

# Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 48. September 2001. 50p

# OUTLOOK

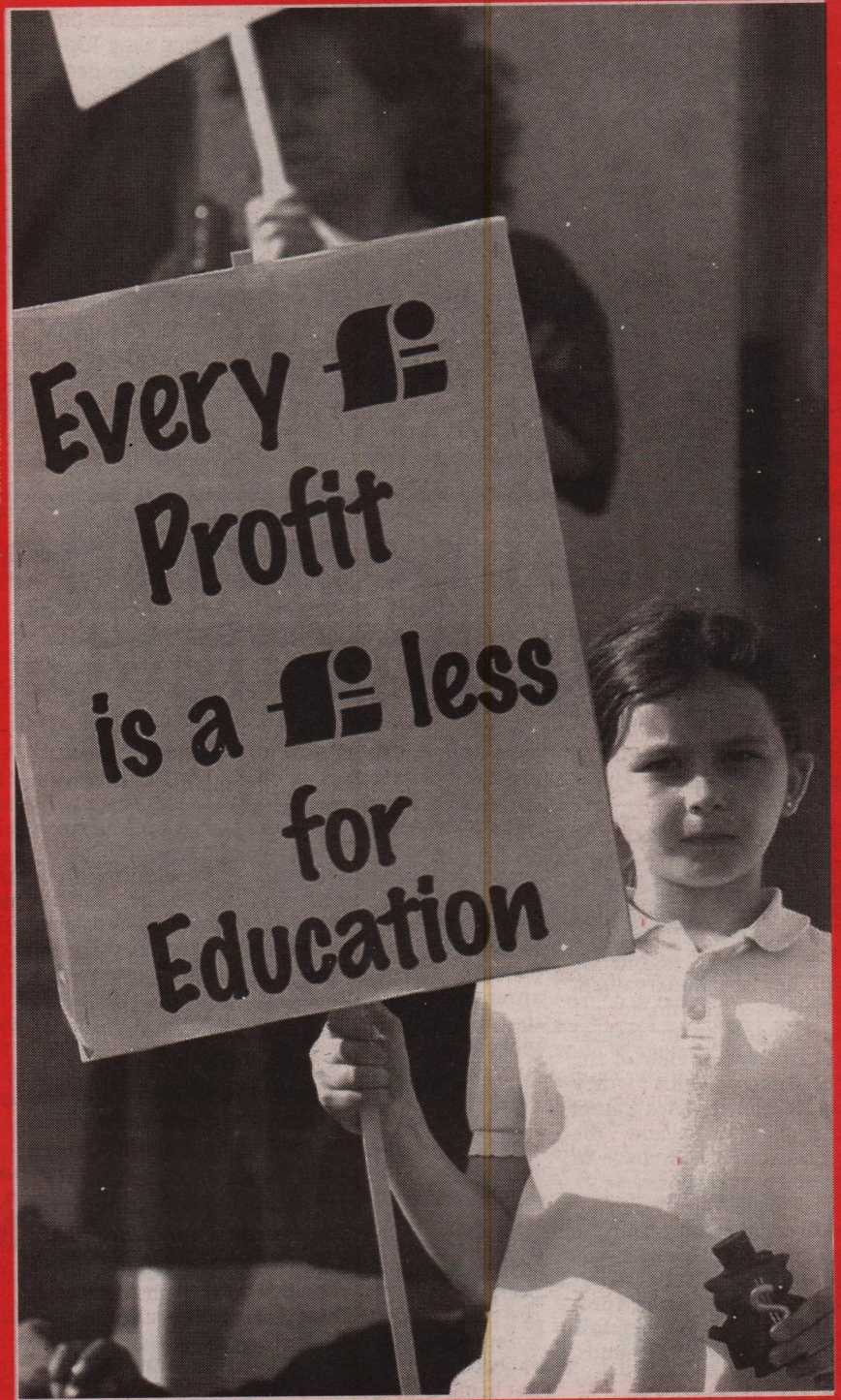
## INSIDE



20 pages on:  
Fighting  
racism ...  
After Genoa  
... Economic  
crisis ... and  
much more!

Major unions  
link up to  
challenge  
Labour's plans  
for privatisation

Keep  
public  
services  
public!



## INSIDE:

Special 4-page  
Briefing on PFI and  
PPP, pages 9-12

LOBBY Labour Party  
Conference  
BRIGHTON  
Sunday Sept 30



# Defend Greg Tucker and Mick Skiggs South West Trains witch hunt RMT activists

RMT activist and Socialist Alliance general election candidate Greg Tucker has been victimised by his employers, South West Trains, in a clear attempt to launch a major attack on the RMT.

During the general election period RMT members on South West Trains took three days of strike action to defend their union's right to organise. The dispute, dubbed "the red waistcoat dispute" by the media, concerned a number of issues, ranging from unfair application of sickness absence procedures to a refusal of the company to meet with RMT representatives.

After three days of successful strikes, the company backed down and agreed to the majority of the union's demands. It was a clear victory for the RMT.

But it is clear now that SWT management saw their climb down as only a way of gaining valuable breathing space. They immediately put into place measures to target key RMT activists.

This has now borne fruit with disciplinary action taken against Waterloo Branch Secretary Greg Tucker. As a result he has been downgraded from driver to revenue protection assistant - a ticket collector in plain language. Aside from a per-

sonal cut in wages, the clear issue here is to threaten other rail workers and undermine the RMT.

At the same time as disciplining Greg Tucker, SWT have suspended Portsmouth based RMT Guards' activist Mick Skiggs on similar trumped up charges.

For Greg the charge was "speeding", for Mick using a mobile phone "at an inappropriate moment". In both cases SWT are trying to cloak their victimisation in the garb of "safety".

That this is a joke was clear in Greg's case when the decision to downgrade him was explained as due to his long-term bad attitude.

Management took into account:

- the fact that a train he drove in 1993 ran twenty minutes late,

- that he refused to drive a train during the signal workers dispute in 1994

- and that he refused to work overtime on a day in 1999.

Two previous disciplines were taken into account despite the fact that on both occasions the charges had been withdrawn.

During the general election campaign Greg was subjected to a sustained attack by the *Evening Standard* which highlighted his election activity in joining lectur-



*Witch-hunted for political activity: Greg Tucker*

ers' and postal workers' picket lines, denounced him for his membership of the International Socialist Group and attacked his role inside the RMT.

SWT clearly decided that Greg was too high profile an employee, and had to be dealt with.

The task now is for the RMT to wage a campaign to defend Greg and Mick, not just because an injury to one is an injury to all, but

because SWT want to use these attacks to clear out any union opposition to their drive to increase profitability. All that was won in the dispute in May will be under threat.

The RMT leadership has already agreed to start the process of balloting members for industrial action. What is needed is a major campaign to convince the membership of the need to fight back.

# Medical secretaries step up pay fight

## Campbell MacGregor

North Glasgow UNISON Branch has been pursuing a regrading claim on behalf of 300 Medical Secretaries for 15 months.

The medical secretaries feel they are undervalued, overstressed and do not get the recognition or respect they deserve in view of the specialised skills they require, the complex nature of their work and the responsibility they have in relation to patient care.

The Trust have failed to resolve the dispute and the secretaries have rejected any notion that the recent National Framework proposal comes anywhere close to meeting their demands, which are:

- Unconditional upgrading to grade 4 of the Admin & Clerical Whitley Scale, in line with administrative secretaries across the Trust, with point to point assimilation (i.e. secretaries currently at the top of scale 3 should move straight to the top of scale 4).

- Retention of proficiency allowances

- Implementation back-dated to the date of submission of the claim (June 2000)

They took 3 days of strike action from 8th to 10th August after voting 91.3% in favour of action. All of the strikers are women, and many are single parents. Their normal take home pay is between £700-780 per month.

On the first day there was a very successful demo and rally, where support was received from all quarters. The strikers grew more determined and confident, particularly when the Mail

Vans refused to cross the picket-lines, even some of the supplies did not get in.

Some strikers set up stalls in the city centre, handed out leaflets and enlightened people about their claim. They collected many signatures on their petition to the Scottish Executive, and around £3000 in donations to the strike fund. Fying pickets travelled to some sites where there are not many secretaries.

The action won a commitment from the Trust not to hire agency staff and to withdraw their threat to deduct 5 days pay for 3 days strike and 2 days annual leave.

Frances Lyall, Medical Secretary said, "It seems that the only way the Trust are going to understand the value of what we do is by us not being there."

## Disruption

Carolyn Leckie, North Glasgow Hospitals Branch Secretary and Co-chair of the Scottish Socialist Party said, "It is regrettable that we are forced to take this action as it will inevitably cause disruption.

But the ability of the NHS to provide a service in the future is being put in jeopardy by failure to pay medical secretaries the correct salary to reflect the importance and complexity of the work they do.

Recruitment of Medical Secretaries and other NHS staff is becoming increasingly difficult. If this problem is not solved now, there will be very few people left willing to work in the NHS".

Carolyn told *Socialist Outlook*: "This is a significant struggle, which, if won will give confidence to all public sector workers to face and fight the battles ahead.

We need solidarity."

Until conclusion of this dispute, there will also be a strict work to rule. This will involve:

- adhering to contracted hours (no overtime, paid or unpaid) and ensuring all breaks are properly taken.

- no covering for established posts that have been vacant for more than 3 months.

- boycotting of all work associated specifically with current 'Waiting List Initiatives'.

As we go to press, a second bout of strike action from August 29-September 5 has started. On September 1, the strikers held a march through Glasgow.

The subsequent rally was addressed by speakers including MSPs Tommy Sheridan (Scottish Socialist Party) and Dorothy Grace Elder (Scottish National Party), and a member of the UNISON national executive. Messages of support and financial donations totalling around £2500 were read out, mainly from other UNISON branches, but also from the Prairie region of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and the STUC women's officers.

Carolyn Leckie said that the dispute was being undermined by national union officials, but consultants had decided effectively to support the dispute by e.g. refusing to perform operations without typed notes. The Trust was rattled.

This dispute could still be a long haul, financial support should be sent to:

Kathy McLean, Treasurer, UNISON North Glasgow Hospitals Branch, Cuthbertson Building, GRI, Castle St., Glasgow, G4 OSF

# Heavy-handed cops smash Glasgow pool sit-in protest

## Campbell MacGregor

The last issue of *Socialist Outlook* contained a report on the occupation of Govanhill pool in Glasgow.

This is a swimming pool in a particularly run-down area of the city with a large racial minority population, which the local council were attempting to close without any semblance of consultation.

After 142 days of occupation, early on the morning of August 7 the sheriff's officers moved in, accompanied by large numbers of police, to evict the occupation.

The clashes which took place were not quite Genoa, but they were some of the most serious clashes between police and protesters which I have ever seen in Britain.

When I got up that morning I read the story on teletext that the authorities had moved in. I quickly finished my coffee then headed straight down to the pool.

When I got there around 100 police were outside the building, a few hundred protesters were blocking Calder Street outside the pool, and some were also blocking nearby Victoria Rd., a main road through Glasgow, forcing police to divert traffic.

In scenes reminiscent of the north of Ireland, I noticed dustbin lids in the road, which had presumably been used to warn of the approach of the sheriff's officers. The officers were inside the building, searching for 10 protesters who they thought were hiding inside. One protester had made it onto the roof.

The crowd was multi-racial and contained several children. Most of them were local people. They were clearly in a militant mood and showed a defi-



ance of police authority that I have not often seen. Sometimes people linked arms and at other times they sat on the road to prevent the police clearing it.

At one point a police car was surrounded by the crowd, to stop it moving. As scuffles took place at various times the mood grew more heated and the police were often pelted with eggs.

I would have assumed that in a city the size of Glasgow the police might have difficulty dealing with a protest like this initially, but they would have the ability to bring in large numbers of reinforcements within a relatively short time.

This did not happen. Eventually 4 police horses appeared, which were used to charge the crowd. Although the police did gradually gain control of the street they seemed very reluctant to arrest people perhaps because they did not have the forces to do it. It took several hours before the police gained control of the situation.

A number of SSP activists

turned up at various times during the day as did SNP MSP Dorothy Grace Elder but unfortunately there was no organised attempt by the SSP to mobilise its members. I did go back to my flat for a time and try to alert SSP members myself by email but the message was only delivered a week later (this was probably just a technical hitch, but you sometimes wonder).

The SSP has supported the occupation throughout but it does not currently have the organisational ability to mobilise large numbers of people in a short time (I wish it did!). At the same time the authorities are blaming the SSP for the occupation as an excuse for ignoring the militancy of many people in Govanhill.

- 2 SNP MSPs and the SSP are calling for an enquiry into police heavy-handedness and allegations of racial abuse of protesters by the police. The struggle by Southside Against Closure is continuing, see <http://crowd.to/saveourpool>

# GMB's anti-PFI campaign raises the heat on Blair

It's just three months since the second Labour landslide victory. But one of the shortest and worst-tempered political honeymoons is already over, and things are hotting up in the public sector unions in the run-up to this year's Labour Party conference.

It may come as a surprise to some left activists, but the pace is being set – and cranked up – by the leadership of the GMB, which has followed up its decision to withhold up to £1m of its expected donation to Labour Party funds with a decision to spend this cash on campaigning against Tony Blair's privatisation offensive.

GMB leader John Edmonds and the union's publicity team have homed in on the soft target of the controversial Private Finance Initiative, especially in the NHS. Recent weeks have seen a steady stream of hard-hitting full-page GMB anti-PFI adverts in national daily papers, while the union's press office has been pumping out a series of releases which have stirred the interest of journalists and helped popularise the issue.

All the evidence from the first few weeks of this is that the GMB line is going down very well with its members and with the wider public, who have been relieved to see arguments in defence of public services and challenging the onward march of privatisation.

This of course does no harm to the GMB in its rivalry with UNISON for recruitment of public sector workers. The high-profile, hard hitting GMB offensive has caught UNISON off-guard, with its vague and plodding "Positively Public" campaign of postcards and pledges looking decidedly undynamic.

However there is a certain degree of common interest to unite the public sector unions: not only do they want to retain and extend their level of membership in the key services, but they feel the need to be seen by their members as fighting hard on their behalf.

Perhaps with a sideways glance at the potential for the development of the Socialist Alliance, the leaders of the GMB, along with their opposite numbers in UNISON and the TGWU, are also agreed in wanting to do this without splitting the existing labour movement politically.

Rather like the stranded Roy Hattersley, who wants to oppose Blair's right wing policies without embracing the politics of the left, and reject New Labour without relinquishing the old, they want to pressurise New Labour to change its policies rather than break the remaining links between the party and the unions.

The General Secretaries of all three unions will share a platform at a key fringe meeting at Labour Party conference in Brighton, under the title "Keep Public Services Public". There is talk of similar meetings at local level to build up campaigning, and even mass demonstrations and a lobby of Parliament, to be mobilised by a rather reluctant TUC.

John Edmonds sums up the approach with his warning to Blair: "By pushing ahead with public service privatisation Tony Blair is not just placing himself on a collision course with our nurses, teachers and doctors, he is on a collision course with the British public. If the Prime Minister does not pause

for thought, public service privatisation could become Labour's poll-tax".

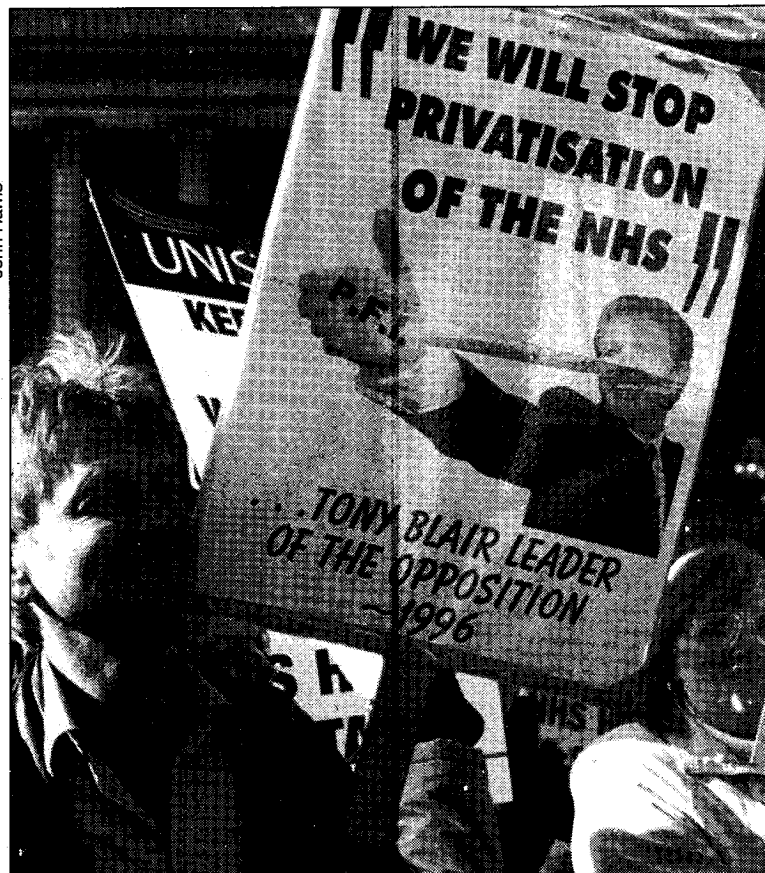
Unfortunately there are none so deaf as those who will not hear, and the unions' message has made little obvious impact on Labour ministers.

Indeed it is hard to see how – short of a full-scale U-turn on PFI, PPP on the tube and other privatisations – Labour could offer the kind of concessions that might appease the public sector unions. One effect of the GMB campaign has been to heighten popular awareness of the issues at stake, and encourage members to take more interest: they are unlikely to be impressed by any token gestures.

With the traditional back-room deals and contacts increasingly exposed as ineffective, each of the big unions has tried different ways to step up the pressure to force ministers to listen.

The GMB, with a combative campaigns team at national level but relatively little in the way of active branch membership in the NHS across most of the country, has adopted the "up and at them" approach: UNISON, with a more volatile and active base, and branches with serious resources beginning to mount their own campaigns, has taken a more cautious line of "reviewing" its political link with Labour; while TGWU leader Bill Morris, with the fewest health workers, has threatened to fund Liberal Democrat campaigns against New Labour policies.

However they may want to play it, by placing themselves at the head of an emerging popular movement



at local level, the union leaders run the danger of letting the genie out of the bottle, and triggering a much stronger resistance than they intended.

In practice the most effective way to make ministers sit up and take notice was the solid industrial action staged, by the Dudley Hospital strikers in the run-up to the election. Their stance against the enforced transfer of NHS support staff to a private contractor as part of a PFI hospital scheme forced concessions from the Trust – and has subsequently led to Health Secretary Alan Milburn announcing two new "pilot" schemes, in which support service staff would be excluded from PFI deals.

This lesson is also underlined elsewhere: the recent 2-day general strike by South African trade unions challenging the ANC government's policies of privatisation underlines the fact that even the most long-standing of traditional links between unions and political parties can be strained to breaking point if the party leaders refuse to give way.

In Britain, too, there have been periods in the past in which one or more unions, under pressure from their members, have fought against Labour governments – and won.

The more Blair, Milburn and their privatising pals dig in as defenders of the free market, PFI and PPP, the greater the pressure that will build up within the unions.

The left needs to be a part of that pressure, building the broadest possible base in the unions for the fight against privatisation, and popularising the argument for a socialist alternative.

This is an important stage in the political development of the workers' movement, as it tests out its political and union leaders and the limits of its traditional organisations. Only when key layers are convinced that a change must be made can a genuine mass political alternative be built.

As the fight develops, we can expect the rank and file and the wider campaigning sections to be more ready than their union leaders to draw the conclusion that the Labour Party has been irreversibly hi-jacked and no longer seriously pretends to represent the interests of working people.

That is why the development of the Socialist Alliance as a united left alternative is also crucial for the political development of the fight to keep private hands off our public services.

# Fight New Labour's racist policies!

In the wake of Firsat Yildiz's murder in Glasgow last month (see p5), the government announced that it was going to review its policy of dispersal of asylum seekers. Seems sensible, you might think.

Anti-racist campaigners have always opposed these measures which force people into areas without support and resources, far from any of their own communities, friends and family, as well as campaigning against the companion inequity of the voucher system.

But the reality is that any review by this government is unlikely to lead to an improvement in the desperate position of asylum seekers.

We can hardly have confidence in a government which includes Jack Straw – who tells us he sympathises with Australian Prime Minister John Howard's plight in trying to keep out the Afghani asylum seekers on the Tampa.

