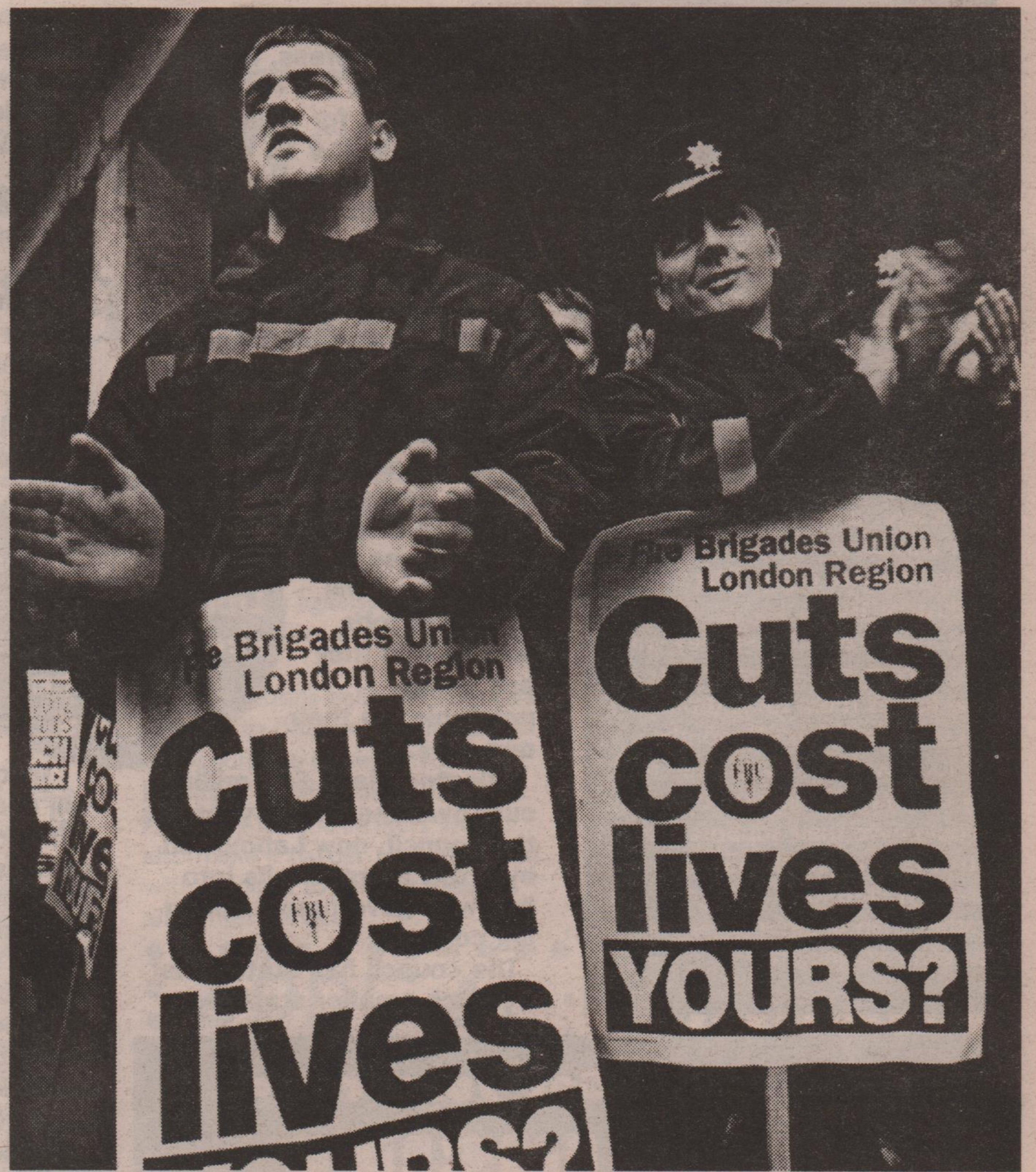


Socialist DOWNLOOK

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Gordon Brown's £40 billion welfare illusion

Now you
see it ...
Now
you don't!



FIRE FIGHTERS across the country have been battling against a wave of cuts in service forced on councils by government spending limits. But they and other groups of public sector workers have been offered no relief by Brown's handout, which retains rigid limits on local government spending.

LABOUR MINISTERS know how it's done: many of them spent almost 20 years exposing Tory claims to be "spending more than ever" on health, education and social security. Now, like a tired old Paul Daniels routine, they are using the same tedious tricks themselves in government.

They know that the real spending figures can be inflated to create a popular public image one day, and then busi-

ness can revert to the normal routine of cuts and conflict. Gordon Brown's claim to be pumping extra billions into health and education in the long-awaited Comprehensive Spending Review centred on two key deceptions:

* The "increases" over the next three years include every pound spent above the current budgets - effectively counting each increase twice. (See page 5)

* The "real terms growth" rests on the assumption that

nurses, doctors, teachers and others will effectively subsidise public services for another three years through a further pay freeze.

Labour hopes to have ended debate on resources for three years. But as the media headlines subside and the rave reviews are overtaken by the harsh reality in the classrooms and on the wards, it will take more than Brown's conjuring prowess to prevent an angry backlash.

Noon workers still waiting for recognition

BEFORE the publication of the 'Fairness At Work' White Paper, the TUC held up the workers of Noon Products as the prime example of the need to change the law on union recognition.

Noon Products is a very profitable company, the biggest supplier of curry products to supermarkets Sainsbury and Waitrose and also supplies France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Conflict has been building up for 10 years at its Southall base which employs 350 workers. Management is abusive and intimidatory.

In September 1997 the whole workforce joined the GMB. Management refused union recognition and told them they should 'make their own union' and forget the GMB.

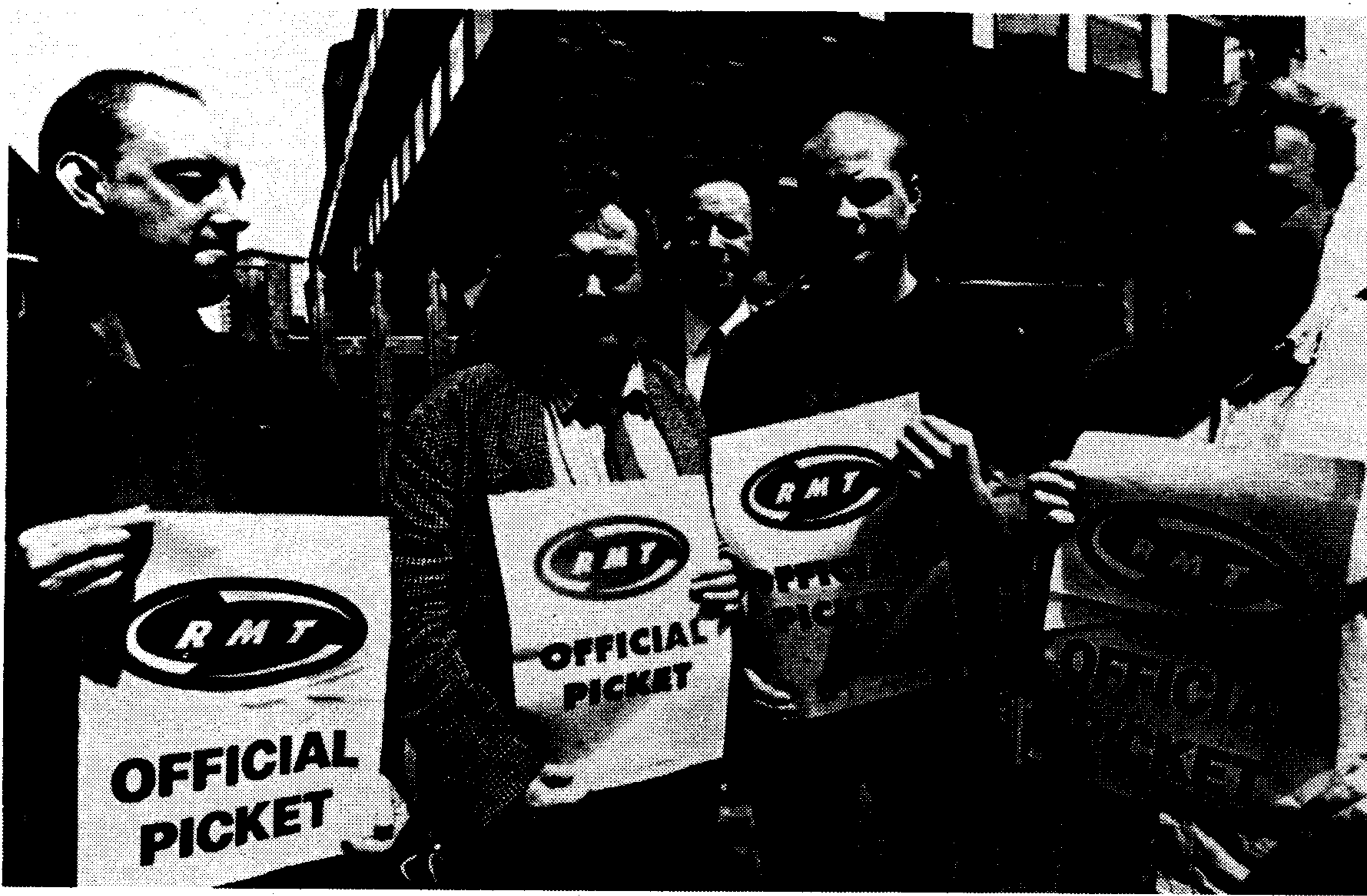
They even offered 50p increments on pay if they left the union, which was rejected. Management created new posts of floor manager which they persuaded some shop stewards to take on.

Despite a big demonstration of support through Southall, a lot of publicity, the support of several local MPs, and a petition with 15,000 signatures delivered to 10 Downing St, management refused to budge.

Management declared one of the stewards, Rana, medically unfit for work despite his doctor saying he was fit. He was taken back after a big demonstration, but was sacked in May of this year. His case is going to an Industrial Tribunal.

Noon's are adamant they will not recognise a union until the law forces them to, and that could be another 18 months.

Noon workers have been told by drivers at Waitrose, that they would have their support if they struck. Why has the GMB passively waited for a change in law rather than organise strike action to win recognition?



Andrew Wigard

Rail: vote to fight on

Infrastructure workers on the rail network have now taken 11 days of industrial action. The maintenance companies have lost millions of pounds in delayed contracts and lost work.

A successful conference of infrastructure workers with over 250 delegates has now decided to continue the action with a mixture of weekday overtime bans and weekend strikes.

Despite attacks on key activists morale remains high. Support committees should be set up to organise pickets and assist the strikers financially.

Islington council staff ballot on jobs fightback

Elkie Dee
AS WE GO to press, Islington Union awaits the results of a branch ballot for strike action in support of the 12 Housing Needs Officers sacked for going on strike in protest at job losses.

While there is sympathy for the strikers in the branch, confidence has been lowered by a period of restructuring and job losses.

Many other workers are being moved to new offices and subjected to a reselection process in which some will lose their jobs, and be told they are "unappointable" to their own jobs.

Islington plans £60 million cuts over the next 4 years as the council, now Labour-led by a tiny margin, falls into line with government spending controls.

The council has stated that a "much smaller staff group"

will run it and that pay increases will be limited to 2 per cent, unless funded by "additional savings". Many more services face privatisation in the guise of Best Value and joint venture PFI partnerships with the private sector.

For the councillors, New Labour or Liberal Democrat, breaking the will of the unions in the borough to resist is essential to drive through these plans. Dealing with those who fight back with unprecedented severity is an intentional part of this process for management and for elected councillors. Council trade unionists in the borough will need courage and determination, and a clear strategy of resistance, in response. This will involve

* linking the struggles of different sections of workers against cuts and privatisation together

* putting pressure on local politicians and Labour Party activists

* making connections with local campaigns by service users against privatisation, for example tenants organising to oppose housing sell-offs

* working with other local labour movement and community activists

What happens in Islington does have significance for others. If Islington Council succeeds in driving through the cuts, other councils inside and outside London will be looking for ideas on how to do the same.

They will share their ideas and experiences on "best practice". We need to share ours on "best fightback".

Councillors, New Labour or Liberal Democrat, seek to break the will of the unions

Unions and tenants unite to defeat Council house sell-offs

Glenn Voris, UCATT member (Secretary of St Helen's TUC, personal capacity)

A CAMPAIGN has started to resist attempts by St Helen's Council to privatise 800 council houses this September.

Next year they plan to extend this to over 4,000 Council houses.

Socialist Outlook took the lead in fighting back, by getting a motion passed within the joiners' UCATT branch calling for a joint campaign between unions, tenants, and community groups.

The first campaign meeting was to be held on 22 July. Already at time of writing, it looks likely to be well attended. However, the Communist Party led Union branch has evaded the campaign so far.

A vigorous NO campaign involving flyposting, leafletting and public meetings on council estates is required.

It is vital that this round of council house sell-offs is defeated to give confidence to the campaign before next year's onslaught.

Nationally, New Labour has announced its plans to sell off 85,000 Council houses this year and double this next year.

This is combined with an attack on Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs - Council run direct works departments) under the new "Best Value" regime which has replaced Compulsory Competitive Tendering.

Best Value is a rebranding of the privatisation of local services, a less threatening name for something even worse.

Combined with Labour's stated intention to enforce tight spending limits on local authorities, it will mean

wholesale sell-offs of every asset

or service that can be sold, if not defeated by campaigns involving tenants, workers and other service users.

This move of privatising the DLOs has stepped up a gear with Labour's plans to privatise all DLOs in Scotland, which has already begun in North Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire, which has been met with mass DLO trade union meetings.

The response of tenants and trade unionists to fight council house privatisation is now gaining ground. UCATT has said in its national journal that "members and tenants can unite to resist transfer (privatisation) of council houses".

Conference

Tenants are also getting organised. A national conference was held on 18 July with representatives from all the 70 local tenant campaigns attending - this is a big step forward.

However, UCATT and the other DLO trade unions need to unite with this organisation to resist wholesale privatisation and destruction of the DLOs nationally, to safeguard tens of thousands of jobs.

Locally, privatisation of services continues with the news on July 17 that St Helen's Council has lost the tender for its school meals service, affecting over 500 jobs. This latest attack needs to be linked with the council house sell offs to build one united campaign against privatisation.

The Welfare State Network/United Campaign to Repeal Anti-Trade Union Laws' march from Birmingham to Blackpool Labour Party Conference in September is an ideal opportunity to build a real fightback between workers, tenants and the users of public services.

ALAN THORNETT Get your copy!

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Alan Thornett's first-hand account of trade union struggles in the car industry from the 1970s, with serious lessons for trade union activists today.

448 pages, illustrated. £11.95 plus £2 post and packing, from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

No "fairness" without a fight!

ANOTHER ROUND of trade union conferences is over. More than a year after the election of Blair's new Labour government it is clear that this government has done nothing to meet the needs of the millions of trade unionists that voted for it in May 1997.

Instead it has cuddled up to the bosses – whether in driving through further restrictions on public spending with all the associated implications for pay, conditions and jobs and services or in pushing further for a flexible labour market. Privatisations go steaming ahead whether under the guise of Private Finance Initiatives or 'Best Value'.

And on the two key issues on which the trade union leaders staked so much – recognition and the minimum wage – what has been served up is a mess of potage.

The trade union conferences have been a mixed bag. The bureaucrats certainly did not get everything their own way on a series of key debates. Even where they won key votes much of the discussion from conference rostrums demonstrated that for activists the honeymoon with the government is certainly over.

But criticism alone is not sufficient.

Union organisation on the ground – and morale in the workplace – was severely battered by the long night of Tory rule. Confidence and combativity can't be rebuilt over night.

EDITORIAL

Beyond this even among militants there is a vacuum of perspectives. A whole layer of shop stewards don't remember the last Labour government. Rebuilding confidence in the current situation is not straightforward.

Industrial action remains at a low ebb, despite important actions in a series of long standing disputes and important new ones.

The leaderships of a growing number of unions, not confident of their continued hold on the reins of power as the bosses' offensive bites deeper and forces their members to contemplate action, have launched or stepped up vicious witch-hunts.

Under the guise of assaults on the far left, they seek to stymie the ability of any union members to act or organise independently of the official union bureaucracy, and especially to make it harder for them take effective action to defend jobs, conditions and services.

In this context effective campaigning is paramount. The anti-union laws are the central obstacle to militant action. Blair's recognition package is not only an insult to trade unionists. As he so proudly trumpets, it leaves Britain with the most unreg-

ulated, labour market in the advanced capitalist world.

And it is quite clear that without a substantial campaign of mass action to force further changes that is all that is on offer from New Labour. This is what we were all told we must behave for during the years of Tory rule.

This is why the development of the United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-union Laws is such a significant initiative. After a shaky start the recent recall conference took important steps forward on the question of structure – making participation from a broader layer possible, whether or not they were able to win support from their national union.

Support for the campaign needs to be built at every level of the Labour movement. The decision to make the London May Day demonstration a national event focused on the demand the laws are repealed deserves the backing of every trade union branch in the country.

Resolutions will not be enough – detailed plans will need to be laid to get the maximum numbers involved and down top London. That is why the development of the United Campaign at a regional level will be key.



Labour is pressing ahead with its policies: unions must fight back for theirs

■ United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws c/o John Hendy PO Box 17556 London EC2Y 8PA or Lol Duffy, Liverpool City UNISON, Victoria St, Liverpool L2 6QL

■ The United Campaign, together with the Welfare State Network, is organising a march from Birmingham to Blackpool to Labour Party Conference.

Leaving Birmingham on September 19, it focuses on the twin themes of defence of the welfare state and repeal of the anti-union laws. The march will link up with the demonstration called by UCLH UNISON on the eve of conference. Get your organisation to sponsor a marcher for £150.

Tameside strikers lead national struggle against privatisation

Adam Hartman

ELDERLY residents are being used as guinea pigs by Tameside Care Group (TCG) in an exercise of cost-cutting and management intransigence.

Striking care workers and their supporters are holding a public hearing to highlight the deterioration in care of residents and to break the council's information black-out on the dispute.

The council has banned its libraries from displaying information about the strike, and is charging £60 for a document on the running of the homes which should be in the public domain.

On June 2 TCG carried out its threat to sack the strikers if they refused to sign new contracts. Since then the strikers have stood firm and have received strong support from the local labour move-

ment and UNISON members nationally.

The dispute is the outcome of eight years of mismanagement and mistreatment of staff. In 1992 Tameside Enterprises Ltd. collapsed with over £2 million of debts, only two years after it was set up by the council to run its elderly persons homes. The crisis was "resolved" at the expense of staff, whose conditions were attacked time and again.

Now TCG wants to pass the council's £300,000 cut in funding for residential placements onto the workforce, cutting basic pay for staff taken on before 1992 from £4.50 per hour (days) or £5.68 (nights) to £3.60 or £3.75 per hour, and cutting holiday pay and ending sick pay for all staff.

Strike supporters in Manchester recently won a victory against

Apex, one of the agencies supplying scabs. Apex has agreed to withdraw from Tameside after a series of pickets outside its head office and recruitment sessions and a campaign supported by Manchester City Labour Party calling on the city council to stop using Apex. However TCG has placed adverts in the Manchester Evening News for permanent scabs to cut the expense of using agencies.

The strike is in danger of reaching an impasse. TCG has no intention of meeting the strikers demands. The anti-union laws give employers the advantage in sitting out lengthy disputes and, with the help of national union leaders, pushing strikers into accepting deals which fall short of their demands. Regional and national officials may negotiate an unacceptable deal as the "best obtainable" and withdraw official backing if the strikers reject it.

There is a need to escalate the dispute to break the deadlock and force the company to give in. So far the strike leadership has stayed within the anti-union laws, in order not to jeopardise the support of UNISON nationally.

But these laws prevent the action which is clearly needed to move forward: solidarity action from workers who deal with TCG, especially council employees, and effective mass pickets.

Afraid of this potential, the council has resorted to intimidation, threatening disciplinary action against UNISON members who attend workplace meetings to dis-

cuss the dispute, or join picket lines even in their own time. They have instructed the branch secretary not to represent the strikers during facility time.

The council has also threatened police action against the strikers if they hold rallies on the Town Hall steps.

These actions belie the council's attempt to disown responsibility. The council is closely involved, holding a "golden share" in TCG. A victory for the strikers would also make it harder to push ahead with its plans to privatise leisure and other services.

The role of the Labour Party in Tameside has been scandalous. Local MP Andrew Bennett, who is a trustee of TCG, has failed to intervene, at least publicly, on the strikers behalf.

Labour Party members must expose the role of the council and put pressure on the MP to stop sitting on the fence. This is a national issue. What is happening in Tameside is already happening – or will happen – throughout the country as more and more services are sold off to balance the books of cash-squeezed local authorities.

Linking up the Left

The launch conference for the Network of Socialist Alliances in England takes place on Saturday September 5 starting at 10a.m. at the United Railway Club in Rugby (close to the railway station).

