

Serialist DOWNLOOK

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Say no Millbank's stitch-up

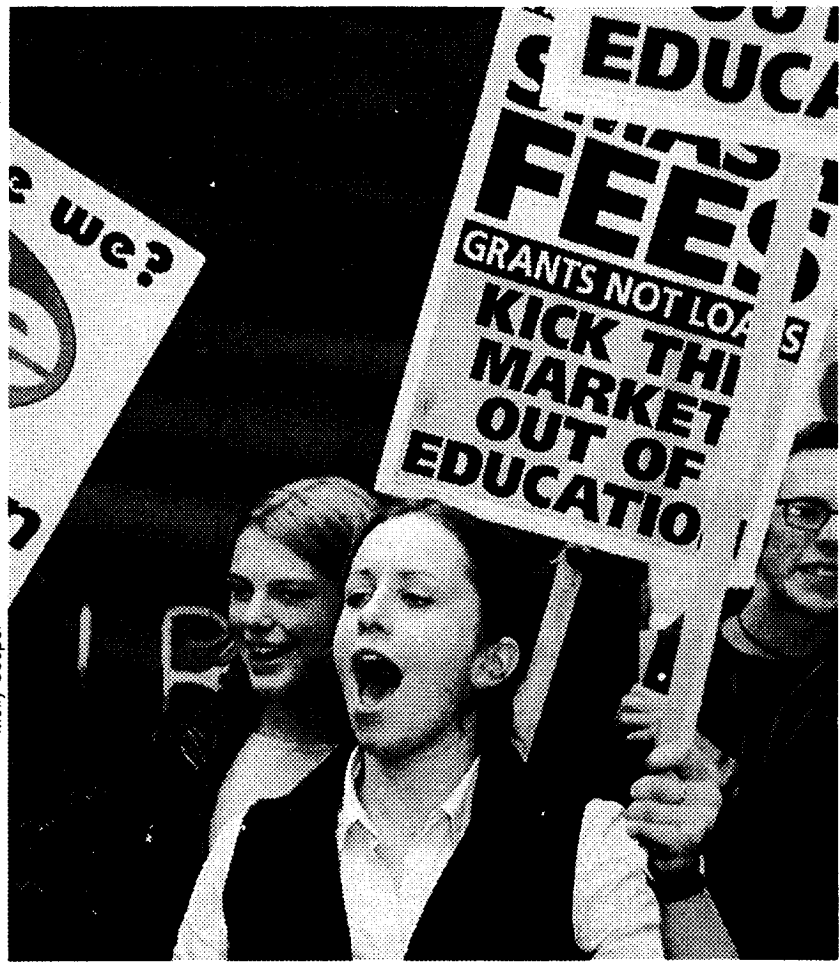
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Molly Cooper

STUDENTS in Scotland and south of the border have continued the fight against the imposition of tuition fees by the New Labour government.

Thousands of students marched through Edinburgh to the temporary home of the Scottish Parliament, to underline the unresolved policy clash which could potentially derail the coalition between Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

Students on the march called not only for a rejection of tuition fees – which are already established in English colleges – but for the reinstatement of grants.

In England, too, there have been protests including this one in Oxford, against the impact of the fees. A contingent of students from south of the border joined the Edinburgh protest.

They can see that if fees can be defeated in Scotland, the Westminster government will be forced to do the same.

STOPP Labour's war on teachers!

Gill Lee, Officer,
Lewisham NUT
(Personal Capacity)

AT A PACKED conference on Saturday October 9th STOPP (School Teachers Opposed to Performance Pay) was launched. Teachers met to discuss how to oppose the government's Green Paper, which would damage teamwork, equal opportunities, and damage education.

The teaching unions seem set to reach accommodation with the government unless a mass campaign can stop them. The NUT Executive has failed to mount the campaign of publicity and strike action agreed by the union's Annual Conference.

In its evidence to the Review Body the government says:

"Pay must be flexible and put service needs first. It means challenging outdated assumptions, for example, the idea that fair pay means everybody should get the same increase, or that pay and conditions should be set nationally". The government's proposals are designed to hold down the general level of pay for teachers.

Education as a whole will suffer. Teachers who can do so, will increasingly choose to work in schools where targets can be met i.e. schools with a 'better' intake.

Schools which have a more working class intake will find it harder to attract teachers whose pay is dependent on their ability to 'meet targets' often beyond their control.

Not achievable

All teachers know that "results" – whether measured by exam results, attendance or any of the other 'exemplar' measures contained in the government's guidance on the implementation of the green paper – are not achievable by them as individuals. For any one teacher to obtain pay based on performance depends mainly on the intake of the school.

As Nick Davies showed in his recent series of articles for *The Guardian*, comprehensive education has been considerably undermined by Tory educational reforms, continued by Labour, which led to the increasing division of schools by social class.

Ofsted criteria mean that schools likely to attain less than average national results (in other words schools with a working class intake), are likely to be labelled as "failing".

While some teachers, despite the huge workload and stress involved, continue to work at schools 'under special measures', schools with 'serious weaknesses' and schools which have been 'fresh started',

many others understandably get out and find jobs in schools seen as 'easier'.

By rewarding "successful teachers" Labour's proposals will increasingly divide schools into ones which can attract teachers seen as 'successful', while schools in which teachers would find it harder to meet targets will increasingly be staffed by newly qualified staff or staff waiting for appointment to 'better schools'. All this will increase the polarisation of schools – to the disadvantage of working class children.

Labour's plans are a major challenge to the pay and conditions of teachers, to the team work that is necessary for teachers to do their jobs; and to the existence of the teachers' unions.

Teachers' pay as a whole will be held back, while only those prepared to submit themselves to the 'threshold' appraisal process will gain pay increases.

Given the low level of pay for teachers on the main scale, many teachers will feel they have to apply, despite the quite small increases in pay and the increased workload involved in the new pay spine. Each of the new performance points will be worth only £800 - £1000, but the government appears willing to throw a lot of money at the scheme in the first year to



Even the best teachers need resources and support to deliver results

'bed it in'.

Teachers who go on the fast track programme will be expected to 'make an additional commitment' to the job (attending training in their own time) and 'should be exempted from the working time limits that apply to other classroom teachers'.

This will put pressure on all teachers to work even longer hours each week than the 48 reported in the NUT's own surveys.

The division of the workforce by payment according to results will undermine the teamwork essential for teachers to do their jobs.

Teachers will be more reluctant to share ideas, take on difficult pupils and classes, or support other colleagues through pastoral intervention if they know a colleague is being paid more as a 'good' teacher than they are. Pupils as well as teachers will lose from this.

The very existence of the teaching unions is also threatened by the green paper. It effectively brings in individual pay bargaining; strengthens management's ability to decide who merits higher pay (and who is simply a 'disruptive element') – and erodes nationally determined conditions.

● STOPP
c/o Lewisham NUT
Room 6 Catford Town Hall
Lewisham SE26



Support the sacked Skychef workers – don't fly Lufthansa!

Adam Hartman

The 270 sacked Lufthansa Skychef workers at Heathrow Airport are now in the twelfth month of their struggle for reinstatement.

The workers were sacked for taking part in an official one-day strike over the decision by the airline catering company (a subsidiary of Lufthansa airlines) to impose new working arrangements without the agreement of the workers or their TGWU union branch.

The company sacked not only the strikers but also workers who were on leave or sick at the time and who admitted they would

have joined the strike if they had been at work.

Under new legislation which protects strikers in the first eight weeks of an official strike, the sacking would have been illegal.

Having raised expectations that it was willing to settle the dispute on favourable terms, the company then made a derisory offer: a vague possibility of a job at some indeterminate time in the future or a severance payment of £220 for each year of service.

Not surprisingly the workers have rejected this offer. They are now calling for the labour movement to redouble its support for the strike by:-

■ spreading the boycott of Lufthansa Airlines and using airlines which don't contract their catering to Lufthansa Skycheffs

■ supporting the 24 hour picket line (Faggs Road just off the A30 near Hatton Cross tube station)

■ making donations to help sustain the strike (cheques payable to the T & G with "Skycheffs" written on the reverse and sent to T & G Regional Office, "Woodberry", 218 Green Lanes, London N4 2HB). Contact this address for campaign materials.

■ writing protests to Lufthansa German Airlines, von Gablenz Str 2-6, 50679 Cologne, Germany

Boycott Pricecheck shops

The TGWU is calling for a boycott of all shops owned by the London-based Pricecheck chain in a crucial battle for trade union recognition.

Wages in the chain are extremely low and the workers' terms and conditions of employment are poor.

The workers have joined the TGWU to fight

for better pay and conditions but the owner of the firm is refusing recognition and has victimised workers who have tried to build the union.

A successful lunchtime picket of the firm's Kings Cross store on 13th October brought trade in the shop to a standstill.

Return of "Mr PFI" and the Prince of Darkness

Packing the cabinet

TONY BLAIR's once-postponed reshuffle of ministers has further strengthened the hand of the Cabinet's privatisers and "modernisers".

While much of the limelight has been hogged by the return of Peter Mandleson - who will step into the shoes of the floundering Mo Mowlem and try to press-gang the political leaders of northern Ireland into an agreement - we should not lose track of the changes in the Department of Health.

Frank Dobson has been dragged kicking and screaming from the job he had always coveted as Health Secretary, and forced to smile and insist he is not Uncle Albert from Only Fools and Horses, and that he really wants to be mayor of London. And his place has been swiftly taken by the upwardly-mobile former Treasury Secretary Alan Milburn.

In opposition Milburn was until about six months before the election a sharp and capable critic of Tory policies on the NHS. He knew how to ask the right questions to smoke out the real crisis building in the NHS and the bureaucratic waste of the market system.

But then, in concert with other New Labour leaders, he switched from attacking to supporting some of the main lines of Tory policy. The most conspicuous policy-switch was on the "Private Finance Initiative" (PFI), dreamed up by Kenneth Clarke in 1993 as a means to "privatise the provision of capital for the public sector".

From steadfastly opposing and

EDITORIAL

exposing the costs of the Tory scheme, New Labour turned full circle to pledge in its Manifesto that it would "make PFI work".

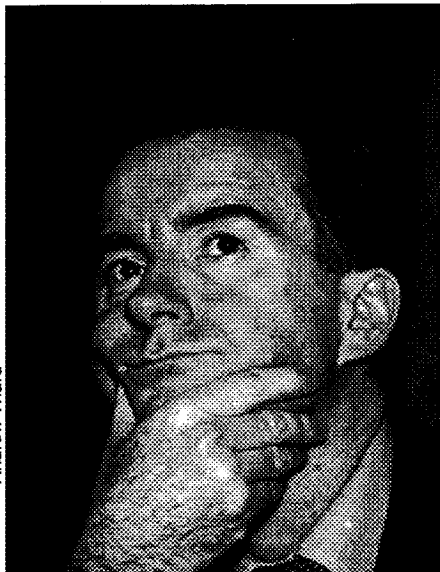
Major concessions to placate the private banks, developers and building firms in PFI consortia were among the first legislative changes pushed through with Blair's massive majority: and the driving force arguing for PFI was Dobson's number two - health minister Alan Milburn.

Brushing aside warnings from all sides, Milburn rubber-stamped many of the first wave of PFI schemes in the NHS. 19 PFI-funded hospitals valued at £1.5 billion are now under construction.

These projects will privatise more hospital support services, and funnel millions in profits into the coffers of private consortia out of the scarce revenues of NHS Trusts over the next 60 years.

Although Dobson - at first an "old Labour" critic of PFI - was eventually won over to this "third way" (and now finds it a millstone around his neck in the mayoral race, in the form of tube privatisation) he has never shown the same passion for it as his minister.

But Milburn also played a key role in formulating Labour's wider health reforms. These set out boldly to replace the wasteful chaos of the Tory "internal market" and the inequality of GP Fundholding with a new system.



Andrew Ward

How do I get out of this? Mandleson

However Labour's plan preserves the "purchaser/provider split", tightens cash limits, and gives GPs - who have always refused to be salaried employees of the NHS - ever-growing power over the future shape of health services through the establishment of "Primary Care Groups" (PCGs).

Having proved his ruthless determination to hold down NHS spending, Milburn was promoted - to Chief Secretary of the Treasury, where he could help Gordon Brown hold down spending across the whole public sector.

It was from this elevated position that Milburn helped fix the NHS share of public spending for the next three years at a level which

means New Labour will increase health spending over the five years 1997-01 at a lower average level than the Tories did.

Now a growing number of PCGs are facing their first cash deficits. Health authorities and Trusts, too, face the prospect of cutbacks to balance the books (23 London Trusts alone face combined deficits of over £60m).

And Milburn is riding back in to take charge, insisting that the pace of "modernisation" must be increased.

However beneath the slick, smooth talk of a New Labour zealot, Alan Milburn has shown himself to be less than confident to argue his case in a wider audience.

He famously refused as health minister to defend the government's policy of phasing the nurses' pay award on breakfast TV when he discovered he would have to be seen by millions arguing against a nurse in uniform!

Exhausted, under-paid and short-handed, front-line NHS staff will be less than impressed by the arrogant way in which "Mr PFI" has so far viewed their plight.

Perhaps health workers will console themselves that at least they have not been allocated Peter Mandleson, whose noted spin doctoring skills are not much use on the wards.

His surprisingly warm welcome from the notoriously homophobic Unionist establishment appears to be chiefly a function of Mandleson not being Mo Mowlem, and the fact

that he obviously carries authority from Tony Blair.

The scope for "spinning" the impasse over the Good Friday agreement, however, seems to have been largely exhausted by a succession of fudges by Blair and Mandleson's ill-starred predecessor.

Mo Mowlem's waning fortunes could be charted by the disappearance of her standing ovation from the faithful at Labour conference.

Even if no progress can be made, Blair can argue that he has put his "best man on the job" of placating the parties to the Good Friday agreement, and just hope that something will turn up, or somebody will sell out.

But Mandleson's rapid rehabilitation is a major statement of intent in terms of the whole cabinet.

The dwindling remnants of "old" Labour have now almost all been shunted into the sidings of government or dumped altogether, and the decks have been cleared for the dominance of eager advocates of "public private partnership", "modernisation" and the so-called "Third Way".

Some of these - like the new Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon, have risen without trace, having shown little more than their total subservience to Blair.

At a time when the Paddington disaster has helped focus public opposition to privatisation in public services, this reshuffle could prove a belated step on the road to the end of the bizarre love-affair between Blair and the British electorate.

As High Court judges block guards' strike

RMT must fight for rail safety!

In a move with far reaching implications for the privatised rail industry the courts have blocked the national Guards' strike called by the RMT.

The judges accepted the argument from train operating companies (TOCs) that any dispute should be with Railtrack, as the controllers of the Railway safety "Rule Book", and not with the TOCs, who are bound by the law to implement whatever Railtrack tells them.

Whilst they are appealing the decision, the RMT Executive has agreed to call off the strikes.

Despite the protestations of the TOCs that they are merely caught in the middle, the reality is utterly different. The TOCs want to get rid of guards altogether.

In their place they want ticket collectors and buffet managers, "customer care" workers on the trains, who will only have a safety role in a dire emergency.

The current guards' general safety role will fall on the already overburdened shoulders of the drivers. To facilitate this change the TOCs met with Railtrack and demanded a Rule change. Railtrack obliged.

Whilst all the rail companies are clearly acting in collusion, any attempt by the RMT to defend its members is deemed to be "secondary action" - and thus a breach of the Tory anti-union laws.

If the RMT leadership fails to fight on this issue, no job on the railway will be safe.

When this issue arose two years ago a forthright campaign among the RMT membership saw Railtrack forced to back down. But this time round the RMT leadership has been reluctant to defend its members. Only after a strong rank and file campaign amongst train crew was the proposed Rule change taken seriously. It became clear that industrial

action would again have to be on the agenda but little was done to mobilise the membership. Instead the faintest of offers from Railtrack was hailed as a "victory" and ballots were abandoned.

Once again it took a rank and file revolt to convince the RMT leadership they had to act.

Ballots were again called, but little was done to make up the lost ground, or to prepare the public for any dispute. Despite this Guards voted overwhelmingly for action in most companies.

In the aftermath of Paddington you would have thought the argument for maintaining safety standards was quite clear. But such has been the cowardice of the RMT leadership that even this message has been lost.

So now we face a situation where rail workers face job losses and attacks on safety, where the TOCs are claiming to be defending the safety Rules against a union

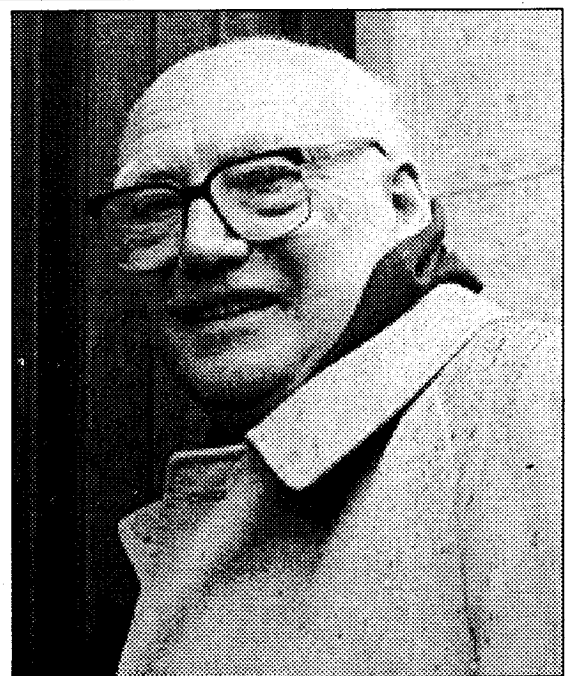
demarcation dispute.

The RMT must now act decisively to regain the momentum. In the light of Paddington, Southall and other incidents it is not enough to be just trying to hold back the TOCs threats, we should be campaigning for the reintroduction of guards on all trains.

As a first step to mobilising the membership the RMT should immediately hold a recall conference of train crew.

There union members could formulate an agenda for change - demands to improve the safety of the railways whilst protecting the jobs and conditions of guards and drivers.

On that basis the RMT can enter into a real dialogue with the public on how to best provide a safe railway - through public ownership



RMT leader Jimmy Knapp - looking for way out

and control.

The union should be prepared to challenge the anti-union laws if that is what it takes to defend its members. But even if the RMT leadership are not prepared to challenge the laws directly then this at least gives them the chance to provoke a clash with the TOCs on a proper basis.

Time and again over the last fifteen years the RMT leadership has ducked the issues and dodged out of a fight to protect train crew jobs and safety. We have seen the result - worse conditions and a steady loss of jobs. This time round the RMT must respond!

Alan Thornett

The Livingstone challenge for London Mayor, based as it is on huge support of Londoners, offers the best opportunity yet to deal a serious blow against Blairism and start to regenerate the left.

As the official Labour mayor he would have the possibility of regenerating the left inside and outside of the Party. If he was excluded and stood as an independent he would have the possibility of organising a serious new initiative to the left of Labour with his position as Mayor at the core of it.

Either option would provide a much needed breakthrough since, the Livingstone challenge aside, the forward march of Blairism has been relentless.

This year's Labour Party conference was a good example. It could hardly have been more dominated by Blair or the forces of the left more invisible. There are good things happening, like the continuing success of the Grassroots Alliance in winning positions on the executive, but the impact of this on the evolution of the party is marginal at best.

New Labour strategists seem to have already concluded that they are going to win the next election in two years time – and barring major developments such as severe economic crisis they are probably right.

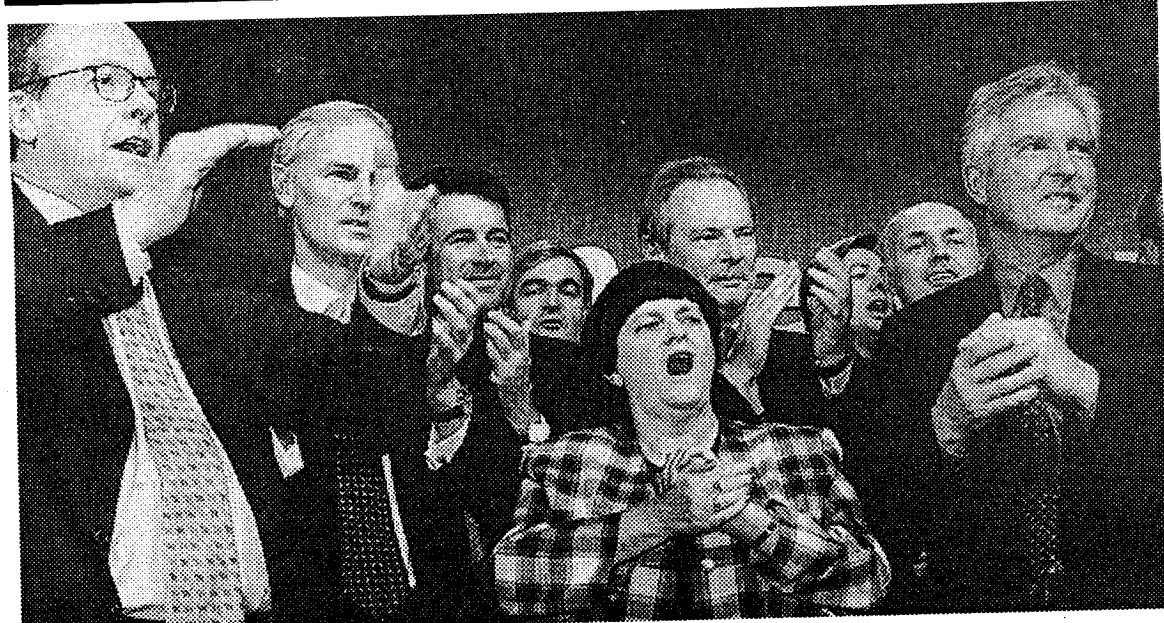
Blair therefore not only attacked the Tories, who are an easy target, but began laying the groundwork for the next stage of his project for the Labour Party.

The class war, he proclaimed, was over: and he was now going to declare war on "the conservatives of the right and of the left" who are standing in the way of New Labour "modernisation".

It was clear enough who he was talking about: teachers who are opposing performance related pay, those who are opposing privatisation in its many forms, and those who are opposing the "modernisers" inside the LP.

But he went well beyond the theme he has pushed since he abolished Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution (which was supposed to heal the spilt between Labour and Liberalism at the turn of the century): he called on the "one nation" section of the Tory Party to join New Labour! Blair even named Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine, in particular, calling on them to join.

All eyes on Ken as Blair's gang tightens grip



Top Tories losing the plot in Blackpool: the obscure in pursuit of the reactionary

Since then Blair has formed a new, and unprecedented, campaigning alliance with Clarke and Heseltine (and Charles Kennedy, new leader of the Liberal Democrats) in favour of the EU. The alliance is in favour of entry into the single currency "when the time is right" – which in reality is when they judge they can win a referendum on it.

Former Tory Prime Minister Edward Heath, Heseltine and Clarke appeared on a high profile platform with Blair, Brown and Cook to say how much they agreed with Tony on all things European – a key success for the Prime Minister in his quest to reshape British politics still further.

It is clear that the political gap between these "one-nation Tories" and Blair is minuscule compared with the gulf which exists between them and the Tory leadership. The formation of this alliance has severely exacerbated

the deep divide inside the Tory Party which is now verging on a formal split.

The depth of these divisions came out clearly enough at the Tory Party conference, which again moved the Party move sharply to the right. Xenophobia ruled the day, as the main themes were to defend fox hunting, defend the pound, and, when Margaret Thatcher arrived at it, defend Chilean dictator Pinochet!

Thatcher was treated to a heroine's welcome and cheered to the rafters when she told a fringe meeting that all bad things came from Europe and all good things came from the English speaking nations. Norman Tebbit was able to get up at the conference and say that he felt more at home in the party today than for a very long time.