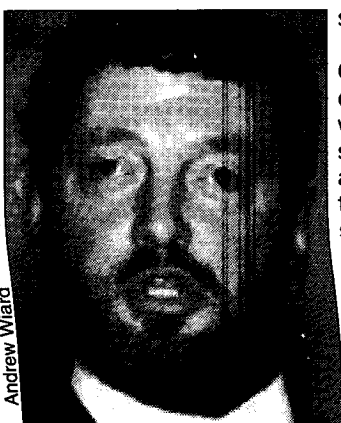
David Blunkett has shown us his determination to be an even more reactionary Home Secretary than his predecessors Straw and Michael Howard, by promising to send in snatch squads to remove people whose applications for asylum have failed.

The Home Office has set a target to increase the number of forced removals of failed asylum seekers and other illegal immigrants from 8,000 two years ago to 30,000 next year.

A pilot scheme which has seen 17 immigration officers specially trained in carrying out removals is already in operation in the Newham, Barking and Dagenham areas of east London.

A further 60 immigration staff are to be trained in September to operate as part of four teams of "enforcement officers" based in Croydon in south London, Hayes in west London, and in central London.

Despite opposition to his plans from both London Mayor Ken Livingstone and the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Blunkett has argued that these measures are necessary to restore "faith in the asylum



Blunkett: snatch squads

system".

And now we are told that the Government are co-operating with catering conglomerate Sudexho, who plan to pay asylum seekers slave wage levels of just 34 pence an hour for cleaning and cooking in the new detention centre which will shortly be opened at Harmondsworth!

Last year, New Labour promised a review of the voucher system to head off opposition at its conference lead by Bill Morris of the TGWU.

No report has emerged from that review which was concluded last December – despite large numbers of submissions from anti-racist organisations, refugee groups and trade unionists who barged their way into a consultation which was actually aimed at supermarkets!!

And the dispersal review doesn't even promise the same minimal level of consultation with anyone at all, but is merely a mechanism for the government to see if they can package their reactionary policies in a more palatable way.

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation campaigns at its Annual General Meeting in July agreed a resolution which pointed out that the so called National Asylum Support Service is consistently failing in its duty to provide for the welfare of refugees.

The resolution points out that "we have found NASS to be grossly inefficient in terms of the allocation of accommodation, with average delays of three months before allegedly appropriate housing is provided, and delays of between four to six weeks for the issue of vouchers.

"Children have been prevented from entering schools because of these delays, and the poor administration of dispersal procedures has, in many cases, led to applications for asylum being severely prejudiced".

It goes on to argue that refugee organisations should cease co-operation with NASS. This call to end co-operation has also been supported by the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, which has itself launched a petition calling for an end to the dispersal and voucher systems.

All socialists need to step up their campaigning over these issues and ensure that this time our voices cannot be ignored.



# Racist 'One Nation' vision reinforces "fortress Australia"

**Susan Moore**

**T**he plight of the 438 Afghan refugees stranded on a freighter in appalling conditions while the Australian government refused to allow them to even land on its soil rightly gained a good deal of media attention.

The inhumanity of Australian Prime Minister John Howard has been roundly condemned, as the refugees now face many thousands of miles more travel to New Zealand and to the remote Pacific island of Nauru.

On Sunday August 26, a boat carrying the refugees broke down in international waters. A Norwegian freighter received the distress calls and picked up the refugees. The captain of the freighter decided to take the refugees to Christmas Island which was the nearest port, as required by International Maritime Law.

Howard called an emergency cabinet meeting and banned the freighter from entering Australian waters, thereby preventing the refugees landing on the Australian territory of Christmas Island, in opposition to the views of those on the island.

Councillor Gordon Thompson, who is also the secretary of the island's workers' union, says residents are ashamed of the military action taken to prevent the ship from coming to port. He says community leaders have met and are unanimously behind wel-



Australian socialists have been quick to fight Howard's racism coming the boat people.

Instead, as some of the refugees started a hunger strike, Australian Special Armed Forces (SAS), boarded the freighter and tried to force the captain to start moving the boat away from Christmas Island in an act of blatant piracy. Captain Rinnan refused to take orders from the SAS and condemned the boarding party.

The crew described the panic on deck as the Afghans watched two high-speed boats close on the Tampa. One said: "A lot of them were screaming they were going to be shot or arrested. Some looked as if they were going to jump overboard as the uniformed troops got closer."

**D**esperate crewmen shouted warnings that the waters were shark-infested and pulled some young men back from the ship's rails.

The inhuman policies carried out in this case by the

Howard administration are not dissimilar to the views about refugees and asylum seekers carried through by the governments of most rich nations. Many of the difficulties faced by those trying to reach Australia are familiar to anti-racist campaigners in Britain and elsewhere in Europe.

Afghans fleeing the Taliban face persecution - public hangings and stonings are a daily reality. Any opposition to the fundamentalist regime is enough to be killed.

The exodus from Afghanistan has been one of the biggest ever - 6.3 million since 1979, with 4 million of these ending up either in Pakistan or Iraq. Women are not allowed to work, male unemployment is rife, adult literacy is just 30% and life expectancy only 45 years.

The Afghans aboard the freighter are part of a new exodus which began last year as a devastating drought compounded the existing situation.

Howard's actions over the

Tampa are part of a process in which he has adopted more and more of the "One Nation" agenda put forward by Pauline Hanson in an attempt to maintain his electoral base.

Hanson came to prominence in 1996 when she was elected to the Federal Parliament.

In the early years of the Howard government, the Coalition relied on One Nation to do the racist scapegoating of refugees for them. The emergence of One Nation from within the Liberal Party provided a perfect vehicle for the dissemination and propagation of racist ideas.

By blaming the current economic misery on isolated sections of the population - both on migrants and indigenous Australians - One Nation distracted attention from the growing gap between the wealthy and working class people.

However, One Nation was only useful as long as it did not provoke a movement capable of challenging its racist ideas. As rallies in support of indigenous rights and multiculturalism grew larger, the Coalition and the Labor parties moved to limit and destroy One Nation - without challenging the racist ideas it represented.

The Coalition merrily pinched many of One Nation's policies and racist rhetoric and continued the scapegoating of migrants, indigenous Australians and the unemployed. This mostly went unopposed by the Labor opposition, which

supported many of the worst attacks.

Over the last five years under Howard and Immigration Minister Ruddock have presided over massive and unprecedented restrictions on refugees and asylum seeker, in the context where Howard's coalition already inherited a mandatory detention policy from the previous Labor government..

**M**igrants have lost the right to all social security benefits for their first two years in the country. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has had its budget cut by more than 40%, and local migrant resource centres have faced funding cuts of up to 100%.

While immigration levels have remained relatively stable, the family reunion program has been slashed and refugee places frozen at 12,000.

The ability of skilled migrants to enter Australia, the numbers of whom have increased, has become increasingly dependent on their English language skills and their belonging to a tighter set of occupational categories.

The harshest attacks however have been inflicted on asylum seekers who arrive in Australia without proper documentation. Ruddock has introduced legislation preventing human rights organisations from accessing the camps where refugees are detained.

He has introduced regulations that ensure the immediate return of any arrivals who do not clearly ask for asylum.

The powers of coast guards to stop and board ships outside Australian waters and search for potential asylum seekers have been increased. Ruddock has ensured the passage of laws that deny asylum to anyone who may be able to get asylum in another country

**H**e introduced legislation that prevents arrivals who manage to prove their refugee status from accessing English language classes and migrant resource centres. Asylum seekers whose appeals for refugee status are rejected face heavy financial penalties for losing and are forbidden to work or receive any government payments while their cases are pending.

Ruddock's rabid attacks are not just excessive displays of bigotry but the spearhead of a concerted ideological campaign to justify major changes in Australia's immigration policy.

The end result has been a dramatic increase in the number of British and white South African migrants coming to Australia, and a dramatic decrease in migrants from the Third World.

**T**he land of opportunity has become fortress Australia. Such a dramatic shift would have been impossible without the ideological shift that the Liberals have worked hand in glove with One Nation to bring about.

In response to this assault there have been increasingly desperate protests in the detention centres, including mass breakouts from three centres when detainees decided to take their cause to nearby towns.

Anti-racists and socialists across the world have rightly seen the case of the Tampa as a focus for solidarity and opposition to the policies of the Australian government.

At the same time as pursuing this course, we also need to step up both the battles against similar policies carried through by our own governments and strengthen international co-ordination to develop a clearer picture of the way in which denial of rights to asylum seekers is at the centre of the process of capitalist globalisation.

## Australian unions join protests

There has been strong opposition to the position of the Australian government from a number of important trade unions.

The Maritime Union deplors what is essentially a military invasion of a friendly ship in peace time. National Secretary Paddy Crumlin described the actions of the Howard Government as inappropriate, inhumane and deserving of international condemnation.

"People smuggling has to be combated," he said. "But the perpetrators are the ones who need to be targeted, not the innocent victims, the master and crew of a vessel answering a distress call from a sinking ship. Nor pregnant women and children. This is nothing less than a cynical reelection gambit - Mr Howard's Falklands War."

"Furthermore the Federal Government has demonstrated breathtaking hypocrisy on the

issue," said Mr Crumlin: "Here we have a government that actively solicits foreign shipping and third world labour to carry Australian cargo between Australian ports in our domestic transport chain, now saying that to protect our national sovereignty we can not support the seafarers aboard the Tampa. This is after Australian authorities called on the captain to change course and rescue people on a sinking ship only days earlier.

The NSW Labor Council called on the government to treat the plight of refugees on the Tampa as a humanitarian crisis rather than a political opportunity.

Its Secretary John Robertson said "People are being incited by the politics of hatred - no one seems to give a toss where these people go, as long as they don't come here."

Robertson says it's up to the

union movement to stand up for both the refugees and the Norwegian crew of the Tampa, even if this was not a popular position. Meanwhile, the Labor Council has also joined those condemning the federal government's detention of asylum seekers. Robertson said the plight of six-year-old Shayan Bedraie - who faces deportation with his family - highlights the inhumanity of the current policy.

"It is clear that the processes have fallen down," Robertson says.

"We need an effective system that deals with applications quickly and transparently, not the system that currently exists which more resembles a maximum security prison."

Meanwhile, the Australian Confederation of Trade Unions has supported the Opposition parties' decision to block legislation that would have given

Australia extraordinary powers to turn back ships in distress.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow says Senators should be congratulated for their principled stand against the retrospective and draconian legislation.

"Prime Minister John Howard's clumsy and heavy-handed treatment of the refugee issue has become an international embarrassment to Australia," Burrow says.

"The Government's actions in relation to the Tampa threaten to undermine humanitarian operations under the International Law of the Sea.

"The international movement of asylum-seekers is a worldwide problem and no decent prime minister would abandon people at sea. We need a solution that meets international and Australian law. The Government's attempts to override all such legal prece-

dents deserve to be defeated by the Senate."

Burrow says Australian law allows for asylum-seekers to argue their case for refugee status.

At the same time as mounting the strongest possible opposition to the racism of the Australian state in this situation we have to also go on the offensive and demand an open border policy for all those seeking asylum across the world.

### Socialists

The Australian Socialist Alliance issued the following statement:

"PM Howard has sunk to new depths of cruelty by refusing to allow the Norwegian cargo boat MS Tampa to dock at Christmas Island", said Mr Ian Rintoul, New South Wales Senate candidate for Australian Socialist Alliance on August 30. Mr Rintoul, who is also a

spokesperson for the Sydney Refugee Action Collective, described the 438 asylum-seekers as "victims of Liberal policy on the high seas", adding that "Howard has become an international pariah". Mr Rintoul criticised the government's move to weaken the Australian laws on who constitutes a refugee and the definition of persecution.

"These people are in desperate straits. Many need medical treatment and all deserve a safe haven," Mr Rintoul said.

Fellow Senate candidate Pip Hinman, also national coordinator of Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor and detained two months ago by the Indonesian police after a raid on an academic conference in Jakarta added: "Labor should hang their heads in shame in tailing the Liberals' racist response."

"Turning asylum-seekers back



# Refugee murder unites Sighthill

Gordon Morgan

The murder of Kurdish refugee Firsat Yildiz Dag in Sighthill has brought the debate on asylum seekers onto the streets of Glasgow. On August 25 a march of over 800 people from Sighthill took place under the slogans: "Sighthill united, against poverty, against racism. Asylum seekers welcome".

Amongst the demands is the call that money Glasgow Council received from the Government for receiving asylum seekers should be spent in regenerating Sighthill.

Firsat's murder was one incident in a steadily rising stream of attacks on refugees throughout the city, especially in Sighthill. Such has been the fear amongst refugees that many have demanded to be relocated in London to escape the racist insults and attacks. In the aftermath of the murder, the Council has temporarily suspended locating refugees in Sighthill.

In the most appalling reaction to the murder, the *Daily Record* regurgitated Turkish Embassy propaganda claiming that Firsat was a bogus asylum seeker.

Their article seemed designed to justify racist attacks and exacerbate the feeling amongst the poor residents of Sighthill that refugees were getting special treatment. At the same time, the paper also came close to branding all residents of Sighthill racist.



Demonstrators on Christmas Island

on the open seas is One Nation policy. Minister Philip Ruddock and Labor counterpart Con Sciacca are legitimising Pauline Hanson's racist agenda."

Marina Carmen, preselected Socialist Alliance candidate for the seat of Kingsford Smith said that Socialist Alliance joins with refugee activists in welcoming asylum-seekers and refutes the idea they are "illegal" or "queue-jumpers".

"Under Australian law, peo-



Thousands have joined the protests in Glasgow since the murder

The *Record's* stance provoked criticism across the political spectrum. Its offices were picketed and its editor publicly isolated by other media figures on Scottish Newnight. Whilst it did not apologise, the *Record* was forced to change its line to calling for more resources for Sighthill.

Sighthill is one of the poorest areas in Glasgow in a city with 7 of the 10 worst health areas in Britain. Sighthill is amongst them. The scheme has been run down over the past 20 years and used as a sink estate for the poor and homeless. It is completely cut off from amenities - most of the supermarkets have moved out while only off licenses and expensive small shops remain.

When the asylum dispersal programme was mooted, Glasgow city council responded quickly...

The city had thousands of empty houses, many likely to

be demolished, all a drain on Council resources. The Council leaders saw the dispersal programme as a financial lifeline.

The Government would pay to have houses renovated which would mean work for Council building workers. School rolls would expand and local shopkeepers would have higher takings. The government would pay the rent

The Council's enthusiasm was immediate - it did not consider the social consequences.

They had to identify the areas of the city in which the refugees would be housed. Officers considered not only vacancy levels but also the existing ethnic mix. The parts of the City which were chosen included Pollokshaws and Pollokshields where refugees has been reasonably well integrated.

Sighthill had a large number of vacancies, but its ethnic population was largely Chinese. Officers indicated early in 2000 the problems that would arise from siting refugees in an impoverished area like Sighthill and that there would need to be support services and other resources put into the estate if this was going to work.

These recommendations were either vetoed or ignored by the council. Only now after the attacks and murder are similar proposals resurfacing.

Like everywhere else Glasgow suffered from the general chaos of the dispersal programme. People arrived at different times and different numbers than expected.

Practical problems result from this. Houses are made ready for a certain time: if no one arrives, the houses have to be shuttered up - otherwise it is likely to be stripped of all furnishings and fittings within a few hours.

Such was the chaos that Glasgow stopped the dispersal programme after a fortnight until better communications were established with

London.

If communication with London was poor, Glasgow Council's communication with its citizens was non-existent.

Initially residents in Sighthill were told Kosovans were coming - which is what the council was itself told.

However when the government changed this plan, the council remained silent. Local people were given no information about what was going on in Iran or Kurdistan or Afghanistan.

Refugees from over 20 countries, speaking over 20 separate languages, were dumped in a relatively small scheme in Glasgow. The Glasgow council translation service has no service in some of the relevant languages, and inadequate resources for others. The demand for its services has risen over 10 fold in the last year and it is not coping.

Police and social workers have been unable to communicate with many refugees and hence attacks were officially unreported. In practice the police had no presence in Sighthill (as in many schemes in Glasgow) and denied there was any problem until a stream of victims appeared in the national press.

Finally a series of community initiatives have been taken by the police, but they will only persist if they are closely monitored.

The major problem is the poverty and ignorance of the community.

People saw flats being done up for people they knew nothing about while their houses remained in a state of disrepair.

And this took place in a situation where both the main political parties and the press were whipping up a witch-hunt against supposedly bogus asylum seekers as freeloaders.

The Council has done nothing for existing resi-



CHALLENGING racism in local press: Birmingham protestors picketed the *Evening Mail* which had blamed asylum seekers for withdrawal of free passes for blind people

dents, who have been demanding housing repairs for years. An essential demand has been for a community drop-in centre where people can meet - this has been refused on cost grounds for years. As in other schemes, youth gather in gangs and attack strangers. In Sighthill when they attack asylum seekers this appears, - indeed may be - racist.

The Scottish Socialist Party has always campaigned against the government's dispersal policy. The SSP together with the SWP and others were instrumental in setting up the Glasgow committee to Welcome Refugees to provide practical support and raise awareness in the local communities that refugees were coming and to make them welcome.

This umbrella organisation has been at the forefront of campaigning on the issue and has linked with existing community and anti racist campaigns. As refugees became established in localities, more local campaigns were established which linked to community organisations.

In Sighthill the problems of poverty were identified early and taken up. With the attacks on refugees, the role of racism in the attacks came up. The police had identified a number of youth who were regularly attacking asylum seekers.

The Council decided that this was racial harassment, and decided to evict the mother of the youths. At a meeting with the local community the Campaign to Welcome Refugees including Tommy Sheridan were made aware of the real anger at the way the community was being treated by the Council and the ignorance about the real position of refugees.

By acting against one tenant, the Council was compounding its own lack of investment and education and would only foster racist reaction.

A campaign to unite the local residents and the refugees to demand improved facilities in Sighthill was established, Sighthill United. A letter opposing the eviction of the mother was sent to the Council and the press by Tommy Sheridan, Bill Speirs of the STUC and various anti racist campaigners.

These events preceded the murder and the BNP-related

riots in England.

At the same time as these discussions were taking place, the BNP were beginning to organise. The BNP has had a presence in Scotland for some time and has in the past worked to involve Loyalists around Rangers and attack the Asian population in Govanhill.

They have been prevented from holding anything other than clandestine meetings for some years and in general have been prevented from open leafleting.

After their successes in England, the BNP threatened to hold a series of meetings in Scotland. A vigorous response by local activists including ANL and SSP members in Pollokshields saw 300 demonstrate at a few hours notice and saw the arrest of BNP leafleters. The meetings were called off.

The ANL were planning a series of meetings throughout Britain and included one in Glasgow. Unfortunately at this stage the murder of Firsat took place in Sighthill.

The ANL meeting had apparently been called without discussion within the SSP. The SSP had decided the emphasis of the response to the murder was to promote a campaign against the conditions leading to racism, poverty and ignorance - using the Sighthill United campaign. This took place in the context of the *Record* accusations that the whole of Sighthill was racist.

Then ANL posters went up around Sighthill with the slogan "No Return to the Holocaust". Leaders of the SSP were furious with the SWP, the main movers in the ANL.

They felt that since the SWP is also part of the SSP leadership, they should not be acting in a way which was in fact against party policy. Heated discussions took place within several Glasgow SSP branches and the West of Scotland Committee of the SSP and a resolution criticising the SWP platform was passed.

In the event the ANL meeting took place with representatives of the STUC and Tommy Sheridan speaking. The open airing of political differences (which were very small on matters of strategy, rather more so on tactics) has been seen as very beneficial.



# “Genoa made Prague seem like a picnic”

**Campbell McGregor travelled to Genoa as part of a Globalise Resistance contingent from Scotland Below he shares some of his impressions of the time he spent there.**

I arrived in Italy through Milan Malpensa airport, successfully trying to look like an ordinary tourist. Later I heard that a number of Scottish people who had been involved in protests at Faslane nuclear submarine base were turned back, so my concerns had obviously been justified.

When I got to Genoa I visited the Red Zone on the last day that it was open to the general public. The level of security had to be seen to be believed.

The whole boundary of the zone was a ring of steel, with a reinforced fence several feet high. The only place I have seen anything like this was Belfast, and this made even Belfast look tame.

During the three days before the G8 summit started I attended a number of meetings organised by the Genoa Social Forum, discussing the struggle against globalisation, poverty, and world debt.

On Thursday July 19 the first demonstration in the

programme took place, in support of asylum seekers. Even then it was evident that a huge mobilisation was building. I heard that the official police estimate was 30 000, twice what the organisers had expected, so we can only guess what the actual figure was. Later that day Rifondazione Comunista held a rally with speakers from several leftist parties in Europe.

