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Socialist

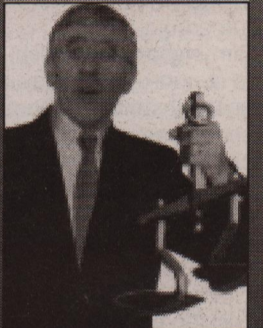
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Zapatistas fight rape of rainforest page 11



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Globalism and farm crisis, p 3

...and much more!



Staligrad O'Neill

Dudley Hospital strikers are running a Socialist Alliance candidate as part of their fight against privatisation ... see page 2

100 Socialist Alliance candidates in biggest left challenge for decades

United in fighting Labour's Tory policies



For campaign coverage, meet more candidates, and a reply to Guardian's Polly Toynbee SEE INSIDE, pages 6-7

**1,000
join
Dudley
strikers
demo**

A lively march of over 1,000 trade unionists turned out in Birmingham on March 3 to support the Dudley hospital strikers, who are continuing with their campaign of action to resist their transfer to private contractors.

600 support staff from the Dudley group of hospitals have staged a succession of strikes amounting to 14 weeks since the dispute began last summer.

The strikes have been officially supported by UNISON, whose General Secretary Dave Prentice gave a militant-sounding speech to the opening rally, which was chaired by Dudley Hospitals UNISON Secretary Mark New.

Among the other speakers was Bob Whitehead from the campaign to save Selly Oak Hospital, which faces closure as part of the new £291m Birmingham University Hospital PFI scheme (see this page).

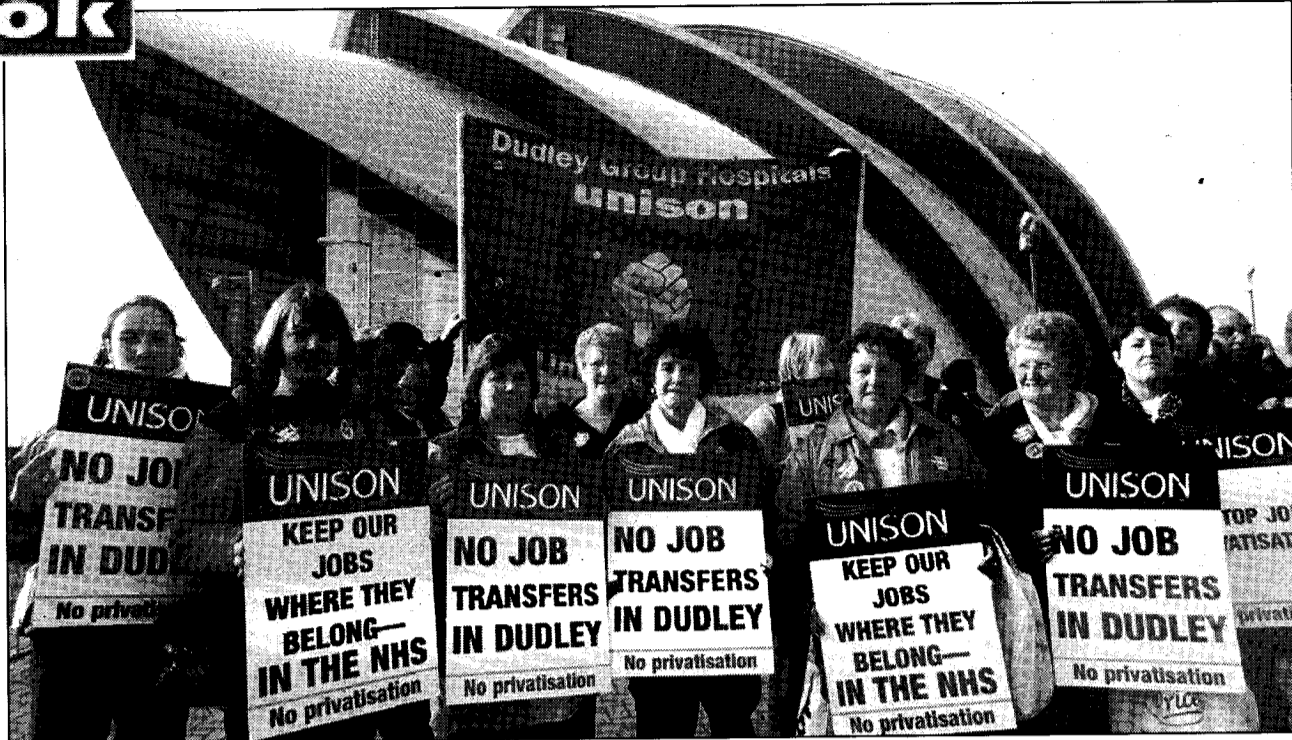
Other support for the demonstration came from UNISON branches, the local Fire Brigades Union, UCATT members employed by Birmingham City Council, and others.

After the speeches were over the march headed down the Bristol Road to besiege the surgery of junior health minister and local Labour MP Gisella Stuart.

The size and spirit of the protest should have encouraged the Dudley strikers, whose tenacious fight has become the focal point of resistance to the government's Private Finance Initiative.

Donations and messages of support should be sent to: UNISON Dudley Group of Hospitals, Union Office, Wordsley Hospital, Stream Road Stourbridge DY8 5QX

Andrew Wlward



Private claws sink deeper into NHS

John Lister

Any lingering doubts that a large chunk of the new money belatedly injected into the National Health Service in Gordon Brown's last budget will be funnelled directly into the pockets of big business will have been dispelled by the latest government announcements.

With a fanfare of publicity, Health Secretary Alan Milburn unveiled plans for another 29 hospital developments: but there were two snags:

■ Most, if not all of the new hospitals are to be funded and run by the private sector, and leased to the NHS for a 30-year period under the controversial Private Finance Initiative (PFI) dreamed up by the Tories.

■ And – partly because of the complexity and bureaucracy of establishing PFI schemes – none of them will be built until 2006 at the earliest: that's not only after the coming election, but probably after the NEXT election as well!

The newest package of hospital schemes carry a headline cost of £3.1 billion – including four (St Helen's, North Staffordshire, Leicester and Birmingham) in excess of £200m.

The new University Hospital Birmingham, at a thumping £291m, will be by far the most expensive hospital ever built in the NHS, but in each case the actual cost will be far higher.

The Trust involved will be required to fork out monthly

lease payments over the next 30 years which guarantee the profits of the bank, building firm and service providers in the winning consortium.

The new wave of PFI projects, following on the 38 already approved by the Department of Health, will bring the total of privately-funded schemes to more than £7 billion, all of this coming in instalments out of NHS annual budgets.

New Labour boasts that it is the biggest ever hospital building scheme in the NHS: but when the Tory government in the early 1960s embarked on its Hospital Plan for England and Wales, all of the investment came from the Exchequer and the completed buildings belonged to the NHS. Indeed many of these assets are now being stripped to help pay the massive cost of PFI projects.

Concessions

Milburn has been obliged to make a number of concessions in his efforts to win public acceptance of PFI hospitals.

■ Unlike the first wave of schemes which involved massive reductions in numbers of available hospital beds, making PFI a by-word for service reductions, he now claims the latest batch of new hospitals will expand bed numbers by a total of 3,000 – although no firm details yet exist to confirm this will be the case.

PFI schemes tend to inflate in cost and reduce in bed numbers as the process of negotiation proceeds towards a final contract.

■ Milburn has also broken from previous policy, under which the NHS has become a permanent, long-term tenant in rented private hospitals.

He says now that in the 29 new schemes there will be an "option" at the end of the initial 30-year contract for the hospitals to "become the property of the NHS" – though how much extra this will cost during and at the end of the lease period is not clear.

■ And after stubborn resis-

tance by UNISON support staff at University College Hospital, London (UCLH), who fought plans to hand them over to private contractors as part of the PFI deal for a new hospital, Milburn announced last year that future PFI schemes could separate the privatisation of support services from the private ownership of the building.

But as the Dudley Hospital strikers have found, this promise appears to exist only on paper, and is not binding on Trusts who – as in the Dudley Group of Hospitals – may just dig in and insist on wholesale privatisation.

So keen is New Labour in the private provision of NHS capital that the legislation being quietly forced through Parliament in advance of the next election proposes a further massive extension of PFI into the area of primary care – the provision of GP surgeries and health centres.

The Health and Social Care Bill includes a plan to "unlock £1 billion of new investment in family doctor premises" over a 4-year period, through the establishment of "NHS LIFT" (Local Improvement Finance Trust).

But of this £1bn, less than 20% – a mere £175m – will be contributed by the Treasury: the remainder will come from the private sector. NHS LIFT "will be set up as a limited company", and those investing can obviously expect a generous and guaranteed profit.

So while an ever-increasing proportion of health care will be delivered in privately-owned, profit-seeking "NHS" hospitals, or even by private medical companies and private hospitals through the "Concordat" signed last autumn by Milburn, there is also a growing role for the private sector in the provision of so-called "intermediate" (nursing home) beds.

And the hard line which has distinguished the NHS – which provides services free at point of use – from local government social services – which have been subject to

means-tested charges – is about to be blurred by another part of the Health and Social Care Bill.

This little-discussed legislation will set up new Care Trusts, combining health and social services in each area. Not only do Care Trusts raise huge issues for the terms and conditions of staff in the affected services, but they also mean that for the first time NHS bodies will be levying charges from patients for care they receive.

Any doubts that this will be the case should have been dispelled by the refusal of Milburn and the Blair government to implement the proposals from the Royal Commission on long-term care of the elderly.

Charges

It called for charges for such care to be scrapped, and for both "nursing" and "social" care to be funded from taxation, at a cost of around £1 billion a year.

New Labour in England is hell-bent on extending charging and privatisation into areas of the NHS even Thatcher feared to tread.

The Health and Social Care Bill has now completed its passage through the Commons and is being pushed rapidly through the House of Lords to reach the statute books before the election.

It's a safe bet that few of the Blairite MPs who nodded it through with barely a thought could tell us what is in the Bill, other than the controversial plan to scrap the patients' statutory watchdog bodies, the local Community Health Councils.

What is clear is that New Labour has used its massive majority and its mandate to roll back 18 years of Tory cuts in the NHS to force through the biggest-ever extension of privatisation in our most popular public service.

If nothing is done to change these policies, future generations will still be lumbered with the bills, long after Alan Milburn has retired.

**Blair's
plan: a
2-tier
school
system**

TONY BLAIR's plans for education are again to be a centrepiece of the coming General Election. They have delighted the right wing press, who have hailed Labour's Green Paper as the "death of the comprehensive".

Labour's press supremo Alistair Campbell summed up the government's contempt in the phrase "bog-standard comprehensives". Tory education spokesperson Teresa May complained that Labour had stolen the Tories' policy.

Labour now promises a big increase in the number of "specialist" schools, which will have powers to select up to 10 percent of their pupils. By 2006 almost half of all secondary schools will be "specialist" schools, and receive extra funding, creating a new 2-tier system.

Already under new Labour – and Education Secretary David "read my lips: no selection" Blunkett – more children are being taught in selective schools than under the Tories.

Since schools need a cash pot of £50,000 even to apply for specialist status, it is clear that the most hard-pressed schools, especially those in more deprived areas, will remain firmly at the bottom of the heap.

This is a further kick in the teeth for teaching staff at comprehensive schools – smashing morale at a time when schools in many parts of the country are already struggling to recruit and retain sufficient teachers.

To make matters worse, Blair also wants to see more religious-based schools, and wants to encourage businesses and 'voluntary organisations' to take over failing schools.

After it has landed education authorities with a hefty bill to pay the 3.7% average increase in teachers' pay, demoralised teachers with a mountain of assessments, paperwork and ever-moving "targets", and worsened the shortages of teachers in a growing list of subjects, Labour has now given notice that its second term would be even worse for education than its first.

People voted Labour in 1997 to bring an end to Tory policies in education, health and other vital services. But now it seems a Labour vote would bring in policies more extreme than even Thatcher.

However strong votes for "no-cover" action by teaching unions in various parts of the country may indicate that the level of resistance to Labour's policies may be greater than Blunkett and co. have come to expect.

**Campaign for Palestinian Rights
STOP ISRAEL'S WAR CRIMES**

END THE OCCUPATION

Saturday 17th March

Assemble 11am Hyde Park
(nearest tube Marble Arch)

Rally at Trafalgar Square

Speakers

- Tony Benn MP; ● George Galloway MP;
- Afif Safieh, Palestinian delegate to Britain; ● Bruce Kent;
- Ken Cameron (former FBU Gen Sec)

Farm crisis as Labour backs globalisation



The countryside is under siege, and thousands of animals are being slaughtered and burned, as the foot and mouth outbreak spreads inexorably further across Britain.

The restrictions on movement of people and animals have effectively forced Tony Blair to scrap the option of a snap election in April, and helped to undermine the desired "feelgood factor" which was supposed to be created by a relatively generous budget as part of Labour's pre-election preparation.

This latest blow to the dwindling number of British farmers and to rural communities comes after a succession of food safety scares, and a collapse in the market price of pigs, sheep and cattle.

This had brought a crisis even before the first outbreak of foot and mouth was confirmed. Figures for last year show average farm incomes in Wales have fallen to just over £4,800, and in Scotland to just £3,800.

This helps underline the fact that the once rich pickings of EU subsidies are just a fond memory for many small and medium sized farms.

Exodus

This dire financial situation, with farm prices hammered ever lower by the monopoly purchasing power of a handful of profiteering supermarkets, has led to an exodus from farming and a frightening rate of suicide among farmers.

Against this background the hollow claim of the so-called Countryside Alliance to represent the needs and demands of the rural population has been starkly exposed.

The protest march they had threatened to mobilise on London later this month – and which has now been postponed because of the foot and mouth epidemic – was nothing to do with the plight of small farmers, their low-paid workforce, the closure of village shops and post offices, or the absence of public transport or other key services in rural areas.

It was purely and simply against the abolition of fox-hunting, a pursuit cherished by the rural rich.

The countryside has become a reservoir of low pay, under employment and deprivation for working families. The closures of coal mining and many other traditional industries have also left large pockets of working class communities living in "rural" areas, facing long journeys if they are to find work in urban areas.

But for the wealthy, with their large houses, holiday homes, leisure pursuits and 4-wheel drives, the countryside remains a playground.

Polarisation

The polarisation between rural rich and rural poor has widened with the privatisation of bus services and the collapse of much of the rural economy.

And as the squeeze tightens on agriculture it is only the biggest farms which have the reserves and the margins to ride out the rough times and wait for a future return to profitability.

Yet the domination of agriculture by these big farms, linked in with the development of agribusiness at national and international level, has been a factor in the eruption and spread of foot and mouth disease.

The new pattern of farming and food production involves the routine transport of countless thousands of live animals from one end of Britain to the other. Many are now taken huge distances for slaughter in the reduced number of larger abattoirs, following on the closure of much of the network of smaller, more local abattoirs in order to cut costs.

Not only are there issues here of animal welfare, arising from the vast increase in avoidable distress and suffering to those animals that are shipped in crowded trailers, but the system appears designed to maximise the risk that a health problem in one area can rapidly spread to other areas throughout the country – especially if it is a disease as infectious as foot and mouth.

Bourgeois pigs? Socialists should not be indifferent to plight of rural population

But there has also been a massive increase in the export of live animals to Europe and beyond: numbers of animals shipped across the Channel have increased more than four-fold since the big protests at the trade in veal calves highlighted the issue a few years ago.

At the same time, the global market in food-stuffs and the constant search of the supermarkets and food processors for the cheapest possible supplies have led to a rising tide of imported meat from countries around the world, some of which have been wrestling with declared – or undeclared – outbreaks of foot and mouth.

Tony Blair's New Labour government has become one of the leading proponents of the virtues of the global economy and the free market system. Under Labour, the supermarkets have continued to reign supreme, pocketing billions in profits while squeezing food producers at home and abroad to the point of bankruptcy.

Now it is not just the rural population that is paying the price: the real cost of "cheap food" has repeatedly been exposed, and even Blair himself has been forced to question the "stranglehold" of the supermarkets.

Small producers

Why should socialists and the workers' movement care about these issues? Last autumn's fuel tax protests helped point to the disaffection of important sections of the middle classes – the "petty bourgeoisie", small producers, self-employed lorry drivers and small farmers.

Socialist Outlook argued then that the labour movement should not ignore the problems these people were raising, but take on and fight for progressive policies that could tackle them.

We pointed out the lesson of history that sections of the petty bourgeoisie can easily turn towards the reactionary right if they see no positive response from the left.

The same is true of the rural poor and the small farmers facing ruin in the current crisis.

Along with the Socialist Alliance, we call for policies that address the underlying problems in the countryside, which in most cases flow from the operation of New Labour's new-found business friends – the banks, agribusiness, and the supermarkets.

Our alternative platform of policies includes:

- Big grants for small farmers to switch to organic production, where margins are higher and food is healthier.

- Incentives for small farmers to form more cooperatives (as some are already doing) to share and reduce their costs and negotiate collectively with retailers and food process companies.

- Incentives to reduce the transport and import of food that can be grown locally, thus reducing road traffic, pollution, and threats to animal welfare.

- Prosecute – and nationalise – the feed manufacturers whose use of animal protein triggered the BSE crisis, but who have never paid even a penny in compensation for the damage done.

- A steeply progressive turnover tax on multinational agribusiness and supermarkets.

- Step up the regulation and inspection of health and safety procedures at all levels of agricultural production and food processing.

- A big increase in the minimum wage.

- Slash taxes on fuel, but impose a windfall tax on the oil companies which have been creaming billions from rising crude oil prices.

- Investment in cheap, efficient and widespread publicly-owned rural transport services, using buses and rail.

- Investment in active and diverse rural communities – including community facilities, youth clubs, schools, and environmental projects.

Their Budget – and ours

GORDON BROWN's Budget is to be unveiled the day after this issue of *Socialist Outlook* goes to press. We are not privy to the details of Brown's political and economic calculations, but the pressures on the Iron Chancellor as he tots up the figures have been increasingly obvious.

There are four key factors that will be weighing especially heavily on his mind:

1. Brown has been so tight with public spending that the Exchequer is running an unspent surplus variously estimated at £1.8 billion to as high as £40 billion.

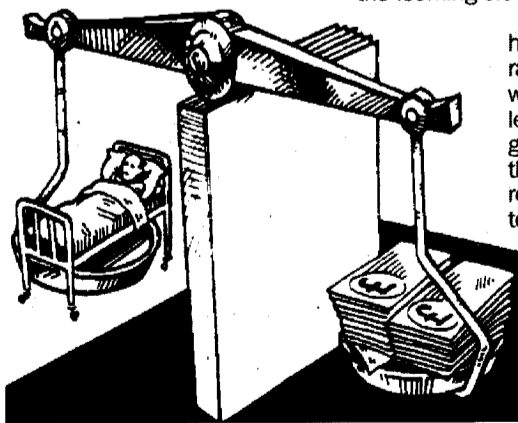
It seems this second figure also includes the proceeds of Brown's "windfall" auction of mobile phone franchises – money which, to the intense annoyance of public sector workers and pensioners, he has already insisted will not be spent but used to reduce the national debt.