Full details and agendas can be obtained from the Liaison Group, c/o John Nicholson, 58 Langdale Rd., Manchester M14 5PN.

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Women gain ground in CWU

Marian Brain

WOMEN members of the Communications Workers Union (CWU) held their second successful national conference which attracted women from across the country on the eve of the union's main conference last month.

This followed the first conference held last year after a long campaign by women activists.

The theme was "encouraging women into the trade union movement". The need for the event was made clear when General Secretary Derek Hodgson opened the conference. He pointed out the dearth of women in union positions - only three of the 96 postal branch secretaries are women.

Perhaps the most powerful contribution came from Critchley striker Sue Hoskins who explained how her life had changed during the course of the dispute.

"I think we were all a little selfish at Critchley before the strike. As long as everything was OK for us we didn't care about the rest of the world. That made it difficult

to understand why people would support us.

"When Executive member Michelle Emerson spoke at our first meeting after the strike started, she broke down and cried and I just couldn't understand why.

"I thought it is *me* that is going to lose my job, not her. But since then I have come to feel the same about other industrial disputes".

The conference included a final session which was a 'mock conference', in which inexperienced women had the chance to work through procedures, practice speaking etc in front of a supportive audience.

A further major step forward was taken for women's rights - and the real involvement of women in the trade union movement - when CWU annual conference passed a resolution which gave women's conference considerably more power.

With the support of the union's Broad Left and against the opposition of the Executive, the resolution called for women's conference to take resolutions from branches and to have the right to submit two resolutions of its choice to annual conference.

A resolution has given women's conference more power

STILL waiting for some fairness at work: MSF strikers embroiled in a battle with Metro Cammell in the midlands will no doubt be less than impressed that their leaders can find time to attack the government and employers a free hand.

Stalingrad O'Neill



Row after Region opposes Mayor for London

Stop MSF witch hunt!

Susan Moore

THE NATIONAL leadership of MSF is attempting to discipline the President and Secretary of its London Region Council, Sue Michie and Hugh McGrillen in a blatant political attack on the most left region.

Their 'crime' is that London Region Council called for a 'No' vote in the May referendum against a directly-elected London

mayor and publicised this to its branches. This position followed lengthy discussions - it was not the product of the fevered imaginations of the President and Secretary.

Many other parts of the labour movement in London, including many Constituency Labour Parties, took a similar position. Most, however, decided to bite their tongues and stay quiet.

Lyons would like nothing better than to discipline London

The President and Secretary were first summoned to a hearing without being informed of any allegations or evidence against them. On the advice of Regional Council they refused to attend, instead writing to demand what they were accused of and copies of material.

In response they were given a new date and copies of a letter from Terry Ashton, General Secretary (now Director of the Board) of Greater London Labour Party.

This claimed that London region MSF had been a constant thorn in the side of the London Labour party, had disrupted a consultation conference on the mayor and London Assembly, and committed the ultimate sin of adopting a policy different to that of the Labour party.

Ashton never raised these allegations with the regional executive of the Greater London Labour Party, raising the question of what authority he had to write the letter.

He seems to consider it out of order for a union body to adopt policy different to that of the Labour Party. MSF has the right (even duty) to decide its policies.

Is the next stop discipline against the RMT for having the temerity to strike against London Under-ground, since this is government policy?

Speculation is rife as to whether Roger Lyons, MSF General Secretary is witch hunting London Region at the behest of Ashton, or Ashton wrote his letter at the request of Lyons - who would like nothing better than to discipline a regional body which has challenged him for years.

Whichever it is, this episode shows the symbiotic relationship between the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracies and the path they would like to go down if this is not challenged.

London Region Council of MSF is outraged, and is asking activists in the unions and Labour Party to take up this issue. If Ashton and Lyons succeed in this witchhunt it would make it easier for them and their ilk to repeat it elsewhere.

CWU steps back on anti-union laws

Marian Brain

At the Communication Worker's Union (CWU) Annual Conference at the beginning of June, an emergency resolution from the NEC was endorsed that welcomed the government's Fairness at Work White Paper.

The bureaucracy of the union manipulated the debate and pressurised delegations, and managed to overturn the union's previous policy of opposition to all anti-union laws.

They rationalised that although the white paper did not live up to

the expectations of the trade union movement in a number of key areas, such as the proposed 40% threshold for recognition ballots, it did have positive features.

General Secretary Derek Hodgson went to great lengths to justify the climb down, arguing that the previous policy had left them isolated from other unions.

This was a very passionate debate, and one of the best speakers was sacked Critchley striker, Wendy Williams. She criticised the failure of the white paper to enforce the right to reinstatement

for those who, like herself, had been sacked for taking part in legal industrial action.

Vicious

In summing for the NEC the General Secretary made the most hostile, and disgraceful witch hunting speech I have heard in a long time, viciously attacking the United Campaign to oppose the anti-union laws.

The new policy will greatly weaken the ability of the Critchley workers and others in similar disputes to win. The Broad Left must

step up the campaign to re-establish the union's previous position of opposing all the Tory anti-trade union laws. If we were not hamstrung by these laws the Critchley strike would not have lasted a week, let alone over 12 months.

Tony Blair and the New Labour government need the anti-trade union laws so that they can keep the so called "flexible" workforce in place, to enable them enforce their strategy of cutting wages and condition.

We need to oppose them for the same reason.

UNISON's leaders scorn conference votes

Paul Wozny

A FEW short weeks after the annual conference, at the first meeting of the new National Executive Council, key conference decisions were overturned or ignored.

The National Minimum Wage set at half the median male earnings has been a key demand of UNISON since its foundation. However, the leadership ignored that policy when the Low Pay Commission announced its derisory rates. They claimed it was a historic victory for UNISON.

They soon dropped that line when they saw the angry reaction of members. That anger turned towards the leadership when it was announced that the decisions of the Commission were unanimous - the Commission included a prominent member of UNI-

SON's leadership.

At the Conference in June, the leadership supported calls on the Labour government to improve the minimum wage, but bitterly opposed practical proposals to put pressure on them.

The key debates focused on a call for a national demonstration on this issue, which Conference

twice supported overwhelmingly. The first vote was overturned by a procedural sleight of hand. The second was carried, despite an impassioned plea from General Secretary Bickerstaffe to reject. Conference called for the demonstration to be organised



Ducking the issue: Bickerstaffe

before Labour's Conference in September.

There was legitimate concern over the time scale, so supporters of the Campaign for a Democratic Fighting UNISON (CFDU), on the NEC proposed that the demonstration be organised in October 1998.

The leadership pushed through a delay until March 1999 - and will no doubt follow that with further attempts to delay or scrap the decision.

Conference also voted to support the heroic Hillingdon Strikers, calling on the NEC to restore them to full membership of the union and reopen negotiations on

their behalf with the new employers - Granada has taken over the contract from Pall Mall. The NEC side-stepped that decision by referring it to one of its sub-committees.

UNISON Direct is a new high-tech communications project being piloted in a number of branches. But it has been developed by an outside contractor, Capita - a notorious union-busting firm. Conference overwhelming called on the NEC to end its links with Capita. The NEC decided to ignore that call.

The leadership not only ignore the policy they oppose, they also ignore the policies they pushed through conference themselves. The leadership won the vote on a witch-hunting motion which banned branches from affiliating or contributing to 'factions' and 'outside political organisations'. The

Brown's big 3-year gamble

A CLOSER look at the government's Comprehensive Review confirms that Gordon Brown is staking all on the ability of the British economy to avoid the looming recession.

If, as many pundits are already predicting, the new upsurge in unemployment gathers pace, increasing the numbers claiming benefits and reducing the numbers paying taxes, the wheels could come off the whole plan.

Brown is also hoping against hope that inflation, which has only just edged below 4%, can be kept under control for the next three years, and that public sector workers – whose pay levels have lagged way behind inflation and settlements in the private sector – can be press-ganged into another three years of effective pay freeze, relieved only by dodgy "performance-related" deals as now proposed for teachers.

A massive fire-sale of government assets to raise a one-off total of £12 billion over three years has also been added into the sums,

raising the question of what Brown would have left to flog off if Labour were to win a second term of office.

And the NHS and local government are being urged to enter into hugely-expensive schemes to build new facilities using the revamped Tory Private Finance Initiative – despite the fact that many councils are already ruing the long-term cost of similar "creative accountancy" schemes in the 1980s in which some sold off assets including their town halls, only to lease them back on exorbitant terms.

One significant area where there is no reference to PFI as a source of funding is defence. The navy has been assured of the capital to build two new giant aircraft carriers costing far more than the entire hospital building programme – but without having to rent them over the next 30 years from some consortium of City slickers.

The biggest loser of all in Brown's new regime is local government, where the fine print of Labour's commitment to end

"crude and universal capping" of council taxes (and thus government-imposed cuts in services) has been applied quite literally: capping will continue, but in a more refined and subtle way.

New Labour is determined to protect local people not from cuts in vital services, but from "excessive council tax increases". A series of measures is designed to make life difficult for councils to raise the money needed to compensate for inadequate central government funding, and the "reinvigoration of local democracy" is clearly to revolve not around the provision of services but how low council taxes have been held.

There may be a local price to pay for some of these policies, with Labour-run councils forced to embark on a new round of controversial cuts, and carrying the blame for embarrassing shortfalls in services. Health authorities and Trusts, too are likely to forge ahead with high-profile plans to axe hospitals and beds based on the real figures of the spending



Has Labour come up with enough to avoid new campaigns on school cuts?

review, not on the hyped-up version paraded by Brown and the media.

But clearly the government hopes that the 3-year spending review will enable them to meet a strategic target of withdrawing into the background as these cuts take shape and leaving local bodies to take the blame, while evading the annual debate over levels of public spending – possibly until after the next election.

Their hope – based on a cynical estimate of the feeble stance of public sector union leaders – is that campaigners seeking to reverse local cuts, and public sector workers fighting for decent wage increases will be deterred by the way in which budgets appear to have been firmly battered down for three years to come.

It's up to us to prove them wrong.

Spin doctors' treatment bad for health

Dobson plays double your money!

John Lister

SO DESPERATE was the plight of the NHS after decades of cash starvation that even a relatively moderate cash injection, suitably hyped by the spin doctors and sympathetic mass media, appeared to have worked wonders.

While they were in opposition, Frank Dobson of the Labour mobile minister's office would have made instant mince-meat of any comparable Tory announcement. Now in government they happily use the same techniques – and brush aside the hypocritical protests from the Tory benches.

It worked a treat. "Beyond our wildest dreams" was the response of one pressure group to Gordon Brown's announcement of an extra £21 billion over three years for the National Health Service. The *Mirror* newspaper, which in May declared that Health Secretary Frank Dobson should be "Bloody ashamed", now proclaims him a hero.

It seems positively churlish in these circumstances to look Gordon Brown's gift horse in the mouth, but it is the only way to see how people are being misled.

The sums add up very differently on closer inspection. From a budget of £37 billion this year, NHS spending will increase to £46 billion by 2001-2, an overall increase of almost £9 billion, bringing annual increases of around £3 billion in cash terms, before allowance is made for inflation.

This is, far from generous. Pundits had been warning that an increase of less than £8 billion

would represent a real terms cut, with inflation running at 2.5% or more, and rising pressures on NHS wages. The NHS Confederation, representing Trusts and health authorities, had pressed for a 3% real increase over three years.

But the government has the budget to do otherwise – have a 3% real increase, and add together each successive year's "increase" (£3.8bn 1999, £5.6bn 2000, £8.6bn 2001) – and then doing the same for social service budgets as well – can we make the total add up to £21 billion.

Not all of the money is what it seems. The total of £8 billion which Health Secretary Frank Dobson proclaims as the "fund" for the modernisation of hospitals, clinics and GP premises turns out to be the total of all projected capital spending on the NHS until 2002.

This headline figure is padded with an estimated £2 billion of Private Finance Investment (25% of the total) – which is not only not government money, but also represents a long-term cost to the NHS Trusts, which will have to pay hefty interest and leasing charges on the new facilities for at least the next 30 years!

Another £800m turns out to be estimated income from the sale of NHS land and buildings.

Perhaps this might be seen as

quibbling. After all, a £8 billion increase by 2002 represents, according to government figures, an average real-terms increase of 4.7%, beginning with a substantial 3.7% increase next year.

But following on two years in which the current government has broadly adhered to extremely low budgets set by the Tories, the outcome will be an increase averaging around 1.5% over the next years of this Parliament. By comparison the 18 years of Tory government saw real terms increases averaging 3.2% (though the budgets tapered off sharply in the Major years).

These projections of course hinge crucially on the government's assumptions on inflation, which may be unsafe.

Inflation tends to be higher for NHS goods and services, and the assumption of a further 3-year freeze in the value of NHS pay – enforced in part by changes in the terms of reference of the supposedly "independent" pay review bodies for nurses, professional staff and doctors – is likely to increase the already severe shortages of qualified staff, especially with 20% of the existing NHS nursing workforce due to retire within two years.

Even if we assume the pay limits are successfully enforced, and the inflation targets are achieved, the resulting increase falls far short of a bonanza for health spending.

Only by assuming that the budget might otherwise have remained frozen, and adding together each successive year's "increase" can we make the total add up to £21 billion



Hospitals like Kidderminster and community hospital beds across the country are still faced with closure despite Brown's handout.

Health economists have generally agreed that a 3% real terms increase each year is required to meet the growing costs of caring for rising numbers of frail elderly patients, new drugs and new medical technology.

Gordon Brown's hand-out – if it is distributed where it is most needed – ought to mean that health authorities should be able to keep their heads above water, but it is by no means enough to fill the gaps in a service which is currently attempting to squeeze down spending by £700m this year to balance the books by April 1999.

The £438m increase in social services spending next year falls well short of the £750m which social services directors recently said was required to cope with growing pressures of caring for more frail elderly people, and adds to the cash crisis facing many council departments.

This short-sighted economy seems certain to perpetuate the problem of "blocked" hospital beds as local councils run out of cash to place elderly patients in

nursing homes: 140 beds are already "blocked" in this way in Gloucestershire.

The other obvious casualty of the new situation is mental health services. Early indications from ministers last year suggested that a cash injection of up to £500 million might be available over three or five years.

But the promised announcements have been postponed, and the funds for vital developments – not least the development of new 24-hour nursed accommodation for patients with chronic and severe mental illness – appear to have evaporated.

Whether the limited flow of funds can be directed to ensure that Tony Blair's promise on waiting lists is fulfilled remains unclear.

What is certain is that however much it is hyped, the 3-year settlement is not enough to tackle the underlying problems – and the combination of measures could lead to the opening of gleaming new, privately-financed hospitals for which there are no nursing staff available.

As Home Office's Show Trial collapses Fight goes on for justice for Campsfield 9

Bill MacKeith

CHARGES of riot and violent disorder against nine former detainees at Campsfield Immigration Detention Centre were thrown out at Oxford Crown Court on June 17 1998.

All nine men seek political asylum as a result of persecution suffered or feared should they return to their home countries in West Africa.

But, instead of walking free, five of these entirely innocent men were immediately transferred into Rochester Prison. Stanley Nwadike, Enahoro Esemuze, John Quaquah, 17-year-old Sambu Marong and Harrison Tubman.

The three free men are Nigerians Stanley Ozidede and Edward Onabanjo Agoro, student leader opponents of the Abacha regime who have been granted political asylum in the UK, and Lucky Agbebaku, who received exceptional leave to remain in the UK on the day the trial collapsed.



The ninth defendant, whose case was stopped because he was found not fit to stand trial, is another lad (minor) now in a north London mental hospital receiving treatment for illness caused by the abuse he has suffered under Britain's barbaric methods of treating asylum seekers.

During the trial, Group 4 prosecution witnesses perjured or contradicted themselves, caught out

by the video evidence of their own CCTV spy cameras inside Campsfield - and the Chief Immigration Officer at Campsfield, a civil servant, confessed that, contrary to his previous statement he could not identify any of the defendants.

The trial's collapse shows that the charges should never have been brought. The motivation for bringing the charges on the basis of non-existent evidence was

clearly political.

On the day after the protest on August 20 1997, Home Office junior minister Michael O'Brien issued a press statement in which he made remarks prejudicial to the possibility of a fair trial.

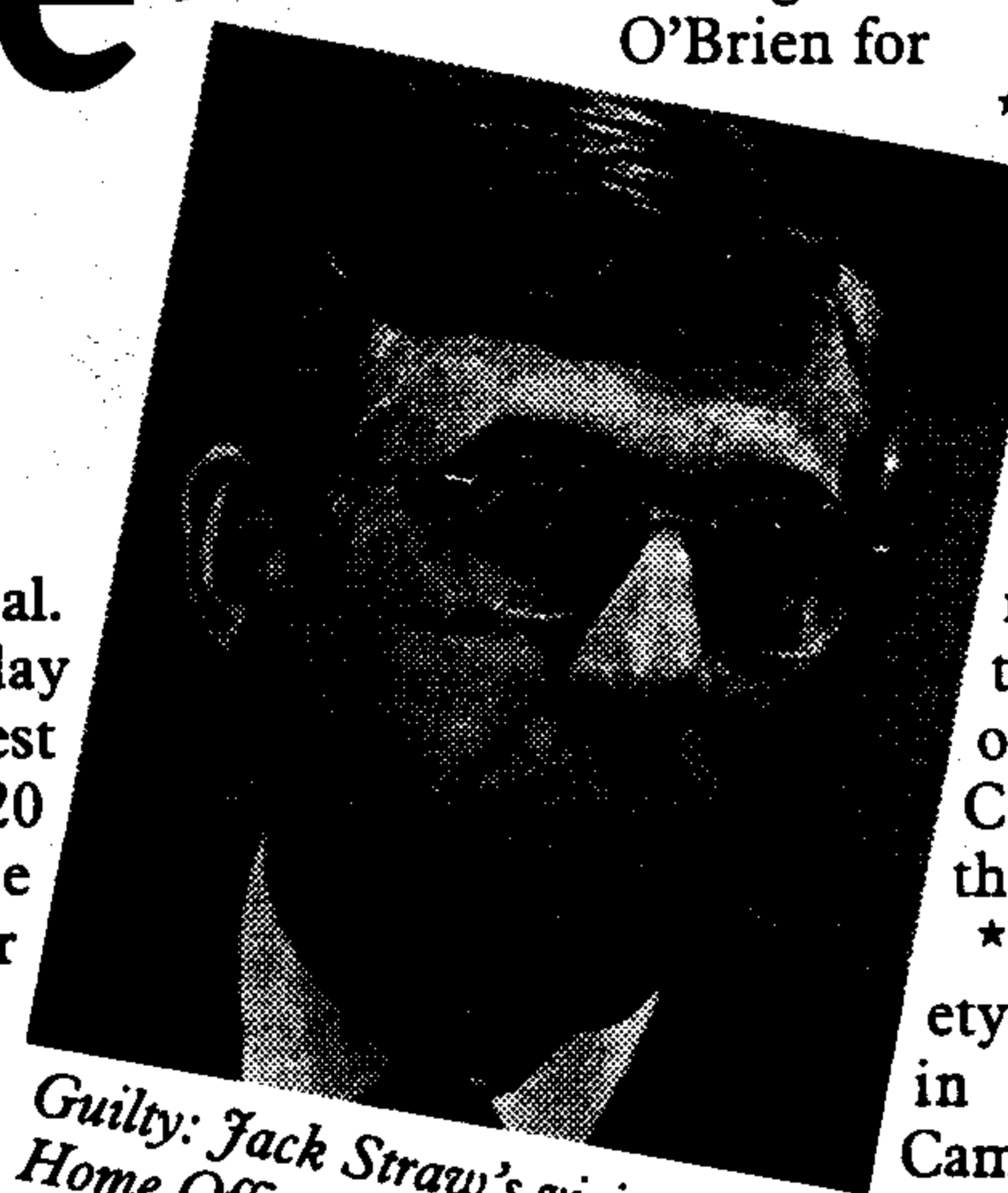
A lawyer present in Banbury police station reported that charges were only made following a phone call 'right from the top' in the Home Office to officers reluctant to press charges.

In view of these facts the Campsfield Nine Defence Campaign, whose participants include the only three former defendants who are free, called immediately after the trial for:

■ The immediate release from Rochester jail of the five men found innocent of all charges (John Quaquah, Enahoro Esemuze, Stanley Nwadike, Harrison

Tubman and Sambu Matong) and the granting to them and Nosa Imasuen of refugee status or exceptional leave to remain.

■ The resignation or sacking of immigration minister Michael O'Brien for



Guilty: Jack Straw's vicious Home Office team

- * his role in setting up this shameful show trial;
- * for prejudicial remarks before the trial started,
- * for perversely misinterpreting the Chief Inspector of Prisons' report on Campsfield during the trial
- * and for impropriety and provocation in travelling to Campsfield to present Group 4 with an award for 'excellence in training' from the Heart of

England Training and Enterprise Council.

■ Home Secretary Jack Straw to apologise to all nine of these innocent men (two of them in fact minors) for the malicious and wrongful prosecution to which they have been subjected.