In reality the Tory Party is being torn apart both by the success of Blairism in colonising the middle ground of British politics, and by its own long-standing divisions over Europe. The result is that the one-nation Tories no longer find the Tory Party habitable and feel much closer to Blair and New Labour. What Blair says today about the EU is what they have been saying about it for years.

Blair followed the Labour Party conference with a Cabinet reshuffle which ranked amongst his most audacious moves yet. Nothing could have shown his confidence more than the decision to bring Mandleson back after only 10 months out of the government and make him a minister.

At the same time he cleaned out most of the surviving remnants of old Labour in the cabinet (such as they were) and established a team modelled almost entirely in his own image. He feels no need to compromise with anyone – and he doesn't. There have only been

the most muted protests at his actions from within the Labour Party, and most of the media have strongly approved of his changes, including his resurrection of Mandleson.

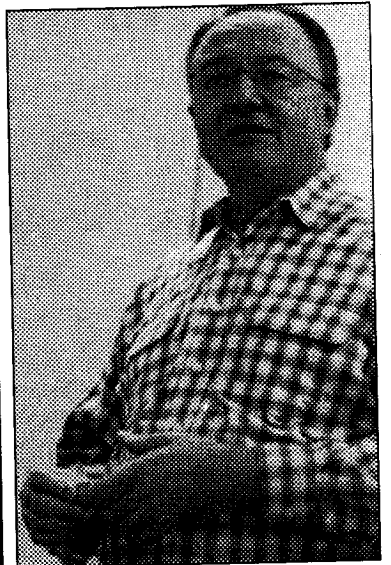
And the situation inside the Labour Party is set to get worse for the left, unless a breakthrough can be made with the Livingstone challenge or in fighting the possible deselection of left MPs.

There is reportedly a "hit-list" of key members of the Campaign Group which the Blairites intend to target for removal in the reselection process which has just completed its first stage at local level.

While it seems so far that all local constituencies have reselected their sitting MPs – including members of the Campaign Group, this is not the final hurdle. They then have to be endorsed by the National Executive.

Since the Executive's decision will be based on political criteria [i.e. loyalty to the Blairite project] the expectation is that some of them, most likely the key players in the Campaign Group, will be de-selected. What the response will be from either deselected MPs or their supporters remains to be tested out. There is still a significant and active left in the Labour Party but it is greatly weakened and much of it passive.

And it will not end there. Next year the party is to be reorganised at constituency level, which is the level where the left has traditionally been at its strongest and the level at which the link with the unions has been closest. Local trade unions have had the right to



The man Blair wants to stop ...

send delegates to local general management committees of the Labour Party. This is what the left has long referred to as the "open valve" between the party and the unions.

Under the rubric of 21st Century Party, this along with local democracy is to be severely neutered. Local committees are to meet once every three months instead of once every month, and their decision-making powers severely limited.

The meetings will cease to be delegate based, and instead will be open to all members, bring an end to representative democracy in the LP.

The stated motivation for this is clear in the consultation document: "Our primary duty as a party is to ensure that we stand candidates and that as far as possible every elector has the opportunity to vote Labour". No comment on what these candidates will do when they are elected, as the Blair steamroller continues to remake the party as an electoral machine.

This is probably the biggest single "reform" which Blair will have carried out since he started to transform the Labour Party, certainly as far as its effects on the rank and file members is concerned.

And potentially there could be significant opposition to it. Unfortunately there will be difficult to channel this effectively, because on the basis of consultation on the changes the NEC will already have implemented its own proposed reforms!

In the run up to June 2000 the consultation will primarily take the form of seeking completed questionnaires from individual party members. This will then be reported to the July NEC who may well then propose rule changes commensurate with this. By the time the proposals get to next year's conference, delegates will be presented with an effective *fait accompli*.

Blair's end-game is to reshape the Labour Party into the first party of the British bourgeoisie. But he has another objective as well. That is to ensure that

when the long downturn in the level of strike struggles ends in Britain, any new radicalisation which emerges will not easily find expression inside the Party.

To begin to reverse this, the left needs a victory. There is a lot hanging on the Livingstone challenge and the support it has amongst the electorate in London.

Hague's revolting Tories

Under the bizarre slogan of the "Common Sense Revolution", William Hague's floundering Tory Party lurched even further to the right at their Blackpool conference.

Among Hague's five key pledges was a promise to remove all schools from local authority control, tearing up national pay and conditions agreements for teachers, and giving heads and governors complete power to set their own admissions policy.

NHS patients were promised that if they could not be treated by an agreed date, the health authority would have to pay to send them elsewhere for treatment – possibly the private sector. No estimate was given on what this might cost!

While the ageing Tory faithful may see in this and other ranting pledges a welcome echo of the glory days of Thatcherism, many of the Conservatives' traditional big business supporters will be even less inclined to back a Tory Party which has set its face so firmly against the Euro and appears to be flirting with the idea of leaving the EU.



If I wore a vest would I look like Bruce Willis?

Defy the fixers - left must back Livingstone

Alan Thornett

Ken Livingstone's bid to become mayor of London is the best chance to deal a blow, against Blairism since Blair took the leadership of the Labour Party three and a half years ago. The left must fully support this.

Livingstone's campaign has been transformed by several opinion poll results, which show that he has massive support amongst Londoners. An *Evening Standard* poll on October 15 showed that if Livingstone were the Labour candidate he would trounce Tory candidate Lord Archer with 63% of all voters - including 23% of Tory voters!

It also showed that he has the support of 50% of Labour voters in the race for the labour candidature. Dobson could muster only 17% with 16% supporting Glenda Jackson and 7% Trevor Phillips. Even more significantly it showed that Livingstone would also win easily against all comers if he stood as an independent.

Livingstone would get 43% of the vote as against 25% for Archer and 23% for Dobson.

A *Mail on Sunday* poll showed similar results - except that Dobson's support in a contest with Archer had fallen. Of course this poll was taken after the new Electoral College had been announced.

The Millbank dirty tricks department has been working overtime but it was seriously wrong-footed by these results. Only a couple of days before they had announced their 'answer' to the Livingstone problem in the form of an electoral college designed to give Dobson the nomination.

It has three sections each having one third of the vote: one for London party members, one for trade unions and Socialist Societies, and one for London MPs, MEPs, and the Millbank selected candidates for the London Assembly - a total of just 86 people!

This did indeed give Dobson a big advantage. He would be assured at least 75% of the MPs section. Millbank also recommended that unions cast their votes as block votes once they have determined which way they will be cast, which they assumed would be wielded by the union leaderships and would benefit Dobson.

This set-up (or stitch-up) means that one vote of an MP is worth 1,000 more than the vote of a LP member, or 5,000 times more than the vote of a union member. This factor alone automatically gives Dobson half the votes he needs to win the nomination before a vote has been cast in the London LP members section or the trade union section.

But it was not so simple. The level of support shown for Livingstone in the polls affected the situation in the unions. Not only did major



Andrew Ward

His Master's Voice: the control may be hands-free, but Dobbo is clearly Millbank's chosen man

What you can do to support Ken

- Contact the campaign at PO Box 20052, London NW2 5ZH or HYPERLINK <http://www.livingstone.org.uk> or www.livingstoneforlondon.org.uk
- Agree to be a contact in your constituency to ring round to ensure the maximum vote for Ken
- Press your MP and MEP to hold an advisory ballot of members before deciding how to vote themselves
- If your union has not yet decided how to vote press it to hold a ballot
- recommend support for Ken
- Make sure that recommendations to support Ken are widely publicised - at branch as well as regional level.

unions in London, such as the TGWU, MSF and the FBU announce that they would ballot their members but they also declared they would recommend a vote for Livingstone.

Even the GMB, which controversially cast its block vote for Blair's man Alun Michael as leader of the Welsh assembly has been shamed into balloting in London - though without a recommendation.

In UNISON, the London Political Committee has recommended support for Livingstone, but it is unclear at time of writing whether the Blairites in the national machinery will be able to overturn this.

Other affiliated unions including TSSA, RMT, ASLEF, UCATT, the Bakers and the CWU have yet to decide. In the CWU it seems likely that the key debate will be whether the vote is split. The AEEU - whose leader Ken Jackson has stridently backed Dobson and attacked Ken Livingstone has formally not decided yet, but neither they nor builders' union UCATT which also has yet to decide are expected to ballot.

Faced with this Millbank promptly changed its position and recommended that where unions had balloted they should cast their votes proportionately - which would swing the benefit back to Dobson.

Dobson an unfair advantage. UNISON has already taken a decision to this effect, and will cast a block vote whichever way it goes, although this cannot be defended as a democratic principle.

At the end of all this a Dobson win is still the most likely outcome, but it is now a close-run thing and much more of a gamble than was envisaged when Millbank introduced the system.

Other things have gone wrong as well. Trevor Phillips dutifully withdrew from the contest to become Dobson's running mate, but Glenda Jackson has not been prepared to do the same.

In fact she has denounced Millbank for twisting her arm over it. This failure to reduce it to a two horse race means that there will be a split in the Blairite vote. Even if it is only a small split this is an added problem in a close-run contest.

Millbank, therefore, have a big decision to make. Will they take the gamble of defeating Livingstone in the rigged Electoral College - or will they take what Livingstone calls the 'grassy knoll option' and disqualify him in the selection procedure?

The odds may be against this. But they have clearly kept their options open, since the selection panel does not have to announce their short list until November 16. And any

This advice is now in turn being challenged in some unions who argue that since the AEEU, and possibly USDAW, intend cast block votes for Dobson without a ballot, to cast their votes proportionately would give

doubt that this is under tight leadership control was put to rest when Trevor Phillips announced his withdrawal from the race and immediately appeared at the top of the top-up list of candidates for the Assembly.

Millbank would pay a heavy price if they were to disqualify Livingstone in selection, both in loss of membership in London and beyond, and in credibility amongst the electorate

But they may still see it as the best worst option against the nightmare scenario of Livingstone winning the nomination and becoming the official Labour mayor of London.

Of course, Livingstone is saying that even if he is excluded he would not stand as an independent. But the more he is attacked by the Blairites the more popular he becomes. In private he must see standing as an independent as a very real option if he is crossed off the short list by the selection panel or beaten in a heavily rigged process. And the left should press him stand in either of these circumstances and back him to the full if he does so.

None of this means that the left should be uncritical of Livingstone. For some time he has been shifting to the right and narrowing the distance between himself and the Blairites.

The most important example was his support for the Balkan war. His stance in support of the bombing disgusted many of his supporters, and made him virtually unsupportable whilst that war was on.

But if any of that was designed to soften the attitude of Millbank towards him it didn't work. Millbank have been unflinching in their opposition to him getting anywhere near the position of mayor of London.

London people remember him from the GLC and his popular Fares Fair policy in particular - despite its problems in the end. Livingstone's GLC was also the first to really put equal opportunities on the agenda - and this means

something important to women, to black people, to lesbians and gay men and to disabled people.

And the great divide in this election is the issue of privatisation, particularly following the Paddington rail disaster. Livingstone's stand against the privatisation of the tube is the basis of much of his support and he has made clear that he intends to make this the centre piece of his battle with Dobson.

Unfortunately the left is divided on the issue. The SWP are supporting Livingstone and even the CPGB are doing so.

But the Socialist Party equivocated at their Socialism 99 event and the current edition of the *Socialist* reports events without taking a position. The AWL have yet to make their position public, but the level of hostility they have displayed to Livingstone in the past would make their support unlikely. Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party never support anyone other than themselves as a point of principle.

Yet to fail to support Livingstone under today's conditions would be a big mistake. His challenge is a big opportunity for the left and if it is defeated it will be a defeat for the left.

These divisions (if they continue) could affect the role the London Socialist alliance could play in these events.

Should Livingstone be allowed to stand for the nomination and win it, the left will need to stand a left slate for the Assembly, which will support Livingstone as mayor.

Otherwise Livingstone could be trapped with a hostile Labour group in the Assembly. If he stand as an independent he may well propose his own slate for the Assembly which the left can unite behind.

If on the other hand he is excluded in the selection procedure or beaten by Dobson in the electoral college and does not stand as an independent then an alternative left candidate for mayor will be needed.

Civil service union chiefs seek 'partnership' with New Labour wreckers

Darren Williams, PCS Group Assistant Secretary, Office for National Statistics (personal capacity)

The whole public sector has been in a state of siege for the last twenty years. The very idea of 'public service' has been a target of the neo-liberal offensive driven forward by the Thatcher and Major governments, which denied that there was any sphere of life which could not be best served by private enterprises obeying the 'laws' of the market.

The effects of this ideology are best known in the context of the National Health Service and the education system. But the civil service has not escaped unscathed.

Until the mid-1990s, privatisation of central government services was virtually unknown. Even then, only a few smaller departments, like the Property Services Agency and Her Majesty's Stationery Office, were sold off in their entirety. This was, however, only part of a much broader onslaught.

Throughout the civil service, the ideology and management techniques of private enterprise were introduced. Highly centralised structures were broken up into ever-smaller units, so that potentially profitable sections could be hived off to private companies. This was initially done through market testing; specific services within departments were put out to tender on a five-yearly basis.

The break-up of departments was accompanied by the ending of national collective bargaining on pay and conditions, with each department or agency given responsibility for its own arrangements.

This was a classic 'divide and rule' tactic. It ensured an increasing divergence in pay and conditions between departments, with staff in smaller departments being left with little industrial muscle and therefore losing out. It made it almost impossible to organise legal industrial action across the whole civil service - in fact, the last time this happened was a one-day strike against market testing on 5 November 1993.

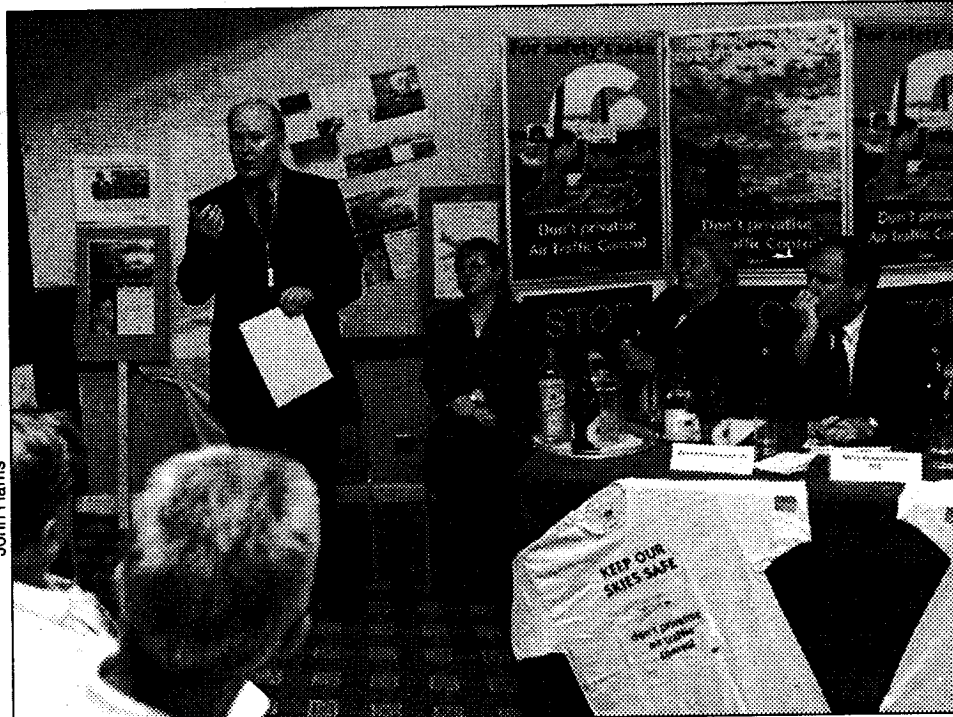
Even market testing's dismal failure to save money did not dissuade the Tories from pursuing their attack on the civil service, albeit in a slightly modified form. The 1994 government White Paper *Continuity and Change* spelt out a range of options - ranging from outright privatisation to internal restructuring - which each department had to consider in order to become as 'efficient' as possible.

The meaning of 'efficiency' was spelt out: the document celebrated the loss of 32,000 jobs since January 1993 alone, and declared the intention of cutting at least 30,000 more over the next four years. This drive to meet this target proceeded at breakneck speed - both before and after the change of government on 2 May 1997.

New Labour's policies for the civil service are rooted in the same ideology as those of the Tories. This was shown by the government's attempt to privatise the Royal Mint (which it has now reluctantly abandoned) - despite the fact that the Mint was making an annual profit of £13.7m in the public sector.

It is certainly clear to anyone reading the Cabinet Office document, *Better Quality Services*, a handbook "on achieving the government's objectives through competition involving the private sector".

In the foreword, Public Service Minister, David Clark, states: "What matters to the cit-



PCS is also caught up in the fight against Labour's planned privatisation of Air Traffic Control: a joint PCS/IPMS fringe meeting was held at this year's Labour Conference

izen, and therefore to the government, is quality for the customer at the most reasonable cost to the taxpayer. If these are right, the distinctions between public and private are not so important. We want to encourage business to play a fuller role in providing public services."

New Labour has accepted two key Tory principles: that essential public services must be provided only so long as their delivery is affordable under the existing regressive taxation system; and that private businesses are almost certain to be more efficient at providing such services than public bodies.

How this works in practice is clear from the example of the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The Treasury embarked on an 'efficiency review' of the ONS in July 1998, which it began by commissioning a report by private sector management consultants, KPMG, at a cost to the taxpayer of £130,000.

The KPMG Report's highly superficial analysis of the ONS's operations, padded out with flow charts, diagrams and meaningless management-speak, was apparently constructed purely to justify the predetermined conclusion that the department would be more 'efficient' if staffing levels were reduced by a third and large chunks of the department were hived off to private companies.

There was no indication in the report that the KPMG team considered any option other than contracting-out (or 'outsourcing'), despite the guidance in *Better Quality Services*: "Departments should use whatever means will deliver best value for money. ... without any inbuilt preference for any particular way forward."

Despite the well-known fiasco in the Passport Office, brought about by outsourcing, the ONS Efficiency Review is proceeding apace. The Treasury, and its agents in senior management, are hellbent on cutting staffing levels to the bone and offering up key services to private profiteers. In this, it is being aided by further private sector consultancies, the bill for which now stands at around £1 million. So much for efficiency!

The impact on civil servants of the unrelenting attack which they faced since 1979, has been exacerbated by the complete failure of leadership by their trade unions. In the

dying days of the Callaghan government, a pay strike by the two biggest unions, CPSSA and SCPS, successfully challenged the government's incomes policy, and resistance to attacks on pay and conditions continued sporadically through the early 1980s, as the left (particularly in CPSSA) alternated with the right in running the unions.

Since 1988, however the right have enjoyed unbroken power, to the detriment of members' interests. All the worst excesses of the civil service 'reform' programme - including performance-related pay and the end of national collective bargaining - have been introduced in this period, with the response from the union bureaucrats being tough words but no action.

Moreover, this has been accompanied by a concerted effort to eliminate accountability. This has culminated in the new merged union, PCS, having one of the least democratic structures anywhere in the British trade union movement.

Despite the fact that there is now one union representing the vast majority of civil servants - where there were four in the 1980s - the bureaucracy continues to squander its potential strength. The result is clear: in its first year of existence, PCS's membership declined by 11,600, against a trend of stabilisation across the TUC.

It is not surprising the leadership fails to inspire the confidence of civil servants, given its slavish attitude towards the New Labour government. It has issued a barely-qualified welcome to the *Modernising Government* White Paper, which insists that, "public servants must be the agents of changes citizens and businesses want."

A recent headquarters circular relates that the union has contributed to the preparation of a draft action plan on modernising the civil service, drawn up at a conference of Permanent Secretaries.

The five principles on which the union's input has apparently been based is a strange list, with "serious concerns on the present performance pay system" right at the bottom, below "taking fear out of the process of change" (which presumably means breaking down members' resistance to sweeping changes in their terms and conditions).

Right at the top of the list - above "employ-

ment security for members" - is "the need to develop partnership working across the Civil Service".

A clearer idea of what the bureaucracy means by "partnership" can be gleaned from the July 1999 consultation document, *Industrial Partnership*. "The broad context of partnership", it says, "is the belief that, although there are areas of disagreement between union and employers' sides, the two have shared mutual interest".

The document pays lip-service to the fact that the interests of management and unions are not identical, but draws no meaningful conclusions from this.

A revealing paragraph states: "Clearly a key part of the union's agenda at departmental/agency level is to minimise outsourcing and ideally stop it altogether."

One of the attractions of the partnership approach is that, if it succeeds in merging together the management and unions agendas, the need for - and hence the drive for - outsourcing could be substantially reduced."

Translation: "if union reps collaborate with management in ensuring implementation of 'efficiency savings' (whatever the impact in jobs, staffing levels, etc.), then the slightly more drastic alternative of privatisation might possibly be avoided".

Nowhere in the document is there any mention of an alternative approach to 'partnership' - even as a fallback, if management should spurn the union's advances. Campaigning, mobilising members, and of course, industrial action, are taboo subjects in the new, modernised union that is PCS.

PCS members' reaction to this misleadership of has increasingly taken the form of despair, cynicism and abstention from the union's internal processes. As New Labour continues to push ahead with the break-up and commercialisation of the civil service, the need for a change of leadership has never been so great.

But the left is currently in no shape to rise to this challenge. Faced with ever-greater attacks from the government, employers and its 'own' side, the Socialist Party-led Left Unity organisation has retreated further into electoralism, pinning all its hopes on winning control of the National Executive Committee in May 2000.

Support for its slate is essential, but is unlikely to be forthcoming unless Left Unity takes a more proactive approach to campaigning on bread-and-butter issues. Its membership has shrunk to a tiny rump, and badly needs to turn this around before it becomes completely irrelevant.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Caucus, whose politics are more grassroots-oriented, has also declined in numbers and retreated into inactivity, outside the departments where it is strongest (the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency).

Ironically, it is mirroring Left Unity's own electoralism by focussing its attention on an electoral challenge to the Left Unity-led Employment Service Group Executive Committee (GEC).

The GEC has failed to oppose initiatives like National Traineeships, but an electoral challenge will be meaningless unless it is combined with a coherent approach to organising and building the left in order to make a real challenge to the bureaucracy across the whole union.

The Socialist Caucus needs urgently to initiate a broad regroupment with other healthy sections of the left, to start this process.

Bitter lessons of Paddington crash

Why we must renationalise the railways

GREG TUCKER, driver and RMT activist who stood against Jimmy Knapp as General Secretary of the union looks at the issues raised by the Paddington rail crash.

Was safety compromised by privatisation?" is a question that infuriates most rail workers.

The answer was always blindingly obvious. For us the question is, "Why could no one in New Labour accept that our demands for re-nationalisation were based on real fears for the rail service, not on some dogmatic conservatism?"

It is not just that the Tories chose the most dangerously complex way possible to privatise the railways. The over one hundred companies all now involved in the rail network share one common goal - to make a profit from the labour of rail workers. To do so they are all involved in com-

promising safety.

Before the general election Labour was quite happy to recognise this.

For the last two years New Labour has connived with the new rail bosses to try to hide this simple truth. The reality of Prescott and Blair's "Rail Summits" has been that behind the tough words for public consumption the rail companies have been appeased.

The Paddington disaster raises every aspect of the effects of privatisation. Over-stressed, under-trained drivers, trains with forty year old safety systems, track capacity over-stretched, track layout safety deliberately underplayed and signals left obscured. A catalogue of failings, each a direct result of the rail sell-off, leading to a massive systems failure.