2. But the same fanatical

prudence with public spending, which left Labour clinging ludicrously to Tory cash limits for health, education and other public services for its first three years in office, has had a long-term impact. Brown's belated conversion last summer to the injection of record increases in health spending may well have come too late to revive the flagging NHS.

The authoritative *Public Finance* magazine has echoed the views expressed in the recent letter from teaching hospital finance chiefs to NHS chief executive Nigel Crisp – leaked to Channel 4 News – warning that they still do not have enough money to meet government targets. Other hospitals and health authorities share the same view.

Education, too, is under the cosh, and the shortage of skilled nursing and other professional staff in the NHS is mirrored by the growing



shortages of school teachers. There are huge financial strains in further and higher education as the inconsistencies of government policy – urging expansion while squeezing resources – take their toll.

And local authorities up and down the country are once again looking for cuts and savings to balance the books, as New Labour's spending limits make it almost two decades of uninterrupted cuts in jobs and services.

3. While Brown would normally be happy to tough out pressure from public sector workers and turn a deaf ear to Labour's core support, he faces an extra pressure of the looming election.

Expectations have been raised that he would pull at least a few goodies from the famous red briefcase to placate hard-suffering workers.

The advance announcement of an increase in the minimum wage from a pathetic £3.75 an hour to a feeble £4.10 is scarcely going to set the inner cities abuzz with celebration.

4. But Brown also faces an unusual problem for a Labour Chancellor at this stage in government. He knows that barring a cosmic catastrophe Labour will still be in office after the coming election, and that he will again have to manage the affairs of British capitalism to the satisfaction not only of British employers but also

of global capital.

Only a week ago, the International Monetary Fund, the body that press-ganged Harold Wilson's government into hugely unpopular cuts in public services in 1976, published a highly critical report challenging even the limited increases in public spending Brown announced last year.

We can only guess how far each of these factors will influence the eventual shape of the budget: but for socialists it is clear that very different criteria would apply.

The Socialist Alliance has published an alternative budget for working people, which calls on Brown to spend the full £18 billion surplus on boosting public services.

The Alliance calls for a complete shake-up of the taxation system – including a 15% levy on oil company revenues – so that direct taxes on businesses and the rich become the predominant source of revenue, while regressive taxes on ordinary working class families are scrapped altogether.

It calls for the end to the "cap" on National Insurance contributions, which would raise an extra £5 billion a year, and for employers'

National Insurance contributions to be raised from just 12% to the European average of 28%. Corporation Tax should be put back up from the present 30% level to the 52% level it was at under Thatcher.

The Alliance budget proposes to spend this extra revenue on public services, pensions and benefits.

It argues for a 25% increase in spending on education and training, with the scrapping of university tuition fees and restoration of the student grant; and a further big increase in NHS spending, with the abolition of the Private Finance Initiative as a means to finance new hospitals.

The basic difference in approach is between a Labour government seeking to do only what big business will allow, and a socialist government seeking above all to meet the needs of working people.

Four years after Labour romped to power with a massive majority, Britain is if anything **further away** from socialist policies: the Alliance challenge in the coming election will for the first time give voters in 100 seats a chance to opt for something better.

Tube privatisation Strikes show light at end of the tunnel!

Greg Tucker

THE UNITED action taken by RMT and ASLEF tube workers was magnificent. 2,000 RMT members defied the court ruling that had decided their strike was unlawful to join ASLEF picket lines bringing London Underground to a halt.

Whilst the strikes were subsequently suspended this is not the end, merely a breathing space. RMT members are being re-balloted to try to "legalise" their dispute. And with the government backtracking on their deal with Kiley and Livingstone all the issues remain unresolved.

The tube workers day of action was significant in a number of ways. Firstly it underlined the importance of unity between the rail unions.

Under Mick Rix, ASLEF has changed direction. Previous General Secretary Lou Adams tried to "play the market" to benefit drivers at the expense of other workers.

Now ASLEF is opposing Prescott's Private Public Partnership, joint action is possible. Without either RMT or ASLEF this dispute would have faltered. With unity on the picket lines the need for a single industrial union is given concrete expression.

Secondly it showed that the law could be defied successfully. The 2,000 RMT members who struck did so in the face of considerable pressure from management.

In addition to the obligatory "repudiation" letter from Jimmy Knapp they were threatened with all sorts of disciplinary action up to the sack and jail time!

In the end, whilst the union was fined by the courts the threats against individual workers had to be lifted.

Again unity was the key. LUL senior managers had drawn up a hit list of a dozen RMT activists they wanted to send to prison for contempt of the injunction - they were forced to back down because ASLEF refused to talk separately from the RMT until they did so.

It is important to under-

stand the legal basis for blocking the RMT dispute.

It was not Thatcher's anti-union laws but Labour's 1999 Employment Relations Act that was used to rule it unlawful - on the grounds that the RMT had not identified how many of its members were being called on to strike, by grade at every individual workplace.

This is another intolerable burden on the effective right to strike that threatens all workers - Labour's anti-union law!

Thirdly despite their subsequent backtracking, courtesy of the Treasury we are told, the fact that the government appeared to do a deal with Kiley and Livingstone was a real victory for the strike.

Whatever our misgivings over such a deal by Livingstone,

it shows that it is possible to defeat this government. Solid strike action can win. This message needs to be pressed home in the RMT tube re-ballot and in the other national dispute over rail safety being waged.

On the picket lines themselves solidarity from the Socialist Alliance was greeted warmly. The unfortunate divisions of the Greater London Authority election campaign are no longer an obstacle.

Solidarity with further tube strikes will clearly be a key part of Socialist Alliance work in London in the run up to the general election.

The Socialist Alliance work around the re-nationalisation of the railways is already bearing fruit. At a recent national meeting of RMT train crew representatives not one of the hundred and twenty or so activists present was prepared to stand up to defend Labour.

In contrast a number of the delegates had been out working with the Socialist Alliance. As a direct result the rail unions have now launched their own mass petitioning campaign to "take back the track".

The train crew meeting was called to discuss progress in the national dispute over the safety role of guards and drivers.

Railtrack and the operating companies have been trying

to sidetrack the dispute into meaningless "working party" discussions. RMT Assistant General Secretary, Vernon Hince, has been going along with this, no doubt as his contribution to the Labour election campaign. But rank and file opposition has blocked this escape route.

A strike ballot should be called in the immediate future - once some preliminary work has been completed to overcome the new legal hurdles.

The aim remains to try to link in with the tube dispute - at the latest, strike action could be possible before any May 3rd election date.

It is clear that action needs to be urgently called. In the run up to the general election the government is vulnerable and the operating companies have been seriously weakened by the continuing crashes as the railways lurch from crisis to crisis.

In the first years of privatisation massive windfall profits were made. The managers who bought the rolling stock companies saw a profit of £17 million within months of "investing" about £100,000 each. Railtrack was making over £1 million a day in profits - profits increased because they effectively stopped doing any real track renewal for two years.

But now the chickens have come home to roost. As passengers have been frightened off by the sheer chaos of failing services the companies have been squeezed.

Among others, Virgin and Stagecoach report massive losses. Railtrack appears to be technically insolvent. A national dispute now would hit the companies whilst they are exposed.

You would have hoped that such a situation would have been seized upon by the Labour government to implement its promises to return the railways to public ownership and control.

With a bankrupt Railtrack, and operating companies making losses at the end of their franchise period - all the problems of it "costing too much" to re-nationalise could now be dealt with.

And it would be popular - the public clearly wants the



Prescott: shovelling cash into pockets of private rail operators

railways taken away from people who have shown they are unfit to be trusted.

But far from it! Instead Labour is giving out even longer franchises to the operating companies, and is propping up Railtrack, looking sympathetically at their request for a £2 billion bail-out.

Four years ago that sort of money was deemed too expensive to use on re-nationalisation - it had to be

targeted on schools and hospitals we were told.

Today the government can contemplate giving this money over with not one share coming back into public hands.

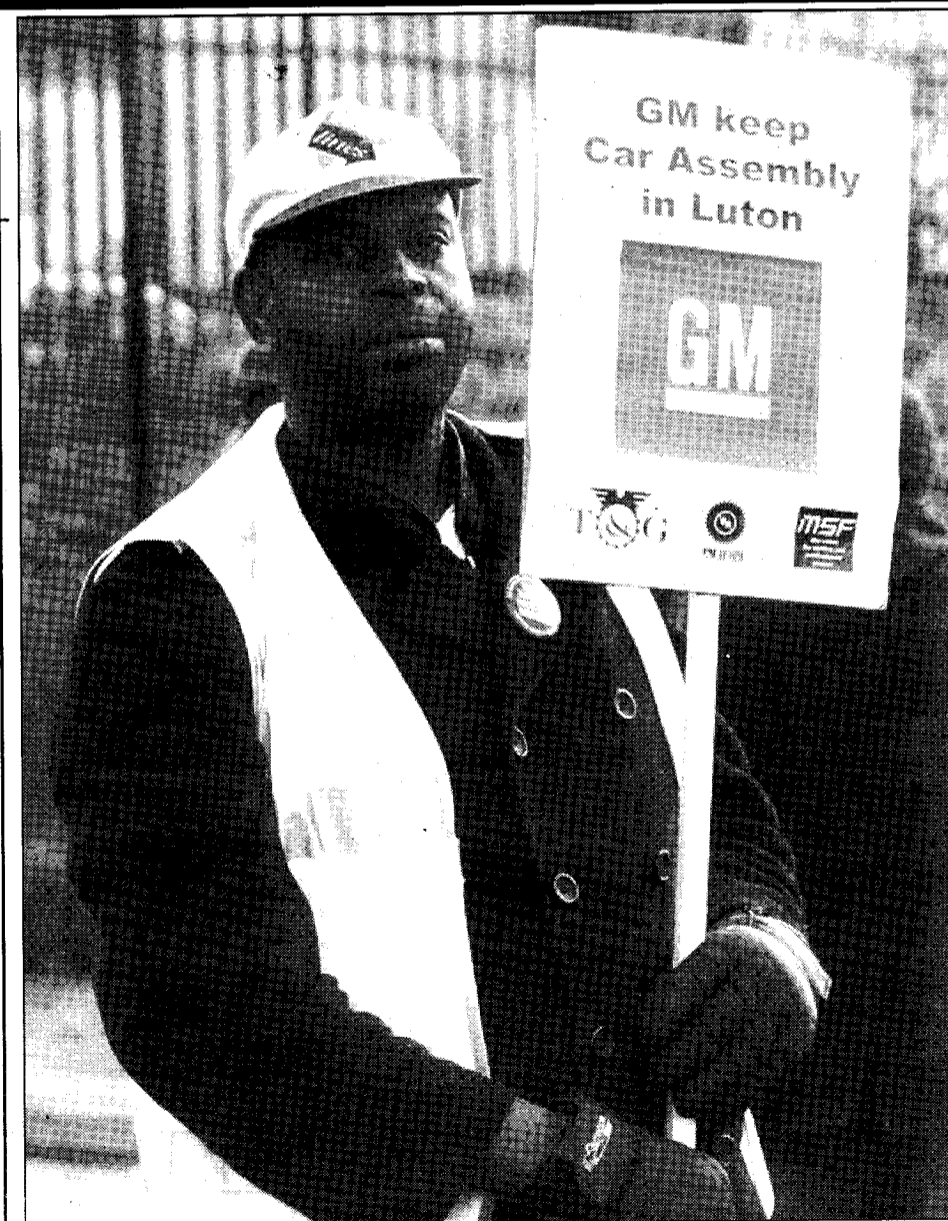
A strategy for securing the future of public rail transport must now be developed, to include

- Concerted industrial action on the tubes and mainline in defence of safety and against the effects of privatisation;

- A political campaign for hands off the tube and the immediate rail re-nationalisation (under workers and users control);

- Breaking with a Labour Party unwilling to take even basic measures to defend the rail industry

- and support for those parties (such as the Socialist Alliance) who are prepared to make the case for a publicly owned, properly funded, integrated public transport system.



Andrew Ward

Vauxhall: it's all gone quiet

Vauxhall workers fighting to save jobs from the axe have now staged a successful series of strikes - but the action so far has been restricted to short stoppages. There has been no attempt by the Luton stewards to act on their radical policy statement, which declared that "This is our plant. General Motors of Europe have given up their right to call it theirs."

There is a real danger that with a number of new jobs on offer at a neighbouring plant, and in the absence of a fighting lead and occupation of the Luton plant, the early militancy of the Vauxhall struggle could be dissipated, and the remaining jobs could be lost without further resistance.

WHAT'S
ON**March 10****March Against Racism and Police Brutality**

Assemble: 12 noon, Tottenham police station, North London

Rally outside the surgery of Barbara Roche, called by: Broomfield 3, Free Winston Silcott, Haringey Solidarity Group, Justice for Harry Stanley campaign, Justice for Roger Sylvester, Police crimes against civilians and Lindo Family Defence Campaign, Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!, Miscarriages of Justice UK (MOJUK).

March 15**PUBLIC MEETING**

Stand up to Barbara Roche. Speakers: Louise Christian (SA Candidate, Hornsey & Wood Green, Refugee & Human Rights organisations).

8pm, Hornsey Vale Community Centre, Mayfield Road, Crouch End N8

March 16**OXFORD Socialist Alliance film show.**

KEN LOACH will speak about his recent release *My Name Is Joe*, followed by a showing of the film. Ultimate Picture Palace, Jeune St 7.00pm (adm £4)

March 17**DEMONSTRATION for Palestinian Rights**

Assemble 11am Hyde Park
Tony Benn MP; George Galloway MP; Afif Safieh, Palestinian delegate to Britain; Bruce Kent; Ken Cameron (former FBU Gen Sec)

March 19**Committee to Defend Asylum seekers Public meeting**

7.30pm, Conway hall, Red Lion Square, WC1
Tony Benn MP; Teresa Hayter, Louise Christian, Andy Gilchrist, general secretary FBU, Ladislav Balaz, Roma Europe.

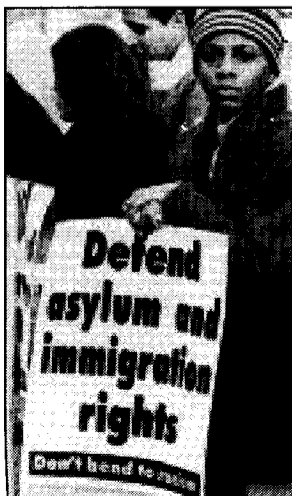
March 27**LONDON SOCIALIST ALLIANCE ELECTION RALLY**

Friends Meeting House, Euston Road with Louise Christian, and others

March 31**MANCHESTER DEMONSTRATION Hands Off Asylum Seekers! Keep Racism out of the General Election! Saturday 31 March**

Assemble 12.00 noon (leaving 12.30pm prompt), All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester

To get involved in the planning of this demonstration Phone: 0161 740 8206 (Tony Openshaw) or 0161 881 7352 (Mark Krantz) or Email: manchester@defend-asylum.org, or tony.openshaw@pop3.poptel.org.uk



New "Barbed Wire Britain" network to stop immigration detention

Bill MacKeith

A UK Anti Detention Network was set up in January to try to halt the massive increase in immigration detention in Britain.

It is made up of local campaigns in the neighbourhood of places of detention – detention centres and prisons – and national bodies such as the Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns, the Joint Council for the Welfare of immigrants and the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers.

The Network will have its second meeting on 10th March after the demonstration in Cambridge on the anniversary of the

opening of the 400-place Oakington "reception centre" outside the city. A proposal to adopt the name (and website address) "Barbed Wire Britain" will be taken.

Why another network?

In the run-up to the general election the government seems determined to prove that it is tougher than all comers when it comes to stopping people who wish to enter the UK, particularly those seeking political asylum (about the only way you can enter Britain

now from countries with a majority black population).

For its part the Network is determined that this development – perhaps the biggest-ever internment of innocent people in peacetime – shall not go unchallenged.

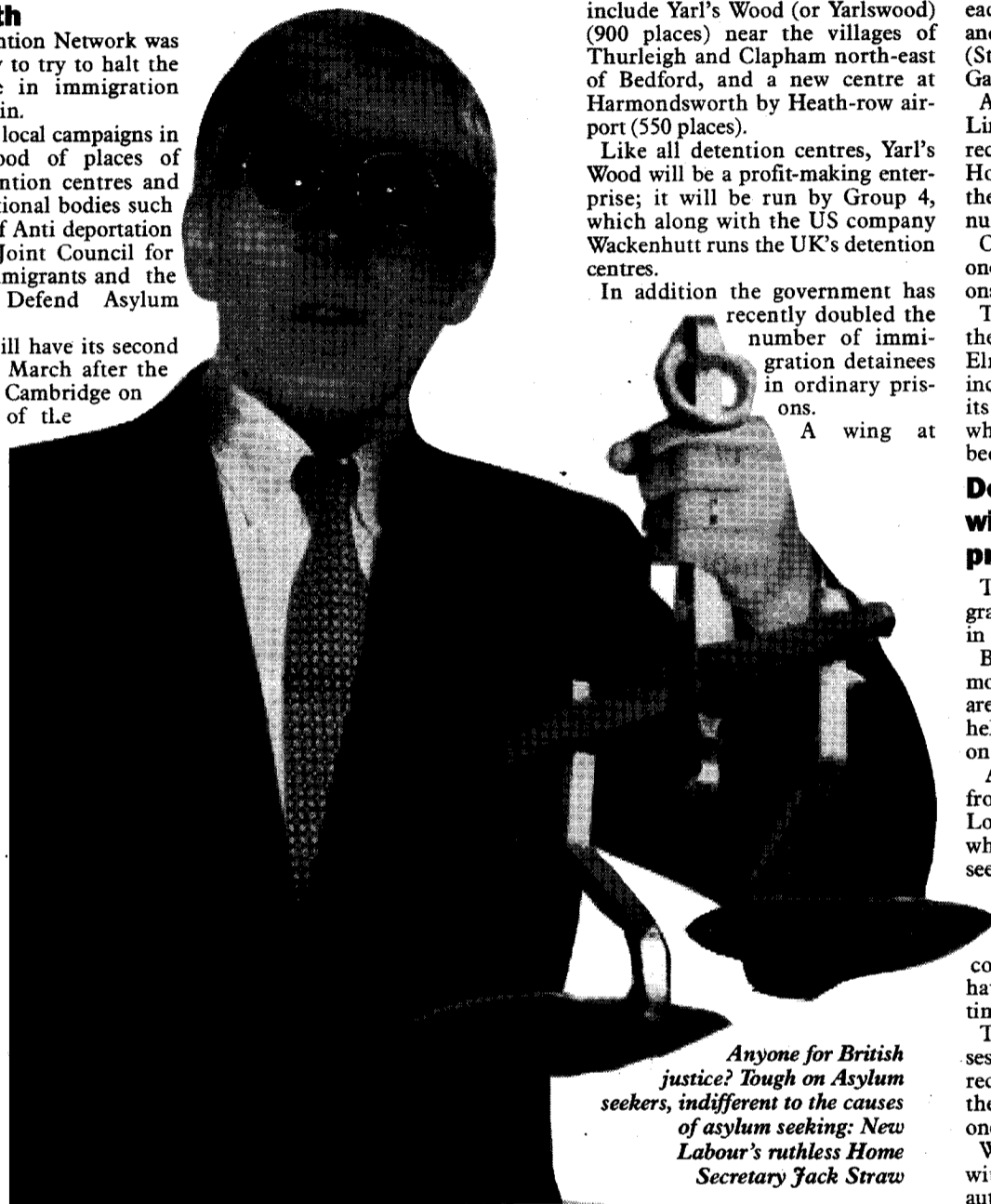
It is scandalous that so many people should be locked up, without charge or conviction, without written reason being given, without the say so of a court of law, and without any time limit whatsoever.

