum seekers who arrive on their own or without children.

Other initiatives, under preparation by councils, voluntary and community groups, involve the setting up of special shelters.

One such shelter is currently being planned in West London.

These kinds of concrete initiatives, while absolutely necessary, will not compensate for this overall assault on

the lives of innocent people - people who have fled for their lives, or in poverty, and are treated with contempt on arrival in Britain.

The rest of the Asylum and Immigration Bill proposals will increase the number of people immediately sent back when arriving in Britain and will reduce further the right to appeal.

The campaign against these attacks has so far involved two major national demonstrations as well as more localised work to mitigate the effects of the legislation.

There is a real need to step up the campaign in the coming weeks as the Bill comes in for its final reading.

The Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAIAB) have called a lobby of Parliament between 3-5pm on July 15th. This will be followed by a public meeting in the House of Commons at 6pm.