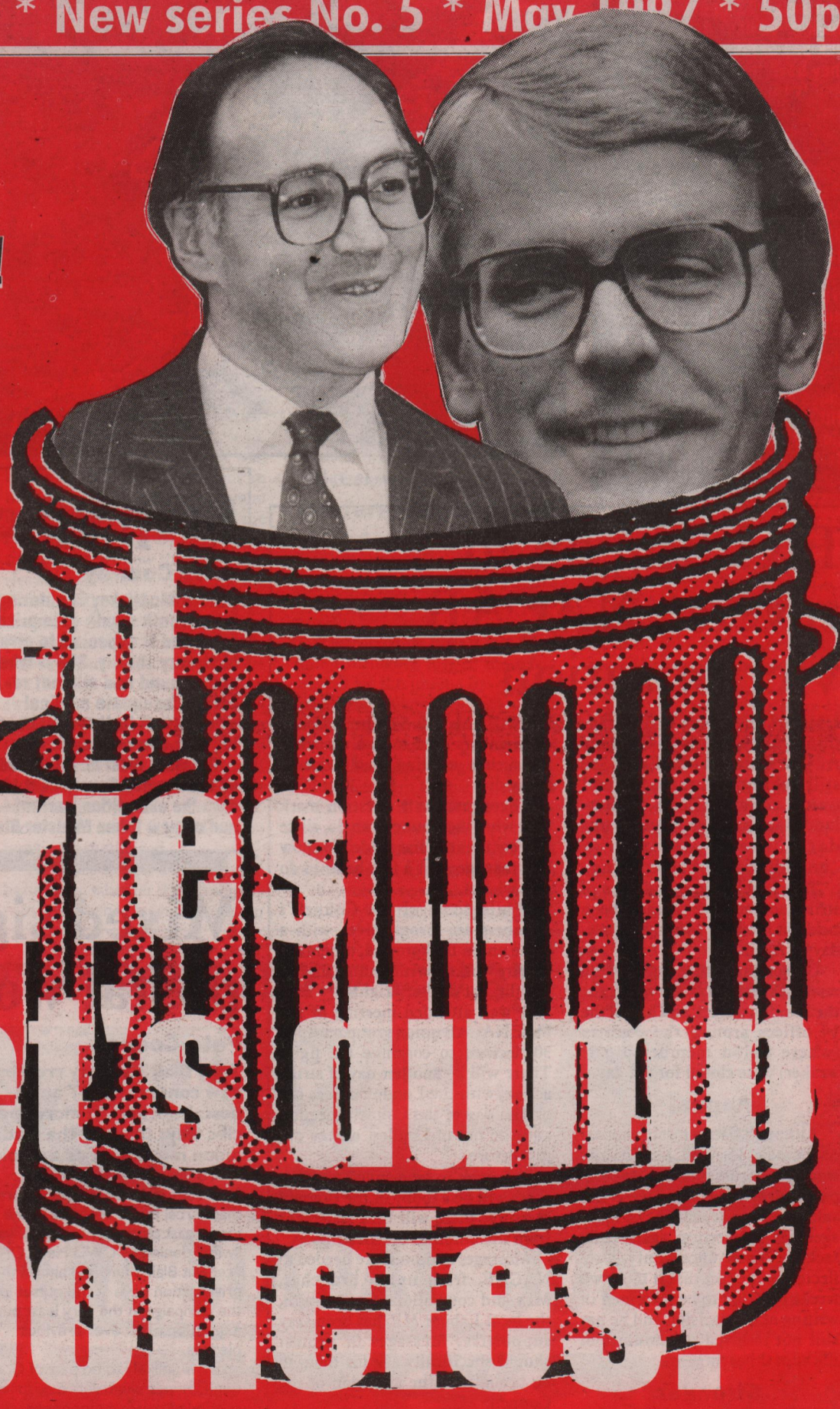


Socialist OUTLOOK

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**Victory at last!
Don't let New
Labour waste it!**



**We've
dumped
the Tories --
now let's dump
their policies!**

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PALESTINE

on the March
to Amsterdam



a Socialist Outlook pull-out on the Euro Marches 97

Bakers out for more bread

65 WORKERS at the Arnaouti Pitta Bread Bakery in Tottenham, North London, are on strike for better pay, improved working conditions and union recognition.

Arnaouti's pitta bread is sold in Safeway and Tesco amongst other places.

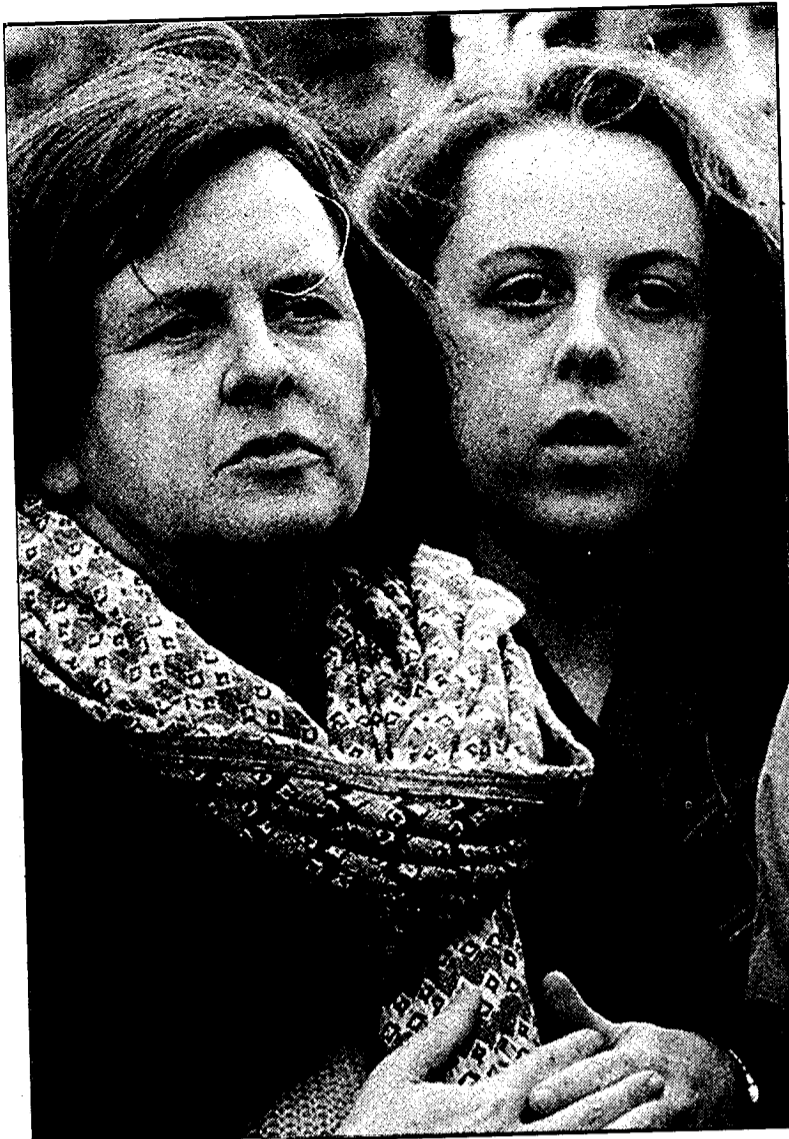
The workers at the bakery are paid £3.37 an hour for a contracted 72-hour working week (6 12 hour days) without sick pay or pension rights. They have to work a year to qualify for 12 days paid holiday.