In these respects all detainees – including those in free-association regimes of detention centres – are treated worse than people convicted of a crime.

The vast majority of immigration detainees are people who are seeking political asylum in this country and a large proportion of them have escaped traumatic situations only to be met with abuse, not a safe haven, on arrival in this country.

It is estimated that on arrival an asylum seeker stands a 1 in 8 chance of being sent straight to detention.

There is no national network dedicated to opposing immigration detention, a government policy which is arguably a cornerstone of immigration control and denial of



include Yarl's Wood (or Yarlswood) (900 places) near the villages of Thurlleigh and Clapham north-east of Bedford, and a new centre at Harmondsworth by Heath-row airport (550 places).

Like all detention centres, Yarl's Wood will be a profit-making enterprise; it will be run by Group 4, which along with the US company Wackenhutt runs the UK's detention centres.

In addition the government has recently doubled the number of immigration detainees in ordinary prisons.

A wing at

each in Bullingdon (near Oxford) and Liverpool, 30 in Holme "House" (Stockton-on-Tees), and 27 at Gateside.

Apart from Rochester, Haslar and Lindholme, these prisons have only recently been "designated" by the Home Office and they account for the bulk in the recent increase in numbers detained.

Of the total detained, 71 were in ones and twos in some 40 other prisons around the country.

Two prisons that do not feature in the figures above—Cardiff and Elmley in Kent—are nevertheless included in the Home Office's list of its current "detention estate", of which the total capacity is 1,842 beds.

Detainees share cells with convicted prisoners

The Home Office says most immigration detainees in prisons are held in separate wings.

But in Winchester, Elmley and in most places where numbers detained are small, immigration detainees are held in the same wing as prisoners on remand and awaiting sentence.

An asylum seeker recently released from HMP Belmarsh in south-east London reports that, contrary to what the Home Office says, asylum seekers are held on the same wing as convicted criminals, with whom they have to share cells.

They remain locked in when convicted criminals are let out to have exercise or watch TV, sometimes for 24 hours a day.

They are limited to one 30-minute session at the canteen a week, cannot receive faxes or phone calls from their solicitor, and can make only one 5-minute phone call a day.

When released they are not issued with a rail travel warrant – prison authorities state that only remand or convicted prisoners are entitled.

Why "Barbed Wire Britain"?

The Network is named after a series of European conferences publicising the spread of immigration detention across Europe.

The most recent such conference was held in Oxford last September (see *Socialist Outlook* No. 38).

Now the 94-page conference report ("Barbed Wire Europe Conference Against Detention") is available through the Network – see contacts at end of story.

It gives a country-by-country rundown on the current situation and struggles to end detention.

Help

If you are near one of these places of detention and would like to join the campaign of opposition (or if you know someone else who would) please phone the Network on 01865 558145,

or e-mail bmackeith@aol.com.

■ Copies of the "Barbed Wire Europe" report mentioned above are available for £5 (p&p included) from 40 Richmond Terrace, Oxford OX1 2JJ.

the human right to asylum, and a case of institutional racism if ever there was one.

The Network's programme includes

A series of demonstrations—locally organised but with outside support—at all major places of detention (basically, those listed elsewhere in this report)—including construction sites and "designated prisons".

● Local public meetings to publicise the issue

● A national media launch in mid March

● A website to be set up in March

● Publication of a map of places of detention in the UK

● Building on the local campaigns for a national profile which may include events in London, open letters, a mega concert with big names

● Going to see detainees and offering support—through the local group of the Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID).

Please forward any further suggestions to the contact/s listed below.

The government's building programme

Detention centres being built

Anyone for British justice? Tough on Asylum seekers, indifferent to the causes of asylum seeking: New Labour's ruthless Home Secretary Jack Straw

Lindholme (Doncaster) has been converted to immigration detention use and 10 other prisons have been "designated" to take 50 immigration detainees each. Dungavel detention prison (150 beds) near Lanark is due to open in May.

January 2001: all-time record numbers detained

On 31st January 2000, 1,565 people were detained under 1971 Immigration Act powers, according to government figures.

Of these, 414 people were held in detention centres – 165 in Campsfield (Oxford), 117 in Tinsley (Gatwick), 83 in Harmondsworth and a total of 49 in Dover harbour, Heathrow (Queen's Building) and Longport.

In addition 231 were held in the 400-place Oakington "reception centre".

The total number of 920 detained in prisons included 177 in Rochester, 117 in Haslar (Gosport), 87 in Lindholme (Doncaster), 68 in Wandsworth, 67 in Belmarsh (Greenwich), 58 in High Down (Guildford), 46 in Winchester, 36

Manifesto must aim for broad appeal

Veronica Fagan

The next stage in preparing the Socialist Alliance for the election will be a national conference on March 10 in Birmingham which will decide on the election manifesto for the Alliance as well as the key pledges that will be run on every candidates leaflet.

Hopefully the manifesto will then be published as an accessible pamphlet which could be an important tool in the campaign.

This will be another staging post in the establishment of the Alliance as a national force. Local activists will get the chance to meet campaigners from other areas, to see how many candidates we have in place for the most sustained challenge the left has mounted in the post-war period.

The process of discussing the manifesto started some months ago. Sixteen submissions have been made by local Alliances and political groups which support the Alliance.

A document was drawn up which brings together all the proposals which are common to all or most of these which will form the working text for the conference, to which amendments can then be put.

Consensus

Politically this document is on the right lines – demonstrating that there is a great deal of consensus about the policies we need to combat new Labour.

There are some omissions including the strange lack of any need to secularise the British state – an issue which should receive more attention from the left as we see an increasing number of religious schools getting taxpayers' money as part of the plan to privatise education.

Some more controversial amendments will undoubtedly come forward which attempt to move the Alliance in the wrong direction.

While revolutionary socialists have been, and will remain essential to the success of the project, the Alliance is not a revolutionary organisation. We would not have won the breadth of support we are already getting on the basis of a revolutionary platform – the political basis for that does not exist today.

So it will be important for the conference not only to vote against amendments from groups who confuse their own political ideas with what can be common ground in this alliance, but to try to convince those who put them forward why this is the wrong approach.

Jargon

But what is a much bigger problem however is that the draft manifesto as it stands is essentially a shopping list of demands, full of jargon and completely inaccessible to those thousands of disillusioned Labour voters to which the Alliance needs to reach out.

There is of course no way such a document can be redrafted by a conference of hundreds of people.

The conference must simply decide the policy points and agree that the text should then be rewritten in a completely different way. Models exist that can easily be used: the SSP manifesto and the ISG submission are the sort of document that is needed.

A consensus seems to be developing around this approach, but it needs to be formally agreed by the conference.

That way we can ensure that activists leave the conference convinced that we are embarking on a General Election campaign that can focus the frustration that so many working class people have felt with a new Labour government for which they voted, but which has trampled on their aspirations.

A voice for the voiceless is needed at this election, and the Alliance can begin to become that voice.



Mark Steel, Dave Nellist and Theresa Bennett launching the Socialist Alliance national campaign

Daring to dream that things could be better

John Lister

UNITING sections of the left in what will be the biggest challenge to Labour for over half a century was always going to find its hecklers and critics.

So it was little surprise that the national press launch of the Socialist Alliance campaign for the general election, which seems likely to involve 100 candidates in England, should have come under fire – from the incorrigible, hopeless sectarians of the Spartacist tendency on the one side, and the *Guardian's* Polly Toynbee on the other.

It was no surprise either that the hostile ultra-leftism of the Spartacists [aka 'Workers Tannoy!'] provided useful ammunition for Toynbee's predictable efforts to devalue the importance of the Alliance as a qualitative new factor on the left of British politics (*Guardian*, March 2).

It was only by focusing on questions raised by this insignificant and peripheral sect that she was able to claim – despite all the evidence to the contrary – that the left remains locked in its long-standing state of fractious and factional disunity.

This also enabled her to drag in an allusion to the hilarious parody of such

absurd divisions in Monty Python's 'Life of Brian'.

In fact the growth of the Socialist Alliance, and the experience in a number of areas of the success that can be achieved when the previously divided left finds ways to work positively together, signals at long last the possibility of moving beyond the futile factionalism of the past.

There are signs that the Alliance is creating a framework in which remaining areas of political disagreement can be discussed constructively.

Obviously this type of work is anathema to the parasitic ultra-left, whose whole existence depends upon exploiting the work and struggles of others and divisions among other organisations.

But what is it that Polly Toynbee finds so objectionable about the Socialist Alliance?

Her article shows that it is she who is locked in the past. Long after the demise of the right-wing splinter group that formed the SDP in the 1980s (and of which she was a part), she is still working out her anger at those on the left who in the 1980s and early 1990s fought for socialist policies within the Labour Party.

Hostile

She is still hostile to those who challenged witch-hunters and "modernisers" like Neil Kinnock, who preferred to see the health workers, print workers, miners, and left-led councils like Liverpool and Lambeth defeated in struggles against Thatcher's government than to lead any fight that might weaken British capitalism.

Toynbee's criticism of the "dotty left" Alliance political platform is effectively to complain that it is not a Kinnock-style "new realist" campaign, based upon fine-tuning the existing capitalist economic system, or on rejuggling taxation, interest rates and money supply to make small-scale changes.

Branding the Alliance a "coalition of dreamers," she ridicules the idea that we should demand an end to poverty, improved pensions,

free nurseries and childcare, renationalisation of rail and buses, or abandoning immigration controls.

"How will it be paid for?" she demands – as if the Alliance was seeking to claim that it is an embryonic government about to take over tomorrow, and as if New Labour's policies of privatisation, PFI and subsidies for rail operators were not all ruinously expensive.

Toynbee herself rails against those who attack the New Labour government's policies: "How dare Dave Nellist and Mark Steel talk of 'Labour cuts' just as more money than ever before comes on stream?"

Perhaps Toynbee herself should check out what is happening up and down the country, as health authorities and Trusts struggle to balance the books after three brutal years of Tory cash limits, as councils slash jobs and privatise services for an umpteenth successive year, and as schools face four-day weeks after years of pathetic pay rises for teachers.

Perhaps she should look at the Further Education colleges axing jobs to balance their books, or the Universities staring down the barrel of deficits as students reject the opportunity to stack up debts of over £22,000 a time to collect a degree, after New Labour scrapped the remaining grants and imposed tuition fees – a step even the Tories never attempted.

Maybe she should also check out Labour's massive privatisation of council housing, or the NHS Trusts which will be forking out billions to private sector development consortia for lack of government capital.

Minimum wage

And how would Ms Toynbee fancy eking out an existence on Labour's much-vaunted £3.75 an hour minimum wage (or even £4.10) – or, worse, on the wretched pittance allocated to asylum seekers under New Labour's vicious voucher scheme – which is worse than the Tories?

Strangely, however, the final section of her article

goes on to underline the fact that there are very obvious ways in which even a Labour government could raise the cash for many of the radical policies demanded by the Socialist Alliance.

Even the right wing Fabian society has embraced the call for progressive taxation of wealth and high incomes, she admits. And even Labour's own pet think-tank the IPPR has called for more taxes on the rich.

Toynbee's final sentence exposes the naivete of her political approach and undermines her whole critique of the Socialist Alliance.

"Why," she (speaking for many Labour supporters) asks, "is Labour always happier to disappoint its own ranks than offend those interests who will never support Labour anyway?"

Capitalism first

For those who support the Socialist Alliance, the answer is clear: Labour is a party which supports capitalism first, and reforms for its own supporters only where possible.

The Socialist Alliance, by contrast, to use the phrase mocked by Toynbee, is the party "for the millions, not the millionaires".

It is a party which rejects the "new realist" view that things can only change a little when big business and the super-rich allow, and which boldly spells out a different set of policies for a new type of society, based on meeting need, rather than maximising profit.

Toynbee calls in vain for Blair's party to show "vision", but rejects the Socialist Alliance because we dare to dream of something better, and to fight to build political support for that vision.

With Labour, the working class has had a century of voting for the "lesser evil", only to be betrayed and ultimately ignored: with the Socialist Alliance working people are being given a credible chance to vote at the next election for the policies they want and need.

Now that really is something new!

Gearing up in Bradford

Bradford Socialist Alliance was formed in January and, in February, selected a candidate to stand against New Labour in the general election.

The Alliance has started canvassing support on the street and at local political events. It participated in the National Day of Action on railway privatisation in January.

The development of the Alliance in Bradford comes against a backdrop of sweeping proposals for privatisation in Bradford Council. The Tory-Liberal coalition running the council is carrying through privatisation of great swathes of council services.

In doing this they are continuing a programme opened up by

the Labour administration which preceded them. It brought forward its proposals to privatise the education service shortly before the election in 2000.

Three of the Labour MPs in Bradford have shown varying degrees of support for the campaign to oppose this privatisation.

One of them, Gerry Sutcliffe, MP for Bradford South, used his appearance at a lobby of the council to launch a remarkable attack on the Socialist Alliance as undemocratic. Apparently their offence was to give out leaflets at the lobby!

The Bradford Alliance is small but growing. Its prospective candidate will stand in

Sutcliffe's seat. His attack, launched on minimal provocation, suggests a real fear in the Labour bureaucracy that the alliance will find an echo in the working class.

This has helped to encourage members in their activities.

New Labour has an apparatus already. The Alliance must build one from scratch.

Participating organisations have shown a generally constructive attitude, suggesting there is a will to overcome problems.

Sadly Worker's Tannoy have not shown up at all in the Alliance, justifying Polly Toynbee's diagnosis in the *Guardian* of their abject abstentionism.

Alliance Tyneside challenge

Byers beware!

Socialists in the North East are challenging Tony Blair's lieutenant Stephen Byers in the coming General Election.

The Tyneside Socialist Alliance have selected PETER BURNETT, secretary of Newcastle Trades Council, and International Socialist Group member to fight for the Industry Supremo's North Tyneside seat.

Peter is also a well known anti-racist campaigner who recently organised a march of several hundred through the streets of Newcastle for asylum rights.

Explaining to Socialist Outlook why he was so keen



Peter Burnett

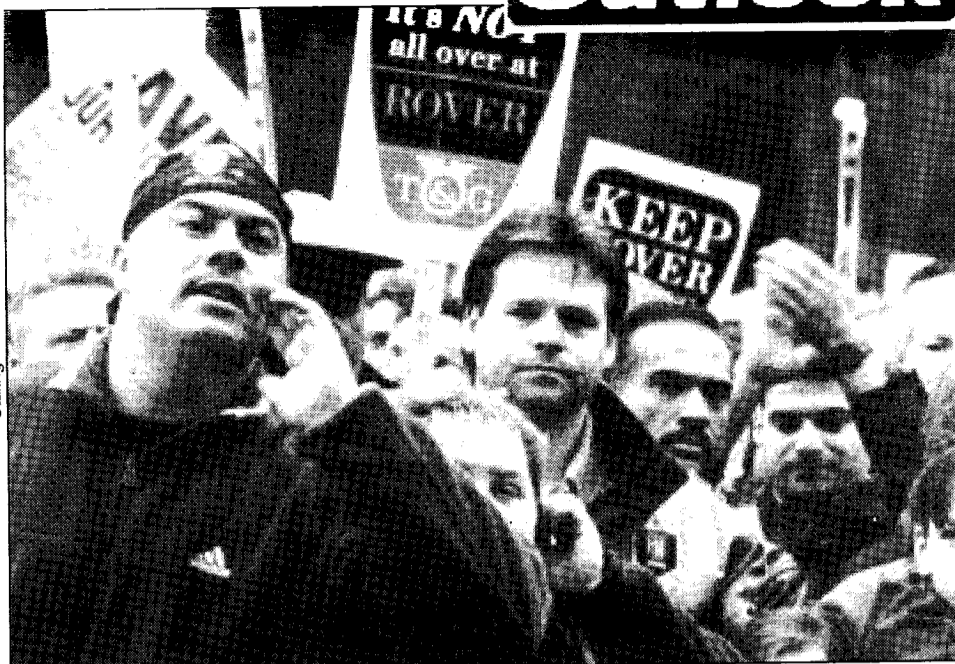
to stand against Byers, Peter pointed out that many Labour voters in the North East were bitterly disillusioned by the performance

of the Blair government. "Instead of tackling the urgent problems in the region, new Labour has pursued the same free market policies that impoverished the region in the first place.

"By selecting me, the Socialist Alliance has given me the opportunity to fight against Byers, who has been absolutely key in promoting these capitalist strategies."

In North Tyneside the key issues will be jobs, quality of life and the environment. All have worsened in 4 years of a Labour government.

Income per head in the North East is 23% below the national average, with results that can be seen in



Stalagrad O'Neill

Byers is all ears to the needs of employers, but did nothing to save threatened jobs at Rover

the wasteland of housing estates, boarded up property and broken pavements in derelict shopping centres.

The Socialist Alliance will focus on the disasters of Byers' 'regional policy', which involves scandalously handing out thousands of millions of pounds to big companies while keeping wages low, work flexible and the anti-union laws in place to "encourage inward investment".

"Grants of more £50 million were given to Siemens, roads were laid, and a new Metro station built to encourage the German giant to stay," says Peter.

"But 12 months after the Queen had opened their North Tyneside works Siemens had mothballed the site, with a loss of thousands of jobs across the region."

The Nissan scandal reveals the other side of the same coin.

"Byers gave the ailing Japanese multinational £40 million in a rescue package designed to keep the firm in the area. The price however was a new work regime with productivity increases of 30%. The result - exhausted and stressed out workers and the break-up of families."