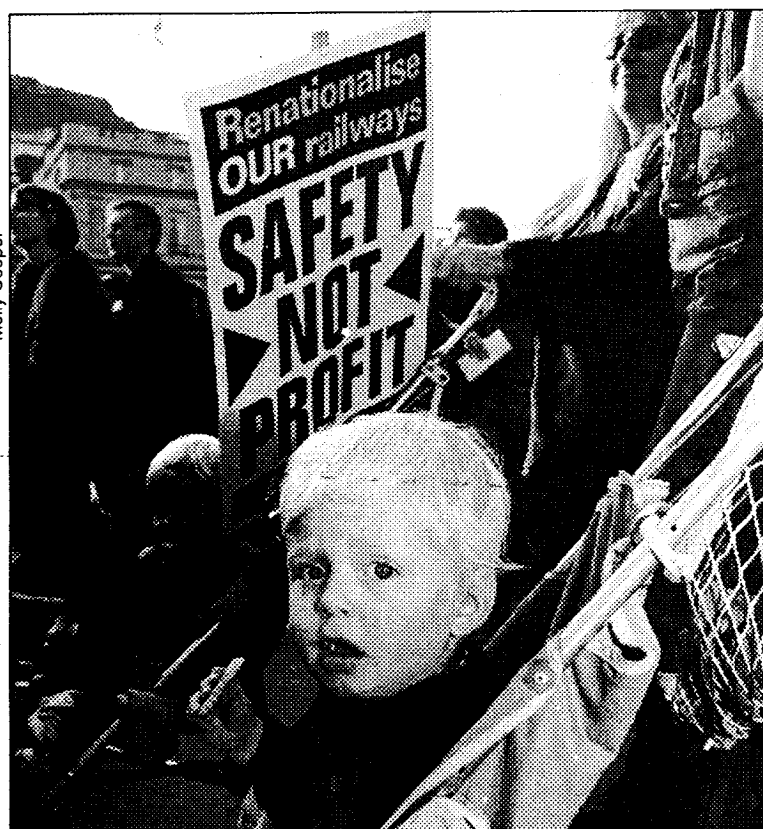
Drivers, after training shortened by their new private employer, find themselves working longer shifts, with worse conditions. Under pressure to ensure they catch up on time lost leaving the station. With more practical experience they might be more

confident in resisting the dangerous demands made of them.

Trains should be fitted with more advanced safety protection. They aren't because the money to do so was given to lawyers preparing for privatisation instead. Diesel fuel, which can cause fatal conflagration would not be necessary if the all lines were fully electrified - as are most lines leaving London.

This is what happened at Paddington - and it is a tale that most rail activists will recognise. In every area there are hazards that never seem to be dealt with. Difficult signals reported time and again but never re-sited. An emergency speed restriction imposed over five years ago to deal with land subsidence that is only now being repaired. Radio communications dead spots never cleared up.

Train crews are painfully aware that Railtrack has refused to invest the necessary resources. The incidence of signal failures, points failures, broken rails, track circuit failures and the like are clearly on the increase. The HSE was publicly forced to intervene



Molly Cooper

after repeated problems with the Severn Tunnel, but with less of a fanfare passengers see the result in delayed trains as speed restrictions crop up all over the country. There were some specific, extra problems facing the drivers at Paddington.

The track capacity had been over-stretched. Too many trains competing to go in and out of the station. The solution, increase the line speed to cram more trains in. This leaves less time to react and creates higher impact speeds.

The track layout was fairly unique, deliberately designed in a less than safe way to accommodate the Heathrow Express. In a fatal compromise the unsafe design appears to have been accepted on the understanding that Automatic Train Protection

(ATP) would be operating instead. It wasn't!

The new track design meant signals were left obscured. Local union activists had been campaigning for years to get SN109 made safe. Buck passing between train operating companies and Railtrack meant no proper solution was ever implemented.

With the sun shining directly on the signal, probably giving a "phantom aspect", the driver might never have known he had passed a signal at danger.

A catalogue of small failings, each a direct result of the rail sell-off, leading to a massive systems failure.

Tinkering now with the safety chain of command will do little to correct matters.

New Labour plans to continue the privatisation process with Air Traffic Control and London Underground - making all the same mistakes again. This cannot be allowed to continue.

The rail system needs to be brought back into public ownership immediately - and without compensation.

Only then can the much needed investment in safety be properly managed. Railtrack and the

operating companies should be politely told - "We have let you rip off millions every day in profits. Your time is up. Just be thankful we are not asking for any of your ill-gotten gains back."

Unlike the first time round a new British Rail needs to put rail workers in control of the railways.

One hundred years ago when rail workers first raised the demand for nationalisation that was what was expected - that those with the real experience of the system should run it in the public interest.

Instead, fifty years ago when it was taken into public ownership it was still run as if it was a capitalist concern. Indeed the old shareholders did better - their compensation an improvement on their previous dividends.

Drivers know where signals are badly sighted. Guards know where track needs better maintenance. We all know where the service to passengers needs to improve. Instead of listening to accountants, it is time rail workers' and public views were heard.

Cutting corners - and risking lives - for profit

Tessa Van Gelderen, a former RMT activist at Paddington, comments on issues at the station

THE CHANGES that have now been made to the layout of the track at Paddington speak volumes.

Making some lines one-directional, changing the signalling, and preventing trains crossing over in the Paddington area, are major alterations. This is a clear indication that the originally signalling and track layout brought in for the introduction of the Heathrow express was rushed, and was done without regard to normal safety standards required of a railway.

But that was par for the course for a railway system that was sold off cheap. Yet the cost of any improvements will be passed on to the passengers and taxpayer.

Railtrack last year made £442 million profit, but it did manage to find £1 million for Research and Development. Not enough research and development obviously to investigate all those signals passed at danger; just enough, probably, to work out that the cost of bringing in Automatic Train Protection (ATP), recommended from the Hidden Inquiry

of the 1988 Clapham crash, would be too high a price to save human lives.

Privatisation of the railways brought in changes of uniform and corporate colours for the train companies, but loss of jobs and worsening conditions for the staff.

Longer hours, fewer breaks and targets that include trains arriving on time, all put pressure on traincrews. *The Guardian* on 7 October 1999 wrote: "Jonathan Bray (from Save Our Railways) underlined the increasing trend towards sub-contracting, which had led to mistakes in signal repair and other errors in tracked maintenance. And on an operational level, train companies were more likely to take short cuts because of the threat of hefty fines from Railtrack."

As a guard and a trade union and a safety rep for the RMT at Paddington in the lead up to privatisation, I was involved in a number of safety issues.

When the track was being re-laid, overhead lines were introduced for the first time. Simultaneously, Great Western started to run trains in and out of Waterloo that involved the third rail, which also was not present in the old Western region.

Management refused guards training "in situ" for the third rail because the mock-up at either Reading or Waterloo would have to be hired from another company. Instead we were shown a short video and had a quick multi-choice test afterwards.

Guards are responsible for the safety of passengers and other on-train staff, having to detrain them safely if necessary. In 1982, when I was trained at a guard, I spent 5 days at a school just dealing with electrics, and practised using the equipment that broke the electric current on the track itself. An hour's lecture now suffices - and this had the approval of the HSE.

Many of the changes that have taken place on the rail network have safety implications: eliminating the second driver on high speed trains; getting rid of the guard on many suburban services; reducing station staff; longer hours and fewer breaks for drivers, and so on. It is no coincidence that these measures reduce staffing levels, the highest cost for train operating companies.

At the same time, much of the work carried out by Railtrack is contracted out, and many ex-BR track workers find themselves on short-

term contracts, with all the implications that involves.

The unions should not shy away from the fact that loss of jobs is an issue. The dispute with the RMT guards was about safety; it is about keeping guards in their operational role on the train.

The union should have gone further and should campaign to put a guard back on every train - not to collect fares or pour the tea but to take responsibility for the train and the safety of the passengers.

Now that the three train operating companies have won their case in the courts by claiming that, while the dispute is over safety, the guards' beef is with Railtrack, this will have wide-ranging consequences.

By law, guards cannot take industrial action against anyone other than their employer, so Railtrack (or whoever will be responsible for safety) can make the rules without fear of opposition.

Of course, if they had had any regard for safety, the train companies would have supported the role of guards, against the proposals of Railtrack, rather than taking the RMT to court. Their actions show how much they value human life in comparison to profits.

Nominations are under way for the UNISON general secretary elections. Elkie Dee reports.

ROGER BANNISTER is the left candidate, chosen by a meeting of CFDU supporters in September, needs 25 branch nominations before the end of November to stand - at time of writing, he has 15.

Bannister's platform is For a Fighting General Secretary on a Worker's Wage. The policies of this campaign will include:

- End low pay - the union should demand £5 an hour, not a penny less, with no exemptions
- For a national fight against cuts and privatisation in all their forms - against the Private Finance Initiative, public-private partnerships and Best Value
- Campaigning to take back the privatised utilities into public ownership
- Solidarity with and support for workers on strike
- Repeal of the anti-union laws, and if necessary, defiance in defence of members' interests
- No financial support to Labour councillors or MPs whose policies attack members' jobs, wages and conditions, and the opening up of the political fund so that union can support candidates whose policies defend members' interests
- Support for the right to self-

UNISON: Campaign for a Fighting, Democratic General Secretary!

organisation

- Against all forms of discrimination
- Defend a woman's right to choose
- Defend the right of members and branches to campaign
- An end to all victimisation of union activists - lift the branch suspensions now!

He will take the average wage of a UNISON member, not the £74,000 on offer, and supports the election of all full time union officials - on a worker's wage

The campaign is to link the defence of members' interests with the democratic right for union activists and branches to campaign politically.

It is also a campaign in opposition to the current witch-hunt within the union, in which a number of branches have been suspended by UNISON.

The left within the union needs to mobilise the anger of activists and members disappointed by the leadership's failure to defend its

members' interests against continued attacks from the government and employers, and offer a way forward.

It is important that the left within the union can build a united campaign this time, both to maximise support for Roger Bannister and to win people to be part of an alternative to the current leadership.

An important issue in this election is the relationship between the union and the Labour government. The current leadership line is in favour of cooperation and of downplaying conspicuous conflicts of interest between government policy and members' interests, arguing that UNISON can influence the government more by working with them.

Tell that to members who have lost their jobs or had pay and conditions cut under privatisation and spending cuts.

The bureaucracy's chosen candidate to succeed Bickerstaffe is Dave Prentis, a hitherto obscure

career bureaucrat clearly already striving to ensure that anyone likely to vote in the election has heard of him.

In a blatant affront to union democracy, UNISON publications have at least three quotes from Prentis in every article, and he is suddenly the union's spokesperson on anything and everything in the national media.

Sadly, Prentis does not have to compete for branch nominations, as the leadership's candidate. And 12 out of the 13 regional convenors voted for him.

Not all the regions are following suit, though - Eastern Region, East Midlands and the South East have already voted not to support Prentis. This shows a gap opening up between the bureaucracy and activists who are in touch with what is happening to members on a day to day basis.

Campaign committees in support of Roger Bannister have been launched in several regions. The aim is to set one up in each



Nurses and health workers need a lead from UNISON in fighting cuts and closures.

area to bring the left together, with an elected convenor to act as a link to a nationally coordinated campaign.

There is to be a wider national campaign committee meeting with representatives from all those who wish to take part in this on November 13 in Nottingham.

For more information about the campaign or to join the CFDU, contact Glenn Kelly, national campaign organiser, on 0171-251 8449.

Haringey workers say enough is enough!

Elkie Dee

A UNION branch plans to ballot members for industrial action over their employer's plans to sack staff in order to re-engage them all on new, inferior terms and conditions, including reductions in maternity and sick pay, an increase in the working week for white-collar staff, cuts in various allowances and overtime premium payments.

The employer has made it clear in all negotiations that this mass sacking is its intention if it doesn't get its way.

Union negotiators feel they are being asked to accept contracts that break national conditions with a gun pointed at their heads. The employer argues that they have to make cuts to deal with a financial crisis.

Welcome to the Labour-controlled London Borough of Haringey in north London. The financial crisis is the result of years of mismanagement, including a debt of over £70 million at Alexandra Palace and a number of expensive deferred purchase agreements.

Worse off

Almost all workers will be worse off, with either reduced pay or increased working hours, as well as other significant reductions in conditions of service.

The planned cuts will also have an impact on people who live in Haringey through reduced local services. Many staff will look for jobs elsewhere, and some will be difficult to replace. Morale will plummet.

And of course, many staff live locally and will lose out twice, suffering worse pay and conditions and worse services.

It will be disabled workers, women, low-paid and part-time workers (and people who fall into

more than one category) who lose out most. Union members are outraged by the attack on equal opportunities involved.

The union fears that further attacks are planned. There is no guarantee that the council will not be back demanding further cuts next year.

Privatisation, with its damaging impact on jobs, conditions and services, is also on the agenda - with services like home care particularly vulnerable.

Some proposals, such as moving the pay date from the middle to the end of the month (payment in arrears rather than advance or arrears and advance), have been carried out by other councils.

The contracts on offer are worse than national conditions, and undercut Single Status agreements, which included a maximum 36 hour week in London.

Any harmonisation taking place is at the expense of workers. The council has ignored the financial implications of the Single Status agreement it signed until it put forward these proposals for cuts.

The tactic of sacking staff to impose new contracts has been copied from neighbouring Camden, who did it 3 years ago. as a precursor to privatising payroll functions.

UNISON is working closely with other Council unions, including GMB, TGWU and UCATT, to campaign against Haringey's plans. The unions plan to consult their members and to campaign among Borough residents and local Labour Party members.

Haringey has the support of other UNISON branches, UNISON London Region, and the national union.

If Haringey Council pushes through the plans, the dangers are clear - today, Haringey - tomorrow...?

SSP extends its reach as Scottish Labour declines

Gordon Morgan

AT THE HAMILTON South by-election, Labour scraped in ahead of the SNP with the Scottish Socialist Party in third place with 9.5% of the vote. The Tories came in fourth and the Lib Democrats, Labour's partners in the Scottish Parliament, came in sixth and lost their deposit.

There were three notable things about the result; the collapse of the Labour and Lib Dem vote and the strong showing for the SSP.

In June at the Scottish Parliament elections, Labour got 14,098 votes on a 55% poll, in the by-election they got 7172 just over half of their previous showing.

The SNP vote fell only marginally from 6922 to 6616. The Lib Dems fell from 1982 to 634 - a loss of around a third.

The SSP did not stand as first past the post in June, however, they stood in the Euro Elections and polled 647 on a 20% poll. This time the vote increased to 1,847; nearly three times the European election result - the percentage increased from 6.7% to 9.5%.

The disenchantment with Labour and the Lib Dems was expected given the poor image they have presented since setting up the Scottish parliament. It does however, kill off the myth that somehow voters would return to vote for Labour in Westminster elections.

In fact the collapse in Labour's turnout has been noticeable in all recent elections. Opinion polls have not captured this reluctance to vote Labour and increasingly a



Plunging vote: Labour's Dewar

willingness to vote for other parties.

Whilst Labour is being shown up for the wretchedness of all its policies, the Lib vote has collapsed due to their abandonment of principle. They have ditched their election promises, on tuition fees in order to hang on to power in Hollywood.

The SSP by contrast has had very favourable publicity since June. Tommy Sheridan's clenched fist at the opening ceremony was widely applauded; his speeches and interjections in Parliament have shone against poor opposition, and been widely reported.

More importantly his bill to abolish warrant sales will help end the fear and misery caused to around 28,000 people each year as a result of debt. Tommy and the SSP have been active in every local campaign since June and very large meetings have been held throughout Scotland.

The Hamilton election was

important in that for the first time the media have reported the SSP as a force beyond Glasgow and interviewed other SSP spokespeople. The latest press opinion polls would give a second seat for the SSP in the Hamilton region; more seats could be won elsewhere.

The growth of publicity is being accompanied by a growth in the SSP itself. There are now 50 branches with around 2,000 members. This high growth has given problems over the summer as the central apparatus has remained weak whilst the focus is on branch building. Various conferences are planned to help consolidate the gains in the autumn.

At the June election, the Socialist Labour Party gained more votes than the SSP. At the time it was felt there was confusion - and the SSP gained substantially more votes than the SLP at the Euro elections.

The SSP has sought to have the SLP in Scotland discuss ways to come into the SSP. Unfortunately the SLP has not been responsive to these approaches and stood in Hamilton - getting 1.2% of the votes.

The refusal to join forces is despite the internal democracy of the SSP, which would allow comrades from the SLP to organise around a separate political platform within the SSP if they wished to do so.

There are already a number of currents within the SSP which organise in this way and circulate their own material. It is time to unify and build the Scottish left around the SSP.

Labour offers no justice for asylum seekers

Susan Moore

The Immigration & Asylum Bill has now almost completed its stages through the House of Lords and the government intend it to receive Royal Assent by next month. However the debate in the House of Lords may have upset their plans.

On the one hand the Lords passed government amendments making the Bill even more draconian: but on the other they threw out the immediate introduction of vouchers to replace cash benefits.

Government ministers showed their arrogance and ruthless determination by tabling last minute amendments to the Bill to allow deportation orders to be issued before an asylum claim is determined.

The amendments will allow the Home Office to issue retrospective deportation orders on Asylum Seekers who made claims from

July 1993 but have not yet had their cases heard. The amendment was sent back to the House of Lords by 129 votes to 47.

John Stewart, for the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, said: "The Home Office seem determined to deport people as fast as they can. This latest amendment indicates they are prepared to trample all over the tradition of 'natural justice' in their determination to kick people out of the UK."

The Bishop of Southwark, Thomas Butler moved an amendment, which he said would delay the introduction of vouchers until the government had fulfilled its promise to speed up the processing of asylum applications. He argued that it would not be right for asylum seekers to be left to suffer for years on a care package designed for only a few months.

Tory and Liberal Democrat

peers joined forces to support the amendment, which was carried by 161 votes to 116, a majority of 45 on October 20. This would mean that asylum seekers would be eligible for existing social security benefits until the government clears the backlog of appeals - which currently stretches back as far as the early 1990s.

The government's target is to process appeals in six months.

It may well be that these developments in the upper House will stimulate a belated Labour backbench revolt when the Bill returns to the Commons in the next couple of weeks.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, narrowly averted a rebellion before the summer recess by offering so-called "concessions" to the levels of support made to asylum seekers with children.

In the meantime a member of the Coalition for Asylum and Immigration Rights (CAIR) has

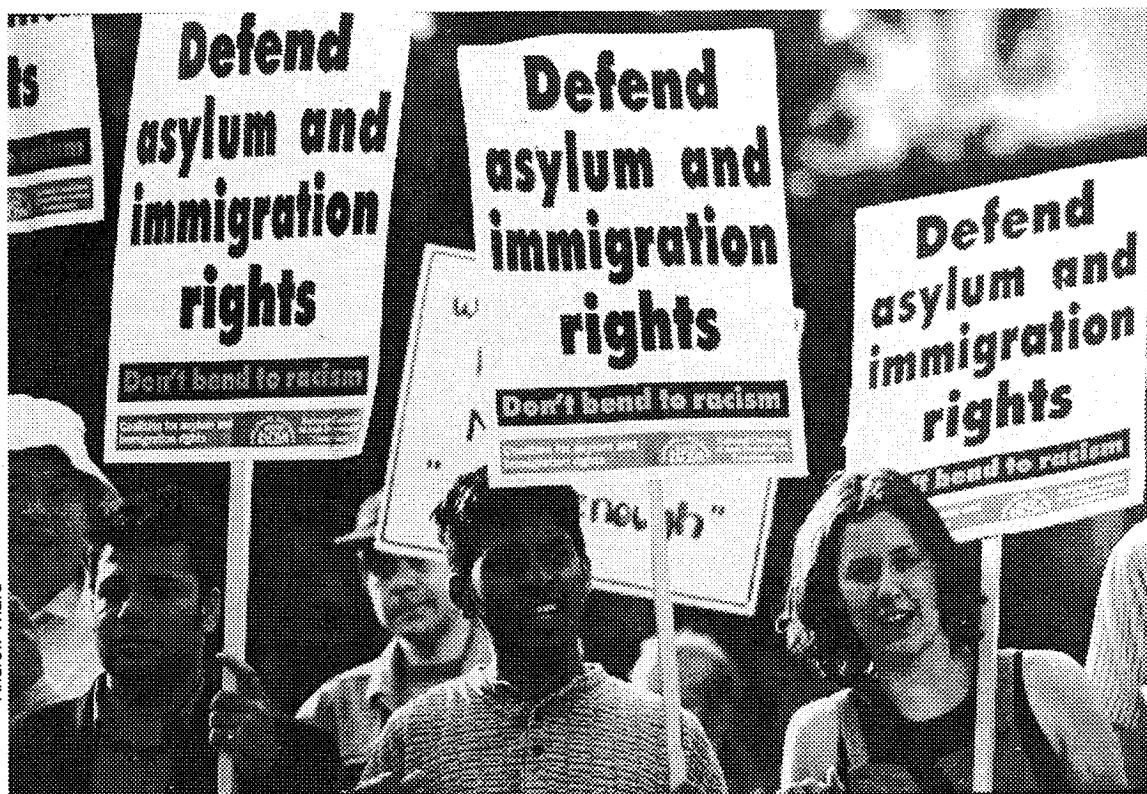
gone on a week-long hunger strike in protest against the draconian measures in the Bill. Others will join her on rolling 24 hour hunger strikes.

The hunger strike will end at a protest opposite Downing St on Wednesday 27th October

Further details from: Zrinka Bralo 0171 701 5197

CAIR can be contacted at: NCADC 101 Villa Road, Birmingham B21 1 NH

NAAR 26 Commercial St, London E1 6LS 0 c/o NCADC E-mail: cair@ncadc.demon.co.uk



Harsh statistics of "New Labour's" racist policy

- Since coming to power New Labour have deported over 76,000 people.
- Enforcement figures for the first 6 months 1999 are up 9.6% on the same period last year.
- Although deportations during the first 6 months of 1999, at 2,895, were slightly (400) fewer than the same period last year, the numbers "refused and removed" were up by over 1,900 at 14,310, compared with the same period in 1998.
- Total enforcements were also up 1,510, at 17,205. By August 31 this year 42 asylum seekers had been detained over 1 year, and 176 asylum seekers had been detained between 6 and 12 months.
- A total of well over 200 asylum seekers have been held in prisons throughout each the first six months of 1999.

Ford strikes learn lessons of Lawrence inquiry

Veronica Fagan

THE REMARKABLE walk-outs by workers at Fords Dagenham over racism demonstrate very graphically the extent to which the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry has begun to reshape the political landscape.

On October 6 about 13,000 workers staged a strike in protest at systematic racism and walk outs continued for several days on all shifts. These constituted the most significant industrial action ever taken by British workers against racism. There have been token actions before, but nothing on this scale - and nothing in such a key centre.

Workers went on to vote for a ballot for official strike action, the results of which will be known in the next week.

It is not of course that black workers at the plant have only recently started to suffer from racist abuse and harassment. There is a sorry history going back a long time - and one that can

only be partly explained by the strength of fascist organisations in the area.

"What has changed in the post-Macpherson era is not the discrimination - but the confidence to fight. Union leaders had failed to persuade management to hold a joint inquiry into the implications of the Lawrence Inquiry, despite management's assertion that they are committed to "Zero tolerance" against racism

Whatever the consequences of negotiations at Fords as Company President Jac Nasser arrives at the Dagenham plant for discussions, the actions of the workers at Fords will certainly merit - and may even get - a place in the history books.

Nor is Fords the only place that the Lawrence inquiry has been taken up by trade unionists. In the Employment Service for example, PCS activists in the Socialist Cau-

cus in London have circulated the report around workplaces and a new black and minority ethnic caucus has been set up.

Demands include an investigation into the low number of black and minority ethnic managers, with such workers stuck on lower grades for considerably longer than their white colleagues.

Returning to Fords, another interesting point is raised. In the current political situation, where industrial action remains at a very low level, it is noteworthy that it is on an issue like racism that workers feel able to take unofficial action of this type.

While the dead hand of the union leaderships has been able to ensure no action takes place on key questions of wages and conditions, this is harder on issues that the unions have traditionally ignored, such as racism.

