

# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Asylum seekers welcome here!



West Midlands campaigners held a picket and soup kitchen to highlight the effect of the withdrawal of asylum seekers' social security. Held near a DSS office, staff and claimants were told not to approach pickets

**OPPOSITION** to the Tories' Immigration and Asylum Bill is growing.

Already thousands of people have participated in protests and got involved with the Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill.

The bill requires that employers carry out checks for 'illegal immigrants'. The government is also trying to cut off benefits.

The TUC is supporting the demonstration called by the campaign. It is important that

the labour movement is mobilised around the issue.

The Labour Party has also come out against the bill. Unfortunately it is not being very vocal.

Everything must be done to maximise the protest. The

current Tory crisis means that this bill could help bring down the government.

The February 24 demonstration must be built as widely as possible.

**More on page two**

**Build February 24 anti-racist demo**



# Asylum seekers face benefit cuts

Mark Jasen

AS THE Immigration and Asylum Bill goes through the committee stage in parliament, asylum seekers face another threat, due to be introduced on February 5.

Peter Lilley made a tactical retreat on the earlier introduction of these cuts. Original proposals were to cut off benefit entitlement to all existing asylum seekers. The retreat was due partly to the legal threat from right wing Westminster Council, concerned that they would be legally obliged to house asylum seekers without central government funding.

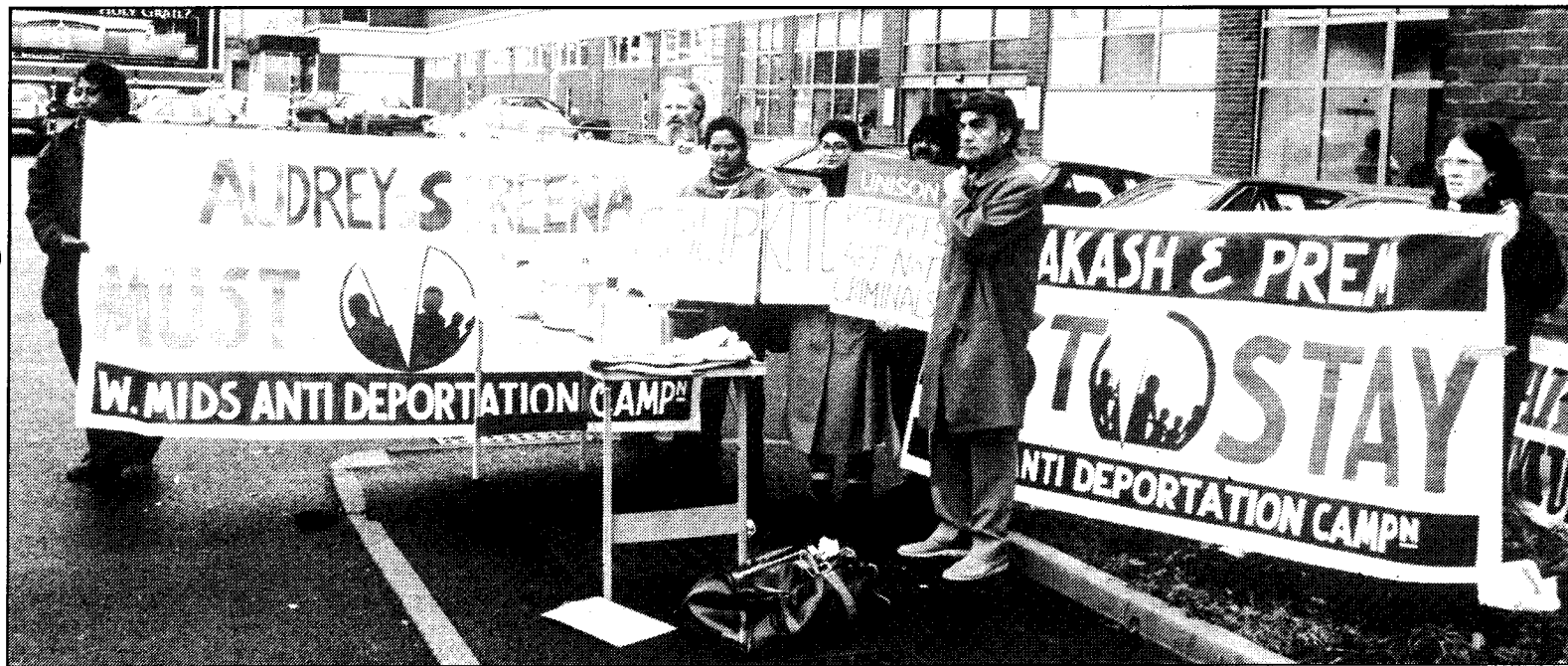
It was also an attempt to avoid the embarrassment of churches organising soup kitchens for the estimated 13,000 asylum seekers who would have been made homeless overnight.

The proposals are now to refuse benefits to all new in-country applications and to anyone appealing against home office decisions.

Already hospital workers and GPs have been instructed to carry out immigration checks on patients. Some local councils have prepared to cut free school meals and housing benefits.

The Social Security regulation changes will withdraw Attendance Allowance, Council Tax Benefit, Disability Living Allowance, Disability Working Allowance, Family Credit, Housing Benefit, Invalid Care Allowance and Severe Disablement Allowance.

Eager administrative staff have not only been pre-empting these meas-



ures, but encouraging internal immigration checks whether or not this will be required by law.

If the Immigration and Asylum Bill becomes law, a new category of "immigrant" will be created, so that many people who have lived in Britain for decades will only be entitled to the above benefits at the discretion of the Home Secretary. Also, people who have travelled thousands of miles fleeing persecution, and who are entitled to benefits, will fear applying for them in case they are shopped and deported to face persecution or death.

Whilst much of the discussion has focused on opposing the bill in parliament, it is vital that the campaign against the Social Security regulations is not forgotten.

Already many public sector union branches have adopted non-implementation policies against the measures and Labour Party branches have called on local councils to refuse to cut essential benefits.

The Tories abandoned plans to introduce the Job Seekers Allowance in May, a week after CPSA conference decided it would boycott it.

Since then, wherever management has tried to introduce pilot schemes in benefits offices, CPSA branches have called strike ballots and management have backed down.

A mass campaign, backed up by this kind of action, can force the Tories to abandon their racist proposals.

## Asylum seekers welcome in Birmingham

**O**n January 8, the West Midlands Anti Deportation Campaign organised a successful soup kitchen attended by over 40 people outside Handsworth DSS offices. During the protest, management told staff not to talk to campaigners. This did not stop union members and officials coming out to show solidarity. Prakash Chavrimootoo, who has been fighting for over 5 years to stay here with her son Prem, was there dishing out the soup. She faces deportation because she left her violent husband less than a year after their marriage. A Birmingham CAIAB branch has been set up and there are plans for public meetings and coaches to the CAIAB demo on February 24.— Marian Brain

## Beat back the Bill

**DURING THEIR** long stint in power the Tories have introduced a number of measures to restrict asylum and immigration. Now, with an election imminent, they are bringing in the Immigration and Asylum Bill which contains even more draconian measures and is also an attack on all black people.

The Tories are hoping to pick up votes by playing the race card, and bringing British immigration laws more into line with other states in the European Union.

The Immigration and Asylum Bill will allow the Home Secretary to decide that certain countries pose no serious threat of persecution to its citizens. Refugees on this 'white list' will be subject to fast track appeals with no recourse to a higher court.

It will be a criminal offence to employ an asylum seeker or a person with no immigration entitlement. Assisting asylum seekers could be viewed as an offence. Local authorities will not be able to provide assistance with housing.

Although originally advocating an all-party committee of inquiry on immigration, Labour now opposes the bill in parliament. Labour Party and Trade Union members must build campaigns that mobilise opposition to the bill, at the same time ensuring that the Labour leadership does not backtrack on its opposition. This also provides an opportunity to Labour Party members to demand that Labour-led councils do not implement the social security regulations.

Demands for remedial and emergency measures must also be made in order to ensure that Asylum seekers

losing their benefit are not thrown on to the street.

Trade unionists working for local authorities must also take up the issue of non-implementation of the bill and defence of members who are victimised for not complying.

At a national level the absolute priority is to defeat the bill before it becomes law. Opposition to the bill is widespread and includes the Liberal Democrats and the churches. The Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAIAB) has called a mass demonstration on Saturday February 24. This demonstration will provide the basis for a mass mobilisation of the labour movement together with black people and refugees to help defeat the Bill. Be there.

Simon Deville

### Socialist Outlook Books

## Ending the Nightmare

Socialists against racism and fascism

Why are racism and fascism on the rise in Europe? What lessons are these from the anti-fascist struggles of the 1920s and 1930s?

This compelling collection of marxist essays — including Ernest Mandel's 'Learn the Lessons of Germany' — explains the roots of European racism and fascism, and the strategy needed to defeat them.

This 128-page book is available POST FREE to UK readers only from Socialist Outlook.