Moreover the arrogant

decision of Nissan to pay its suppliers in devalued Euro has forced contractors across the region to shed workers to compete with European firms.

In the same week that the press were praising the rescue over 100 jobs were lost on trading estates.

Peter also pointed out that in a new White paper on Regional Regeneration, Byers offers more of the same:

"Free market, social partnership and hot air. Tax Free zones are promised and an increase in the budget of the development agency which will fund various clusters of firms which unite bosses trade union bureaucrats and Labour councils in endless talk of a "sunrise revolution" and a new cultural renaissance".

Tyneside Socialist Alliance is internationalist, Peter argues. "We will expose the fraud of 'ethical foreign policy', in which Byers is deeply implicated. He is currently considering whether to provide \$200 million in support for Balfour Beatty, the firm responsible for the Hatfield Rail crash, to build the Ilisu dam in Turkish Kurdistan."

The dam breaks all the guidelines of the World

Commission on Dams. It will affect 78,000 people, displace thousands, and ruin archaeological heritage sites.

It threatens Turkey's relations with countries downstream such as Syria, increasing the possibility of water wars and the certainty of thousands more refugees.

All these issues raise a fundamental question which needs to be discussed by socialists in the North East.

"How is it that such right wing politicians as Blair and Byers come to dominate the politics of a region so overwhelmingly working class, with a history of poverty and unemployment, in which the bankruptcy of capitalism is so obvious revealed?"

The answer which unites today's scandals with those of the past lies in the strength of the trade union bureaucracy, especially the GMB.

Union leaders are the king-makers in North East politics, subordinating the great strength of the working class to the rotten politics of right wing Labour.

"The Socialist Alliance will be a voice for democracy in the Labour movement - a democratic alternative to secret deals between government multinationals union bosses."

Socialists looking to down Hill

Leading RMT rail union activist and ISG member, Greg Tucker, will be standing as the Socialist Alliance candidate in Streatham against transport minister Keith Hill.

"Our campaign is about articulating the anger of local people and helping organise the defence of our communities from the worst of new Labour's policies.

"As well as raising the vision of an alternative society free from the iron rule of profit I believe that we can make a real difference to peoples lives today.

I still remember how angry I was sitting the eleven plus at how our class was being artificially divided into success and failure - whole futures seemingly decided there and then.

Speaking with a group of angry parents last week, for all Blunkett's "read my lips, no more selection" the situation has actually got worse.

One after another they explained how they could not find local secondary schools prepared to take their children.

Their sons and daughters had had to sit entrance exams at each school they applied for - up to six times in some cases. No wonder their kids felt alienated - branded as failures again and again.

The parents' demands were straightforward - that the Labour council build new comprehensive schools to replace the ones they recently closed and sold off



Conducting a fight: Greg Tucker

for conversion into yuppie flats, and an end to selection and the domination of religious schools across the borough.

Unlike Tony and his cronies they cannot pick and choose which better funded school to send their kids to, miles away from home.

We will be championing their demands, promoting their campaign for better than bog-standard provision for all.

Talking to local tenants, the sell off of council housing remains a threat despite successful ballots defeating the Labour council's plans. In contrast we will be arguing the case for new council house building and a massive improvement strategy.

After all council rents nationally subsidise the government to the tune of £1 billion - let's use that money in the interests of tenants and the homeless.

At the same time thousands locally face being made homeless because of the contracting out of the

housing benefit service.

Despite losing over 50,000 letters of inquiry and complaints, and forgetting to send out renewal forms when individual claims have expired the private contractors, Capita, have been given an extra £4 million by Labour - to help them improve.

The Socialist Alliance has been campaigning for Capita to be thrown out. It is only one further example of how privatisation is ruining people's lives.

Of course, for me, and the reason I relish standing against Keith Hill, there is no better

example of this than on the rail and tube. Hill used to work for the NUR, forerunner of the RMT, and the constituency Labour party remains sponsored by the RMT.

But despite his historic links Hill has done nothing whatsoever to defend rail workers. Rather he has been at the forefront of the government's campaign to sell off the underground.

Without the RMT Hill would not be an MP - we aim to remind him of this fact every day of the campaign.

It is clear that Londoners remain overwhelmingly against any idea of privatising the tube.

And the case for renationalisation of the railways is reinforced every day by the utter chaos caused by Railtrack and the train operating companies.

In contrast to Hill, we will be pressing home our support for the action taken by tube and rail workers in defence of safety."

NEW!

This ISG pamphlet is a contribution to the debate within the Socialist Alliance on the policies needed to challenge New Labour and unite a broad movement of the left.

Now available for just £2.00 including post & packaging from ISG, c/o PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST GROUP

Building the alternative to Blair

£2 Policies for change John Lister

Scottish socialists gear up to contest every seat

Terry Conway and Gordon Morgan

The second conference of the Scottish Socialist Party took place in Glasgow on February 10-11 attended by around 250 people. Its main focus was to launch the party's ambitious General Election plans.

Yet again the conference demonstrated that the SSP is a serious force in Scottish Parliament, with the 27% score in the Irvine by-election ringing in participant's ears.

As the Executive motion pointed out, the average score for the SSP since the Scottish Parliament elections is just under 7%, they have beaten the Liberal Democrats every time, and can now realistically claim to be the fourth political party in Scotland.

The Party's National Council way back last August had agreed that the target should be to stand in each of Scotland's 72 seats - as has been stated many times since to give every Scottish voter the opportunity to vote socialist.

The only constraint on such a project, they said, should be if it seemed that the required finances could not be raised.

Socialist Outlook supporters were not convinced this was the right approach at this stage of the party's development. In some areas of the country, especially in some large rural constituencies where the SSP has no effective branch, this will lead to a token campaign.

Others at the conference felt that if the organisation were overstretched in the battle over the Westminster elections and ended up with major debts this would cut across mounting an effective challenge in the elections for the Scottish Parliament due



Committed to fighting every seat: Sheridan

in 2003.

Supporters of the Scottish Republican Socialist Movement who argued this position, also claimed that "actual membership of the Westminster Parliament would be inimical to the aims" of the SSP.

In this debate for the first time I as a visitor from England got a real sense of the breadth of positions within the party on the Scottish national question.

These range from the supporters of this position who locate themselves strongly in the tradition of John Maclean, to the federalists of the Campaign for a Federal Republic, of which supporters of the CPGB seem to form a sizeable proportion.

The leadership and most members of the party have positions somewhere between these two.

It was also healthy to see that in practice the existence of organised platforms within the party allow it to attract broader forces and to conduct serious political debates without this at all cutting across its effective operation on the ground either in campaigns or elec-

tions. In effect the debate on how many seats should be contested in the General Election was pre-empted for most members.

The target had been publicly announced - including that very morning in radio interviews with MSP Tommy Sheridan - and therefore a large majority felt it would be a defeat to back off at this stage.

Even at the conference itself this debate followed the opening of the conference by Sheridan in a speech in which he motivated the leadership's position, calling for 100,000 votes for socialism.

Conference went on to debate the programme on which the party will stand - which will be delivered to every voter in the country in the form of an 4 page newspaper.

The programme was in general non-contentious - it is a serious document, which is very well thought through and extremely accessible. The Socialist Alliance in England would certainly benefit from studying not only some of the discrete proposals in this document but its language.

Some additions were agreed. The platform accepted that the SSP should welcome the Socialist Alliance challenge in England and Wales, and that



the manifesto should include a section on Ireland dealing with the way the Good Friday agreement has entrenched sectarianism. There were some drafting changes to other sections. The conference took place in the context of two major developments on the far left in Scotland.

The majority of the leadership of the SSP were formerly members of the same international organisation as the Socialist Party in England and Wales, the Committee for a Workers International (CWI).

There had been long standing disagreements between most of the Scottish people and the Taaffe leadership in London which had finally culminated in a break by the Scottish majority.

These disagreements go back at least as far as the formation of the SSP itself - which the Socialist Party leadership opposed.

They had become increasingly bitter as the overwhelming majority of CWI supporters, organised as the International Socialist Movement (ISM) refused to accept the line peddled by London - in the Socialist Alliances as well as the SSP - that building the broader political formation was counterposed to building their own party.

It was clearly no accident that the decision to finalise this split took place in advance of the SSP conference - leaving the ISM free to produce the first issue of its rather impressive magazine *Frontline* and hold its own fringe meeting.



Tommy Sheridan and Alan Green

The resulting tension was evident during the conference, particularly in the session which discussed the

question of tendency rights within the SSP.

On other questions the debate seemed far less polarised - partly because of skilful handling by the ISM.

So for example when the CWI comrades put a series of essentially nit-picking amendments to the programme, the response was to accept most of them.

The other main context for the conference was the discussions which have been taking place between the SSP and the SWP.

The SWP had increasingly recognised that there was little political logic in it remaining outside the SSP once it was increasingly committed to playing a pivotal role in the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales.

However, entering a party is a more complicated issue than just being a current within an alliance.

The fact that this has been difficult for the SWP to fully convince their membership in Scotland may be indicated by the fact that the negotiations have been conducted by Julie Waterson and Chris Bambery - who while they are Scottish have both lived in England for many years.

At the conference itself it was clear that there was some suspicion from the base of the SSP as to the extent to which the SWP has broken from its sectarian past.

As far as I could tell the leadership does not really share this concern - accepting the point that the experience in England has been overwhelmingly positive: but that it will be a process in Scotland that both "sides" need to go through.

However they have driven a hard and unfortunate bargain on the question of paper sales, in which they have essentially played on this suspicion to ensure that *Socialist Worker*, along with the rest of the left press, cannot be sold publicly but only within SSP events.

This debate was definitely the low point of the conference, in which the Executive's position was carried despite opposition from all the minority currents.

The top table tried to insist that their opponents were over-reacting: no one would be disciplined for going against the resolution - it was just a question of setting out what was expected of people.

They were assisted by ridiculous speeches in opposition from Socialist Party loyalists who made comparisons between the SSP leadership and the witch hunters

of the Labour Party.

Of course the leadership is right about one thing: there are real difficulties. It would not be acceptable for sales of *Socialist Worker* to continue in their present way because they would completely dominate the SSP's own paper, *Scottish Socialist Voice*.

The conference heard anyway that a distribution deal had been done for *Scottish Socialist Voice* which would enable the paper to go weekly (though probably the SWP's participation is actually equally important in making this a reality.) but this in itself would not solve the problem.

The experience of the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales demonstrates that the SWP are becoming more prepared to put the need to build common projects above their own narrower interests.

However the fact that the SWP's entry was a done deal became clear from discussions in the corridors - with it becoming clear that one of the SWP's full-timers was coming on staff immediately to work on *Scottish Socialist Voice*.

The leadership must find ways to become more inclusive in practice - it cannot be healthy that the overwhelming majority of officers are supporters of the International Socialist Movement.

Conference took a lengthy discussion on constitutional changes that would deal with this question. No immediate measures were agreed a commission was established to look at best practice across Europe and bring back proposals to next year's conference.

It certainly seemed that the leadership were genuine in their wish to change the current situation. Only time will tell how far the break from the stranglehold of the Socialist Party dogmatism will take the ISM current.

The challenge facing them and all socialists in Scotland is to build of a dynamic, broad, truly democratic party to the left of Labour which Scotland so desperately needs.

The Scottish Socialist Party faces many challenges in the months and years ahead. There can be little doubt that the party will continue to grow and strengthen through its activities in defence of working people's rights and through its election campaign.

It is on the right track, and all socialists should support its endeavours to deepen its impact.

Time to stop the roller-coaster of globalisation!

Veronica Fagan

In April the Summit of the Americas will take place in Quebec City.

In these post-Seattle days it is no longer possible for the governments of the world and their friends in the boardrooms of the multinationals to discuss how to rip us off more effectively without their plans being challenged.

People all over the world, whether or not they will make it to the protests in Quebec, want to know what sinister new rules are being devised which will

Make our lives as workers even more intolerable and dangerous than before
Sell off even more of our scarce public services
Destroy even more of our fragile planet
Con us into buying even more overpriced brand goods

The Quebec summit is an important step on the road to implement the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)—an expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement implemented on January 1 1994 to cover the whole of the western hemisphere.

FTAA is scheduled for implementation in 2005 and discussions about its

development began at the Miami summit in 1994, immediately after NAFTA itself came into effect.

Trade ministers from 34 countries — that is all countries in the hemisphere apart from Cuba — were involved in the discussions.

However little actually happened until a second summit took place in Santiago in April 1998, which set up an ongoing Trade Negotiations

Committee (TNC) consisting of vice ministers of trade from each of the states.

Nine working groups were also agreed, which deal with the major areas covered by the project: agriculture, services, investment, dispute settlement, intellectual property rights, subsidies and anti-dumping, competition policy, government procurement and market access.

These bodies have been meeting on a regular basis — every couple of months — to agree proposals on these distinct areas and prepare a first draft text which was completed last December.

The Quebec City meeting will be the first opportunity to consider this work — essential if the 2005 implementation is to be achieved.

No texts from these debates are publicly available — the negotiations take

place essentially in secret unless you happen to be a representative of big business. Over 500 corporate representatives in the US have security clearance and access to FTAA NAFTA expansion documents.

Organisations such as the Organisation of American States (OAS), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), collectively known as the "Tripartite Committee", also provide direction.

There is no voice for civil society — demands of NGOs to have access were rejected and instead a Committee of Government Representatives on Civil Society was established to represent the views of civil society to the TNC.

What is clear however, despite these attempts to keep us in the dark, is the stark outline of this political project, the aim of which is to deepen exploitation still further.

Essentially this will be an extension of NAFTA itself to a larger region — it is already reported that a whole number of the preparatory texts are literally based on the equivalent NAFTA texts, just with more countries added in. This is why activists preparing for Quebec have been drawing out the lessons of NAFTA to make clear what will be at stake if we don't stop this neo-liberal roller-coaster.



Make April 2 Scarf Wearing Day

Quebec City, along with our democracy, is being privatised

A wall of steel wire 2-3 metres high is being erected around old Quebec City. Naomi Klein has aptly described this as a modern day Bastille. Other activists have quipped that it's a sign of how far we've come in the era of free trade, when the citizens of Quebec will be barred from visiting their own capital, all in the name of international capital.

The security perimeter being erected for the Summit of the Americas in late April will cover much of Quebec City's upper town, including six hotels, the Centre des Congrès, the National Assembly and a number of high profile tourist attractions.

Access will be controlled with military precision, with internal passports required to enter the security zone and individual photo-ID badges for each summit venue.

In addition the local councils of Saint-Foy and Quebec City have passed by-laws prohibit-

ing the wearing of scarves to cover a part or a whole of the face.

These by-laws will take effect not only during the demonstrations themselves but in the weeks leading up to them. People are subject to fines and/or a jail sentence.

The intention is to:

● Make it easy for the security forces to spray tear gas directly into the face, mouth and nose.

● Make it easy for the security forces to photograph people who attend in Quebec City so that they can be entered into the security files of the rapidly expanding security system supposedly focused on "terrorism."

● Build a climate of fear and inhibition to stop people from expressing their rights to protest.

Several weeks ago, a number of students were arrested and taken to jail, temporarily, in Quebec City for distributing

pamphlets on the street without a permit!

The erosion of civil liberties piling up in Quebec City is driven by the Federal Government.

This is the same Federal Government which allowed the police to pepper spray students in British Columbia several years ago to prevent embarrassment to the criminal and genocidal leader of Indonesia, President Suharto.

In response activists in Quebec are calling for April 2 to be designated "scarf wearing day".

Protests in front of government buildings and town halls are planned not only in Quebec, but across the Canadian state.

Hopefully the idea will spread not only amongst those who will be directly affected if FTAA comes into force, but amongst all those who oppose neo-liberal globalisation.



FTAA: a bosses' "Bill of Rights"

Susan Moore

The negative effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA), introduced in 1994, are starkly apparent to working people in Canada, Mexico and the U.S.

It was certainly no accident that the Zapatistas chose January 1 1994 as the day to start their rebellion in the Lacadon jungle — they were not only fighting for the rights of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas but protesting against the neo-liberal model that NAFTA has sought to impose on the poor and exploited throughout the world.

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) would intensify NAFTA's "race to the bottom".

Exploited workers in Mexico could be played off against even more desperate workers in Haiti, Guatemala or Brazil, by companies seeking tariff-free access back into U.S. markets.

Over a million U.S. jobs

have been lost since NAFTA as companies relocated to Mexico to take advantage of the lower wages and weaker laws regulating basic health and safety provisions.

Most American workers who lose their jobs this way then end up finding new jobs themselves, but with less security than they had before — and wages that are about 77% of what they originally had. The U.S. trade surplus with Mexico has become an \$18.6 billion deficit.

NAFTA was sold in Mexico on the basis that it would lead to economic prosperity. In fact it is only in the border region that intensified industrial activity has taken place — in the unregulated maquiladoras.

And of course this has only brought profit to the bosses — for the workers it has meant increased exploitation.

Today more than one million more Mexicans work for less than the minimum wage of \$3.40 per day than before NAFTA. In the last seven

years eight million Mexicans have fallen from the middle class into poverty.

In addition, the development of the maquiladoras has led to destruction of the environment and to increased public health threats in the area.

Along the border, the occurrence of some diseases, including hepatitis, are two or three times the national average, due to lack of sewage treatment and safe drinking water. There has also been a rise in violence against women.

NAFTA expansion to the whole hemisphere also provides a potential "back door" for the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), through negotiations focused on investments and in the financial services sector. Activists didn't label the MAI "NAFTA on steroids" for nothing.

Like in NAFTA's infamous Chapter 11, the US Trade Representative's office says that FTAA will include

"investor-to-state" suits.

These allow corporations to sue governments directly for the removal of standards or laws designed to protect public health and safety, which may cost the corporations a little more in operating costs.

In other words, the FTAA would include clauses that explicitly value corporate profits over human costs.

NAFTA cases setting precedents for FTAA actions under this provision include:

■ The Canadian funeral home chain Loewen Group, which used NAFTA investor protections to sue the U.S. government for \$750 million in cash damages after a Mississippi court found them guilty of malicious and fraudulent practices that unfairly targeted a local small business.

(NAFTA permits companies to sue governments over rulings or regulations that may potentially limit their profits.) Loewen argues that the very existence of the state court system violates its NAFTA rights.

■ The U.S.-based Ethyl Corporation forced Canada to pay \$13 million in damages and drop its ban on the dangerous gasoline additive MMT, a known toxin that attacks the human nervous system.

Other regulations protecting public health and the environment remain open for attack under NAFTA and FTAA.

■ In a similar case, U.S.-based waste management company Metalclad Corp. sued a Mexican state.

In 1991 they had bought a toxic treatment facility which had been closed down in Guadalupe.