Black workers, while their level of unionisation has usually been higher than that of white workers, have rarely been incorporated into union structures. This means that when they do move into action they are less likely to be bound by conservatising rules than their white colleagues.

These strikes constituted the most significant industrial action ever taken by British workers against racism.



JUSTICE for Ricky Reel! The belated inquest into the killing of Asian teenager Ricky Reel, who died in 1997, begins on November 1. This comes after a long fight by Ricky's mother Sukhdev (above), family and many supporters for a proper police investigation of what appears to be a racist murder.

When any "accident" could mean catastrophe

Measuring radiation after the Japanese nuclear accident



Roland Rance

WITHIN DAYS of the recent nuclear accident at Tokaimura in Japan, worried workers at the previously secret Rolls Royce reprocessing plant in Derby contacted CND to warn of the danger of a similar criticality accident there.

The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate inspectors issued a report earlier this year criticising procedures, particularly emergency and evacuation plans, at the Midlands plant. Roland Rance looks at the issues at stake for all of us.

The Tokaimura incident is yet another example of the inability

of a profit-led industry to deliver safe working and environmental practices. For reasons not yet clear, workers brought together more than seven times the permitted quantity of enriched uranium, setting off an uncontrolled chain reaction.

Unbelievably, they were not wearing protective clothing, and carried the uranium in simple buckets. Although radiation levels up to 15,000 times normal were later recorded two kilometres from the site, warnings were not issued to local residents for several hours.

Directors of JCO, the company which runs the site, accepted for-

mal responsibility, but attempted to pin the blame on the workers, claiming that they had breached safety regulations.

The likelihood is that inadequately-trained workers, operating new systems, and under pressure from managers to improve efficiency and profitability, simply cut corners and ignored – if they ever knew – the safety regulations.

The fact is that it is impossible to eliminate human error, which has been the cause of most previous nuclear accidents. Greenpeace has published a calendar of hundreds of such accidents.

They explain that at Chernobyl

in 1986, technicians were apparently carrying out unauthorised experiments which led to the disaster there. In 1975, technicians seeking the cause of a power failure at Browns Ferry, in Alabama, crawled under the reactor with lighted candles, and set light to the station. In 1998, contractors at Dounreay in Scotland accidentally cut a power cable.

In fact, these incidents should not be referred to as "accidents"; they seem an inseparable part of the running of nuclear power stations.

The Rolls Royce plant in Derby is not a power station, but an armaments factory; it produces

bomb-grade uranium for nuclear submarines, using a similar process to that at Tokaimura. According to CND, the threat there is "potentially worse" than at the Japanese factory, since it uses 93% enriched uranium, rather than the 19% used in Tokaimura. Consequently, a far smaller mistake could produce a catastrophic result.

According to the whistleblowers who contacted CND, the plant has no off-site emergency plan, and no procedures for containing radioactivity in the event of an accident.

Despite this, the government has declared Raynesway to be safe, and refused demands to close it. Workers should demand the immediate halt of all nuclear weapons production, and the use of the equipment and skills for socially beneficial purposes.

Tokaimura was not directly engaged in weapons production, but in research for a fast-breeder reactor. The British government last year ordered the closure of the Dounreay fast breeder in Scotland, following a series of accidents and the disappearance of 170 kilograms of highly enriched uranium – enough to produce 12 bombs.

Despite the initial promise that nuclear electricity would be "too cheap to meter", it is now clear that the economic and environmental cost is astronomical.

Indeed, it is only by estimating the value of a human life at £400,000 that the UK Atomic Energy Authority is able to balance its books. If it used the EU Commission figure of £2 million, then Britain's entire nuclear energy programme would be seen as a major economic burden.

In addition, it is leaving a legacy of highly radioactive waste which will need centuries of attention. It is producing plutonium whose only use is in the production of nuclear weapons – it is unsafe and causing major health problems through the release of radioactivity.

As I write, reports are coming through of a "significant statistical link" between stillbirths and exposure of fathers to low levels of radioactivity after extensive research carried out in the Sellfield area.

Socialists need to fight for investment and research into renewable energy sources such as solar, geo-thermal, wind and wave power. Even under workers' control, it is doubtful whether nuclear energy could be produced safely. Under capitalism, it is leading towards catastrophe.

Global protests hold back Monsanto's GM juggernaut

John Lister

FOR DECADES the giant St Louis-based Monsanto corporation has been able to get away with selling toxins to the world: but now global protests have inflicted a series of major setbacks from which it is struggling to recover.

Early in October Monsanto chiefs announced they would not attempt commercial exploitation of their work on a "terminator gene" that would prevent genetically-modified crops from reproducing, and thus force farmers to buy fresh seeds from Monsanto each year.

As one US Department of Agriculture official put it: "The goal is to increase the value of proprietary seed owned by US seed companies, and to open up new markets in Second and Third World countries".

Environmental campaigners warned that Monsanto's renunciation would close off only one of dozens of possible ways in which "terminator technology" could be used to boost the profits of seed monopolies.

However Wall Street analysts have warned that the whole of Monsanto's investment in genetically-modified crops is becoming a major liability. It is dragging down the corporation's share price – while global rejection of GM crops is ruining key sections of US agriculture.

Protests by Indian farmers have helped force a government ban this year on crops containing the terminator gene.

And consumer concern in Europe, Japan and elsewhere is leading to major food producers and retailers refusing to buy American and other GM farm products.

US corn exports to the European



Consumers in Europe and US dairy farmers have given thee thumbs-down to Monsanto's Bovine Growth Hormone as well as GM crops

Union have plunged 96% in a year – almost wiping out a \$200m market. Exports to food producers in Mexico and Japan have also been hit by bans on GM corn.

Even within the US, where the pro-GM lobby is strongest, and 35% of this year's corn and 55% of soyabean acreage was from GM seeds, major food companies are now refusing to use genetically modified crops and demanding that they be separated from non-GM output.

Hormones

There have also been increasing problems facing US farmers who use Monsanto's controversial Bovine Growth Hormone. There have been battles to force the EU to drop its ban on BGH-injected beef, and over 90% of US dairy farmers have refused to use BGH since it makes cows sick, requiring them to be dosed with large amounts of antibiotic, which contaminates the milk.

To make matters even worse for

Monsanto, the world's second largest agribusiness which now controls 85% of the US cotton seed market, the bulk of the US corn seed, and 30% of the Brazilian corn market, fresh doubts have been raised over the safety of its flagship weedkiller Roundup, which accounts for 17% of the corporation's total annual sales.

Roundup kills almost anything green, and one of the objectives of producing genetically-modified ("Roundup Ready") soyabean and cotton was to encourage farmers to use large quantities of this herbicide – and no other. Any restriction on the use of Roundup could prove devastating to the whole Monsanto strategy.

Already US business is losing confidence as the GM bubble bursts. Shares in the \$12 billion a year Monsanto were valued at \$47 in the spring of this year and rose to \$51, but as the global tide of boycotts, protests and government bans has

risen, this has slipped away to just \$38 in October.

Monsanto has always been willing to make a fast buck from selling toxic and hazardous material. They were manufacturers of the notorious "Agent Orange" defoliant used by the US airforce in Vietnam: Monsanto also produces Nutra Sweet (aspartame), the artificial sweetener linked with a range symptoms and side-effects.

But it seems that even the political power of this massive multi-billion dollar corporation which has been able to persuade the US government to turn a blind eye to so many dodgy products can be undermined by mass campaigns.

The Clinton administration, recognising the tide of opinion against GM foods, has been reluctant to wage yet another trade war on behalf of Monsanto, leaving many US farmers high and dry with unsaleable crops.

But even if Monsanto bows to pressure and sells off its agricultural chemicals business – perhaps to German giant Bayer – there is little doubt that the drive for profits and monopoly among seed suppliers will force new efforts at "terminator" technology – perhaps based on requiring seeds to be used in conjunction with specific weedkillers or fertilisers.

Campaigners warn that Monsanto alone has been seeking to patent as many as 87 terminator patents, with other firms also trying to get into the act. As long as agriculture is dominated by capitalism and the giants of agribusiness, the needs and safety of consumers and farmworkers will come a poor second to the profits of the corporations.

Takeover by bankers' favourite generals

Crackdown in Pakistan

Terry Conway

IN PAKISTAN on October 12, the army under the leadership of General Perez Musharraf took over control of the country from the Muslim League administration of Nawaz Sharif. Sharif was placed under house arrest, along with most of his government, and their bank accounts frozen. Only the President, Rafiq Taraq, escaped this fate.

While many in the west reacted with surprise to the coup, in Pakistan there was less surprise. After all the country has been ruled by Generals for nearly half its short life.

When Nawaz Sharif was elected in April 1997 after the dismissal of Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party under suspicion of corruption, he was very popular. Bhutto was fined £5 million last April after her conviction and

remains outside the country.

Though Sharif had been in power before, and was himself under the shadow of corruption, Benazir had become so hated that there was a willingness to give him another opportunity.

His actions since then have completely squandered that good will – as is evidenced by the fact that there have been no mobilisations against his dismissal.

When Musharraf first took over, he did not declare martial law and indeed his statements were very unclear as to what long-term arrangements he intended to put in place.

For several days he was in frantic discussion with civilian leaders – seemingly attempted to find someone who was prepared to give his power a democratic gloss.

This attempt was not motivated by any concern for the rights of the people of Pakistan, but by some-

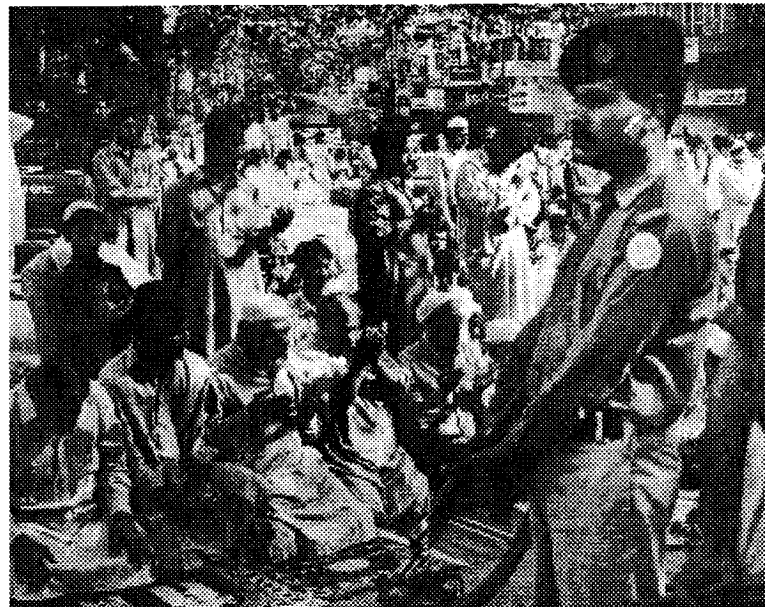
thing much more important.

With the country £20 billion in debt and the economy in tatters, it is the response of the IMF and the Americans that the General is concerned about. The Karachi stock exchange had fallen by 95 when it re-opened after the coup.

On the other hand Musharraf must have been fully aware that the US had become increasingly unhappy with Sharif's performance.

The state of the economy concerned them deeply, while developments in India have increasingly opened up the possibility that it was there that they should look for their strongest alliances in the sub-continent. That shift in American imperialism's traditional allegiances had become very clear during the recent war over Kashmir.

Finally on October 14, two days after the coup the General declared a state of emergency – but not mar-



The new "Chief Executive" is backed by guns – and nuclear weapons

tial law. He assumed the title of "chief executive of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan" and suspended not only the constitution, but also the National Assembly, all provincial assemblies and the Senate.

The Senate chairperson and deputy chairperson and the National Assembly and provincial assemblies' speakers and deputy speakers were also suspended.

Musharraf sacked the Prime Minister, all federal and provincial ministers and governors and the advisers to the Prime Minister and chief ministers. He proclaimed, "The whole of Pakistan will come under the control of the armed forces of Pakistan

While Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth on October 18 and Britain has suspended economic aid, major financial sanctions have not been imposed. Indeed Bill Clinton commented on the General's pronouncements in an extremely muted way:

"A lot of what he said on the substance, including the conciliatory tone towards India, I thought was quite good. But I was disappointed there was no commitment to a timetable to move towards democracy, and I hope that will be forthcoming."

Yet again American imperialism has demonstrated the real extent of its commitment to democracy.

Coup de grace for a discredited premier

Farooq Tariq, General Secretary of the Labour Party, Pakistan reports from Lahore

Troops took over the important buildings in the capital, Islamabad, in the evening of October 12, after the state-run electronic media announced Musharraf's dismissal of the government.

Sharif's decision that day to remove Musharraf from his post as army chief apparently prompted the military coup.

In his first televised address, Musharraf said that everyone was aware of the turmoil and uncertainty that the country had gone through under Sharif. "Not only have all the institutions been played around with, and systematically destroyed, the economy too is in a state of collapse", he said.

"Despite all my advice, they tried to interfere with the armed forces, the last remaining viable institution in which all of you take so much pride and look up to, at all times, for the stability, unity and integrity of our beloved country."

This is the usual demagoguery of a military ruler – but at that point it was still not clear what Musharraf's long term plans for the country were.

The military coup was apparently provoked by the announcement of the dismissal of the General by Sharif. Only one week

earlier, the Nawaz Government had promoted the General to Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Committee. The General had immediately purged some senior military officers who were known as Nawaz Sharif supporters. In retaliation, the Prime Minister tried to dismiss the general.

This may have been the immediate excuse for the military takeover. But the real reasons are deeply rooted in the present economic crisis in Pakistan and its political effects. Further it is part of the aftermath of the Kargil dispute with India over Kashmir.

The military have reacted angrily to attempts by the Sharif government to blame them for Pakistan's defeat in the dispute with India over Kashmir. The military and the Islamic fundamentalists have instead blamed Sharif for the debacle, because he caved in to United States pressure to withdraw from Kargil.

In a move to reschedule the country's IMF loans, the Nawaz Sharif Government recently blamed the Taliban government in Afghanistan for "terrorist activities inside Pakistan." This is a surprising U-turn.

Pakistan is one of the only countries in the world, which has formally recognised the Taliban government; the Pakistani military have actively supported the Taliban's take-over of Kabul and

other parts of Afghanistan.

Sharif was hoping that this U-turn would help the renegotiation of loans with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But it was not appreciated by the various religious currents within the army.

The economy is in absolute tatters. The government's attempt to introduce a general sales tax was successfully opposed by the small traders' association, which organised a nation-wide strike on September 4.

In the face of this protest, the government ignored IMF instructions, withdrew the GST and introduced a new tax.

Further, cotton growers across the country were demanding an increase in cotton prices, a commodity which accounts for 70% of the country's exports. The powerful All Pakistan Textile Manufacturers Association was opposed to such an increase.

On October 10, a nation-wide protest of peasants and cotton growers blocked all of Pakistan's main roads for hours; there have been many other massive demonstrations.

All these developments exposed the extremely unpopular nature of the government and the remarkable change in the consciousness of the masses.

At the beginning of 1997, Sharif won the general election with

40% of the vote and secured a two-thirds majority in the national assembly.

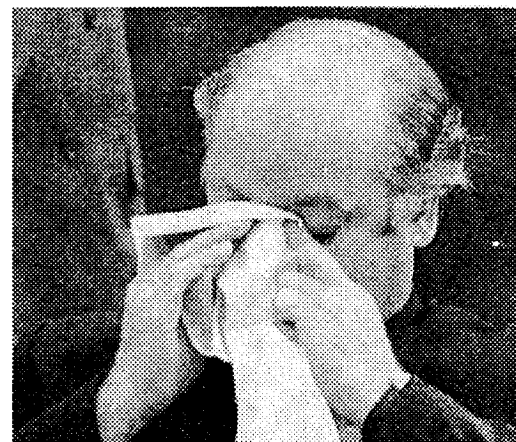
He used his majority to introduce amendments to the constitution against trade unions, minorities, women and oppressed nationalities. He tried to bring the bureaucracy under his absolute control and humiliated it in public.

Sharif wanted to rule like a Mughal empire. He had a telephone help-line installed, on which he took callers' complaints. After listening for a minute, he would announce what action he would take. Television would broadcast the story and the impression would be given that justice had been done in seconds.

But despite his demagoguery, the conflicts mounted, not only with the people, the army and his religious constituency, but also with his international backers.

Sharif was unable to implement the IMF's agenda of speedy privatisation of the main public sector institutions, including the railways, telecommunications and electricity. He even got into a fight with those power companies contracted by the previous government of Benazir Bhutto government to build the power generation plants.

These contracts allowed the power companies to sell this electricity at a price above the inter-



Nawaz weeps for his lost power and influence

national competitive rate. The energy multinationals bribed the Benazir government to accept this deal.

Nawaz's clique hadn't shared in these kickbacks, so were rather hostile to the deal. In the end, the World Bank intervened, urging Nawaz to seek a compromise with the power companies.

The nuclear tests and the military incursion into Kashmir also drew (hypocritical) US condemnation, while the defeat in Kashmir strengthened the hand of the military against him.

Sharif's government was weak, isolated and unstable. As a result, the military's take-over was not met with any resistance from the masses. There was instead a sense of confusion and, to some extent, a sense of relief. But the programme of the Generals is clear – the speedy implementation of the IMF programme at the expense of the people.

The military take-over is yet another setback for the left and trade union movement in Pakistan.

The Labour Party Pakistan has issued a statement (see over) opposing the military take-over and has demanded the immediate announcement of general elections under an interim government of workers and peasants.

The military take-over is yet another setback for the left



With Mussaraf (above) in charge, the country is really going to the dogs

Declaration of the Labour Party of Pakistan

**Army out of politics!
For a workers' interim government!**

[Lahore, 13 October]

The Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) strongly opposes the army coup, and demands that the army go back to the barracks. The LPP further demands the creation of a workers interim government to hold fresh elections for a new legislative assembly.

The army coup mirrors the deep-rooted economic crisis that has exposed the internal contradictions and infighting of the Pakistan ruling class. Nawaz Sharif, ex Prime Minister, wanted to strengthen his dictatorial power by forcing the retirement of General Pervaiz Musharraf.

But this coup proves that the army is the real ruler of the country. Nawaz's attempt at grabbing power was deplorable. But the army coup is absolutely unacceptable.

The new government - even if it is a civilian set up - will be a puppet in the army's hands. Whether we have a military or civilian regime now depends on the generals' negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank. The coup was against the plans of US imperialism, but the US will find a compromise with Pakistan's military strongmen.

The new government will use accountability as a pretext, but this will be an illusion. The new government will not be able to recover loans from defaulters. In fact, the masses will be taxed even more heavily, in a futile bid to overcome the economic crisis.

The lack of protest against the

coup proves the utter unpopularity of the Nawaz regime, because of its economic policies. The new regime will have to carry out the same economic policies. So it too will be increasingly unpopular.

The army coup will sharpen the national question in the three smaller provinces, particularly if the army resorts to dictatorial methods.

For the moment, the masses might feel some relief, because the army coup has replaced the Nawaz regime. But they will soon be disillusioned. The trade union movement, working class peasants, free press and political parties will suffer the loss of democratic rights.

The class struggle will be even more difficult. The working class will have to fight for democratic rights, in addition to their genuine rights and demands.

The Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) demands that the army return to barracks immediately. An interim workers peasant's government should be set up to hold the ruling class accountable.

This workers peasant interim government should hold elections for a new legislative assembly. Democratic rights should be restored immediately. No ban should be imposed on meetings, demonstrations, and processions.

The LPP vows to mobilize the working class and peasants to press for these demands. It will launch a campaign for the restoration of democratic rights and it will not accept any attempt by the military to impose martial law.

Military raid PLP office

ON OCTOBER 21 a truck load of military men turned up at the offices of the Pakistan Trade Union Resource Centre where the weekly paper of the PLP, *Mazdoor Jeddohud*.

They harassed the printing workers, complaining that the paper did not support the military. They took away copies of the paper as well as a copy of a new book, "Prepare For Fight," written by Amjad Ayub, LPP overseas organiser.

As the subsequent press release from the PLP points out this raid is an attack on press freedom despite the promise of Chief Executive General Pervaiz Musharraf in his first address that this would be respected.

The first issue of the *Weekly Mazdoor Jeddohud* was printed on 19th October with the slogan "No to Martial Law" and an appeal to the working masses to fight against the military dictatorship. It has detailed articles on the present situation and LPP point of view to fight back against the military take over.

LPP is the only political party which has not welcomed the present military take over.

Please protest against this attack and send your Emails and faxes to the Chief Executive General Pervaiz Musharraf Islamabad, Pakistan.

India - rightward shift in new parliament

Elections in late September confirmed the sharp rightward shift in Indian politics under the Hindu-fundamentalist government of Vajpayee, reports KUNAL CHATTOPADHYAY.

BIG BUSINESS at home and abroad was enthusiastic about the comfortable (though not huge) majority of Vajpayee's BJP-led coalition government. The stock market broke the symbolic 5000 mark, and the Indian rupee-never a strong currency-strengthened on currency markets.

Bolstered by this support, Vajpayee's caretaker government went on the offensive. It increased prices of petrol and diesel drastically. Prime Minister Vajpayee warned that the nation would have to brace for tough decisions. The fat cats of the nation however remained unperturbed, showing they knew quite well on whom would fall the burden of these decisions. India's Standard and Poor rating rose slightly, indicating that Western bankers see the country as a less risky customer after the election results.

Vajpayee's next project is legislation to open the insurance sector to multinational private insurance companies. Insurance in India is far from ideal, with a corrupt bureaucratic machinery, and all kinds of "fine-print" limiting protection. But premiums are still affordable for workers in the organised sectors. True, this is a small minority of the population. But affordable insurance is still one of the gains obtained by Indian workers since independence in 1947.

Workers and employees in the nationalised insurance corporations have decided to agitate and strike against the "liberalisation of the insurance market." But such responses are fragmented, and often dispirited, because of the collapse of the left.

This is one of India's most right-wing parliaments. The far right parties, led by the BJP, but including smaller parties like the Maharashtra-based Shiv Sena, have almost 190 seats. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance has nearly 300 seats.

The main opposition party is the Indian National Congress, with over 100 seats. Congress is the historic party of the Indian bourgeoisie, and, since it was led by Rajiv Gandhi, it has been getting rid of all "socialist" rhetoric and populist policies.

It was Congress, under the Prime Ministership of P.V.Narasimha Rao, and during the period when Manmohan Singh was the Finance Minister, that began the current project of inserting the Indian economy into "globalised" capitalism.

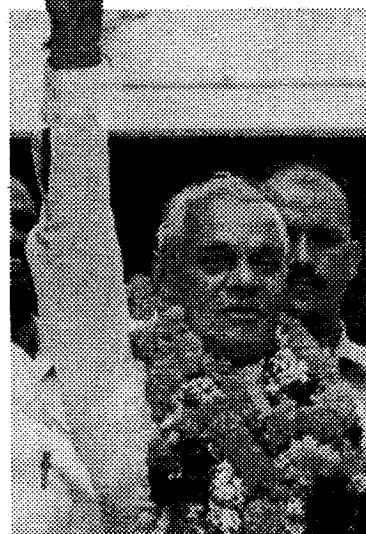
It is now clear that Indian capital

is aiming for the silencing of Indian labour in order to further develop this goal. An indication of just how far they are willing to go comes from BJP ruled Gujarat, where the government has run a 10-month union-busting campaign against the Vadodara Kamdar Union, a Baroda-based "class struggle" trade union. (see next page)

The BJP has also exposed its extreme antidemocratic politics in a campaign against *Communalism Combat* newspaper.

The Home Ministry accused to magazine of breaking foreign exchange legislation after it published a series of advertisements protesting BJP policies (one of which was co-signed by some women's NGOs with foreign connections). *Communalism Combat* was subjected to a vilification campaign and forced to shift from Mumbai to Delhi.