The bakery is using agency workers to keep the business running.

Haringey Trades Council has organised mass pickets, lobbies and hardship collections.

The local Bakers Union branch is calling for all union members in the country to donate £1 each to support this struggle.

Send donations and messages of support to: Paddy Hill, Auxiliary Officer, No 1 Region, BFAW, Sinclair House, Unit 9, 66 Willoughby Lane, Tottenham, London N17 0SQ.



Roisin and Bernadette McAliskey

Fighting on to reverse NACAB victimisation

UNION members at the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) are still taking action to defend union activist Glenn Sutherland, sacked after 19 years under the pretext of 'unauthorised photocopying'.

Two highly successful days of strike action have already been held, on Monday 14 and Wednesday 23 April.

On both days no member of the main MSF union group went in at the London offices, and half of the 14 offices around the country (where union membership is weaker) were closed for the day.

Appeal

Although Glenn lost his appeal on Tuesday 15 April, he certainly won the arguments. The appeals panel clearly felt they were not sufficiently independent of management to overturn against the sacking. Their uncertainty is reflected in the fact that it took two weeks for Glen to be informed in writing of the decision and he has still not received the minutes of the appeal hearing.

Stronger

Despite this, the second day's strike was stronger than the first. New members joined MSF in order to be able to participate in the second strike, and the union group is now stronger than ever.

A special meeting of NACAB's Council has been called for May 23 solely to discuss the case, a very rare event which has possibly only happened once before in

NACAB's history. 5 of the 37 Council members need to sign a request for such a meeting, and twice as many did.

There remains a question mark over what the Council can do, since in recent years it has tended to allow line management a free hand to do as it wishes.

While some of the Council's members are 'progressive', with a trade union background, others are charity workers with limited understanding of workers' rights.

A well-attended meeting of the MSF NACAB union group on April 30 decided to continue the fight. There will be another day of strike action, with the London offices out on the day of the Council meeting and the out-of-London offices out just before.

It has yet to be decided whether there will be a lobby of the Council meeting: there will be a statement from the union to the meeting.

Messages of protest are needed to NACAB, from union branches, MPs and councillors. Chris Smith, the local Labour MP, has been very supportive. Messages of protest should specifically ask for them to be brought to the attention of the Council.

Messages of protest should be sent to: Helena Shovelton, Chair, NACAB Council, c/o NACAB, 115-123 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LZ.

Copies and messages of support should be sent to: Jennie Twydel, Secretary St. Pancras branch MSF, 80 Pembroke Street, London N1 0DP.

Southwark College message to Blair

"Education, Education, Education!" was the cry during the election.

So striking NATFHE members from Southwark College called on Downing Street the day after Tony Blair moved in to demand that he "put his money where his mouth is." 150 members of the lecturers union have been on all out strike for the last fortnight against plans to make over £1 million cuts from Southwark College's £10 million staffing budget.

The cuts will mean over 30 compulsory redundancies and all part time staff being sacked and re-employed through an agency - on worse pay and no conditions.

Two years ago a similar dispute at the College led to a three week all out strike which forced the Governors to back down. This time morale is high with the strikers again confident of victory.

NATFHE delegations from colleges across the country were joined by other local trade unionists in a march which stopped off at John Smith House, Labour's HQ, to present a letter to the borough's two Labour MPs and to failed Labour candidate and Council Leader Jeremy Fraser, calling on them to fight for the resources necessary to halt

the cuts at the College.

The strike graphically exposes the problems New Labour faces. On the one hand the question of accountability has to be confronted. The decision to attack the workforce was taken by a handful of unelected Governors.

They are intent on driving forward with the process of marketisation of education provision. On the other hand, the decision was financially led from central government with a Labour council being a willing party to the imposition of spending cuts.

Neither is this an isolated incident. In North London, Kingsway College workers are set to take action in the next weeks in a similar dispute - and other Colleges across the country face the same stark choices, with governing bodies looking to the same solutions - job cuts and agency workers.

New Labour's promises of "Lifelong Learning" and "full time study for young people" as part of a programme to get 250,000 under 25s off the dole queues will mean nothing if College places are allowed to disappear.

Step up campaign for Roisin

Terry Conway

ROISIN McAliskey is entering her seventh month of imprisonment and is expected to give birth very shortly. She is wheelchair bound and still not receiving adequate medical attention. A further bail hearing was due on May 6.

Pressure must be increased on the German Government to drop the extradition warrant - and on new Prime Minister Blair

to secure her immediate release! Rush your protests to:

His Excellency, The Ambassador, Dr Jurgen Oesterhelt, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 23 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 9AT
FAX 011 44 171 824 1435
The main e-mail address for the Labour Party is labour--party@geo2.poptel.org.uk
Phone 011 44 171 701 1234
Fax 011 44 171-277-3300

John Smith House, 150 Walworth Road, London, SE17 1JT ENGLAND

There are many other affiliate listings with e-mail addresses found at <http://www.labour.org.uk/contacts/index.html>

I suggest starting any correspondence with congratulations on Labour's landslide victory.

Mixed signals for Telecom and postal workers

Pete Cooper

Tony Blair's victory creates a new context for BT and postal workers in more specific ways than for the trade union movement as a whole.

It is unclear what is in store. A statement by Stephen Byers that Parcel Force could be in line for at least partial privatisation was swiftly denied by CWU Head Office. But Blair's further shift on the privatisation issue at the outset of the campaign at the very least puts a question mark over previous pledges.

BT is unlikely to be part of Gordon Brown's windfall tax, despite its continued massive monopoly profits. Motions at this year's CWU conference to support this exclusion should be thrown out.