They planned to build a huge hazardous waste dump, and promised to clean up the mess left behind by the previous owners.

But they reneged on the promise to improve things — in particular neglecting to deal with ground water contamination and so alienated local support.

In 1995, when the landfill

was ready to open: the city denied Metalclad a building permit and the state declared that the area around the site was part of an ecological reserve.

Metalclad launched a legal challenge, claiming Mexico was "expropriating" its investment. The complaint was heard in Washington by a three-person arbitration panel.

Metalclad was awarded \$16.7m. Using a rare mechanism allowing appeal to a third party, Mexico has chosen to challenge the ruling before a Canadian provincial supreme court.

As Naomi Klein wrote in the *Guardian* on March 1

"The Metalclad case is a vivid illustration of what critics mean when they allege that free-trade deals amount to a "bill of rights for multinational corporations."

This is why thousands of protestors will be going to Quebec in April and why activists the world over are organising against the effects of neo-liberal globalisation.

Terry Conway

Mexico's impoverished and abused workforce at the Duro factory in the unregulated maquiladora of Rio Bravo in the state of Tamaulipas have mounted a determined campaign for over a year for independent union recognition.

Duro is a Kentucky-based maker of gift bags for Hallmark card shops and a number of other major retailers.

At least some of the workers hoped that the government of Vicente Fox would listen to their demands.

Fox's right wing Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) was swept to power last July when the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was finally defeated after a staggering 71 years in power.

Fox's programme is right wing and pro-American – essentially promising big capital that he would implement Thatcher-style neo-liberalism more efficiently than the PRI – but without the corruption scandals that had increasingly dogged the PRI's latter years.

Many workers however voted for him not on that basis, but because they wanted to defeat the PRI and saw no other effective alternative.

But Fox's Secretary of Labour is a former head of COPARMEX, the association of industrial employers, which has taken over legal representation of Duro at labour board hearings.

The Board has continued the same illegal actions as under the previous administration and, has reneged on promises made by the ousted Zedillo administration to the U.S. and Canada during negotiations with the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA).

The independent union at Duro had petitioned for the recognition ballot back in the autumn. After many delays and acts of intimidation the ballot was scheduled for Friday March 2.

But the ballot took place at the factory rather than on neutral ground as the workers had demanded. Nor was the ballot itself conducted without management intimidation. Workers had to declare out loud before a panel of bosses and union representatives which union they backed.

In the run up to the election there was an organised campaign of intimidation and violence against the workers. Key supporters of an independent union were sacked, and all workers were told that anyone who was to vote for the independent union would lose their job.

The company also threatened to close down the plant if the independent union won. Goons from company "unions" blocked the workers' efforts to leaflet, and attacked them in the street.

Solidarity action with the workers has taken place in the US, targeted at Duro itself but also at Hallmark, its largest customer.

There were 20 demonstrations against Hallmark around Valentines Day organised by the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, which is based in San Antonio, Texas and brings together supporters from Mexico, Canada and the US.

In April 2000 the workers' elected leaders were illegally fired for refusing to agree to a sweetheart contract negotiated with the company by the National Paperworkers Union (CTM).

On June 12 the workers began strike action, demanding reinstatement and recognition of the independent union. They have been occupying an encampment in Rio Bravo's town plaza since that day.

When they struck, they were attacked and beaten by police armed with machine guns, arrested on trumped up charges (subsequently dismissed), and later blacklisted – effectively barring them from work in any of the maquilas in town.

The workers demand the right to be represented by a union willing to negotiate basic working conditions. They want medical attention inside the plant, and an environment where they have the right to toilet breaks – and don't find mouse faeces in their food.

They need basic safety equipment: because there are no guards on the cutting machines, workers have lost fingers. They want an end to constant threats from management, and to sexual harassment.

Even the state government has acknowledged that Duro has some of the worst working conditions in the area.

After a summer of organising they succeeded in winning the first legal registration



A visit to Mexican President Vicente Fox was the first stamp on George W. Bush's new passport – an indication of the importance of the Mexican link for US business

Mexican women fight global exploitation

of an independent union in the history of their state. In late September the Duro Workers Union filed for a recuento – an election to win the right to negotiate on behalf of the workers instead of the CTM

For months the company used a series of stalling tactics to avoid scheduling an election date.

It introduced two phantom unions – with no base in Rio Bravo, let alone the plant – so that they had to be on the ballot. Intimidation and violence have continued – the key workers' leader has his shack fire-bombed on October 31.

When it became obvious that support for the independent union was growing, the General Secretary of the CTM spent several days at the plant in late January holding meetings with the workers.

Line by line production was stopped with connivance from the employers, giving him a captive audience. He told workers to vote against the independent union, claiming it was controlled by "foreigners" who want their jobs back.

Then on Friday, January 26, the entire second shift was threatened with the sack if they voted for the Duro Workers Union, and 20 workers were fired for giving information to the union and organising. On February 5 an additional ten workers were fired for organising.

Finally, after numerous demonstrations targeting Duro's customer Hallmark and a letter from 43 members of the US Congress to Mexican President Fox between February 10-15, the Federal Conciliation & Arbitration Board, at a hearing on February 19, scheduled the union election for March 2.

On February 26 twenty women workers – members of the new independent union at the Duro Bag Company – and a small number of their supporters from the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras faced their worst nightmare.

They were surrounded in the Hotel La Mansion and threatened by forty to fifty thugs brought in by the company. The police lounged outside, refusing to intervene.

CJM members outside tried to mobilise others in support, but Rio Bravo is remote, and difficult to get to. It was clear that the local authorities were on the side of the company – they had refused to deal with early complaints of intimidation.

It was only when a group from a Catholic lay organisation arrived, involving a priest and a young politician and offering Church support to the workers that the thugs began to back off.

Then the police arrived, calling out the name of the non-Hispanic American, and forcing the thugs to withdraw. The Mexican government provided the crucial police protection not to its own citizens but to avoid an international incident.

If the Duro workers succeed in getting an election, and if the election is democratic enough for them to win, then a real union, committed to negotiating improvements in wages and working conditions in the maquiladoras will have been born.

This would be a tremendous breakthrough. That's why COPARMEX, Duro and political leaders from Fox to Governor Yarrington of the State of Tamaulipas, to the local Labor Board are all working hard to make sure this doesn't happen.

The authorities blame everything on outside agitators – Americans who come to take their jobs back and on Mexicans intent on economic destabilisation.

The more the company and government fire, threaten and harass the Duro workers, however, the more determined they seem to be.

So far they have weathered nine months of hunger and repression, and they see their



movement growing both inside the plant and among an increasing number of allies in Mexico, the U.S. and Canada.

When they began their struggle, none of the largely young and female workers thought about the possibility of making real progress against a global economy which offers them only deadly working conditions, starvation wages and daily assaults on their dignity.

But this struggle could win real gains. The forces are arrayed on both sides, and the Duro workers' determination and support in across the continent offer a real opportunity for a big step forward.

■ Contact CJM at cjm@igc.org or fax 210-732-8324

■ Make a financial contribution: cheques to "Emergency Support Fund to The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, 530 Bandera Road, San Antonio, TX 78228.

Workers at Duro are not the first group of Mexican workers to suffer as a result of collaboration between the Mexican state and company bosses.

In 1992 for example Volkswagen sacked 14,000 workers in one of its Mexican plants because they rejected a contract negotiated by a company union.

Mexican courts upheld Volkswagen's action. In 1987, during a strike, Ford cancelled its contract with its workers, sacked 3,400 of them and imposed a wage cut of 45% on the rest.

Time and again the Mexican authorities, in collusion with big business, have denied workers the right to form independent unions, and so hold wage increased well below increases in productivity.

This takes place in the context that many American firms have relocated to Mexico – where they can pay workers a tenth of the going hourly rate that US workers receive – even though they are just as productive.

Tom Ruben

Zapatistas challenge rape of the rainforest

Susan Moore

As the Zapatista march makes its way from the Lacandon rainforest in Chiapas to Mexico City, Mexican President Vicente Fox addressed big business at the World Economic Forum meeting at the tourist resort of Cancun on the Yucatan peninsula. Speaking at the end of a two-day meeting organized by the World Economic Forum to discuss the financial and political future of his country, Fox stated: "We see globalisation as an opportunity, but we've got to seek globalisation with human and environmental quality."

Protestors marked this gathering of the Forum in the same way as they did its recent gathering in Davos - with demonstrations which were attacked by riot police. The World Economic Forum is a key symbol of unfettered markets and borderless trade which leaves much of the world's population mired in poverty. Today ninety per cent of Mexican Indians have no sewerage, sixty per cent no running

water.

For the Mexican establishment the key issue at stake at the Forum was a new neoliberal offensive in the shape of the infamous Plan Puebla - Panama.

This project aims to kill two birds with one stone: promoting economic globalisation and undermining the Zapatista struggle for autonomy.

Plan Puebla - Panama aims to turn the area between Puebla (just south of Mexico City) and Panama into a "development corridor" in order to integrate these regions into the global economy, and has a budget of US\$9 billion. It is the economic side of a counter-insurgency plan whose military face is the low intensity war against the Zapatistas.

The central idea of the programme, according to its supporters, is to create the economic conditions for the inhabitants of this region - primarily subsistence farmers - to work in the oil, tourism, and maquiladora (sweat-shop) industries.

The Plan was originally devised

by a member of the previous PRI government and is now being supervised by multimillionaire Alfonso Romo, president of the agro-biotechnology transnational Grupo Pulsar.

Referring to the Chiapas part of this project, Romo has stated that it is "the one I like best out of all my business enterprises" (see www.ciepac.org/analysis/pulsar for more information on Pulsar).

Romo has a joint project in association with Conservation International (of which he is a board member) in the Lacandon rainforest, allegedly for conservation purposes.

According to Miguel Pickard, from the Centre for Economic Research and Community Action Policies (CIEPAC), it is likely that behind these so-called environmentally-friendly projects lurk



"biopiracy" activities - the robbery of medicinal plants and knowledge for patents by transnational corporations.

The Lacandon rainforest hosts key resources in terms of water, oil and biodiversity. According to the World Bank, Chiapas is an "interesting experimental field in biotechnology and biodiversity for business investors".

The rainforest covers 1.9 million hectares and 25 per cent of the country's surface water which generates 45 per cent of its hydroelectric power is found there.

More than half of the species of Mexican tropical trees, 3,500 plant

species, 114 of mammals, and 345 of birds have their home in this area.

Since 1997 the forest has been partly under Zapatista control. Clearly both the previous PRI government and Fox's administration are extremely unhappy that the EZLN's presence prevents them from pillaging this natural wealth in the way they would like. There are also plans for further hydroelectric dams and the privatisation of water supplies which would be very difficult to carry through with the present relationship of forces in Chiapas.

The Mexican side of the project has four stages. The first is would involve the "modernisation" of the transport infrastructure (trains, roads, airports) in order to facilitate the extraction of goods and resources and their removal from the area.

In fact road building programmes have already started in Chiapas for this purpose - as well as to make containment of the EZLN easier for the government and right wing paramilitaries.

The second stage is a concerted drive towards agricultural modernisation to increase exports (which includes biotechnology).

The third is support for small and medium sized businesses, and attracting companies to the region, including maquiladoras. The last is to exploit the potential of the region as a tourist attraction principally through more road construction.

It is clear that this "modernisation" of Chiapas can only take place if many of the indigenous communities of the area are driven out in contradiction with the spirit of the San Andres Accords which the Fox government claims to genuinely wish to implement.

The Zapatistas on the other hand defend the communal ways of the communities of the forest which are so counterposed to the relentless search for individual profit regardless of cost which are integral to the plan.

Ironically of course such initiatives as the Plan Puebla - Panama may actually serve to increase support for the Zapatistas as it is so evident that the only ones who will benefit from such schemes are multinational corporations and their friends in government.

International solidarity with the march of the EZLN

Resolution of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International

1. Today, neo-liberal globalisation faces ever broader, more sustained and radical social resistance.

The idea that "another world is possible" was asserted strongly at the recent World Social Forum in Porto Alegre.

This was not only an expression of rebellion, protest and revolt against the tyranny of the market but as a multicolor mirror of the plural and massive experiences of struggle and, above all, as the desire to construct a popular and democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist alternative.

2. The Zapatista movement has been a key factor in this change of climate. From its initial uprising in January 1994 and then through calling the first Intercontinental encounter for humanity and against neoliberalism, the EZLN has become an unavoidable political and moral reference point.

All those who, on the basis of their own struggles, oppose the conservative counter-reforms carried out in the name of "modernisation" are part of the same process.



Without doubt, the EZLN has been a fundamental protagonist in this movement for "another world is possible". This movement became visible at Seattle but had in truth been gestating for some years previously, with struggles that reject concessions like that of the Zapatistas and the expression of struggles of the indigenous, peasant, trade-union movement, the movements of the unemployed, of women, for human rights and many other popular sectors.

3. Now the EZLN is beginning a new phase of struggle with the launch - after the historic defeat of the PRI - of a challenge to the new government.

It is marching to Mexico City to demand the fulfillment of the San Andres Accords and their translation into legal and constitutional reforms. The EZLN sees this as a decisive step towards a peace with dignity, one that respects and recognises the rights of the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

They see the fulfillment of the San Andres Accords as necessary for a political exit from the conflict, along with the release of Zapatista prisoners and the withdrawal of the federal army from their communities.

4. Struggles against capitalist "neoliberal globalization" such as the struggle of the Zapatistas, but also experiences like the Participatory Budget in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the recent victory of the popular and indigenous movement in Ecuador, or the campaigns against Plan Colombia and the imperialist project of AFTA, show that there is a growing movement of resistance to the powers-that-be which can actually win some victories and struggle for "a world where all worlds can fit in".

5. The Fourth International reaffirms its solidarity with the struggle of the EZLN, its March and its demands, and also salutes the Indigenous National Congress which is currently meeting.

This militant position will be expressed both through the work of our comrades in Mexico and also in the field of internationalist solidarity.

February 21, 2001



ERIC TOUSSAINT,
President of the
Belgian Committee
for the Cancellation
of Third World Debt
(CADTM) reports
from the World Social
Forum in Porto
Alegre, Brazil

Another world is possible!

It was an audacious gamble: bringing together hundreds of representatives of movements opposed to neo-liberal globalisation from all over the planet in a big city in southern Brazil.

The aim was to map out alternative paths and agree which international mobilisations would be a priority over the months ahead exactly the same time as those who aim to push the world still further towards commodification and the domination of capital were meeting in Davos.

We were counterposing to the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos a World Social Forum (WSF) – affirming that another world is possible.

The gamble paid off from all points of view. There was a high participation of representatives from a very wide number of movements opposed to neo-liberal globalisation.

There was significant convergence between people who had come with their own demands and a high quality of debate. Three complementary declarations from social movements, parliamentary representatives and local government representatives were adopted.

And we got widespread media coverage. The WEF at Davos and the WSF at Porto Alegre were systematically presented as symbolising two basic choices facing humanity.

The World Social Forum is the culmination of more than a year's careful preparation by a Brazilian organising committee composed of social movements (including the MST, the movement of the landless, and trade union federation CUT and non governmental organisations).

This committee worked in liaison with movements from other continents like

ATTAC, Focus on global South, the CADTM, Jubilee South, as well as the French journal *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

The initiative was supported by the state government of Rio Grande do Sul (10 million inhabitants) and the city council of its capital, Porto Alegre (1.3 million inhabitants), both of them led by the Workers' Party (PT).

On January 25, 2001, the Forum opened with nearly 4,000 participants. Radical speeches (like that of the governor, former trade union leader Olivo Dutra) and high quality cultural production –presenting the indigenous and African roots of today's struggles in terms of the struggle of Black slaves for emancipation – set the tone for a 5-day race against time.

After the opening, the participants of the FSM met in the city centre for a big demonstration of around 10,000 people on the theme "March for life, another world is possible" which ended with an open air concert.

From January 26-29, each morning was taken up by four major debates which took place simultaneously with an attendance of between 400 and 900 people

according to the debate.

In total then, 16 debates devoted to the big social themes and oriented towards mapping out of alternatives.

Each afternoon there were workshops – nearly 360 of them in four days, organised by the movements themselves.

Following this, there were "conference-testimonies" involving personalities like Lula (leader of the PT), Cuautémoc Cardénas (leader of the Mexican PRD) or José Bové (French Peasants confederation).

In addition, there was a world parliamentary forum (in which 350 elected representatives participated) and a world municipal forum led by the new mayor of Porto Alegre, Tarso Genro.

There was also an international youth camp with more than 1,000 participants as well as a camp of indigenous peoples and many activities involving the Movement of the Landless.

The WSF ended on January 30 with the decision to meet again in Porto Alegre on the same date as the WEF in Davos in 2002.

After the defeat of the MAI (Multilateral Accord on Investment) in October 1998, the defeat of the WTO in Seattle and the fiasco for the World Bank and the IMF

in Prague, the WSF in Porto Alegre constituted another step forward for the movement of resistance.

This meeting was preceded by a dozen very significant initiatives of mobilisation in the year 2000 in the course of which these movements have systematically acted together.

At Bangkok in February 2000 (the 10th UN Conference on Trade and Development); Washington in April 2000 (Spring meeting of the IMF and World Bank); Geneva in June 2000 (Evaluation of the UN Summit on Social development) we organised common action.

At Okinawa in July 2000 (G7); Prague in September 2000; Brussels, New York and Washington in October 2000 (World Women's March); Seoul the same month (3rd Asia-Europe Conference); Nice in December 2000 (EU summit); Dakar in December 2000 ("From resistances to alternatives") we made our voices heard.

These actions also allowed the drawing up of common positions between powerful social movements. Trade unions from the CUT in Brazil, KCTU in South

Korea, CTA in Argentina, COSATU in South Africa, and so on have been able to learn from each other.

Peasant movements, indigenous movements; the World Women's March; networks such as Focus on global south and ATTAC and movements of those "without" (homes, jobs, land) have come together in new ways with ecologists and pacifists, trade unionists and the radical left.

We are building coalitions around particular themes so as:

- Cancellation of the third world debt
- Opposition to the neo-liberal offensive in trade;
- Support for the 'Tobin tax' on speculation.

The points of agreement between these movements include:

- The necessity of a democratic and internationalist alternative to neo-liberal capitalist globalisation;
- The need to achieve equality between women and men;
- To deepen the crisis of legitimacy of international institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, the Davos Forum, the G7 and the big multinationals
- Cancellation of the

Third World Debt and the abandonment of structural adjustment policies;

■ Support for an end to the deregulation of trade,

■ Opposition to certain uses of genetically modified organisms

■ Rejection of the current definition of intellectual property rights in relation to trade;

■ Opposition to militarist policies (for example, Plan Colombia);

■ Support for the right of peoples to an endogenous development;

■ Taxation of capital through a Tobin type tax;

■ Rights for indigenous peoples

■ Agrarian reform

■ A generalised reduction of working hours;

■ The promotion of democratic experiences like the participatory budget practised at Porto Alegre.