The two main left parties, the CPI and the CPI(M) have spend 20 years trying to create a third front, equidistant



V for Vajpayee? or for voters?

from the Hindu right and the Congress. On two occasions, this left-democratic, or left-secular unity appeared to be on the verge of maturing.

When Viswanath Pratap Singh became Prime Minister in 1989, and in 1996, when first H. D. Devegowda and later I.K.Gujral headed United Front ministries including CPI leader Indrajit Gupta as Union Home Minister it seemed as if they might have some success. But both these governments were unstable - divided internally and under heavy external pressure.

The left parties extended a degree of respectability and democratic credentials, but the main constituent of the front, the Janata Party, shifted to the right and collapsed. Most of the fragments are now allied to the BJP. The main exception is Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party.

The collapse of their main partner meant that the left contested these elections alone, for the first time in 25 years. The results were disastrous. The CPI(M) won 32 seats, including a few outside its strongholds in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala. The CPI - less

fortunate, and less skilful at alliance-building, only won four seats, three from West Bengal.

The old strategy of the left now lies shattered. Meanwhile, the CPI(ML), which over-reacted against its previous anti-parliamentarism, and presented a huge number of candidates (trying to replace the CPI(M) as the centre of radical protests) did far less well than it had expected.

The left block won 42 seats, plus one won by the radical left CPI(ML) Liberation.

The weakened parliamentary situation of the left means it will be even less able to act as a pole of attraction for progressive forces, and resist rightward moving legislation, especially economic legislation. This was the only justification for the final days of "left and democratic" bloc making.

All left currents now need to seriously rethink their political line and tactics. Parliamentarism coupled with local actions will not halt the BJP. The early pronouncements of Vajpayee, of Finance Minister Sinha, and of the leading spokespersons of the Indian bourgeoisie, make it clear that tough, and if necessary violent attacks on the working class are being prepared.

Building country-wide resistance means encouraging and supporting struggles against price rises, social security, health and safety, unemployment, and democratic rights.

With every bourgeois party shifting rightward, every left alliance with them will not just mean calling a halt to workers's struggles - as in the past - but actually helping them to stamp out the struggles.

Look at West Bengal, where the left has been in government for over two decades. The state government is trying to behave responsibly, in other words to stop "unnecessary" strikes, to evict hawkers from city roads, to beautify Calcutta at the cost of the urban poor, and offering special incentives for capitalist investors.

As a result, the bosses have been milking the factories dry. Innumerable small, medium and big factories are locked out, the workers retrenched, or their pay reduced or workload increased.

Not surprisingly, all but one of the industrial seats of West Bengal have been won by bourgeois parties. The left block has 29 out of 42 seats, down from 33 in 1998 and 37 in 1996.

The left's share of the vote remained constant, at around 47%, but the total vote cast declined, as many refused to vote. In many parts of the country, voters are tempted by tactical voting, in which the left could lose to bourgeois candidates.

The Indian left has learned nothing from the disastrous coalitions with "progressive" bourgeois currents in Spain in the 1930s and Chile in the early 1970s. But the Hindu-nationalist version of fascism is to be fought, mobilisations have to be organised and battles have to be fought. Time is running short.

Epic struggle for health and safety at Hema Chemicals

Kunal Chattopadhyay and Rohit Prajapati

From December 11 1998 until September 2 1999 just under 250 workers at the Hema Chemical plant in Gujarat, India were on strike, demanding an end to the life-threatening and unsafe conditions in the factory. While the strike has now ended because the union no longer had the financial resources to support the workers, the battle to make conditions less deadly continues.

To understand the significance it is necessary to know something about the union that led it, the Vadodara Kamdar Union (Baroda Workers' Union).

Trade unionism in India is split up extensively along party lines. Every political party has its own party-controlled union whose leaders are not accountable to the ordinary workers. Union leaders are rarely workers or sacked workers - instead they are usually party leaders.

The leaders carry out negotiations without keeping most workers involved or informed. Settlements are very often signed in English - which very few workers speak. Trade union members are not given full details of the type of deals struck behind their backs. Settlements hailed as victories are later found to contain increases in workloads or to exclude casual workers.

In the province of Gujarat, where the VKU is active, this is further complicated by three factors. Even reformist-led unions like the AITUC (led by the Communist Party of India) and the CITU (led by the Communist Party of India Marxist) are weak. On the other hand, Gandhian ideology is strong.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, the most important bourgeois nationalist leader of the freedom movement, the capitalists are not an exploiting class but only people who hold the social wealth in trust, so that class struggle is never the way to settle disputes between workers and the bourgeoisie.

The final factor is the strength of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its trade union wing, the BMS in the province. The BJP is dedicated to establishing that there is no class, no class identity, but the key identity is the Hindu identity.

Since the labour minister of Gujarat hails from Baroda, he therefore takes special care to fight against class struggle alternatives when they emerge.

The Vadodara Kamdar Union was established a quarter century ago, when a group of workers, members of the AITUC who supported Trotskyist politics, were victimised by the union bosses for this "crime". However, from the beginning, the workers, and the Indian Section of the Fourth International, decided that they would not build yet another party-controlled union.

The VKU therefore adhered from the beginning to the principles of working class democracy. The large majority of trade union leaders have been workers or sacked workers. Negotiations have been open, and based on militant class struggle.

Regular trade union schools have been organised to ensure that the political education of the members is real, and that no external bureaucracy can usurp their control over all the processes of union work.

The result was, that after an initially difficult period, the VKU began to make significant headway. The VKU has not been a narrow craft union, nor one interested solely in getting wage rises.

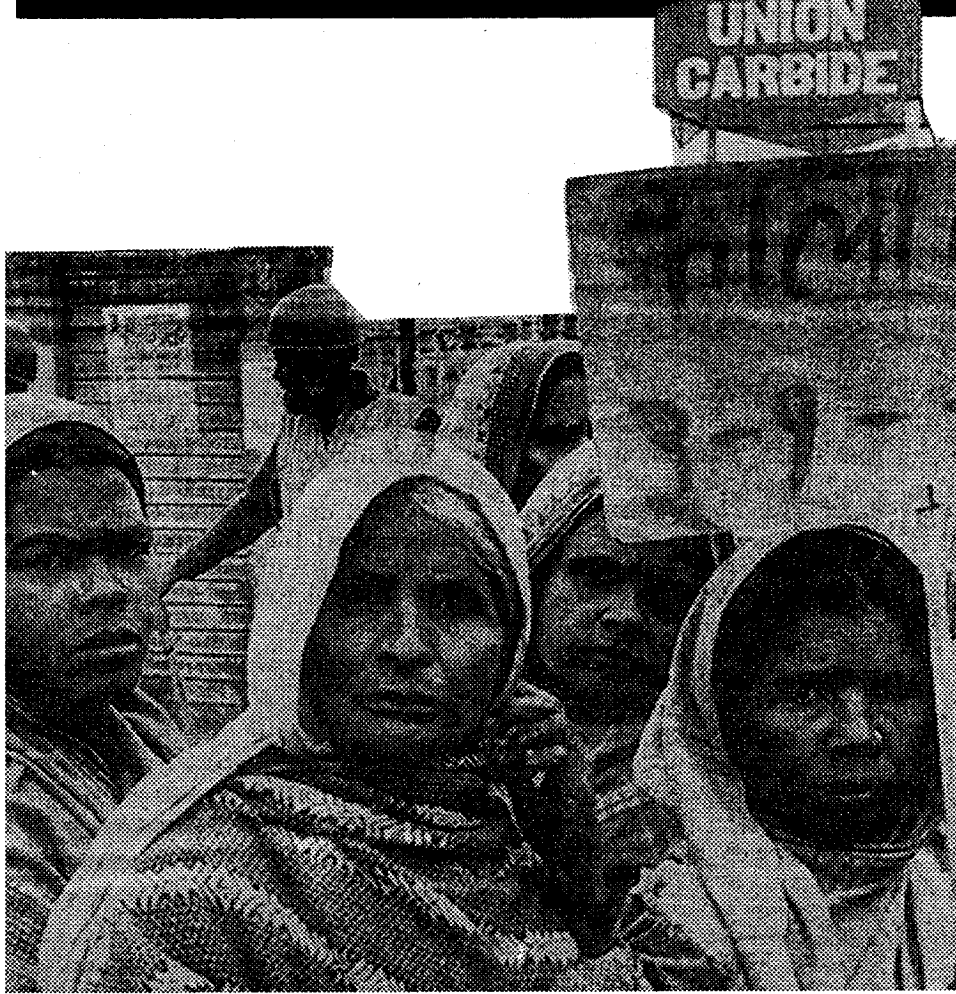
It has been active in a wide range of issues like the Narmada Dachan Andolan (the struggle against building big dams over the river Narmada which threatens numerous villages), the anti-price rise movement, women's rights movement, and movements of rural workers and poor peasants.

The VKU, despite its name, has now made contacts well beyond Baroda. For instance, in Ankleswar, which is the fastest growing Chemical industrial complex in the province, VKU activists joined hands with local activists to fight for a number of demands.

A key demand was the introduction of minimum wages for the chemical workers, for in this industry there was none set in Gujarat.

Another was the struggle for health and safety. Though there are a number of existing

Indian strikers need solidarity



The Indian government has done little to improve the enforcement of health and safety laws or protect factory workers since the Bhopal disaster 15 years ago. Over 2,500 people were killed in the city in Madhya Pradesh, central India and 100,000 left homeless after a cloud of poisonous gas was released from the US-owned Union Carbide plant.

laws, like the Factories Act of 1948, and though the Government of India has signed a number of ILO conventions, in practice health and safety issues are sorely neglected in India. Even in industries where far more skilled workers are recruited, like the nuclear power industry, the Indian establishment claims that Western norms are unnecessarily tight.

As for the chemical industry of Gujarat, even in industries where acid is routinely used, proper gloves are not always issued. The Ankleswar Rachao (Save Ankleswar) movement initiated by local workers with the collaboration of the VKU took up such issues. All this has made the VKU a special target of the rulers and the provincial BJP government.

It is in this context that the struggle at Hema Chemicals becomes so important. In trying to smash the strike, not only the owners of this particular factory, but the government, are showing their determination to finish off the union.

The Hema Chemical factory was established in 1965 and manufactures potassium and sodium bichromate, basic chromium sulphate, and other chromium-based chemicals. Chromium is used widely in alloy and metal plating; and bichromates form the raw material for a number of chemicals used as wood preservatives, for the manufacture of coloured glass, glaze, in tanneries, for pigments for lithography and so on.

The production process involves crushing chromate ore into small pieces and then roasting it after mixing with soda ash or lime at 1100-1200 degrees centigrade in a reverberated furnace. Then the metal is cooled and the bichromate is extracted. Unit 1 of Hema Chemicals manufactures the bichromate, while Unit 2 crushes and roasts the ore.

Both units employ a little over 120 workers. In both units the health of the workers is at

stake. Bichromate is hexavalent chromium, a human carcinogen. It also causes chemical rhinitis, chronic pharyngitis, and nasal perforation. It is known to cause lung cancer, skin ulcers, perforation of ear drums, damage to the respiratory tract, kidney damage, and allergic dermatitis.

Chromic acid mist has a history of causing toxic jaundice indicating damage to the liver. Lung fibrosis is also known to have occurred. The workers at the Hema Chemicals have fallen prey to all of these.

An incomplete medical examination by the Certifying Surgeon of the Factory Inspector's office of Vadodara found 43 workers to be suffering from nasal perforation, while 23 were found to be suffering from forms of dermatitis.

The toes of two workers had to be amputated following secondary infection and gangrene. One of them also suffers from hydronephritis due to damage to the kidney.

The company violates most labour legislation. The chromium level at the factory is not monitored. As per the schedule 11 of the Factories Act, TLV for chromium is 0.05 mg/sq. metre. The technology employed by the management is highly unsafe. In one of the units owned by the same management, Ushma Chemicals at the Nandesari industrial area of Baroda, an explosion in December 1996 killed four workers.

Concerned over health and safety, and as part of its strategy of fighting against the current trend of flouting health and safety norms in the name of liberalisation and competitiveness of Indian industry, the union had been agitating over these issues for a considerable period.

After being repeatedly prodded by the workers, the Factories Inspectorate filed a number of complaints against the company

for violation of provisions of the Factory Act.

But the government never carried out systematic follow-ups, something not surprising for a ruling class for which the environment means little more than campaigns to Save the Tiger. And this emboldened the owners to carry out greater repression on the workers.

Even the medical people employed by the government in the Employees Sickness Insurance sector have failed to discharge their duties, by not providing proper diagnosis and treatment, or helping the workers to file compensation claims.

Finally came an arbitrary wage deduction from late 1998. Though the union got a stay order from the court, the management simply decided to ignore the order. It was at this juncture that the workers decided that a strike was the only weapon likely to succeed. Thus it came about that workers had to wage a bitter battle to implement laws.

The government of Gujarat made it clear where it stood. Neither Labour Commissioner, nor Factory Inspectorate put the least pressure on the management to comply with the law. Instead, on May 1, 1999, the government declared the strike illegal.

Using the government order, management brought the police to the factory gate and filed false charges against many workers.

Despite this and other incidents of intimidation, the strike continued till the beginning of September 1999. But at this stage, sustaining the workers became impossible.

Rural workers and poor peasants had so far contributed significant amounts, but for them, it was no longer possible to bear the burdens of maintaining close to 250 workers and their families. So the strike was called off, even as fresh legal attacks were launched against the company.

Though the union does not believe that a bourgeois court will by itself do much for the working class, it filed a case against the government, demanding that

(a) The court should quash the order declaring the strike prohibited;

(b) The court should compel the government to implement the Health and Safety laws;

(c) The internal environment of the plants should be improved, and workers in this period should be paid full wages even though the plants will remain closed.

The workers are now facing a crisis. Some of the striking workers have not been taken back, and nearly two dozen of these are in need of serious medical treatment.

In order to continue the struggle politically, VKU and Inquilabi Communist Sangathan (Indian Section of the Fourth International) have decided to contest three industrial area seats in the forthcoming municipal elections in Gujarat. For this, too, funds are required. Unless health and safety are made the general issues of all workers, this kind of battle will not be waged seriously.

● Send protest messages to the Chief Minister of Gujarat [fax +91-2712-22101], The Chairman, National Human Rights Commission 91-11-3340016 or 3366537, and the Hema Chemicals Industries [-91-265-380129], with a copy to us by e-mail ics@LWBDQ.LWBBS.NET or Fax +91-265-412499.

● Financial aid is needed to sustain the sacked workers, and to provide them with medical care. Given the degree of newspaper coverage of this strike, these workers will not find it easy to get jobs elsewhere. The financial aid is therefore particularly urgent. Cheques payable to VKU should be sent to Hema Chemical Workers appeal, c/o PO Box 1109, London N4, 2AA.

West Papua: British profiteers plunder Indonesian colony

Adam Hartman

The directors of British mining giant, Rio Tinto, must be looking forward to many years of exploiting West Papua's gold and copper resources following the recent election of Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid and Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri. With East Timor gaining independence, these "moderate democrats" are committed to preventing any further reduction in the territory under Indonesian rule.

The profitable relationship in West Papua between Indonesian occupation and corporate exploitation, which began in 1963, is set to continue.

Indonesia and the multinationals: a special relationship

Rio Tinto has a large stake in the mine set up and operated by the US-based company Freeport McMoran. It is the largest mine in the world, producing the world's largest output of gold (2.8 million ounces in 1998) and second largest output of copper. In recent years the mine has expanded significantly, with most of the new investment coming from Rio Tinto, giving it a 40 per cent share of the copper produced in 1998.

Dating back to 1967, the mine has depended on the patronage of the Indonesian authorities, which created the conditions for its prosperity. Using terror to submit the people to Indonesian rule and take control of their land, the colonial government doled out concessions to mining and logging companies.

The Freeport mine was built on land seized without compensation from the Amungme tribe. To make way for the mine and for the company town built to house the workers brought in from Indonesia, up to 40,000 people were removed and forced to start a new life in unfamiliar surroundings. More land was swallowed as the mine expanded.

The mine has caused widespread environmental damage. In 1993 it was dumping about 95 per cent of the tonnage it processed into the river used locally for drinking water.

Local people complained that outbreaks of skin disease and diarrhoea were caused by this



Indonesia was seen as the most reliable force to keep West Papua in line

pollution.

In 1997 the authorities accepted that the river was undrinkable. Sedimentation from these wastes has caused the river to flood the plains used to grow sago, the staple crop. In 1997 a village was buried under mud and tailings from the mine forcing eighty families to be relocated.

The company has tried to clean up its image, claiming that it looks after local people by providing health, education and employment.

In 1996 it announced a \$16 million fund for tribal groups around the mine. But the mine provides relatively few jobs for local people: only 1,500 out of the 12,000 workers in 1993 were Papuan.

Throughout its existence the mine has been a focus for protests against the Indonesian occupation and the depredations of foreign corporations.

The company has worked closely with the Indonesian army, which has committed atrocities in the surrounding area. In 1994 the Indonesian press reported a massacre of 120 people after a West Papuan flag-waving ceremony in a village 20 km from the mine.

In 1995 a Catholic bishop, Msgr

H.F.M. Munninghoff, reported that civilians were held and sometimes tortured on company facilities.

Imperialism and West Papua: a history of betrayal

Like Indonesia, West Papua (the western half of Papua, called New Guinea by the Europeans) was a Dutch colony. However its Melanesian inhabitants in the East (now Papua New Guinea) have cultural affinities with their neighbours, and shared with them the desire for a single independent state.

After Indonesia gained independence in 1949, the Dutch remained in West Papua and Australia ruled in the east. The two powers eventually agreed to independence, but when Indonesia objected, the Dutch handed over West Papua to the United Nations.

West Papua became a victim of scheming by the United States at the height of the Cold War.

Anxious to make Indonesia a key ally of the US, as well as to curb the growing influence of Indonesia's communist movement, the Kennedy administration lobbied vigorously in the UN in support of Indonesia's claim to West Papua.

They dismissed the aspirations of "some 700,000 Papuans living in the Stone Age" in racist terms.

As a result in 1963 the UN allowed Indonesia to occupy West Papua, on condition that a "full and free referendum" was held.

US companies were of course rewarded handsomely for their government's support for Indonesia's claim to West Papua with a generous share of the fruits of this resource-rich colony, not to mention a market for US-made weapons needed to quell dissent.

The Indonesian army waged a brutal campaign to stamp out the movement for independence, rounding up and killing those active in the political life of the territory and bombing villages which resisted.

As Papuan men withdrew to the forests to take up arms, the army began a full-scale counter-insurgency war, with Britain and France as well as the US providing the goods.

By 1969 the Indonesians were ready to hold their "referendum", which resulted in the "Act of Free Choice" rubber-stamping Indonesia's rule. The army picked 1,025 men to vote, with President Suharto making it clear that a vote for independence would be counted as treason.

To control the population the

authorities have used a combination of repression, causing at least 100,000 deaths since 1963, transmigration and resettlement of the local population in "model villages".

Tens of thousands of Indonesians have been brought over from Java and other densely-populated provinces to occupy land taken from local people, in a programme financed by the World Bank and implemented by British and Canadian development consultants.

The settlers have often been abandoned without infrastructure, state support or knowledge of local conditions. Migrants have also been brought over to work in the mines, pulp mills, plantations and fish farms set up on prime land or coastal waters by Indonesian and other foreign investors.

In common with Indonesia, every square metre of forest in West Papua has been parcelled out in concessions to logging and mining companies.

Indonesia is currently losing two per cent of its forest every year. West Papua's forest, including the Lorentz National Park, home to seven Papuan tribes and incredibly rich in its biodiversity and range of habitats, is under threat.

In spite of the repression, the authorities have not extinguished the people's spirit of resistance or their desire to take back control of their land and to win their freedom. A guerrilla movement, the OPM (Free Papua Movement) is active, and there is widespread civilian resistance to Indonesian rule.

It is vital that we in Britain expose and challenge the role of British and other foreign companies in plundering West Papua's natural resources.

The British government and the "international community" have been complicit in covering up the crimes, which have been and are still being committed in that territory. We must champion the West Papuan struggle for freedom.

For further information contact:-

● TAPOL - the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign, 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW; Tel:0181 771 2904; website: www.gn.apc.org/tapol

● PARTIZANS - People Against Rio Tinto and its Subsidiaries, 218 Liverpool Road, London N1

Anxious to make Indonesia an ally, the USA dismissed the aspirations of "some 700,000 Papuans living in the Stone Age"

A guerrilla movement, the Free Papua Movement is active, and there is widespread civilian resistance to Indonesian rule.

Anger erupts as Indonesian MPs opt for "liberal" Islam

Veronica Fagan

On October 20, Abdurrahman Wahid, chairperson of the Muslim association Nahdlatul Ulama, was elected president of Indonesia, defeating Megawati Sukarnoputri, chairperson of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). Wahid defeated Megawati by 60 votes in the 700 member People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). Wahid's election followed the rejection of former president B J Habibie's "accountability" speech the previous day by the Assembly by a narrow majority of 33 votes. His party, the ruling Golkar decided to allow a free vote on the question after it became clear that the major papers of the Indonesian ruling class wanted to see him defeated. Following this defeat, Habibie withdrew his nomination for President. Golkar did not in the end put forward another candidate for President though they made an initial nomination but withdrew it and decided instead to vote for Wahid. Megawati's PDI-P on the other hand had failed to make alliances with any other parties and did not have sufficient votes with only 153 deputies itself to secure a majority. Stunned Megawati supporters who

had been on the streets already waiting to celebrate the expected victory of their leader began protesting and demanding her installation as President. They highlighted the profoundly undemocratic nature of an electoral system in which the President is elected by 700 Assembly members rather than the population as a whole. Habibie himself had argued that in future there should be direct elections for the post and this was backed by other commentators. The world's leader's and the world's markets were worried. Would Megawati's supporters continue to mobilise on a long term basis throwing into question the political and economic stability of this key country for the world international order? Or could a deal be done that would return people to their homes and allow order to return to the streets and stability to the stock markets? One day later, Megawati was elected vice-president, but with only 322 out of 700 votes. Her opponent, Hamzah Haz, chairperson of the Muslim United Development Party (PPP) and also a member of Nahdlatul Ulama, gained 180 votes; almost 200 MPs abstained.