BT management clearly favoured a Labour victory in the hope of a relaxation of the "asymmetry" rule which prevents BT from rivalling the new Cable and Wireless cable company and Sky in offering home entertainment services.

This would make its laying of fibre optic cable network more prof-

itable. The CWU Telecoms leadership which brokered the "deal" has placed much reliance on this outcome in the hope of more jobs (and union members!) being generated.

But C&W will mount a major challenge, including in the Courts to limit BT's freedom to destroy its smaller competitor. Much of any additional work would be carried out by anti union contractors. The cancer of sub-contracting is already eating into BT's workforce after yet another recent retreat by the union leadership on their further encroachment.

Resolutions on re-nationalisation of BT and of action against contractors are high on the agenda.

A new factor is BT's merger with the US Telco MCI. Merger at the management level is already well advanced, with the notoriously anti-union MCI management playing a disproportionately big role in the new organisation. BT is already moving to reduce lay full timers' union facility time.

BT is introducing "trading units" (internal markets) which if not fought at the outset by national ac-

tion will lead to terms and conditions being undermined by threats of undercutting and job loss.

The 31 sacked Critchley Labels workers are still campaigning for their jobs back and for trade union recognition. However Blair's proposals on trade union recognition, even when introduced, will not be made retrospective.

A welcome innovation this year will be a "strategy" session in the Telecom conference. However the Telecom Executive's idea of a strategy which revolves around a partnership with BT and includes the suggestion of biennial union conferences should be thrown out.

Much of the interesting discussion will be outside conference hall around who will run for General Secretary in 1998 and how s/he will be chosen after Alan Johnson's surprise elevation to Parliament.

The Broad Left which only has a base in Telecom will have to make arrangements for a common candidate with Postal militants.

Socialist Outlook will be arguing for an open conference of the left to choose and campaign for such a candidate.

Now dump Tory policies!

THOUSANDS of people staggered to bed in the not so early hours of the morning on May 1 exhausted but elated. Many more woke on the following morning to the joyful news of a Labour government and a Tory rout.

At long last the dark years of Tory rule that had savaged so many lives and communities were at an end. The relief was visible in the faces of strangers smiling at each other in the street.

The Tories are left not only an English only party but essentially a party of the shires and suburbs. The knives were out long before the ballot boxes even opened and whether the Tory party can survive this scale of defeat remains an open question.

But no one can afford long to recover after the election campaign. The fight against Blair's Tory policies needs to start yesterday and we need to hit the deck running.

Crowd

When Tony Blair addressed the union-jack waving, hand picked crowd outside number 10 he was at pains to state "I know well what this country has voted for today. It is mandate for New Labour and I say to the people of this country: we ran for office as New Labour, we will govern as New Labour."

Despite the certainty in his words the facts belie him. Exit polls - which were totally accurate in predicting the results of the election itself - also told us voters views on policies.

Sixty per cent of those voting Labour for the first time were in favour of the redistribution of wealth, 75 per cent against any further privatisation. The figures were higher still for traditional Labour voters.

Millions voted Labour to end the Tory nightmare not to see it continue in a new guise. Despite his great pains to ensure the contrary most took little notice of Blair's detailed policies and expect significant changes in their lot over the months to come.

Moves such as signing the social chapter and ending the ban on unions at GCHQ may bolster the mood of hope for a while but Blair has no intention of using his massive mandate to bring the real improvements that Labour supporters want.

In Tory-free Scotland this election saw a swing to Labour against the SNP to destroy the architects of the poll tax but the polls also showed that the SNP were promised more votes than Labour in the referendum on a Scottish parliament.

Despite the timidity of the plans constitutional reform in Scotland and Wales in particular will change the political map forever.

While the Liberal Democrats have massively increased their number of MPs, their share of the vote remains the same. Their improved showing was a result both of better targeting on their behalf and more efficient tactical voting from a layer of the electorate.

There will be no pressure on Blair to co-operate with them to get his programme agreed - but he may choose to do so to strengthen the political profile he wishes to present on a whole range of issues.

The votes for the Referendum Party seemed vaguely respectable - until one unpicked them and realised that not only did they largely rely on Tories deserting the sinking ship, but that with £20 million spent on the campaign this works out at £25 per vote!

Fascists lose out

The fascists by and large showed poorly but even one single vote for these candidates is of concern and they may well increase their support under a Labour government.

The so-called Pro-Life Alliance fared badly - averaging 0.9 per cent where they stood - a testament to the campaign of the National Abortion Campaign not only during the election itself but in its year's of battling for a Woman's Right to Choose.

The media were quick to point



With a majority of 179 Blair could do anything he wants: but all he wants to do is "build on" Tory policies!

out on May 2 that New Labour's leader could afford to expel any left trouble makers in the PLP without fear of legislation being compromised. They further argued that if the unions were troublesome on the industrial front he would move quickly to completely sever the union link.

While these briefings may well have been issued from Millbank in the hope of intimidating those who might think of challenging the cliques line, it may be less easy to silence dissent now the hated Tories are dead and buried. While the majority of the new intake are undoubtedly supporters of the leadership some dissidents did slip through the net, their numbers swelled by unexpectedly high swings.

The left in the PLP were wrong to keep their heads down not only during the election campaign itself but in the months that preceded it. No attempt by Blair to continue the monetarism of the Tories must remain unchallenged.

There are tactical discussions to be had as to whether the left should vote against the Queen's Speech in

the early days of this new administration, when such actions might only be understood by very few. It might be better to wait until Brown's 'promised' budget in July when proposals that directly impact on jobs and services are likely to be made. The left will need to analyze such developments as they occur in order to plan the best tactical response.

Conference fightback

With the majority of union conferences taking place over the next two months there will be a sharp test of the ability of activists to prepare the fightback.

It is ironic that Blair is attacking union influence just as the party created by the unions has won its biggest-ever victory.

The unions must oppose Blair's 'Party into Power' proposals - which threatens to degut trade union influence in the party - as well as advancing the demands and interests of their members.

Most union leaderships will continue to keep their heads down - they can't remember anything else. Despite this it is likely that ex-

pectations of many who voted Labour will spill over into action the leaderships are unable to control.

Candidates to the left of Labour were squeezed by the massive sentiment across the country to get rid of the Tories which has left that party high and dry.

Within this overall tendency the Socialist Labour Party fared generally much better than the rest. It was seen by a small but significant layer of voters as a legitimate alternative to a post-Clause 4 Labour Party that made clear it would carry out policies very similar to that of the Tories.

There was a difference in the level of support their different candidates received that with the exception of Scargill reflected their record in local campaigning.