■ A common North/South and East/West struggle.

These main elements are all, or almost all, to be found in the declaration that the social movements adopted at the WSF in Porto Alegre (see the websites www.forumsocialmundial.org or attac.org).

They were also part of the Bangkok appeal (February 2000) and the declaration of Geneva (June 2000). Such a level of agreement is a very encouraging sign given our different geographic origins, political traditions and experiences of struggle

Some big questions remain the subject of debate. Is it necessary to "abolish" the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO or can they be reformed?

Should we fight in the countries of the periphery for the suspension of the payment of the debt or rely on negotiations without recourse to this measure? These debates will continue but we can still organise together.

Davos surrounded by barbed wire and protected by hundreds of police and soldiers. Porto Alegre open to all who put humanity before profit. In Davos, luxury; in Porto Alegre, dignity. In Davos the crisis of legitimacy; in Porto Alegre, the alternatives.

After Gujarat earthquake: the political economy of rehabilitation. A statement from the ICS

“Nothing left between earth and sky”

The all-India Conference of the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, Indian section of the Fourth International, meeting at Vadodra February 10-12, expressed grief and solidarity with the victims of the terrible earthquake, which struck the people of Bhuj, Ahmedabad, and many other parts of Gujarat.

The work of the Conference was cut short because comrades were busy with relief work. The conference issued this statement.

The ordinary people of Gujarat and the rest of the country have spontaneously rallied round the afflicted people in their hour of agony. From the moment people heard the news they donated money, goods, and organised relief.

They had no faith in the government, which sat on the news for several hours, in order to allow the Republic Day parade to pass “undisturbed”.

This same approach has since marked the functioning of both state and central governments.

Because the government did not co-ordinate relief properly, many local initiatives have been extremely chaotic. Fifteen days after the disaster, the chaos continues, for the government has still to organise and coordinate.

From the beginning, the government of Gujarat has tried to minimise the scale of the disaster and reduce the actual number of the dead.

While people on their own initiative have been organising relief, government ministers and VIPs have been wasting time and money organising costly trips to enhance their image while doing nothing concrete.

De facto the governments have abdicated their respon-



sibility in a number of ways. They have appealed to companies to adopt villages. They have made a similar appeal to Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

If firms and NGOs are to adopt villages and rehabilitate the villagers, what is the role of the Gujarat government supposed to be?

Perhaps the time has come for it to take voluntary redundancy, to be downsized, for truly this is one organisation which is doing nothing, and whose departure would be financially good for the country.

But the government is trying to project an image for itself, by talking about the need to form disaster management committee etc. They can do so

only by hoping that the public memory is short.

Similar promises were made at the time of previous earthquakes - including one a few short months ago - but nothing happened.

It is evident that the government is inefficient. This has been made amply clear by the mass media.

The government's response to its own inability to cope is to try to privatise the work of relief and rehabilitation. We oppose the proposal to hand over rehabilitation to industry and NGOs. They are donors, and they are not accountable to anyone.

Many of the companies are interested in such relief work because they want to create an image which they can subsequently utilise when issues like industrial pollu-

tion, anti-worker activities, or other economic charges are brought against them.

If these companies misuse the villages or the territories in the name of rehabilitation, then too they cannot be brought under control, since rehabilitation is not their duty, but a voluntary act.

We do not consider NGOs in the same way as we look at business, but we oppose the move to hand over villages to NGOs too.

This would absolve the government of all responsibility. All the work of relief and rehabilitation should be carried out by joint committees consisting of government representatives, elected representatives of people directly affected by the earthquake from all classes and communities, and repre-

sentatives of people involved in relief work.

We demand that action be taken against those promoters who had built houses illegally, or had violated the housebuilding rules, which contributed greatly to the scale of the tragedy.

We oppose the Central Government's plan to raise a huge sum of money through a surcharge on the income tax.

We do this for three reasons. First, such a move is regressive. It puts the burden of funding the rehabilitation on working class people.

This is happening when there are large sums of money owed by big business in unpaid taxes. The government should declare that industries who have not paid their taxes should be either pay up immediately or have their properties taken over in this hour of disaster in the interests of the people.

Secondly, we oppose the plan to mobilise funds through income tax because there is no transparency in how the government utilises this money.

Funds could easily be diverted to the nuclear programme or to other unpopular and anti-people aims of the government.

Finally, we oppose the call for income tax surcharge because as of now, the government is not even sure of the extent of the disaster. So the figures it is mentioning are sheer guesswork.

The government is concerned about how much money industry is losing, or how much the Western Railways will lose, but it has no figures for how much working people will lose since they have been rendered effectively jobless.

Nor has the government announced any plan to pay such people at their usual rate of earning till economic and social life is restored to normality.

Class conflict, communal conflict, and anti-Dalit feelings have not died with the dead of Bhuj. While any torn clothing and any kind of food will do for the working people, for poor peasants, for Dalits, upper middle class people with cars are getting priority for relief.

Especially sinister is the role of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS: a communal organisation linked to

the extreme right wing party BJP) and its affiliates.

To common people, who see RSS activists bringing out dead bodies while many others refuse to do so, this may appear a harsh accusation.

Yet we make this statement with full understanding. The RSS wants to show how committed to “serving the people” it is.

It has disciplined cadres who will do what their leaders say. So they bring out the dead. But are they truly humanitarian?

No, this too is an image building exercise. The RSS cadres have never expressed regret for those who died as a result of the mass riots during Advani's Ratha Yatra, or after the destruction of the Babri Masjid.

The RSS have never expressed anything but joy at pogroms of Muslims or Christians. Today, also, their image building exercise seeks to conceal a grim reality.

Whenever they have dominated, and with government support and patronage they have all the advantages, they have discriminated between Hindus and non-Hindus, between caste Hindus and dalits.

We condemn the mixing up of government machinery with the RSS machinery. If the RSS wants to carry out a communalist and casteist relief policy, it should do so as a voluntary organisation, without government support.

It was a great surprise, that all so-called experts absolutely ignored the human factors in this tragedy. It may be true that earthquakes cannot be predicted.

But the social consequences of such disasters are in our hands.

The lack of a proper housing policy, of a proper long-term disaster management policy, or of a proper industrial policy, can all be felt. We demand a serious, scientific and transparent reassessment of earthquake zones all over the country.

Appeal

Please send donations to working class aid for those affected by the Gujarat earthquake to:
Ernest Mandel Memorial Fund, c/o PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU
Money will be paid in rupees to the Samarthan Trust

As we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, SUSAN CALDWELL a socialist feminist activist from Quebec, now working as co-director of the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam, looks at the gains of last year's World March of Women Against Poverty and Violence.

While unfortunately little happened here in Britain in response to the project, in many other parts of the world it has led to bridges being built between existing feminist activists and younger women mobilising in opposition to capitalist globalisation.

Chanting and cheering, tens, hundreds and thousands of women demonstrated in 159 countries during the second and third weeks of October last year. The World March of Women Against Poverty and Violence was a huge success – although ignored by the media of almost all countries.

On October 15 last year, 20,000 people marched in Washington, including some 2000 women and men from countries other than the United States. In New York, about 10,000 women and men from many nations rallied at the United Nations and then marched to Union Square. They joined the March and represented women all over the planet taking part in the World March of Women. Close to 100 countries were represented.

Notable among the delegations were the large European contingent, energised by the success of the March of European Women, held earlier in Brussels on October 14 which brought together almost 35,000 women. There were also 250 women from Mexico, who arrived in a motorcade that set out from Chiapas. Some 50 Japanese women also attended, as well as a large number of Native women and vibrant groups of women from Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

These women represent both a continuation of the wave of women's liberation movements from the 1970s and new generations of young women fighting against the poverty and violence created by the neo-liberal globalisation. They are part of the mobilisations against neo-liberal globalisation in Seattle, Washington, Melbourne and Prague – and now focused on the specific impact on women.

There are two major new features of between this Women's March 2000 against Poverty and Violence: those joining agreed to a radical anti-neoliberal globalisation and anti-patriarchy platform, and, almost all were part of a four year organising process that generated the simultaneous actions in each country as well as the march in New York.

Focusing on the 'female face of poverty', the platform of the Women's March 2000 calls for the abolition of the third world debt as well as rejection of the IMF and World Bank's structural adjustment programmes. While noting the link



Women lead the way



between poverty and violence against women, the platform also notes that many rich countries maintain patriarchal laws and policies that treat women as 'less than human' and thus perpetuate and reinforce the violence that women suffer.

The World March of Women demanded from the UN and its member States concrete measures to put an end to poverty and the different forms of violence against women. It demanded genuine respect for the rights of all women regardless of their origin, their sexual orientation or their social or cultural affiliation.

And this raises a weakness of the Women's March 2000. While the platform is quite radical, the strategy is one of lobbying governments and the various institutions of national and international governments. This flows from the origin of the call for the World March of Women by the Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ) after the UN Beijing Conference on Women in 1995.

Like other NGOs (non-governmental organisations), the FFQ had taken part in the parallel conference of NGOs same time, but on the outskirts of Beijing.

As a result of the surprise success and impact of the 1995 Bread and Roses March of Women in Québec, they had concluded that governments paid more attention to public actions than just private lobbying. This was the context in which the FFQ launched the appeal for a World March of Women in 2000. With the original contacts being those women-based NGOs that had been at Beijing, the lobbying strategy was maintained.

Thus the Women's March calls upon the very institutions – the IMF, World Bank, and national governments that are the source of the problem – to reform themselves and to adopt and apply the human rights legislation to protect women from violence and to ensure swift action against poverty and its effects on women and children.

Respecting national differences and seeking to operate in a democratic way, the FFQ was able to get the funding for a conference in Montréal, Canada, in 1998 to develop and adopt the platform.

The focus was on developing national unitary structures for the March in each country and encouraging the development of national demands and actions as well as international ones.

While the conference was exciting, conflict arose over the style of decision making (consensus versus vote-taking) and the inclusion of lesbian rights in the international platform when this would apparently preclude the involvement of many women's organisations from non-American or non-European areas of the world.

This concern with the non-representativeness and the sometimes bureaucratic functioning continued throughout the preparations for the World March.

But the very impact of ongoing neo-liberal globalisation lead to a broad response:

● from women in the 'first world' who had seen their gains of the

1970s and 1980s eroded as well as the cutbacks in social services causing both job loss and increased work load

● from women in the 'third world' who saw the devastation of the IMF and WB's structural adjustment on educational and social services leading to virtually no public health care services with a consequent increase in maternal and infant death rates and a return of previously controlled illnesses such as TB and cholera

● from women in war-torn areas who were both victims of violence by enemy soldiers and were further victimised as refugees in camps in nearby areas.

At the Women's March in New York, six women from countries in conflict (Afghanistan, Colombia, Kurdistan, Palestine, Rwanda and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) talked with emotion and conviction of the effects of these conflicts, particularly on the lives of women and children. They denounced the industry of death that travels from country to country in the form of arms and other kinds of trafficking.

In all women from 159 different countries organised and acted within the framework of the World March of Women 1000 Against Poverty and Violence. Roughly five million signatures were collected from all over the planet in support of its two demands – to eliminate poverty and violence against women – and were presented to the UN.

The actions in each country sought specific changes – whether to the minimum wage laws or to increased funding for women's centres or for education for girls, etc. Few, if any, concrete changes can be seen as a result of these actions. But women have recognised the reality of their ability to collectively organise and the strength of this collective solidarity.

The decision has already been made to continue the organisational network set up for the Women's March and to begin discussing both a balance sheet and the prospects for future actions.

Socialist-feminist organisations, including sections of the Fourth International, need to be part of these discussions and organisations.

We need to push the platform to develop a more explicitly anti-capitalist analysis, going beyond lobbying and misplaced faith in the national and international institutions to either implement current human rights legislation or to reform themselves into progressive structures.

Organising needs to expand to include more grass-roots women's organisations in all countries which will raise again the question of the need for truly representative decision making structures.

But with the recommitment of feminists from the 1970s and 1980s and the involvement of young women of the 'Seattle generation' now taking place, there are grounds for hope.

The younger generation of women are often spontaneously anti-capitalist because of their opposition to neo-liberal globalisation and, being products of the period after the gains by the women's movement, are organically anti-patriarchal.

Consequently, the resurgence of a women's liberation movement is back on the agenda. Our slogan of the 1970s remains to be realised: "No socialist revolution without women's liberation – and no women's liberation without socialist revolution".

Socialist Outlook

Campaign fights to close Gap

Veronica Fagan

To mark International Women's Day, anti-globalisation campaigners will be targeting Gap stores in towns and cities throughout Scotland, Wales and England.

Gap may want to promote a chic image, but it severely exploits women workers in inhuman conditions in the Third World while persuading women here to pay inflated prices for its brand name.

Together with the actions on March 5 against pharmaceutical companies (see below), these protests show that the movement to global resistance is taking root in a big way in Britain.

Organising to take people

to international events like those in Seattle, Prague and Nice will play an important part in the campaign.

At this level the key focus will be the demonstration in Genoa against the G8 summit on July 20. But what was also obvious to the 250 activists who turned up to a planning meeting in London last month was that we needed to think globally and act locally.

Clearly action at a local level allows more people to get directly involved than the smaller numbers who can get to the international actions.

Gap, like Nike, is an industry leader which also owns Banana Republic and Old Navy. It has become one of the most profitable and

fastest-growing clothing retailers in the world.

In 1999 its turnover was \$11.6 billion of which \$1.1 billion was net profit. Last year Gap Chief Executive Millard Drexler received \$172.8 million in salary, bonuses, and stock options.

In 1995 Gap was the target of an anti-sweatshop campaign because of union-busting in its Mandarin factory in El Salvador. After successful grassroots mobilisation, Gap agreed to a monitoring system at that factory that continues to this day.

While Gap received good publicity for this move, it failed to implement all the reforms. It put minimal resources into the monitoring system and reneged on its pledge to extend such



Gap makes profit from global exploitation: now anti-globalisation campaigners have made it a target

monitoring to other factories in the region.

Furthermore, in three years of discussions with anti-sweatshop groups, Gap has failed to do anything about wages.

Following a meeting with activists, the company agreed to a statement that no worker making products for Gap should live in poverty, but refused to take the next step and accept responsibility for ensuring that workers are paid a living wage.

Saipan is a 47 sq mile island in the Pacific, part of the North Mariana Islands, which include Guam, and are all US territory.

The island is replete with sweatshops, and Gap does the most business of any company there - over \$200 million a year, contracting in six factories. Companies import without tariff or quota restrictions and label

their clothes 'Made in the USA,' but do not have to adhere to US labor laws.

Workers and anti-sweatshop groups filed a billion dollar lawsuit against Gap and 17 other retailers for labour abuses in Saipan. But the problem is undoubtedly broader than Saipan.

In Russia, Gap pays factory workers just 11 cents an hour and keeps them in slave-like conditions. Workers from Macao contacted the Asia Monitor Resource Center in Hong Kong complaining of abusive treatment by factory managers, who forced them to work excessive overtime and cheated them out of their pay.

A delegation from the US National Labor Committee in June 1999 reported that Honduran Gap factory workers are subjected to forced pregnancy tests, forced overtime, exceedingly high pro-

duction goals, locked bathrooms, and wages of \$4/day, which only meet 1/3 of their basic needs.

The workers said that if they tried to organise a union or even become more informed of their rights, they would be fired. They had never heard of Gap's code of conduct.

In Indonesia, 700 workers went on strike in July, 1997 protesting miserable wages and the factory management's refusal to recognise their independent union.

These are just a few of the reasons why Gap will be a target of action this month. Gap - along with other brand multinationals like Nike - are fitting targets of anti-globalisation protestors, especially on International Women's Day.

We demand a living wage for all workers and the right to organise.

Global day of action against drug company power



Terry Conway

The grass roots campaign fighting HIV/AIDS in South Africa, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) has called on activists across the world to mobilise locally and globally against the profiteering of the pharmaceutical industry.

Campaigners across the world, including in Brazil, Chile, Italy, the United States and Britain will be protesting in solidarity with TAC on the opening day of the legal action brought by 42 major companies against the South African government to prevent it importing cheap generic drugs and making them available to people with Aids.

For health campaigners, trade unionists and socialists the grotesque levels of profits of these vast multinationals have long been a

source of anger.

But this rage has increased many times over in regard to their response to the spread of AIDS where the obscenity of their greed has become even more obvious to broader layers.

At the same time, with the rise of mass protests against globalisation, the drugs industry is one of the most graphic symbols of what is wrong with the neo-liberal world we live in.

Below we print the letter which will be appearing in papers across the world which demonstrates the way

The Letter: Drop the case!

"On March 5 over 40 of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies - including Boehringer-Ingelheim, GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Roche - are taking the South African Government to court.

They are fighting a law, that was passed by the South African parliament and approved by Nelson Mandela, which would allow life-saving medicines to be imported from countries where they are cheaper. They claim that the law infringes intellectual property rights.

Nearly five million South Africans are living with HIV. But few can afford the drugs which have enabled richer countries to transform the disease from a killer into a manageable illness.

These companies, with the support of some Western governments, are protecting their monopolies at the expense of millions of lives. This legal action shows that the pharmaceutical industry is more concerned with staving off competition and protecting their high profit margins than with genuinely increasing access to medicines.

We believe that this lawsuit is legally flawed and morally reprehensible. We call on the companies involved to drop the case and on Western governments to provide clear support to the South African government as it strives to tackle the urgent HIV/AIDS epidemic."

drug companies are putting their greed for profit before the right of thousands of people in the Third World to stay alive.

In Britain action will be focused through pickets against GlaxoSmithKline, the

world's largest drug corporation which leading the fight to enforce patent rights and price fixing for anti-HIV drugs.

For further information visit the TAC web site at <http://www.tac.org.za>. or e-mail info@tac.org.za.

Activities are taking place in London, Birmingham and Manchester and will involve activists from Globalise Resistance, Action for South Africa and various HIV/AIDS groups.

"The outcome of this court case will affect 32 million HIV sufferers in poorer countries, who cannot afford these exorbitant-priced drug therapies", according to gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, who is backing the protest.

"GSK says that under its Accelerated Access scheme it has cut the price of HIV drugs by 85 per cent. But

this scheme applies only to Africa and even the reduced price of \$1500 a year is too expensive for most people in Third World countries".

"A victory for GSK and the other pharmaceutical giants will make cheap anti-HIV drugs illegal and condemn millions of people to a painful, slow death".

"GlaxoSmithKline's multi-billion pound profits are obscene. The argument that they need these mega profits to fund research is false. GSK made a profit of \$7.6 billion in 1999, but invested only \$3.75 billion in research that year.