Wahid took Nahdlatul Ulama out of the Suharto's PPP in the mid-1980s and distanced NU from the Suharto regime. For almost a decade, Wahid cultivated the image of a liberal democrat, developing links with Western academics and NGOs. In 1990 he accepted the position of chair of the Democratic Forum, a loose talk shop of intellectuals loosely associated with the defunct Socialist Party of Indonesia, a conservative social democratic institution. The Democratic Forum remained inactive and ineffectual. At the same time, Wahid developed close relations with individual generals. He also cultivated a posture of supporting a more liberal, tolerant Islam. He advocated a de-Islamisation of daily language and ceremonial activity. However, the NU remained a bastion of medieval religious practice; rote learning, obedience to the mullah and the cruder forms of superstition remain dominant. His reputation as a liberal, especially among democracy movement activists, began to plummet in mid-1996, when the anti-dictatorship struggle began to turn militant. He urged Megawati's PDI-P not to take

Put on a happy face: Wahid and Megawati get together to keep Indonesia's angry working people under control



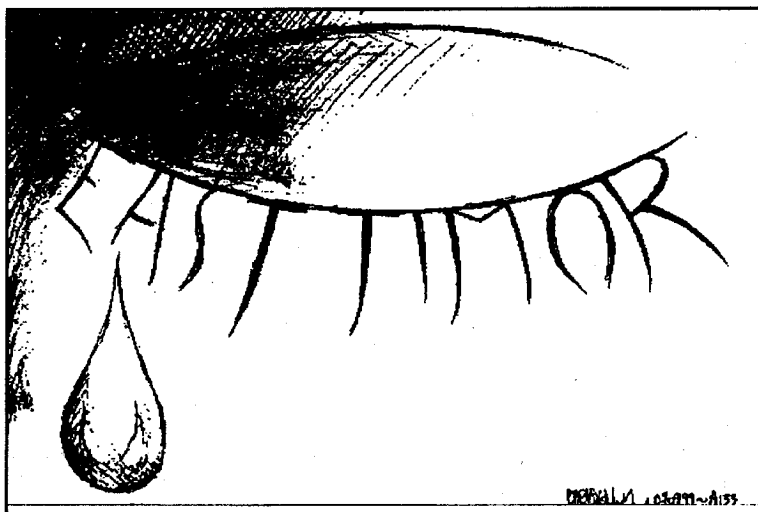
a confrontational stance against Suharto after the dictatorship deposed her as head of the PDI. As anti-Suharto sentiment gathered momentum in the period before the May 1997 elections, Wahid actively campaigned for Golkar. He became the personal escort and champion of Indonesia's most corrupt politician, Suharto's daughter, Tutut. In May 1998, when the student mobilisations were near to bringing Suharto down, Wahid sat beside Suharto in the presidential palace as the dictator tried to sell himself as a leader who could implement reform. When the anti-dictatorship movement was at its height, he spent most of his time lending legitimacy to the old order. It became increasingly obvious that he was primarily motivated by a fear of "people's power". He was seeking a smooth transition to a post-Suharto period which would not threaten a political order that kept the masses out of politics. Despite Megawati's election as vice-president it is clear that the new government remains in the Suharto mould. Megawati herself should not be seen as a radical despite her huge popular support - at one point she argued against

acceptance of the referendum vote for independence in East Timor - though she later withdrew on this. Whether this government will be able to fulfil the aspirations of the Indonesian people and at the same time deliver the stability demanded by the powers in Washington and Canberra remains to be seen. In the meantime the people of East Timor are celebrating the return of leader Xanana Gusmao. Some of the remaining 1500 occupying Indonesian troops (TNI) have begun to prepare for departure. Most of the pro-independence leaders and activists have been able to return to open political activity. The National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) is about to open its office. Fretilin, a member organisation of CNRT, is planning a major reunion congress in early December. The Timorese Socialist Party (PST) has also opened its offices. However it seems that elections may not take place for 2-3 years, during which time the country will remain a colony - of the UN rather than of Indonesia. The lessons of Northern Iraq, Bosnia and Kosova make clear that this is a fate that will become increasingly problematic for the population.

Independence for East Timor

Statement of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, Amsterdam, September 27 1999.

After terrible massacres and destruction by terrorist militias under the auspices of the Indonesian Army, the United Nations finally sent troops to East Timor, and the Indonesian government had no choice but to retreat. This was only possible because of the heroic resistance of the people of East Timor and their decades-long fight for self-determination and independence. A massive mobilisation and the results of the referendum held on August 30 made it absolutely clear - if it was not already - that the choice of the East Timorese people is for independence. This was also made possible through the mobilisations and the pressure of international public opinion in many countries in the last few weeks. In the spirit of international solidarity tens of thousands took concrete action as a way to stop the slaughter and took to the streets in indignation. This forced the most powerful imperialist governments in the world, especially the United States - as well as the UN - to take a distance from the Indonesian generals whom they have been supporting for decades.



This solidarity movement shows once more that the mobilisation of public opinion is the strength through which the course of events can be changed. And that is the most important lesson that the East Timor events can teach us in our global struggle against injustice: we have to demand and create a new politics of solidarity, of popular action, of lived democracy. That is also why we have the responsibility to continue to struggle for freedom for East Timor. The presence of the UN-mandated forces in the country should not and cannot be a substitute for this task of solidarity. The East Timorese people are suffering from lack of supplies and medical and humanitarian assistance. The killers are still there, having applied a policy of scorched earth, forced deporta-

tions of thousands of Timorese and physical elimination of the leaders and fighters of the resistance, of the National Council of the Timorese Resistance (CNRT) and of the Armed Forces of East Timor (the FALINTIL guerrillas) who nevertheless are still fighting back. In fact, the massacres were the consequence of organising a referendum under the control of the Indonesian army with the aim of maintaining good relationships between imperialist countries and the Indonesian ruling class. The Fourth International demands the immediate withdrawal of all Indonesian forces. The UN-mandated forces must guarantee the safe return of the thousands of refugees - those who escaped to the East Timor mountains and also those that were

deported to other Indonesia territories, the leaders and representatives of the Timorese resistance, as well of Commander Xanana Gusmao. The UN-mandated forces must also guarantee the immediate disarmament of the civil militias created and backed by the Indonesian army, and the arrest of all its leaders, so that they can be judged for all the massacres, murders and deportations that they are responsible for. At the same time, the countries that have supported the Indonesian government must economically support the reconstruction of East Timor, for all the destruction and suffering imposed on this people. The Fourth International cannot accept any eventual position of the UN-mandated forces on the ground that means the disarmament of the FALINTIL. If it is a question of respecting the popular will, then Interfet must put itself at the disposal of the National Council of Timorese Resistance and recognise the guerillas of FALINTIL as the sole legitimate armed force to assure the security of the territory of East Timor. We absolutely reject any idea of partition imposed on the majority of the people. The Fourth International equally cannot accept the idea that the forces under UN mandate should be used as a force to guarantee the maintenance of capitalist interests in East Timor

as, for example, with regard to the oil of the Timorese sea, which is today exploited by both the Indonesian and Australian states, through a shameful agreement signed between these countries. The Fourth International will continue to denounce the death traders that still sell arms to the Indonesian generals, in spite of their promises to the contrary, as in the case of the Blair government in Britain. At the same time, we will continue solidarity with all the progressive forces that struggle for liberation and democracy in Indonesia and other oppressed territories within Indonesia. The Fourth International considers these are the minimum conditions for the beginning of the process of reconstruction of this new country and stands in solidarity with the East Timorese resistance, continuing to develop all efforts, on a national or international basis, for the victory of the independence of the people of East Timor. The Fourth International stands for the immediate recognition, by all countries, of the independence of East Timor and of its provisional government, as soon as the National Council of the Resistance decides that the conditions are right to proclaim this new country to the whole world.

Victory for Portugal left

In the Portuguese parliamentary elections last Sunday, the Left Block – a movement bringing together the PSR (Portuguese section of the Fourth International), the UDP (ex-Maoist) and many independents – obtained 2.5% of the votes and will form a new parliamentary group with two MPs.

This represents a significant increase in the number of votes (130,000, more than doubling the 60,000 in June's European election). The vote profile remains almost unchanged – young and urban (see more details in next International Viewpoint).

Francisco Louçã (Chico) from the PSR and Luis Fazenda from the UDP were elected in the Lisbon region, where the Block has the best result (4.9%). Fazenda is the leading person of UDP and he has already some experience as MP – the UDP had one place on the Communist Party list in 1991.

In addition, he was one of the most enthusiastic advocates of the idea of forming this radical left unity in the beginning of 1999.

Green Left Annual Forum and AGM, Bristol, Saturday Nov 13

Green Left, a coalition of democratic green and left radical organisations, is to hold its annual forum this year at the Central Friends' Meeting House in Bristol.

The theme is "Town and Country - our common future", recognising that concerns of social justice and environmental sustainability affect rural and urban areas equally.

You do not have to be a member of Green Left or its associated organisations to attend. The cost for the day is £10 waged/organisations, £5.00 low income, £3.00 unwaged, and lunch will be available at £2.00

For further information, to book lunch, or to be sent flyers for distribution, please contact Alan Debenham on 01823 321304

Stop the WTO Millennium Round! Ruthless in Seattle!

On 30 November representatives of 134 member governments of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will be gathering in Seattle USA to discuss a Millennium Round of trade negotiations. The outcome of these discussions will profoundly affect the living standards, job conditions, security of, and social provision for the majority of the world's population, reports PETE COOPER.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is the enforcer of international trade agreements. It is an unelected, unaccountable and undemocratic organisation with huge power over all our lives.

This power was recently demonstrated when it ruled in favour of US government appeals against the European Union (EU) ban on beef hormones, resulting in \$117m worth of US trade sanctions on products including Danish pork and French Roquefort cheese.

Its ruling in favour of a US appeal on behalf of the US-owned Chiquita company against EU protection of Caribbean banana imports leaves 200,000 Windward Island small farmers facing ruin.

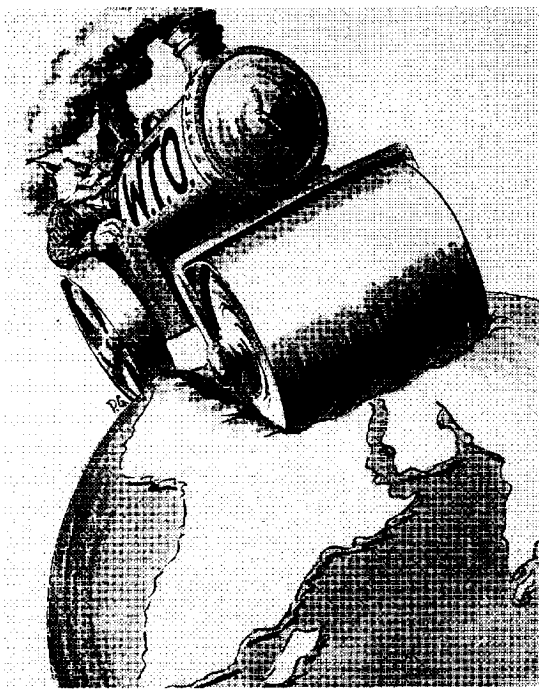
The agenda to be decided on at the forthcoming WTO negotiations in Seattle could include:

● A Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)

This would strictly limit the right and ability of governments to regulate currency speculation, investment in land, factories and services.

MAI would stop governments considering as investment criteria the record of companies and countries on human rights, labour and the environment.

It would ban investment conditions such as recycling and the use of local labour. It would grant absolute rights to trans-national corporations to compete for public contracts.



Agriculture, Intellectual Property Rights, and Services are high on the US list of priorities, since these are industries in which US trans-national corporations are dominant.

● Agriculture

The US and a number of other food-exporting countries want to stop the subsidisation of food production, particularly in the EU and Japan. Small farmers everywhere, especially in developing countries would be hardest hit. The US government subsidises its own agri-businesses.

The US also wants prohibition of import bans of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) crops and seeds: the precedent for this has been set by the EU beef hormone ban mentioned above.

According to one WTO negotiator "GMOs are going to make



Those who protested over Third World debt and unemployment at the Cologne G7 summit should now be joining the fight to stop the Millennium Round in Seattle.

bananas look like peanuts."

● Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

These would prevent countries like India producing cheap food and medicines not conforming to US-style patent laws.

● Technical barriers to trade

This could include a prohibition on labelling food as GM or non-GM, so you wouldn't be able to tell which was which.

From this month the UK in line with the EU has finally banned the new use of the killer material asbestos. Canada, which exports asbestos, wants the WTO to prohibit this ban. Organisations such as the London

Hazards Centre are campaigning to defend the ban.

Public services

The US wants to make it illegal for all WTO member countries to provide services – including health, education, water, energy, tourism, film and broadcasting – through public funding.

The obligatory private provision of these services (for those who can afford it) opens up mouth-watering opportunities for the private service giants. European style public provision, such as the NHS would be outlawed!

Labour movement, environmental and women's organisations and activists round the world have concluded that the WTO Millennium Round agenda cannot benefit the poor, and the oppressed of this world. Over 1000 organisations in over 80

countries have signed an anti-millennium round statement.

The EU governments are in favour of the Millennium Round, while differing about which items should be discussed, both with the US and each other. A recent preparatory meeting of EU ministers failed to agree on a number of issues.

The British position on labour standards is particularly hypocritical, with ministers arguing for them to be referred to a joint WTO-International Labour Organisation (ILO) body.

Unlike the WTO, the ILO has no teeth, – as Blair and co well know. After all, they are happy to preside over British anti-union laws which fail to comply with ILO standards.

The TUC's position is essentially the same as the government's, although an anti-MAI resolution was carried at this year's Congress. Both the TGWU and UNISON are opposed to the WTO agenda ... but don't hold your breath waiting for them to campaign on the issues.

Other, if smaller, forces however are beginning to stir. Recently a well attended conference initiated by Green Party activists, and addressed by representatives of Red Pepper and NGOs such as Friends of the Earth, the World Development Movement and Christian Aid, launched a campaign to Stop the Millennium Round as part of the global campaign.

Reclaim the Streets activists are also taking up the issue. A trade union campaign is being initiated by Coventry Trades Union Council.

A public meeting has been called as part of the global day of action to stop the millennium round.

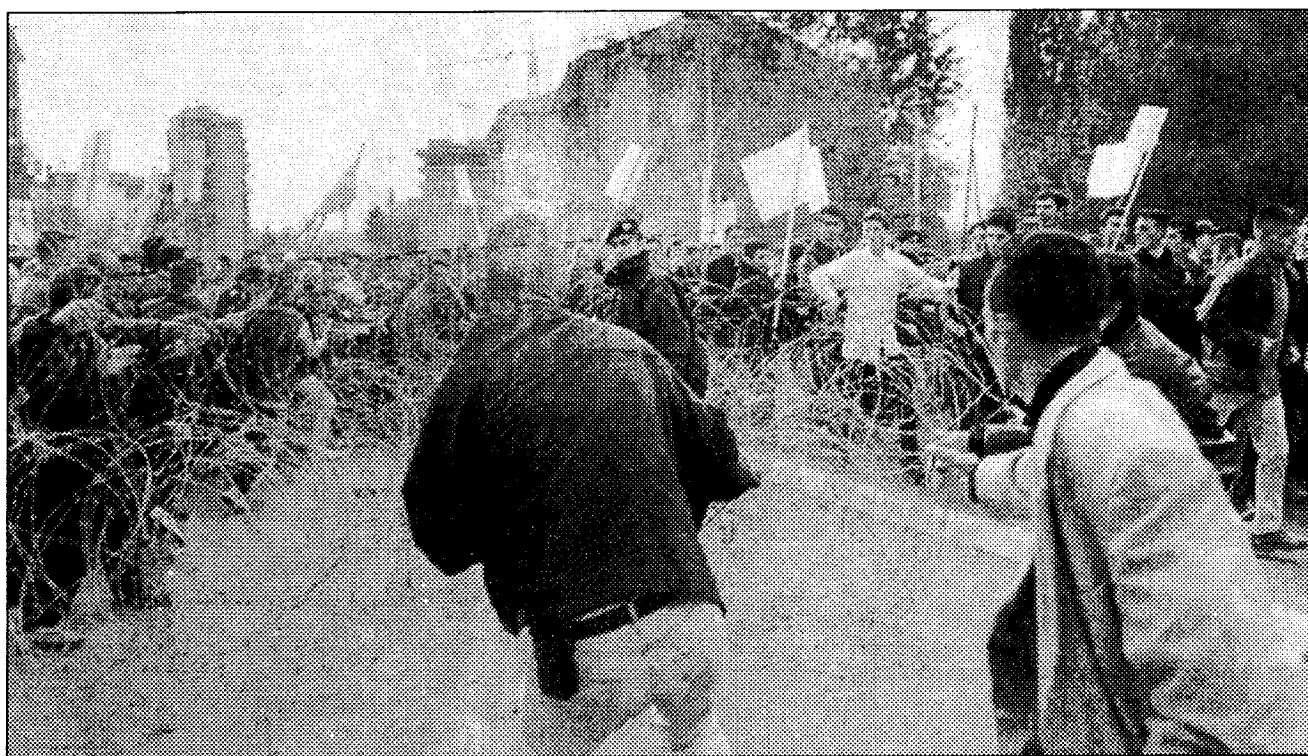
Hopefully this will be the beginning of a concerted campaign, which needs to be taken into the labour and social movements to turn around New Labour and its TUC clones.

OUT NOW!



The Real Irish Peace Process available (£6 plus 70p p&p) from **Socialist Outlook**, PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU

Serbian count cost of NATO's blitz



Ethnic conflict continues in Mitrovica (above) while Milosevic (left) continues to exploit divisions in Serbian opposition

Geoff Ryan

Serbia is now the poorest country in Europe. 500,000 landmines and 10,000 unexploded bombs have still to be cleared. This is addition to the still unknown damage to health and the environment from depleted uranium.

In fact both Nato and the Milosevic regime either ignore or underestimate the real consequences of the war in the Balkans on the environment and the health of hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of people living in the Balkans.

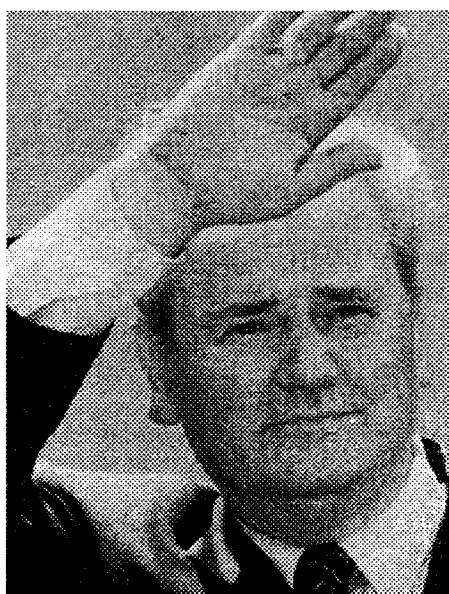
For example, eight tons of highly toxic mercury has gone into the Danube, but little has been done to warn people of the dangers this poses.

44 per cent of Serbia's industrial capacity has been lost as a result of Nato's deliberate targeting of the civilian infrastructure. Serbia's poverty, along with economic sanctions, restricts its ability to clear the Danube of bridges destroyed by Nato. This threatens to cause a huge build up of ice when winter arrives. Not only Serbia but Hungary and Croatia will be at risk of large scale flooding.

Millions of Serbs will face the coming winter with totally inadequate heating. A European Union plan to supply heating oil to the opposition-held cities of Nis and Pirot has been abandoned. No opposition politician turned up to the recent EU meeting in Luxembourg, even though the EU was prepared to supply transport from Serbia, thereby breaking its own economic blockade.

This was hardly surprising, since the EU demanded that, in return for oil, opposition leaders must publicly commit themselves to the extradition of Milosevic to the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague. In any case the EU was only offering about £3.2million of oil - about half the amount spent on bombing a single bridge over the Danube.

Even this very limited offer was unacceptable to the United States, which is opposed to any lifting of sanctions. At the same time the US has demanded that European members of Nato must shoulder more of the burden of running the alliance - while opposing any moves by the Euro-



pean states that could lead to them acting independently of Nato.

Although protests against Milosevic continue in Serbia, the regime is not seriously threatened. Vuk Draskovic, leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), has joined opposition protests after a supposed attempt to kill him in a road crash.

In fact even some of the opposition are rather sceptical about whether or not there was an assassination attempt.

Zoran Djindjic of the Democratic Party appears to accept Draskovic's version of events - but only in order to claim that he too has been the target of assassination attempts.

The weakness of the opposition is not simply the intense personal rivalry between Draskovic and Djindjic. It cannot agree on any political and economic programme, let alone one that could win support among decisive sections of the working class.

It is hampered by its own nationalist past. Draskovic was a member of Milosevic's government until he was sacked during the war. Djindjic supported Radovan Karadzic when Milosevic decided to abandon the Bosnian Serbs. As late as January of this year Djindjic denounced the opening of an American government office in Prishtina as an attack on Yugoslav sovereignty.

The opposition is torn between denouncing Milosevic for being a nationalist and for not being nationalist enough. In addition it cannot openly appear to be siding with western forces responsible for the destruction of Serbia. Hence the decision to boycott the

Luxembourg EU meeting.

It also cannot rely on much support from the military - many of whom are rather fearful that the overthrow of Milosevic would see them too facing extradition to The Hague.

In Kosovo, Serbs and Roma continue to be threatened by sections of the Albanian majority. Some of the attacks are clearly carried out by former soldiers of the Kosova Liberation Army, despite public statements by KLA leaders opposing such attacks.

Attacks have also taken place on United Nations officials, including the murder of a Bulgarian official because he spoke Serbian and of a Serb interpreter.

Clashes have also taken place between former KLA units and Nato troops, in particular in the divided town of Mitrovica. These clashes express very contradictory developments.

On the one hand they demonstrate an awareness that Nato is not going to act in the interests of the Kosovars. This was made clear recently by US deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott who reiterated US opposition to an independent Kosova, insisting that it must remain part of Yugoslavia.

The de facto division of Mitrovica is clearly perceived as not

being in the interests of Kosova. This is given added weight because the important industrial complex of Trepka lies in the Serb areas to the north of the city. Kosovar miners are campaigning to take back control of their mines, which are at present occupied by NATO troops.

Attempts to reunify the city and bring Trepka under Kosovar control, in the face of Nato opposition, are positive and should be supported.

On the other hand the clashes also reveal hostility to the remaining Serb population, which is a totally negative factor. Socialists have to argue against attempts to drive out, let alone murder, the Serb and Roma populations.

However, we should also not lose a sense of proportion. We have to recognise that Albanian hostility to Serbs and Roma is largely the result of ten years of brutal oppression of the Albanian Kosovars by the Milosevic regime. Many of those on the British Left who rightly denounce attacks on Serbs were remarkably silent about Milosevic's treatment of the Albanian population.

Equally, while socialists should support an end to sanctions against Serbia and participate in campaigns to bring relief to the millions of Serbs threatened with starvation this winter we should not ignore the crimes of Milosevic.

Certainly Nato has inflicted tremendous damage on the health service in Serbia. We support the campaign for medical aid to Yugoslavia. But we also recognise that the Milosevic regime was prepared to inflict similar hardships on the peoples of former Yugoslavia.

When the Serbian army withdrew from Croatia, for example, it took with it every piece of medical equipment it could carry.

Although the opposition in Serbia remains weak, the situation in Croatia is much more positive. There is a real chance that opposition parties will win the forthcoming elections.

And in early October Dinko Sakic, the former commander of the Second World War murder camp at Jasenovac, was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. The successful conviction of this mass murderer took place despite attempts by Croatian President Tudjman to play down the brutality of Jasenovac.

Serbs, Jews and Croats all gave evidence at his trial.

Tudjman may not have been happy about the outcome but the fact that the trial took place, let alone the verdict and sentence, suggests that those who insist that Tudjman is 'the most right wing ruler in Europe since Franco' are very wide of the mark. Such a trial would have been inconceivable in Franco's Spain.

Mitrovica: where even the hospital needs treatment

Franziska
MITROVICA has one hospital, on the Serb-dominated north side of town. Early one morning I took the bus which brings all the Albanian staff over to the hospital.

Luckily, no Serb stones welcomed us that day. At the gate of the hospital our bags were searched by French troops.

Inside the Serb staff gathered for their usual morning demonstration. Doctors are cheered giving speeches about not leaving their posi-

tions and demanding Albanians - both patients and staff - leave the hospital. Kfor is not really interested.

Flutura Mustafa explains that it is only the third week the Albanian staff of her department have been allowed in the building at all. Before the Serbs let them back in, they built a door in the staircase to the 2nd floor. They lock themselves and all the equipment behind it.

The first floor just has some desks and chairs and an old X-ray machine left, not even one single bed. The staff sit

drinking coffee and smoking - what else can they do anyway?

Later the ambulance brings three patients. One is a mother with her two-year old son, very angry, showing us a hand full of glass splinters.

The Serbs had attacked the ambulance again, smashing the last window left.

Where things are more serious they have to send patients to Pristina - not in an ambulance, they have to take public transport if they have no-one to drive them.

Debate: How far from a secular Irish state?



Dear comrades ...

I think your article on the European elections (Socialist Outlook No. 26) exaggerated the danger of the Dana victory.