■ Home Secretary Jack Straw to agree immediately that all nine innocent men should receive an appropriate financial settlement as a token of compensation for the wrongful imprisonment, suffering and persecution endured.

■ Compensation to be included for such treatment as the mental suffering that on three occasions led defendants to attempt to take their lives, and the handcuffing to a guard of one of the defendants throughout a three-day stay in a hospital during which he was in a coma.

■ The laying of criminal charges against Group 4 employees who stated in court that they truncheoned detainees on the head on 20 August.

■ The laying of criminal charges against Group 4 employees who confessed in court that they, not the detainees, smashed up telephones at Campsfield on 20 August, as stated in public by Michael O'Brien;

■ The investigation of possible criminal charges against other Group 4 employees for damage caused on 20 August.

■ The immediate suspension of Chief Immigration Officer John Graham and all the Group 4 guards whose unreliable evidence in court and in police statements provided the legal basis for the prosecutions.

■ The immediate scrapping of the contract between the government and Group 4 to run Campsfield.

■ Finally, the British government has so far failed to respond to the urgings of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Amnesty International, national trade unions in the UK, Churches Commission for Racial Justice, and the report on Campsfield of the Chief Inspector of Prisons.

We call for the immediate release of all the immigration detainees imprisoned, wrongfully and without being tried or convicted of any criminal offence, at Campsfield and other UK detention centres and in prisons, and the closure of Britain's detention centres.

Dounreay's grim legacy will haunt future generations

Roland Rance

THE GOVERNMENT decision to cease reprocessing activities at the Dounreay nuclear power station in Scotland, and to start to close the plant, is welcome news as far as it goes.

But the cost of this decision is incalculably huge, the environmental damage unknown but devastating, and the legacy of this white elephant will be around for tens of thousands of years.

Dounreay contains both a prototype fast breeder reactor, which is fuelled by plutonium rather than the more usual uranium, and a reprocessing plant, which extracts uranium and plutonium from nuclear waste material.

The redundant reactor has been closed since 1994, following the government's decision to abandon the fast breeder programme. The decision to cease reprocessing comes after a series of accidents at the plant, and growing evidence of massive pollution and contamination caused by its activities.

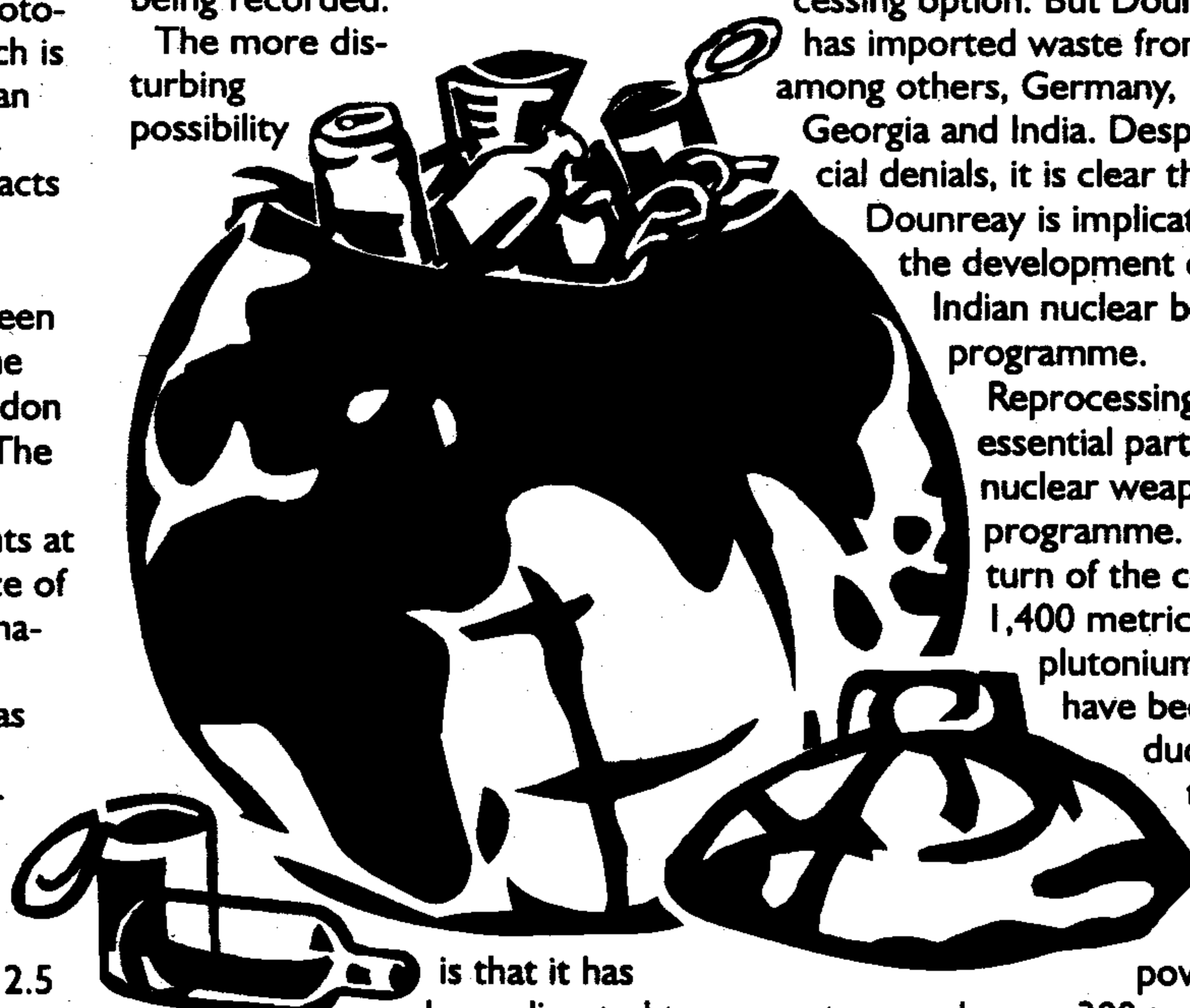
One of the main concerns was the practice of dumping an unrecorded mixture of nuclear and other waste in a 65 metre deep shaft. This dumping was halted in 1977, after a major explosion which blew off the 12.5 ton lid of the shaft, and showered the area with vast quantities of radioactive matter.

Experts believe that the risk of a further explosion is still great, and cannot rule out the possibility of

'criticality' - the accumulation of enough fissile material to cause an uncontrolled chain reaction, ie a nuclear explosion.

This risk is compounded by the admission by Dounreay management that they 'cannot account for' 170 kilograms of highly enriched uranium - enough to produce 12 bombs. Management has attempted to reassure the public that this material has been dumped in the waste shaft without being recorded.

The more disturbing possibility



is that it has been diverted to nuclear weapons production, or stolen. Security at the plant is so weak that late last year six kittens were discovered in the heart of the site, having somehow managed

to enter and remain there for several weeks undetected.

Following the closure of the fast breeder, Dounreay has expanded its programme of waste reprocessing, in the course of which it has imported and stored waste from countries without the facilities, or inclination, to handle this dangerous material themselves.

The USA, apparently concerned by the possibility of nuclear proliferation, has rejected the reprocessing option. But Dounreay has imported waste from, among others, Germany, Russia, Georgia and India. Despite official denials, it is clear that

Dounreay is implicated in the development of the Indian nuclear bomb programme.

Reprocessing is an essential part of the nuclear weapons programme. By the turn of the century, 1,400 metric tons of plutonium will have been produced in the spent fuel of nuclear power reactors, and some 300 tons of it will have been separated into weapons-usable form. Less than 18 pounds (8 kilograms) is needed to build a Nagasaki-type bomb. The amounts will continue to

grow rapidly. By 2010, there will be 550 tons of separated plutonium in commerce, more than twice the amount now contained in the world's nuclear arsenals.

When the first British nuclear reactor at Calder Hall was opened in 1957, the public was told that it would make electricity "too cheap to be metered". It has now become clear that the economic figures were fiddled (with no consideration, for instance, of the costs of decommissioning and waste discharge), while the environmental and social costs were completely ignored.

Life is cheap

In a 1993 application to increase its waste disposal limits, the UK Atomic Energy Authority used an implied value of a human life of £400,000, compared to the EU Commission's value of £2 million. It is only through such distorted figures that any economic case can be made for nuclear energy.

The environmental damage is overwhelming, and will continue for hundreds of thousands of years. The civil liberties implications of continued reliance on nuclear energy are frightening.

The decision to begin the closure of Dounreay - and apparently of the notorious Sellafield plant in Lancashire - should be welcomed, and we must continue to press for the complete decommissioning of all nuclear energy plants. We simply cannot afford them.

Spotlight on police racism

As the first stage of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry draws to a close, police racism, indifference and incompetence has been widely exposed, reports SIMON DEVILLE.

A survey conducted by the BBC revealed that around half of Londoners had less faith in the police than they did at the start of the inquiry. Whilst the first stage of the inquiry has focused on the role of the police during the investigation, the next stage will move on to the lessons to be learned.

Throughout the inquiry the Metropolitan police have been thrown on the defensive. Initially claiming that their investigations were met by a "wall of silence" from the local community, they were later forced to concede that 26 people had given them the names of the five suspects.

Police spent crucial time investigating Stephen and his friend Duwayne rather than looking for the killers. They even blamed the Lawrence family and their solicitor for the fact that there was no successful prosecution.

Finally the police were forced to apologise to the Lawrence family, five years after Stephen's murder, despite the fact their own internal investigation had pronounced a clean bill of health.

Inquiry

Jack Straw, not particularly well known for his stance against police racism, was quite happy to agree to a public inquiry, apparently confident that the inquiry would not be sufficiently independent to undermine the police.

The last time that relations between black people and the police were placed under such intense scrutiny was following the civil unrest of 1980/81 - the

so-called "inner-city riots" - with the Scarman inquiry.

Scarman's conclusions were widely seen as a whitewash. He was prepared to accuse some lower ranking police of racism, but characterised them as a few bad apples. The hated 'sus law' which gave police the power to stop and search whoever they felt like was scrapped.

The main lessons learned, though, were about how the police manage their PR, rather than bringing about real change to the police.

Just over a decade later the powers in the sus laws were re-introduced through the Criminal

criminal justice system.

Black people are far more likely to be charged than whites, more likely to be prosecuted than whites for the same offence and are more likely to be imprisoned.

The lasting lessons from Scarman are that where the police used to use such statistics to argue that black people are inherently more prone to criminality than whites, now they simply avoid referring to such statistics. While waiting for the findings of the Lawrence inquiry to be announced, others are already drawing their own conclusions.

Many black people and anti-racist campaigners attended the Stephen Lawrence inquiry.

When Stephen Lawrence's killers were forced to appear, so many members of the black public exercised their right to hear the evidence that a video link had to be installed so that those who couldn't get in could watch the proceedings from another room in the building.

Media attention was focused on the presence of the Nation of Islam, whose choice of dark suit, white shirt and red tie made them so visible in their uniformed appearance.

Articles on their reactionary separatist politics were a convenient distraction from the anger of so many black people mobilised against racism, not just that of the killers but that of the state and its uniformed representatives.

A central problem of the Lawrence inquiry is that its remit is focused on the police response to racist violence rather than a more wide reaching inquiry into the role of the police.

It would be difficult for the inquiry not to place blame on the role of some officers. However, there is a danger that it will simply give one or two officers a slap on the wrist whilst serving as a public relations exercise for a police force that is racist through and through.

There are numerous incidents where the police have been called

A central problem of the Lawrence inquiry is that its remit is focused on the police response to racist violence rather than the role of the police.

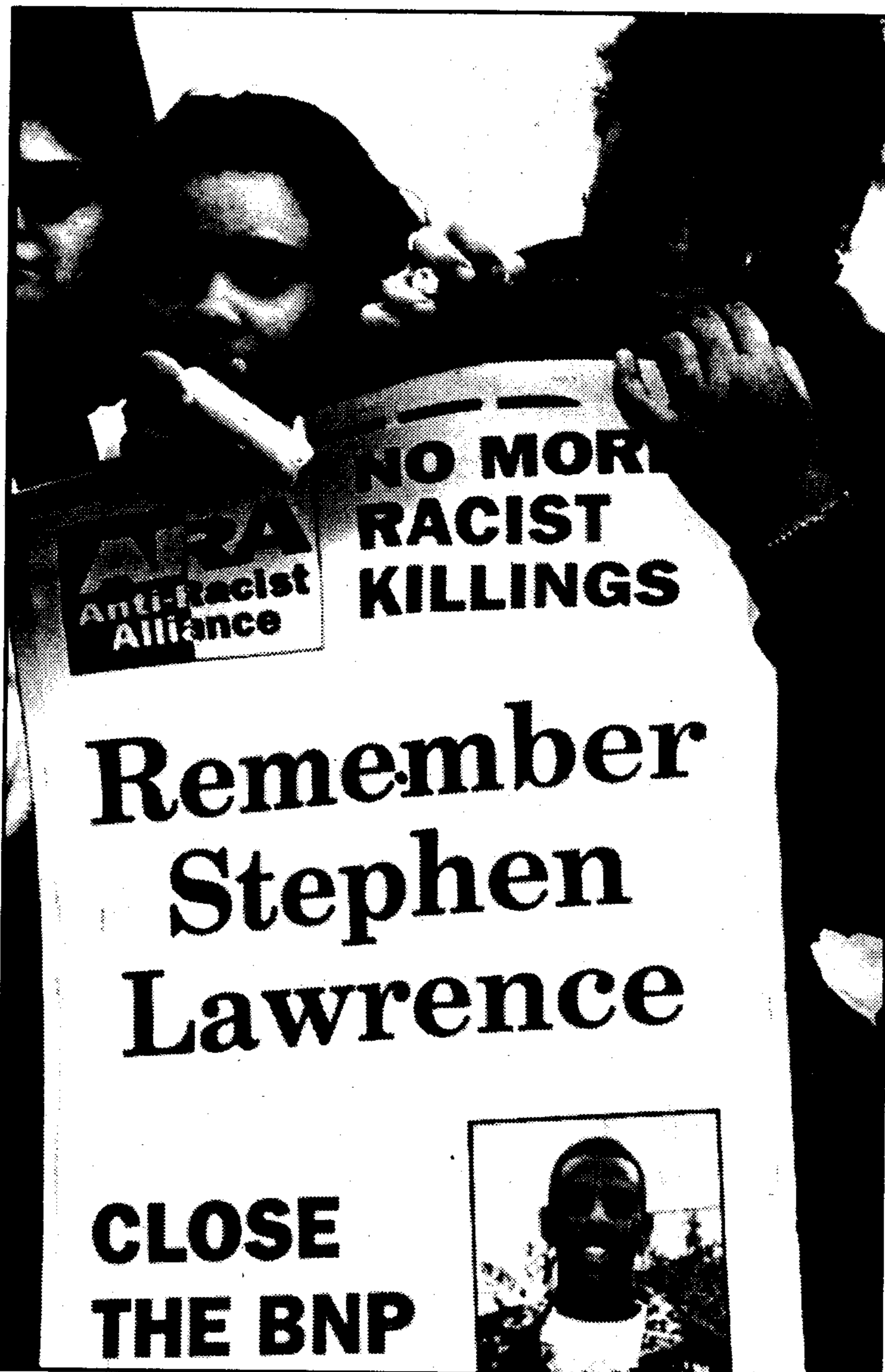


The police have consistently failed to tackle racists, preferring to protect BNP and others from anti-racist protestors

Justice Act.

Whilst the police have learned not to allow senior officers to appear in the media blaming black people for the rise in crime, the underlying racism still exists throughout the force.

An internal inquiry leaked to the press earlier this year showed that powers to stop and search have been overwhelmingly used against black people. All statistics have consistently shown that a racial bias exists throughout the



Andrew Ward

to deal with racist attackers and have arrested the victims of an attack.

Whilst the investigation into Stephen Lawrence's murder has sharply highlighted the racist way in which the police conduct investigations into racist crime, this in itself does not address the root of the problem, merely a symptom.

Defending rich

The fundamental role of the police within society is to defend the rich and powerful against the vast majority of the population. As such, black communities, and to a slightly lesser extent, white working class communities are seen as a problem to be dealt with.

With an institution that is built upon such a culture it is inevitable that the police are going to view black people as criminals, and that their investigations into racist crime will be clouded by this view.

It is impossible to understand the real context of the Stephen Lawrence investigation if it is dealt with in isolation from an understanding of the day to day police harassment of black youth, of police brutality of the numerous deaths in custody and of the generalised criminalisation of black communities.

The second stage of the Lawrence inquiry poses a challenge for anti-racists: how should we respond?

The courageous struggle by the Lawrence family and their supporters has played a crucial role in bringing key aspects of police

racism to public attention. As the Scarman inquiry has shown though, such attention does not necessarily bring about positive change.

The key demands that anti-racists should make on police must focus on three main areas. Firstly that racist violence is dealt with the same seriousness that police would deal with other violent crime, and that the perpetrators of racist crime are prosecuted.

Secondly, we must demand that police powers to harass black communities are brought to an end, that powers to stop and search etc are scrapped and for a demilitarisation of the police. Finally, we should demand an independent body to investigate the police.

The real reason that the police and the criminal justice system have been able to get away with so much for so long is not simply down to its formal powers given by the state.

The most significant factor is the absence of a mass anti-racist movement, independent of the state, that can hold the police to account for its actions. The divided nature of the anti-racist movement allows racism to continue.

The mobilisation of black people around the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, and the links established between a number of anti-racist campaigns, must be built on.

The current outrage at the death of Stephen Lawrence and at the conduct of the subsequent investigation into his murder, must be used to help develop a movement to ensure that there are no more cases such as this.

The most significant factor is the absence of a mass anti-racist movement, independent of the state, that can hold the police to account for its actions

8 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

2,000 challenge EU austerity Cardiff Euro-protest breaks the silence

Terry Conway

OVER TWO thousand people marched through Cardiff on June 13 in a spirited and noisy protest to mark the holding of the European Summit in the capital of Wales.

Our placards, in both Welsh and English, declared - Unite across Europe for jobs and democracy! This was the largest number of protestors in the city since the anti-poll tax movement.

It was particularly pleasing to welcome demonstrators from across the European Union: from France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Ireland and the Spanish State.

The largest delegations were from the AC! unemployed movement in Belgium and France and special thanks are due to them for their efforts. For a few hours at least, the flavour of recent French protests was brought to the streets of Cardiff!

The Cardiff demonstration did receive excellent press coverage in the Welsh media. Several radio and television interviews were conducted by march organisers in the week prior to the demonstration, and many reports appeared in local papers too.

The Counter-summit organised by "Reclaim Europe" was also positive, involving a layer of mainly young people in a series of useful debates about the nature of the bosses' project of European integration and the various strands of an alternative.

Unemployed activists from across England and Wales mounted a further protest on Monday June 15 when they occupied the offices of the Welsh Labour Party in opposition to the Job Seekers Allowance, the New Deal and the pathetically low minimum wage.

Organisers had hoped that perhaps more people would have participated, particularly after the major success of last year's protest in Amsterdam. Mobilising was not helped by the fact that there was so little press coverage in the run up to the Summit itself - a complete contrast with last year when Amsterdam dominated the media for two or three weeks.

After the rows over who was to head the European Central Bank, it seemed that the Eurocrats wanted to dodge further exposure for the time being.

Lack of press attention was not the only factor. The campaign to build support for Cardiff did succeed in deepening the debate on European integration within the labour movement: nevertheless this remains a difficult issue to mobilise around in Britain.

After many years of Tory rule, the real effects of the Maastricht convergence criteria for the single currency are not as apparent as they are in France or Germany.

This problem will need to be tackled in the next months, both in order to build an internationalist "No" campaign if Blair calls a referendum on the single currency itself, as well as to build for further international action such as the demonstration in Cologne next summer.

Financial Appeal! - Unfortunately, the campaign's accounts after the Cardiff march show a deficit of over £600. We realise that you may have already contributed financially to the Committee but need to ask you to consider a further contribution to meet our costs.