Friday was the direct action day, with various different protests across the city. I was with a contingent including people from Globalise Resistance in Glasgow who made it to the Piazza Dante at the edge of the Red Zone.

Many protesters simply banged plastic bottles against the fence and let off balloons. Eventually the police decided to turn water cannon on the protesters, but the force was largely lost by firing through the fence.

Then some protesters did bring down a piece of fence (not the main fence protecting the Red Zone, but an outer fence protecting a gate). After this an organiser announced that it had been a good protest and we should all go to Piazzale Kennedy, one of the bases of the Social Forum.

After most protesters had already left the Piazza Dante, the police threw a few tear gas canisters at

those still leaving, which was pretty vindictive, there were shouts of “No panic!” at other protesters and “Bastardi!” at the police.

On Saturday the main march took place. The streets near the start of the route in Piazza Sturla became packed, filled with a sea of red flags, any hope of a coherent start point or time became lost in the sheer numbers, which have been estimated at 300 000.

We marched along the sea front, with police helicopters overhead and police and naval vessels patrolling off the coast.

I could see that there was trouble taking place ahead, with clouds of tear gas and smoke at the point where the march was supposed to turn away from the sea front up the Corso Torino. The organisers were diverting the march away from this up the street before, the Via Casaregis, but the police charged forward up 2 streets and threw a large number of tear gas canisters at people who were marching past peacefully.

The street seemed to fill with tear gas in a short space of time and some people were quite badly gassed. It was quite nerve wracking because it was very crowded and it could have been nasty if any panic had developed, but it did not.

The march was broken up

into small groups, some never got any further, but others straggled towards the end point in Piazza Galileo Ferraris by various routes. Eventually we rejoined the official route on the Corso Sardegna.

At the end point the organisers had called off their plans for a rally and were advising people to leave, as the situation had become too dangerous with the police attacking from several directions.

On Sunday I went to a press conference called by the GSF, around 1000 people turned up through word of mouth, their interpreters volunteered to carry on working unpaid. On the Saturday, I had heard rumours that somebody had been killed, but I now got the story of how Carlo Giuliani had been shot by a carabinieri.

I spoke to a woman I knew from Dundee who had been nearby when he was shot, she had seen his body on the ground and still seemed shaken. The press conference began with a minute's silence for Carlo.

People were also appalled to hear about the attack on the Social Forum press

office, located in a school for the deaf, which had taken place the late on Saturday night.

The police had arrived on foot and trucks, there had been screams and cries from people in the school, most people were taken away on stretchers, and either hospitalized or arrested.

People arriving at the school in the aftermath of the attack had slipped on fresh blood on the floor. 3 computers were totally destroyed and documents disappeared.

There is evidence that there were some police agents among the protesters. One plainclothes policewoman who took part in the raid on the school was wearing a “No G8” t-shirt. A video was shown, in which “protesters” went up to police lines and had a friendly chat with them.

The police claimed that some incriminating objects were found in the school, such as penknives, but these

objects could have been found on any building site, and anyway the school was open to anyone, the Social Forum could not examine all people staying there.

On Tuesday I took part in a protest with several thousand people in the Piazza de Ferrari in the centre of the Red Zone, very near the Ducal Palace where the G8 summit took place, against Carlo's killing and police violence more generally.

Similar protests took place at the same time across Italy, including 100 000 in Milan. Later I visited the spot where Carlo was killed, it had been turned into a shrine with flowers and memorabilia.

I thought the protests in Prague against the IMF/World Bank conference were dramatic, but Genoa made Prague look like a picnic. Although Prague was a serious mobilisation, there was an element of “revolutionary tourism” about it.

Genoa on the other hand was a serious test of strength between the Italian labour movement, with support from the anti-globalisation movement internationally, and the new Berlusconi government. Both sides knew what the stakes were.

There were large contingents from Rifondazione Comunista and some Italian trade unions.

It was also a serious international mobilisation (although this may have been overshadowed by the sheer size of the Italian mobilisation) there were sizeable contingents from Britain, Greece, and France, I met a Dane and a Swiss, and even spotted a placard from the Philippines.

Contrary to what some British people might assume, clashes on this scale are not normal in Italy, the last time anyone was killed on a demonstration in Italy was 1977.

One Italian said to me that the tear gas attack on Saturday was the worst he had ever known.

The international labour movement should continue to mobilise against such international bodies wherever they meet, and should also give solidarity to the Italian labour movement in its struggle against the repression of the Berlusconi government.



# Left takes the fight for justice to Rome

**Adam Hartman**

AS PART of a loud and vigorous delegation of fifty young militants from the Fourth International Youth Camp in Central Italy I joined the over-30,000 strong demonstration in Rome on July 24 against the police violence in Genoa and in solidarity with the Genoa Social Forum (GSF).

We held a minute's silence in honour of Carlo Giuliani, called for the resignation of Interior Minister Claudio Scajola, and demanded the release of the scores of protestors still being held in police cells.

Similar demonstrations were taking place virtually everywhere in towns and cities throughout Italy. In total 150,000 people took to the streets in a spontaneous outburst of protest against the killing of Carlo Giuliani and the beating, arrest and torture of dozens of people during and after the midnight raid on the Roberto Diaz school and the GSF headquarters.

The protests put huge pressure on the government to explain how the police brutality and violation of basic



Conspiring against protestors: Berlusconi (right) with his “post” fascist deputy Fini

legal protections and rights could have been allowed to occur in a supposedly democratic country.

There is widespread fear that the repression in Genoa signals a return to the “strategy of tension” last used by the state in the 1970s to criminalise and disorientate the mass left-wing workers, student and women's movement of the time.

At first the government tried to face down demands for Scajola's

resignation and for a parliamentary inquiry, with Berlusconi trying to distance himself and his ministers from the actions of the police.

But this position was impossible to sustain as evidence emerged of the role of “post-fascist” Deputy PM Gianfranco Fini in finalising the security plans for Genoa and his presence in the police “war room” along with four Alleanza Nazionale MPs on the Saturday of the

protests.

Clearly the government was involved in the repression at the highest level.

Berlusconi conceded the demand for a parliamentary inquiry and the opposition, including the previously outspoken Left Democrats, conveniently dropped its demand for Scajola's resignation and its threats to mobilise thousands more in protest.

The demonstrations signalled a new mood on the Italian left: of shock, as the new government, with several (so-called post-) fascists in key posts, threatens to uproot democratic rights and extend state control over the media; and of determination not to be terrorised off the streets by state violence and to redouble the effort to build a mass movement both against the government and against neo-liberal globalisation.

Social Forums are springing up across Italy as the movement gathers force. The Partito Rifondazione Comunista is set to play a key role in this movement. The Left Democrats however must decide





There was a big turn-out for the earlier demonstration in support of asylum seekers



The Italian police had prepared a special Genoa welcome for the anti-capitalist protestors

### Terry Conway

I travelled to Genoa for the demonstration on July 21 on a bus from Belgium, rather than on the Globalise Resistance train, because I was then going on to the Fourth International Youth summer camp near Rome with other comrades. This meant that it was unfortunately only possible for us to get to Genoa for the main demonstration on the Saturday.

Before I left Britain I saw the reports of the huge demonstration in support of asylum seekers, for open borders on July 19. This demonstration, which was completely peaceful, was much larger than the organisers predicted. It made me want to get to Genoa even more.

On Friday morning I travelled to Brussels and then left the city around 6pm. Shortly after we left, reports began to come through that two demonstrators were dead – though the information we could get at this time was very patchy. Radio reception was poor and we were not managing to get through to comrades already in Genoa to find out more.

People were obviously very concerned and we began to discuss how we would organise ourselves on the demonstration. We agreed to split into groups of 5 who would decide collectively how to operate when we were in the city.

This was very useful as in a huge demonstration it is virtually impossible to stay together in a large group, but it is also vital when the police are being extremely aggressive that people don't get left behind.

We also exchanged tips about what to do if you are sprayed with tear gas – and subsequently managed to get some of the lemons that would come in very handy free from the next service station – though I doubt the cashier knew why we wanted them!

We drove through the night, managing to get a little sleep despite the fact the seats were uncomfortable and we were anxious about what would await us in Genoa.

Around 6am we drew near to the Swiss/Italian border. Well I say near, at this point

## From Genoa ... to Brighton! Linking up, fighting back

we were probably 50km away, but already in a traffic jam caused by the police checks at the border. It took over an hour to actually get to the frontier.

Eventually we crawled to the check point itself. The bus was stopped and conspicuously armed police boarded. Each bag in the body of the bus was searched

continue on our way to Genoa, the first hurdle passed.

We were stopped again as we entered the city itself, some hours later. This time things were a little quicker – only the body of the coach was searched and we were not body searched.

When we arrived, just before 2pm which was the

International contingent and march together with other comrades from across Europe.

The biggest contingent was from the LCR in France but there was also a significant turn out from the Portuguese PSR as well as comrades from Luxembourg, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Spain and Greece.

Unfortunately the police had prevented us linking up with the Italian comrades who were elsewhere as part of the Rifondazione contingent.

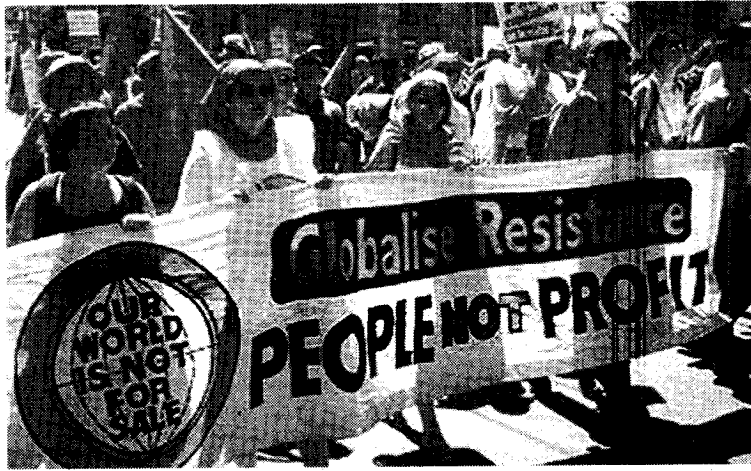
The sense of strength which came from so many people assembled reached its greatest heights when around 4 o'clock the story went through the crowd that the summit had

ended. Huge cheers echoed across the streets and there was a palpable sense that we were winning this battle against neo-liberal globalisation.

The positive atmosphere was also enhanced by the enormous support the march clearly had from the people of Genoa. It was a baking hot day – and virtually every shop and café in the city was closed as it had been for days previously.

Many people came out on to their balconies as the crowds went past, waving and shouting at the protestors. A significant number hung banners from their homes. I think there was one person I saw during the whole afternoon who was not supportive.

The most tangible piece of solidarity however was eminently practical – people threw down water to the



and our passports taken from us. At the same time, other officers were rifling through the luggage compartments.

Then we were made to get off the bus and segregated into male and female groups to have a fairly thorough body search. Then we were left to sit in the by now searing heat for some time without being told what was going on.

During all of this, various possessions had been taken from people – a small hammer which was packed with a tent and clearly intended for bashing in tent pegs into dry Italian soil was taken, but so was a full bottle of gin. I am not sure what aggressive purpose this was assumed to serve, but its owners didn't get it back.

Eventually we were allowed to get back onto the bus and our passports were returned. At around 10am we were able to

scheduled time for the demonstration to start, things were already in full swing.

Given the events of the day before, and the murder of Carlo Gulliano by the police, even more protestors had arrived in the city than had been anticipated. Organisers had hoped for 150,000 but almost twice that many turned up.

The massive contingents of Italian metalworkers, fresh from the strike action they had been involved in over the previous weeks, were very noticeable.

We could taste the tear gas in the air and see that the police were blocking a number of side streets, breaking up the march and causing chaos. Despite that, the atmosphere was extremely festive – it was clear that police violence had not succeeded in intimidating people into going home.

Despite the chaos we managed to find the Fourth

streets below in whatever containers they could lay their hands on.

Hose pipes were probably the most popular and the march became even more chaotic as people tried to ensure they walked under the stream to cool down a little as well as got a mouth full of liquid. Some were lucky enough to even have bottles of mineral water rained on them.

Genoa was another milestone in the development of the anti-globalisation movement, particularly in terms of the weight of the mobilisation from Italy itself.

This strength was further confirmed by the subsequent protests which took place in protest at Carlo's death and against police brutality in the days that followed.

There is no doubt that the tactics of police intimidation did not succeed in weakening the determination of the movement to protest against the inequities of global capitalism.

Before Genoa, the world's "leaders" had already cancelled the Barcelona summit.

They decided that the WTO summit would take place in Qatar to deter us. But the response has been for the ICFTU to call a day of trade union action on November 9 to co-incide with Qatar.

In the US the AFL-CIO have called a Global Justice week of action from September 26 to October, which will take action

- In defence of immigrants

- Against Bush's Fast Track trade negotiations

- For Debt Cancellation

- In opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

In Europe, a key focus will be actions in Brussels in December during the summit to be held at the culmination of the Belgian presidency of the European union.

Internationally, plans are maturing for the second Social Forum to be held in Porto Alegre next year.

All these mobilisations and more will form the international context for the march at Labour Party conference on September 30.

Here in Britain as well as across the world, strengthening the link between fighting neo-liberalism at home and abroad in a key task facing all socialists.

### Global health fraud

ONE OF the issues which Tony Blair claimed justified the need for the Genoa summit was to make progress on the long-promised Global Health Fund to tackle diseases, especially in Africa.

The WHO points out that deaths from malaria could be cut by as much as 97% by the correct intervention.

The cost of such measures would up to \$10-\$20 billion in the developing countries, some of which could come from debt relief.

But despite extensive lobbying prior to Genoa, only \$1.3 billion has so far been offered towards the WHO target, and even this may be a one-off payment.

Indeed the situation could be even worse than it looks, since the limited allocation of new money seems certain to come with strings attached.

The plan was always for much of the money to be used to buy drugs and vaccines – most of them from suppliers in the "donor" countries.

But the global bodies overseeing this "partnership" between governments, NGOs and the private sector are unrepresentative, and unaccountable to those they are supposed to be assisting.

In some cases they insist that services are re-shaped to use more modern – and more costly – drugs from the major pharmaceutical giants, with no guarantee they will be able to afford to continue to buy future supplies.

The focus on developing services based on high value drugs – not least in the treatment of HIV/AIDS victims – is diverting from the need for much cheaper preventative measures, which can cut off the route by which the disease is spreading throughout much of Africa.

Provision of condoms, the most cost-effective means of prevention, has barely increased during the last five years, and is only around a quarter of the level required to match the highest provisions in African countries.

The additional supplies to fill the "condom gap" could be produced for just \$48m.



Andy Kilmister

**Marx's warnings confirmed**

**R**ecord consumer borrowing as house prices boom. A growing trade deficit as consumption sucks in more and more imports. Increasing worries about the value of the pound. Seems familiar?

In many ways the British economy at the moment looks very like it did in the late 1980s during the 'Lawson' boom. Like Gordon Brown, Nigel Lawson was regarded as a miracle-working Chancellor who had managed to eliminate public sector borrowing and start repaying government debt.

Yet within a few years the economy was in recession and the government budget deficit had soared. It became apparent that Lawson and the Tories had failed to eliminate the underlying weaknesses of British capitalism, and this led in large measure to their defeat in the 1997 election. Will the same happen to Brown and to Labour?

To answer this we need to look both at the specific problems of the British economy and the way in which these interact with growing global economic weakness.

It seemed likely two years ago that the British economy would slow down sharply in the wake of the Asian crisis of 1997 and 1998. In the event this did not happen, and the maintenance of growth was an important element in Labour's success in winning a second term in government.

**T**his happened for three main reasons. First, the rapid US boom kept the world economy growing at a reasonably fast rate. The USA took in British exports and also growth in the US stimulated production in Asia and Europe, which in turn benefited British exporters.

Second, Britain as a leading imperialist investor has benefited greatly from soaring profits and asset values elsewhere in the world, especially in the US. Over the last few years the British balance of payments has increasingly come to depend on profits and investment income from abroad.

Third, the last two years have seen a significant upturn in both company and household borrowing in Britain, fuelled by low interest rates and a rise in house prices. This is now being backed up by the extra government spending declared by Brown over the last year. Much of this is being channelled into the private sector through mechanisms such as PFI/PPP, but it still has an expansionary effect on the economy.

The problem for Brown is that the first two of these factors are no longer operating. With the US economy slowing, and profits and stock markets falling in the USA and elsewhere, growth in Britain is becoming increasingly dependent on a domestic credit boom. This is at the root of the growing trade deficit and fears of a housing market bubble.

The worry for Labour is that if the problems of the balance of payments result in a collapse of the value of the pound then they will have to raise interest rates to maintain its level and to stop higher import prices pushing up inflation. With companies and households having extended their borrowing so much this runs the risk of repeating the experience of the early 1990s.

Just as for Lawson, this situation results from the underlying weak position of that portion of British capitalism which is based in Britain, and its inability to generate sustained growth which is not based on borrowing binges.

Key to changing this is the issue of productivity – and Brown has stressed this continually over the last few years. Yet a recent article in *The Economist* of June 23 showed how little he has actually been able to achieve through the market-based measures favoured by New Labour.

Over the first term of the Labour government productivity growth actually decreased compared with the Major years. With productivity rising more sharply in the USA than previously, Britain slipped further behind – and remained just as far behind other

# British economy falters as world growth slows



Stuck for answers: European Central bank boss Wim Duisenberg and Japanese Premier Koizumi

European countries as it had been before.

The relatively stable growth rates of output during Brown's tenure as Chancellor have been based more on international factors than on a transformation of production conditions within Britain.

Over the last few months, global growth has continued to slow. Previous issues of *Socialist Outlook* have argued that the problems of global capitalism result from an interlinked set of more specific imbalances. In particular, three are crucial; the bursting of the US bubble, the continued stagnation in Japan and turbulence in the so-called 'emerging markets'.

The key aim of the global capitalist class over the last few years has been to try to avoid these different crises coming together to form one synchronised global economic crisis. This was at the basis of the US Federal Reserve's reckless expansion of the American economy in order to overcome the effects of the currency crises in Asia, Russia and Brazil in the late 1990s.

**T**he danger for global capitalism at present is that these various difficulties are more closely connected than they have been at any point for the last decade. *The Economist* recognised this very clearly in its editorial of August 2, saying that 'so far this downturn is not deep, but it could be the most synchronised since the 1930s'.

This results both from the growing integration of trade and investment relations summed up in the term 'globalisation' and from the key role played by the USA over the last five years in stimulating international growth. As a result the effect of the current US slowdown has been magnified dramatically.

Slower growth in the US is now affecting both the European and the Asian economies. Germany is effectively stagnating. In Asia, Singapore and Taiwan, two countries which did not devalue in the 1997 crisis, are in recession, while the majority of other countries in the region have seen sharp falls in their growth rates compared to 1999 and 2000.

The same pattern has been repeated in South America: Brazil which devalued in 1999 is growing slowly, while Argentina, which did not, has been in recession for three years. The result has been a growing threat of

currency crises in the developing world, with Argentina and Turkey most at risk.

The largest developing economy in Asia, China, is maintaining a high rate of growth only through a massive increase in government borrowing at a time when there is already a huge level of bad debt in the banking system.

The Asian economies have been unable to turn their exports from the USA to Japan, because the Japanese economy continues to refuse to grow, despite a government budget deficit which is approaching 10 percent of GDP and interest rates now fixed at zero. The mandate of the new Koizumi government is to try to overcome this through 'structural' reform and deregulation.

Yet this is a very risky strategy for capital to try in Japan, where business activity has been dependent on so many informal networks and linkages for decades. In addition, there remains considerable political disagreement about who should pay for the accumulated debts stored in the Japanese banking system.

How can we explain the current global slowdown? Here the assessments of both *The Guardian* and *The Economist* are of interest. In its editorial of August 25 *The Guardian* argues that "most recessions in the 20th century were triggered by central banks raising interest rates to curb inflation. The current slowdown looks more like a 19th century-style recession, caused by the bursting of an investment bubble".

*The Economist* agrees: "this downturn may differ from previous ones [in] that it has not been caused by a collapse in demand after central banks have raised interest rates to fight inflation. Instead it is an investment-led downturn."

**I**n other words, the mechanisms underlying the crisis look remarkably like those pointed to by Karl Marx in his account of economic crises a century ago!