Send your cheque or postal order for £4.95 made payable to 'Socialist Outlook Fund', to PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU. Overseas: add £1.65 postage.



## Stoke Newington police kill asylum seeker

Simon Deville

On 16 December 1994 two officers from the notorious Stoke Newington police station arrested Nigerian asylum seeker Shiji Lapite for "acting suspiciously". Twenty minutes later he was dead.

The jury at the inquest into Shiji's death took just thirty five minutes to reach a unanimous verdict of unlawful killing. This is the second unlawful killing verdict against the police in three months.

The officers' claims to be in fear of their lives were at odds with the injuries received.

One claimed he had to kick Shiji

repeatedly in the head "as hard as he could" because Shiji "had hold of the others throat". The other officer said that he could breathe perfectly well, and the pathologist couldn't find a single mark around his neck.

Whilst one officer claimed Shiji bit him, the bite mark did not appear at his initial examination only showing up after a week. Bruising on one of them was consistent with that from a blunt instrument, like a truncheon.

However, Shiji received 45 injuries. The coroner warned of the police use of the neck hold which crushed Shiji's windpipe.

The two officers will now face a police investigation, though the prosecution service had already decided that

there is not enough evidence to prosecute.

Whatever the result of the investigation, it will not question the racism and corruption of the criminal justice system and police. Police chief Sir Paul Condon has said he fully understands the "noble cause corruption" that leads to fitting up and brutalising black communities. The whole hierarchy of the force encourages and trains officers to treat black people as a "problem" to be dealt with.

Black communities and the labour movement must organise to defend themselves against racist attacks, whether the racists are BNP thugs, the police or the government.

# Unequal stakes in an unequal society

**BRITISH voters may not be concerned with the details of Harriet Harman's children's education but they have a keen sense of humbug.**

Major tapped into it when Blair faced him across the despatch box last week "it is important to be tough on hypocrisy and tough on the causes of hypocrisy".

Blair was forced to defend Harman because his own personal credibility was staked on her survival. She is part of "the project"—steered cadre cannot be discarded lightly.

But it was her misfortune to strike the leading edge of the iceberg that the good ship Blair will surely founder on.

Education is a crucial issue—campaigns such as FACE have succeeded in mobilising a whole new constituency. Everyone cares about the future of their children.

Assuming that Jack Straw is not caught house-breaking it is likely that Labour will win the next election. It is then that the real balance of forces in the Labour Party will come into play.

## EDITORIAL

Blair knows full well that there is a substantial section of the Parliamentary Labour Party committed to the conception of the welfare state, and a free comprehensive and quality education system.

More importantly, people in Britain are strongly in favour of the welfare state.

The mythology of the modern British Labour movement, whatever its failings and fantasies, rests on a conception of a collective solution to the social questions faced by society. Universal and free health care, comprehensive education and—to an extent—housing provision are all part of the package.

This is why Blair path is full of pitfalls.



Harman has not been slow to take advantage of Tory-created educational inequality

Photo: Andrew Ward

He aims to kill off any notion of collective provision and the responsibility of the state to its citizens. "Community" and "stakeholding" are the buzz words to cover the move.

So when Tony Blair talks about his vision of a stakeholder society he is really searching for a way to bluff through his plans.

The hypocrisy is there for all to see. Despite all the talk of a "moral community", Harman has not been slow to take advantage of Tory-created educational inequality.

Not all stakes, it seems, are equal.

Few care about the language involved, but most want the Labour Party to roll back the frontiers of the free market and reinstate some of the key welfare rights that have been undermined or withdrawn in the last 15 years.

The Labour Party is supposed to

stand for collective social provision.

This explains the uproar over Harman's choice of school. If Harman does not have confidence in the future of comprehensive education then who does?

Blair understands that to deliver the government spending requirements for Maastricht means a massive attack on the welfare state and the education system.

As this is implemented divisions are bound to emerge between those who will want to prioritise the criteria for European monetary union and those who want a free and comprehensive education system and free welfare state. It is not possible to have both at the same time.

Blair's attitude to the union leaders is instructive here. A few union bosses gullible enough to listen might have

expected a bit of the stake themselves. But not so.

When GMB leader John Edmonds interpreted stakeholding to mean an improvement in workers' rights he was soon put in his place. Workers will only get a stake if they buy shares!

It is therefore reasonable to expect a divide to appear inside the labour movement once Blair takes office. British capitalism is in no position to provide for even a barely recognisable version of 1945.

This is why Blair is working towards an alliance with the Liberal Democrats. Socialists must respond by organising alliances of their own to defend and extend the welfare state and the comprehensive education system from the bottom to the top of the labour movement.

## Compulsory workfare schemes plan

# Punishing the poor

Roger Mullgan

The Tories plan to sneak in a scheme to make all those jobless for over two years work for their benefits.

The Project Work programme is a US-style workfare scheme in another name.

It is set to run in selected areas from April this year. Project Work lasts six months.

Those targeted must attend a two week Restart course.

Three months of compulsory Job Club follow, where the unemployed are pressured into applying for low-paid jobs. If that does not do the trick, there is another three months of compulsory work experience—for an extra £10 a week.

Failure to turn up, dropping out of the scheme or "disruptive behaviour" will result in loss of benefit.

This is yet another politically—motivated attack on the poor.

What makes this obvious is the Ann Widdecombe connection. The two areas where Project Work will be piloted are Maidstone and Hull.

Ann Widdecombe is the Tory MP for Maidstone and minister with special responsibility for Hull.

Socialist Outlook spoke to Nigel Danby, chair of the North Humberside Employment Service CPSA branch.

He said: "It's clear to us that Project Work is part and parcel of the Job Seekers' Allowance.

"It's yet another compulsory scheme with no guarantee of a job at the end.

"The policy of this union is to boycott work that is anything to do with JSA. Management have abandoned JSA pilots across the country as soon as they hear that the CPSA is planning to hold a strike ballot."

"Project Work is not just an issue for civil servants and the unemployed.

"As the Tories' latest attack on the welfare state, it concerns trade unionists, Labour Party members and all working people.

"Workfare is a threat. But it is also an opportunity to build maximum unity among those affected."

## Subscribe today!

Socialist Outlook is Britain's best-selling socialist fortnightly. For an internationalist, socialist and working-class perspective on world affairs, subscribe today!

Annual subscriptions cost £17 for Britain or Ireland; £38 by air to China, Japan or Australasia; £50 for multi-reader institutions and solidarity subscribers; and £30 elsewhere.

Send your cheque or postal order payable to 'Socialist Outlook Fund', PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU. Please add a sum equal to £7 to payments not in British pounds.

Name .....

Address .....

Post Code .....

Telephone .....



# NHS breaks down in winter

Harry Sloan

WHILE Shadow Health Secretary Harriet Harman debated which exclusive school to send her son to, diverting media attention from the crisis in the NHS, the cold winter weather has been cruelly exposing the inadequacy of the skeleton service remaining in many British hospitals.

Major hospitals including St Mary's and Great Ormond Street in London have been turning away children with meningitis because of a lack of intensive care beds. Others have been struggling with growing numbers of emergency admissions. So bad has the crisis become that in December six prominent NHS Trusts in south London co-signed a unique letter of protest.

The problems they highlight are faced by almost every major hospital across the country, and will be repeated with every onset of cold weather.

They pointed out that hospital bed numbers have been cut back so far that one hospital had up to 52 emergency patients (equivalent to two wards) spending the whole night on trolleys. On one Saturday, one of the six, St Helier Hospital in Carshalton, even ran out of trolleys, and was forced to treat patients in ambulances outside.

The letter, signed on December 15, is the first time acute services Trusts have collectively complained at the impact of government policies. Until now these quango bodies have preferred to suffer in silence, relying on back-stage lobbying rather than admit they cannot cope.

The letter, addressed to the chair of South Thames regional health authority, is a devastating, blow-by-blow indictment of the NHS market reforms and of the dogmatic insistence by Tory Ministers that hospital beds should close to fund developments in primary and community care.

All six top consultants — medical directors and chairs of consultant committees from St George's, St Helier, Queen Mary's Roehampton, Kingston, Mayday and Epsom Hospitals — protest first and foremost at the "lack of beds across the SW London area and the detrimental effect of this on patients".

They go on:

"\* There was a view that Hospitals should continue to reduce beds as a consequence of increased Day Case Surgery, shorter stay in hospitals and increased Community Care and Social Services.

"\* However there is instead a steady increase in medical emergencies requiring admission and increasing difficulties in discharging patients... In one hospital there has been a 22 percent increase in admissions through A&E compared with this time last year.

"\* These patients first fill the Medical beds and then have to overflow into unsuitable beds in Surgical wards: on December 4 one Trust reports 42 medical 'outliers' in Surgical wards, and one reported 90.

"\* When all beds are full, the Emergencies (often very sick) log-jam back into A&E, 'overnighting' on trolleys which are insufficiently supervised, uncomfortable and extremely successful for both patients and teaching staff.