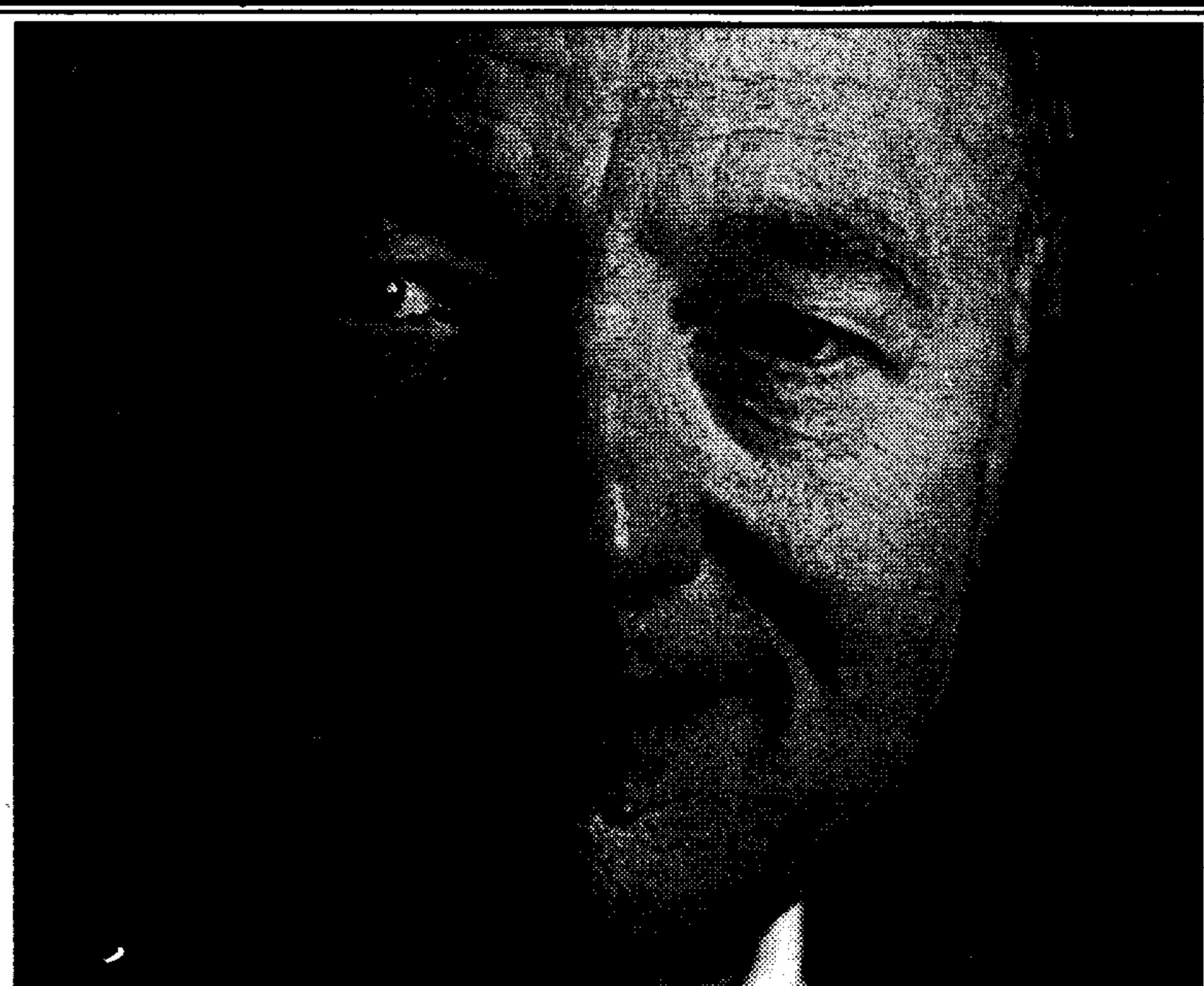
Our debts are the price of a well organised event, and most of the outstanding amount is owed to individuals on the Committee. Any further financial support would be greatly appreciated.

A copy of the Committee accounts is available on request. Please send donations to: Cardiff Euro Demo Committee, c/o CCTUS, 131 Crwys Rd, Cathays, Cardiff, CF2 4NH, Wales.



Stalingrad O'Neill

The largest delegations were from the AC! unemployed movement in Belgium and France



The face that doesn't fit with Millbank: Blair's team are desperate to avoid the Labour nomination for London mayor going to Livingstone.

London Labour stitch up

Neil Murray

ORIGINALLY scheduled for the end of February, the Greater London Labour Party conference finally took place over the weekend of 13/14 June.

It had been postponed unilaterally by General Secretary Terry Ashton. Claims that this was because a venue was not available were disproved at the time - rather it was because many resolutions opposed a directly-elected mayor for London.

Ashton, no doubt at the behest of the national party leadership, wanted to avoid the conference taking this position in advance of the May referendum.

Ashton then used the intervening period to attempt to change the rules of conference. Just as he failed to convince the regional executive of the wisdom of having a directly-elected mayor, they were not convinced that the conference should comprise workshops and only two resolutions decided by ballot.

The executive told him that any rules changes should be voted on by conference.

Lo and behold, Ashton ignored this, and sent out the new standing orders to CLPs and affiliates anyway. He also changed the basis of the election of the regional executive (renamed 'board'), presumably in the hope of getting a more compliant set of people elected.

To prevent any immediate challenge to these standing orders, delegates were packed straight off to workshops to discuss bland policy documents.

When the conference finally convened in plenary session the chair, Jim Fitzpatrick (ex-FBU leftie, now MP) had to apologise for a series of omissions on the documents listing nominees for the new executive.

Unchastened however, he refused to put a reference back of the new standing orders to con-

ference, which would have required a simple majority.

Instead, his ruling had to be challenged, a notoriously difficult vote to win, not just because it needs a two-thirds majority, but also because it is seen as disruptive.

When the result was finally announced some hours later, Fitzpatrick had scraped home. The challenge was reportedly supported by 65.59 per cent of the votes, including 86.7 per cent of those of the unions and affiliated societies. The fact that it is easy to check the votes of the unions but not the CLPs left delegates extremely suspicious of this result.

The left more or less retained their strength on the regional executive, and the two motions the conference was allowed to discuss were passed overwhelmingly.

Candidate

The first defended the right of the London Labour Parties to have a resolution-based conference at least every two years, and the second (carried with only two votes against) supported the right of any London party member to be Labour's candidate for mayor in an OMOV ballot. The latter was a signal that party members will not easily accept a dictat from the party leadership on who can stand for mayor.

The new standing orders meant that crucial resolutions on the privatisation of London Underground, cuts in the fire service and racism could not be discussed, although fringe meetings did discuss them.

The conference showed serious disquiet across the London Labour Party at the machinations of the leadership, while the Left is able to win key votes, but not yet strong enough to seriously disrupt the leadership's plans.

OUT NOW!

A new Socialist Outlook pamphlet setting out the case against the Single currency.

£1.30 including postage from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Cronygate: the real scandal is the politics of Labour's leadership

Monsters or Frankenstein?

In reporting the activities of lobbyists and their claims of access to key ministers, the media have by and large swallowed the governments' line.

This is apparently about outsiders not Blair's New Labour Party. Draper and friends are merely boastful young men fluttering around the fringes of government.

Blair argues that the bulk of the claims are not about ministers but about lobbyists and that the government has no case to answer. Yet the very value of these people as lobbyists is that they can provide access to ministers.

Someone setting up as a lobbyist who can't provide that isn't going to make much of a success. The House Builders' Federation has dropped the lobby firm GPC because it sacked Draper. GPC was of use to them precisely because of the access Draper could provide!

It is not accidental that Draper and his cronies have close relations with people at the heart of government. They have spent the last 15 years laying the foundations for the policies and practices of 'New Labour' in close cooperation with many now in the Cabinet such as Robin Cook, David Blunkett, Jack Straw, and Blair himself.

Many of them have been, and still are, involved in the powerful Labour Coordinating Committee. When first formed in 1978 this was a Bennite organisation of the left in the constituencies. However it moved rapidly to the right (and away from Benn) in the early '80s and played a major role in the witch-hunting of Militant. It was no longer the Tories who were the enemy, but the Left.

It pushed for and promoted the 'Policy Review' process under Neil Kinnock as leader which was used to get rid of left policies such as unilateral nuclear disarmament. It championed passive voting in the form of One Member One Vote.

It provided the campaign backing Blair in the abolition of Clause IV of the Labour Party's constitution and first proposed the use of a referendum as a way of pressuring constituencies, unions and the special conference into endorsing this. 'Modernisation' was their watchword and they put forward proposals similar to those adopted by last years conference in 'Partnership in Power' for 'reforming' and downgrading the NEC and conference.

The LCC provided a platform for Blair at party conference fringe meetings when he was not well known and many of them worked as researchers for key Labour MPs.

Ben Lucas, one of those at the centre of the allegations, used to be a researcher for Jack Straw. He now works for the lobbyists LLM and is still chair of the LCC. Mike Craven, long-standing LCC activist, now an adviser to John Prescott, was previously managing director of Market Access, a firm which merged with GPC. *The Observer* has shown a long list of those now working as lobbyists who previously worked for MPs or the Labour Party.

Liddle, now a policy adviser in Downing Street, had his own trajectory to influence. He played a role in launching the break-away Social Democratic Party in 1981, and stood as an SDP candidate in the 1986 Fulham by-election (saying 'Labour will never govern again').

He rejoined the Labour Party in 1995 and was instantly taken into the inner circle, through his old friend, Mandelson.

When Mandelson and Liddle

wrote their book 'The Blair Revolution', they paid fulsome tribute to the role of Draper. Draper worked for years as Mandelson's assistant. The chair of GPC is Ian Wrigglesworth, an ex-SDP MP.

Draper founded the magazine *Progress*, mailed free to thousands of Labour Party members, and rumoured to be funded by David Sainsbury, previously the SDP's main backer, now a Labour peer.

Draper is said to have got the money by persuading Blair to contact Sainsbury. Liddle, Wrigglesworth and Sainsbury have had no problem finding political soul-mates at the heart of 'New Labour' after leaving the SDP. The Left has been pointing out the pernicious role of these people and their undemocratic practices for years, from the time many of them were active in the National Union of Students and the National Organisation of Labour Students.

There they employed all the dirty

For hire: Ben Lucas (right) and Draper (below)



spring to Draper's defence (it couldn't happen to a nicer man), but it is not a question of individuals. Having done their bit to free the government of all vestiges of leftism, the lobbyists are now enriching themselves through their contacts. Changing the Labour Party into a Party like the US Democratic Party in its structure and policies goes hand in hand with giving power to lobbyists providing access to government for businesses. If it wasn't a 'business friendly' government there would be no role for lobbyists.

tricks possible to prevent the Left having any influence. The upshot is that NUS has been totally tamed, refusing to defend students' interests, first against the Tories' introduction of loans and now against Labour's abolition of grants and introduction of tuition fees.

Blair loyalist MPs like Stephen Twigg, Jim Murphy and Lorna Fizzsimmons (still on the LCC committee) are all ex-NUS presidents.

While Blair has defended Liddle, Draper has been hung out to dry, with Mandelson and the rest of the leadership distancing themselves from their long-term collaborator. Draper may even be expelled from the Labour Party for 'bringing it into disrepute' if the leadership believe that to be expedient.

The Left certainly aren't going to

In defending the role of lobbyists, Mandelson pointed out that the TUC had recently run one of the most professional lobbying operations ever. This surely proves the point - that if the government is not sympathetic to your cause in the first place, no amount of "access" is going to change its mind.

We have to ask why the TUC wasted money on employing expensive lobbyists rather than mobilising trade unionists.

The 'cash for access' issue is not as big a scandal as the Tories 'cash for questions': but for the labour movement the real issue is how these people got into the position of wielding the influence they do, both on a personal level and for their wretched right wing politics.

Blair loyalist MPs like Stephen Twigg, Jim Murphy and Lorna Fizzsimmons are all ex-NUS presidents



Pete Firmin

BALLOT PAPERS will be going out to all Labour Party members from the end of July for the election to the Constituency section of the NEC.

The slate put together by an alliance of the Left [Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Campaign for Socialism (Scotland), Labour Left Briefing, Labour Women's Action Committee and Socialist Campaign Group News] and Centre (Labour Reform) has already had some significant successes.

Despite the leadership setting a supposedly insurmountable barrier of for nominations, the 6 candidates broke this easily. They required nominations from CLPs in three different Party regions - they got them from a total of 128 CLPs, many not generally associated with the Left.

Candidates have been speaking at local meetings to promote the

slate and at fringe meetings at union conferences, and more are planned in the next few weeks. Some candidates have also been able to break through the media silence to get coverage.

The leadership has a problem. Last year's election, when Ken Livingstone beat Mandelson, showed that a candidate too closely associated with the leadership has a problem. Yet they are determined to see the Left defeated.

What an embarrassment for them if Liz Davies, who they refused to allow to stand as a candidate in the general election, were to get elected to the NEC!

Rather than one pro-leadership slate, there were 13 other candidates nominated (although some have since withdrawn). All are attempting to portray themselves as independent, but all are known to be unwilling to challenge the policies and undemocratic practices of the leadership seriously.

Rumours abound that the lead-

ership intend to employ Labour students over the summer to ring party members urging them to vote for anyone but the left. These are of course denied.

These plans have been rather thrown out over recent weeks because the person said to be organising them was one Derek Draper. An organisation, 'Members First' has been formed to promote Blair's candidates and has been given large advertising space in the magazine, *Progress*, which Draper founded.

The contempt with which the leadership treats the membership knows no bounds. The main person arguing in the press that the Left/Centre slate does not represent 'ordinary members' is Steve Bassom, long-time leader of Brighton Council - and now a member of the House of Lords.

Despite the Whips' office initially giving MPs pre-printed nomination papers with the names of their favoured candidates for the MP/MEP section entered, Dennis Skinner and Alex Smith MEP have achieved

sufficient nominations, and although they are unlikely to win they could garner votes from a wider section of MPs than usual who are disaffected with the leadership's performance.

Over the next weeks the Left needs to pull out all the stops to publicise the Left/centre slate and achieve a good turnout. One of the biggest problems faced is the recognition factor compared with previous years when MPs were allowed to stand. Win or lose, the election should also be used to revive the Left, and in particular Campaign groups in the Party, linking up with campaigns and trade unionists.

■ NEC slate: Liz Davies, Andy Howell, Cathy Jamieson, Mark Seddon, Christine Shawcroft, Pete Willsman.

■ For the Conference Arrangements Committee: Doreen Cameron and Audrey Wise.

■ For the National Constitution Committee: Rosina McCrae.

● See What's On (page 19) for meetings to promote the slate.

Get out the vote for the Left/Centre slate!

An organisation, 'Members First' has been formed to promote Blair's candidates

The Left needs to pull out all the stops

Drumcree: finger of blame still points at Britain

JOHN McANULTY surveys the results of the referendum and assembly elections

The Drumcree standoff of 1998, as reported by the British media, reads like the plot line of a badly constructed thriller.

The wise British colonialists hold peace talks and get the tribes to shake hands. We then have the cliffhanger of the referendum, followed by the cliffhanger of the assembly elections, followed by the cliffhanger of Drumcree.

The tragedy of the sectarian murder of the Quinn children leads to a reconciliation of "moderates" and the defeat of "extremists". The Irish question disappears into the sunset, solved at last.

Any connection with reality is totally fortuitous. The real winner in the present situation is the British government. The extent of their victory can be measured by the fact that they and their responsibility for the sectarian hell-hole in the North of Ireland have become largely invisible.

Britain has fought a long and costly war over the past 30 years with very clear aims. It wants to stay in Ireland. It aims to do so by restablising the undemocratic partition of the country and maintaining the sectarian privilege which is the base for unionist support for the British presence.

The peace process rests on two big opportunities:

* The first, arising from the Sunningdale agreement, involves a new willingness by Irish capital to openly support partition.

* The second involved the collapse of the republican program and the willingness of the republican leadership to enter service under the direction of Irish capital.

There was one big obstacle – the Unionists' program, which essentially boiled down to the military suppression of nationalism and the restoration of a full-blooded supremacy, was not a realistic basis for a settlement.

The three years of the peace process gave time for the unionists to reflect on the small shift that the British required while the republicans became accustomed to the little that was on offer from the process.

So British realism told them early on that they would have to split the unionist forces and be prepared to lose Paisley and his loyalist base.

However they were also determined not to fragment unionism and lose their base altogether, so the peace process involved the defence of unionism and of the majority of sectarian privilege within the state, winning nationalism to a junior partnership by reserving some sectarian privilege for them.

The central aspect of the peace process has always been the idea of "unionist consent" – in reality



a veto over the whole process, only constrained by British pressure and the knowledge that the traditional unionist programme could not be implemented.

The breakthrough and actual agreement was when David Trimble of the Unionists, supported by the Loyalist paramilitaries of the UDA and UVF, agreed to this shift.

The referendum to copper-fasten the deal illustrated the wide ranging nature of that veto. It became clear early on that the overall outcome would depend only on the unionist vote.

So an outcome that looked like a total triumph for Britain, with over 70% voting for the agreement, was in fact the closest of close shaves. The only vote that counted to the British – between the Unionist right and ultraright, split 45%/55% in favour of the deal.

The referendum vote illustrated the fragility and rabid bigotry of the unionist base that Britain was struggling to maintain. The bigots were reduced to campaigning on prisoner release and the likelihood that the republicans would win a place in government.

Fundamentally the deal was so pro-unionist that they were unable to find any fault with it, and were reduced to opposing it because it was a deal rather than a military offensive!

The British were able to take comfort from the massive nationalist vote in favour, the total republican collapse to a reformist program and the consequent vote for the modification of articles 2 and 3 to indicate southern Irish support for a partitionist solution.

The Assembly election

The next big test was the June Assembly election [See table]. The picture of unionist reaction emerged in even starker form.

The Official Unionists were humiliated by achieving a lower share of the vote than the SDLP, though managing to win more seats, because of the effect of transferred votes in a PR election.

Their minders in the parties representing the Loyalist paramilitaries – the UDP and PUP – lost half their vote, reducing the effect that their muscle had had in keeping Paisley and the rest of the ultraright at bay.

Paisley's DUP, written off after the referendum, held their vote while the UK Unionists mixture of reaction and "socialist" populism made inroads in the Protestant working areas that the paramilitaries had hoped to hold.

This bloc, along with 3 independent NO unionists, fell just short of the magic 30 seats needed to sabotage the complex working of the assembly. Given the public divisions of Trimble's official unionists and the hidden no vote within that party, it was clear that the threat from the right was growing.

The divisions within unionism were offset by the avalanche of support for the agreement within the Nationalist community. A nationalist overall vote of 39% illustrated one of the totally reactionary ideas behind the vote – the idea that Catholics in the North of Ireland will simply breed their way to a united Ireland.

The ludicrous idea that biology would determine politics is contradicted by the fact that the 39% were in fact voting for an agreement that stabilised British rule and partition, and one that

included within itself a unionist veto which, with British support, could be made to operate even if unionists were to become a minority.

The 17.65% vote for Sinn Fein – an increase of over 2% – was greeted with delight by the republican leadership. It indicated the success of their campaign to hold their own supporters – a policy of rank opportunism that allowed a 'free Vote' in the referendum, followed by the patient lobbying of each individual to make sure that they then joined the canvassing teams and got their hands dirty in the election.

The success of this strategy indicates the total marginalisation of the opposition. They have been unable to explain the collapse of the republican programme, or to break from the idea of the 'nationalist family' with the bourgeoisie.

The only alternative that they have offered so far is back to the failed militarist strategy of bombing London and the 'long war'. This prospect is so unappealing that it makes the Sinn Fein leadership's reformist strategy look good.

The fact that the Sinn Fein vote increased is an indication that the organisation is still sweeping up new voters in the ghettos who in the past would not have bothered to vote.

It will have escaped the attention of the organisation that the vote probably means that they are unlikely, outside of some massive upset in the political situation, to achieve their ambition of replacing the SDLP as the major nationalist party. To do that they would have had to make inroads now, as the party of youth and peace, authors of the Stormont agreement.

In fact the agreement was so bad that their manifesto was mostly lists of things they would have liked to see in the agreement. It was the SDLP who unabashedly endorsed the actual deal, and who increased their vote also.

As the party of the bourgeoisie they will be on their home ground in the assembly and in a government. Sinn Fein will find themselves at a disadvantage in both, especially when further concessions have to be made to unionism.

Drumcree

What did unite the majority of nationalist YES voters was a silent bottom line – the Orangemen had to be stopped at Drumcree.

Drumcree symbolised all that was rotten with the old system –

the public celebration of totally unrestricted sectarian privilege. The Orangemen, and they alone, were to have an unfettered right to march and mark out their territory. The task of the state forces was to assure that right and to assault and imprison in their homes any nationalists who objected.

Britain has no objection in principle to this – what it does object to is any shock that might either lead it into direct conflict with its orange base or prevent the base from functioning. The Orangemen had to be isolated if they were to be stopped.

Massive fortifications were built to prevent the bigoted RUC fraternising with the Orangemen. A puppet parades commission had to be created to absolve the RUC from blame for the ban. The Orange Order had to be linked to the minority NO vote opposing a settlement, and thus, by implication, opposed to the majority of the population.

They had to be conciliated also. Any direct contact with residents would have led to the ban being lifted. The Belfast bigots were to march in the Ormeau road. Heavy hints were dropped that conceding this year's march would win the following year.

It all went wrong. The Official Unionists indicated that all unionists supported the orangemen's sectarian privilege. Trimble was supposed to hold the line with his SDLP deputy Mallon, but disappeared from view.

The Dublin government and media panicked, and laid heavy pressure on residents to agree a march. Blair nursed the situation along with mediation – essentially scrapping the legal structures that the British had set up.

Sinn Fein offered support to an idea of civic forums to discuss grievances as a method of settlement – an idea rejected by residents.