The fundamental basis of the current crisis, as in Marx's analysis, is a collapse in investment caused by a fall in profitability. The long-run background to this is the tendency for profit rates to fall as higher capital spending undercuts the basis on which profits are made, the exploitation of living labour. However, this long-run trend is translated into a cyclical pattern of booms and slumps through particular circumstances which dif-

fer at different points of capitalist development.

The key immediate factors bringing about the current crisis are threefold.

- Firstly, there is the investment boom associated with the hype over the 'new economy', information technology and the internet. This led to a speculative wave of investment unrelated to any realistic expectations of future profitability.

- Secondly, there is the international inflation of asset values, particularly in the stock market, as mobile money capital seeks a home in a world where productive investment opportunities are limited.

- Thirdly, there are the specific actions taken by the major industrialised economies, especially the US to deal with the problems of the second half of the 1990s.

Fear that the Asian crisis would spread persuaded them to allow a dangerous increase in borrowing which appears increasingly unsustainable.

**T**wo important questions arise from this. Is this really a new kind of downturn, unlike those of the mid 1970s, early 1980s and early 1990s? How serious are the prospects for global capitalism? The answers to these are in fact related.

The contrast presented by *The Economist* and *The Guardian* between the current slowdown and those in the past is overstated. The mechanisms of over-investment and over-production identified by Marx were present in previous recessions as well.

However, there is an important difference which should be noted. In the post World War 2 period, national economies remained to a certain extent insulated from one another, particularly in services as opposed to manufacturing.

This meant that one strategy open to capital when faced with falling profits was to try to recoup the money by raising prices.

This in turn led to an upsurge in working-class militancy and a rise in inflation rates which threatened investment incomes and the future stability of the system. For this reason central banks were prepared to intervene in order to bring inflation down, even at the cost of recession.

As national barriers have come down and international competition has increased, this has become a less and less viable strategy for capital to follow. The inflation levels preceding the slump of 1975 were higher than those before 1980 and much higher than those before 1990. Now competition is so intense that inflation is relatively low.

This might appear to mean that capital has more scope in managing the crisis than in the past. Both the US and Japanese governments have tried to exploit this by raising spending, cutting taxes and lowering interest rates. *The Economist* argues that the European governments should follow their example by scrapping the post-Maastricht 'stability pact' limiting government borrowing.

**B**ut in many ways the crisis has actually become more difficult to manage rather than easier. The place of price rises in providing a short-term way out of the crisis for weaker capitals has been taken by increases in borrowing.

And just as the levels of inflation preceding crises have tended to fall over time, so have the levels of household and corporate debt tended to rise. This in turn has strengthened the tendency to over-investment.

For these reasons, the current slowdown is likely to prove difficult to manage both in Britain and elsewhere.

It may well be that a synchronised recession is headed off. But this can probably only be achieved by implementing policies which will contribute to the build up of debt and the shaky financial structures which helped to bring the recession about in the first place.

This in turn will leave capitalism even more vulnerable to the outcome of the next wave of speculative investment.

The opportunities for socialists to argue that global capitalism is an inherently unstable system which cannot ensure security and prosperity for the majority, and to stress the relevance of Marx's analysis in showing this, are better than they have been for years.



**Socialist Outlook Special**

**PFI/PPP Briefing**



# Bankers' licence to rip off NHS

**John Lister**

**D**ebate over private sector involvement in the financing and delivery of health services has steadily increased over the last few years. Last autumn Health Secretary Alan Milburn signed the controversial "concordat" with private medical providers, under which the NHS will pay for the treatment of waiting list patients in "spare" beds in private hospitals.

In February, Milburn unveiled the latest list of major hospital schemes which he has given the go-ahead to proceed using private funding, as part of the government's declared goal of establishing £7 billion-worth of hospitals funded through the "Private Finance Initiative" by 2010, as set out in last year's NHS Plan.

During the election campaign, and in Labour's election manifesto there was an emphasis on increased "partnership" with the private sector in the provision and operation of hospital services, including the establishment of new stand-alone "health factories" to deliver elective (waiting list) treatment.

During the summer came the shock announcement that the NHS had bought up a loss-making 95-bed private hospital specialising in heart surgery: it had been running with only 50 percent of its beds occupied. Managers of the UCLH Trust that will take it over admitted that over a third of the patients in this new "NHS hospital" will be continue to be private patients.

This increased involvement with, dependency upon and indebtedness of the NHS to the private sector has been strongly opposed by all of the organisations representing health workers. Among the most vocal critics has been the British Medical Association, which has consistently rejected the core assumptions of the Private Finance Initiative.

**What is PFI?**

The initials stand for Private Finance Initiative: PFI is a Tory policy, first devised in 1992, which was strongly denounced by Labour's shadow ministers until a few months before the 1997 election.

According to Tory Chancellor Kenneth Clarke, who in 1993 intro-

duced the policy, initially for NHS projects costing £5m or more, PFI means:

"Privatising the process of capital investment in our key public services, from design to construction to operation."

Despite its popularity with ministers, and especially with the Treasury team, PFI has incurred the increasingly vociferous opposition of the BMA, the Royal College of Nursing, almost all trade unions, local campaigners in affected towns and cities, and a growing body of academics.

## What does the policy involve?

**L**arge-scale building projects, which would previously have been publicly funded by the Treasury, were to be put out to tender, inviting consortia of private banks, building firms, developers and service providers to put up the investment, build the new hospital or facility, and lease the finished building back to the NHS – generally with additional non-clinical support services (maintenance, portering, cleaning, catering, laundry, etc).

Lease agreements for PFI hospitals are long-term and binding commitments, normally at least 25 years. The NHS Trust involved, instead of paying capital charges to the Department of Health on its NHS assets, pays a "unitary charge" to the PFI consortium, which would cover construction costs, rent, support services, and the risks transferred to the private sector.

The big difference from capital charges is that not only are the costs much higher, but PFI "unitary payments" don't circulate back within the NHS. Instead they flow into the coffers of the private companies, from where they are issued as dividends to shareholders.

The appeal of PFI both to the Tories and to the Labour govern-

ment is that it enables new hospitals and facilities to be built without the investment appearing as a lump sum addition to the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

The government can appear to be funding the "biggest ever programme of hospital building in the NHS", while in practice injecting less public capital than ever. Only six major NHS-funded schemes, totalling less than £300m, have been given the go-ahead since 1997.

By contrast, the Labour government has so far given the go-ahead to 38 PFI-funded NHS schemes totalling almost £4 billion, and aims to increase this to £7 billion by 2010. The NHS Plan calls for a total of 100 new hospitals. 85% of all new capital investment in the NHS is now coming from the private sector.

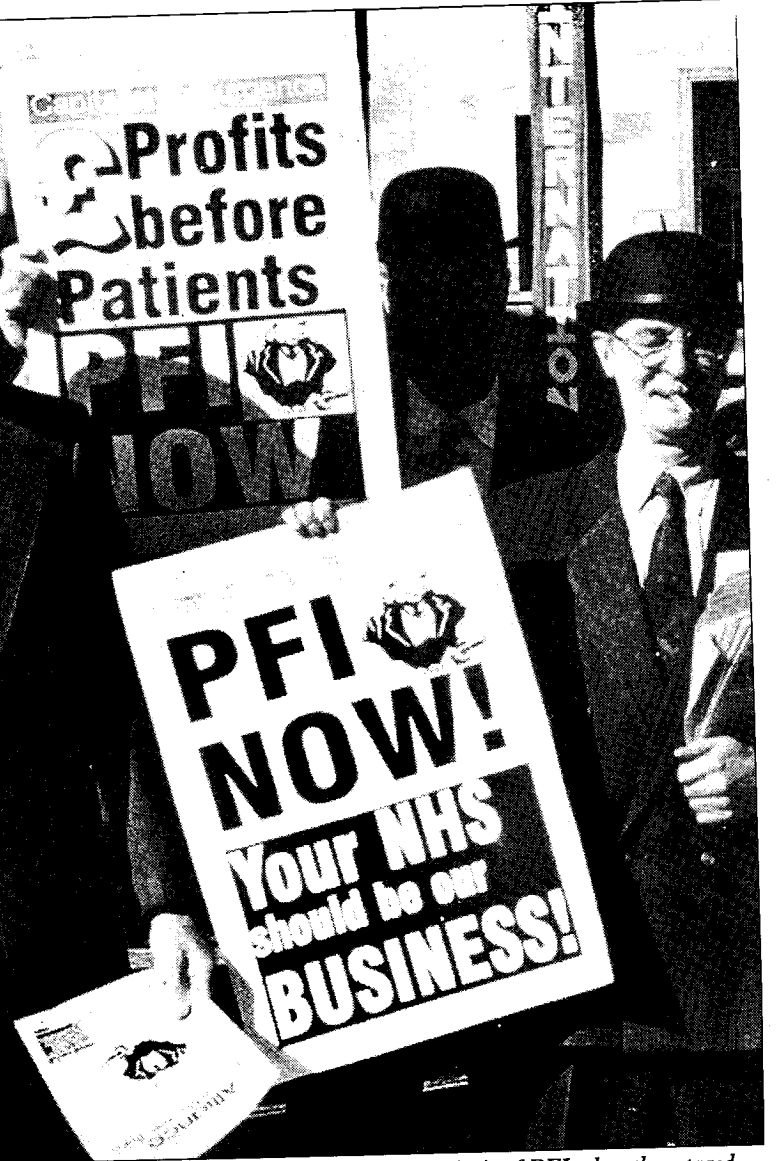
But as with all borrowing, the short term benefits of PFI are outweighed by the long term costs. By 2007 the annual cost to the NHS of PFI payments involved in leasing these privately-owned, profit-making hospitals, and buying ancillary services from private contractors, will be in the region of £2.1 billion: together with capital charges, the total bill will add up to £4.5 billion a year.

These – and other, less obvious, costs are being picked up by the taxpayer, by patients through a squeeze on budgets for clinical care, and by hospital staff struggling to keep the service afloat under mounting pressure.

## How PFI costs more

### Increased "headline" costs of schemes

**P**FI hospital projects have become notorious for the massive level of increase in costs from the point at which they are first proposed to the eventual deal being signed.



Socialist Alliance supporters in Oxford drew attention to the bizarre logic of PFI when they staged this mock lobby of "bankers" pressing for quicker progress on a long-delayed local hospital scheme

In part this is because PFI consortia are keen to make each scheme as big as possible, and also because private firms prefer to buy and then build on greenfield sites and lease buildings back to the NHS rather than refurbish existing NHS hospitals.

Among the more dramatic increases in prices from original plan to PFI deal are:

● Greenwich: up from £35m in 1995 to £93m in 1997

● UCLH, London: up from £115m to £404m

● Leicester: up from £150m in 1999 to £286m in 2001

● South Tees: up from £65m to £122m

● Swindon: a £45m refurbishment of Princess Margaret Hospital in Swindon turned into a £96m new hospital on a greenfield site out by the M4.

The first 14 PFI deals escalated in cost by an average of 72 percent, from a total of £766m to £1,314m by the time they were approved.

This inflation has obviously had an impact on the final bill to be paid. The new Dartford Hospital was originally projected to be "at worst cost neutral", but it soon emerged that purchasers were going to have to foot the bill for an extra £4m a year if the Trust were to be enabled to pay the PFI costs.

## Rate of return for private investors

PFI consortia don't build hospitals for the sake of our health. They want profit for their investment.

A BMJ article in 1999 pointed out that shareholders in PFI schemes "can expect real returns of 15-25 percent a year", and went on to explain how little actual risk is involved for the companies in PFI consortia.

In Barnet, the second phase of the new general hospital, originally tendered at £29m, went ahead at a cost of £54m, with capital borrowed at 13% over 25 years. In Dartford the rate was 11%, and the £17m

annual payment represents a massive 35% of the Dartford & Gravesham Trust's revenue.

The new Worcester Royal Infirmary, a project which was originally estimated at £45m when it was first advertised for PFI tenders in 1995, was eventually given the go-ahead at a total cost of £110m.

But the annual charge of £17m is more than a quarter of the Trust's projected income. Of this, £7.2m is the "availability" charge, or lease payment on the building, giving a total cost of £216m to rent the hospital for 30 years. The scheme will cost the Worcestershire Health Authority an extra £7 million a year.

While most NHS Trusts spend around 8% of their income on capital, those with PFI schemes are spending between 12% and 16%. In part this is because the private sector has to pay more to borrow money than does the government – but the net result is that the taxpayer picks up an inflated bill, while the banks coin in an extra margin.

## Margins for PFI consortium partners

The profits flow to the private sector at every level in PFI. Building firms, banks, business consultants and other PFI hangers-on are eagerly anticipating a generous flow of profits as the first hospital schemes take shape.

An investigation in the Health Service Journal showed building contractors "expecting returns of up to 20 percent a year on the equity stakes they hold in the project companies" as soon as the building is complete and Trusts start paying up for the use of the new buildings. Consultancy firms, too – architects, engineers and surveyors – are pocketing above average fees for work on PFI schemes. As the HSJ article pointed out: "there is little chance of the construction industry losing interest in PFI hospitals".

And once the building is finished, maintaining and providing services in the buildings will deliver comfortable, guaranteed profits of up to 7 percent for firms holding service contracts. The first two waves of PFI hospital schemes all involved the privatisation of any non-clini-

**Only six major NHS-funded schemes, totalling less than £300m, have been given the go-ahead since 1997. By contrast, the Labour government has so far given the go-ahead to 38 PFI-funded NHS schemes totalling almost £4 billion, and aims to increase this to £7 billion by 2010. 85% of all new capital investment in the NHS is now coming from the private sector.**



cal support services that were not already in the hands of the contractors.

## Fewer beds

The first wave of PFI hospitals became notorious for the scale of the cuts in bed numbers they represented, with reductions in front-line acute beds ranging as high as 40%.

PFI planners wanted to axe almost 40% of beds in Hereford (from 414 to 250) and North Durham (from 750 to 450) – and as a result the newly-opened North Durham Hospital has been plunged into an immediate beds crisis. Two other PFI hospitals embodying large-scale bed reductions have so far opened, in Dartford and in Carlisle, and both are already struggling to cope with pressures on the depleted numbers of beds remaining.

These bed numbers were based not on the actual experience of front-line Trusts dealing with current levels of caseload, or on any actual examples of hospital practice in this country, but on the wildly over-optimistic projections of private sector management consultants working for PFI consortia.

The verdict is still awaited on one of the other big bed cuts based on this type of approach, in Worcestershire, where the Health Authority forced through plans to for a new PFI-funded Worcester Royal Infirmary which would cut 260 acute beds – over 200 of them in Kidderminster – as well as beds in Redditch – a county-wide cut-back of 33%.

In Edinburgh the new Royal Infirmary will involve a loss of 500 of the existing 1,300 beds, and a halving of the 6,000-strong workforce.

But the shape of PFI schemes – or at least the way they are presented – has changed since the findings of the NHS Beds Inquiry, commissioned by the Labour government to report on the adequacy of bed numbers. Alan Milburn has become more sensitive to the charge that PFI is further reducing front-line capacity.

After intervening (again in the aftermath of a strike) to force the UCLH scheme in central London to be expanded to include additional beds (at dramatically increased cost!), Milburn has insisted that new PFI schemes must at least match the existing numbers of acute beds.

One beneficiary of this decision could be the population of East Kent, which had been facing a cut-back of almost 400 beds in a massive PFI-funded rationalisation scheme that was to axe local A&E units, and reduce acute services from four hospitals to one.

## Where are the promised extra beds?

Mr Milburn has gone further and insisted that the historic run-down of hospital bed numbers will not only be halted but reversed, through PFI schemes.

“Overall, these new hospital developments will provide almost 3,000 extra beds on the number currently provided. Indeed, in every single one of these new developments more beds, not less, are now planned.”

This has in turn led to a further escalation in the costs of the new generation of PFI schemes, but the Department of Health remains coy on the numbers of beds to be provided in new PFI schemes.

Indeed there is little, if any evidence in the figures published by the Department to support Milburn's claim that the second and subsequent waves of PFI schemes will increase bed numbers



Sacrificed on the altar of PFI: Kidderminster hospital lost all its acute beds to help pay for new PFI hospital in Worcester

at all, let alone by the hefty 3,000 figure he has claimed.

Even if these promised beds do eventually materialise, they will come only after almost 2,000 beds (27% of the total) have been cut in the first ten PFI schemes – a cut-back that will still distort health services locally for years to come.

Another factor in assessing the impact of bed reductions and service changes under PFI is that a cut in the number of front-line acute beds may be masked by an increase in the numbers of less intensive “intermediate” beds, which are then included in the totals.

This is the case in South Birmingham, where the Trust is proposing a PFI scheme that would cut over 200 of the present 1017 acute beds, but replace 150 of them with cheaper on-site “intermediate” beds. The numbers are further confused by adding in another 100 intermediate beds outside the hospital, 85 of which are to be transferred from other existing hospital sites.

Intermediate beds can play a role in the longer-term care of frail elderly patients, but do not play the same role as front-line acute beds in dealing with emergencies and waiting list patients.

The issue of intermediate beds is central to the debate over adequate bed numbers. Recent reports have highlighted the demand by consultants at Carlisle's Cumberland Infirmary for an urgent 50-bed extension to the PFI hospital to reduce the numbers of cancelled operations.

But Trust managers are sticking to the line of the PFI plan, that the number of beds is right, but that there are too many of the “wrong type of patients” in them, who ought to be transferred to “intermediate” beds elsewhere.

And a new Birmingham University report on the massive bed cuts proposed as part of the Herefordshire PFI scheme has concluded that the Trust will only be able to meet government waiting list targets if more beds than planned are kept open. The consequence could be that old-fashioned “hatted wards”, which were due to close with the opening of the new hospital would have to stay open indefinitely.

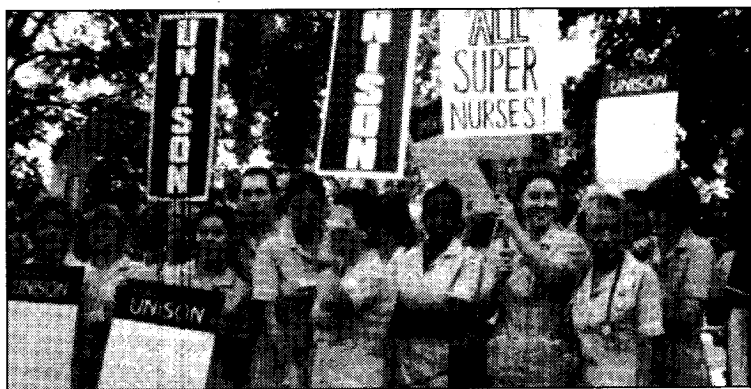
However the figures are massaged, the pressures of rising demand for emergency treatment, and for waiting list care will expose any weaknesses in the new system planned around the requirements of PFI and the private businesses involved.

## Consultancy fees/negotiation costs

The first 15 PFI schemes for new hospitals spent a combined total of £45 million on advisors, with costs

varying between 2.8% and 8.7% of the capital cost of the project. These costs are heavily inflated by the need to strike legally-binding deals with private sector firms in what are often very complicated deals.

This pattern has continued, and according to health minister John Denham the first 18 PFI schemes squandered £53m on consultancy fees – with £24m pocketed by lawyers, £16m to accountants, and £12m spent on “other” advice. Bromley Hospitals Trust alone had spent £3m on negotiations by 1997.



PFI schemes squeeze clinical budgets – and axe nursing jobs

## Delays in major projects – and in smaller ones, too

The complexity of the procedures and process of PFI and the negotiations that it involves has brought a new level of delay to schemes which might otherwise have proceeded with public funding.

In Oxford, attempts to find PFI capital to relocate and centralise hospital services from the Radcliffe Infirmary to Headington, close to the other main hospitals, have been dragging on since 1996, and already collapsed once. Negotiations on the scheme, originally costed at £71m, have been a closely-guarded secret, but the latest projected capital cost has risen to £91m.

In East Kent NHS Regional bosses have warned that the plans for a new PFI hospital to replace four existing hospitals – the projected cost of which has already almost doubled to £102m – could take 4-7 years to complete the complex PFI process before a brick is laid.

Even more serious have been delays in projects which are smaller, and which do not involve high-profile general hospitals. In London the Brent Kensington Chelsea and Westminster Mental Health Trust wants to improve its community services, at a cost of around £24 million: but the project has been log-jammed since 1998. In June the local health authority was told that:

“The Regional Office has said that the Trust must establish

whether there is private sector interest in funding and managing the proposed new facilities. ... What seems clear is that the development at Woodfield Road could be more attractive to the market because this is a new development. Schemes that involve refurbishing facilities are less attractive. However the scheme is a small one in cost term and may be below the level at which most companies would be interested.”