Rapid increase in emergency admissions leaves health workers in misery — and angry!

One hospital reported 26 trolley patients in A&E one evening, and in November one reported 52 A&E trolley 'over-nighters'.

"\* Neighbouring Trusts are unable to help as they face the same problem.

"\* The pressures are similar on ITU/CCU/HDU beds for the severely ill. Last Tuesday, the nearest ITU available was Basildon, and as you know from recent events, this is part of a nationwide problem."

Pointing out that the influx of emergencies into a reduced number of beds

is leading to the cancellation of waiting list admissions, the Trusts sum up:

"Thus the current situation which has no flexibility in the system for the increasing number of admissions, is throwing impossible stress on patients and pressure on the staff."

But matters are even worse: there are financial penalties imposed on Trusts if they cancel too many waiting list admissions:

"The financial issues of the 'contracting process' make the current situation more ridiculous.

## FACE: expose conjurer Clarke!

Roy Leach, NUT National Exec., personal capacity

IT IS TIME to for FACE to face the future as it comes up to its conference on February 10.

The key task for FACE (Fight Cuts in Education) in the coming year is to maintain the momentum built up since its formation barely a year ago.

It has grown rapidly and has had a major impact on the British political landscape. In March and September it organised the largest education demonstrations in over a decade — at 15,000 and 10,000 respectively.

And in close co-operation with teacher unions, mainly the NUT, it has mobilised tens of thousands more supporters outside town and county halls.

But the real measure of FACE's success is the shift in the Government's priorities and that it has had to promise a sham £800 million extra for education in the Autumn Statement.

This extra money is a cynical play — not without some success — to defuse the anger that FACE has tapped into and given a focus.

Because what the Government has done is increased the Education Standard Spending Assessment — the set amount it believes councils need to spend to provide education — at the expense of other services.

The cash going to councils has only seen a tiny increase and there will be massive increases in the council tax. So,

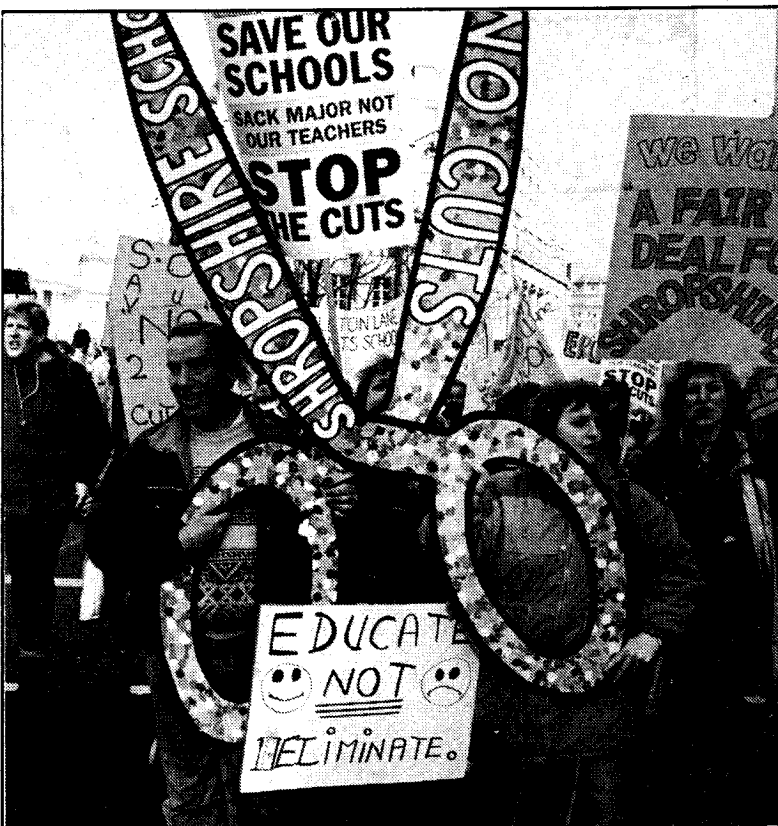


Photo: Andrew Ward

15,000 joined march FACE demonstration in other words, each of us is expected to pay more for reduced services.

What are the priorities for FACE over the next year? Education cuts are going to happen again and the blame needs to firmly attached to the real culprits — the Tories.

But FACE must also continue to

press all political parties for a commitment to fund education according to need and for class sizes to be immediately limited to 30.

The reason the NUT leadership has turned its back on FACE can mainly be explained by campaigners placing this particular demand on the Labour

Party.

Instead the NUT leaders wants to tailor union policy more to the needs of Blair's New Labour than teachers, parents and students.

FACE's second annual conference on February 10 will focus on: mobilising for the most effective demonstrations during the May local elections including a national demo in Nottingham in late April; the Autumn Statement; and the general election — whether soon or later.

And the conference is likely to re-launch the FACE pledge which helped put pressure on candidates at last year's district council elections.

This will aim to keep education on the centre stage. There will also be practical workshops on needs related budgets — school governors setting deficit budgets to stop teachers being sacked to balance the books.

Campaigners face a battle. About 10,000 teaching jobs were axed this financial year because of council cuts. It is plain for anyone who cares to look into classrooms that this has led to increases in class sizes. And as many schools have used up balances to stave off job cuts, the impact this year could be even worse.

This will be especially true if, as seems likely, pay awards are not funded centrally. The Tories will be hoping that they have got away with their budget sleight of hand.

FACE's task is to expose conjurer Clarke for the charlatan that he is.

## Call CPSA Barry's bluff

AS CPSA workers in the Employment Service (ES) prepare to vote for a massive escalation of their strike action, General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom's latest plan to wreck the dispute could blow up in his face.

For the first time in his career as the most notorious right-wing do-nothing in the union movement, Reamsbottom is calling for an all-out indefinite strike. Has Barry finally seen the light and decided to support his members' fight for decent pay? Not quite.

Reamsbottom and his fellow travellers on the CPSA National Disputes Committee have consistently put the brake on the strike. It was Reamsbottom who did shady deals with Employment Service Management to try to get the strikers back to work before Christmas. When the Broad Left-led ES Section Executive wanted a programme of regional strikes starting on January 31, Reamsbottom called them off.

He is now forcing members to vote on whether or not to strike indefinitely with no strike pay, because he thinks there is no chance of a yes-vote. If there is a no-vote, the dispute will be over as far as Reamsbottom is concerned.

Now is the time for CPSA members to call Barry's bluff by delivering a yes-vote: preparing to go all out to win.

**Nigel Danby, North Humberside ES CPSA Branch Sec'tary, personal capacity**



# Hemsworth by-election test: Vote Labour but fight for socialism

Jonathan Joseph

The first test for Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party will be the Hemsworth by-election on February 1.

Hemsworth is one of Labour's safest seats.

A traditional mining community, it should be a hot-bed for what the media like to call 'old Labour'.

Such an image is not lost on Arthur Scargill and that is why a SLP candidate is standing—three months before the SLP is even launched.

Brenda Nixon, formerly involved in Women Against Pit Closures, is seen by some as providing a socialist alternative to the Labour Party candidate.

She left the Labour Party six months ago because of Clause Four. And she supports the NUM, whose candidate was banned from standing for Labour.

Also she is standing against Labour's Jon Trickett, a former left-winger turned Leeds Council leader.

Yet despite all this, it is a mistake for Brenda Nixon to stand.

Scargill's break from Labour is premature at best.

Despite the defeats over Clause Four and internal democracy, Blair has not won a decisive victory in the Labour Party. It is important to keep up the fight in the party.

And more importantly, a future Labour government will come under real pressure, espe-



SLP candidate Brenda Nixon: "seen by some as providing a socialist alternative"

cially from the unions. This gives socialists real possibilities.

Whatever Scargill decides to do, the majority of the working class will vote for a Labour gov-

ernment. Their motive will be a hatred of the Tories.

Scargill's project cuts himself off from these people and their potential influence on Labour.

This is one reason that the SLP project is tactically flawed.

This is not to say that the SLP may not get a respectable vote because this is a by-election and due to the nature of the constituency.

A 22,000 Labour majority means that people can vote for the SLP without fear of letting the Tories in. The General Election will be a different matter altogether.

Like Scargill and his supporters we too want to fight New Labour. But we believe that this battle must be waged inside the Labour Party.

It is vital that socialists take account of the real tensions that will emerge once Labour gets elected.

To prepare for this, socialists inside the Labour Party need to start putting forward their own demands.

Socialists should fight for common ownership and public services.

We should battle for full employment and a decent minimum wage. Socialists in the Labour Party need to demand the repeal of the anti-union laws and the Criminal Justice Act.

And we should launch a real fight against the Immigration and Asylum Bill.

We disagree with the SLP being formed and call for a vote for Labour.

But we should work together with all socialists including those supporting the SLP for those goals, and against both Major and Blair.