They demobilised completely, in an all-out reliance that the British would keep their word, and supported a silent protest while the Orangemen walked the Ormeau road. Ironically the first to propose this were the Orange order. We walk, and you protest ineffectually.

What became invisible were the massed rows of RUC and the British state ready to force the Orangemen through the Ormeau Road.

In the end the Portadown Orangemen isolated themselves. Not only because of the sectarian murder of three young boys but also because of their utter indifference after the deaths became known and their attempts to smear the family with drug charges.

Now it's payback time. The Orange state has been moved 3 millimetres from absolute sectar-



Not much to celebrate for either of the main players in the peace deal, Gerry Adams or David Trimble (left)



Workers' Liberty parades confusion on referendum "Definitely a critical maybe"

David Coen

THE JUNE issue of Workers Liberty devoted 12 pages to a discussion of what WL supporters should have advocated in the May Referendum in the North of Ireland.

The majority, for a series of dodgy reasons, advocated a "Yes" vote, while their chief theoretician, Sean Matgamna, appears to advocate abstention: having strongly argued against a "Yes" vote, he cannot bring himself to call for a "No" vote.

The starting point for the majority is that the main problem in the North of Ireland is the division between Catholics and Protestants: "at worst (what the Stormont Agreement does) is to institutionalise the sectarian conflict at the heart of Northern Ireland Society. At best it provides a new framework in which the leading communal politicians on each side can manage the conflict" The only alternative "is a return to sectarian war"

Of course, it's a critical "Yes". The WL majority declare themselves against this "...continuation of the long bourgeois attempt to create what they (the bourgeoisie) consider to be an irritating and irrational national problem" (my emphasis).

The discussion that follows contains some real gems such as this, from Martin Thomas:

"The Yes meant not Yes to a partial or limited step in working class activity, but Yes to the London and

Dublin governments as the accredited active forces in this 'stage' of development, after which we hope will come the workers stage"

Shades of the Kim III Sung-loving Workers Party here?

The big problem for the WL is correctly identified by Matgamna – how do you vote for a bourgeois solution without taking responsibility for it?

An even bigger problem is if this is a bourgeois solution, why doesn't Matgamna advocate a vote against?

Of course, we are not against any and every proposal from the bourgeoisie: stopping the Orangemen at Drumcree would be supported by all socialists.

However, WL's public angst about voting "Yes" – which, it has to be said, is the logical consequence of their position on Ireland – comes from precisely this flawed understanding of what the British bourgeoisie is up to in Ireland.

For all the sophistication with which both sides appear to weigh the subtleties of voting "Yes", they are strangely crude in their understanding of the British State. It is assumed on both sides that the British want reform so that they can get on with the business of exploitation.

Imperialism seems to have disappeared, and what's left is a rather benign and put-upon British ruling class pressing change on a reluctant, unresponsive (and ungrateful) region.

The point of course is that, like the original settlement in 1921, the current deal is designed precisely to prevent working class unity, to preserve (slightly reformed and updated) the cross class alliance which is Unionism/Loyalism, and to tie Irish workers, "Protestant" and "Catholic", into an ongoing alliance with the British ruling class. The

fact that some Unionists such as Ian Paisley do not see that "I value the Union" Blair is attempting to reform the union in order to preserve it, shouldn't confuse anyone.

Because WL focus on sectarianism simply as an idea in people's heads rather than making a serious materialist analysis they run themselves into all kinds of bother on the national question in Scotland or on European unity.

To take the example of Scotland: devolution is designed not (as WL believe) for the democratisation of the British state, but its very opposite. WL's support for devolution sounds like the Liberal Democrats.

The reasons given by Matgamna for not advocating a "No" vote are that not only would it appear to be against the popular vote for

peace, it would also be to line up behind Paisley and the Protestant intransigents.

Yet neither he nor the other "abstainers" actually believe that this deal will bring about peace.

The most it will do – and this is a view shared by all sides in this argument – is stop military action by the IRA.

Here's the rub: the only real benefit of the "peace" agreement is to stop the war, by which they mean the activities of the IRA. In fact you'd think, reading some of the contributions, that the IRA are the main problem in the North of Ireland.

But for the IRA, WL seem to believe, "normal class politics" could have led to working class unity and perhaps outright revolution long ago.

If the main problem in Ireland is not British imperialism but the IRA's demand for Irish unity, the solution must be to abolish the national question.

WL advocate a kind of cantonisation of Northern Ireland within the UK: "we advocate a federal united Ireland, with self rule for Protestant majority areas, coupled

with closer, perhaps confederal, links between the UK and independent Ireland to reassure the Irish (Protestant) minority." (My emphasis)

In short, give independence to the "Protestants" and bring the rest of Ireland back into the UK: self determination and "independence" for the "Protestant" minority, while denying it to the "Catholic" majority in Ireland as a whole. Even bourgeois democrats, let alone "revolutionary" socialists, would be hard put to sell this particular deal.

But the cat is out of this particular bag in the very first contribution to this debate. It is not just the bourgeoisie who view the conflict in the Six Counties as an irritating and irrational national problem – so do WL!

For them, the real basis of the conflict is that "Catholics" and "Protestants" are fighting each other for irrational and obscure reasons which cannot be understood in class terms.

Therefore WL wish they would just stop and behave like the British. Taken to its logical conclusion there would be less sectarianism if the Irish would rejoin the UK.

Matgamna is now realising where this is leading: a revolutionary socialist group which allies itself with the British bourgeoisie in helping to contain (and perhaps liquidate) an anti imperialist struggle in Ireland.

But this is a monster of his own creation. Sectarianism is not just an idea in people's heads: it has a real material basis. Once you lose sight of this it is easy to slip into the categories of "Catholic" and "Protestant", to fall for the propaganda line of the British ruling class who peddle it to justify their own "peacekeeping" – and in the end to capitulate to the very sectarianism you oppose, by voting "yes" to an agreement which institutionalises it.

Ireland has always been the acid test for British revolutionaries. This is make-your-mind-up time for the WL minority – and especially for Sean Matgamna.

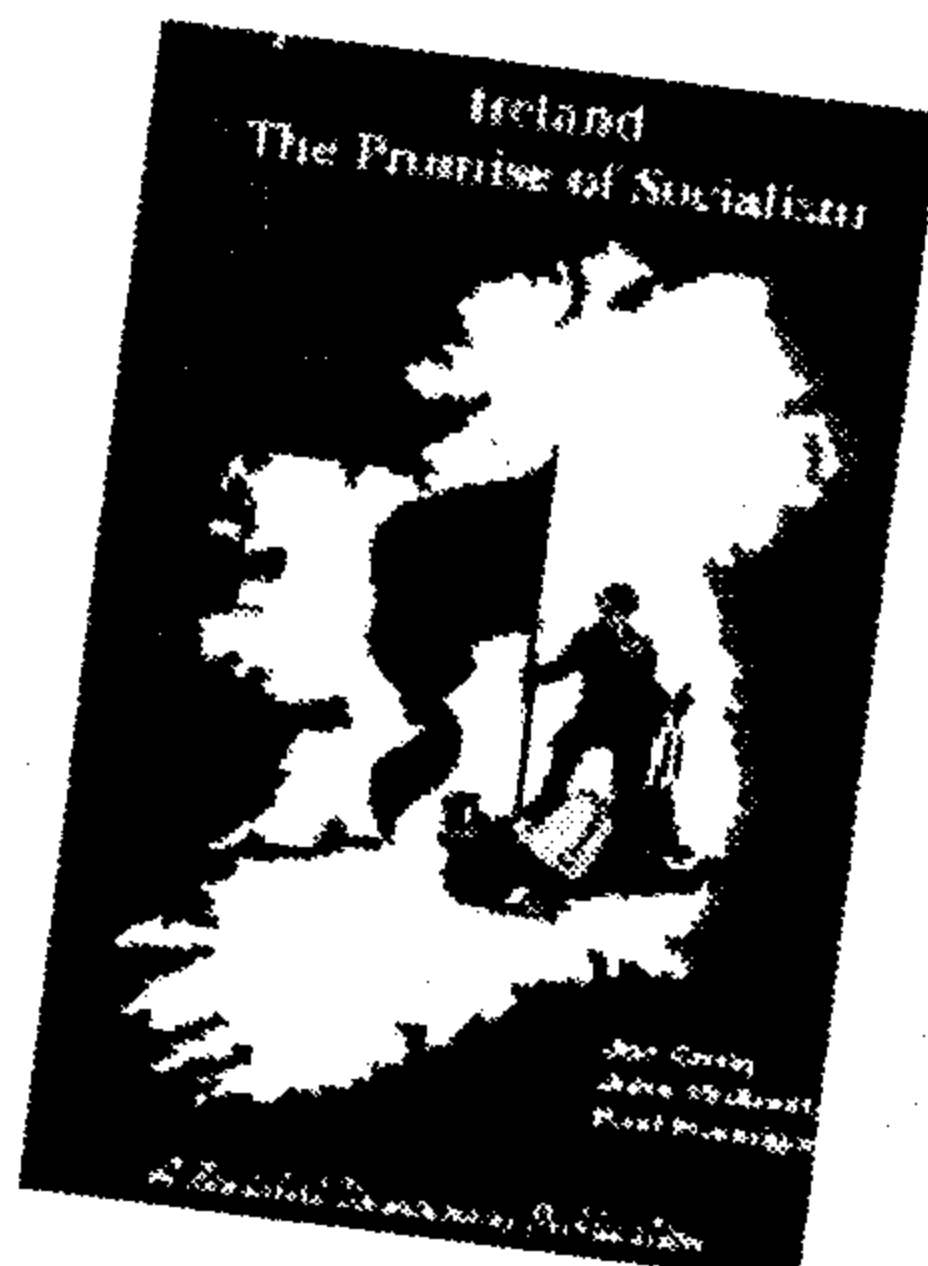
It is not just the bourgeoisie who view the conflict in the Six Counties as irritating and irrational – so do WL!

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Capitalist crisis deepens ...

Anarchy rules!

Anyone wanting evidence of the irrationality of capitalism as an economic system will have found plenty of material over the last month. Two examples are the contrasting developments in Britain and Japan, reports **ANDY KILMISTER.**

JAPAN is currently in its most serious recession since the mid 1970s. Output fell by 5.3 per cent in the year up to the first quarter of 1998. The government budget deficit is estimated at about 7 per cent of GDP. The USA government has organised a major operation to support the value of the yen.

Meanwhile in Britain manufacturing output continues to slide. Despite this the Bank of England put up interest rates again last month and another rise is forecast by many. Profit growth is falling away, and the financial balance of UK companies is at its weakest position since 1992.

The striking thing is that orthodox commentators give exactly opposite reasons for these two sets of problems. The Japanese crisis is attributed to too little spending by consumers and too much saving. In Britain it is the inflationary effects of high consumer spending that are blamed for interest rate rises; while the government and employers claim that high wages are feeding into inflation and affecting profits.

In each case commentators claim that a bit more precision in government policy, adjusting expenditure or taxes, would have removed the problems.

But the Japanese government seems unable to push spending up however much taxes are cut, and in Britain rate rises have slowed down investment while consumption continues to grow.

Marxist approaches provide a way of understanding this paradoxical situation. The problems of Britain and Japan are not accidental results of policy errors. They spring from the nature of the system. As Marx showed, capitalist societies are continually perched between two possible causes for crisis.

On the one hand there are the problems of realising profits. The forces which give rise to profit, keeping wages low while increasing productivity, create a constant problem in selling the output which is produced.

On the other hand there is the problem of generating profits. If demand is increased in order to ensure output is sold then wages and raw material prices tend to rise and eat into profit levels. Japan currently faces the first

problem, Britain the second.

In the past Japanese and British capitalists have overcome these problems in particular ways. Japan has relied on heavy investment spending and exports. But exports are now limited by the crisis elsewhere in Asia. It has been estimated that this will knock 2 per cent off Japanese GDP this year alone.

In addition the USA is increasingly resistant to the growing Japanese trade surplus. This is the reason behind American attempts to keep the value of the yen high and discourage a flood of cheap Japanese imports; just as Clinton has desperately attempted to stop any Chinese devaluation.

Investment spending in Japan has been hit both by the financial crisis and also by a general crisis of confidence. Capitalists are unwilling to invest to produce more consumer goods if there is no prospect of sales in the immediate future.

In Britain the traditional response of employers to the problems of rising wages and input prices is to

raise their own prices. But this has become a more problematic option.

The independent Bank of England is likely to respond to any such development by slowing the economy even further.

Increased international competition has also made it difficult to resort to this approach.

Britain too faces the prospect of cheap imports from Asia and falling demand there; while inflation rates are lower in other European countries as well.

Stagnation

So the unplanned nature of capitalism means that the system in Japan demands more spending and in Britain it demands less. But there is no way of transferring the spending in Britain across the globe and the result is increasing stagnation in both countries.

This process is made worse by the increasing integration of each country in the global market. But current developments are likely to increase that integration even further.

The problems of Britain and Japan spring from the nature of the system

One of the main recent developments in Japan has been the movement of US companies into the troubled Japanese financial sector.

The Travelers Group paid \$1.6 billion for a 25 per cent stake in the Nikko securities company, while Merrill Lynch bought up 30 branches, including staff, from the bankrupt Yamaichi brokers.

At the same time Japanese companies are taking advantage of the crisis elsewhere by buying up South Korean firms on the cheap.

In this way the effect of economic crisis is to increase the interconnected nature of the market while making it ever more unplanned and anarchic.



Another national minority to repress: Serbian forces on the streets of Djakovica. (Below) Serbian boss Milosevic

Kosova: the case for self-determination

Geoff Ryan

WHEN the Kosova Liberation Army first emerged some two years ago, Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosova, argued that it was a Serbian police trick designed to discredit his pacifist policies.

This is somewhat rich, since it is widely believed that Serbian President Milosevic more or less permitted Rugova's activities until recently. If Albanians did not have him to look to they would search for leadership amongst other, more militant, candidates.

Under Rugova's guidance the LDK and other Albanian parties in Kosova declared independence and began setting up parallel structures of government, health care and education. Rugova was elected president in semi-underground elections while a "government-in-exile" shuttled between Germany, Switzerland, Albania and Macedonia.

Six months of renewed Serb repression has radically changed the balance of forces among Kosova's Albanian majority. The Kosova Liberation Army is rapidly becoming the dominant force. Rugova is even losing members of his own party to the KLA, including official KLA spokesperson Jakub Krasniqi.

Parliament

Rugova is caught in a cleft stick. In a bid to shore up his political position, he recently convened the 120-member Kosova parliament, elected in March but never authorised by the Belgrade government.

The LDK controls 90 per cent of the seats, in part because pro-KLA groups boycotted the election. No sooner had Rugova taken his oath as president than Serb police raided the LDK headquarters, where the session had taken place.

Like the KLA, Rugova supports independence. His pacifism has won him international support. But his commitment to non-violence has failed to end the bloodshed or win self-rule. Negotiations with Milosevic in May proved abortive and further alienated most Kosovars from Rugova.

His international popularity is an important factor in his declining support in Kosova. The governments that praise Rugova's pacifism are totally opposed to Kosovar independence. The Dayton Accords, which supposedly ended the war in Bosnia, simply left Kosova at Milosevic's mercy.

Since passive resistance has clearly failed and the west, despite occasional denunciations of Milosevic, shows no support for their struggle, Kosova's Albanians have concluded they have no choice but to fight alone.

Liberated areas

The KLA has been the main beneficiary. It has shown an increasing ability to take on Serbian forces, to create liberated areas and is reported to be organising clandestinely in the Kosova capital Pristina.

The success of the KLA has led US special envoy Richard Holbrooke, the architect of Dayton, to meet with the KLA and argue that they must be included in any discussions with Milosevic.

He has even rejected the use of the term 'terrorist' to describe the KLA. He qualified this, however, by saying that the real purpose of the meeting was to discover who actually controlled the KLA and that this contact did not in any way undermine Rugova's position and authority.

At the same time the Contact Group - Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the US - has made it clear it will not countenance Kosovar independence, which they fear could trigger rebellions in other states with substantial Albanian minorities, such as Greece and Macedonia. They are currently working on another Dayton-style 'agreement' to impose on the region.

Only Kosova's Albanian population has the right to decide whether or not it wants indepen-

dence or accepts some form of autonomy within Yugoslavia. Socialists must support their right to self-determination.

There are forces that have advocated Kosova becoming a third unit, alongside Serbia and Montenegro, in a federation. These include Adem Demaci, who spent 28 years in Yugoslav prisons and heads the Parliamentary Party of Kosova and Mahmut Bakalli, former head of the League of Communists of Kosova, sacked in 1981 for supposedly being responsible for the rise of Albanian unrest.

On paper such a scheme has appeal. A genuine federation, uniting different nationalities on an equal basis, would be a big step forward in rebuilding unity amongst the different nations of the Balkans. However the level of

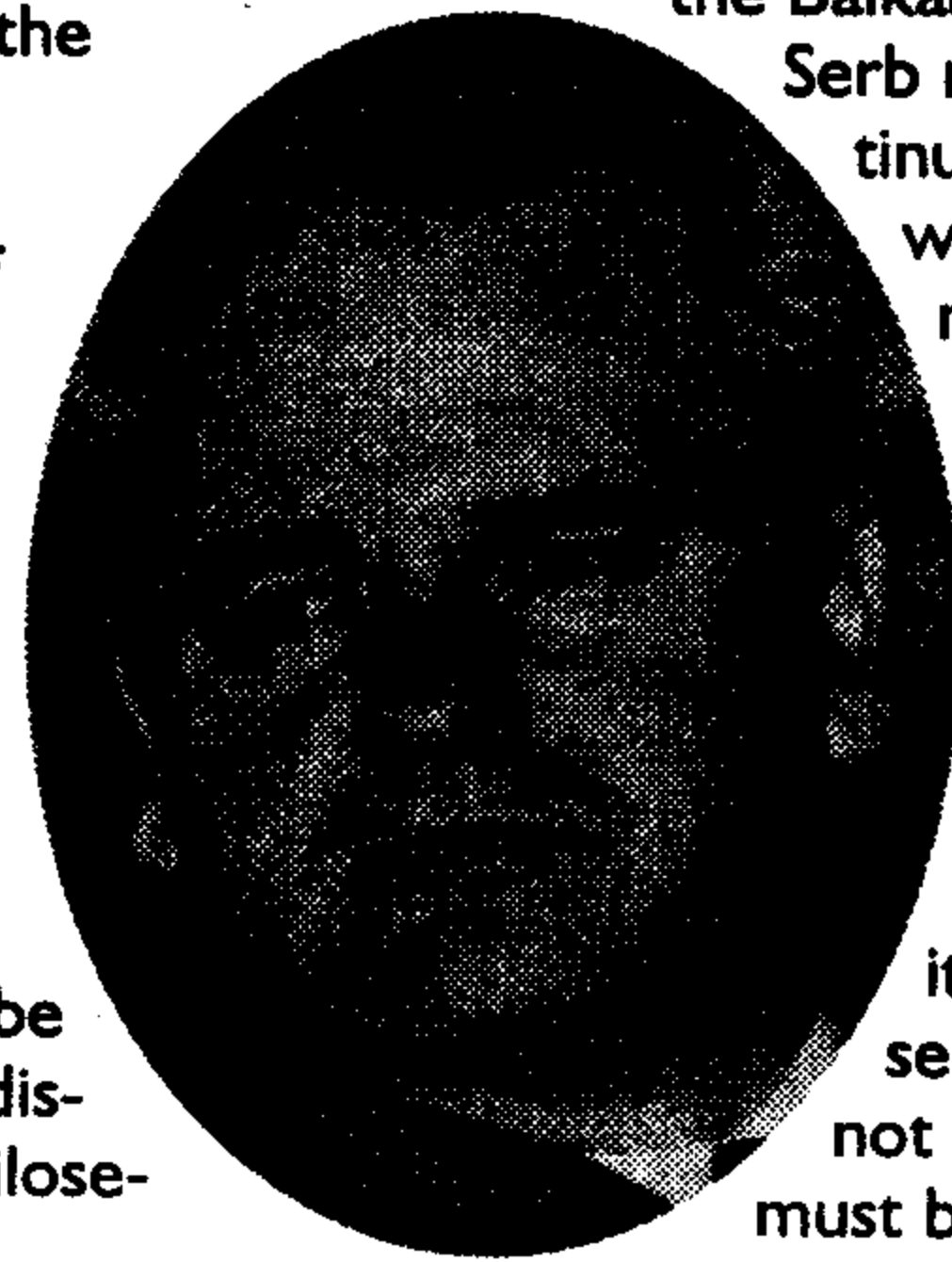
Serb repression - which continues despite the threat of western sanctions - has made such a solution almost a non-starter.

Socialists must also support the right of the Kosovar Albanians to unite with Albania if they so choose. We do not necessarily advocate it. The right of nations to self-determination does not mean that all nations must be grouped within a single nation state.

There are many nations - the German, Hungarian, Russian etc - that are divided between several different states.

There is no reason why the same could not be the case for Albanians. Indeed the KLA has recently retreated from advocacy of unification. However, we reject any attempt by imperialist powers to deny the right of Albanians to unite in a common state.