If the Trust has to advertise the scheme for PFI bidders, the HA is warned that: “Clearly this could add several months to the

timetable. If any part of the scheme is then funded privately the Trust estimates this will add a delay of another 12 months.”

And with consultancy fees so high, and property prices still rocketing upwards in the capital, all this extra time is likely to cost much more money, too.

## Staffing levels reduced

The Cumberland Infirmary scheme involved a cut in clinical staff of £2.6m, and in North Durham the financial balance of the plan involved staff cuts to save £3m.

In Bromley, the Full Business Case projects savings in staff costs of £2.9m a year, which arise, among other things, from “the reduction in the number of beds and theatres. 136 jobs are expected to be axed, including 34 nurses and 8.5 doctors, while the reduction in qualified nursing is to be compensated by a higher ratio of health care assistants.”

## Privatisation of support services and staff

In the first few PFI hospital schemes, staff working in non-clinical support services have been routinely “sold on” to private contractors providing “facilities management” for the PFI consortium. Their pay and conditions were safeguarded only by the fragile TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings)

rules, which protect only existing staff – leading to a 2-tier system in which new employees are on different term and conditions – and which can easily be circumvented by unscrupulous employers.

In the summer of 1999, after a campaign of strike action, union members at University College Hospital, London won a groundbreaking agreement enhancing the protection of the pay and conditions of support staff transferred to the PFI contractors. But staff still stand to lose their entitlement to the NHS pension scheme and sickness payments.

Since the 2001 Election, Alan Milburn – in the aftermath of nearly a year of strike action by support staff at Dudley Hospitals Trust fighting their compulsory transfer to a private contractor as part of a PFI deal – has now announced three “pilot” schemes, in which support services will be separated from the financing of the new building.

However hospitals which have already been cleared to proceed with schemes incorporating support services will be allowed to go ahead, and it appears that the management of support services could still be handed to the private contractors, while the staff they manage remain employed by the NHS.

It is not yet clear whether the PFI consortia will agree to this loss of what they saw as a valuable additional income stream. It is possible they will respond by seeking to increase other charges to compensate for the loss of additional profit.

A document for the Barts and the London Trust, discussing the so-called “Soft Facilities Management” services (portering, cleaning, catering and laundry) pointed out that “Potential bidders view the inclusion of Soft FM services as important to making the Trust's Project attractive”.

In a document larded with management jargon, the Trust board were also told – contrary to all the experience of NHS staff who have been switched to private contractors – that:

“There are potential benefits for the staff concerned ... Terms and conditions may be better than the NHS can afford to offer.” [!!] “Transferred staff will be part of a larger, specialist FM provider organisation which can enhance career progression and provide better training and development.”

## Loss of additional income (car parking, shops, catering, etc)

In the new North Durham hospital, the WRVS volunteers to pay rent to the PFI consortium for space in the new building, while patients have to fork out up to £25 per week to watch the new bedside TVs.

These are just some of the changes that will be ushered in when private firms own the hospital and its surrounding facilities. Car parking charges and rent from shops, cafes and restaurants on the hospital site, which might previously have gone to the Trust, are now another income stream for the PFI consortium.

These services also move out of the control of the Trust: in Cardiff, the new PFI-funded car park at the giant University Hospital of Wales now levies punitive charges on patients and visitors, backed up by zealous imposition of fines of up to £25, regardless of the circumstances. The Trust is powerless to intervene.

## Squeeze on clinical staff

The inclusion of all non-clinical support services in rigid, legally-binding “unitary payments” effec-



tively top-sliced from Trust budgets under PFI creates a new pressure on staff in clinical services.

Clinical services become the only area of Trust spending where Trust managers can seek the "cost improvements" and "efficiency savings" which they are required to make each year by government and by NHS purchasing bodies.

As the Wellhouse Trust was told in the negotiations over the new Barnet General Hospital - where even medical records have been incorporated into a PFI contract in a new computerised system:

"Part of the price ... has been to agree to an indexation regime which has no in-built cost improvement and is linked to the published RPI index ... The Trust will not therefore be in a position to impose Cost Improvement Programme targets across most of its support and operational services. ... The scope for future mandatory CIP targets will be limited to clinical services and to the few support services remaining under the management of the Trust."

**Squeeze on community and other services**

If more has to be spent in paying inflated costs of building new acute hospitals through PFI, less cash is left in the pot to finance other aspects of health care in each area.

As we have seen, many of the first wave of PFI hospitals have had to be heavily subsidised by local health authorities in order to make them affordable. The Worcestershire scheme means that an extra £7 million is being allocated to acute services to enable the Trust pay for the new WRI: this has to be found by squeezing cash allocations for mental health, community services and primary care.

**Poor quality buildings**

Much of the argument in favour of allowing the private sector to own and manage as well as build new hospitals, and for the long terms of lease agreements under PFI has been that the result will be a higher-quality building. Unveiling the latest round of PFI schemes receiving the rubber stamp, Alan Milburn argued that:

"For too long investment in NHS infrastructure has been a low priority when it should have been a high priority. Capital investment in the NHS was lower at the end of the last Parliament than it was at the beginning.

"The consequences are plain for all to see. Buildings that are shoddy, equipment that is unreliable, hospitals that are out of date. In too many places the environment that staff work in and patients receive care is simply unacceptable."

But the experience has been NEW buildings which are shoddy and NEW equipment that is unreliable - at a higher price than before. After just a few months of the first PFI hospitals coming on stream:

In Carlisle, a chapter of disasters and catastrophes began with an impractical design - with a huge glass roof, but no air conditioning - and continued with the use of cheap sub-standard plastic joints for pipes, resulting in leaks of water and sewage. Faulty equipment and fittings have brought a succession of power cuts, while cuts in support staff have meant that broken equipment goes unrepaired. Walls are too thin for staff to be able to put up shelves.

In Dartford, too, plumbing was a central issue in the new hospital. Taps ran dry in operating theatres a fortnight after the hospital opened, and supplies of sterilised supplies ran out, bringing elective surgery to a halt. Consultants complained that



Dudley strikers: failed to win all their demands, but forced concessions from ministers

the portering contract did not cover wheeling patients back to wards after operations.

In North Durham the saga continues, with generator failures plunging operating theatres ITU and casualty into darkness, overheating, poor planning, and plumbing faults which include sewage flooding through ceiling areas and cold taps that give out hot water.

Trust managers in response to the Observer article detailing the problems in Carlisle hit back arguing that the standard of the PFI build-

the Trust in to a long-term commitment to maintain services around the new hospital or PFI-funded facilities - no matter what changes may take place in local health needs, medical techniques or population over the next 25-60 years. The flexibility of owning land and buildings and being able to take decisions over how they should be used is seriously reduced.

**Looming threats**

**Pressure to include other services**

The government's election pledge to set up specialist free-standing surgical units was linked to suggestions that some or all of these might be built jointly with, or run by, the private sector.

This would raise once again the thorny issue of the employment of clinical staff - nurses, doctors and professionals - by private firms or PFI consortia, a policy which successive Labour health secretaries have insisted they would not implement.

However the building of new units would open up the possibility that rather than transferring staff from the NHS to a private employer, staff might simply be recruited to a privately owned and managed unit, conducting work on contract for the NHS - as indeed will an increasing number of private hospitals as a result of the government's Concordat signed last year.

Private sector companies have long pressed for the extension of PFI into a number of clinical areas including radiology and imaging services, pathology, and specialist nursing. In April 2000 the Welsh Assembly intervened to block plans that would have transferred NHS nursing staff at Glan Clwyd hospital near Rhyl to Fresenius, a private firm that was preferred bidder for a new renal and dialysis unit.

**The rising tide of PFI costs**

NHS schemes completed, under construction, or on the list for approval between now and 2006 already add up to a staggering £6.4 billion, and a quick look at the tables in the Appendices below shows that the sums of money committed in terms of annual payments are far larger than that, with most deals lasting 25 years or more.

Adding up the data from the tables shows that the combined unitary payments on the six PFI hospitals which are already operational adds up to £83m a year, giving a total payable of £2.4 billion -

SIX TIMES the capital value of £423m.

The annual fees on the next 14 schemes in the queue for which details are available add up to £250 million a year, giving a total cost of £7.9 billion - over FIVE TIMES the capital value of £1,507 million.

If these deals are replicated in subsequent PFI schemes, the NHS could wind up paying between £32 billion and £38 billion in real terms (index linked payments) to private consortia over the next 25-30 years.

The argument that support services are included in this overall cost falls flat when we contrast this cost of financing a project through PFI, in which every £1m of capital eventually costs £5-£6 million, with a standard 6% mortgage.

Every £1m could be financed this way over 25 years for just £1.94 million, less than double the amount borrowed, and with no obligation to buy any other services, and freehold tenure of the assets at the end of the deal.

The NHS is only part of the total PFI borrowing. As *Sunday Times* correspondent David Smith pointed out recently, based on the Treasury's budget report, with deals worth £14 billion already generating revenue:

"Even if no new PFI deals were signed, the government would pay nearly £4 billion a year, on average, in fees and charges to PFI contractors over the next 25 years."

Of course the private sector is keen to ensure that even more deals are signed, with the potential to crank up revenues from the state for the whole gamut of PFI deals towards the £30 billion a year mark.

But how does all this represent value for the public sector? While the headline and actual costs of the large schemes are big enough to cause long-term dislocation to the finances of the NHS, the cumulative costs of financing some of the smaller schemes (less than £20m) through PFI can be ludicrously

large.

Some small scale deals which ought to be affordable from one-off capital funds are to be paid off over 25 or 30 years, with a resultant cost as high as 24 times the value of the scheme. (figures below are taken from Department of Health data, "PFI schemes by Region": "total cost" is obtained by multiplying the - index-linked - unitary payment with the number of years in the contract.)

● Queens Medical Centre catering: value £1m total cost £23.8m

● North Birmingham Mental Health: value £12.4m, total cost £163.5m

● Royal Wolverhampton Radiology: value £10.9m, total cost £70m

● Rotherham Priority Elderly MH: value £2.1m, total cost £16.9m

● North Bristol Brain Rehab unit: value £4.9m, total cost £42m

In some cases, management will argue that even these small-scale PFI deals represent much more than a costly hire-purchase scheme, and that significant services are included as part of the unitary payment.

But the combined deal is only available with this fixed, real terms price tag, and the value for money must be assessed in the context of the final cost compared with the initial investment.

The figures suggest that financing piecemeal schemes in this way, with all of the on-costs of bureaucracy and delays, cannot be a sensible use of NHS resources.

The more money that is squeezed out of the NHS in PFI payments to bankers and private providers, the less that remains to treat patients, pay clinical staff and develop modern, appropriate services.

■ This article is adapted from the PFI Dossier researched by John Lister for the GMB, the full text of which can be found on the GMB web site [www.gmb.org.uk](http://www.gmb.org.uk)



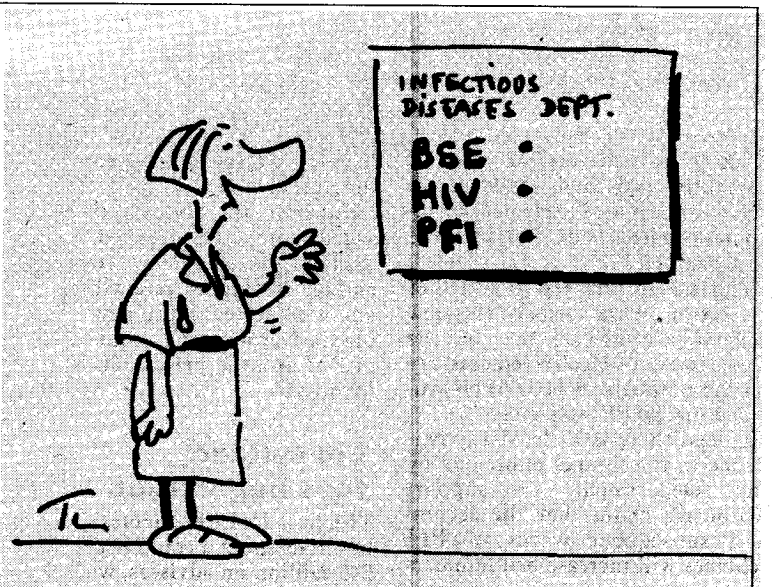
ing and the "teething problems" of the new hospital were no worse than normal in new NHS-funded hospitals (all of which of course are built by private construction firms). Critics point out that simply being no worse than new NHS-funded buildings, does not seem to justify the extra cost and other problems of PFI.

**Land assets stripped: NHS as tenant**

Many PFI deals are part-funded by handing over to the consortium "spare" NHS land and building assets released as part of the new scheme. Although this defrays some of the initial costs - and therefore reduces the monthly "unitary charge" which it must pay, the Trust then becomes a tenant, renting its key acute facilities from the private sector.

This has two important consequences for the future:

- Once the NHS assets - paid for over the generations by the taxpayer - have been passed over in this way, the Trust no longer has any scope to use them in future service developments. The initial cost of any future schemes will inevitably be higher - and the probability of having to seek additional financial investment from the private sector is increased. And at the end of the contract period, the NHS Trust is likely to be in a weak position to negotiate over a further extension of the lease agreement.
- The PFI deal effectively locks





# Milburn's muddle

IT SEEMS that whizz-kid Health Secretary Alan Milburn just can't find a way to get good news out of the NHS, despite Gordon Brown's belated injection of extra cash since last year.

The normal winter media fare of headlines on hospital trolley-waits, bed shortages, and unfilled nursing posts, now runs all year round. But it has been supplemented by reports of filthy hospitals, and more recently the first full-scale condemnation of a Trust management regime by the Commission for Health Improvement.

The CHI report panned the Epsom and St Helier Trust in SW London as the worst in the country, pointing to high death rates for emergency surgery, dirty wards and urine-soaked carpets, and staff not only demoralised but intimidated by blundering Trust bosses. But it has only examined a few Trusts: there could be even worse to come!

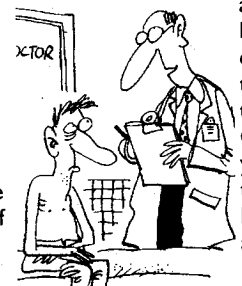
Epsom/St Helier Trust chief executive Nigel Sewell opted for the easy option of early retirement, pocketing a golden

handshake and a hefty pension, just before the report was published, leaving others to take the flak. A frustrated Department of Health refused to get involved, leaving the new Trust bosses to be slowly roasted by a hostile media as they tried to cover up the scale of the problem.

But this crisis was immediately followed by headlines on the death of an elderly patient on a trolley waiting for treatment at Whipps Cross Hospital, and year-round crisis conditions in emergency hospitals in Liverpool and across the country.

But Milburn's latest answer to the problem – buying more operations from the private sector and exporting patients to hospitals in Germany and elsewhere, (which have spare capacity because their health services invest more money than Britain in front line care) – simply rubs in the point that New Labour has failed to grasp the scale of the problem.

In each case the solution actually compounds the problem by siphoning cash OUT of the NHS, leaving the most hard-pressed Trusts without the resources they need to cope with local need.



"I'd like to see you again next week for a post-mortem"

Andrew Ward



## Deloitte and Touche report on Tube:

# PPP rigged – official!

Greg Tucker

THE PUBLICATION of the report commissioned from accountants Deloitte and Touche on the privatisation of London Underground should be the last nail in the coffin of Public Private Partnership.

Described by Will Hutton in *The Observer* as "the most devastating condemnation of PPP"... "exposing a mendacious gerrymander that sets out unfairly to rig the rules", the report actually sets out little that had not already been claimed by the RMT, Hutton himself in his own report and London Transport Commissioner Bob Kiley in his.

But what the government could previously denounce as ill informed speculation this time has the official stamp of accountants able to examine the books for real!

Confirming these previous reports, it is obvious why the government and LUL went to such great lengths to try to keep its findings secret.

First they tried to buy Kiley off over the election period, then they sacked him after the election was over, then they used the courts to try to protect "commercial confidentialities".

The only commercial secrets being protected were just what a good deal the private contractors were being offered!

Blair, Brown and co. have argued that the Underground PPP will only go forward if it is shown to bring value for money. The

Deloitte and Touche report shows how at every stage it has been necessary to assume the worst possible public sector performance and compare it with the best possible of the private sector to even get close to meeting this requirement.

Indeed, it is clear that far from being merely biased the assumptions made wildly exaggerate public failure and private success.

Because, up until now, LUL funding has always been on a short-term basis, set from Budget to Budget by the Treasury, investment has been piecemeal and inefficient.

It is clear that given stable long-term commitments a more efficient regime would ensue. This is the prospect facing the privatisers – but not LUL it seems – who are assumed to be £700 million less efficient.

### Reality on its head

This turns reality on its head. Given a long-term commitment LUL could raise money cheaper than the private sector through Livingstone and Kiley's bond issue proposals.

It would be even more cost effective if the government were prepared to raise the funds itself through direct taxation.

Add to this another assumption – that LUL performance will disrupt services – the government decided to build in a £1.2 billion "performance adjustment". And then because it

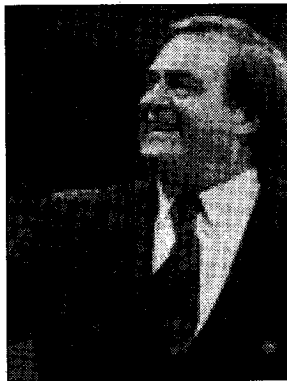
is well known that LUL cannot manage its investment and is bound to have major cost overruns another £1.6 billion is assumed as the extra cost that LUL would bear. No mind that in every occasion that LUL has "overrun" in the past the actual offenders were the very contractors being asked to come in and run the privatised LUL.

For it is assumed that the private sector will run to perfect efficiency, delivering everything they promise on time and to budget. And of course if things do go wrong they will bear the burden and not the public. Or so they claim.

But again here the report accuses the government of a sleight of hand. Whilst the PPP will last 30 years the private sector figures only hold up, at best, for the first seven and a half years. After that, with all the cards in their hands, the privatisers will be free to renegotiate far better deals.

The sum total then is that the comparison of private to public costs starts from a false basis, with the full cost of the private sector bids not accounted for, and then assumes £3.5 billion extra costs for the public sector.

Despite this the private sector bids are still not competitive. And the government still claims that value for money is their sole crite-



Fiddler in chief Prescott

tion! Of course, all this is simply based on financial tests under current economic and political frameworks. It says nothing of

the other social costs – the effect on staff, jobs and conditions, the effect on public safety and the environment. We have seen what that has meant on the mainline railways.

Kiley and Livingstone now have the option to use this report to launch a new legal challenge – a judicial review of the government's decisions.

But rather than relying on the courts what we need is Livingstone to mobilise the mass of Londoners who voted for him precisely to express their concern at Tube privatisation.

In the run up to the TUC and Labour Party conferences trade union leaders have been trying to find forms of words to defuse the anger their members feel at the prospect of the broadening scope of the privatisation process.

What is happening to LUL should be a warning. There is no level playing field, no honest broker.

The government is acting out of deliberate ideological motives – to reward its supporters in big business – and will do whatever it takes to make sure that happens – value for money has never been its concern.

## Signs of a new round of NHS campaigning

Harry Sloan

Local campaigners are raising the tempo of activity against the Private Finance Initiative in the NHS, demanding the Treasury should fund the programme of new hospital building.

In Oxford, stung by comments by local MP and Treasury Secretary Andrew Smith that he had seen no sign of union anger at PFI schemes in the NHS, a short-notice meeting held in mid August attracted over 30 activists from public sector and other unions to relaunch the Oxfordshire Campaign Against Privatisation, with its first target being the local scheme to switch hospital services from the old Radcliffe Infirmary to a new centre in Headington.

This had been costed at £71m: but has now been put out to PFI tender at a starting price of £91m. OCAP intends to mount a series of high profile activities and public meetings, including lobbies of Andrew Smith's local "surgery" sessions.

UNISON health activists, central to the campaign in Oxford, are also at the centre of a major campaign against PFI funding of a hospital scheme in Peterborough. The local UNISON health branch has com-

missioned a detailed critique of the Outline Business Case – and decided to publish this as an 8-page newspaper, to be distributed to every household in Peterborough.

With all of the major health unions, as well as the BMA and even the Royal College of Nursing, now opposed to PFI, campaigns that expose the reality of PFI schemes and home in on their impact on the level and quality of health care for local people can win widespread popular support.

In Peterborough, the messages of endorsement for the UNISON campaign include the local Constituency Labour Party.