Over the next months there will be countless opportunities at both formal and informal level to debate strategy and tactics.

The left inside and outside the Labour Party desperately needs to engage in these discussions in as open and comradely a way as possible, at the same time as engaging in the day to day battles against Blair's Tory policies.

Dockers demonstration shows way forward

Susan Moore

TWENTY thousand people marched and danced through London on April 12 on the March for Social Justice organised by the London support group for the Liverpool Dockers.

The event raised issues that were otherwise sidelined in the election campaign of the main parties. The march gave high profile to the campaign of the Liverpool dockers for reinstatement and the dockers, Women on the Waterfront and dockers support committee were prominent.

Other workers in dispute, including strikers from Magnet, Hillingdon Hospital and Project Aerospace all of whom have been fighting against dismissal for many months, had large contingents. Disability activists were present in numbers, and trade unionists marched with their banners.

Fifty per cent of the demonstration was made up of supporters of Reclaim the Streets (RTS) further cementing the firm alliance they have built with the dockers over recent months. RTS had called a two



day festival of Resistance to be launched by the march and brought an unusual flavour to the event with their sound systems and direct action approach.

The action of the police in attacking mainly RTS activists after many others had dispersed was sadly all too familiar.

The Liverpool dockers and the London Dockers support commit-

tee had enthusiastically agreed that the march would mark the start of the European Marches in Britain since the issues raised by both are the same.

Glenn Voris, Secretary of the British Marches Committee spoke about the marches to the rally in Trafalgar Square. Jeremy Corbyn MP also spoke in support of the marches.

Euromarch supporters gave out thousands of leaflets to the demonstrators, many of whom who were previously unaware of the marches.

Euromarch T-shirts also sold well. In the week since the demonstration the Euromarch committee has received many enquiries from people wishing to march.

The London Euromarch commit-

tee and the London Dockers Support Committee have now merged to build the biggest possible mobilisation for the Euromarches in Britain.

The event presaged precisely the kind of alliances that will need to be built and actions that will need to be organised in the months to come under Labour.

It also gave us confidence that such a task is achievable.

Scotland - A Tory Free Zone!



Fighting council cuts will be a focus before the devolution referendum

Gordon Morgan

ON MAY 1 the Tories lost all ten of their seats in Scotland. They now have NO MPs, NO MEPs, and control NO councils.

The Tory party organisation is on the point of collapse. The main policy on which they fought the election on – attacking devolution – has been clearly rejected, and they face a root and branch reappraisal

of policies with the possibility of a separate Scottish party focused on the Scottish Parliament.

In every part of Scotland the mood was to get rid of the Tories. Tactical voting was widely employed to ensure their defeat.

Six seats were won from the Tories by Labour, one by Lib Dems and three by the SNP. Labour hold 56 seats, Lib Dems 10 and the SNP 6. The Tories have the same as the Scottish Socialist Alliance – none.

There is a mood of celebration in achieving this, even amongst people who distrust Labour – the defeat of Michael Forsyth was particularly welcomed.

Compared with 1992, there was a 9 per cent drop in the Tory vote to 17 per cent (higher than at local elections), an 8 per cent rise in Labour to 47 per cent (down on recent polls), SNP up 1 per cent to 22 per cent and Lib Dems down 1 per cent to 12 per cent.

The extent of tactical voting can be deduced from both SNP and Lib Dems taking more seats with much the same percentage as in 1992. In Labour-held seats the SNP and Lib Dem share of the vote fell.

Labour's strategy in Scotland was to focus on UK issues and focus on the need for change at Westminster. This clearly worked – particularly in the last 2 weeks.

In the early stages of the campaign Blair almost blew it by ill considered remarks on devolution and sovereignty which showed he didn't understand the basis of the Claim of Right, nor indeed the detail of Labour's proposals.

For a time this allowed the SNP to succeed in raising the 'Scottish Question', and polls suggested a rise in their vote to nearer 30 per cent, a point where they could take seats from Labour.

Labour retrenched after reaffirming their commitment to a Scottish parliament. This time the people trust them to deliver.

The SNP are moderately pleased. They succeeded in proving that an independent Scotland could be at least as affluent as the present set-up (under capitalist policies and within the EU) and indeed proved that Scottish tax payers have been 'subsidising' Westminster.

This has changed the terrain of debate between devolution and independence: however, the implications of this have not yet had an impact on voting intentions.

Preferred

However, amongst under 25 year olds independence is now the preferred option, and in a poll which showed voting intentions for this election in line with results, the same people indicated 38 per cent

would vote SNP in elections for a Scottish parliament – as against 39 per cent for Labour.

The Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) stood in 16 seats and got 9,740 votes, 1.8 per cent.

It saved one deposit, with Tommy Sheridan getting 3,639 votes and 11.1 per cent of the vote. It was clear that the SSA suffered from a squeeze in the last 2 weeks. Early rallies were well supported, however many pledges of support vanished, particularly in areas where the SSA had not previously been active (due to reorganisation most boundaries had changed).

Overall the SSA has gained credibility, several of its candidates have addressed thousands of people at rallies, many new members have been gained, and in Glasgow one in 40 voters voted SSA.

Effectively this was the launch of the SSA as a campaigning and political organisation. There will be few elections over the next 2 years, so to grow the SSA will require to become integral to the political and community life of the areas as well as taking campaign initiatives.

Scargill's disappointing electoral challenge

Phil Jones

ARTHUR Scargill, in Newport East, has registered a respectable, if disappointing, protest vote against New Labour's candidate, ex-Tory defector Alan Howarth.

With nearly two thousand votes and 5 per cent of the total Scargill, standing for the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), saved his deposit. However he failed to dent the Labour majority, coming in behind the Tory and Lib Democrat candidates.

Nevertheless, by standing against Howarth the NUM president highlighted for many in Newport Blair's attempts to distance the Labour Party from its working class base.

Labour supporters in this solidly working-class constituency were given a stark choice. Presented by their own party with a recent ex-member of the government which had so mercilessly attacked their jobs and communities, many gave their support instead to the miners' leader – a man who has consistently led the resistance against such attacks.

Howarth's candidacy represented a drift too far for a layer of activists, whereas Scargill embodied a more familiar politics, rooted in working class self-organisation.

Dissension within Labour ranks in Newport was stirred up by the leadership's blatant manoeuvring to secure Howarth a safe seat at the last moment.

With veteran Labour MP Roy Hughes 'persuaded' to stand down, Howarth was selected from a shortlist which – significantly – excluded several strong local contenders.

Party members taking part in the ballot were left in no doubt that they were expected to endorse the leadership's choice, and most duly did so.