Meanwhile, 2.5 million people in the developing world die needlessly of Aids every year."

Iraq: end sanctions, stop the bombing!

George W may not know where Iraq is, but he understands that it is useful to up the ante against "rogue states" in order to back up the need for Star Wars 2, spending on which formed the centrepiece of his first budget.

In the months preceding the American and British bombing of Iraq, coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the Gulf war, too many influential voices had been demanding an end to sanctions against the country.

Too many had recognised that the result of these reparations were being wreaked on the children, women and men of Iraq and not on Saddam, who looks as secure as he did 10 long years ago.

The US government was also concerned about the increasing level of media attention given to the number of allied personnel from the Gulf war, as well as those who had fought in the Balkans, suffering debilitating illnesses.

The depleted uranium and other heavy metals that were used in these conflicts do not distinguish between friend and foe in their long term destructive effects.

None of this could be allowed to stand in the way of Bush's determination to go ahead with the National Missile Defence project, otherwise known as Star Wars 2. So yet again Baghdad and its people were the target.

And yet again Bomber Blair demonstrated his craven following of whatever suits the American establishment, following Bush where no other country would in this outrageous war crime.

In the aftermath, the real arguments begin to come out from Downing Street, while Parliament is conveniently in recess. After Bush's election, Blair had refused to make any statement on Britain's attitude to NMD, in particular whether the bases at Fylingdales and Menwith Hill would be used to assist this new arms race.

Now Blair, along with his American counterparts are trying to peddle the ridiculous lie that NMD will permit a reduction in nuclear weaponry!

It is true that the US plan to take out of commission some hardware which is now past its sell-by date. But the idea that what is planned could make the world a safer place beggars belief.

Star Wars 2 is the biggest threat to world peace since the signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty in 1972.

China, India and Russia have all responded by stepping up their own programmes.

All socialists must ensure that non-co-operation with Star Wars is made a central issue in the forthcoming election - as well as continuing to call for the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

Palestinians fear Ariel attack

Sharon: the real face of Israeli culture

Roland Rance

The election of Ariel Sharon as Israeli prime minister has been seen by many as a turning point in the history of Israel, and as the definitive end of the "peace process".

Sharon, after all, is reviled in the Arab world as the "Butcher of Beirut", remembered with fear and loathing by Palestinians for his part in many massacres over the past fifty years, and scorned by liberal Israelis as almost the devil incarnate.

The fallacy of such an apocalyptic view, however, is apparent from the haste with which the Israeli Labour Party, prodded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Shimon Peres, declared its willingness to serve under Sharon in a "government of national unity".

As foreign minister, Peres who until just before the election was being touted by many as the "left" alternative to outgoing PM Ehud Barak, will have the task of justifying Sharon's policies internationally.

Another Labour member, former general Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, will be defence minister, in charge of implementing Sharon's policies in the occupied territories. According to the Jerusalem Post (4 March),

"Ben-Eliezer ... intends to do away with the carrot and use a stick to bring the Palestinians back to the negotiation table".

Ironically, Sharon's will be the first government in Israel with an Arab minister - Labour's Salah Tarif, will be minister without portfolio. In an ominous move, former general Rehavam Ze'evi, of the far-right Moledet party, whose entire policy is the "transfer" (ie expulsion) of all Arabs from Israel, will be minister of tourism.

None of this should come as any surprise. Sharon is not a radical break from previous Israeli prime ministers: he is the genuine face of Israel's political culture.

And, despite much anguished hand-wringing from parts of the Israeli peace movement, it is clear that he won the election because of, not despite, his



One military man with a brutal past succeeds another as Prime Minister as voters tire of manoeuvres

questionable past.

Sharon, it should be remembered, is a product of the Israeli labour movement.

He was brought up in a semi-collective village, his earliest sponsors were Labour prime minister David Ben-Gurion and Labour chief-of-staff Moshe Dayan, and his political mentor, and friend, was Labour PM Yitzhak Rabin.

His political background, like Rabin's, was the activist Ahdut

Ha'Avoda wing of the Labour Party, associated with the pre-state Palmah shock force of the nascent Israeli army.

In the early 1950s, he was appointed head of a new army unit charged with pursuing Palestinian infiltrators across the borders and eliminating them. Among the exploits of this notorious Unit 101 was the raid on Qibya in Jordan, in which over 70 civilians were murdered when their homes were blown up while they slept.

Under Sharon's command, the unit carried out scores more raids in Jordan and Egypt, some characterised by sickening brutality.

Sharon was also responsible for the "pacification" of the Gaza refugee camps in 1970-1. His troops bulldozed scores of homes to provide easy access for tanks, and carried out a war of assassination against suspected PLO members; an unknown number of Palestinians died as a result of his exploits.

As an army officer, Sharon was noted for his adventur-

ism and insubordination, and frequently accused of leading his troops into unnecessary danger.

Deliberately excluded from consideration as chief-of-staff, he entered politics, originally as a supporter of negotiations with the Palestinians and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

This state, however, was not to be in Palestine; for Sharon, "Jordan is Palestine", and his strategic goal in the 1982 Lebanon war was to remove Palestinians from both Lebanon and Palestine, and to overthrow the Hashemite regime, which would be replaced with a compliant Palestinian state.

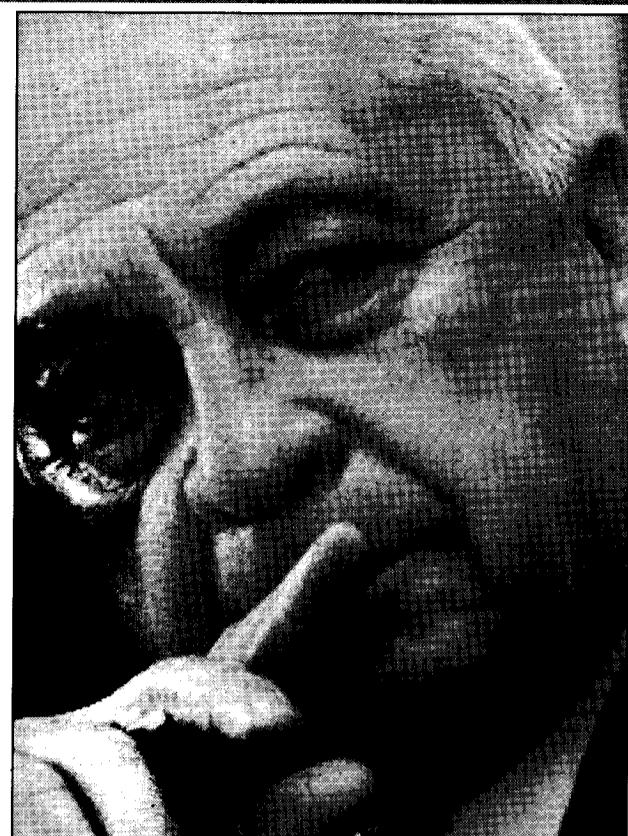
He left parliament soon after he was elected, having been appointed special adviser to defence minister Rabin in 1975.

Sharon's 1981 appointment by Menahem Begin as defence minister sparked a huge controversy, in the course of which one of his aides commented:

"When (Sharon) was not appointed chief-of-staff, I said that those who did not want him as chief-of-staff would get him as defence minister."

"Now I say that those who don't want him as defence minister will get him as prime minister."

His role during the 1982 Lebanon war is well documented, as is his subsequent resignation after an official enquiry found him "indirectly responsible" for the murder of hundreds of



much of the centre vote which he had won in 1999. He offered "concessions" which, while far from sufficient to win Palestinian support, were viewed by many Israelis as too great. And his behaviour led to the uprising, driving many voters into the arms of the Israeli "right".

Russian immigrants, for instance, most of whom who had backed Barak in 1999, switched in large numbers to Sharon.

But Sharon's victory was not merely a result of Barak's loss.

Throughout the campaign, Sharon portrayed himself as the grandfatherly figure, who could make peace from a position of strength.

Many Israelis, tired of the violence, isolation and economic cost of the conflict, clearly believed that Sharon would be a sort of Israeli De Gaulle, talking tough while making an offer the Palestinians couldn't refuse.

After all, they remember that it was Begin's right wing government which brought peace with Egypt, withdrawing from the entire Sinai peninsula, and dismantling settlements in the process.

This optimistic prospect, however, is no more likely under Sharon than it was under Barak, Netanyahu or Rabin.

Until there is a change in the Middle East balance of forces, no Israeli government will be prepared to offer the sort of deal which Palestinians will be able or willing to accept.

Sharon, with eight Labour ministers in his cabinet, can be expected to continue the policies of his friends Barak and Rabin, though with his own style and approach. The combination of his "Jordan is Palestine" views, and Ze'evi's support for "transfer" are of particular immediate concern.

But it would be a mistake to view Sharon as uniquely evil, and to focus opposition to his well-documented war crimes.

Sharon's positions are the logical development of Israel's actions over the past fifty-two years. These, rather than the personality of Israel's current leader, are the source of the conflict.

Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Beirut.

All of this is, of course, well known to the Israeli electorate. In electing Sharon, they have shown their disdain for international opinion and their contempt for Barak's political manoeuvres.

Barak lost the election because, in the space of eighteen months, he had managed to alienate a large part of his constituency. When first elected, he gained 95% of the votes of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

His first step was to declare that he would build a purely Jewish coalition, with no reliance on Arab members of the Knesset.

Like all earlier PMs, he failed to appoint an Arab cabinet minister. He permitted the police chief in Galilee (where there is still an Arab majority) to conduct a campaign of harassment against Arab political activists, in the course of which several Knesset members were threatened with prosecution for incitement.

And he oversaw the pogroms against Palestinian citizens, in the course of which 14 were killed with no investigation and no apology. It is no surprise that the Arab vote plummeted to a reported 1% this time.

The unprecedentedly low turnout shows that many Israeli Jews, too, refused to vote for either candidate in this choice between two war-criminal generals.

Barak, who had promised to bring peace, also lost

Mumia's case at critical stage

Steve Bloom

On October 15, 1999, attorneys for the wrongfully convicted US political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal filed legal papers in Federal District Court asking that he be given a new trial.

The next legal step – which could happen any time now – will take place when Federal District Court Judge William Yohn sets a date for an initial hearing in the case.

At that hearing he will listen to oral arguments from lawyers on both sides to support written briefs which have already been filed. Mumia will be present in the court and plans are underway to mobilise large numbers of his supporters to be both inside and outside the courtroom.

Mumia Abu-Jamal was originally convicted in 1982 of killing a police officer, Daniel Faulkner, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Since his conviction, in a trial marked by blatant police, judicial, and prosecutorial misconduct, he has spent the last 18 years on Pennsylvania's death row, under the most brutal and dehumanizing conditions.

Meanwhile a world-wide campaign of protest has developed, as evidence mounts that Mumia was the victim of a police and government frame-up against him, and as more and more people find out about it.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation had been spying on Mumia since he was 14 years old and a member of the Black Panther Party.

Before his arrest he was the president of Philadelphia's Association of Black Journalists, and had earned a considerable reputation as an eloquent spokesperson for Philadelphia's Black community and for other poor and oppressed peoples. This gained him the enmity of the Philadelphia establishment.

He has continued his journalistic work while in prison, achieving fame worldwide as the "voice of the voiceless."

Many of the facts which have convinced people across the globe that Mumia's trial and conviction were a travesty emerged in the years after it took place.

Witnesses have come forward to say that they testified falsely, or refused to testify at all, because they had been coerced by the police.

Ballistics

Ballistics experts (not hired by the defence during the original trial for lack of money) have stated that the scientific evidence precludes any possibility that the shooting took place as the prosecution claimed.

But none of this new evidence is part of the official legal record at the present time, and therefore can't be used.

Mumia's attorneys attempted to introduce it during hearings that took place in 1995 – before the same judge, Albert Sabo, who presided at the original trial.

Sabo ruled that none of this testimony was credible, and so excluded it from the written transcript.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court, the last state court to rule in the case, then upheld Sabo's findings. But the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is an elected body, and the majority of its justices ran campaigns with support from the Fraternal Order of Police – the main group which has been crusading for Mumia's execution.

Any vote in favour of Mumia's appeal, then, by any of the court's

nine justices, would have constituted a guarantee that they would lose their next bid for reelection.

So one of the key issues which Judge Yohn must decide is whether he will allow new evidence to be introduced into the record as part of the Federal appeals process.

He is not legally required to do so, but

higher levels of federal courts: the Federal Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Transcript

The justices of these tribunals will rule strictly on the written transcript that is placed before them, which is why Yohn's decision on this issue is so crucial.

It is no exaggeration, then, to say that the fate of Mumia Abu-Jamal may well depend on the public outcry that is raised in the time before Yohn makes this determination.

If he is reminded of how many people around the world are watching to see the way the federal courts handle Mumia's case it can be a substantial factor in influencing his ruling.

One new development in the case revolves around four Amicus Curiae ("friend of the court") briefs which were filed with Yohn during the year 2000.

The groups which requested Yohn to consider additional legal arguments, based on a substantial material interest in what decision is made on Mumia's request for a new trial, were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American Civil Liberties Union, 22 members of the British Parliament, and the Chicana/ Chicano Studies Foundation.

However, Yohn decided that he would not read or consider these additional briefs, asserting that they did not contribute anything new of substance, and that to take up time with them would merely delay the appeals process.

The British MPs and the Chicana/Chicano Studies Foundation, however, refused to take "no" for an answer, and appealed Yohn's decision to the Federal Court of Appeals, asking that Judge Yohn be directed to take their briefs into account.

Delay

The Court of Appeals upheld Yohn's decision, but the process of appeal was at least one factor which has further delayed proceedings in Yohn's court.

More significantly, the entire process has begun to focus attention on the information contained in these two briefs, which cover some previously unpublicised aspects of the original trial.

Through rereading the transcripts and looking into other legal material they document additional evidence of a conscious frame-up against Mumia.

For example, statements by Mumia's own (court appointed) attorney indicate that he attempted to collaborate with the judge and prosecutor to make sure any conviction would not be overturned on appeal.

Judge Sabo claimed in court to have checked with a higher court on the propriety of a decision denying Mumia the right to have a non-attorney (John Africa of the MOVE organization in Philadelphia) present as a consultant at the defence table.

However, there is no record whatsoever of the legal process which he claims took place. (The texts of these Amicus briefs are available online. Go to www.freemumia.com, the website of the New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition.)

Supporters around the world are being urged to continue organising political activities around Mumia's case, and it was one of the prominent themes raised by thousands of protesters who lined the route of President George W. Bush's inaugural parade in Washington D.C. on January 20.

Conference

In addition, a major national activists' conference is projected, also in Washington, for March 30-31, to discuss the next steps in Mumia's defence.

In a related development, one of the leaders of the national campaign around Mumia, Clark Kissinger from the organisation Refuse and Resist, was sentenced to 90 days in jail by a Federal Judge in Pennsylvania – for the "crime" of making a speech.

The jail term stems from a probationary sentence handed down to Kissinger as a result of the sit-in for Mumia at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia on July 3, 1998.

Most of the activists arrested that day pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges and paid a fine. Kissinger and a handful of others pleaded not-guilty and demanded a trial.

As a result, after they were found guilty, they were given extremely punitive conditions of probation, which include being forbidden to leave their home jurisdiction (New York in Kissinger's case) without permission, and being required to hand over information about their personal finances and political associations.

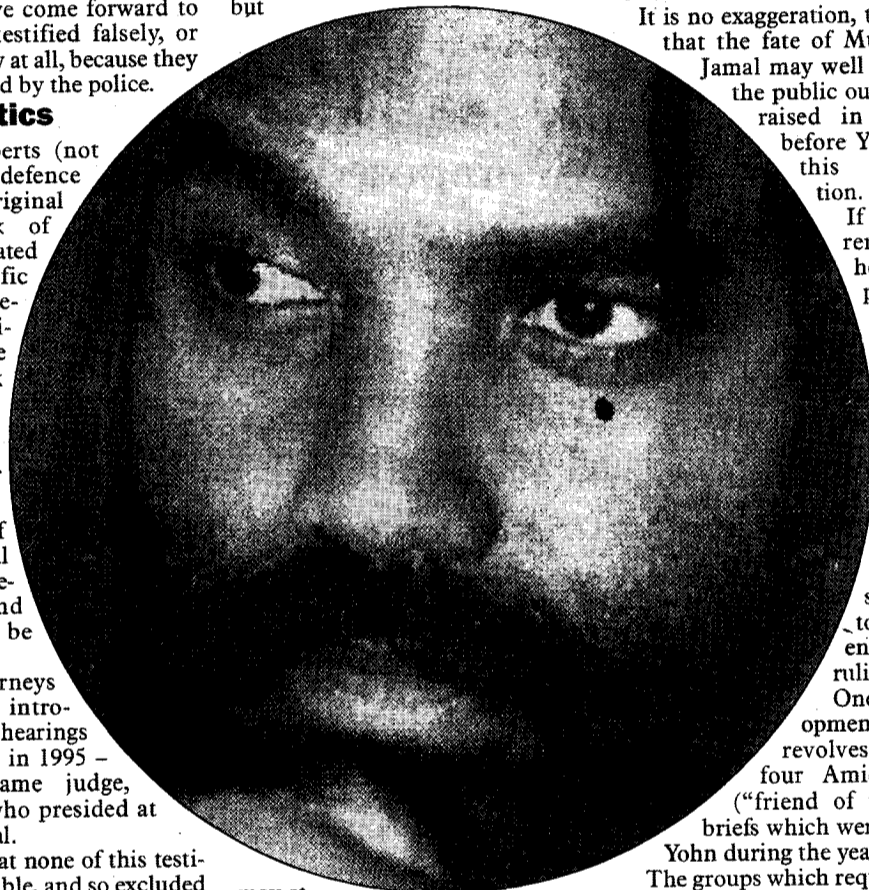
Speech

Kissinger defied these provisions by travelling to Philadelphia to give a speech during demonstrations at the Republican National Convention last August.

At a hearing on December 6, Federal Judge Arnold C. Rapoport ordered him to serve the time in jail, after which the restrictive terms of his original probation will be reinstated.

Kissinger is appealing, on the grounds that the original probation was illegal and a violation of his constitutional rights.

■ Steve Bloom is a member of the national committee of the U.S. Socialist organization Solidarity and on the steering committee of the New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal coalition.



may at his discretion. (He could simply decide to review the written transcripts of state proceedings.)

Mumia is requesting an evidentiary hearing, and Judge Yohn's courtroom is the last place where this could happen.

If he says "no" to such a hearing, none of the new evidence will be introduced, and it therefore will not be considered even when the case is appealed further to the two

Step up the efforts to save Mumia

Declaration by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal

THE CASE of Mumia Abu-Jamal is well known around the globe as one of the worst examples of racist and class injustice in the United States, a nation which is among the world's leaders in executions.