MPs in areas facing such campaigns would do well to remember the sorry fate of David Lock, the Labour MP in Wyre Forest, who backed Worcestershire Health Authority against local campaigners defending Kidderminster Hospital – and paid the price with an embarrassing defeat in June.

Campaigning can make a difference: and with the new aggressive line being taken by public sector unions nationally, more local campaigns are likely to make their mark, leaving ministers and their stooges isolated in defence of PFI.





**An orgy of murder, kidnap, theft, and hostage-taking, in state terror campaign...**

# Boycott Israel, the Apartheid state!

**Roland Rance**

**W**ith the murder of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) leader Abu Ali Mustafa, and the creeping reoccupation of parts of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel has intensified its onslaught against the Palestinian people to a state of near-open warfare.

In other acts of aggression over the past week, Israel has attempted to murder the leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), threatened to shoot a bishop and a key UN official, and held civilians hostage as human shields when it occupied family homes and an orphanage as command posts during its invasion of Beit Jala, next door to Bethlehem.

Israel's latest escalation has embarrassed its western backers. Foreign secretary Jack Straw has said that the actions are "excessive, disproportionate and threaten to stoke the cycle of violence", and the US State Department has also been critical.

But this has not stopped Israel's ongoing confiscation of Palestinian land, destruction of homes and olive groves, expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, and siege of the Palestinian communities, which continue in full force.

**A**t the same time, Israel, with the unwavering support of the USA, is disrupting the UN conference against racism in Durban, in order to prevent delegates criticising Israeli policies and practices as racist.

Abu Ali Mustafa was elected head of the PFLP last year, following the resignation of its ailing leader Dr George Habash. Together

with Habash, he had established the PFLP after the 1967 war, when Israel seized those parts of Palestine it had not occupied in 1948.

For the next twenty years, the PFLP was second in importance among Palestinian organisations only to Yassir Arafat's Fatah. It was famed for its militancy, its hijackings, and its rejection of any compromise over the Palestinian right of return or the establishment of a unitary, secular and democratic Palestine.

It played a significant role during the earlier Intifada, when it was centrally involved in establishing and leading the Unified National Leadership which directed the struggle - in effect, a soviet-type body, similar to those set up during many revolutionary struggles.

**T**he PFLP declined in significance with the growth of Hamas and other Islamist organisations, when Arafat turned to open dialogue and compromise.

According to recent polls, it commands the support of about 8% of the Palestinian population, though this support is believed to be growing.

The assassination of Abu Ali Mustafa marks the first time in this uprising that Israel has targeted a clearly political, rather than allegedly military, leader.

Since his election, Abu Ali had reinvigorated the PFLP, and was regarded as second in importance only to Arafat within the PLO leadership. Despite the restrictions on movement in the occupied territories, some 50,000 mourners are reported to have attended his funeral.

Over the summer, Israel has also continued its policy of reoccupation of areas from which it had earlier withdrawn as part of the Oslo agreement.



*Routine repression of Palestinians (above) has escalated with Israel's military reoccupation of the West Bank town of Beit Jala (top) and renewed seizures of houses and land*

Areas of Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem, Gaza and Jenin have all been reoccupied; some only briefly, while Israeli troops remain in others.

In Beit Jala, Israeli troops occupied the home of Muhammad Hassan al Masheikheh, refusing to allow the 20 family members to leave, while they used the home as a sniper and military command post.

They also occupied a Lutheran orphanage, similarly holding the 45 children there as human shields; they were only able to gain access to the building after threatening to shoot the Lutheran Bishop to the Holy Land, who held the keys.

In Gaza, Israeli troops refused to allow the head of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to enter the Rafah refugee camp, threatening to shoot him if his convoy did not turn back.

**U**nder this relentless attack, increasing numbers of Palestinians are calling for an international peacekeeping force to replace the Israeli presence in the



occupied territories. While this call is understandable, it is not one that we can support. Indeed, we would warn that, while such a presence might provide a short-term easing of the situation, in the long term it would prove disastrous to the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

Troops from third countries would clearly not have the emotional commitment to the biblical borders of Israel and to the settlers, and might initially be more even-handed than Israeli forces. But calling on imperialism to provide a military solution to a situation which it has created, and to bring to an end an occupation which it has always supported, is a dangerous illusion.

The powers which imposed "order" in Iraq and Serbia can be no allies of people fighting for their freedom. While we oppose such a call, it is significant that many Israeli activists have endorsed it. This reflects a deep and growing alienation from the national consensus.

However, this call is still a retreat from the unequivocal call for a complete, immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all the ter-

ritories occupied in 1967 - the only interim demand which we can support.

Opposition to this call, however, does not mean opposition to any demand for international action. In particular, we support the call for a boycott of Israeli goods and of tourism to Israel.

**A**ctivists across the world are increasingly coming to recognise the similarities between Zionist Israel and apartheid South Africa.

To mark the UN anti-racism conference in Durban, the South Africa Palestine Solidarity Committee recently issued a statement which noted:

"We, South Africans who have lived through apartheid cannot be silent as another entire people are treated as non-human beings; people without rights or human dignity and facing daily humiliation.

"We cannot permit a ruthless state to use military jets, helicopter gunships and tanks on civilians. We cannot accept state assassinations of activists, the torture of political prisoners, the

murder of children and collective punishment...

"Israel is, simply, an Apartheid state... We support the demand to isolate Apartheid Israel, the right of return of millions of Palestinian refugees and the dismantling of racist settlements.

"We pledge ourselves to be part of a new International Anti-Apartheid movement against Israel".

A further development in the international campaign against Israel was the attempt by Danish MP Soren Sondergaard, a member of the Danish section of the Fourth International, to arrest Israel's new ambassador to Copenhagen, Carmi Gilon.

Gilon, a former head of the Shin Bet (Israel's security service), was responsible for the torture of countless Palestinian prisoners, and has justified using torture.

In a move almost as embarrassing for Denmark as for Israel, the Danish foreign minister has decided that Gilon cannot be arrested because he enjoys diplomatic immunity.

This campaign, and the civil action in a Belgian court against Israel's Prime Minister Sharon for his role in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres in 1987, have caused great difficulties for Israel's foreign office, which is apparently also concerned at the possibility of similar action in London.

The anniversary of the 1987 massacres will be marked by a rally in London on 13 October, organised jointly by Al-Awda (the Palestine Right to Return Coalition), and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Further details are available at [www.al-awda.org.uk/](http://www.al-awda.org.uk/) or [www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)



# How long can NATO hold on to fragile Balkan "peace"?

**Geoff Ryan**

The peace deal that is supposed to give greater rights to the minority Albanian population in Macedonia is hanging by a very fine thread. At the time of writing the Macedonian Parliament is reconvening to open discussions on the 'framework agreement'. The debate was supposed to begin on August 31 but was delayed after several hundred protesters surrounded the parliament building and turned MPs away.

Other events over the last week suggest that even if the deal is approved by Parliament the chances of the current ceasefire holding are very slim.

Nato troops have begun collecting weapons from Albanian guerrillas of the National Liberation Army. However there is a massive discrepancy between the three thousand or

so weapons Nato are proposing to collect and the eighty five thousand weapons the Macedonian government claims are held by the NLA.

While the Macedonian government is no doubt exaggerating the NLA's arms, the reality is that many weapons will remain in NLA hands. The only question is whether those arms will remain in Macedonia or, as appears to be happening, be moved temporarily over the border into Kosova.

Although the NLA claims it is willing to cooperate with NATO, and has enormous illusions that NATO will offer them protection, tensions have already developed.

On August 29 NLA guerrillas engaged in a fire-fight with US troops on the Kosova-Macedonia border. The previous day US soldiers had arrested 32 guerrillas as they

tried to enter Kosova from Macedonia. Since June over 600 Albanians have been detained after crossing the border.

The decision of the NLA to move arms and soldiers into Kosova is hardly surprising. On the same day as the clash between the NLA and US troops, Macedonian interior minister Ljube Boskovski announced that once Nato has partially disarmed the NLA, Macedonian government forces will launch new attacks on the Albanian guerrillas.

Boskovski claimed 'I believe Nato, by this symbolic collection of weapons, will open the way for us to clean up the terrorists'.

He appears totally unaware that such words are in stark contrast with official Macedonian claims that Nato's Operation Harvest is a purely cosmetic operation and that

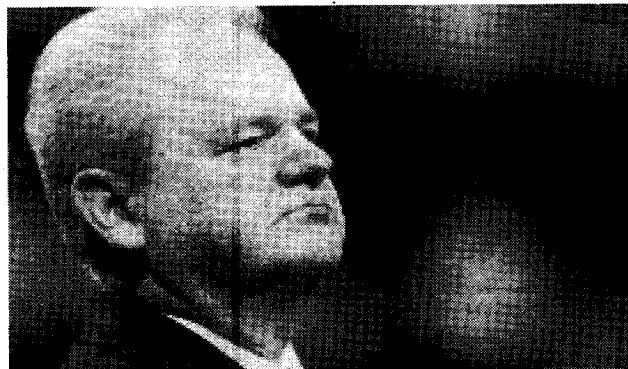
Nato is protecting the NLA.

However, Boskovski reflects the widespread hostility to the peace deal among the majority Slav population, as evidenced not just by the blockade of Parliament but by the killing of a British soldier by Macedonian youths.

It is by no means certain that even if Parliament does eventually ratify the peace deal this will be accepted by most Macedonian parties.

Opposition is particularly strong in the party of prime minister, Ljubco Georgievski.

There is clearly strong anti-Nato feelings among wide sections of Macedonian Slavs while many Albanians, despite the recent clashes, still have strong illusions in Nato. Does this mean, therefore, that socialists should automatically side with the anti-Nato Slavs against the pro-Nato Albanians? Such an



*Meanwhile the architect of the Balkan crisis, former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, is still refusing to cooperate with the war crimes court in the Hague.*

attitude is simplistic.

Hostility to Nato among the majority Slav population is not based on anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist views. Rather it is based on hostility to a perceived support for the creation of a Greater Albania by Nato.

Such views are, of course, nonsense. Nato is clearly committed to maintaining the unity of the Macedonia state and to weakening the ability of the Albanian minority to take up arms again.

The large number of arrests over the last few months are evidence of that. And even if Operation Essential Harvest does only result in collecting a few thousand weapons, by

forcing the NLA to transfer arms and soldiers to Kosova it allows the Macedonia army to mount an offensive if Nato does withdraw after the supposed 30 day limit.

Despite the pro-Nato illusions of many Albanians we support their right to self-determination, including the right to unite all Albanians in a single state - even though we do not advocate such an aim.

Events have already shown that some Albanians are beginning to recognise that they cannot rely on Nato. New clashes between Albanian guerrillas and Nato forces are likely, further weakening Albanian illusions.

# Bio-piracy in Chiapas

**Veronica Fagan**

In March 2001, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) made history when it marched into Mexico City at the culmination of its journey from the southern state of Chiapas.

This action was the latest in the long campaign of the Zapatistas for autonomy for the indigenous people of the region and it seemed that the government might at this point make some concessions. Within six weeks however, the San Andre accords had gain been gutted by the politicians and the EZLN broke off dialogue with them.

This contest has been taking place since the Zapatistas launched their first offensive on January 1 1994, as the North American Free Trade agreement came into force. The date was no accident - the struggle has always been one which contests both the actions of the Mexican government but also the right of the multinationals to plunder the natural resources of Chiapas..

**Threatened**

The UN-recognized Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve holds the last, threatened heart of virgin forest in the Lacadon jungle, which has essentially been under Zapatista control since 1994.

Despite President Vicente Fox's pledges to withdraw troops from Zapatista territory, in practice this has not happened. While seven camps have been shut, they have just been moved and a number of new military checkpoints installed. There were 104 military operations in Chiapas between May and



*Zapatistas wear masks: but capitalists carry out daylight robbery*

July in 6 cities in the area. A low intensity war is clearly being carried out.

Barred by the cease-fire from attacking the Zapatistas, the troops in the virgin forest area are supposedly operating against drug traffickers and from deforestation.

But the area's Maya inhabitants are clear that Montes Azules is not being "protected" in their interests but for transnational biotech corporations that hope to profit from the region's genetic wealth.

In 1998 the California firm Diversa signed a three-year "bio-prospecting" deal with the Mexican government. Diversa, which has a similar deal with the US government for Yellowstone National Park, is granted access to Mexico's biodiversity in exchange for \$5,000 to train and equip personnel from the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

These people will collect the samples and receive \$50 per sample and then royalties of between 0.3 and 0.5 percent of net sales

on products derived from them. In contrast, Yellowstone National Park got \$15,000 of equipment, royalties of from 0.5 to 10 percent—and \$100,000.

**Secret**

The terms of both deals had been secret. Environmental groups went to US federal court to try to get the Yellowstone terms released - but they were eventually reported in the Salt Lake Tribune.

The terms of the Mexican deal were leaked to the Mexican daily La Jornada, which lambasted them as "bio-genetic plunder."

The University of Georgia, the British-based company Molecular Nature Ltd. and El Colegio de la Frontera Sur have launched a similar five-year project. This one, titled Drug Discovery and Biodiversity Among the Maya of Mexico, specifically targets Chiapas.

Tapping the vast reservoir of local knowledge about the rare plants found in the area and their potential uses, the

programme will receive \$2.5 million from the International Cooperative Biodiversity Groups (ICBG), a consortium of US government agencies.

The Chiapas Council of Traditional Indigenous Midwives and Healers (COMPITCH) is urging non-cooperation with the research, charging that "the pact was developed without notifying or informing indigenous communities and organizations."

The US program has developed its own partnership with local Indian communities, called ICBG-Maya. Director Brent Berlin of the University of Georgia told the Associated Press that the project has received the consent of nearly fifty communities and forged profit-sharing deals with them.

Again the terms are kept hidden, but what is going on is clearly not about raising the living standards of impoverished people, but of making bigger and bigger profits for the big corporations. But in a situation where poverty is grinding, the hope of the companies is that co-operation can be bought.

**Grants**

Since 1993 the ICBG has awarded eleven bio-prospecting grants totaling \$18.5 million worldwide. Commercial partners include GlaxoSmithKline, Dow Agroscience, American Cyanamid (recently acquired by BASF) and, until recently, Monsanto Searle.

A unique geyser-dwelling microbe collected from Yellowstone in 1966 was the source for enzymes widely used in DNA research and sold to Hoffman-LaRoche for \$300 million.

As well bring wealth to

impoverished villages, new patents are much more likely to impose economic burdens by requiring farmers to pay royalties to foreign corporations to grow their own indigenous maize.

Even the Mexican government has expressed concern over DuPont's recent patenting of all corn varieties with certain oleic acid levels, including many originating in Mexico.

**Impact study**

Beth Burrows of the Seattle-area-based Edmonds Institute, one of the litigants in the Yellowstone case, is still waiting for a court-ordered impact study on the bio-prospecting program there.

Says Burrows: "To privatize living organisms, whether it is Mexican maize or Yellowstone microbes, may serve corporate interests, but it does not serve our social contract or our duties to steward the land and support farmers."

"Farmers all over the world save seeds and trade them with neighbors. But Monsanto has taken farmers to court for violating their property rights. Farmers have to go to the corporations like to masters on the manor."

This is what lies behind and is backed up by the "trade-related intellectual property rights" provisions - or TRIPs - of NAFTA and the WTO, which gives international recognition to patents on life. In contrast, the United States still resists ratifying the Biodiversity Treaty, unveiled at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, which would recognize indigenous peoples' intellectual property rights.

However there is resistance in Chiapas as elsewhere. In April representatives from more than 100 Chiapas Indian communities held a meeting in the highlands city of San Cristobal de Las Casas, vowing not to plant bio-tweaked corn.

In mid-June COMPITCH held an international anti-bio-piracy Forum for Biological and Cultural Diversity, in San Cristobal. And on June 24, when the Biotechnology Industry Organization met in San Diego, Diversa's hometown, activists held their own "BioJustice" counter-convention.

**Accords breached**

This is clearly part of the political context which led to Vicente Fox following in the footsteps of his predecessors in breaching the San Andre accords.

The acceptance of real autonomy for the people's of Chiapas would be a blow to the rights of transnational corporations to plunder their resources. But Fox was elected after decades of rule by the corrupt PRI, precisely on the promise of speeding up Mexico's integration into the market. That is why any meaningful peace accords can only be one by a real defeat for the forces of neo-liberalism.

Such an outcome would of course be a huge boost to the international fight against capitalist globalisation. This is why the question of solidarity with the people of Mexico and Chiapas should be an important issue for all socialists.

Further information from <http://www.chiapaslink.ukgat.eway.net>



# RUC key to sectarian state

The key to understanding the current battle around the RUC is to look back to the siege of Ardoyne earlier this summer, where Catholic primary school children were threatened by orange mobs and prevented from entering school (a threat that seems ready to resurrect itself as we go to press).

Only one reporter, Ed Maloney of the *Sunday Tribune*, reported the events correctly, saying that the children were prevented from going to school by the RUC.

Following the first day of intimidation, the loyalists were able to mount a token presence in the certain knowledge the RUC, as so often in the past, would do their job for them and barricade the road.

That's the reality that supporters of the Good Friday agreement blind themselves to. The problem in the North of Ireland is not sectarian bigotry but a sectarian state and a sectarian police force. The RUC actions in Ardoyne, followed up by a full scale attack on nationalist residents, is simply part of a long tradition where the state force supports orange intimidation and attacks anyone who objects.

To round out the picture we simply have to add that the latest wave of bombings and ethnic cleansing carried out by the UDA is spearheaded by the Shankill Road 'C' company, a creation of British intelligence.

Despite the murder of two young men, one a Catholic and the other a Protestant, the RUC and the British state confine themselves to a review of the UDA ceasefire and find themselves unable to decide if it is holding or not.

There's a word for this sort of indecision. It's called support, protection or state sponsorship of sectarian terror. The 'socialist' UVF attempt mass murder with a car bomb in Ballycastle and hold a demonstration celebrating sectarian murder - and the British exhibit a similar blindness and indecision.

The claim for the Good Friday agreement and for its expression around policing - the Patten report - was that it would reform the sectarian state and the RUC. However any serious analysis of Patten indicates that it at no point addressed the issues of sectarianism and state terror.

Instead it defined the problem as a cultural one. It was not the sectarian



RUC's main target is still Catholics

equip the force with even more lethal plastic bullets.

In fact this absolute control has been a feature of the agreement for some time, enshrined in two Police Bills that have become law.

The latest lobbying by the nationalists and Sinn Fein have only been about implementation - essentially they have been looking for promises from the British that they will behave well in setting up new structures.

No one should be surprised that under these circumstances the Dublin government, the Catholic Church and the SDLP have declared their support for the new RUC. The briefest of glances at Irish history would indicate that these groups always act to defend imperialism and to win stability for big business.

In a speech in New York last year Bernadette McAliskey compared the republican support for the Good Friday agreement to a funnel. Once you went over the lip the only place to go was down and down to where the British wanted you. This is the situation that Sinn Fein find themselves in now.

They claim that they will build a campaign to bring back the Patten report. They claim that there is still time to negotiate reform, despite the British and their erstwhile friends telling them that the time for talk is over. A glance at one of the 20 points Sinn Fein has listed will say all:

"The oversight commissioner was tasked by Patten to oversee the operation of the Police Act, rather than the implementation of the Patten report as originally intended. His position has been undermined by the act. In addition the oversight commissioner has no powers of direction. He should be given the statutory powers and the role envisaged by Patten."

Can anyone imagine the masses facing down the police lines chanting that? Or that it would make any difference to the day to day reality of the sectarian state if they did? This is not opposition to the RUC. This is Sinn Fein being a loyal opposition within the confines of the sectarian settlement.

In the meantime the real movement that is taking place in the discussions about policing comes from the fact that not enough has been done yet to reassure Trimble and the Unionists that they will retain their sectarian control when the dust settles.

The British will have to do even more to make the nature of the new RUC absolutely clear. Dublin and the nationalists will reluctantly agree and Sinn Fein will strike a few more shrill postures, holding on grimly in the hope of places in a coalition government with the southern capitalists.

Sinn Fein claim that their nationalist friends have settled for half a loaf. The truth is there is no loaf.

Republicans and socialists don't want an improved RUC. They want it disbanded.

The first step to smashing the sectarian police force is to force all the nationalist and reformist politicians - including Sinn Fein - out of Stormont. The issue is simple enough. If you don't want a sectarian police force, don't support a sectarian state.