Left activists were however disgusted by the effective imposition of a largely unrepentant Tory. One branch secretary publicly announced her intention to campaign against Howarth.

Scargill's candidacy provided socialists with a rival pole of attraction and many Labour activists were amongst the audience at the SLP's campaign launch. The NUM leader was well received at the packed meeting, although publicity had been minimal. When Newport West MP endorsed Howarth, he was shouted down.

Scargill failed to build on this promising foundation however, dissipating his and his party's energies instead of concentrating his attention on Newport. The SLP stood candidates in four other South Wales constituencies, in none of which it had any significant local base.

In the special circumstances of Newport, with the combination of Scargill's personal following and an opponent not seen by many as an 'authentic' Labour candidate the SLP could have made a significant impression.

Elsewhere in Wales however and throughout most of Britain the party has been premature in trying to advance a left alternative to the Labour government for which millions of workers have been fervently waiting.

Will Labour squeeze the unionists for an Irish deal?

John McNulty

Sinn Fein's success at the polls in Northern Ireland combined with Labour's victory in Britain indicates that the 'Peace process' is back on track and that Sinn Fein will be part of it.

The price of inclusion however remains what it has always been – unconditional military and political surrender by the republican leadership.

The goal of the process itself remains the same – a revamped partition which amends cosmetic aspects of sectarianism in order to buy off a section of the nationalist middle class.

The main features of discrimination and unionist power that make the North of Ireland a sectarian hellhole will be retained. The retention of partition is a brutal denial of the rights of the whole Irish people.

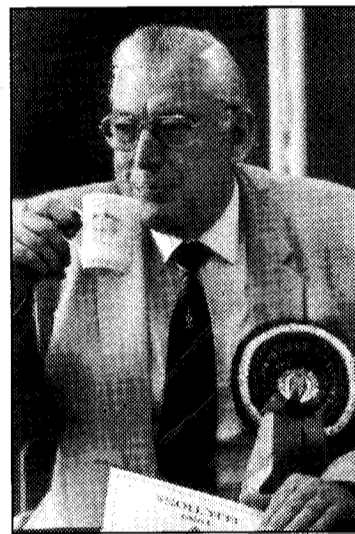
The British and unionists hoped to see a weakened Sinn Fein emerge on May 2. At the last general election Sinn Fein got 10 per cent of the total vote. In the forum election last year they got 15 per cent.

This time they achieved 16 per cent and the election of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness as MPs.

The theory was that they had 'borrowed' votes from the capitalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and that these would return with the ending of the cease fire.

Instead we see Sinn Fein with a stable base creeping towards 50 per cent of the nationalist vote. The British government will take comfort however from the fact that Sinn Fein fought the election on policies indistinguishable from those of the SDLP and that the SDLP itself held its vote and remains the senior partner.

They will be even more pleased that the real loser was Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Martin McGuinness unseated arch-bigot William McCrea who had earned the hatred of na-



Losing out: Paisley's party

tionals for his open alliance with the most extreme elements of the loyalist death squads.

The DUP were left with Paisley himself and his deputy Peter Robinson, while the Official Unionists won an extra seat – re-establishing themselves as the senior unionist partner.

Split strategy

British strategy since the beginning of the peace process has involved a willingness to split unionism and discard the extremists in order to do a deal with the moderates. The problem is that 'moderation' here means David Trimble – the hero of Drumcree, who has already led a revolt against the British in order to preserve the sectarian privilege of unionism.

But the most significant element of the election in the North of Ireland has nothing to do with local figures. The landslide election of a Labour administration in Britain is the most important factor.

The theory peddled by the SDLP and accepted by the republican leadership is that the total failure of the peace process to deliver anything at all was because Blair was in hook with the unionists. The election of a Labour govern-

ment will therefore enable the real peace process to start.

Of course this ignores the fact that Labour could at any time have denounced Major for putting party interests before the strategic interests of the British ruling class as a whole.

Not only did they not do this, they backed the Tories all the way and stood in the election on a platform of support for the sectarian state and for the unionist veto against progress in Ireland.

Labour will however have a lot more freedom of action now. Logic dictates that they will want to use it to squeeze the unionists, because otherwise there will be no settlement at all.

They won't squeeze too hard, not because unionism is too strong but because it is weak, fragmented and extremely volatile. Britain needs that mass base that unionism provides to maintain its occupation of Ireland.

That means that the terms of the settlement will be whatever David Trimble can be persuaded to accept.

Only a demoralised and neutered Sinn Fein could live which such a deal, so a tight British squeeze on republicanism will remain a feature of the coming period.

It will however be much easier under Labour than the Tories to campaign on issues of democratic rights. Labour will have less space to subordinate these issues to the negotiating process.

The first test for Mo Mowlam will be the recent Tory law increasing the notice period for marches to 21 days.

A moment's reflection will make it clear that such a law will have no effect on the traditional sectarian parades that are organised a year in advance.

What they are is a denial of freedom of assembly to those who oppose sectarian marches. Will Labour repeal this? Not without a lot of rank and file from within the Labour movement.



Not focused: Scargill

Eerie silence follows the election euphoria

Who's afraid of the Big Bad Blair?

By Terry Smith

"NEVER MIND the majority - we will still be timid," is the message Tony Blair and his lieutenants are banging home to the Party's newly-elected MPs as Parliament reconvenes.

Anyone naive enough to expect that the Party's landslide victory might open the door to reforms rather more ambitious than the feeble pledges in Blair's manifesto are in for a rude awakening.

Disregarding all the evidence from exit polls during the elections, Blair is adamant that he will remain a "New Labour" prime minister, and that his MPs will toe the line - or face stern consequences.

But with a majority larger than the entire Parliamentary strength of the Tory Party, the excuse for imposing Tory-style policies is already wearing thin.

Labour is also lumbered with the consequences of Tory economic policies, which have not only left the cupboard bare in key public services (see page 6) but also left a massive gap - a "black hole" - in the Budget, leaving little if any scope for extra spending even in priority areas.

Among the first to point this out (and call for increased taxation on top earners to plug the gap) has been Ken Livingstone - who may be the only left winger confident enough to break ranks and speak openly out of line with New Labour orthodoxy.

The threat of expulsion from the Labour whip has been covertly raised to bludgeon wayward Labour MPs into submission, and some established MPs on the hard left are expecting swift retribution from Blair's boot-boys.

Union chiefs

But how are we to explain the mute impotence of the union leaders? It seems that they have voluntarily gagged themselves - perhaps agreeing with Blair that unions are an electoral liability, and perhaps also in the hope of delaying Blair's drive to sever the Party's links with the unions.