## Looking Left

Jonathan Joseph looks at other socialists' responses to the SLP

THE PRESS had a field day. Here was 'old Labour' squabbling again. Tommy Sheridan had stormed out of the room.

Such events give a flavour of how ill-prepared the birth of the SLP has been.

There is a major problem concerning Militant Labour's involvement in the project.

All along Militant has welcomed it. The big problem is that Scargill does not want an organised current in his party.

The draft constitution drawn up by barristers Michael Mansfield and John Henty excludes "individuals and organisations other than bona fide trade unions which have their own programme, principles and policies".

Such a statement is all the more misplaced considering that the politics of the SLP have yet to be properly debated.

This puts Militant in a difficult position. They have stated their displeasure at being excluded from the SLP but have pledged to carry on supporting it from the outside.

Such a position can only be understood if we examine the political justification Militant have given for the SLP.

For them it is no longer possible to change the Labour Party. The SLP is seen as an alternative based on the supposedly socialist values of Labour's past.

This shows Militant are still deeply influenced by labourist definitions of socialism.

Coupled with this is the dismal failure of Militant's own electoralist project. The SLP is their last straw.

For the Socialist Workers' Party the SLP also provides a problem.

It is threatened by another pole of attraction outside the Labour Party, although it has now welcomed it as "putting socialism on the agenda". It has called for an SLP vote in Hemsworth.

Finally, Hilary Wainwright, who some expected to support Scargill, has criticised the SLP initiative. Writing in Red Pepper, she argues that it lacks any sense of strategy and timing. She is also concerned about the organisation's democracy.

In particular she complains that there has been a lack of any sort of genuine discussion with other groups and constituencies on the left. If there had of been it is likely that the project would have taken a completely different form.

Socialist Outlook has always argued for the left to organise as widely as possible. It would have been much more useful if Scargill had launched such a campaign, instead of an electoral party.

## Turn the Socialist Campaign Groups into a real force!

Pete Firmin, officer  
Socialist Campaign Group

THE LABOUR Left wants to see a Labour government replace the Tories as much—if not more than—anyone else.

But if Labour is elected on its current programme, then not only will it not reverse the damage done by the Tories, but disillusionment might lead to a backlash that could bring the Tory right to office.

Most Labour Party members are willing to swallow their doubts over Blair's policies for the sake of getting elected—as was shown by the ditching

of Clause Four. The "don't rock the boat" argument is persuasive.

But some of the Blairite gloss is beginning to wear off.

He had to employ the confidence in the leader's ploy yet again to save Harriet Harman's skin. There is a limit to how much of this people can take.

Although the Labour Left is currently small and weak, it is better organised than it has been for a long time. Many on the Left have begun to realise the need to get organised, rather than try to function as individu-

als or become demoralised and drop out.

The number of local Socialist Campaign Groups has risen during and since the Clause 4 campaign to forty.

**A serious alternative to Blairism must campaign much more openly and clearly**

But to pose a serious alternative to Blairism it is necessary to campaign much more openly and clearly.

If Campaign Groups are in the forefront of building solidarity with sections of workers in dispute, and in fighting around issues like the Immigration and Asylum Bill, inside and outside the party, they can

begin to attract labour movement activists concerned with a serious fight against both the Tories and Blairism.

Links with trade unionists have to be extended to the national level. The network of Socialist Campaign Groups needs strong connections with left formations in the unions. Together we must challenge the support given by most union leaders to Blair's right turn.

It is also important to organise for the general election. The Left must clearly call for a Labour vote, while placing demands on the party to carry out the policies we need.

Such a campaign can strike a chord with many activists in the Party, unions and single issue campaigns.

# Post-war Blues

**B**ritish politics has entered a period of turmoil and change. Both the Conservative and Labour parties face a series of decisive choices about their futures. In this Centre Stage Toby Brew-

ster reviews the terminal crisis of Toryism. Jonathan Joseph analyses the background to their difficulties and Geoff Ryan looks at the historic failure of the Labour Party to present a coherent alternative.

## Tory Titanic hits European Union

WOBBLES over education aside it is commonly held that the Tory party is in crisis and that Labour is on an unstoppable roll.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Such is the crisis facing the British economy and polity - one further revealed by the end of the cold war and the developing inter-imperialist conflict - that both political parties are in an historical crisis of unparalleled proportions.

The crisis of the Tory Party is made worse by the fact that it is in government. When, and if, Blair wins power the Labour Party will face the same fate.

It is no accident that both the ideologies of Conservatism and Labourism are beginning to disintegrate under the impact of the new world order.

This is highlighted further because Britain is in an economic downturn. It has gone on so long that commentators have almost stopped commenting on it.

It is this fact that makes the apparent desire of Blair to "build on Thatcher" seem so peculiar.

If Thatcherism was so good why have the results been so bad?

Thatcher spent a decade creating a more flexible labour market through a legislative attack on the trades unions. It was an attack of such breadth that union membership fell by over 40 per cent.

As John Rentoul in *The Rich get Richer* argued, at the end of the 1980s there was a shared perception that, "the Three Nations... are the have the have nots and the have lots."

Yet despite the rigours of monetarist discipline - if it isn't hurting it isn't working - the British economy is still spiralling downwards. Thatcher was unable to dispense the right medicine that would address the structural weakness of British capitalism.

Essentially the problem of the British economy is that since the turn of the century it has been stuck in a low investment low productivity trap relatively to other major capitalist economies.

This was a consequence of Britain being the first major capitalist country to industrialise. The vast commercial empire that it was able to build gener-

ated massive profits which allowed British companies to develop on the basis of self financing rather than having to rely on the banks or the state for their money.

At the same time Britain was able to defeat its major European rivals and build a global empire which was to play a central role in protecting UK manufacturing industry from foreign competition.

Through industry, commerce and plunder of colonies Britain was able to develop its financial sector to give it a third way by which maintain its economic leverage in the 20th Century.

It was this cushion that insulated British industry from the need to innovate and to introduce advanced production techniques.

Thatcher was not able to find a way of out this predicament.

The deregulation of the financial sector reinforced the UK as a world centre for financial speculation. At the

ing class and increasing domestic investment within the context of the 1945 settlement.

The conclusion was unavoidable. If British capital was to survive embedded in a medium size power the whole of 1945 had to be trashed.

While Thatcher did deliver massive blows to the political and organisation strength of the working class she was unable to reverse Britain's long term decline. The failure of the Thatcher project has tipped the balance inside the ruling class in favour of an integration with European capital and an industrial modernisation strategy.

It has now become common sense to many political leaders and industrialists that the only safe place for British capital lies in an alliance with those on the other side of the English Channel.

So Atlanticism is over.

Yet the mass membership of the Tory Party are incapable of accepting such an outcome and its leadership are

thus incapable of delivering such a modernisation strategy which could only work under the protective umbrella of EMU. It contradicts everything that the Conservative Party—the party of

flag, sterling and Empire—stands for.

It will be rent asunder by the contradiction between the forces of Maastricht, and the forces that made up its own historical tradition which are ideologically hostile to European integration and the end of Britain's great power status.

It is in this context that Blair's project becomes obvious—the standard bearer for pro-European capital.

The bourgeoisie hope that the party that cared for the welfare state in its cradle will now be able to supply the poison that will put it into its grave.

Blair will therefore have to attack the ideological and material heart of labourism—education health and welfare. This is why Blair will depend on image, spin, anti-Toryism and joke big ideas such as 'communitarianism' and 'stakeholding' to get him through to the next election.

Blair's project is based on the need to transform the role of the British state. In this he is building on Thatcher.

But the difference is that Blair's re-orientation of the British state is based on an attempt to modernise the econ-

**The mass membership of the Tory Party are incapable of accepting European integration and its leadership are thus incapable of delivering such a modernisation strategy**

same time taxation policy ensured that companies paid less tax for paying out dividends to shareholders than for investing in new machinery.

Added to this Thatcher remilitarised the UK economy by giving unparalleled support to UK military industry and the expense of civil manufacturing.

In this sense Thatcher was the ultimate ideological expression of what had been central to the Tory Party bloc for over 150 years—the alliance between finance capital and the military, built upon an Empire which had given it the resources to win over a section of the skilled working class.

After the war the Bretton-Woods financial system and US pump priming of the European economies allowed the British ruling class to establish a new system of economic regulation. It delivered major social provision to the working class and ensured that British capital could function in the new world economy.

But, no post war government was able to reverse the long term decline from empire. Each administration has had to grapple with the problem of reducing the wage levels of the work-



Miners' strike was a decisive moment for the British labour movement

omy and to regenerate the level of investment in British manufacturing industry.

To do this Blair will create an industrial policy that will codify and develop new relations between labour and capital. The basis has already been laid through the emergence of new management techniques. This will be coupled with appeals to voluntary sacrifices "for the good of the nation and the community."

This means shrinking the "social" state and expanding its role as an organiser of industrial policy, building an alliance with the manufacturing sector of capital within the project of a single European currency.