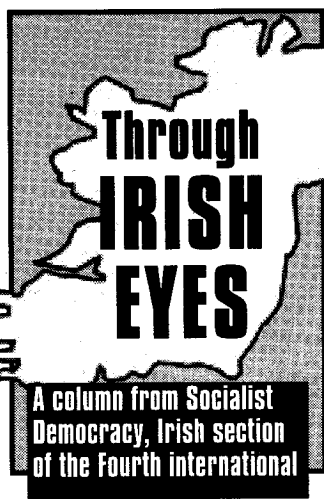
terror which was the problem, it claimed but rather Catholic perception of the RUC.

What it claimed therefore was needed was to change the symbols and thereby encourage Catholic recruitment and give well-off Catholics some influence at local level.

But even in its own terms this seems likely to fail. When applications were invited to the "new" RUC, it was predicted that 50% of these would be Catholic. But despite the fact that the British were able to write the definition of 'Catholic' so that it included people with no links to any republican or nationalist opinion, they still only managed to claim one third of the applications.

But even this level of cosmetic change seems to be a step too far.

Sinn Fein claim that the British wish us well and that 'securocrats' were sabotaging the agreement. But it is the British that have consistently ensured their absolute control of the force, to preserve its overall sectarian character, to retain repressive laws and to re-



# South Africa General strike challenge to privatisation

As the fight against privatisation steps up a gear here in Britain, trade unionists will be pleased to hear about the successful two day General strike in South Africa.

On August 29 and 30, particularly in the large enterprises thousands of workers demanded that the government reverse in attacks on services. Huge demonstrations were also held in many parts of the country, including 350,000 in Johannesburg and 300,000 in Durban and 300,000 in Pretoria.

COSATU stated that around 60% of those who were not in essential services - and therefore exempted from the action by the unions - came out on strike, though there was a difference in response in different parts of the country.

In South Africa, too the unions have had to confront government propaganda, claiming that what they are putting forward is not privatisation but merely "restructuring", and that they are acting in the interests of ordinary people by providing "consumer choice".

And of course the South African trade unions in the main see themselves in as being in alliance with the government in fighting the legacy of apartheid.

Some of the union statements reflect this tension, and in general the unions are reluctant to point out the fact that the agenda being followed by Mbeki has a great deal in common with those pursuing the neo-liberal agenda elsewhere in the world.

Despite these limitations, other aspects of the criticisms are sharp. This is perhaps not surprising in a situation where over 100,000 jobs have been lost as a result of privatisation.

Public sector job losses have contributed to soaring unemployment, which rose from 15% to 25% between 1995 and 1999 in terms of official figures. Real unemployment probably stands at nearer 40%. And for every worker who loses their job, five or six people lose their livelihood.

Privatisation has been accompanied by attacks on wages and conditions in the public sector.

The effects of some privatisations that have already completely or partially gone through are already apparent.

The government partially privatised in schools in 1994. Now, the rich pay high fees and get great schools in the suburbs. Meanwhile, working people's schools in the town-

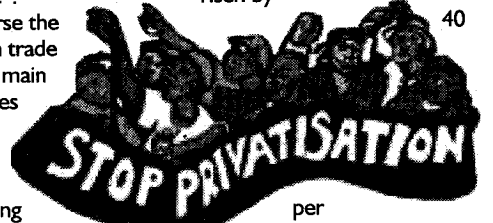
ships and rural areas don't have electricity or enough classrooms, resulting in high failure rates.

Privatisation of health care started under the apartheid regime, mainly through deregulation. Today 16% have private health insurance at a cost of R36 billion. This is more the R32 billion spent on public health.

Spending on public health care has fallen by 15% in real terms since 1996 - resulting in a real deterioration of service.

There has also been a shift of key health professionals from the public to the private sector. Some cities have privatised water management, leading to rising prices and a worse service. Durban's costs are set to go up by 28%. Making people pay for water has led to cut offs and even exacerbated the spread of cholera.

Privatisation of the telephone system means even though Telkom is rolling out new phones, basic rentals and local call costs go up - and phones get cut off for poor people. The cost of local calls has risen by



per cent in the past three years, while the cost of international calls, which mostly rich people use, has dropped 35 per cent.

The fight over electricity is at the centre of the current action, as the government is planning to permit the private generation of up to 30% of electricity - particularly through the transfer of a stake to a "black empowerment" (!!) consortium.

Because the government says the electricity company Eskom, which previously supplied the cheapest electricity anywhere in the world, has to make profits and pay taxes, huge numbers of people will end up with no service.

60,000 households in Soweto alone had their power cut off this winter. Now the National Electricity Regulator says it wants market prices for electricity, which could result in price rises of 20% - though other consultants have suggested that soon prices will need to rise by 50%.

While this round of strikes is over, COSATU will be meeting in the next few days to discuss plans for the future. Solidarity with South African workers needs to be raised both in trade unions and in the anti-globalisation movement in Britain.

## Not the Bogota 3!

One of the Irish newspapers reported the arrest of 3 leading republican activists in Columbia carried the headline Not the Bogota 3!

The reporter was making a simple point. In the past Sinn Fein would have mounted a defence campaign to support the activists: today they deny any connection with them.

Behind the jibe is a serious point. The one certainty about the Irish peace process is that the Sinn Fein leaders are lying.

They openly admit this. They tell their members that they are lying to the imperialists and the imperialists that they are lying to their members.

When things go wrong, they deny their members and hold by their contract with imperialism.



# Socialist Alliance structure: SP must move beyond the old sectarian agenda

Alan Thornett

**T**he Socialist Alliance had a highly successful intervention into the General Election, and greatly strengthened itself in the process. Now it is organising a conference on December 1 to adopt a new constitution which can facilitate its further development and consolidation.

The present constitution of the Alliance developed in an ad-hoc way as the organisation grew and changed, and is no longer adequate to today's challenges. There are a variety of different positions on how things should develop, but most seek in various ways to consolidate the SA and its structures.

This means reorganising and strengthening the structures of the Alliance at both national and local level. It means a unified membership and financial structure rather than the two tier system which exists at the present time.

The main debate is likely to be with the Socialist Party (SP) which is opposed to consolidating the SA, and argues instead for decentralisation. The SP has submitted both a proposed constitution and a political motivation for it.

This submission calls for the SA to be a loose association of political organisations (though some aspects would in our view be over-centralised).

For the ISG the new constitution must be based on democratic principles, which unfortunately were not consistently present in the general election campaign. There the Socialist Party successfully engineered fiefdom constituencies, in which they determined all political decisions, including who the candidate was. They demanded this repeatedly, with the implied threat that they might split if they didn't get their own way.

**N**ominally the SP was part of the Alliance, but used the SA to promote its own narrow advantage. It contributed almost nothing to the campaign at national level, often drafting its members into those constituencies where it had the candidate, even from other constituencies where there was an Alliance candidate.

These issues had come to a head at the January meeting of the Liaison Committee of the SA, which was only held together by the acceptance of a statement, prepared in advance between the SP and the SWP. This allowed the SP to determine the candidate and have political control in a list of pre-selected constituencies.

This statement overrode the democracy of the local alliances by imposing candidates on them. This was directly contrary to the 'Coventry protocol' which had been agreed by the earlier national conference of the SA, and which put candidate selection in the hands of the local Alliances.

The SWP agreed to this in order to maintain the unity of the Alliance. The ISG, along with most of the other left organisations, voted for it for the same reason. But everyone was clear that this was a one off agreement - necessary to get the Alliance through its first General Election campaign.

Whatever else happens at the December conference, this grossly undemocratic imposition of candidates must not be repeated. As



Local activists must be allowed to choose Alliance candidates without vetoes, stitch-ups or ultimatums

a first principle, the selection of candidates must be carried out by properly constituted meetings of local SAs on the basis of a majority vote of those present.

Local SAs might want to make other decisions by consensus, with majority decisions only being taken when this proved impossible, but a formal vote is necessary for candidate selection.

It is important that the SA remains united, and that the SP remains within it: but this cannot be at the expense of basic principles. It is impossible to build an alternative to Blairism without the most rigorous democracy, accepted and carried out by all participants in the SA. The SA cannot be built on the basis of undemocratic decisions bulldozed though under threat.

**T**he constitution put forward by the SP is not only undemocratic but also contradictory. Whilst its general framework is to decentralise the SA at national level, it becomes ultra-centralised by proposing a detailed constitutional structure for local SAs.

There is of course a perverse logic behind the SP proposals. They want to weaken the national structures in order to give themselves maximum room for manoeuvre, whilst finding a way of getting their own candidates in at local level in their priority constituencies. They want to perpetuate the logic of the Liaison Committee statement into the new constitution.

Of course the SP cannot with any credibility propose openly that they be given political control of certain constituencies as a constitutional right. They have, therefore, looked for mechanisms which will give them that - more or less - in practice.

Their answer is to introduce 'members platforms' into the Alliance - with a local right of veto.

The SP constitution would oblige local SAs to have in their local constitutions the right of any (minimum of) six members to establish a 'members platform' on request.

Once any platforms are established any decisions (including the adoption of candidates) could, at local (not national) level, only be taken unanimously.

In other words each member's platform would, at local level, have a veto over any decision. In practice any six people could paralyse the decision making process of a

local alliance.

Any one member's platform could frustrate the will of the majority in a local SA to adopt a candidate of its choice. This would also apply pressure for the adoption of a candidate put forward by the vetoing platform. If that does not work it is a short step from there to putting forward another candidate under another name.

At national level platforms would not have the right of veto other than on changes to the constitution - presumably to protect this initial stitch up from future challenge.

This outrageous procedure of local vetoes is partly justified, in the SP's political motivation, by counterpoising it to the concept of one-person-one-vote brought in by Neil Kinnock. But the analogy with Labour witch-hunters does not make sense.

OMOV was introduced in the LP in order to use a large passive membership against a smaller active membership, and used postal ballots for that end. It does not mean everyone in the room voting - as the SP implies. It means all those NOT in the room also being entitled to vote. The most democratic procedure is all present voting, providing the meeting has been properly constituted.

The SP attempt to justify their proposals by saying that they want a SA which is 'federal' rather than centralised. But of course it depends what is meant by federalism. The Socialist Party use the historical example of the LP between 1900-1918 and quote Keir Hardy at the LP founding conference expounding the right of affiliated organisations to select their own candidates.

**B**ut it is not true that the early LP had no control over candidates: those selected still needed to be endorsed by the Party. True, a few defied this rule, but that was the requirement.

And the form of federalism of that organisation was shaped by the context. The LP was formed under conditions of a slow break from Liberalism.

It was an unstable mixture of idealists, socialists, disaffected Liberals, and trade union leaders. Many of the later straddled both the Labour and Liberal Parties, and would have preferred to have remained Liberals if they could have only got candidates from organised labour selected.

Trade unions got involved because they felt the need for labour representation, without regard at this stage to particular politics. The

Labour Party did not have anything approximating to a socialist (or even social democratic) constitution or political creed until reorganisation and consolidation out of wartime conditions in 1918.

Moreover MPs were not paid by Parliament, so when trade unions paid them a wage, naturally they wanted to nominate the candidates. At the same time the local organisations of the Labour Party were weak or non-existent.

100 years later the idea that the first 18 years of the LP should be our model shows the weakness of the Socialist Party's politics.

If we want to look at lessons from the early history of the British Labour movement, the model of the ILP would be a better example. The ILP was a conscious break with Liberalism and was socialist in creed from its inception in the early 1890s.

It did, however, consider itself federalist, despite having a centralised decision making process (the supremacy of conference) and central control over the adoption of candidates.

The term 'federal' is in any case a much misused concept. The ISG wants a "federalism" in this situation in which the Alliance is an open and pluralist organisation containing not only individuals but organisations coming from different traditions.

These organisations have their own structures and priorities, but work collectively together in a unified organisation - the Socialist Alliance - which needs its own policy-making process and an elected, authoritative leadership to carry this out. Such a structure could not rationally be called over centralised.

The SP falsely imply that it is intrinsic to the idea of federalism that the Alliance should be only a collection of groups mainly doing their own thing but coming together for elections under loose arrangement. This does not hold water.

Unfortunately it is hard not to read into the SP proposals an irrational hostility to the SWP. This is the case even in the election for the national committee, where they propose reserved positions for MPs, MEPs, and councillors (effectively councillors) - which only the SP has - and for trade union NEC members or national officers.

**W**hilst it would be good to have such people on the EC, it is hard to see how this one factor qualifies them. In any case why national officers - and NEC members in the unions rather than other office holders or rank and file activists? Some of the best activists are excluded from such positions by the right wing.

The SP also argues that the SA should support groups of workers who decide to stand in elections themselves, as a protest against new Labour. There is no contest on this.

The SA would be prepared to support (ie not stand against) groups of workers who weren't ready to join us. The Alliance tried to reach an arrangement with the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation, without success, offering them prominent positions on a joint slate in the run up to the London Assembly.

There was nothing more the SA could do other than withdraw from the election in favour of the CATP - which even the SP did not propose.

What happened in the June by-elections in Hackney was not that the SA decided to stand against a group of UNISON workers, but that the SP organised a group of UNISON workers to support one of their own members as a candidate - against an existing Alliance candidate.

This sort of manipulation created a huge amount of bad feeling. The local Alliance had been deeply involved in the fight against cuts and privatisation, and therefore there was a strong basis for convincing local trade unionists not only to vote for the Alliance but to become involved in it. Unfortunately the SP put their own supposed interests before those of building the Alliance.

There are many challenges facing the Socialist Alliance if it is to succeed in establishing itself as a central part of the fight against Blairism over the months ahead.

To meet this challenge, we need the most effective structures that can give a voice to those who will increasingly be looking for such an alternative.

The Alliance will be stronger if the Socialist Party can be convinced to be a positive part of that alternative: but this will require convincing them to back down from their current extremely destructive positions.



In the run up to the December conference which will decide the future structure of the Socialist Alliance, one area of political debate which has not been sufficiently explored is the whole question of positive action. The Alliance needs to decide what – if any – measures we should take to ensure the full involvement and representation of the different oppressed groups in our society, such as women or black people, within our own structures.

Behind the question of adopting different administrative measures however, lies a broader and probably more important debate about what our vision is for a different type of society and the ways of getting there. Having a political exchange about these questions is of value in itself, whatever precise organisational decisions we take at the conference. Terry Conway offers a view for debate.

**T**he Socialist Alliance has developed and evolved in a political period where the ideological credibility of those who argued that history was over, and that the capitalist society in which we lived was meeting everyone's needs is being rejected by more and more people. The rise of the anti-globalisation movement is an exceedingly positive development in a situation where the world and country we live in has seen defeat after defeat for the left.

However that does not mean that winning people to a vision of socialism is a straightforward one. Two of the most powerful organisations which historically argued that they championed the cause of socialism – Social Democratic Parties and Communist Parties – are deeply implicated in what has been discredited.

The vision of socialism that we put forward through the Alliance is obviously one that differentiates itself both in theory and practice both from the legacy of Stalinism as well as from any idea that Blair's project has anything to do even with social justice, never mind socialism.

We have tried to take on board in the Alliance the fact that the vision of the future we develop and act on needs to be one which relates to the concerns of those coming into activity today – for example by putting environmental politics at the centre of our concerns.

Whether we have carried through this intention in practice is another question, but we have at least recognised the importance of the aspiration.

On other political questions however we have been less developed. It's not a question of beating ourselves up over this – we are a relatively new organisation operating in relatively difficult circumstances. But we have to look honestly at our weaknesses and discuss how we can address them.

From this point of view, we should look critically at which social forces we have so far



A new generation of young women have not had to battle in defence of abortion rights: gains of the past must not be lost

## Alliance must learn lessons of liberation struggles

attracted to our banner.

If we put to one side for a moment those who are members of revolutionary organisations, what is most noticeable about those who have become involved up is that these are not people who are new to politics – although many had been inactive or only partially active for a period.

Of course it's excellent to see people, with all that wealth of experience and talent coming back into activity. But it doesn't answer the other side of the equation – how we win the new generations to support for our ideas – how we really evolve a politics for the 21st century. That is why the Alliance needs to give conscious thought over the next period to how we win young people to the organisation.

**T**he involvement of women in the Alliance is more complex. It's not possible to give statistics at this stage because there is no unified membership system, but my guess would be that in terms of membership at local level, women and men are fairly equally involved.

However, when it comes to the participation of women in the leadership structures – the officer's group and the Election Committee/Executive this involvement, energy and talent is not replicated.

In our view this is a situation that needs to change. Despite the gains of the women's liberation movement, without conscious measures, there is always a tendency for organisations to replicate the sexual division of labour in our society – a division of labour which disadvantages women and undervalues the contribution we can and do make.

This problem is one which faces organisations of the left as well as other types of organisations in capitalist society, because we are condi-

tioned and shaped by the sexual division of labour that permeates that society.

The best way is of addressing such inequalities will vary from situation to situation: but the first hurdle that needs to be overcome is winning acceptance that some such measures will be necessary.

Another related issue that we need to look at critically is the involvement of black people in the Alliance. The Socialist Alliance rightly put the question of opposition to racism and defence of asylum seekers at the centre of the General Election campaign.

It was often the most difficult issue to argue with people who otherwise supported our ideas – for example among the callers who rang the national office after the election broadcast, a significant number focused on this issue.

Since the election campaign, if anything the issues have moved even more to centre stage – we have seen increased racist attacks and provocations from the BNP in particular and rebellions in response from significant layers of black youth. In the last weeks we have seen the Tory leadership campaign wracked by questions over BNP involvement.

**I**t's true that in this latter period part of the difficulty for us nationally has been having the political resources to respond to these questions. If Alliance members have been involved, they are more likely to have used other umbrella's such as the Anti-Nazi League or other anti-racist organisations rather than acting in our own name. And it's fair to say that such difficulties have occurred across the political spectrum, and not just on questions of racism.

But at the same time, while we were able to put forward a significant number of strong black candi-

dates at the General Election (as well as in the London Assembly elections before that) there can be no doubt that we remain an organisation where the proportion of black people remains shamefully low.

The ISG has believes that in order to create the sort of organisation we need to meet the challenges facing us, the December conference should support a number of measures to help address these an similar questions.

### We should:

- Support the right of women, black and minority ethnic people, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and people with disabilities to caucus within the alliance. Such caucuses should then put forward proposals to the alliance as a whole which can both make the organisation more habitable and more effective in fighting oppression

- Adopt measures that will ensure that leadership structures have at least a minimum number of women involved. At this stage we would suggest a rather modest figure of 25% – but this figure should not be one we are happy with in the long term.

- Elect both a youth officer and a black officer, with the remits of working with the leadership team to involve more black people and more youth in the Alliance.

**O**ne of the effects of the times we have been living through (really since the Miners' strike) is that there has been a break in political culture and legacy.

Many of those who are involved in the Alliance today have lived and been politically active through a time when for example the women's liberation movement was much more dynamic and visible than it is today.

It is important to value and pass on the contribution made by socialist feminists to the development and successes of that movement.

We should be aware that young women and men today are certainly not getting access to that legacy through – for example – the books available in libraries whether at college or where they live.

Today what tends to make the news are stories of women's successes – particularly in exams at school – while the fact that most of these very same women will end up earning less than their male counterparts is rarely noted never mind challenged.

But when such a discourse has become so dominant, we should certainly work to expose the reality – that, while it has undergone significant changes in the last couple of decades, women's oppression continues to be a very real phenomenon.

As usual history (or "herstory"! ) is written by and about those with power and money, and what survives in popular culture is not the struggles for equal pay or abortion rights, not the legacy of Women against Pit Closures but the question of how many female chief Executives there are.

The fierce political debates which took place – between groups of women who had a different idea of what sort of society they wanted – on the way forward for the women's movement should be of interest to the whole left.

**T**he distortions in the presentation of the fight for women's liberation impact today on the way that particularly young women are likely to approach the question.

And the role of New Labour is not insignificant at this level.

The argument goes "If Clare Short or Mo Mowlam is a feminist, then I am not... I have more in common with working class men than those women who cut child benefits or condemn women and their families in the third world to die painfully through poverty and disease."

The response of socialist feminists to this argument should be clear. Whatever label she uses, a woman who uses her own position of power to attack other women, and to reduce their standards of living is *not* a feminist – any more than a woman or man who does the same thing can be allowed to use the label "socialist".

A central part of our whole reason for existence as the Alliance is to say as loudly as possible that Tony Blair's politics have nothing to do with socialism.

It's not so different to argue at the same time that privilege for a small minority of women has nothing to do with any real vision of women's liberation.

The other movements against oppression; the lesbian and gay movement; the black movement and the movement of people with disabilities all have things to teach the Socialist Alliance and challenges to pose to us.

The histories of each of these movements have things in common – and also their own particular dynamic which there is not space or time to explore here.