With the slight exception of GMB leader John Edmonds' speech to the Scottish TUC, the leaders of the trade unions which bankrolled Labour's campaign have been obediently invisible for weeks, making Trappist monks seem chatty.

Now a few of them are drawing strength from the result on May 1, demanding their share of the credit and the spoils of victory. May Day speeches have been more confident.

Some bureaucrats may be temporarily placated by the government's decision to sign up for the European Social Chapter - stubbornly rejected by John Major's Tory government - which offers to extend a number of additional legal rights to British workers: but after



Rudely breaking the silence: Essex fire fighters continued their strikes against cuts by the Labour-run council

swallowing 18 years of Tory attacks, others will want to be seen to ask for much more in the way of reforms to benefit working people.

Lew Adams, leader of the rail union ASLEF has called on Blair's government to set a timetable for renationalisation of the railways.

UNISON's Rodney Bickerstaffe has yet to emerge from the pre-election silence, but one of the union's most prominent lay officers, London regional convener Geoff Martin, has added his voice to those calling for immediate action on a minimum wage, pensions and



Edmonds: spoke out in Scotland

workers' rights.

"The whole election campaign may have been targeted at a few thousand swing voters in the marginal seats, but it is the millions of ordinary working class people who were the backbone of Labour's success, and it is the unions who are the voice of these people - so we have nothing to be ashamed or defensive about," he said.

"This is our government, and we will attempt to influence it," he told BBC radio's World at One. "The unions retain 50% of the vote in the Labour Party and we shouldn't be shy about using it."

UNISON's priorities are the public services and the pay of its members employed by them. "They have been ground into the

dust over the last 18 years through privatisation and low pay. It has to be a priority to rebuild these public services and the morale and confidence of the workforce. I hope those on the Labour front bench won't forget who put them into power."

In the debates and discussions before the Election, Geoff Martin has also been among those most keenly advocating the idea of a new Labour Representation Committee to stand up for the demands and interests of the trade union movement as Blair's team moves towards excluding the unions from decision-making and breaking their remaining links with the Party.

Representation

A similar line has been advanced by Tony Benn. In an interview in March with the Welfare State Network's paper *Action for Health and Welfare*, he said:

"The Labour-trade union link is central. 'Fairness, not favours' works both ways. It was a big struggle in the early labour movement to get Labour representation.

"The trade unions will again have to set up political action committees to get Parliamentary representation.

"If the Labour leadership go for state funding, the trade unions will have a lot of spare cash to use.

"Seven million trade union people can campaign directly. For now they are all zipping their lips, but after the election I think things will be quite different.

"In 1980 we put forward the idea of refounding the Labour Representation Committee - out of which grew the Labour Party - and I think we should look at it again.

"I think we must refound the LRC within the party. It must be broad; it cannot be a congerie of left sects."

Benn's proposals are likely to

come back into the centre of events as trade union conferences during the summer recognise the need to keep the link with Labour while fighting for the interests and demands of union members against a government pledged to Tory policies.

'Post Mayday Tension', with its false dawn of silence on the left of the labour movement will not persuade Blair to relent on his plans to gut the party of its working class roots; but nor should it fool socialists into believing that there will be no battles to come.

By the May Day Bank Holiday - just three days after the election - the *Morning Star* had already concluded that "Harman's Honeymoon is Over", pointing to Labour's plans to hold down benefits.

The possibility to unite wide layers of angry, but reinvigorated forces on the left in the fight for working class politics will become steadily stronger as Blair's manifesto and Brown's budget emerge in their full gory detail.

Let's be ready for them.



Labour Left to discuss the way forward

Neil Murray

THE CONFERENCE being organised by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups on May 31 with the support of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs will give the Labour Left an early chance to discuss how to fight in the aftermath of the election victory.

A key focus will be to deepen the fight against 'Labour into Power', but there needs to be serious discussion on the strategy of the Left in the Party. Crucial to this will be the need for us to promote and link up with struggles which do break out against the Labour government, whether strikes or campaigns, such as in defence of the welfare state.

The MPs have to be challenged to do the same. If keeping quiet served a purpose, it was in order that they can use parliament as a tribune to rally opposition to Blair's programme. This might mean, especially as Labour now has such a commanding majority, that they are expelled from the Party.

However, they cannot allow this consideration to dominate what they do. Their first consideration has to be what furthers the struggles and interests of the working class and oppressed.

If Blair moves against them, their best defence is if they have linked up with trade unionists and Party members in building the Left.

Network of Socialist Campaign Groups Conference

'What are we going to do now? A Socialist Strategy for Labour'

SATURDAY MAY 31

11a.m to 5p.m.

(registration from 10a.m.)

London Welsh Centre, 157 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

(10 minutes from Kings Cross station).

Registration: London £8 waged, £4 unwaged. Out of London £2/£1. Registrations should be sent to NSCG c/o 3 Blades House, Kennington Oval, London SE11 5TW. Creche registration deadline is May 24th.

Tories leave public sector cupboard bare

New Labour – new cutbacks?

Harry Sloan

IT TOOK the new Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett just a few hours to confirm what many education campaigners could have told him months ago: there is a big hole (of at least £69 million) in the middle of the finances of further education.

We could also save time by telling him that the schools' budget is around £200m short of the cash it needs to stand still and meet the new legal obligations placed on County Councils by the Tories – let alone the extra funding needed to move towards Labour's pledge of reducing class sizes or implementing their promised literacy campaign.

Savage

Universities, too, are struggling to cope with savage restrictions in their budgets while student numbers increase. For a government pledged to "Education, Education, Education" (and not much else), the urgent need is to inject money, money, money.

But this is not the only area of front-line services that has been decimated by the Tory cuts machine. As *Socialist Outlook* has warned, local government budgets, too, have been ruthlessly squeezed, with brutal cuts totalling £200m imposed on social services spending across the country, axing support for frail elderly people,

children at risk, people with mental illness and many other vulnerable groups.

These cuts for 1997/98 are just beginning to make themselves felt as Labour takes over the reins of office: the new government must either deliver more cash to avert drastic reductions in services or share the blame for the consequences.

Quangos

While Labour's docile councillors have been nodding through these cuts to avoid any hint of rocking the boat prior to the election, the cutbacks looming in the NHS have been cynically concealed or delayed by the vast network of Tory-appointed quangos – health authorities and Trusts – which control the £43 billion health budget.

With very few exceptions – St George's Hospital in south London and a few Trusts in the midlands – Trust boards consciously held back on announcing major cuts and redundancies that would embarrass their Tory patrons in the run-up to the election.