This implies an attack on labourism and everything that Labour has said it stood for. Someone has to pay for restructuring and investment.

This will have a cataclysmic material effect on the working class, the first

in line to suffer the cold winds of modernisation.

The ideology of labourism at the political centre of the labour movement - the Labour Party - will also disintegrate because it is as based just as much on the material benefits of Empire as is the Conservative Party as an historical bloc.

In this context the labour left will have to put up or shut up.

So far it has shut up. It has very little to say of substance about how Britain, as a declining imperialist power, could reorganise its economic and social structure to avoid the Maastricht road.

The production of a coherent economic and social programme is the only way out for the labour left. Such a development would be able to challenge Blairism not just on the basis of opposition, but in providing a credible alternative.

Toby Brewster

# Why Britain's bosses back Blair

**T**HERE IS no doubt that the world economy is in a profound crisis. It is also clear that the ruling class is uncertain and divided over its future strategies. On the one hand projects like the European Union are a necessary part of economic restructuring. On the other, they open up divisions of interest and class rule.

In Britain, the pathetic ideological battle between Blair's 'stakeholders' and Major's 'One Nation' Tories only further reveals the paucity of ideas and the crisis of social identity and leadership.

The more astute spokespeople for the ruling class understand that the restructuring of the economy and society is necessary, but can also see how dangerous the process may be for the interests they serve.

This predicament is best explained by the ongoing collapse of the post-war settlement.

After the Second World War, mass production was complemented by more intensive state intervention into the economy. This combination of mass production and mass consumption produced both a profitable capitalist economy and a relatively stable society.

In Britain, the state employed Keynesian policies of economic regulation and investment. State regulation was assisted by nationalisation. The post-war boom helped create social cohesion and political consensus.

Behind this was a new set of social alliances. The ruling class united around certain social initiatives to head off any threat from organised labour.

The development of the welfare state was a key aspect of this process. Consumer society was also important.

Sections of the labour bureaucracy were incorporated into the new national project as junior partners. Other sections



Blair's aim is not simply to shift Labour further to the right, but to break Labour from labourism itself

Photo: Andrew Wuard

of the working class were integrated through limited concessions.

Both Labour and Conservative politicians could agree that we had never had it so good. A new liberal consensus dominated.

But this form of social organisation could not last.

Its dual role of social and economic stability foundered on international economic turmoil. This was seen when the US economy hit crisis and the Bretton Woods system of exchange convertibility collapsed.

The internal workings of the post-war system began to break down. Profits fell and inflation

rose. Bureaucracy grew and production suffered a crisis of confidence.

As a result capital began to move from manufacturing production to money and finance. Forms of intervention shifted from large scale state investment to control of the money supply and inflation.

**T**his is the context of Thatcherism. Her monetarist message was combined with an onslaught against the labour force. Economic and class interests were united.

But Thatcher's project had its

drawbacks. It failed to grapple with some of the real shifts taking place, in particular the European dynamic.

Ultimately Thatcher had to go. But the source of the problems lies with the peculiarity of the British Conservative Party and its links to the Empire, paternalism and to the feudal past.

The British economy remains trapped in its imperial priorities, ones which have less and less relevance. To break from this creates a severe crisis.

The Labour Party is equally a product of the Empire. It too is peculiarly British, founded not on a socialist ideology, but on a

well organised and developed labour movement.

Tony Blair's advisers appreciate the break from the past that is necessary. In this respect Blair's project goes much further than that of past Labour leaders. His aim is not simply to shift Labour further to the right, but to break Labour from labourism itself.

The sets of ideas and traditions that make up British labourism have deep roots. In 1945 it fitted the purposes of capital to incorporate it much more closely into the running of the economy and society.

And out of this process the working class made a number of important gains - most notably around the welfare state and the unionisation of the workforce.

These have been severely attacked over the last decade. As the post-war order collapses, labourism's social role is being undermined.

But Blair does not intend to restore the welfare rights robbed by the Tories. Quite the opposite. He is busy developing new ways to keep up the attacks.

And the Labour Party is his chosen vehicle. The attack on Clause Four is a clear indication of his intentions to develop the process further to break the Labour Party from its trade union base and re-cast it in the context of the bosses' Europe.

But this will open up serious splits, especially with the trade union leaders. Whatever their politics, they have a certain base to defend in the labour movement.

They can wait for a Labour government, but they cannot stand by forever watching as Blair destroys the workforce and union which pays their wages.

To attack these layers, particularly in the context of a radicalising social situation, could well prove to be Blair's undoing.

Jonathan Joseph

## From the cradle to the crisis

**LABOUR** was elected in 1945 by people expecting a real change. A number of industries were nationalised and the National Health Service was established. India, Burma and Pakistan became independent.

But within two years the promises had turned sour. Austerity measures, including wage freezes and cuts in food rations, were introduced. Troops were used against strikers. Prescription charges were introduced.

Foreign policy was dominated by the virulent anti-Communism of Ernest Bevin. British troops fought colonial wars in Malaya and Palestine and participated in war against North Korea. Rising military expenditure was paid for by the working class.

Labour adopted consensus politics. The only serious divergence from the Tories was over the Suez invasion in 1956. However, despite the swing to the right under the leadership of Gaitskell, attempts to remove Clause Four were defeated - though Gaitskell did reverse the Party's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

When Labour returned in 1964 it was with a commitment to "economic planning". Wilson's government renationalised steel but within the framework of running capitalism more rationally. Soon, faced with serious economic problems, Wilson was turning to the International Monetary Fund. Cuts in public services, devaluation and wage freeze followed. Proposals were introduced to

weaken the trade unions, though concerted action forced their abandonment.

Despite mass opposition to American imperialism's war in Vietnam, Wilson offered to send British troops. Colonial wars were fought in Aden and the Gulf and Ireland.

Although Wilson introduced a number of important pieces of progressive social legislation (on women's rights, gay men's rights, abolition of capital punishment for example) greater restrictions were placed on immigrants.

After defeat in 1970 the party adopted a more left-wing image,

mainly because of the shift to the left in a number of important trade unions. Victories for the miners' strikes in 1972 and 1974 helped consolidate this shift.

However, the Wilson and then Cal-

**After defeat in 1970 the party adopted a more left-wing image, mainly because of the shift to the left in a number of important trade unions**

aghan governments quickly returned to the usual measures of austerity, culminating in the winter of discontent.

Thatcher's victory saw a strengthening of the Labour left. Tony Benn was defeated by a very narrow margin in the election for deputy leader.

But Thatcher's attacks on the unions, and particularly the defeat of the miners' strike, helped move the party significantly to the right - though such a process was already under way when then Labour leader Michael Foot, veteran anti-war activist, supported the Malvinas war.

The weakness of the unions enabled Kinnock and then Blair to abandon the most

radical of policies, making Labour's positions virtually indistinguishable. Blair's project now is to reconstruct a new consensus of the centre and to develop the convergence around Europe.

Geoff Ryan



Turkey votes against  
EU's austerity plan

# Welfare Party vote signals opposition to Turkish bosses

Duncan Chapple

EUROPE'S RULERS are up in arms that the 21 per cent vote for Turkey's Welfare Party, Refat, has given the country's most popular party the chance to try to draw together a ruling coalition.

The Western rulers falsely accuse the Welfare Party of being fundamentalist. In fact the Welfare Party does not stand against Turkey's 70-year secular tradition, but aims to use Turkey's Muslim heritage against the centre-right politicians responsible for the coun-

try's inflation and high unemployment.

Tansu Çiller's EU- and US-backed True Path party had deepened the genocidal war against the Kurdish nation, provoked a mass strike wave with deep austerity measures, and led Turkey into an unfavourable customs union with the European Union.

Turkey's high taxes on imports were a major source of funding for social welfare provision. By failing to replace import taxes with more progressive forms of



Flanked by Kohl and Major, Tansu Çiller takes an adoring look at the NATO headquarters: Welfare Party threatens withdrawal

taxation — such as taxes on very high incomes or on profits — Turkey's customs union is a reactionary cover for steep cuts in state spending.

## A significant number of workers who rejected its Islamicist stance voted for the Welfare Party rather than for the identical rightist parties

Welfare Party candidates aimed to root themselves in their communities: campaigning against corruption, for clean

streets, cheap bread, tram lines and the closure of brothels. They branded the centre-right parties which backed the customs union as "supported by big banks, big interests."

Financed by Saudi Arabia's rulers, the Welfare Party is not an ally of Turkish workers and peasants. Yet a significant number of working people who reject its Islamicist stance voted for it rather than

for the rightist parties.

Its high vote reflects how, in the absence of a consistent workers' party, the oppressed and exploited will take up any tool to hand in the fight against capitalist austerity.

The Turkish bosses may attempt to prevent the Welfare Party from forming a coalition — possibly by military means. Working people around the world should oppose any such attempt to close down the space for political discussion and struggle.