From the European Parliament to Amnesty International, to former president Nelson Mandela of South Africa, to teachers in Brazil, world public opinion has loudly

proclaimed its judgment that Mumia's original trial was a travesty, and raised the call that he be granted a new one.

The year 2001 is likely to prove decisive for Mumia's legal appeal, which will in turn determine whether this global demand for justice is granted or denied.

Federal District Court Judge William Yohn is faced with crucial rulings, including whether all the evidence of police and prosecutorial misconduct, witnesses who have recanted or changed their testimony, and others—including scientific experts—who were never heard by the original jury (the kinds of facts which have convinced international public opinion) will be considered by the fed-

eral courts as part of Mumia's appeal process.

It is therefore crucial for everyone concerned with basic questions of human rights and legal due process around the world to renew and redouble our efforts on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal at this time.

A victory for justice in this case is not only a victory for Mumia. It will also be a victory for the thousands of others across the U.S.A. who were convicted and sentenced to death in trials that came no closer to international legal standards than Mumia's did, but who have simply received less publicity, as well as for all class-struggle and political prisoners everywhere.

February 21, 2001

A phoney Loyalist cessation

"The Nazis were convinced that evil-doing in our time has a morbid force of attraction"

Franz Borkenau

LAST MONTH the self styled Inner Council of the Ulster Defence Association claimed that the organisation was not involved in orchestrating the sustained pipe and petrol bomb war being waged against 'Catholics' right across the north of Ireland.

In the previous month alone there had been at least fifty such attacks, with the small towns of Larne, Coleraine and Antrim being badly hit.

A typical attack occurred in North Belfast last weekend when a pipe bomb was tossed into the living room home of an ordinary working class family causing an extensive fire. The young children living in the house narrowly missed death because of the prompt action of their father and some good luck.

Evidence

There is abundant evidence to prove that all of the Loyalist organisations are in fact more or less involved in a comprehensive campaign of sectarian and gangster terror directed mainly at the nationalist population.

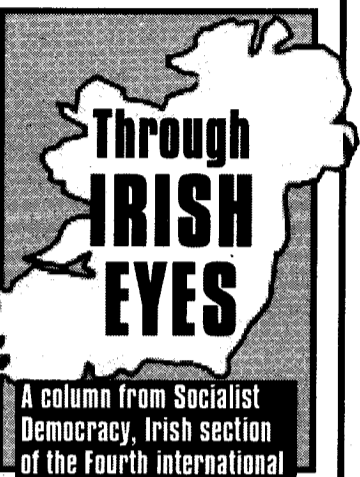
The idea that only mavericks are involved is nonsense but it is the sort of nonsense that all of the pro-peace process parties are willing to play along with as long as the mouthpieces of the organisations continue to mouth their platitudes in support of the Belfast Agreement.

The claim that the 'socialist' UVF-PUP was not participating in the sectarian violence was well and truly discredited when two pipe bomb making factories belonging to the organisation were discovered in North Belfast and in Newtownabbey on February 12th.

Primed

The primed pipe bombs belonged to the Mount Vernon UVF, one of the units loyal to the political leadership during recent the inter-Loyalist feud.

Even David Ervine, the most able spokesperson of the PUP, wanted to distance himself: 'The relationship between myself and elements in the UVF would be unsus-



tainable if it turns out that they have been involved in this'.

Of course such words of comfort mean absolutely nothing. They are only to get by an awkward moment, and you can be sure that Ervine won't be breaking off giving his political advice to the pipe bombers of the UVF.

There is good reason to believe that the UDA was encouraged to make its unbelievable public denial by officials acting on behalf of the British government to allow it to continue with its policy of maintaining that the Loyalist cease-fire is 'still intact'.

The UDA had just met with the decommissioning body. The government line was restated by a senior police officer after the Newtownabbey discovery:

"There is nothing to say that the UVF is involved as an organisation, but there may be individuals taking action as individuals."

Acceptance

There is nothing new about this ruling political culture of blithely accepting Loyalist crimes. For over thirty years there has been a permissive government and unionist toleration of Loyalist violence.

It is now generally accepted that undercover British army units, (the Force Research Unit) that took their chain of command from the Joint Security Committee were actually heavily involved in directing Loyalist violence.

A recent Irish Human Rights Watch report indicted FRU agents in the direct killing of at least 14 people between 1986 and 1990 using Loyalist gunmen as the instrument of death.

justify the assault.

It was claimed that the Good Friday Agreement would democratise the North. Instead it appears that those who criticise the settlement and organise politically against it have to face not only the British and the RUC, but goons anxious to punish anyone who criticises Sinn Fein.

John McAnulty



Partnership deal helped isolate Irish nurses during their last pay battle

Joining forces to fight "partnership"

The task of ordinary workers is to reclaim their unions from the rotten bureaucracy that presently misleads the movement. This was the framework when over 100 trade unionists met in Dublin to discuss setting up a rank and file campaign against social partnership.

In the Republic of Ireland the bureaucracy has presided over nearly fourteen years of social partnership deals. A neo-liberal agenda of deregulation, privatisation and wage restraint has been implemented through an assault on trade union democracy.

The one-day conference on February 10 was called by the Campaign Against a Partnership Deal. Last year it organised to oppose adoption by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions of the latest partnership deal - the misnamed Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.

This in itself was a step forward. Previous campaigns had arisen just before votes on new deals, hampering consideration of a long-term alternative to partnership and the bureaucracy. The leadership of the campaign against the PPF pushed aside the question of political strategy with the justification that what was needed was to get the vote out.

This led to serious mistakes in the campaign, which concerned itself solely with the demand for higher wages and effectively ignored the

wider agenda that has always been part of partnership. In fact it called for the ICTU leadership to go back into negotiations to get more money.

In other words the demand was for a better social partnership deal, not total opposition to it. As Socialist Democracy has pointed out this was effectively an oblique vote of confidence in the present leadership.

For us the key to judging whether a new campaign would be up to the tasks facing it was whether the lessons had been learned. In particular it had to understand that partnership agreements were not simply pay deals.

The most important aspect of the deals has been a political attack on workers, involving acceptance of the whole agenda of the most right wing social and economic policies, now known as neo-liberalism.

This is usually sold as 'competitiveness'; in other words Irish workers should not join in solidarity with workers elsewhere in Europe and beyond, but compete with them to see who can work hardest and for least reward.

The meeting showed that these lessons were at least up for discussion. Socialist Democracy member Kevin Keating pointed out that just because Oliver Twist asked for 'more' didn't mean he wanted to overthrow the whole workhouse system.

Other speakers mentioned the importance of privatisation but this view was not universally accepted.

A member of the SWP claimed that the demand for higher wages was key because it 'went to the heart of the system.'

It was particularly disappointing that a Marxist

should claim that the price of exploitation would actually challenge it, placing it above the more political attacks that workers face. No doubt this debate will go on but the fact that it started is in itself a step forward.

The conference resolutions also showed some positive movement although their manner of introduction left much to be desired. Three pages of resolutions were distributed at lunchtime, leaving little time to read and absorb them while listening to speeches from the platform.

Only the last session was devoted to addressing the resolutions, which, as the primary outcome of the meeting, were the most important thing about the conference.

Better procedure must be adopted, especially where resolutions may be the cause of differences. In a campaign devoted to democracy we should all ensure we practice what we preach.

Fortunately the resolutions did not cause major division. In fact they reflected an

advance on the political basis of previous campaigns dealing with the question of privatisation, anti-union laws and unspecified policies for 'the transfer of wealth from the Golden circle to the workers who produce it.'

Nevertheless there is room for elaboration and clarification.

Particular resolutions were passed on trade union recognition and recruitment, against benchmarking in the public sector, to support the anti-capitalist movement, on pay claims and a workers charter in the upcoming referendum on the Nice Treaty.

The last resolution was remitted when it was pointed out that while the idea of a workers charter was a good one, the adoption of such a charter would not turn a

reactionary treaty into a good one that could be supported.

A resolution on the minimum wage was also remitted when the conference could not agree at what level it should be set at.

The resolution on the Nice Treaty had particular significance because, if implemented, it would involve a campaign inside the union movement on an explicitly political issue.

However only time will tell whether the political aspects of the resolutions will achieve the prominence they deserve.

The aims of the conference are clearly very ambitious, with a resolution passed calling for the setting up of an office and a regular bulletin.

The overall role of the campaign has still to be clarified. It would be a mistake to see it as purely one of organising solidarity - which really should be, and at present could only be, carried out by the trade union movement itself.

The real value of a rank and file campaign at present is to bring the lessons of previous struggles against partnership to groups of workers who are engaging in new struggles.

The campaign elected a committee to oversee its organisation including union representatives from ATGWU and ASTI, independent campaigners such as Des Derwin and Eddie Conlon, and members of the SWP and Socialist Party.

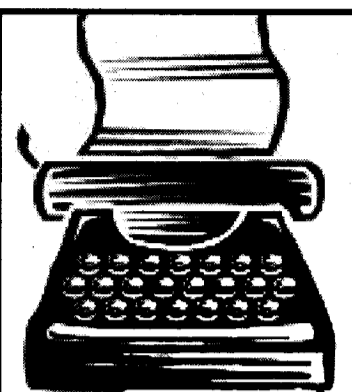
All in all, the conference was a positive start to the crucial task of winning workers to oppose partnership and fight for a genuine alternative.

It reflected the first moves to greater co-operation on the left. Hopefully the campaign will go on to demonstrate the benefits of such unity.

Speak out against intimidation

Socialist Democracy condemns absolutely the recent physical attacks and death threats against Anthony McIntyre, a member of the Irish Republican Writers Group, by a Sinn Fein supporter who had been involved in earlier acts of physical intimidation against the writer.

Our condemnation is all the stronger when we learn of Sinn Fein statements following the attack which effectively



Writeback

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 2JU. email: outlook@gn.apc.org

Crisis? What crisis?

Bubble unpopped; it's US business as usual

Socialist Outlook mistakenly suggests that the US economy's "bubble of the last five years has burst" (*US Economy: the bubble has burst*, Feb 2001).

However, by making a serious attempt to relate the movements in the US economy to the attempts by the ruling class to drive up the productivity of labour. Andy Kilmister's article represents a major advance on the approach of the SWP and SP who also foresee a recession of the US economy.

As a metaphor for an economy, a bursting bubble is always an unwise one. A bubble does not merely implode: it disappears.

As a metaphor for the US economy, it is quite misleading. The US economy will almost certainly be larger in a year's time than it is now.

Most economists agree that the growing US economy will hiccup

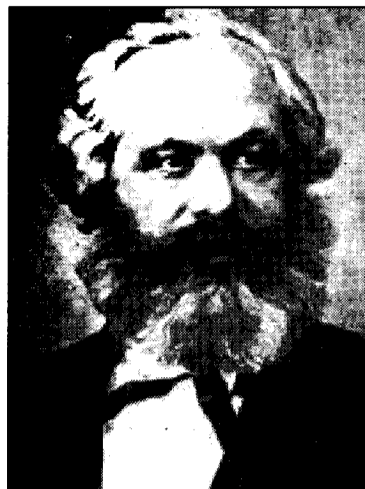
this year. In the first half, the economy will not grow. In the second half, as in the year as whole, the economy will grow.

This is certain to be slower growth than the 1950s and 1960s, when there was a unique combination of European reconstruction, cold war mobilisation and the global modernisation of industry.

On a global scale, however, the world economy in 2001 looks set to grow faster than the one percent to one and a half percent annual growth capitalism has normally seen.

Only a few years ago, comrades in the SP, SWP and ISG also foresaw a deep recession. It did not happen. They mistook stock market and currency instability for a crisis in the world economy from which there was only one way out: a world slump.

This was not the approach of



Marx: what would he say today?

Karl Marx, whose law of the falling rate of profit these comrades believed themselves to be using.

Marx presented his law of the falling rate of profit in the context

of technological change leading to increasing productivity.

Increasing capitalist accumulation does tend to reduce the rate of profit gradually.

However, Marx also outlined a number of influences that can counter this law including increasing productivity, cheaper labour, cheaper constant capital, unemployment and foreign trade.

Due to the past gains and the social weight of the working class and their allies, US imperialism has not been able to exhaust these options.

However, as Henri Wilno outlined in November's 'International Viewpoint', productivity has grown substantially in the US since 1995.

Even in Europe, the rate of profit has risen to high levels since the mid-1980s.

Duncan Chapple
South London.

Drug firms will always put profits first

The multi-national pharmaceutical companies are trying to prevent developing countries such as South Africa, Brazil and India from producing their own, cheaper, anti-HIV drugs.

Western governments seem reluctant to challenge this – seeming to expect higher ethical standards from drug companies, wishfully thinking that consideration for the well-being of all human beings will temper their drive for profit.

But why should this be so?

Whatever its motives, SmithKline Beecham, for example, is correct to say that tackling HIV takes more than

drugs, cheap or not.

People with HIV need clean water, good housing, employment, freedom from war and starvation if the drugs are to work for them.

Ensuring we are – all – healthy is not amenable to the profit motive of the pharmaceutical companies who exist to make money for the few. The point is that public health should not be left in private hands.

And, after four years of promising, it is time that our own government finally produced its HIV Strategy and made clear its own contribu-



'Let me through, I'm a Labour spin doctor'

tion to tackling HIV – here and worldwide – including calling for the companies to drop their lawsuits against developing countries such as South Africa.

John Nicholson,
Manchester

Foot and mouth madness

The government's response to the current outbreak of foot and mouth disease illustrates the barbarous nature of an economic system which treats animals as commodities and puts profit above all other considerations.

It also shows the repressive measures which the state will take to protect private property and business.

Foot and mouth disease is rarely fatal to animals and poses little danger to humans.

There is no justification for the mass slaughter of livestock from an animal welfare or human health aspect.

Foot and mouth undermines both the productivity of livestock and the market for them: the justification for slaughter is purely economic and tied up

with private production under capitalism.

The sane way to tackle foot and mouth is a vaccination programme. Yet this has always been ruled out in

Britain because it is more expensive than slaughter.

The closure of public footpaths and pressure to stay out of the countryside is highly convenient to landowners battling to frustrate the right to roam legislation.

And xenophobia is being whipped up to account for the source of the outbreak and deflect attention from the unhealthy conditions in Britain in which animals are fed, reared and slaughtered.



Socialists should intervene into the debates on the future of agriculture and the countryside.

Only a socialist programme can tackle the problems in agriculture and meet the goals of producing safe, cheap and nutritious food, providing a decent living for small farmers and rural workers, protecting the environment and treating animals with compassion.

Adam Hartman

Socialism on the web

Socialist Outlook web site: www.labournet.org.uk/so
International Socialist Group: www.3bh.org.uk/ISG

Where we stand

AS A NEW CENTURY BEGINS, the battles of the last century remain to be won. Millions of women and men are taking 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.

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 es-

sential 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 2JU. We'll be in touch.

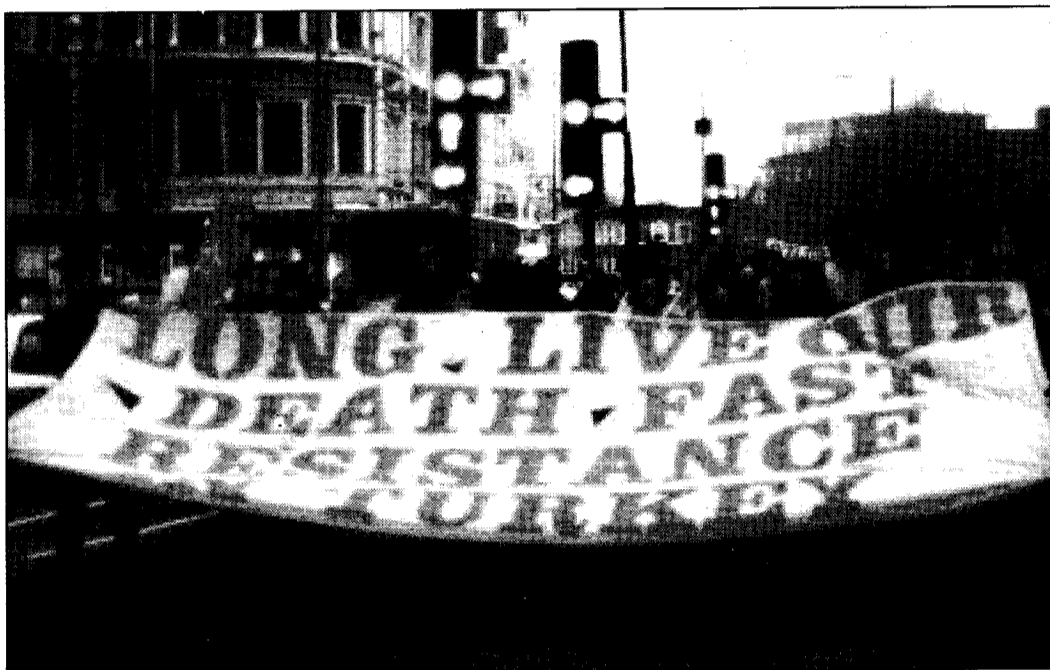
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OUTLOOK

Labour backs Turkish state terror



Who are the real terrorists in Turkey? The state torturers, repressing the Kurdish people, or those fighting torture?

TONY BLAIR's government has just published the list of organisations proscribed under its new, draconian Terrorism Act.

Among the organisations which New Labour has declared it unlawful to support are the Tamil Tigers and the Kurdish Workers Party, the PKK.

In each case the "crime" of these organisations appears to be having taken up arms to resist brutal, racist oppression by the ruling regime - Sri Lanka in the case of the Tigers, and Turkey in the case of the PKK.

But Labour ministers have remained conspicuously silent on the human rights abuses and violent, terrorist action of these governments, and most recently the full-scale, bloody

military attack on hunger-striking political prisoners by the Turkish government last December.

These attacks left 28 prisoners dead, and hundreds suffering burns, bullet wounds, the after-effects of tear-gas and smoke, and injuries inflicted during rape, torture and systematic beatings by troops and prison guards.

In its efforts to expose and challenge this state terror, the PKK has supported the Committee for Struggle Against Torture Through Isolation, which has been marching from Liverpool to London, meeting local trade unions and socialists, and showing a heart-rending video of the prison massacre.

It is bizarre and outrageous that the Terrorism Act now

means it is the **PKK** that is regarded as outside the law while the Turkish government, as a cherished NATO ally, feels able to inflict the most barbaric treatment on the Kurdish people as a whole, and to slaughter those prisoners and activists who dare to resist.

The marchers are urging the British labour movement to take up their fight for justice, and declare its opposition to the Turkish massacre.

In doing so, trade unions and other organisations should also challenge the restrictions imposed by the Terrorism Act, which by gagging protestors can only strengthen the hand of those who use state violence to oppress them.

Details: www.noisolation.de



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