This artificial calm could never have lasted beyond the summer months at most: but following Labour's landslide victory we can confidently predict a succession of revelations of huge financial problems confronting health authorities and Trusts. London's Redbridge & Waltham Forest

health authority was perhaps the first of the bunch when, after the votes were counted, it called an "emergency" meeting for May 7 to discuss its budget crisis.

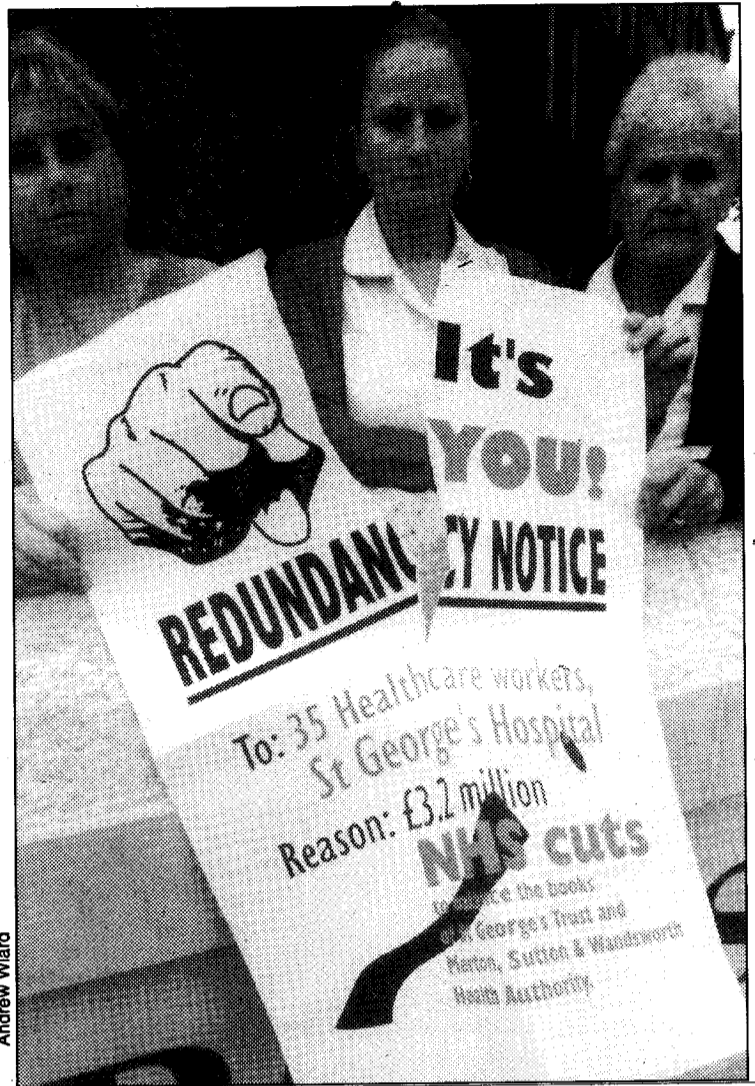
Ward closures, more redundancies, rationing of services and long delays in waiting list admissions are all likely to be announced in increasing numbers as hundreds of thwarted Tory appointees who covered up the crisis until now pile pressure on Labour for extra cash to the NHS.

The state of the NHS is likely to bring the greatest headaches for the Blair government, with the near certainty that sticking to the Tory spending limits will bring not only an autumn and winter of embarrassing, headline-grabbing scandals and trolley waits, but another two years of intensifying crisis as the NHS budget is increased by a mere 0.3% in real terms while demand increases – an unprecedented squeeze on health spending never achieved by any government before.

Hospitals

The pressure will be greater in key areas: in London the above average swing to Labour was clearly linked to concern at the threat to hospitals in the capital, with a staggering wipe-out of Tory MPs in the catchment areas of two threatened hospitals: Edgware and Oldchurch (Romford).

To make matters worse, Labour



A taste of the real world: staff at St George's Hospital, Tooting, protest at the announcement of 35 redundancies as the Trust wrestles with a cash crisis. This April announcement is likely to be the first of many NHS cuts.

has embraced the failed Tory policy of attempting to raise private capital funding for NHS and other public sector projects through the so-called Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Not only has this brought all major hospital projects in the country to a grinding halt since 1993, but to proceed with it would add massively to the unit costs of struggling NHS Trusts.

With a massive popular mandate and a majority of 179, most

people would think that the easy option for Blair's team would be to raise taxes on industry and top earners in order to rescue vital and popular public services rather than carry the can for the crisis they have inherited.

But as Gordon Brown "boldly" hands over control of key elements of the economy to the bankers, it is clear that only pressure from campaigners will ensure they are forced in this direction.

What will New Labour deliver on education?

by Keith Sinclair (Hull NUT delegate to 1997 conference, in a personal capacity)

WILL New Labour deliver? This question ran through every debate at this year's NUT conference like the name of a holiday resort through a stick of rock.

In debate after debate, speakers condemned the record of the Tories on education and then wondered aloud whether New Labour will make a real difference to the lives of school students and teachers at the chalkface.

David Blunkett, Labour spokesperson for Education, addressed the question in his remarks to conference. He said that Labour would make a difference on a number of very specific but limited issues. Labour will abolish the Nursery Voucher Scheme, abolish the Assisted Places Scheme and will ensure that no child of 5, 6 or 7 will be taught in a class of over 30. He also said that there would be 'no further selection' under a Labour government.

So far, so good. These pledges matter and will make a difference to certain aspects of our education system.

Nursery vouchers are a crackpot Tory idea which will not lead to a single nursery place being created. Toddlers are used as a commodity – a voucher-bearing little boy or girl is worth money to an institution, private or public. Labour have said they will divert money from this scheme to provide nursery places for every four year old.

Assisted places

Through the Assisted Places Scheme, the state pays for some students to attend private schools. Its abolition is to be welcomed. Labour says that the money saved will be used to ensure no pupil aged 5, 6 or 7 is taught in a class of over 30. However, the figures do not add up.

The monies saved will not provide the necessary additional teachers. Also, how can any government ensure a class limit without legislating for a maximum class size, as in Scotland? There is no apparent intention to introduce such a law.

The promise of 'no further selec-

tion' is severely limited but has to be contrasted with the Conservative manifesto promise of a grammar school in every town. I wonder why the Tories didn't campaign on the slogan of "several secondary moderns in every city".

The problem is largely what was missing from David Blunkett's speech, and indeed the Labour manifesto. There was no defence of the comprehensive system. Nor was there a mention of the need to abolish league tables or OFSTED inspections of schools.