# Chechen rebels defy Yeltsin

Duncan Chapple

THE LEVELLING to the ground of Pervomaiskoye, a Chechen-occupied village in neighbouring Dagestan, sums up the Russian government's bitter campaign to suppress the nation aspirations of the Chechen people.

In 1991 Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudayev declared independence from the Russian confederation. In doing so the tiny republic was breaking free of decades of national and cultural repression by the Moscow bureaucracy — during the second world war more than one million Chechens were deported to Siberia by the Stalin's dictatorship. Today, there are just 1.2 million Chechens.

Fearing an upsurge of independence movements across the mainly-Muslim Caucasus region, Yeltsin ordered the suppression of Chechenya.

Over 30,000 people have died in the war — most unarmed civilians — in order to fool Yeltsin's Western backers

that a unitary capitalist market can be created by Yeltsin which can dominate the former Soviet Union.

The 40,000 Russian troops who invaded 13 months ago have not yet defeated the independence movement there.

The brutality of the military campaign is a show of strength following the lurch — forced on Yeltsin's government in 1995 — away from economic austerity policies.

In Pervomaiskoye most of the occupying 320-strong Chechen guerrillas were murdered by tanks, missiles, artillery and helicopter gunships: "Mad dogs should be killed" pronounced Yeltsin after the four day siege.

At least 25 civilians had been killed. The village had a population of just 870. The indiscriminate assault polarised Russian public opinion, and developed fears that the war could spread beyond Chechenya.

Fascist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy has sought to gain from the war. He

calls for the widespread napalming of the country and the rapid conclusion of the invasion.

The carnage followed a successful

## The brutality of the military campaign is a show of strength following the lurch — forced on Yeltsin's government in 1995 — away from economic austerity policies

attack on a helicopter base located in Dagestan by Chechen guerrillas who went on to take refuge in a local hospi-

tal — taking 3,400 hostages in order to secure safe passage home.

Passing by Pervomaiskoye on their return journey the guerrillas were fired

upon by Russian helicopter gunships, forcing them to hole up in the tiny village.

In a subsequent attempt to force an end to the Russian siege, rogue Chechen gunmen took hostage 114 Russian ferry passengers sailing in the Black Sea.

Later persuaded by Chechen leaders

to surrender to Turkish forces, the partisans brought the ferry to port at Istanbul to be greeted with crowds chanting anti-Yeltsin slogans.

These reflections abroad of the Chechen struggle for national freedom indicate the tenacity of national sentiments in the face of Great Russian chauvinism.

By forcefully defending new, if limited, rights to national, religious and political expression the Chechen people fight in the interests of all the oppressed nations of the former Soviet Union.

# Russian CP dithers on Chechenya

THE COMMUNIST Party of the Russian Federation [CPRF] has taken an ambiguous position on the war.

The invasion of Chechenya a sharp test of the Russian people's receptivity to great power chauvinism. Gennady Zyganov's CPRF has both blamed Yeltsin for the war and, opposed self-determination for the Chechens.

Zyganov reportedly has a high opinion of the puppet

government installed in the Chechen capital by Yeltsin.

The Russian parliamentary elections are marked by a new flare-up of the war in Chechenya, amongst other things because Yeltsin wanted to use the vote to gain some appearance of legitimacy for the "Chechen government" brought in the baggage of the Russian army.

Gerry Foley



# US Congress assaults welfare

Chris Brooks

**THE US Congress has still not been able to agree a budget — even though widespread agreement exists on the need to reduce health and welfare rights and increase military spending to \$243 billion (around £160 billion).**

Over 760,000 government workers were locked out of work without pay for three-weeks in which the government was "unable" to pay its bills. Around 480,000 were made to work without pay.

In early January 260,000 laid-off workers were instructed by the House of Representatives to go back to work — sparking angry protests nationwide. Congress later reinstated wage payments.

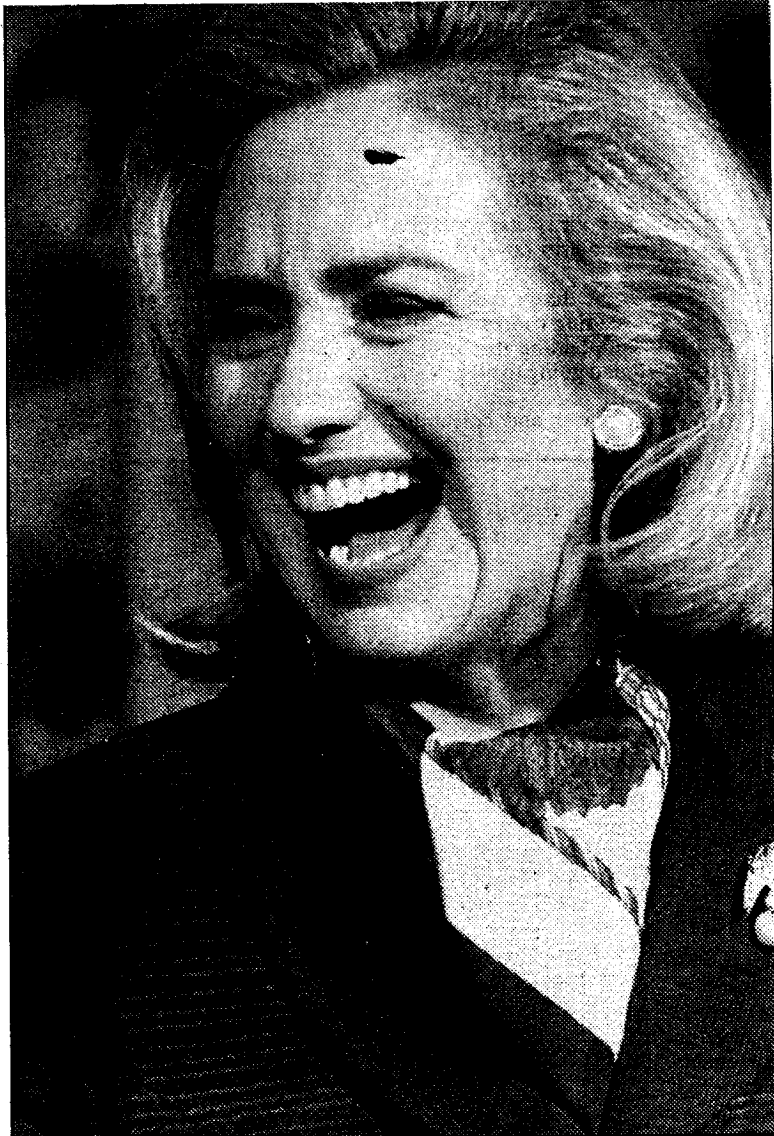
The US government is very far from broke. But since the second world war US state investment on education, health and the national infrastructure was partly funded by government borrowing, rather than by taxing the massive profits which this government spending allowed.

Interest payments on this debt are around \$250 billion a year — pushing the government's budget into the red. Last year, the US government ran a deficit of \$164 billion.

This irrational method of state finance represents a massive subsidy paid by US taxpayers to the corporate and big-business backers of the Democratic and Republican parties. Debt interest payments now account for 28 per cent of US income tax.

While deep tactical disagreements continue between the Democrats and Republicans, the course being taken by them is clear. Over \$600 billion in cuts are proposed by the White House: — with \$102 billion from Medicare retirement payments and \$52 billions more from Medicaid.

They are coupled to the shifting of the tax burden onto working people. Clinton's seven year plan of \$245 billion tax cuts for the rich is to be made up for by \$240 billion of extra taxes aimed at workers and poor farmers,



Union leaders made Hillary Clinton, leader of Democrat's health care "reform" plan, the key speaker at 20,000-strong protest against Medicare and Medicaid cuts!

and by sharp rises in social insurance premiums.

In the run-up to this autumn's Presidential elections the US labour movement leaders will be campaigning for Clinton's re-election. Much of the US left will follow suit, arguing that the Democratic Party represents a "lesser evil". This is a deeply mistaken view.

Unlike the Labour Party in Britain, the Democrats are not just politically pro-capitalist — the Democrats are a millionaires' party, led and built up

by a current of the US ruling class. Clinton's 1992 election vow was "to end welfare as we've known it".

In this context, the poor and exploited in the US — most of whom abstain in elections — need to find ways to strike out along their own road, rather than join in the 'national effort' to balance the budget.

The US needs a broad-based working class party, that puts forward the independent interests of workers and poor farmers, both in elections and in the struggle for social justice.

# IWA backs Bosnia unions

Roland Rance

A RECENT International Workers' Aid meeting in Berlin, attended by representatives of IWA groups from across Europe, discussed the new situation created by the imposed carve-up of Bosnia.

The meeting agreed that the Dayton agreement, which legitimised ethnic cleansing, was a victory for Milosevic, for Tudjman, and for US policy in the region. The presence of NATO troops on the ground was no contribution to the right of self-determination.