Whatever state the Kosovar Albanians eventually achieve it will almost certainly contain non-Albanian minorities. Socialists must not only support Kosovar independence but fight against Albanian chauvinism and for full national rights for non-Albanian minorities - just as we defend the rights of national minorities in whatever state they are found.



Nigeria: hypocrites sigh with relief

Susan Moore

TWO DEATHS of prominent Nigerians in a month could have been an accident.

Few have mourned the death of military ruler Sani Abacha, as few were confident that the promised transition to civilian rule he said he would introduce on October 1 would be any more meaningful than the other twists and turns in Nigeria's tortured past over the last three decades.

When Tony Lloyd of the British foreign office and later Kofi Annan visited Lagos after Abacha's death, their demands that successor General Abdulsalam Abubakar move more quickly to restore democracy did not come out of any concern for ordinary Nigerians. They wanted to normalise relationships with the oil rich state, Africa's most populous country.

The Commonwealth, EU and US had been pressurised into imposing limited sanctions on the Abacha regime after the executions in 1995 of Ken Sara-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders who had protested at the desecration of the country by oil multinationals, especially Shell.

While these limited measures did not meet the demands of the most radical sections of the Nigerian

opposition, of international human rights campaigners or of ecologists, they tied the hands of imperialism more tightly than they wished.

As President Clinton's Africa specialist Susan Rice said after Abacha's death "...the stakes in Nigeria are enormous. A democratic Nigeria is key to a stable and prosperous West Africa, an invigorated African continent, and thus to US national interests and national security".

Moshood Abiola will be remembered by many Nigerians as a political martyr even though he came to prominence as an opportunist businessman prepared to do deals with soldiers until the end.

Just before his death it was rumoured that he was prepared to give up his claim to the presidency in return for his release from prison. This was greeted with dismay by sections of the opposition movement.

Abiola died on July 7 aged 60, apparently of a heart attack, when he was meeting an American delegation. Though the body was examined by international pathologists who said that poisoning was very unlikely, suspicions have not been quelled.

Lawyers for Abiola are calling for an investigation into the tea he was apparently brought shortly before his cardiac arrest.

Thousands gathered on the streets of Lagos and of Ibadan, Nigeria's second largest city to protest his death. In Lagos angry youths attacked sympathisers of the military junta who responded by using their machine guns indiscriminately. At least 200 people are thought to have died.

Abiola first came to prominence when he worked for American multinational ITT's Nigeria. He joined the company in 1968

and became Chief Executive in 1971. He developed a close relationship with the military hierarchy under the 1970s regime of General Murtala Muhammad, which gave him a platform for his political ambitions.

In the late 70s, when the military government lifted the ban on political parties he became Chairman of the Ogun state branch of the National Party of Nigeria during the Second Republic, a period of civilian rule which lasted until the end of 1983.



In 1980 he launched the Concord newspaper group which he hoped would influence his campaign to win the presidential nomination for the then ruling National Party.

When his friend General Ibrahim Babangida took power in 1985 after overthrowing the last civilian ruler, President Shehu Shagari, he was again close to the inner sanctums of power.

When elections were again declared in June 1993 he succeeded in winning the presidential nomination for the Social Democratic Party and won almost 60 per cent of the popular vote.

Despite Abiola's own limitations - he had no vision of building a representative government but was only interested in his own power - his rule could have provided a breathing space in which more radical forces could have developed. This was why the elections were annulled and a transi-

tional government put in place.

Three months later Sani Abacha came to power following yet another coup. Abiola was imprisoned by Abacha in 1994 on a charge of treason when he declared himself president at a secret ceremony in defiance of the military. Within a year he was in solitary confinement.

Since his death Babangida, one of the closest advisors of the present regime has called for democratic elections to be overseen by the military to take place in

between six to nine months. This is his, and probably the regime's favoured alternative to the proposals for a civilian transitional government.

Recently released political detainee Mr Agbakoba responded to rumours that the international community was eager to re-establish trade with the new regime by commenting that they were being willingly duped.

"They are just hypocrites," he said. "We have seen prisoners being released before. General Babangida released around 1000 prisoners when he came to power in 1985."

Every time, the international community breathes a sigh of relief because it feels it can trade again with a clear conscience".

They wanted to normalise relationships with the oil rich state



Abiola

Ethiopia and Eritrea at war - the bitter legacy of imperialism

Roland Rance

THE CONFLICT between Ethiopia and Eritrea, virtually ignored by the national media, threatens to overturn one of the most successful liberation struggles.

Following a thirty-year guerrilla war, in 1993 the people of Eritrea voted, by a stunning 98.8 per cent vote, for independence from Ethiopia.

Two years earlier, an alliance between the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigre People's Liberation Front (TPLF) had overthrown the hated Mengistu regime in Ethiopia. Now these erstwhile allies are involved in a bitter military and diplomatic battle.

The conflict, which has led to heavy fighting near the Red Sea port of Assab and Ethiopian air raids on the Eritrean capital, Asmara, is ostensibly a border dispute. Each side accuses the other of occupying several small disputed border areas, and disagrees about the interpretation of a UN ceasefire proposal.

However, the background to this war is far more significant, revolving around the legacy of the 19th century European carve-up of Africa, and the impact of the immiseration of the third world on these two impoverished countries.

Ethiopia was the only African country never colonised by Europe. An Italian attempt to occupy the country was defeated in 1895, while Mussolini's annexation lasted only five years. Indeed, the Amhara rulers of the Abyssinian heartland used the period of the European "scramble for Africa" to carve out their own mini-empire, subjecting Tigrean, Oromo, Somali and other peoples.

Eritrea, which had been an Italian colony, was occupied by Britain in 1941.

In 1952, the UN made it an Ethiopian protectorate; by 1962, Haile Selassie had broken all of his commitments to regional autonomy, and fully absorbed Eritrea into the Ethiopian state.

Guerrilla war

The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), established in Cairo in 1958, launched a guerrilla war for independence. The EPLF was established as a Marxist split from the ELF in 1970, and soon became the dominant force in the liberation struggle.

In addition to a military struggle, the EPLF began to create the institutions of civil rule: in 1983, it claimed to have set up seven hospitals and over 100 secondary schools. It was also notable for the prominent rôle of women in

its ranks - it has been estimated that one-third of EPLF fighters were women.

In Ethiopia, Haile Selassie was overthrown by the army in 1974. Within a short period, the pro-Soviet Mengistu Haile Mariam had assumed power, and Russian support - previously given to Eritreans (and Somalia) - switched to its new ally in Addis Ababa.

The arbitrary and brutal character of the Mengistu regime, its constant purges of opponents, and its continuing wars against the subject peoples of Ethiopia, led to the growth of domestic guerrilla struggles.

The most important of these was led by the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, set up in the north-west of the country in 1976. The TPLF, which eventually formed an alliance with the EPLF, occupied Addis Ababa and drove out Mengistu in 1991.

Its leader, Meles Zenawi, became president of Ethiopia.

The new Ethiopian regime recognised Eritrean autonomy, and eventual independence. The alliance between the states was based on ideological agreement,

and the close ethnic ties between the peoples (Zenawi's mother is Eritrean, while the mother of Eritrean president Issaias Afewerki is Tigrean). However, this closeness masked diverging interests.

With Eritrean independence, Ethiopia had lost its outlet to the sea, while Eritrea, almost the poorest country in the world, depended on food from Ethiopia.

The two states shared a common currency until last year, when Eritrea issued its new nakfa. In response, Ethiopia tripled the price of maize exports to Eritrea. There were also disputes about harbour charges, which resulted in Ethiopia switching most of its export trade to neighbouring Djibouti.

Continuing unrest inside Ethiopia also lies behind the latest conflict.

Ethnic disputes continue, though at a much lower level than under the Haile Selassie and Mengistu regimes. The dominant Tigreans, like the Amhara, are a minority within Ethiopia (the largest community, the Oromo, form some 40% of the population but have never been politically or economically powerful).

This is a war in which socialists should not take sides. We must call for an immediate end to the fighting

According to Australian academic James Thompson, writing in *Green Left Weekly*, opponents of Zenawi within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the successor to the TPLF, are exploiting Ethiopian and Tigrean nationalism, and opposition to Eritrean independence, in order to weaken Zenawi's position.

This is a war in which socialists should not take sides. We must call for an immediate end to the fighting, and insist that issues at dispute between these two states led by successful national liberation movements should be resolved by peaceful means. We must oppose any foreign intervention.

Pressure

The US government is reported to be putting pressure on Eritrea to accept Ethiopian demands, while Sudan, under an Islamic fundamentalist regime, is interested in destabilising both of these avowedly secular regimes.

In addition, we must continue to call for an end to the burden of debt, under which Ethiopia in particular suffers. If this war escalates, all the people in the Horn of Africa will suffer; the only beneficiaries will be western arms traders and other exploiters, and local reactionaries.

Czech workers reject Thatcherite project The dream is over!

The Czech Republic is, among the ex-Soviet bloc countries, one of those playing the first league (with Poland) in its effort to join NATO. After 1989 and the "death of Communism" commentators claimed that Czech society including the working class was enthusiastic about capitalist restoration. The international financial organisations waxed lyrical about the fast privatisation project and shock therapy of the conservative government of Vaclav Klaus.

Below we print an article written by Czech militant Pavel for Socialist Outlook. Pavel is one of a group of prominent anti-racist militants who recently left Socialisticka Solidarita, the Czech sister organisation of the British SWP as a result of the bureaucratic paternalism of that international current. They have formed a new organisation, the Socialist Workers Organisation. In the next issue of Socialist Outlook we will carry material on the direction of the SWP international current.

In the 1996 election the myth of public support for the Thatcherite policies of Klaus was deflated when the so-called "democratic" right-wing lost its majority in parliament and the social democrats won their best ever result (26.5 per cent compared to 6.5 per cent in 1992).

Klaus was able to form a coalition government just when the first signals appeared showing that the "central-European tiger" was just a castle of cards.

The new government found it difficult to continue the privatisations and liberalisation with the same speed as before. The workers' hostility towards the ruling elite was growing.

The sharpest expression of this was the railway workers' strike in February 1997 which paralysed



all railway transport for five days. The government threatened the rail union (OSZ) with a court order, but the metal workers' union (KOVO), and the miners' union stated they were ready to go on solidarity strikes, and agricultural workers were prepared to organise a blockade of the railways with farm machinery if there was a scabbing operation. The government was forced to retreat.

The South-East Asian financial crisis last spring automatically affected the East-European economies. In the Czech republic speculative capital ran away from the country and the central bank had to massively intervene in favour of the Czech currency. This resulted in implementation of two austerity packages in a period of three months - in March and June 1997.

The unprecedented floods in July moved the public attention away from politics and the government tried to hide behind a mask of "we care so much", using the floods as a justification for even more cuts. But it wasn't long until the workers' response came.

The Czech TUC (CMKOS) called a major demonstration in Prague on November 8. About 100,000 trade-unionists gathered in heavy rain at one of the main squares in Prague and many of them called for a 24-hour general strike (the demand of the tiny Czech far-left at the demo).

Union leader Richard Falbr was forced to adjust the tone of his speech, and ended up calling for the government's resignation. Three weeks later the government collapsed in the wake of a series of financial scandals.

The night of the trade union demo was the last for Sudanese student Hassan, who was attacked by two young Nazis. The racist murder sparked off outrage in many people. There was already an atmosphere of intense political debate and sharp criticism of racism in the Czech Republic by the EU, the US senate and the British and Canadian

governments, after the mass emigration of Romanics.

Some 10,000 mainly young people joined a demonstration against racist violence at the nearby University of Economics and socialists of Socialisticka Solidarita (British SWP sister organisation) succeeded in leafletting and mobilising for a further action called for the following Saturday by human rights activists.

About 2,500 people came and the socialists became the leading force. Nearly all demonstrators marched to Wenceslas Square (the place of big anti-Stalinist demos in late 1980s) chanting radical slogans, including against the government.

A series of actions continued to be organised and despite the decline in the numbers attending, the anti-racist group IPRA (Initiative Against Racism) was established and remains active today.

April and May 1998 saw the biggest demonstration of students since 1989. While a majority of students support the government and are formally right-wing, this is in contradiction with their material situation.

The protests were over price rises in student dormitory accommodation which has increased massively - by some 400% in 5 years. In March there had been a further rise of 50%. 3,000 students came for the first demonstrative sleep-in at the Old Town Square.

Two weeks later 500 militant students marched from the dormitories through the forbidden area near the parliament building and joined another 1,000 students at the Old Town Square. The protests didn't succeed in spite of the fact that at one point 2,000 out of 4,000 students in Strahov students area were prepared to boycott rent payments.

Global Street Parties may be a well-known phenomenon in

Britain but the first ever in the Czech Republic took place on May 16. The organisers were mainly anarchists - the dominant force on the Czech far left since the early 1990s.

They expected a maximum of 300, but 3,000 young people came and blocked the main road in central Prague. They also destroyed the fascist election billboards, fought the police, smashed two McDonalds shops, a Kentucky Fried Chicken bar and shops owned by fascists at Wenceslas Square, and burned the American flag.

The politicians and media were shocked. As one commentator said to politicians in a TV debate: "First the pensioners ran away from you, now you have lost the youth" (DZJ - the pensioners' party had 11 per cent of votes in opinion polls)

After the downfall of Klaus, president Havel succeeded in forming a government composed of "his people" - Christian democrats (KDU-CSL), the defectors from ODS (now called US - Freedom Union), ODA (Civic Democratic Alliance) and "independent" (i.e. Right-wing) specialists.

Tosovsky, ex-governor of the central bank, became the new prime minister. From the beginning it was clear that the new government will continue with the policies of Klaus.

They wanted to do as much as possible before the election victory of CSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party), but in the face of the working class they were very weak.

Their initial popularity was falling substantially and two weeks before the elections a one-hour strike of state employees erupted. Half a million workers participated and road service staff set up road blockades for an hour.

The results of the most recent elections in June 1998 were surprising for many. Social democrats won 32.5 per cent, ODS 27 per cent, KSCM (Stalinists) 11.2 per cent, KDU-CSL 9 per cent, US 8.6 per cent. The pensioners DZJ failed to win seats, receiving only 3.1 per cent.

The Fascist SPR-RSC led by Fuhrer Sladek saw their votes fall by more than half from 1996 - from 8 per cent to 3.9 per cent.

The social democrats and Stalinists ran a vacuous "promise nothing" election campaign - effectively convincing sections of workers not to vote.

The right wing ODS concentrated all its finances and energy in Prague mobilising the middle classes through a well prepared campaign based on fierce, hysterical anti-Communism and Sladek-styled cult of Klaus' personality. Right-wing parties (ODS, KDU, US) now have 102

parliamentary seats and the left-wing (KSCM, CSSD) 98.

Forming a government is problematic. The workers will hardly accept a coalition of the three right-wing parties. The Christian democrats don't want to be in coalition with CSSD government supported by "Communists". The US doesn't want to support a government of CSSD and KDU-CSL.

Whatever government is formed it is very unlikely to last for four years. The polarisation in Czech society and leftward drift of the workers and their allies is clear.

These elections more than ever before clearly reflected class voting, while the prospects of the Czech economy are euphemistically said not to be very good.

On the eve of the election a 0.9 per cent slump in GDP over the previous 12 months was announced. The government with the participation of CSSD would mean just few months delay in the eruption of the class struggle.

The new Czech bourgeoisie is still very weak. The Czech economy is starved by massive undercapitalisation and very low levels of foreign direct investment.

Workers are no longer ready to tighten their belts as their illusions in capitalism have gone waned. It is likely that new elections will be forced in 1 or 2 years by working class resistance against anything which means unemployment and capitalist restoration.

The Far left (and Trotskyists in particular) have a good chance to win over the most militant section of Czech workers, as the pro-capitalist reformists are quite incapable of resolving their discontent.

Social democracy is merely an election machine - a thousand miles from being a mass workers' party. It is based on old party members from the years 1945-48, left intellectuals and careerists.

The Stalinist KSCM (160,000 members) is the only mass party in the Czech Republic, but most of its membership is very conservative - mainly pensioners. The leadership and apparatus, despite occasional radicalism, is well accommodated in the new regime.

Its political line is often national chauvinistic and conservative (eg on issues like drugs and criminality) as well as its electoral base. They maintain their electoral support among workers mainly as protest vote against betrayals and weaknesses of social democracy.

On the other hand, the fascist threat is still there. A recent lobby organised by the social democrats in co-operation with Socialisticka Solidarita and a small left reformist party SDS under the slogan "no coalition with right" was attacked by a Nazi gang linked to SPR-RSC.

In this situation it is a priority to maintain the broadest unity of the left in action - in campaigns, protests and strikes against the pro-capitalist government and the bosses and in anti-racist work.

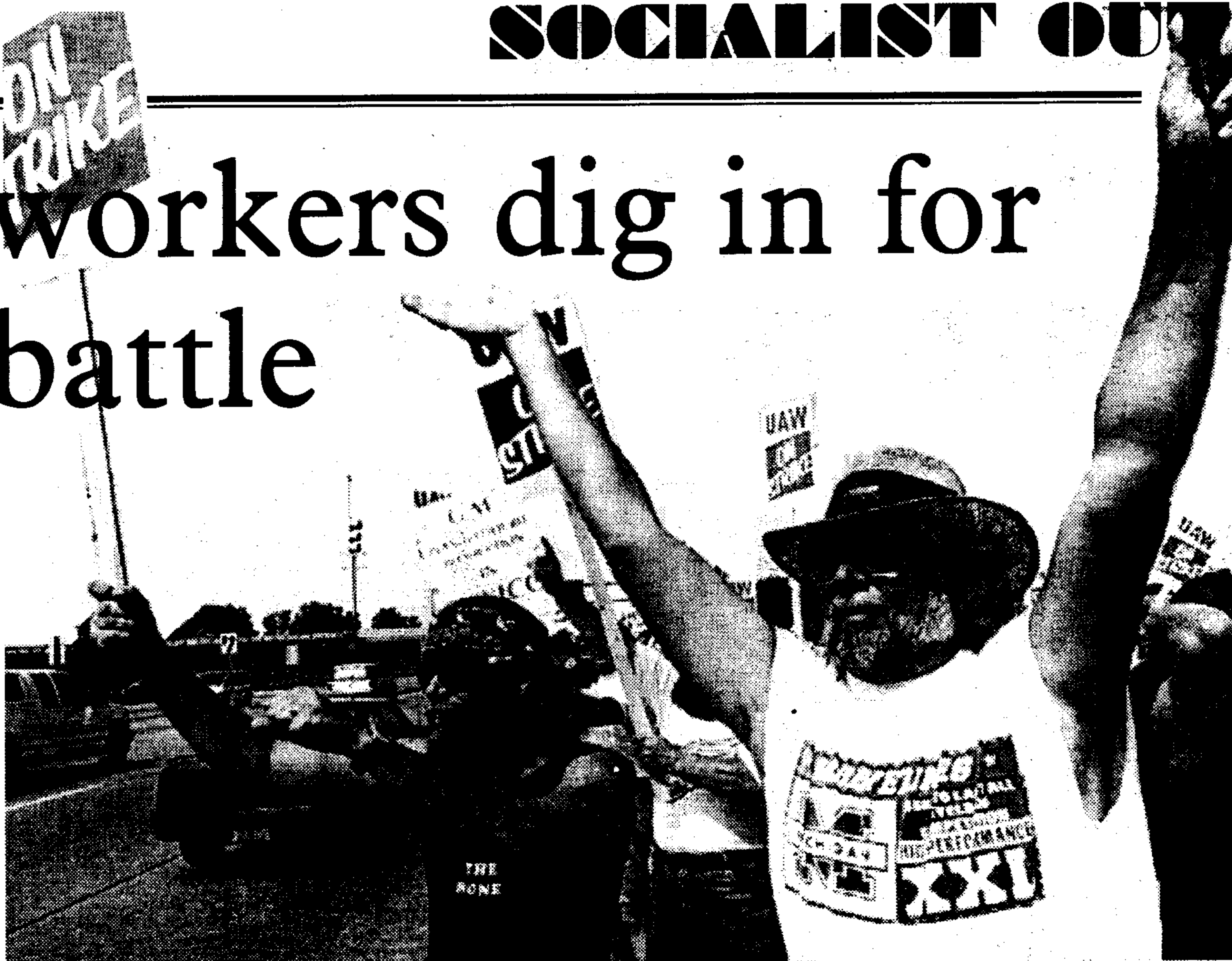
US carworkers dig in for a long battle

Elkie Dee

General Motors' car manufacturing operations are being shut down all over the US and Canada in a strike against job insecurity.

The strike began on June 5 with a walkout by 3,400 workers in a factory in Flint, Michigan, in America's mid-west. This was a response to the company defaulting on its promise to invest in aging factories in America and demanding concessions from the UAW, while investing billions of dollars setting up factories in developing countries. They were joined by 5800 workers at the Delphi parts factory in the same town.