Dana won the last seat in the poorest and most backward part of Ireland – hardly a prelude for sweeping back the secular gains of the last 20 years, except in the imagination of the far right whose slogan is "Back to the fifties".

Candidates with similar politics got minuscule votes in all other areas. The issues of the election were mainly economic and about neutrality. There is widespread concern about Ireland being frog-marched into NATO's "Partnership for Peace" (PPF).

Both Greens – who are way to the Left of most Greens in Europe – kept their seats. McKenna and Ahern are far more Left than the Labour Party. And moreover they are willing to stick their necks out on "Unpopular" issues.

I would also question the description of the Free State as a confessional state. It is basically a bourgeois state with religious deformations, a distorted gain of the War of Independence. To call it confessional is to put it at the same level as the Orange statelet and in essence play into the hands of those to think that Irish Nationalism is just as reactionary as Orangism.

Amongst the outstanding secular struggles to be won is of course abortion from which the main parties are

running scared.

For example, Mildred Fox, a government-supporting independent, states she wants a decision in 6 months by Ahern on a referendum. Why not now?

Or does Mildred want virtue, but (like St. Augustine) "not just yet"?

Ivana Bacik has begun a coalition of pro-Abortion forces. In my opinion a victory by the right will prove Pyrrhic, because the vote for Abortion will be shown as growing significantly. Like the divorce debate, the trend is one way – towards secularism. In stating this I am not calling for passivity but for optimism.

We must campaign for secular education in the schools. Mind you, the religious orders are pulling out of many schools as they do not have the members to even provide head teachers. The refusal of some schools to install the Stay Safe sex education program is an issue.

On medicine in general; the influence and control of the religious orders through pseudo Ethics committees must be combatted. Here again no one outside the mad right opposes contraception.

As I write this I hope for a real debate on the situation and the tasks issuing from it. I am glad to know that Socialist Democracy is opposed to the Good Friday Agreement and also opposes a return to military elitism by sections of the Republican movement.

Fraternally, Jim Monaghan

importantly, the Catholic Church has only lost some battles it has not been defeated and still wields considerable power in health and education.

The fall in numbers joining religious orders has meant that schools now often employ lay principals. This fall is due to a number of factors, one of which is the growing trend towards secular attitudes.

Another is the growth of capitalism in Ireland, the economy and a general increase in materialistic concerns. In other words, I still want a Catholic Ireland but let some else do the dirty work.

However, it is precisely in education that the power of the church is felt. Despite recruiting falling numbers of teachers, the ethos of schools formerly run by the clergy continues to be Catholic and the state has introduced new legislation to ensure that rule of the hierarchy continues.

With this support from the state the church has managed to exclude teachers from new laws on discrimination in order to protect the ethos of such schools and their stranglehold on them. Gay teachers, single parents or people who otherwise fail to comply with the religious ethos of schools in their private lives will not be covered by the anti discrimination legislation.

This is why we call it a confessional state: the Free state government has handed over the control of state functions to the Catholic Church and pays them to do so.

Not defeated

The Catholic Church as we have pointed out has not been defeated despite all the trends and some advances made. The nature of a state is not dependent on the trends and swings in the mood of the population.

It continues to be confessional until the confessional forces are defeated in the same way a capitalist state does not cease to be capitalist just because there has been an increase in militancy and advances made by the working class.

It takes much more for that to happen. The working class must

organise and fight the capitalists and defeat them. Where are the forces fighting the Catholic Church? Running scared of another referendum on abortion. Where was the decisive defeat of the Church? Nowhere.

To describe the Freestate as a confessional state does not play into the hands of those who would claim Irish nationalism to be as equally reactionary as Orangeism.

The Freestate represented the defeat of revolutionary nationalism in Ireland not its victory. Also as socialists we defend the anti imperialist nature of the principal demands of nationalism, i.e a United Independent Ireland.

Reactionary elements of the programme of nationalism are only our concern in that we fight categorically against them and oppose them at every turn.

We have always fought against them – and hence found ourselves on opposite sides of the fence to Sinn Fein in the 1983 abortion referendum.

We opposed it outright because of the attack it represented on women. SF fudged the issue, claiming in a Magill interview that as they didn't recognise the Freestate constitution they couldn't take a position on amending it. They were in fact afraid of their own support in areas not unlike that 'backward' area Jim mentioned.

Lastly, we are surprised that Jim is glad to know that we are opposed to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) and attempts by militarists to launch a rerun of the armed struggle.

We have always opposed militarism as an option for the working class or indeed for nationalists, and as an organisation we are alone in describing the GFA as a defeat.

The Agreement has no positive aspects (as the SWP would claim, for instance an opportunity for non sectarian politics), nor indeed is it the harbinger of peace and prosperity as the Socialist Party would claim.

Gearóid Ó Loingsigh for Socialist Democracy

Socialist Democracy replies

Jim Monaghan's criticism of our analysis of the European elections raises some interesting points.

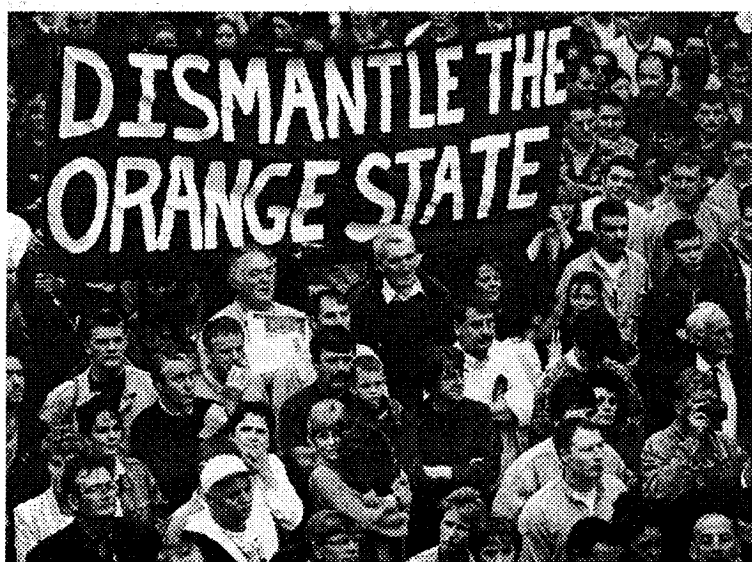
On the supposed left wing nature of the Green Party, Jim states that the Green Party in Ireland is way to left of most green parties in Europe. This is more a sorry description of the state of European greens than any boast on behalf of the Irish Green Party.

It is true of course that Patricia McKenna is quite left wing by current standards. The same however, could not be said of Nuala Ahern (in the recent clash over the new Irish commissioner they took contrary positions).

Even if she could be described as left wing, it is in part irrelevant. Neither of the successful green candidates fought on a left wing programme. They did not fight in opposition to Maastricht, and opposed PFP in terms of the need to strengthen the United Nations and not as opposition to all imperialist military alliances including those called "UN peacekeepers".

They ran a campaign that said little and were helped in their re-election by the decision of the main bourgeois parties to field two candidates when it was obvious to everyone that none of them stood much chance of getting that prized second seat. The greens eventually held their seats with a lower percentage of the vote than the last time round.

However, there was greater surprise over Jim's evaluation of the Dana victory. Yes, it is true that Dana won in one of the poorer areas much noted for its social conservatism.



Don't underestimate the problems south of the partition-line!

However, this does not mean that the forces of the right are not reorganising. They are – and the Dana victory is a great boost for them around which they hope to mobilise. Since Dana's victory we have already seen the publication of the Green Paper on Abortion.

It must always be borne in mind that people like Ivana Bacik didn't push for the Green Paper, the Catholic right did, because they feel they will win.

Progressive forces have been calling instead for legislation to implement the referendum on the X case.

It has been a long held position on the Irish left that the Free state was a confessional state. Most socialists held the position that partition led to the setting up of two states, one an orange sectarian state and the other a catholic confessional state, described by James Connolly as a

"carnival of reaction". Jim claims that this is not so – or at least that it is no longer so.

The Catholic Church was an all powerful institution in Ireland whose writ ran large even in modern Ireland. One need only look at the 1983 abortion referendum to know this or even their role in the ill fated and reactionary New Ireland Forum.

Winds of change

However, Jim claims that the winds of change are blowing and have brought many changes to Irish society. Indeed it is possible to point to many advances made over the years in areas such as contraception and divorce.

However, these advances were partial. Irish divorce law is still quite restrictive and sex education is lacking in many schools. More

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Why Irish union bosses hope to sell out national nurses' strike

THOUSANDS of Irish nurses took to the streets of Dublin on October 21 in one of the most significant industrial disputes for many years.

On one side are the fat cats of the "Celtic tiger", besmirched by scandal which involves the entire economic and political establishment.

The former premier, Charlie Haughey, stands accused of wholesale robbery of the public purse. The Ansbacher scandal involves offshore accounts which connect much of Irish banking in a criminal conspiracy.

Facing them stand 27,000 nurses - representing a public sector workforce that has been subjected to years of wage austerity, and facing a process of privatisation, cutbacks and hospital closures. The nurses have overwhelming public support.

The result should be open and shut. There is however another element to the equation which seems to go almost unnoticed - that is the Irish trade union leadership.

The truth is that the years of austerity were the result of a series of national understandings between government, business and the trade unions. The trade union leadership supported and enforced the austerity.

It is not surprising that the same leadership is now working openly to betray the nurses: what does require explanation is the cloak of invisibility that leaves the majority of the working class blind to their activities.

There is really no mystery about what has been happening. The government have been standing by a Labour Court ruling issued within the terms of the partnership agreement, that restricted pay awards to the nurses.

In the run-up to the strike Barry Cowan, Health Minister, said "If the nursing unions really commit themselves to social partnership, there's a whole range of possibilities open to them to pursue their agenda."

Bertie Ahern said; "We have proposals to move this on, but that can only be with collective agreement."

Almost immediately Des Geraghty, vice president of the nursing union SIPTU, was in contact with the government to begin a negotiation process which, because it was designed to stay within the partnership agreement, could not meet the nurses' demands.

On Wednesday the Irish TUC (ICTU) leadership met and informed the nurses' leadership that they had their support if - and only if - they were prepared to stay with within the framework of Partnership 2000.

As the nurses' leaders entered talks with the government, they issued a statement which significantly did not include any mention of increments, the central demand of nurses looking for a decent wage.

The stage is set for minor concessions by the government, leaving room for the trade union leadership to call off the strike action.

Yet even if this happens the nurses' strike will have been significant. Irish workers see massive private wealth and widespread public corruption. They are now looking for a their share of the cake, while government and big business know that the recipe for the cake is starvation wages for the working class.

Their chief weakness is blindness to the activities of the trade union leaders, a blindness shared by the majority of the Irish left. That blindness won't last. The long sleep of the Irish working class is coming to an end.



Ahern: counting on union chiefs

Under Blair's beady eye

ANATOLE France once wrote, "Everybody is equal under the law. The law permits anyone to sleep under bridges."

Anyone could have dinner with Tony Blair at Bournemouth. A senior citizen on the basic pension would only have to save his or her total income for 5½ weeks for the necessary £350. A worker on minimum pay would have to work 135 hours to qualify.

"Marxism is dead." How often have we heard this repeated? Who was voted the thinker of the millennium in a poll run by BBC News Online? - Karl Marx, ahead of Einstein and Newton.

What was the essence of Marx's thinking? His friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels summed it up at Marx's graveside: "Marx was, before all else, a revolutionary. His real mission in life was to con-

Sniping from the Left

A new column by Charlie van Gelderen



tribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society... Fighting was his element."

Those who worry today about the weakness of the revolutionary movement should take heart from this quote from Francis Wheen's recent biography of Karl Marx: "Social reforms are never carried out by the weakness of the strong but always by the strength of the weak."

Tony Blair's modernisation of the Labour Party is beginning, more and more, to resemble Stalin's "de-bolshevisation" of the CPSU.

First, pack the party conference with faithful acolytes. Not able to despatch critics and opponents to the Outer Hebrides, selection procedures are rigged - how loyally the favoured respond.

Just as in the Soviet congresses,

every speaker paid tribute to the "great Stalin", so nearly every minister and many ambitious MPs, speaking from the platform in Bournemouth, made absolutely sure they remembered to refer to the inspired leadership of Tony Blair.

How long will it be until, like Stalin, Blair takes out his watch to time the obligatory standing ovation?

Those at present enjoying the patronage of No 10 should not be too complacent. When he started his rise to power,

Stalin's closest associates were Zinoviev and Kamenev. This did not save them from ignominy and death by a bullet in the back of their heads. The Gulag was filled with faithful Stalinists. Look out for the stab in the back!

New death warrant signed as fight goes on for Mumia

GOVERNOR Thomas Ridge of Pennsylvania has signed a new warrant for "the execution by lethal injection of Mumia Abu-Jamal of Philadelphia." The execution date is set for December 2, but this is likely to be held up by further legal action.

Ridge's action, the second time he has taken this step, followed the refusal of the U.S. Supreme Court to consider Mumia's appeal claiming he was denied a fair trial.

He argued that he was wrongly stripped of his right to represent himself during jury selection; that he was removed from the courtroom after disrupting the trial, which he said violated his right to confront witnesses against him; and that he was excluded from a meeting in which the trial judge disqualified a juror.

Mumia's legal team have filed for the writ of habeas corpus, in which it is argued that his constitutional rights were violated and the evidence needs to be properly examined afresh. This action could take anything from a few months to years to resolve, probably reaching the Supreme Court again, the third time he will have petitioned this body.

Mumia's immediate response to the setbacks was: "This is just the next stage of the fight. We will continue to fight. We will win!"

A former Black Panther and sympathiser of the radical group MOVE, Mumia was a radio reporter. His conviction and death sentence followed the 1981 shooting death of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner.

The officer had pulled over Abu-Jamal's brother in a traffic



stop. Mumia, then driving a taxicab, apparently passed by, spotted Faulkner questioning his brother, and stopped.

Police arriving at the scene reported that they found the fatally injured Faulkner on the ground, shot at close range in the face, and Mumia lying nearby, wounded by a bullet from the officer's gun. His gun, with five spent shells, was also found.

However witnesses who reported seeing another person fleeing the scene claim to have been threatened by the police. Some have never been called while others have testified elsewhere that they were coerced by police to change their testimony.

It is also argued that ballistics and pathology evidence is inconsistent; that Mumia's trial lawyer selected by the court failed properly to defend the case; that police planted evidence; and that the judge displayed bias and hostility. State challenges were consistently used to get rid of black members of the jury panel.

Within two days of the signing of Mumia's death warrant demonstrations were organized across the U.S., with the largest outpourings in San Francisco where 4,000 people march and rallied, and in Philadelphia where similar numbers mobilised.

Demonstrations that had been set for the "Day After" the signing of a death warrant took place in scores of U.S. cities including Chicago, New York, Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, and many others.

Several hundreds of Abu-Jamal supporters instantly took to the streets in these cities, restating their commitment to broaden the struggle to new sectors of the U.S. population. 300 demonstrated in Paris.

Prominent U.S. figures including Rev. Jesse Jackson, the Congressional Black Caucus, Noam Chomsky, actor Woody Harrelson, and many others issued statements calling for a new trial.

Campaigners are also active in Britain, with regular meetings in London. They are planning a national rally in Trafalgar Square on November 6 at 2pm.. Contact them by e-mail on mumia@callnetwork.com, or the web page on <http://www.callnetwork.com/home/mumia>.

For further information contact: The International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal in Philadelphia, 215-476-8812 or The Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal in San Francisco, 415-695-7745.

e-mail: alerts@freemumia.org

The key role of South African unions

The Trade Union Left and the Birth of a New South Africa, by Claude Jacquin, (Notebooks for Study & Research, IIRE). £4 including p&P from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU.

Recent Notebooks for Study and Research have focussed on different aspects of a world in the process of globalisation: its effects on women; the ideology and reality of new production systems; and the role of the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation.

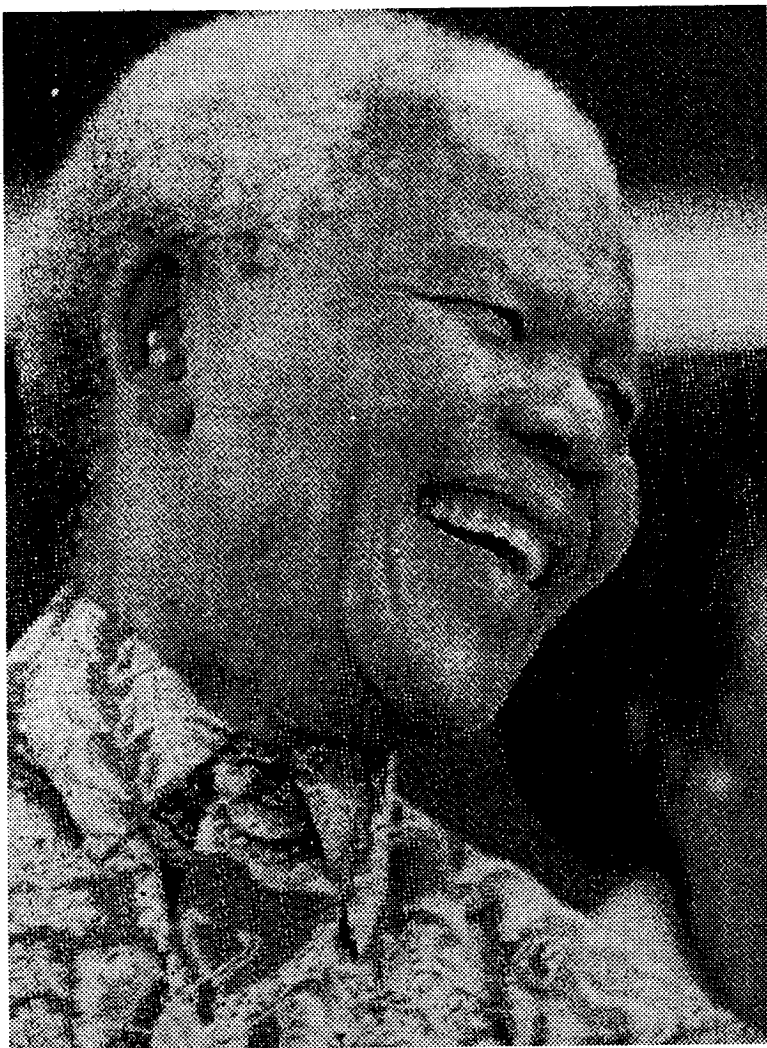
The latest Notebook looks at the social and political impact of these changes on a particular country: South Africa.

During the 1960s and 1970s, a new working-class generation took shape in South Africa under the impact of rapid industrial growth. Just as in Brazil, though on a smaller scale, several industrial sectors took off thanks to the investment of mining profits or simply because of foreign investment.

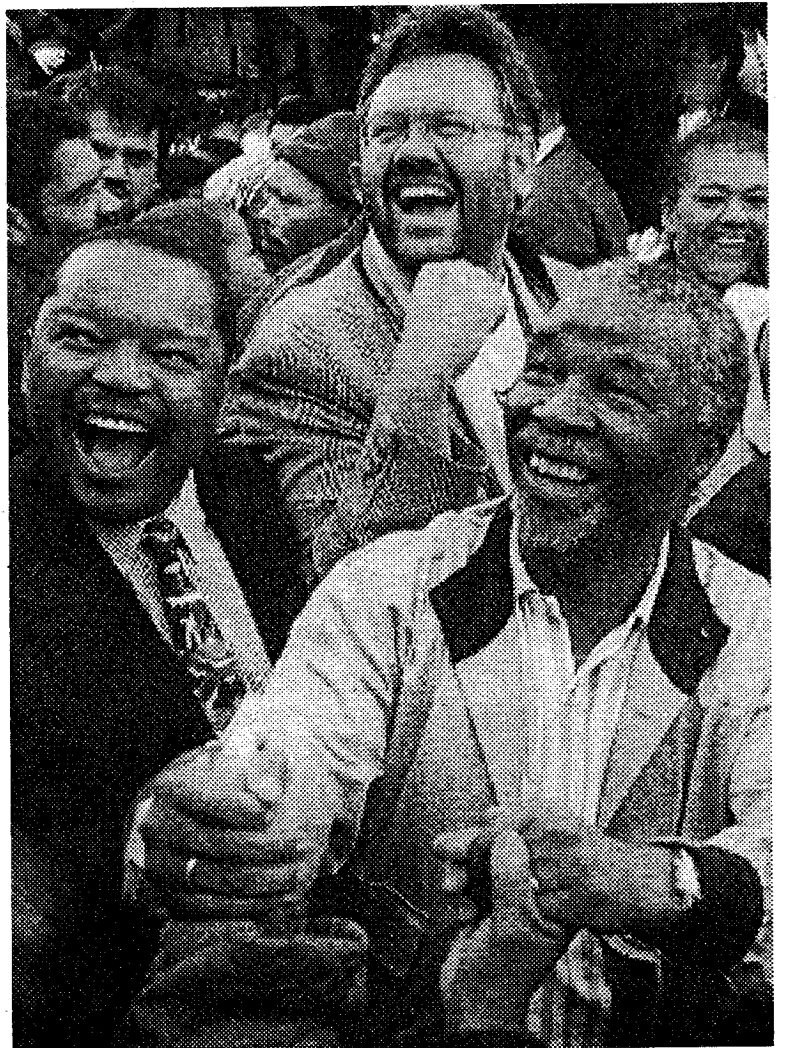
As this development occurred, the Black working class mushroomed. As a result, the new wave of industrialisation in the Third World contributed in the 1980s to the greatest political and social mobilisation in South African history, of which the trade-union movement was one of the central driving forces.

This period saw the emergence of a particularly interesting national working-class current: the current that was behind the foundation of the trade-union federation FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) in 1979.

The author of this Notebook,



The new regime ushered in with the election of Mandela (above) and inherited by Thabo Mbeki was shaped by trade union struggles against apartheid capitalism



Claude Jacquin, covered South African events during this period for the fortnightly *International Viewpoint* under the pseudonym Peter Blumer, and carried out research and studies during ten visits to South Africa between 1982 and 1992. Jacquin calls the core group that founded and led FOSATU "the independent trade-union Left".

He shows that it was one of the most noteworthy political/trade-union tendencies of the period beginning in the mid-1970s and ending at the beginning of the 1990s, the period covered by this study.

It emerged and developed in

dose relation with the structural changes that appeared in South Africa as early as the mid-1970s. Through a study of this trade-union current, Jacquin simultaneously follows the political, social and economic changes that ultimately brought an end to the apartheid system as it had existed until the early 1990s.

Indeed, the current partially changed its initial project and then went on to play a role in negotiating the reform of South African society.

Unions and politics

In describing this evolution, Jacquin raises two questions: the first concerning trade-union practice in a society and a world undergoing dramatic changes; the second concerning the link between trade unionism and politics in the very specific context of apartheid's social structure and later of post-apartheid South Africa.

The changes in South African society were of a contradictory nature, Jacquin contends.

The main issue raised for the Left was how to combine "democratic" emancipation and social liberation: what the specific, political and ideological contribution could be of trade-union currents organised fundamentally at the level of single firms. In fact, a fusion between national liberation and social liberation does not only require a certain level of economic and social development, he shows. Nor does it simply depend on

the objective existence of a social force in whose interests such a double liberation would be. It necessitates as well a certain number of initiatives, challenges and political projects. It cannot happen without organised forces that prove able to push through the spontaneous social dynamic.

Jacquin describes the many obstacles that emerged to block this road. The world political environment in the mid-1980s was no longer propitious for radicalising programmes.

Neo-liberalism was all the rage; strategic doubts infiltrated the ranks of the most radical.

Above all, South Africa's complex social formation meant that any organised socialist project would necessarily confront other currents identifying with national liberation alone and pure democratic reconstruction.