IWA was originally established in 1993 in order to campaign for the rights of Bosnian refugees. The pressing needs of Bosnian workers led to the decision of the first IWA conference to launch the Dundee to Tuzla convoy.

Since then, IWA convoys have carried several hundreds of tons of aid to Tuzla, as well as smaller amounts to Sarajevo, Mostar, Bihac and other towns. Other groups, including Workers' Aid for Bosnia, have also provided significant aid to Bosnian workers.

The Berlin meeting heard that these food convoys were no longer essential, since most supplies were

available in Bosnia, or could be bought in Croatia. Although some direct material aid — such as work clothes and educational materials — was still needed, the most urgent concern was the reconstruction of Bosnian society.

IWA's key task was the mobilisation of international solidarity for the rebuilding of the workers' movement in Bosnia. It was also important — as well as campaigning for the right of refugees to a safe return to their former homes — to support their right to remain in their country of asylum.

IWA has therefore decided to focus its work on support for the work of trade unions in Bosnia, especially in Tuzla, where close links have developed over the past two-and-a-half

years.

Before the war, Tuzla — a town built on coal and salt mines — was a major centre of the Bosnian working class. Although, as a result of the Yugoslav system of 'self management', the union leaderships were closely integrated with the management structures of the mining and other industries, there were several — mainly spontaneous — strikes.

The war has disrupted much of this. Hundreds of miners have been killed fighting against ethnic cleansing, while thousands more are still in the army.

The struggle for survival and the growth of Bosnian (not necessarily Islamic) nationalism have weakened support for the unions. At the same time, there is growing pressure for the privatisation of publically-owned industries and utilities in Bosnia, and elsewhere in former Yugoslavia.

These issues pose a huge challenge for the Bosnian workers' movement.

IWA agreed to support the new independent trade union journal, *Sindikalna Informacija*. The first issue, published in mid-December, carried articles on demobilisation of workers, on Miners' Day, on privatisation, on wage demands, and other issues.

IWA will help to turn the paper into a monthly, and hopes to raise 12,000 Deutschmarks (£6000) for the next six issues. Copies of the paper, with a translation, are available from IWA — price £1 — at the address below, to which all donations should be sent (cheques, payable to IWA, should be marked 'TU paper' on the rear).

IWA also agreed to sponsor a major conference of Bosnian and European trade unions in Tuzla in September. A working group will shortly present proposals; further information will be available from IWA soon.

• All donations or requests for further information should be sent to International Workers' Aid, c/o PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

**The Dayton agreement, which legitimised ethnic cleansing, was a victory for Milosevic, for Tudjman, and for US policy in the region. IWA has therefore decided to focus its work on support for the work of trade unions in Bosnia**

# Java strikes hit Suharto

Paul Walker

**OVER THE last two years there has been a growing strike wave throughout Indonesia.**

The end of 1995 saw a new wave of strikes on Java which both the authorities and employers were unable to control. This is set to continue.

Sritex of central Java, one of the largest textiles factories in Asia, saw half of its 12,000 mostly female workforce walk out on strike over management's refusal to pay the mini-

mum wage and offer any kind of sick pay.

The workforce brought the factory to a standstill for 48 hours until the management capitulated.

In central Java thousands of workers from the clove cigarette company, Jambu Bol, walked out because they had not received their annual New Year bonus in full.

This strike was held after the government run union, the SPSI, had negotiated a 75 per

cent agreement with the management. The strikers marched to the offices of the SPSI to protest at its actions and were joined by 500 workers from other cigarette factories who

**The government claims many strikes are political. In a repressive country almost any activity is identified by the authorities as political**

had the same grievances. This dispute is still not resolved.

In East Java there is an ongoing action by workers at the Maska Perkasa shoe company in Jombang. The strike over wage

levels has met with widespread support from the local population.

Local activists have set up a solidarity committee and have organised demonstrations of up to five thousand people to show solidarity.

In the face of such disputes the government has claimed that

many of the strikes are political. In such a repressive country almost any activity can be identified by the authorities as political.

The strikes indicate both the growing confidence of Indonesian workers and the developing political space that mass action is forcing open on labour issues.

What worries Suharto is the increasing co-operation between pro-democracy and labour movement organisations in Indonesia. The fear is that the emergence of a mass movement that fuses both democratic and economic demands could lead to a radical change of regime which would destroy the Suharto oligarchy's control over the economy.



## No more Bloody Sundays

## Boycott Major's elections

David Coen

THE BLOODY Sunday massacre and its aftermath provide important lessons to learn in the current "peace process".

On January 30 1972, British paratroops shot dead 13 unarmed civilians in Derry.

One person died later from his wounds.

The Civil Rights Movement which over the previous four years had mobilised thousands against discrimination in jobs and housing was literally shot off the streets.

Bloody Sunday showed the determination of the British ruling class to defend the Orange State literally to the death.

The mainly nationalist and Catholic protesters drew three main conclusions from Bloody Sunday.

First, the Six County State could not be reformed and therefore had to be destroyed.

Second the real struggle was against the British to drive them out of Ireland because they stood behind the unionists.

Thirdly, a large section of nationalists, particularly the youth, joined the IRA, believing that only military force could force British withdrawal.

The time between Bloody Sunday and the IRA 1974 ceasefire was the most ferocious military and civilian casualties, sectarian murders and destruction of property in the whole conflict.

The North became a testing ground for Brigadier Frank Kitsons Low Intensity Operations as the Heath Government became more concerned about civil disorder because working class militancy was growing.

The British, already under pressure for interning hundreds of nationalists without trial in August 1971, responded to the angry worldwide upsurge following Bloody Sunday by abolishing the hated Stormont Government in March 1972 and installing direct rule from Westminster.

If any nationalists had the illusion that direct rule would end discrimination they were sadly mistaken.



The sectarian state cannot be reformed—it must be smashed.

More than twenty years later, Catholic unemployment is still two and a half times that of Protestants.

And this is in a situation where more than 40 per cent of the workforce in the Six Counties is employed directly or indirectly by the British Government.

All of this casts an interesting light on the current "peace process".

The republicans were offered talks "within three months of a cessation of violence".

Yet 17 months after the ceasefire they are still excluded from talks about a constitutional settlement.

Major and his unionist allies want the republicans not just to surrender but to accept, in advance of the negotiations, that any agreement will be within the existing state framework.

In other words, the republicans are being asked to concede before even getting into the negotiations exactly what unionists want—an internal set-

tlement.

Nationalists and republicans are questioning more what exactly 25 years of struggle have brought if they end up with another settlement similar to that they thought had gone forever in 1972.

And even the 1974 Sunningdale Agreement cooked up by Heath and destroyed by the Loyalists, offered power sharing and a Council of Ireland. Sinn Fein's ability to resist the Conservative and unionist onslaught is fatally undermined by their own acceptance of the unionist veto.

It is clear they would accept an internal settlement as the *outcome* of negotiations and seek to portray it as a "stepping stone" to unification.

But legal, constitutional and political constraints will prevent unification happening ever happening—even if they ever get to that stage.

They have to face up to the stark fact that unionists will never consent to a

united Ireland.

Nor will the British force them to do so by withdrawing in the forceable future.

Returning to armed struggle is not the solution either.

The sectarian state cannot be reformed—it must be smashed.

Sinn Fein and all nationalists should boycott Major and Trimble's proposed elections.

Trimble and the unionists know that if they sat down in talks tomorrow they could get a settlement which would meet their main demands.

And they are aware that the settlement would be countersigned by Dublin in return for some cosmetic role in protecting nationalists in the Six Counties.

That they choose not to and that Major is willing to go along with them, shows an important aspect of unionism and the crisis of the British State.

The "no surrender" approach requires that enemies must not only be dead but securely buried as well.

In previous crises of de-colonisation the British ruling class were able to impose a solution even if that meant sacrificing a section of its own class in the interests of the class as a whole.

Major is incapable of doing that in Ireland without dividing the Tory Party from top to bottom and he also has the problem of a small parliamentary majority.

Blairs "me too-ism" means that the second team has no alternative.

Thus if, as seems likely in the long term, Major's Irish policy blows up—and that could be literally—then that could detonate a political crisis in the whole ruling class.

One outcome of that could be war—in Ireland.

We should remember Bloody Sunday.

## Slap in face for historical revisionists

The Great Irish Famine—The Thomas Davis Lecture Series ed. Cathal Poirteir. Published in association with RTE by Mercier Press, 283 pages, priced £8.99.

THIS BOOK is a must for all those who want to understand the history of the Great Irish Famine.

The history of the Famine is one of how the Whig (liberal) government in Britain exploited the potato blight to ruthlessly pursue their own interests, arguing that *laissez faire* (free mar-

ket) forces should decide matters.

As the revolutionary nationalist John Mitchell observed: "God sent the potato blight, but England sent the Famine."

The Whigs represented the English industrial capitalist class who emerged onto the political scene in the fifty years before the famine.