Flint has a history as a union town. In 1937 Flint workers put down their tools and occupied the GM factories for 44 days. Their action led to the first union recognition agreement in the US car industry and sparked the mass unionisation of industrial workers throughout North America.



Flint has experienced years of job losses.

This outcome and aftermath of this strike will have far reaching implications not just for car workers and the people of Flint, though. GM is losing \$75 million each day the strike lasts, and is taking an increasingly tough stance.

It is threatening legal action to have the Flint strike declared illegal

and brought to a halt, and to block payment of unemployment benefits to laid off workers. This looks set to be a convoluted process with the first round resulting in a stalemate.

Such tactics are part of a political preparation for the longer-range offensive of capital against labour, which is sure to follow this strike. The enthusiastic support for the

strikers of 200,000 UAW members employed by GM, and that of local motorists, reflects an understanding that the steady disappearance of "good jobs" in the car industry and elsewhere means that all many of the children of working people can look forward to is poorly paid McJobs, or none at all. Until recently, even unionised workers have been forced to

accept deals by their leaders which at best maintained their own wages and pension rights by selling off the rights of new and future workers.

The victory of the United Parcel Service (UPS) strike by Teamsters members last year brought about a shift in worker consciousness, demonstrating that strikes can be won when the workers are mobilised to block any attempt to get scabs through picket lines. Attempts to hire "replacement workers" were defeated by mass resistance.

Further, the strike was clearly a fight for "good-paying full-time jobs" rather than casualisation.

The UAW strike against GM is convincing evidence that the promise of a revitalisation of American labour set off by the Teamster victory over GM has not been smashed.

Both strikes suggest that long-suffering American workers are reaching the limit of their patience. Enough is enough, to quote the slogan of the Tameside care workers here in Britain.

Like the Teamsters' triumph last year, a UAW victory would go down in history as a step towards the ultimate victory of all workers everywhere!

(Adapted from articles by Mark Harris and Nat Weinstein in *Socialist Action*, USA.)

Puerto Rico's not for sale!

Veronica Fagan

July 7 and 8 saw a two day General Strike against the privatisation of the public telephone company in Puerto Rico.

Thousands of workers on 150 picket lines across the island popularised the slogan "Puerto Rico no se vende." (Puerto Rico's not for sale).

In this Spanish-speaking U.S. colony, the slogan expresses both opposition to privatisation and the rule of the market and anti-colonial sentiment in an island practically owned by U.S. multinationals.

The ruling New Progressive Party sees this privatisation - one of many - as part of its plan to completely intergrate Puerto Rico into the United States, to have it accepted as the 53rd state.

On June 18, 2,200 workers from the Independent Brotherhood of Telephone Workers (IBTEL) and 4,200 from the Independent Union of Telephone Workers (UIET) went on strike against the government's plan to sell the phone company.

The phone company is a profitable enterprise which generates income which the government reinvests in social services such as education. 2,700 jobs are expected to go.

When the strike started, Governor Pedro Rosselló called on the riot police to beat up pickets who were being too effective in preventing scabs entering the plants across the island. When TV

images of the vicious police assaults were broadcast, thousands flocked to the picket lines to strengthen the strike.

The Electrical Workers Union went on strike for three days, water authority workers struck for 24 hours, and the Teamsters paralysed the ports during the first week of the telephone strike.

Students too were strong supporters of the actions. Rossello succeeded in uniting everyone against him.

On June 28, more than 5,000 delegates from trade unions and community organizations voted for a national strike. The assembly of the Greater Committee of Labor Organisations (Comité Amplio de Organizaciones Sindicales, Cívicas, Religiosas, Ecológicas y Culturales - C.A.O.S.) was made up of delegates from more than 60 unions and a number of student, community, and environmental groups that have joined in the struggle against privatisation.

Shop stewards and rank and file workers were included, and 50 percent of the delegates were women. The organisation's spokesperson is Annie Cruz, head of the Independent Brotherhood of Telephone Employees.

CAOS was formed last August in response to previous battles against privatisations and attacks from the bosses in other sectors. Workers in electric power generating plants, in the aqueduct and sewer authority, and education workers face privatisation

through different mechanisms, ranging from proposed voucher systems for private schools to subcontracting the work of electrical and aqueduct workers.

CAOS organised a one-day general stoppage and a demonstration of 100,000 people against the privatisation of the phone company in October - possibly the largest mobilisation in the history of Puerto Rico. Since then, it has been at the forefront of the struggles and has provided a way for delegates and rank and file workers from many different unions to talk directly to each other.

About 200,000 workers took part in the general strike, mainly in the public sector. San Juan's International Airport was paralysed by a massive blockade by thousands of unionists the morning of July 7, while all the principal shopping malls, government offices, all public transport, all campuses of the University of Puerto Rico, and all banks were closed.

Pickets by government workers also stopped operations in several industrial parks and in private companies where workers are prevented from engaging in solidarity strikes by the infamous U.S. Taft-Hartley labor law, which applies to Puerto Rico. Private sector workers refused to cross picket lines.



privatised regional hospital and three health clinics closed down over the weekend when the private company that operates them declared bankruptcy. Privatisation has opened the way to the plunder of public assets by private corporations which then close operations.

The regional committee of C.A.O.S held a demonstration on July 16 demanding that the hospital return to government hands. The Unión Nacional de Trabajadores de la Salud which organises the workers there will join the strike. The phone workers have become

an example for other workers facing the ravages of neoliberal privatisations.

Governor Rosselló has stated categorically that the privatisation of the Telephone Company will go ahead. However, it is negotiating with Spanish multinational telecommunications corporation TISA, who are apparently offering no redundancies and a better price.

Workers are speculating whether this represents a way of saving face in the context of a withdrawal of GTE, or whether it is a ruse. In any case, the offer by TISA is likely to delay the sale for another 6 months.

Both the U.S. press and the international press reported that Puerto Rico was paralysed on July 7 and 8. On July 11, 108 representatives of unions and organisations from C.A.O.S. met to plan for the future. José Juan Hernández, president of the Independent Union of Telephone Workers, said there will be a meeting of delegates from all 60 unions to discuss the possibility of another general strike, possibly in August.

The 12 regional committees of C.A.O.S. plan a series of local activities to continue supporting the telephone workers.

In eastern Puerto Rico, one pri-

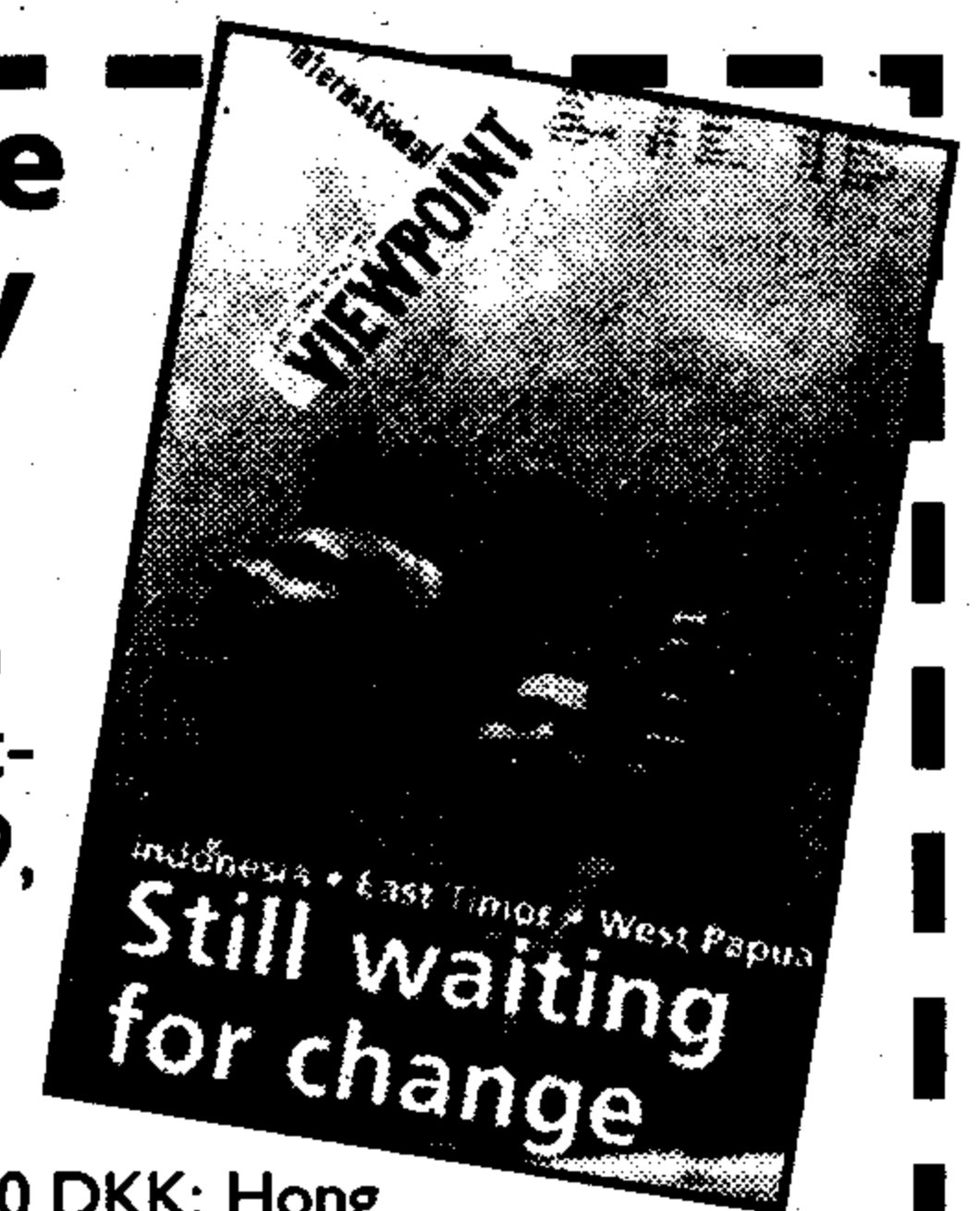
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Marx's battle cry of Permanent Revolution

Key lesson from 1848

"[The German workers] must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organised party of the proletariat. Their battle-cry must be: **The Permanent Revolution.**"

Marx and Engels: Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League (March 1850)

THE TERM "permanent" (meaning unbroken, uninterrupted) revolution" has for decades caused confusion, even among sections of the Marxist movement. But it remains the key to the completion of struggles for democratic rights throughout the world today.

The period of wars of colonial independence may have passed, but in many countries the fight for democracy is still a driving force of mass struggle.

Only a few weeks ago mass resistance by workers and students toppled the Suharto regime in Indonesia. Central to any progressive outcome was — and is — the question of democracy — the destruction of the power of the dictatorial ruling minority; the question of the land and the peasantry; the establishment of rights for the labour movement and a democratic constituent assembly. The same is true of countless other situations in the less developed countries.

In bygone days, of course, the "democratic revolution" was seen as a task to be carried through by the capitalist class — or sections of it — in alliances with the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and even sections of workers. The "classical" example of this was the French Revolution of 1789, waged under the cross-class appeal for "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality".

In this, and the

First of two articles on Permanent Revolution by John Lister

great (1640) bourgeois revolution which overturned the monarchy of England, the bourgeoisie emerged on the stage as a disruptive, revolutionary democratic force.

As we have seen in Indonesia and in South Africa, even now there are sections of capitalists who proclaim themselves in favour of democratic change: so is it possible therefore to carry through the democratic revolution today without the overthrow of capitalism? Can the democratic revolution be achieved arm in arm with the capitalists — even with capitalists in the leadership of the movement?

The reply to that question divides today's workers' movement — between the reformists (comprising a wide range of nationalist and liberal forces, social democrats and Stalinists) who answer "yes"; and the revolutionary Marxist movement which, learning the lessons of history since the mid 19th century, answers firmly "no".

The reformist position of course is not simply that it is possible to achieve real democracy and to satisfy the demands of the oppressed in alliance with the "democratic" bourgeoisie, but that it is dem-



Crackdown: after the 1848 Revolutions came the predictable conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the masses. In June 1849 the French National Guard took action to silence the left wing press.

able to do so — indeed that it is not possible to do any more.

The reformists do not wish to go any further than a political realignment within the framework of capitalist ("mixed") economy. They are more than ready to drop or to tailor their to fit in with the vested interests of the "democratic" bourgeoisie.

The revolutionaries point to the experiences which show time and again that the bourgeois "democrats" are more frightened of the working class than they are committed to achieving even their own demands. Even where the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeois leaders achieve power (or find it thrust upon them) they are more ready to attack the working class than the old regime, and swiftly assemble a new state machinery which defends capitalism against the workers.

Having taken power as "democrats" these leaderships refuse to carry through the democratic programme. The examples are legion — every one of the African and Arab states liberated from imperialist rule has witnessed such a development — similarly India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and now Indonesia: the "democratic" bourgeoisie wants democracy only to carry out its unhindered exploitation of the working class — and is incapable of delivering a completed democratic revolution.

It took the genius of Marx to draw this conclusion from analysing the wave of democratic revolutions which shook Europe in 1848. The issues were posed most clearly in the German revolution, where the question of national unification, and smashing the power of feudal landowners and the monarchy were raised to centre stage.

Sooner than unite with the peasantry in the overthrow of the old aristocracy, the German bourgeoisie held back — fearful that if it were to become the new ruling class it would only have to face the rising power of what was still a comparatively small and divided working class.

It was this which caused Marx and Engels to conclude that only the victory of the working class could bring the democratic revolution to a conclusion in Germany — and hence to put forward the battle cry of "Permanent Revolution".

Since then the size and economic power of the working class even in many of the least developed countries has grown to be much greater than it was in Germany in 1848. The timidity of the bourgeois "democrats" has grown accordingly.

Nor should we underestimate the potential impact of a full democratic programme: a weak bourgeoisie has every reason to fear the upheavals that might follow.

As part of their commitment to the German revolution of 1848, Marx and Engels developed a comprehensive programme of



Spotting the balance of forces: Emperor Ferdinand flees from Vienna 1848

demands for the completion of the democratic revolution in Germany. A brief glance at the scope of these demands helps explain what so frightened the German bourgeoisie. They included:

- *The whole of Germany shall be declared a single and indivisible republic
- *Every German over 21 to be able to vote and be elected
- *MPs to be paid
- *The whole population to be armed
- *All feudal dues, tributes, duties, tithes, etc. to be abolished
- *Estates of princes and feudal lords, and all mines and pits to become state property, and collectively worked
- *One state bank to replace all private banks
- *All transport to be taken over by the state



Illusion of unity: National Guard, bourgeois and worker jointly man the barricades, February 1848.

*Complete separation of Church and State

**"Severely progressive" taxation

*Job creation and care for those unable to work

*Universal and free education.

Although we still have not achieved many of them in "democratic" Britain 150 years later, these demands are not a full socialist programme: there is no proposal to nationalise industry.

They are a *revolutionary democratic* programme (reminiscent of that put forward by the African National Congress, only to be dropped after it won power in South Africa). Such demands would be sufficient to sever the links between the "democratic" bourgeoisie and the old order.

It is precisely this kind of break which the bourgeoisie since 1848 has refused to make. This in turn has prevented the completion of the democratic revolution or stalled it altogether.

Today, we would add a few more demands to the democratic programme, particularly democratic demands relating to the liberation of women.

Small wonder today's bourgeoisie for the most part prefers to cling on to existing regimes rather than risk the outcome of a thoroughgoing democratic revolution!

The fact is that while some bourgeois may support some or even all of those demands — and thus find themselves in a degree of conflict with the old regime — the democratic bourgeoisie is, like the aristocracy, a *proprietary* class, and one whose wealth and position derives more obviously from the exploitation of workers.

This common bond of property always proves stronger than any emotional attachment or moral commitment they may have to democracy.

The *only* consistently revolutionary class, the only propertyless class with no interests in preserving the old order, is the *working class*, the industrial proletariat.

While it must make common cause in the struggle for democracy, and while it must make alliances with the poorest peasants and petty bourgeois, the central factor for the working class must remain its political and organisational independence.

Marx and Engels emphasised this as one of the most basic lessons of the 1848 revolutions.

"The workers' party must go into battle with the maximum degree of organisational unity and independence, so that it is not exploited and taken in tow by the bourgeoisie as in 1848."

Against those who think revolutionaries should plunge uncritically into alliances and unified organisations with radical-sounding bourgeois and petty bourgeois leaders and parties in the less developed countries (recent examples include Mexico and the Philippines), an analysis of the German situation led Marx and Engels to draw out an apt warning:

"The petty bourgeois democratic party in Germany is very powerful. It not only embraces the great majority of the urban middle class, the small industrial merchants and master craftsmen; it also includes among its follow-

ers the peasants and rural proletariat in so far as the latter has not yet found support among the independent proletariat of the towns.

"The relationship of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty bourgeois democrats is this: it cooperates with them against the party which they wish to overthrow; it opposes them wherever they wish to secure their own position."

The role of petty bourgeois leaders throughout history has been one of exploiting and then seeking to crush the power of the working class.

Examples include Robert Mugabe's sudden rise to power — and then immediate suppression of strikes — in Zimbabwe; we may look to the consolidation of power by petty bourgeois regimes in Angola, Mozambique or other examples going back to the Algerian Revolution and including Yassir Arafat's reactionary regime in the West Bank statelet.

The general lesson for the working class was summed up by Marx and Engels:

"Our concern cannot simply be to modify private property, but to abolish it, not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a real one."

Such was the richness of the revolutionary experience they were examining 150 years ago that Marx and Engels were able to detail the methods of entrapment employed by the "democratic petty bourgeois" — the equivalent of today's reformist wing of the workers' movement — and the need to resist.

"They [the petty bourgeois democrats] extend the hand of friendship and seek to found a great opposition party which will embrace all democratic opinion; that is they seek to ensnare workers in a party organisation in which general social-democratic phrases prevail, while their particular interests are kept hidden behind, and in which, for the sake of preserving the peace the specific demands of the proletariat may not be presented.

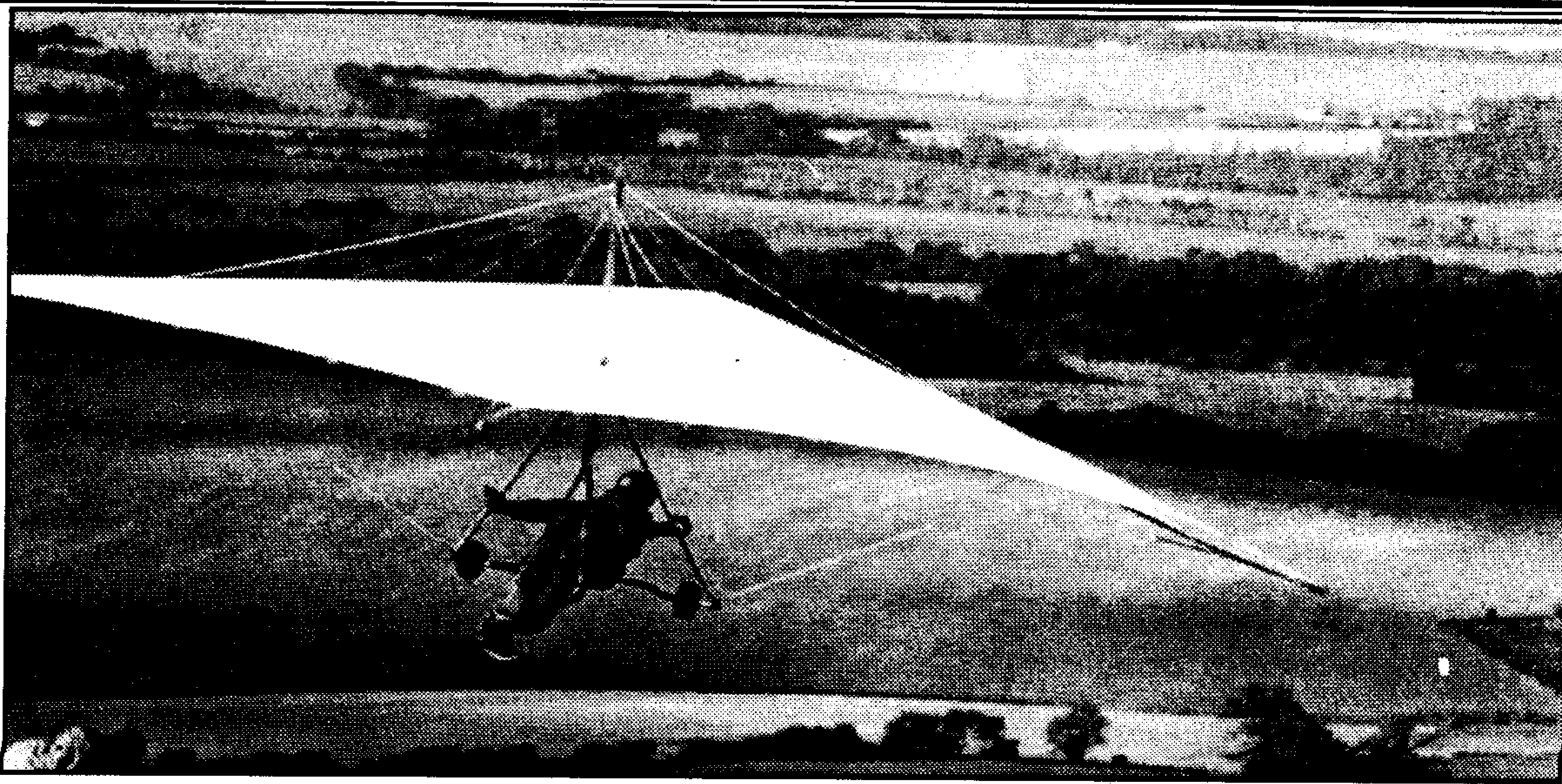
"Such unity would be to their advantage alone and to the complete disadvantage of the proletariat. The proletariat would lose all its hard-won independent position and be reduced once more to a mere appendage of official bourgeois democracy."