There was no open motorway to the post-capitalist promised

land; a new society was not going to be "objectively" or spontaneously ushered in by the social reality of proletarian development.

The way to a new society had to be charted, promoted and built, not just preached.

But all the forces, trade-union or political, that made the attempt ultimately failed, for a multitude of reasons that this study tries to show.

This failure does not make the current ANC government's choice for neo-liberal management of South African society any more "realistic": this choice is very remote from any idea of "national democratic revolution" put forward as an alternative to socialism in the debates of the 1980s.

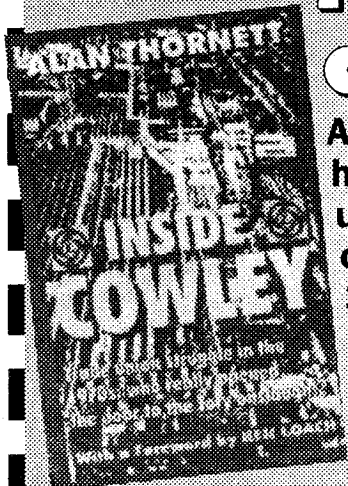
This pamphlet should contribute to lively debates both in South Africa and internationally.

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50 years after revolution: Chinese workers fight privatisation

Zhung Kai

IT IS half a century since the Chinese revolution scored a victory and the People's Republic of China was set up. With the changes it brought in the relations of production and in class relations, the economy acquired possibilities for rapid growth.

According to official statistics, China's GDP rose from 67.9 billion yuan (RMB) in 1952 to 7,955.3 billion yuan in 1998, an average annual growth rate of 7.7%, which was higher than the average annual growth rate of 3% in the world as a whole. This figure has been the pride of the Chinese government.

The most rapid growth took place in the last decade. Up to 1978, the GDP was only 362.4 billion yuan, which means that under Mao Zedong's leadership, in 26 years including the disruptions of production during the Great Leap Forward, the peoples communes and the Cultural Revolution, the GDP had increased by only about four times from a very low starting point.

It was in 1987 that GDP exceeded 1 trillion yuan, a two-fold increase in 9 years. And then from 1987 to 1998, in 11 years, the GDP rose by 6.3 times.

Private sector

However, such a rapid increase in the last two decades was partly a result of the rapid development of the private economy. For instance, of the total industrial output of 1996 and 1997, the state-owned economy constituted 28.5% and 25.5% respectively, whereas the private economy constituted 71.5% and 71.5 per cent respectively.

This rapid economic growth was at the expense of major political concessions on the road to gradual capitalist restoration. In the March 1999 National People's Congress (NPC) when the Constitution was revised, the private economy and individual economy, formerly regarded as playing a "supplementary" role, had their status enhanced to that of "being an important component in the socialist market economy".

Lately, the Standing Committee of the NPC endorsed the "Law on Individually Owned Enterprises", which aimed to encourage and safeguard the development of private economic units. The official figures showed that by the end of 1998, registered individually owned enterprises amounted to 442,000. There were about 31.2 million self-employed industrial and commercial enterprises, some of which were registered as individually owned enterprises.

With China treading the path towards capitalism, social polarisation

and increased gap between the rich and the poor have become more acute.

In the early years of the Reform, "Ten-Thousand Yuan Households" was once the term used to describe the nouveau riche. In later years, over a hundred "Hundred-Million Yuan Households" had emerged. A recent report said that "currently savings in China amounts to almost 6 trillion yuan, mostly concentrated in the hands of 15-16% of high-income households" (NCNA, 30 August 1999).

The deposits of these high income households amounted to 4 to 3 trillion yuan, which was over half the GDP for 1998 and four or five times the total revenue of the country.

But at the other end of the scale, although productivity has risen, unemployment and layoffs are the rule of the day. The Minister of Chinese Labour and Social Security reported to the Standing Committee of the NPC in August that in the first half of 1999, temporary layoffs in state-owned enterprises were 7.42 million workers, of which 5.4 million had not been allocated a new job.

Each temporarily laid-off worker received a living allowance of 170 yuan a month. But some enterprises in some areas did not manage to distribute even this meagre sum of money in time. A sum of 1.37 billion yuan was still owed to pensioners from state-owned enterprises.

Crisis of the state-owned economy

The Chinese bureaucracy has deprived workers of their power to be master of the enterprise; and to democratically operate and manage them. With control in the hands of a small minority of greedy and incompetent bureaucrats, inefficiency and low productivity have become a feature of the enterprises. This has led over a long period to calls for reform. However, these reforms have mostly been in vain.

At the end of 1997, a total of 6,599 (39.1%) state-owned enterprises were in deficit. The net deficit was 29.3 billion yuan in 1997, and 55.8 billion yuan in 1998. About 80% of state-owned enterprises are in debt.

However, if they are all allowed to go bankrupt, the repercussions on bank loans and general savings from the people, and on the already problematic levels of unemployment will certainly cause serious problems of social stability. This is one major reason why the Communist Party of China (CCP) has been reluctant to push through such bankruptcies:

It must also be noted that state owned as well as collectively owned enterprises still occupy a primary position in terms of large and medium scale enterprises with 70 per cent and 64 per cent respectively.

President Jiang Zemin, in his speech commemorating the 78th anniversary of the formation of the CCP, stressed that state-owned assets amounted to 8 trillion yuan, forming the prime basis of the national economy.

He warned of the greed of "some comrades" who attempted to use their political power to seize state assets, arguing that if these people were not contained, state assets would eventually disappear.

This speech indicated that the CCP leaders are still compelled to give lip service to Marxism and socialism, and that the gains of the revolution in terms of labour, social welfare and anti-capitalist ideology cannot be easily removed.

The discontent and protest brewing amongst workers has exerted a strong pressure on the leaders, serving as a barrier to a general capitalist restoration in China.

The Chinese proletariat, both on the basis of class consciousness and actual interest, do not support the privatisation of state-owned enter-

To ensure that the military parade could be seen clearly, 25 factories were asked to stop production for 11 days



Protestors trying to demonstrate in London against China's repression of political opposition were given a dose of British repression by a heavy-handed Met during the state visit of President Jiang Zemin

prises. Workers have taken action against privatisation.

For example, the Chinese Youth Journal in Beijing reported the following case on June 4 this year. In Hefei, the provincial capital of Anhui Province, over 2,000 workers had transferred from state-owned enterprises to companies run by joint ventures where they enjoyed twice their former wages and could earn a monthly income of 1,000 yuan.

However most workers later preferred to leave these new jobs and wait to be re-employed in the state owned sector even though this meant they receive only a small stipend of a basic living allowance.

The reason was that in the new jobs, labour intensity was double that of the original job. Management control was strict and dismissal of workers was frequent - hence there was no sense of job security.

Workers thus preferred to return to state-owned enterprises to wait for reallocation of jobs.

For China's economic reform to

be effectively conducted in a way that benefits the majority of the people, radical democratic political reform is indispensable. Without the workers assuming real power, the bureaucratism and corruption of the CCP cadres cannot be combated.

But the CCP has set its face against any political democratic reform and has cracked down on dissidents and those who demand political democratisation. Autocracy has been maintained by the repression of dissent.

110 Billion yuan has been spent on renovations in the capital to celebrate the 50th Anniversary. To reduce air pollution to ensure that the military parade could be seen clearly, 25 factories including the Beijing Steelworks were asked to stop production for 11 days with an estimated loss of 100 million yuan.

The mobilisation of several hundred thousand people for the mass parade was meant to put up a show of strength and pride, yet they could not cover up the grim reality of life in China today.

Historical view of the Holocaust

Marxism after Auschwitz, by Enzo Traverso £ 11.99, paperback 160pages, Pluto Press

THE LATEST of the Notebooks for Study and Research from the IIRE has just been published by Pluto Press

Auschwitz was a pre-eminently modern genocide. If racial hatred was its first cause, its execution required a 'rationality' typical of modern capitalism.

Ernest Mandel, writing in an afterword to the first edition of Abraham Leon's book *The Jewish Question* wrote of the slaughter of five million by the Nazis: "The human imagination can hardly conceive concretely the meaning of this number".

At the time, aged 22, Mandel cautioned against seeing the genocide of the Jews as a unique crime, points out Traverso.

By the time of his later writings

Mandel's "point of view had changed and his analysis had become much more nuanced... Parallel to his critique of Eurocentric approaches that isolate Auschwitz from racism and colonial oppression, Mandel rejected the mystical cult of the Holocaust. The Jewish genocide must be treated historically; its specificity can only be seen clearly on the basis of an analytical approach of a comparative type."

This drawing out of the evolution of Mandel's thought is only one of the many valuable things about this impressive work.

Dialogue

Traverso sustains a dialogue with writings on the Shoah by many other authors by drawing on the critical and heretical Marxism of Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School, which grasped late capitalism's pent-up capacity for destructive upheavals exacerbated by bureaucratic organisation and advanced technology.

After Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the gulag, the old warning slogan - socialism or barbarism - formulated by European Marxists at the beginning of twentieth century needs to be seriously 'revised'.

The choice we face today is no longer between the 'progress of civilisation and a fall into ancient savagery, but between socialism conceived as a new civilisation and the destruction of humankind.

For Traverso the Warsaw Ghetto uprising is an image of what should impel us to rebel: not a sense of inevitable victory, but an ethical imperative.

Born in Italy, Enzo Traverso was a lecturer in Jewish Studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales of Paris.

He currently teaches political science at the Jules Verne University of Amiens. Two of his earlier books have been published in English, *The Marxists and the Jewish Question* (1994) and *The Jews and Germany* (1995).

Boer War – 100 years on ...

British imperialism's dirty secret

The 3-year war between Britain and the Boer Republics in 1899 shaped South African politics for a century. Until very recently it has been largely neglected in Britain – perhaps because it reveals the barbarous nature of British imperialism so clearly. **GEOFF RYAN explains.**

This was never simply a war between British and Boers (the Afrikaans-speaking white population of Dutch origin). Not all Boers sided with the Boer Republics (the Orange Free State and the South African Republic – usually called the Transvaal).

By the end of the war a quarter of all Boers involved were fighting on the side of the British. A small number of English speaking white South Africans sided with the Boers.

The Boer War was even less the 'White Man's War' claimed by both sides. South Africa's Black population fought on both sides. Women, Black and White, were also involved. On the Boer side a few women fought as commandos, while large numbers died in concentration camps. Many Boer and African women were raped.

Responsibility for the war lay overwhelmingly with British imperialism. It was deliberately engineered by the British South Africa Company of Cecil Rhodes, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain and British High Commissioner in Cape Town, Alfred Milner.

Rhodes and Chamberlain had already tried to provoke war in 1895. The former Radical, Chamberlain, had turned ardent imperialist and began to look favourably on annexing the Transvaal.

The disastrous Jameson Raid was an unofficial invasion of the Transvaal. But it was not simply a mad adventure but one incident in a process that made war between Britain and the Boer Republics virtually inevitable.

Central for Britain was the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand in 1885. The Transvaal's new found wealth meant the Cape's previous economic dominance was rapidly eclipsed. The Transvaal could not only resist British attempts at incorporation in a Cape dominated federation, but also threaten to incorporate the Cape in a Boer Republic.

This threatened Britain's position in South Africa and, more importantly, its control of the sea, vital for the security of India.

Gold revenues allowed the Transvaal to pay for completion of a railway to the Portuguese-held port



of Delagoa Bay (modern Maputo in Mozambique), providing an independent route to the sea. This enabled the Transvaal to embark on a tariff war with the Cape railways during the 1890s, which helped precipitate the war.

The Transvaal's economic backwardness, its citizens' narrow and puritanical outlook, and the geology of the Johannesburg gold fields meant that the economic potential of the Witwatersrand could only be fully exploited by foreign mining firms. Only they were able to raise the large-scale capital required to extract the gold. Foremost in this were men who had experience in the recently discovered diamond fields at Kimberley, the most important of whom was Cecil Rhodes.

Uitlanders flocked to the gold fields around the small town of Johannesburg and transformed it into a sprawling mass of shanty towns full of bars and brothels. Such developments were at odds with the strict Calvinist ideology of many of the mainly rural Boers. Their President Paul Kruger saw Johannesburg as 'an evil place full of evil people'. Religious fundamentalism was accompanied by virulent racism.

The Uitlanders rapidly outnumbered the Boers on the Rand, though they remained a minority in the Transvaal as a whole. The response of Boer leaders was to deny the Uitlanders voting rights. Their attitude hardened after Kruger made a rare visit to Johannesburg in 1894 and was met by a hostile demonstration.

After the arrival of Sir Alfred Milner in Cape Town as High Commissioner in 1897, the issue of British suzerainty was again raised. The

British refused to negotiate seriously with Kruger, even when he offered more than either the Uitlanders or British were demanding.

When the Boers opened the fighting in October 1899 the British were badly prepared. They assumed that the Boers would put up some spirited resistance but would then be easily beaten. The Boers outnumbered British troops by four to one – although 85,000 reinforcements were on their way.

Despite a British victory at Elandslaagte, by the end of November Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley were besieged. Attempts to relieve the sieges of Ladysmith and Kimberley proved disastrous. Eventually it would require 450,000 soldiers (including volunteers from Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) to win this 'small war'.

The belief that 'it will all be over by Christmas' was not the only echo of the First World War. In the early stages of the war the Boers made effective use of trenches. When British troops launched full scale attacks they were cut down.

The last set-piece battle took place in August 1900. By then both Boer capital cities, Bloemfontein and Pretoria, had been captured. Yet the war continued for another two years, now as guerrilla warfare.

The British employed brutal tactics to end it. In order to isolate the Boer guerrillas, farms were burned, crops destroyed, animals slaughtered. These policies made it difficult for guerrillas to operate.

Boer soldiers often went hungry and found it difficult to obtain fresh horses – a necessity for the war they were fighting. On occasions

they were virtually without clothes, reduced to improvising with sacks. Desperate Boer commandos put on the uniforms of captured British soldiers despite a proclamation by Kitchener that any Boer found wearing British uniform would be executed. This proclamation was rigorously carried out.

Two years earlier in Cuba the Spanish had built concentration camps. The British adopted this tactic – tens of thousands of Boer women and children were forced into them. Because of the appalling conditions 25,000 died – a tenth of the entire Boer population.

The conditions were probably not deliberate. British army hospitals were equally bad inside; medical and nursing skills were largely lacking. Far more British soldiers died from disease than in combat. People died because of ignorance of the effects of concentrating large numbers of people in unhygienic surroundings. But their suffering also reflected cruel indifference.

Today, British imperialism shows rather greater concern for the well-being of its armed forces. Its attitude to its 'enemies' remains just as callous, as the people of Yugoslavia or Iraq can testify.

After an international outcry conditions inside the camps improved. Moreover, the internment of women and children tended to stiffen Boer resolve. The British therefore adopted a different tactic – Boer women and children were to be left on the veldt, pressurising men to abandon the guerrilla struggle to take care of them. The perilous situation of women on the veldt was an important factor in persuading some Boers to switch sides.

These and other tactics brought the brutal might of the British Empire to bear on the Boers and gradually wore them down. Commando units in Cape Colony and the Orange Free State were able to continue activity, but those of the Transvaal rapidly became ineffective and demoralised. It was this turn in the Transvaal that eventually won the war for Britain.

However the real losers were not the Boers but the Black population. Both sides had involved Blacks in the struggle. For example, Black Africans played a major role in the defence of Mafeking, armed by Baden Powell. He later cynically lied and claimed they had all run away at the first sound of fighting.

At least as many Africans as Boers died in British concentration camps, and probably far more. They were denied tents to shelter from the harsh South African climate, unlike Boer women and chil-

dren. But all this has been obliterated from history until very recently.

British and Boers may have gone to war with each other but neither was prepared to contemplate Black Africans having any control over South Africa. White solidarity counted for far more than majority rights.

In the treaty that ended the war, Britain paid £3 million pounds to Boer farmers for the destruction of their land, houses and animals. It contained provisions for self government for the Boer Republics within a unified South African state, within a short period of time. The voting rights of Blacks would be left to these republics. So much for the British government claim that they had gone to war in the first place because of the undemocratic nature of voting rights in the Boer republics!

By 1910 Britain had established the Union of South Africa. This safeguarded British strategic and economic interests and ensured White domination. The Boers were able to regain control over the Transvaal and Orange Free State and make significant gains throughout the colony. The Black population would be kept in subjection by both English and Afrikaners for another 85 years.

The Boer War was a major challenge to the developing Labour movement in Britain. The Boer leadership were thoroughly reactionary racist and religious bigots. Lives of British soldiers were at risk. Imperialism was still seen as a good thing by large sections of the population, especially the middle class. So how did Labour leaders acquit themselves?

The middle class gradualists of the Fabian Society at first took a position of abstaining on the war – they eventually supported it. But Independent Labour Party leader Keir Hardie and other Socialist leaders opposed the war, alongside large numbers of trade unionists at all levels. They supported the Boers, despite the physical violence their stand attracted.

In his own rather confused way, Keir Hardie understood that a defeat for British imperialism was in the interests of the world working class. But if Tony Blair had been Prime Minister, then no doubt he would have likened Paul Kruger to the 'new Napoleon' and refused any economic aid to Boer farmers until they elected a government he approved of – and swore undying allegiance to imperialism!



Who should get the guns?

Letters

SINCE MY last letter (SO 27) I have been scouring the pages of your paper for an answer to my questions, but find little illumination there. In particular, you seem to have gone silent about your attitude to the KLA.

Surely now it is clear that the slogan "Arm the KLA" was wrong. Any arms sent to the KLA would have been used in one of three ways:

- returned meekly to NATO's occupying force
- used for ethnic cleansing of Serb and Roma peoples
- used to police the Kosovar population

The one thing they would not have been used for would be the national liberation of Kosova.

On the question of East Timor, your slogan is "Arm the Liberation Front", by which I assume you mean Falantil, but arms supplied to Falantil would not have been used at all!

While the militias and TNI were carrying out their slaughter, the communities were defenceless because Falantil had obeyed UN instructions to remain in separate zones. Xanana Gusmao ordered his troops not to take any action that might be interpreted as starting a civil war.

In fact, while his people were being slaughtered, Gusmao was on the phone to western governments and multinationals telling them he would honour all existing contracts and property relations.

In both areas the CWI called for arms to be sent to the communities so that communities could organise their own defence. The CWI was confident that ordinary workers and peasants would instinctively put these weapons to better use than their "political leaders" ever could.

Surely there is enough tragic evidence to show that bourgeois national movements fail their people.

They fail to defend them when they are attacked, they fail to return land to the peasants or nationalise industry, they accommodate themselves to the wishes of imperialism and ultimately become the policemen of their people rather than their liberators

- this is a road that has been trodden by Yasser Arafat, Gerry Adams and countless other nationalist leaders, particularly since the collapse of Stalinism.

Socialists in this country need to encourage the building of an independent socialist working class movement worldwide rather than see legitimate national liberation movements led into a blind alley by their bourgeois nationalist leaders.

Max Neill, Preston

● See page 17. Max's slogan neatly avoids defining which "community" and which section of workers and peasants should be armed. We will return to this debate in future issues of Socialist Outlook.



We welcome readers' letters on any topic. Letters over 400 words may be cut for space reasons. Write to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. email: outlook@gn.apc.org



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 building simultaneously 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 us at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU, and we'll be in touch.

No magic cure for British left's sectarian disease

Will Matthews in SO 27 makes some serious points recommending socialists to stay in the Labour Party.

Although I left the party a few years ago to do more fruitful work outside, I can't condemn those who do solid work in the party.

However Will mistakenly tries to justify his choice by recalling that Trotsky, in the mid-1930s, called the Independent Labour Party a sect even when it had 100,000 members.

He seems to suggest that, so long as socialists are few in number, we will become a sect if we venture outside the Labour Party.

The ILP was not a sect because it had 'just' 100,000 members. Many workers and socialist organisations, including Trotsky's, had fewer members at that time - as today - but were less sectarian. In fact, the ILP was a sect despite its numbers.



Even Trotsky couldn't solve problem of sectarianism on British left

Because it had a mistaken attitude toward the Communist and Labour parties and towards the working class as a whole, it turned away from a line of march that could have united the workers' movement in campaigning against fascism and war.

Being inside the Labour Party does not prevent the development of such a sect-like mentality, as some of the Trotskyist currents in

the Labour Party have proven in the years since then.

However political life in the Labour Party, for both the right and the left, is presently greatly removed from the independent mobilisation of the working class, the unemployed and the radical youth.

Currents outside the party have, in ways that reflect their modest size, found ways to try to move close to the best of those in struggle or who are radicalising: through the lobby of Labour Party conference, by turning socialist and green organisations in the direction of campaigning and by winning people to non-sectarian and revolutionary socialism.

Such activity protects socialists from sectarian degeneration far more than any party card.

Chris Brooks, London SE24.

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Socialist Outlook

“Let them eat shit!”

THE REVELATION that manufacturers of animal feed in France have used waste including sludge from septic tanks and effluent from animal carcasses to bulk up their product is just the latest evidence that the drive for profit is incompatible with public health and safety.

The scandal was recently uncovered by German television, which pointed out that the revolting sewage residues were being added to feed for pigs and chickens.

It follows on the massive scare over the level of highly toxic dioxins in animal feed in Belgium, which has led to an international ban on Belgian meat and dairy products.

Some countries have already banned all European farm produce, and others are now likely to follow suit.

Far from making the “polluter pay”, the cost of each scandal is carried by governments, while the prime culprits – grasping farmers and feed industry firms escape scot-free, and the filthy abattoirs pick up increased subsidies for slaughtering infected livestock.

Taxpayers in Belgium are to foot the

bill for a \$160m handout to farmers whose produce has been destroyed, and as much as \$660m more is likely to be paid out in further subsidies over the next seven years to Belgian producers of polluted food.

It turns out that the Belgian authorities knew at least six months ago that animal feed was being contaminated with dioxin, but tried to keep it quiet.

In Britain the cost of compensation payments arising from the BSE scandal, arising from feeding cattle with material adulterated with the ground up brains of sheep, runs into billions.

The BSE scandal was worst in Britain because of the deregulation of the feed industry by the Thatcher government – eagerly exploited by grasping feed manufacturers eager to pocket an extra profit – and by the lack of any real controls over the quality of food on the market.

The development of genetically modified corn, tomatoes, soya and other vegetables, and the massive use by farmers of suspect weedkillers, insecticides and



A tale of two demos. Above: Chauvinist Tory MEPs in Paris try to take their crusade for British beef down the Champs Elysees – conveniently forgetting that it was Thatcher whose deregulation triggered the BSE outbreak. Below, demonstration in Plymouth to defend activists who uprooted a GMmaize crops in Totnes, Devon



Nick Cobbing

fertilisers means there is little refuge even for vegetarians from the systematic poisoners of agribusiness.

We can see from the cynical attitude of the rail operators, whose priority is not safety but forcing train guards to clip tickets and sell teas, that human life weighs light – if at all – in the scales compared with the profits of major corporations.

While Blair and his ilk prate about “partnership” with big business, these vivid examples remind us that the interests of working people and the profiteers are completely counterposed.

British and other Western capitalists don't care if workers in the Third World eat at all – as long as they keep providing cheap labour and raw materials, and their governments keep paying interest on ancient loans.

And as they tuck in to banquets of the finest foods available, bosses have no reason to worry about the quality of

food ordinary people find in supermarkets – as long as they keep buying and boosting the profits of Tesco, Sainsbury's and the food manufacturers.

A Labour government worth the name would be working with experts and the trade union movement to set up a full-scale and independent inquiry into the pollution of the food chain.

All the firms and farms found to be in breach of basic standards should not be subsidised, but *nationalised*, without compensation, and run under workers' control and expert scrutiny.

INSIDE:

- Protests hold back Monsanto juggernaut, p10
- Rail safety p3 and p7
- Indian strike for health & safety – p13