The struggle between them and the Tories was not just over the Corn Laws, but about which part of the ruling class would politically dictate Britain's future.

On the one hand, the Whig industrialists wanted to allow in cheap corn from North America and begin the

cheap food policy to placate the rising discontent of the working class.

On the other the Tories with large Irish estates opposed this, as it undercut their main source of revenue, subsidised corn from Ireland.

Whig interests required the institu-

**As the revolutionary nationalist John Mitchell observed: "God sent the potato blight, but England sent the Famine."**

tion of a new agricultural system in Ireland.

Lord Palmerston, great Irish landowner and Whig foreign secretary in 1847, insisted that social and economic improvement required a "long

continued and systematic ejection of small-holders and cottiers".

Sheep, cattle and dairy produce must now take the place of the Irish peasantry.

However, there were upwards of three million Irish cottiers, small-holders and landless labourers who could not be expected to agree easily that history had consigned them to its dustbin.

The Whig government's response to the famine was to refuse relief to those who had not given up their land and homes, and laws designed to force the Irish peasantry from their land and homes through eviction or starvation.

*Laissez faire* would not allow food to be distributed free by the Government, so in the worst months of Black '47 Swanton's mill in Skibbereen had between 100 and 200 tons of meal but the starving had no money to buy it.

Donnelly estimates that mass evictions came close to half a million from 1845 to 1854.

Without the Famine this would have produced civil war. Indeed this was a constant fear of the Government.

To conclude, this book is a slap in the face for the historical revisionists who peddle the lie of "natural disaster" to explain the Famine.

Gerry Downing



'Our Friends in the North'

# Northern exposure

**BRIAN GARDNER** reviews BBC 2's new political drama 'Our Friends in the North'

PETER FLANNERY'S nine-part epic traces a web of graft and corruption as it affects – and in some cases envelops – the lives of four childhood friends from Newcastle.

On the eve of the 1964 general election, Nicky (Christopher Eccleston), just back from spending his vacation doing voluntary work for the civil rights movement in the States, delays his return to university in order to campaign for the Labour Party.

Nicky is in love with Mary (Gina McKee) but is eventually supplanted in her affections by Tosker (Mark Strong), a smooth-talking, guitar-playing Jack-the-lad who, despite being tone deaf, gets star billing in his mum and dad's pub.

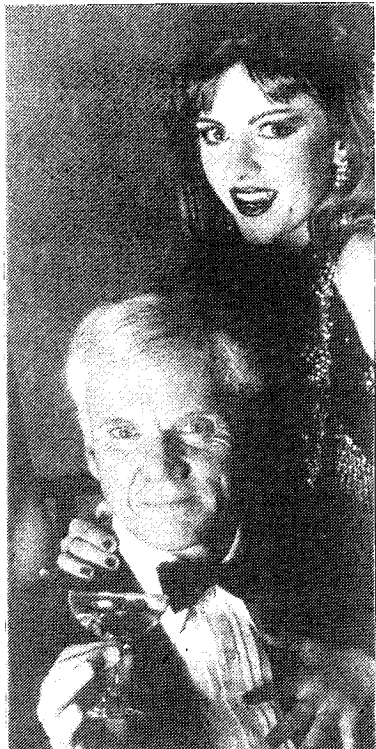
The fourth character, Geordie (Daniel Craig), wants to form a band with Nicky and Tosker, but this comes to nothing when Nicky's party commitments take greater priority.

Geordie's fight with his father causes him to flee

Newcastle for a London of Soho porn shops, strip clubs, bent coppers and murderous criminals—a

world that his underworld boss, Benny Barratt (Malcolm McDowell in a typically menacing role) is hell-bent on controlling.

Meanwhile Mary, her university career never having even begun, is trapped with babies, domestic drudgery and the lying and womanising Tosker.



Malcolm McDowell: typically menacing

Nicky falls in with Austen Donohue (Alun Armstrong) and with John Edwards (Geoffrey Hutchings), they wine, dine and bribe every single councillor and council official they

involved because he is impatient for change. At odds with his father, a former Jarrow marcher who now says that it "doesn't matter who wins elections, nothing changes", he is impressed with Donohue's determination to rebuild the North and provide decent housing for ordinary people.

He is soon disillusioned. After working with Donohue on the 1966 election campaign he becomes increasingly aware that Labour promises are meaningless and that providing decent housing is not about quality of life but about fast-bucks for the Tory capitalists.

Donohue explains that the election was fought on television and that it is no longer possible to stand on a soapbox and rail against all "the crooks and cowards, because" he says, "nobody's interested. People can't see how the big issues connect with their lives any more."

Flannery's drama shows that when 'socialist' politicians get into bed with enterprise capitalists to generate production and wealth, the results are both disastrous, and morally corrupting of the individuals involved.

It is not yet clear where he is taking us.

At the Labour club Nicky encounters a newspaper-selling anarchist

whose publication talks of Wilson's betrayal of the working class.

It remains to be seen whether the se-

ries will argue that capitalism can only be overthrown through a revolutionary socialist programme and that this can be made to work.

Nevertheless, it is extremely watchable and bold. Flannery had quite a struggle to get it made and it is good to see some real political drama back on television.

**Donohue explains that it is no longer possible to rail against all "the crooks and cowards, because" he says, "nobody's interested"**

can find to garner contracts for the building company owned by Edwards.

Edwards and Donohue are barely disguised versions of T Dan Smith and John Poulson, who in the sixties gained contracts for Poulson's building firm by bribing councillors and public officials with money, free houses and foreign travel.

The young idealistic Nicky gets in-

## What's Happening

### February

**Saturday February 3: National Meeting of Socialist Campaign Groups.**

Saturday February 3: Liverpool Dockers demonstration. Assemble 10.30am, Myrtle Parade, top of Hardman Street, Liverpool.

**Monday February 5: Trade Union News Discussion Forum on French strikes with Francine Bavay, SUD, 7pm, Room 12, Friends Meeting House near Euston Station. Sheila Cohen 0171 700 1550**

Saturday February 10. FACE na-

tional conference, Coventry.

**Saturday February 17: Manchester Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill, 1pm, Pakistani Community Centre, Stockport Road, Longsight.**

19-23 February: Student week of action against Immigration and

Asylum Bill.

**Saturday February 24: National demonstration against Immigration and Asylum Bill. Assemble 11 am Embankment, London.**

### March

March 23: Welfare State Network Conference.

## FEEDBACK

Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters. Address them to 'Feedback', PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU. Letters over 300 words are edited for brevity and concision.

## WHAT WE'RE 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!

### Get organised! Contact us now!

- I want to know more about Socialist Outlook.
- I would like to sell Socialist Outlook.
- Please send me your introductory pamphlet:— 'Socialism After Stalinism'. I enclose a cheque for £1.00 payable to Socialist Outlook.
- Send me details of the Socialist Outlook Fourth International Supporters' Association.

Name .....

Address .....

Post Code .....

Tel. ....

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



50p • No. 96  
February 3, 1996  
5 FF • \$1 • 2DM  
1500 lire • 30BF • f1

Scargill's first stand:  
the Socialist Labour  
Party in Hemsworth  
Page 5

Building solidarity  
with Bosnia after  
NATO partition  
Page 9

Bloody Sunday and  
the Irish Republican  
dream  
Page 10

Maastricht  
'One Nation' Labour  
and the Tory crisis  
Centre pages

# Socialist OUTLOOK

**Labour should put need before profit**

# Solidarity not stakeholding!

THE GOOD news from Tony is that we have all been transformed into loving, caring stakeholders with a deep feeling for the good society that we can call our own. Unfortunately this message is lost on most of us.

It is difficult, for example, to claim that we all deserve a stake when company bosses make millions and Blair is unprepared to give a paltry minimum wage of £4.15 an hour.

It is also difficult to swallow Blair's talk of a moral community at work when dockers in Liverpool have been victimised. And Blair is substituting a commitment to full employment with workfare style plans for the unemployed.

How is it that the society in which we are supposed to have a stake in ends up spending millions of pounds on rail privatisation, yet claims that there is no money for schools and hospitals?

What sort of stake are



Photo: Andrew Ward

*Deepening divisions are taking place as the welfare state is gradually being dismantled*

women supposed to have when attacks on the welfare state means that more and more burden falls on them?

What sort of stake are workers supposed to have when Blair refuses to repeal the anti-union laws and tells them to buy shares instead?

How are black people to understand stakeholding when the Immigration and Asylum Bill threatens constant harassment over 'immigration status'?

This is a society where asylum seekers are locked up while the Maxwell brothers

go free.

All in all, stakeholding is just another excuse for inequality and for deepening divisions that are taking place as the welfare state is gradually being dismantled.

In place of all the warm words emanating from the

mouths of the Labour front bench socialists have to take up the fight for a different society—one based on human need rather than profit.

This means standing in solidarity with all those fighting for an alternative in Britain and abroad.