Marx and Engels called instead for an independent organisation of a workers' party "alongside the official democrats":

"During and after the struggle the workers must at every opportunity put forward their own demands against those of the bourgeois democrats. They must demand guarantees for the workers as soon as the democratic bourgeoisie sets about taking over the government..."

"They must check in every way the victory euphoria and enthusiasm for the new situation which follows every successful street battle, with a cool and cold-blooded analysis of the situation and with undisguised mistrust of the new government."

■ Quotations are from Marx *The Class Struggles in France 1848-50*, and from the Penguin edition *Marx, The Revolutions of 1848*.



Most of us prefer to roam the countryside at ground level: others have higher aspirations.

The Land is Ours! Mass trespass successes

Dave Bangs

The recent success of two big trespass walks on the South Downs, organised in support of the government's freedom to roam proposals, proves that we can break through the passivity of the left on this issue. The government proposes a freedom to roam on heath, down, mountain, moor and common, which together constitute around 10% of the area of England and Wales.

Led jointly by a socialist and 2 Earth First! activists the first walk attracted 100 people (despite drenching rain) and the second, 200.

Participants included a strong showing from Justice (the local campaign set up against the Criminal Justice Act) and Earthfirst, with walkers from the Trades Council, unemployed movement, and a number of left groups.

Both walks took place on the Brighton Downs, and brought people from Portsmouth, Hastings, London, and even Brussels!

Vacuum on the left

Both walks took advantage of the political vacuum on this issue to attract national publicity, with interviews and debates on national and regional TV and radio. Whilst landowners organisations conduct a raucous campaign of misinformation in the Tory and farming press, the Ramblers Association fails to create the necessary opportunities to demonstrate its case. The politics of respectability means simply that our case is not being heard.

Trespass organisers made clear that they see the matter of access freedoms as closely tied up with the struggle to

defend bio-diversity, as well as our cultural heritage of historic and prehistoric landscapes.

The second walk ended with a celebratory camp-over on the Offham Marshes SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), near Lewes, where many of the walkers had participated the previous summer in two successful campaigns to prevent a farmer from ploughing out both ancient flower-rich chalk grassland and wet grazing marsh rich in amphibians.

Productivism

Until only 60 years ago walkers on the Downs had enjoyed a customary freedom to wander at will. But the lack of legal status for this freedom left no obstacle to the post-war productivist drive to eliminate semi-natural habitats in the interests of agricultural profits.

Clearly there is now a limited revival of the great pre-war access movement and its famous Pennine mass trespasses, but we must ask ourselves why the left and ordinary countryside users have been so slow to respond to one of the few government proposals with any serious progressive content.

Several factors are at work. The slow building up of a "conservation estate" of open spaces, country parks, nature reserves, heritage sites, and so on, has done much to contain people's growing recreational and cultural aspirations.

And the massive destruction of nature and historic rural landscapes has seemed to have a finality which cannot

be contested. "Once it's gone it's gone", is the common refrain.

Jane Austen at work!

Yet a third major factor operates more subtly. The rural land-owning class has managed only too successfully to reconstruct itself ideologically in the last half century, so as to reinforce their rights to own and to exclude.

Televised Jane Austen, the cult of the stately home, and the marginalisation of the rural working class by inward migrating well-off folk have all helped to sanitise and re-legitimise ruling class control of our countryside.

The average car-borne rural visitor can easily ignore a sea of corporate prairie fields in their drive to the preserved landscape of historic country house or picturesque village. And the conversion of so

much of our ordinary countryside to intensive productivist systems has always been accompanied by the exclusion of ordinary country lovers; children, local rambles, picnickers, courting couples, and wildlifers.

'Stewardship'

To this we must counterpose our demand that the public be recognised as the true 'stewards' of the countryside.

Guaranteed rights of access and enjoyment provide the best safeguard for its protection and sound management.

Two further trespass walks across forbidden Downland are planned on Sundays August 2 and 23. Come along and join in, they're real fun. For further details contact Dave Bangs at 4 Hamilton Road, Brighton, BN1 5DL, Tel: 01273-388392.

Two further trespass walks are planned on Sundays August 2 and 23. Come along!

After 1,000 years of oppression and exploitation

Will new millennium spell doomsday for Britain's landowners?

This Land is Our Land – The Struggle for Britain's Countryside, by Marion Shoard, published by Gaia Books Ltd., 1997, £10.99.

Reviewed by Adam Hartman.

RUNNING to 483 pages, this book, an updated edition of Marion Shoard's *This Land is Our Land – The Struggle for Britain's Countryside*, first published in 1987, is a treasure trove of facts about Britain's landowners – who they are, their history, how they monopolise land for their own enrichment and sport, and how they operate in the political sphere to stifle change.

It sketches the struggles between the classes in, and over, the countryside over the past millennium. It catalogues the damage done to landscape, wildlife and recreation by modern farming and forestry practices. It investigates why legislation brought in by the post-war Labour governments to open up and protect the countryside has failed, and puts forward proposals for reform.

The book begins by setting land ownership in Britain in its international and historical context.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 was of crucial importance in redefining the relationship between landowners and society in England. The king seized all land from the Anglo-Saxon population, keeping some for hunting and allocating the rest to his retinue of barons and knights, the ancestors of many of today's titled landowners, whilst retaining ultimate title over all land.



Landowners turned out thousands to help deter any attack on their privileges

Several features of the feudal order which he established – the landowners' passion for hunting, their prominence within national politics and local administration, and attitudes of paternalism and deference – have survived.

Key changes have taken place over the centuries. Under feudalism the crown set limits on the power of landowners and made several concessions to head off rebellion by the population. It relaxed the enforcement of laws governing royal hunting grounds, obliged lords of the manor to allow passage over their land, and safeguarded the right of free tenants (but not serfs) to graze livestock on common land attached to the manor.

But as feudalism gave way to capitalism from the fifteenth century onwards, landowners, viewing land solely as a source of wealth, set about enclosing commons and evicting tenants to make way for sheep and other investments. In 1646 Cromwell's Parliament abolished the landlords' ties to the crown, making them sole owners of the land.

In the following centuries landowners dominated parliament, authorising the enclosure of seven million acres in England and Wales between 1700 and 1900, monopolising the right to take game, and making poaching a capital offence. These measures destroyed the subsistence economy of the rural poor, forcing them to seek wage labour on the land or in the factories of the Industrial Revolution.

Contrary to landowners' representations of the past which emphasise social harmony, relations between landowners and the rural poor were characterised by intense conflict. Riots occurred frequently against enclosure, anti-poaching laws, food price hikes and the introduction of job-cutting machinery.

Acting through the Tory party, landowners have used key positions within Parliament and government to hold up or undermine reforms which threaten their position, and to delay the extension of democracy into the countryside. Male farm workers received the vote seven-

teen years after urban workers, and elected local authorities only appeared in the countryside fifty years after town councils.

Powerful lobbies such as the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers' Union operate to strengthen the financial position of landowners by influencing taxation and agricultural policy.

So who are Britain's landowners?

Contrary to popular opinion, the aristocracy is still a major force, with just over 300 titled families owning 31.6% of land in the UK according to a 1978 study. A group of untitled "barons", comprising perhaps 1,500 families, carries similar weight to the aristocrats.

Owner-occupier farmers (as opposed to landowners who manage their farms through land agents or let them to tenants) are the other main group. Insurance companies, pension funds and property unit trusts owned just 1.2% of agricultural land in 1978.

Also important are the Church of England, the National Trust and the Crown Estate, which happens to own the sea-bed around the coast of the UK, 50% of the foreshore, the bed and banks of the tidal rivers, 373,000 acres of farmland and forest, and prime real estate in London and other towns, including Oxford Street and Regent Street.

So public-spirited is the Queen that she agrees to forfeit the profits from the Crown Estate (£26.5 million in 1986, £113.2 million in 1998) to the Treasury in return for support from the taxpayer for the Royal Family (£5 million in 1985). She of course retains her income from the Duchy of Lancaster and her other private estates.

In 1987 13% of land in the UK was owned by the public sector. This figure has declined as a result of the privatisation of the utility and transport companies, and land sales by local authorities, the Forestry Commission and British Coal. The Ministry of Defence however has retained its land, owning 871 square miles in 1997.

Occupation of UK farmland is highly concentrated. In 1983 farm holdings under 50 acres (39.6% of the total) occupied just 4% of farmland, whilst those over 494 acres (6.6% of the total) occupied 47% of farmland.

Britain's farmers may be struggling as a result of the BSE crisis, but in recent times they have never had it so good. Farm incomes rose by 65% in real

terms between 1991 and 1996. Farmers are exempt from business rates, VAT, inheritance tax, and fuel excise duty.

Farming and forestry were exempted from the planning controls introduced under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. As a result, in pursuit of the high profits made possible by state support and modernisation, landowners have been free to destroy wildlife habitats and beauty spots, reduce species diversity, and reduce access to wild open country by ploughing it up or planting conifers over it. This is the opposite of what the post-war Labour Government intended when it passed the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in 1949.

Shoard describes in grim detail how the Act has failed. She cites its reliance on voluntary agreements between landowners and local authorities, the reluctance of officials to use their power to make access orders for fear of upsetting landowners, and the over-representation of landowners on the rural councils charged with implementing the Act on the ground, together with the exclusion of the urban working class from those bodies.

So what is to be done? Shoard outlines three proposals whereby the people can reclaim control of the land after a thousand years of dispossession, based on the principle that the landowners must be made to share the benefits of the land with the rest of the community.

Firstly planning control must be extended to cover farming and forestry.

Secondly the public must have a right to roam over all uncultivated land and highways, such as exists in other European countries, notably Sweden.

Lastly a land tax should be introduced as a means of influencing landowners' behaviour. The tax would penalise landowners who damage the environ-

ment, whilst rewarding conservation through tax rebates. Thus landowners would pay for conservation, instead of milking compensation payments from the public as they do now.

In themselves these proposals, especially the right to roam, are valuable. But from a socialist standpoint the over-all approach falls down because it leaves the position of landowners, a key pillar of Britain's ruling class, intact.

Based on striking a balance between the rights and duties of landowners and the public, this fits neatly into the One Nation "partnership" ideology of New Labour.

The recent Countryside marches suggest that landowners are not prepared to accept the loss of control which the author's proposals imply.

Although Shoard rejects common ownership of land as politically infeasible, socialists understand that democratic control is not possible without it.

However this book is a must for any socialist's bookshelf, and excellent value at £10.99.

The aristocracy is still a major force, with just over 300 titled families owning 31.6% of land in the UK

Hans-Jürgen Schulz

(7 June 1933 - 15 July 1998)

IT IS with great sadness that we report the death of Hans-Jürgen Schulz (also known as Kari Karew and Fred Sommer), militant of the Fourth International in Germany who died on July 15.

Hans-Jürgen was well known for his close work with the revolutionary socialists of Sri Lanka and his involvement in Kurdistan solidarity work at a time of severe repression of the Kurds in Germany.

He was known for always debating political differences, however big, fairly and objectively and not treating political differences as personal ones.

Below we print an obituary written by Gerd Kersten and Thies Gleiss for the editorial board and the entire team of *Inprekorr*, the German language magazine of the Fourth International.

"Hans-Jürgen had been a comrade of the Fourth International for over 30 years, and was a long-standing member of the German and International leaderships.

He contributed significantly to building the Fourth International in West Germany and to building and

supporting the International in Stalinist Eastern Europe and East Germany, before and after the "Wende" (turn) in 1989.

His participation in the peace and anti-militarist movement, beginning with the early "Ostermärsche" (Easter marches in the sixties) in West Germany, in union activity at his workplace, the "Neue Heimat" (union-owned building company), in the anti-nuclear movement and the (anti-nuke) "Aktionskreis Leben" within the trade unions, and his restless journalistic and theoretical work were immensely important for all of us. Countless books and pieces, reports, articles, and flyers were written by Hans-Jürgen.

Up to the very last moment he contributed to the activities of the "European Marches against Unemployment, Job Insecurity, and Exclusion".

For more than ten years Hans-Jürgen fought against an insidious cancer. He has now lost this struggle. His life's struggle for just and decent living conditions for all, for democracy and socialism, for world-wide elimination of exploitation and, vitally, internationalism, will be carried on.

We mourn together with his wife and comrade Barbara and his son Joern. We have lost a warm-hearted and ever-optimistic friend and militant comrade."

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Where we stand

IN THE NINETIES, millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity face widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence.

Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men, and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations - an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International, we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what you read in *Socialist Outlook*, why not join us? Drop a line to the address on this page, and we'll be in touch.



Dimitroff (right) was always Stalin's lackey in the Comintern

Dimitroff: a stooge for Stalin

I MUST congratulate you for publishing David Landau's Reuben Goldberg Memorial Lecture.

It is a fitting tribute to Reuben, who I remember well from his IMG period.

There is, however, a small historical error which I think should be corrected.

He seems to be under the impression that Dimitroff acted independently of Stalin when he threw out the Third Period with its tragic 'Social Fascist' nonsense (and which was taken to extremes when Manuilsky proclaimed at the 9th Plenum of the ECCI that even after the victory of Hitler in Germany, Social Democracy remained the main enemy).

Stalin replaced Manuilsky with Dimitroff to capitalise on Dimitroff's magnificent and courageous stand against the Nazis in the Reichstag fire trial.

But from then on, Dimitroff became as subservient to Stalin as all the other functionaries of

the Comintern - which had long been transformed from being the General Staff of the World Revolution to a branch office of the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

Stalin realised that Hitler's victory faced the Soviet Union with a very real military menace.

Instead of rallying the international working class to the defence of the Soviet Union, through his Foreign Minister, Litvinov, he sought alliances with the bourgeois democratic countries, principally France (with whom he had already come to an agreement with the Stalin/Laval Pact) and Britain.

Dimitroff's Popular Front policies were simply the implementation of this same line in the Comintern.

After his arrival in the Soviet Union, Dimitroff never once opposed Stalinism, not even the Molotov/Ribbentrop pact or the dissolution of the Comintern. He became one of Stalin's lackeys.

Charlie van Gelderen



300 Club

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- To join the 300 Club, send us a Standing Order for £5 per month, or drop us a line at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU, and we will send you a form.
- This month's lucky winners are (3rd prize) Gordon Smith (2nd) Dave Amos, and the top prize goes to Jean Wood.

WHAT'S ON

July

Friday 24

Wirral West CLP meeting with Cathy Jamieson, NEC candidate. 7.30p.m., Victory Hall, Salacre Lane, Upton 25-31

Fourth International Youth Camp, Denmark

Tuesday 28

North London meeting with NEC candidates Liz Davies and Mark Seddon with MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Ken Livingstone. 7.30 Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Rd., N4

Wednesday 29

London meeting in support of Tameside Care workers organised by CDU (MSF) and CFDU (UNISON) with speakers from the strike committee,

chaired by Jeremy Corbyn MP 7.00pm House of Commons

Friday 31

Manchester meeting with NEC candidates Liz Davies, Mark Seddon, Pete Wilsman and Andy Howell and Audrey Wise MP. 7.30p.m. Friends Meeting House, Mount St.

August

August 6-10

Troops Out Movement delegation to Belfast

August 28-31

Socialist Outlook/Workers' Action summer school, North Wales

August 28-31

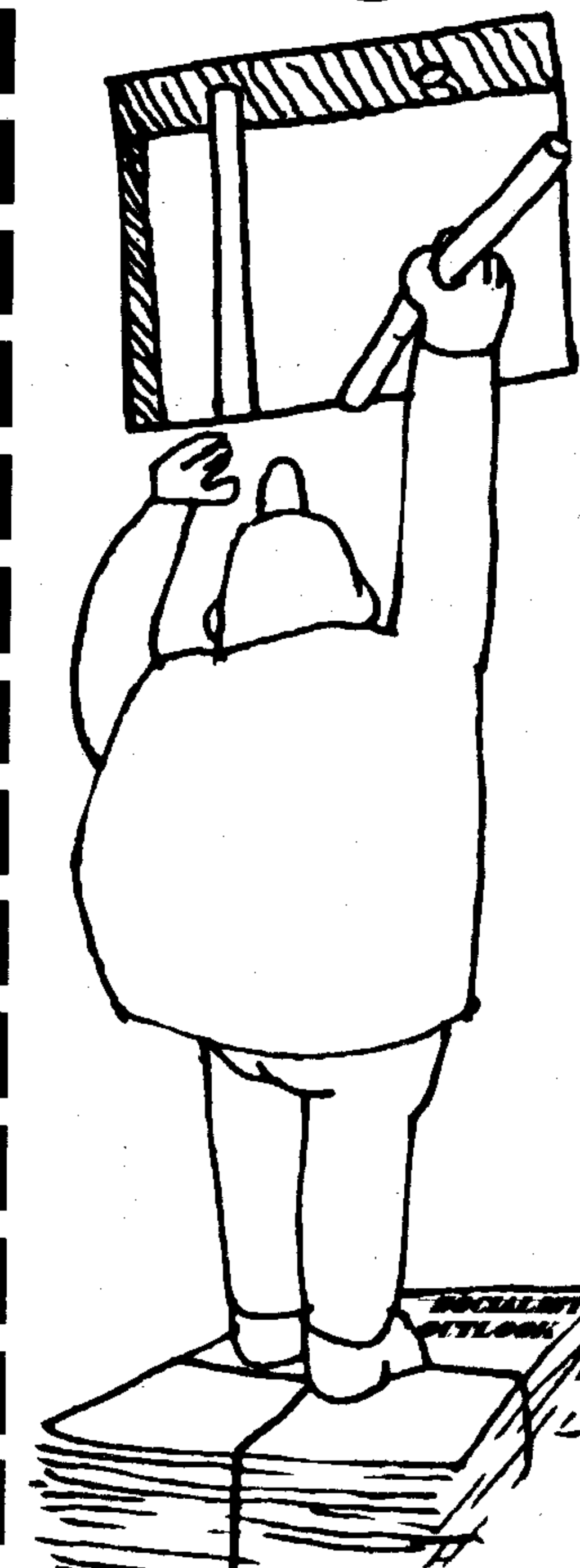
Socialist Outlook/Workers' Action summer school, North Wales

Sept

September 5

Network of Socialist Alliances conference, Rugby

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Socialist OUTLOOK

Lessons of Drumcree

Still no peace in the Orange sectarian state!



Andrew Ward

DESPITE ALL the weasel words about a "peace process" the real face of the settlement being imposed by the British government and its collaborators in the north of Ireland was revealed during the Drumcree events.

While the British press selectively reported a small portion of the illegal violence of the loyalist thugs against the troops and RUC barring them from the Garvaghy Road, and focused on the brutal murder of the Quinn children in a petrol bomb attack in Ballymoney, a full-scale pogrom was being waged by Orange

bigots against the nationalist population across the six counties. Roy Greenslade in the *Guardian* was one of the few British journalists to draw attention to this, and catalogue some of the unreported incidents of arson, intimidation, hi-jacking, bombing, blockading and systematic terror inflicted by loyalist mobs.

* In Carrickfergus, the last four houses occupied by Catholics on the Glenfield estate were petrol bombed, forcing them to flee.

* In north Antrim, 1,000 loyalists blocked three roads to the Catholic

village of Dunloy.

* In Lurgan eight fire bombs were set off in a mainly Catholic housing estate.

Greenslade's long list is all culled from Irish papers. He concludes that in one 24-hour period "there were 191 attacks on police and troops, 412 petrol bombings, 73 houses damaged, 93 other buildings attacked, and 136 vehicles hi-jacked. Hundreds of barricades – most of them ablaze – were mounted in dozens of towns and villages by men in balaclavas carrying baseball bats."

It is a grimly familiar tale. The loyalist thugs had their version of "ethnic cleansing" for decades: now, with the "peace" deal having consolidated the partition of Ireland they are again determined to assert their ascendancy over the nationalist minority.

The British press, eager to promote the illusion of a new "peace", cannot face up to the scale of the war that is being waged by the loyalist bigots. There IS NO British solution. Instead there is silence as armed thugs "unleash savagery in the name of the Queen".