And of course the ways that activists coming into activity for the first time today will raise questions, and the issues that are priorities today, will be different from those that animated people who have been involved for some time – affected by both the gains and the problems of those previous struggles.

We need to find ways to discuss these lessons and to work together with these movements in the battles that they are taking on.



# What's so great about genius?

Martin Smith: *John Coltrane: jazz, racism and resistance.*

Mike Gonzalez: *Diego Rivera: the man who painted walls.*

John Molyneux: *Rembrandt and revolution.*

Paul McGarr: *Mozart: overture to revolution.*

All published by Redwords, London, 2001, priced at £4.99 individually or £12 for the set.

**Reviewed by Andrew Kennedy**

**W**hat attitude should Marxists take to the work of "great" artists, with their attendant cults of genius? Is the idea of a body of artistic work that "stands the test of time" elitist and unhistorical? Such questions are raised both explicitly and implicitly by the first four volumes of the series "Revolutionary Portraits", newly published by Redwords, an imprint of the Socialist Workers Party.

These CD-sized booklets are each devoted to a major artist, namely Rembrandt, John Coltrane, Diego Rivera and Mozart.

One obvious justification for the series' overall title is that the creativity of each artist is related to their engagement at some level with revolution, rebellion or resistance; another, that the artist concerned introduced a new or "revolutionary" kind of representation.

The underlying thesis here seems to be that the most inspiring and innovative works of art are related in some way to historical progress and that this connection is achieved through the creative activity of heroic individual figures.

All the texts are opposed, however, to the crude idea that art and in particular individual creativity is a straightforward reflection of politics or economics. They equally contest the notion that artistic geniuses arise as if by magic, independently of historical circumstances.

All four works are based at least notionally upon a dialectical materialist model of (to quote the series blurb) "the relationship between individuals and larger historical forces", in which "each influences and shapes the other".

Yet there are interesting differences of emphasis among the texts. In the Rembrandt and Coltrane volumes, the individual artist seems to be accorded more auton-



*John Coltrane: genius "spelled out by his environment"?*

omy and the tone is more celebratory. The authors appear to be fans and to want to stimulate our appreciation of the works concerned.

On the other hand, the Mozart and Rivera studies, which were originally published as theoretical articles in *International Socialism*, take a more dispassionate approach, in which there is greater emphasis upon the shaping power of "the larger historical forces".

Mozart, in particular, tends to figure in Paul McGarr's study ultimately as a product or expression of the tensions within European society which resulted in the French Revolution and other social upheavals.

**T**his approach (Mozart as herald of progress) is usually fairly nuanced, but when applied to the opera *The Magic Flute* it becomes over-schematic: thus McGarr ignores the sexist portrayal of the Queen of the Night (surely unjustified even if she does symbolise reaction!) and the racist caricature that is Monostatos, a black servant.

The historical context also plays a



*Mozart: a product of the tensions in society?*

key role in the volume on Rembrandt, but the question of individuality comes more to the fore. To start with, John Molyneux makes it clear that the crucial things we appreciate about

Rembrandt's paintings and prints now are not simply present-day "constructs", formulated with hindsight, but are related to the real, material gains for humanity brought about by the Dutch revolution and war of independence against Spain (1566-1648).

Interestingly, he argues that the Dutch capitalist revolution brought a greater sense of the human individual, reflected in Rembrandt's self-portraits, for instance, and a greater acceptance of diversity, which would presumably provide a context within which Rembrandt could create his sympathetic images of Jews and black people.

Here, as elsewhere in Rembrandt's work, Molyneux argues, the bourgeois celebration of the individual, pushed to an extreme, takes on an anti-bourgeois logic: for example, Rembrandt's "positive" depictions of black people would sit ill with the racist ideology which legitimised the republic's policy of colonial slavery.

More problematically, Molyneux asserts that Rembrandt's images of the women with whom he had relationships can be extraordinarily non-sexist, because they were painted out of love, and not out of a desire to objectify.<sup>2</sup> How does he know?

Furthermore, Molyneux does not examine the precise forms that patriarchal power took in the bourgeois republic, nor whether these forms allowed a space for the expression of fulfilling heterosexual love, at least. Without such a historical foundation, his argument here tends not to advance beyond the level of humanist, empathetic insight.

**L**ike his mentor John Berger, therefore, he has to resort to the notion that Rembrandt was an exceptionally sensitive individual for his time, rather than being a "typical" product of it.<sup>3</sup>

This raises the following question: how much of a role should Marxists accord to individual agency and individual exceptionalism? Obviously, under certain conditions, quite a lot – we would probably say, for example, that without Lenin's intervention the October Revolution would not



*Rembrandt*

have been accomplished.

Arguably, an important role is given to human agency in Marx's famous statement that "Men [sic] make history, but they do not make it just as they please: they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past".<sup>4</sup>

There may, of course, be problems in applying this formula to individuals rather than to collective groupings, and to the cultural rather than the political sphere.

For Molyneux, however, Marx's principle seems to work as follows: Rembrandt is at once a product of the Dutch revolution and Dutch society (something that he did not choose) and yet as a historical agent he chooses (though not with full consciousness of what is he doing) to express the highest tendencies of that revolution through his individual psyche.

One could argue, notwithstanding, that the format of the series panders to a very traditional kind of bourgeois individualism. Doesn't the focus on the single artist, despite all the contextualising, inevitably lead to a capitulation to the myth of male genius?

**I**t is noteworthy that the figures covered by the series so far are all men. Over the past thirty years, feminists in particular have argued against genius as an elitist concept that by definition excludes women and other oppressed groups and leads to the elevation to sacrosanct status of a relatively small group of works by white European males.<sup>5</sup>

This argument should strike close to home: it is safe to say that most people in and around Marxist organisations are familiar with the phenomenon of "the man with the big brain", who authoritatively holds forth and is heard with a kind of reverence.

The SWP's theoretical weaknesses in relation to special oppression are particularly evident here: not one of the volumes engages with feminist critiques of genius.

Some will point to the inclusion of the black jazz musician John Coltrane or the Mexican artist Diego Rivera as demonstrating that the chosen format is at least not inherently Eurocentric.

Nevertheless, most of the texts take an approach to artistic achievement which is summed up by Martin Smith: "John Coltrane was not a 'natural born genius' somehow sprung fully formed, divinely inspired and beyond logical explanation. Genius he definitely was, but the nature of his genius was spelled out by his environment."<sup>6</sup>

He goes on to state: "At a certain point in history Coltrane was able to express his musical ideas with greater clarity than those around him".<sup>6</sup>

This begs the question of why it was Coltrane, rather than another jazz musician, who was able to express these ideas, which means that we are still left with the notion of exceptional individual

attributes. In other words, we have a modified and not very satisfactory version of the bourgeois genius thesis, which might be expressed as: "such-and-such an artist is great, but their greatness has a material explanation, sort of".

One volume bucks the trend. Mike Gonzalez argues that Diego Rivera depicts peasants and workers as passive inhabitants of a timeless, mythic Mexican nation, rather than as active agents, that he is impervious to social contradiction and is therefore actually "the least revolutionary" of the Mexican mural painters.<sup>7</sup>

The incidental effect of his account is to show how completely inappropriate the representation of the individual artist as hero can be. Such a cautionary note is welcome: the desire to portray an artist both as revolutionary and as creative genius, the notion that great art and political action can originate from the same figure – all this creates a huge pressure to mythologise and heroicise.

**N**o doubt Redwords will cover some female cultural practitioners in future volumes – the German socialist artist Kathe Kollwitz occurs to me as a prime candidate. But it is questionable whether the "heroic" format would be suited, for example, to Claude Cahun, a lesbian artist of the 20s, 30 and 40s whose work subversively interrogated notions of gender and identity.<sup>8</sup>

Her unsettling images were produced for herself or for her friends: they were not interventions into the public domain; their relation to class politics is not obvious or straightforward; they don't wear the egotistical trappings of the self-consciously "great" artist.

Might this lead some Marxists to relegate Cahun once again to the historical margins?

It was Trotsky – himself often portrayed as a genius – who predicted that under communism, "The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise".<sup>9</sup>

This promises a future levelling-up of human capacities only to tease us with the prospect of new geniuses arising who will reach an even higher level. Even in an egalitarian society, then, human beings will never possess absolutely equal talents and attributes. Is Trotsky right about this, and if so, is it a problem?

Clearly, we are still in the early stages of developing a dialectical materialist model of the creative human subject and its relationship to social structures and processes. It is worth remembering, however, that these volumes have been produced primarily not as interventions into theoretical debates, but as accessible and enjoyable Marxist introductions to their respective subjects. From that point of view, they work very well.

■ Andrew Kennedy lectures in art history for various institutions.

1. Molyneux prefers to talk instead of "solidarity" and "identification"
2. See Molyneux, pp 18-21
3. See Molyneux pp 82-3 and Berger's *Ways of Seeing*
4. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*
5. see e.g. Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, Women's Press, 1989
6. Both quotes from Smith, p 65. See also Molyneux pp 23-4 and McGarr, p 78
7. Gonzalez, p 62
8. Gen Doy discusses Cahun from a Marxist feminist point of view in her book *Materialising Art History*, 1988
9. These are the last two sentences of *Literature and Revolution*.



# Building a mass party: is the Socialist Alliance missing its opportunity?

Building a mass revolutionary party is a task that has faced the extreme left since the after shocks of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The history of the movement – the sectarianism of the early communist movement followed by its degeneration due to stalinism, accompanied by the betrayal of social democracy and the growth of fascism have been discussed by others, particularly by Trotsky and his followers.

The question I am posing (and it is a question not an answer) is this: in the current situation in Britain, how should Marxists expedite the break of Labour Party members and sympathisers from that Party, overcome the cynicism of millions who don't vote – particularly the youth – and win back a section of the poorest workers and middle class attracted to the fascist scum?

The "entry tactic" will never solve the problem of the absence of a mass revolutionary party, nor will it lead to its formation. That tactic has been around for nearly 70 years! I will remember the Group round Gerry Healy and John Lawrence entering the Labour Party in 1948.

As a member I know the experience was useful, indeed enlightening. Yes, we made some recruits. Ted Knight was one. We participated and helped in the growth of Bevanism in 1952, 1953 and 1954 (an important left centrist movement).

Nevertheless, despite this favourable development most of us got done by the right wing Executive (e.g. Bill and Ray Hunter in Islington, and Ted Knight, Tom Mercer and myself in Norwood L.P.) in 1954. There is no corresponding left centrist current in the L.P. now, and far less chance for a mass break from that Party.

So are the unions the key for opening up the construction of a powerful alternative party, despite their leaderships and bureaucracies? I think they are.

A number of unions e.g. the TGWU, FBU, RMT, UNISON and GMB have threatened or decided to cut back on funds to New Labour. They have voted for alternative policies: renationalisation of the railways; opposition to privatisation; opposition to the government's anti-immigration laws (especially vouchers and detention centres); disgust at the growing divergence between rich and poor and the enormous rewards for directors and executives; the attack on comprehensive education and the encouragement of Big Business to run schools; the refusal to restore the link on pensions

The right wing policies of



Dudley hospital strikers challenging PFI and forcing UNISON to "review" Labour link

New Labour have resulted in a shift in the mood within the Labour Party and in the mood of those normally voting Labour.

The vote for Livingstone, the parliamentary dissent over the Chairs of Select Committees, the abstention of millions of voters, the increasing opposition (mainly of youth) to global capitalism, the fight to restore the link on pensions, together with the growth of fascism and a serious increase in racist attacks in

areas of unemployment and deprivation – these all show the shift in mood.

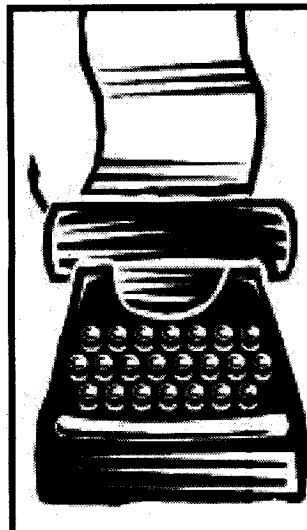
So far the movement in the unions has led, as I have indicated, to a loss in funds to New Labour and the threat to back candidates in elections who will campaign for union policies. I believe it time for the marxist groups (be they the groups associated with or in the Socialist Alliance or those on the left critical of the Socialist Alliance) to campaign, in and out of the

unions, for the unions to found an alternative party based on the unions but with a more radical policy than that founded just over 100 years ago.

In campaigning for such a party I would suggest at this stage there should be a minimum policy such as: the renationalisation of the railways; opposition to privatisation of any public service; increased funding to hospitals, transport (such as the Tube), schools etc. by taxing the rich; the restoration of

## 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 2UU. email: outlook@gn.apc.org



the pensions link; an increase in the minimum wage and no differentiation for age; opposition to participation in America's "star wars" and support for the anti-globalisation campaign and the Kyoto agreement.

Once such a break was achieved, candidates would fight on the programme in local, national and European elections. If the left can force the formation of a new party based on the unions, as the Labour Party was just over 100 years ago, but in this quite new situation, the opportunities for building a mass marxist party would be qualitatively different.

I believe such a party would have an enormous attraction to disaffected Labour party members, but more importantly, to many workers, youth and pensioners, the unemployed and middle class.

With the threat of recession facing the European and world economy the political, economic and social situation will change drastically. A search for an alternative path will be facing many.

Under these circumstances socialist ideas will take on added force as will the need to fight increasing unemployment, cutbacks and wage slashing. The Labour leadership has no answers to these problems except to advise workers to pull in their belts a little more and wait for the good times to return.

It is now that the left should be putting the maximum pressure on the union leadership to consider an open break with New Labour and the formation of a new party based on the unions.

If such a party was formed, with the right of any group agreeing with the policies of that party to affiliate, the chance for a mass marxist party to be built would be present. Have I oversimplified the problems? Maybe I have.

But at least the left wing groups should discuss these ideas – or is the prevalence of sectarianism in the different tendencies too powerful?

**Dave Finch**  
South London

## Lessons from Wales and Scotland

I WAS INTERESTED to read Alan Thorne's assessment of the June general election results ('New Labour: a government with no mandate'. SO 46). but I have to question some of his judgements.

In the first place, while I agree that it is indeed bizarre that Labour's landslide was founded on only around a quarter of the electorate, I think it is difficult to go on to argue that there is anything in the figures that vindicates the decision to run the Socialist Alliance campaign.

Outside three constituencies in which special factors came into play, the overall average percentage poll of under two per cent (in an election in which the turnout was staggeringly low anyway) hardly indicates the emergence of anything like a significant layer within the workers' movement breaking from Labourism to the extent that they are prepared to vote against it.

These kinds of numbers are what one comrade memorably called a 'BT vote' i.e. 'family and friends' (of the candidate). So while the degree of co-operation among the groups of the far left may be gratifying, the actual content of the joint work seems far less so.

But this is in England. In Scotland, on the other hand, the level of the vote won by the SSP does seem to have passed some kind of threshold. Here there is a different process underway – reflected this time round by the vote to the left of Labour, but building on patterns already evident in the way in which the SP and SWP in Scotland have

evolved.

Politics in Scotland seems to be moving at a different rhythm than in England. a significant fact that socialists in Britain have to be able to understand and work with.

And what of Wales? Here the situation appears different again. Comrade Thorne can only note the poor performance of the Alliance, and the fact that Plaid Cymru 'did a lot worse than expected'.

One is tempted to ask expected by whom? By some within Plaid I expect, but when did a small party do as well as it expected?

The very same point could be made about the Alliance. In fact, by any standards. Plaid did in fact remarkably well indeed. if a comparison is made with the last British state general elections in 1997.

Looking at the total votes cast for the main parties in both elections, we see that not only was Plaid the only party to increase its vote in Wales, but it did so by a whopping twenty-one per cent.

Why was this so? Who were these new Plaid voters? Looking at the figures, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they are former Labour voters fed up with the current direction of the Party, especially when it is borne in mind that the biggest swings from Labour to Plaid (again calculated using actual numbers of votes cast) tend to be clustered in the traditional Labour bastions of the south Wales coalfield.

That this is so can be largely explained

by the fact that Plaid's policies are in general not only to the left of Labour's, but also appear to be more in line with the aspirations of the latter's own traditional supporters. With regard to privatisation, for example, Plaid is both critical of the Private Finance Initiative and in favour of renationalisation of the railways.

For many Labour voters, it seems, a vote for Plaid is seen as a vote in defence of the welfare state and public services: Plaid's appeal to Labour voters would seem to lie in the popular perception that Plaid are better defenders of traditional 'labourist' interests – than New Labour itself.

This is of course exactly the same pattern of voting that we saw in the Welsh Assembly elections in 1999, save the fact that this time round it has been on a much smaller scale.

The reasons for this are obvious: the Welsh working class is not stupid, and for the time being it is going to take the question of Westminster government seriously. But the pattern that we saw in 1999 is exactly the same, only this time with smaller numbers. There is a real process here, different to that in both England and Scotland.

And this is the real point I want to make. Since the 1970s, the unitary political system in the British state has been breaking down, and the fruits of this process are what we can discern in the June results.

The consequence today is that in England, especially in metropolitan England, there is no significant radicalisation occurring outside of the organisational or political confines of Labourism.

In Scotland, following on from the poll tax movement and the impact of the national question, there is a genuine large-scale radical current that is beginning the break from the dominant current of British working class politics.

In Wales, a different process is taking place, with a small but significant shift in political allegiance from Labour to Plaid.

Aside from all debate on the merits or otherwise of the performance of the Socialist Alliance, therefore, the real point is that a British political outlook which does not recognise that England is not Scotland and Wales is not England is not going to be able to address the real political developments taking place within the British working class movement.

**Ed George, Spain**

**Socialism on the internet**  
Socialist Outlook web site:  
[www.labournet.org.uk/so](http://www.labournet.org.uk/so)  
International Socialist Group:  
[www.3bh.org.uk/ISG](http://www.3bh.org.uk/ISG)



# Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 48. September 2001. 50p

# OUTLOOK

# Stem the tide of racism!



NEW LABOUR is swimming in a tide of increasingly racist and reactionary policies.

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw tells us he "sympathises" with Australian Prime Minister John Howard's plight in trying to keep out the Afghani asylum seekers on the Tampa - at a time when Howard's actions have met with widespread condemnation across the globe.

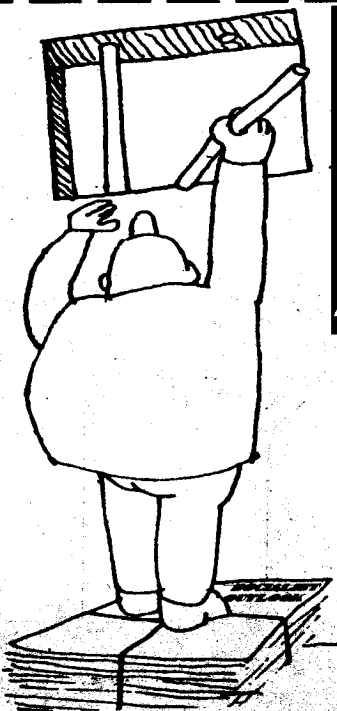
David Blunkett promises to send in snatch squads to remove people whose applications for asylum have failed. Immigration officers will be armed with new powers to search premises and make arrests. Blunkett has argued that these measures are necessary to restore "faith in the asylum system".

Now the Government have given catering company Sudexho an opt-out from the minimum wage legislation so that they can pay asylum

seekers less than one tenth of the paltry minimum wage - a miserable 34p an hour - for cleaning and cooking! The timing of this is somewhat ironic, coinciding as it does with the UN conference on racism, at which the British government is leading the former slave-trading nations in resisting any apology for their past crimes against humanity, any recognition of the legacy of slavery - and any payment of reparations to the African countries affected.

Every rabid racist comment in the tabloids is met by yet more concessions and right wing policies from politicians.

These people must be held to account and their reactionary ideas consigned to the dustbin of history. We say: Step up the fight against racism, throw out the system of forced dispersal, and scrap immigration controls.



**You get a much better view if you read**

**Socialist Outlook**

**every month!**

**Don't miss an issue: SUBSCRIBE now!**

20 pages of internationalist news, views and marxist analysis each month. 12 issues delivered for just £10. OVERSEAS subscribers 12 issues for just £20.

**SPECIAL OFFER (UK only):** One year of *Socialist Outlook*, PLUS one year of *International Viewpoint* (Fourth International magazine) for only £30.

PLEASE send me

12 issues of *Socialist Outlook*

12 issues of *Socialist Outlook* plus *International Viewpoint*.

I enclose £...

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

**SEND TO: Socialist Outlook,  
PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**