OFSTED is a political hit squad which makes snap judgements on schools and teachers. It has wreaked havoc in schools and done nothing to improve education. Schools need new resources and welcome genuine advice. However, OFSTED inspectors are forbidden to help and advise.

The £60,000 cost of the OFSTED inspection of my school could have stocked the library, provided new computers or funded jobs in Special Educational Needs support.

The key problem schools face is funding. David Blunkett promised that New Labour would make "a

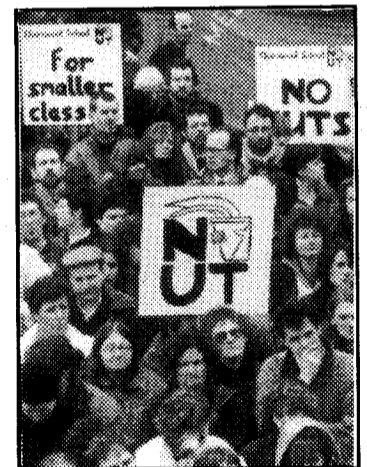
start to eliminate the £3 billion backlog of capital repairs". But Gordon Brown has stated several times that his government will keep to the public spending plans of the Tories.

It is impossible to make any real impact on repairing and replacing crumbling schools if the additional funding is not there. There have been hints that private sector money might be used. This will simply bring into education all the problems of the Private Finance Initiative that have arisen in the health service.

Tory slump

Opinion polls in the run-up to the election showed that Tory support among teachers has slumped over the last eighteen years. The majority of teachers probably voted Labour on May 1, many for the first time.

Their expectations are high but the reality is that under the New Labour government, public sector trade unionists will have to fight to defend our pay and conditions and to ensure that real improvements are made to the education service. Events at the NUT conference



reaffirmed the belief that the election results were vital for the future of education. The re-election of the Tories would have been a disaster, increasing selection in schools and escalating the attacks on schools and teachers. But the election of New Labour will only make a real difference in limited areas. It will not resolve most of the problems facing our schools.

The issues we fought on on before May 1 are still there. Socialist students, parents and teachers need to step up the fight to defend free, comprehensive and fully funded education for all. Taking that battle into the Labour Party is one element of the fight. Building campaigns like Fight against Cuts in Education (FACE) will keep up the pressure on the government. The election of New Labour is the start of a new stage in the fight for what is needed.



Thatcherising Teeside: the cruel years.



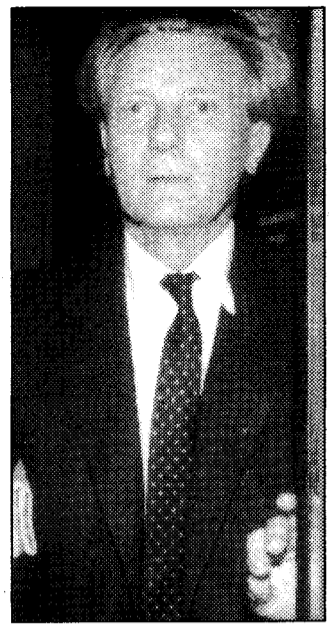
Won't we miss Mr Howard?



Enfant terrible: Portillo is gone



Now Bottomley is really out of it



On the way out: Heseltine

Mandelson gets keys to cabinet

ANY celebration by Tony Blair's newly-appointed cabinet team will have been curtailed by the news that their every move will be snooped upon by the Rasputin at the court of New Labour, Peter Mandelson.

As "Minister without Portfolio" he will have constant 'swipe card' access to Blair's office, and will also be peering suspiciously over the shoulders of ministers to make doubly sure that nothing is said or done which might conflict with the narrow ambitions of New Labour.

From the Jimmy Saville of the campaign, "Fixing it" with the media, he will have no clearly-defined role or responsibility. Columnists are already drawing unfavourable parallels between his post and that of George Wigg, who managed to antagonise many of Harold Wilson's ministers in the 1960s.

Among the other appointments, perhaps the biggest groan would be drawn by the news that Harriet Harman, who argued Blair's hard line against restoring the link between pensions and average wages at last year's Labour conference, is to be Social Security Secretary - in charge of pensions and benefits.

She has lost no time in spelling out her mission to be mean with the country's most deprived citizens, and will be reinforced in her tight-fisted policies by the appointment of arch-right winger Frank Field as junior minister.

Other ominous straws in the wind include the appointment of Jack "Jail 'em" Straw as Home Secretary, and David "Blame the teachers" Blunkett to Education and Employment.

Allegedly "free spending" Chris Smith moved sideways and down from the Health Secretary post he had been shadowing, in favour of Frank Dobson, who has spent much of the last nine months telling councils they cannot expect any more cash for services under Labour.

There they go, there they go, there they go!

18 CRUEL years of single-minded promotion of the interests of the wealthy few at the expense of the majority came to an end on May 1.

Almost two decades of crusading attacks on the most basic rights of trade unions, on local democracy, on the state pension and on the bedrock rights and benefits of the welfare state have combined to stoke up massive social divisions.

Since 1979 Tory policies have increased the real income of the top-paid ten percent by a thumping 65%: but the same period has seen the real income of the bottom ten percent slashed by a staggering 13%.

The gap between rich and poor in Britain is now as great as that in Nigeria. One person in five living in Major's Britain lives in a poverty-stricken household. One British child in every three lives in poverty - a higher proportion than any other European country.

This is no accident. Thatcher's government came to office in 1979 with a mission: to smash the strength of the workers' movement, grab the enormous profits to be made from the privatisation of nationalised utilities, drive up the rate of exploitation in the workplace, and line the pockets of their

wealthy backers.

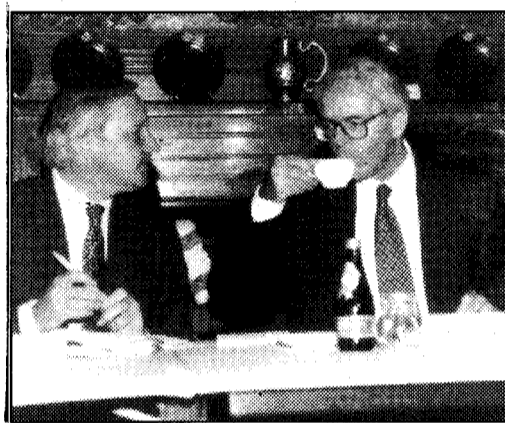
Within a year they had confronted the steel workers, brought in the first anti-union laws and commenced the sale of council houses at knock-down prices. By 1982, with her eyes already on the next election, Thatcher mounted the Falklands War, spending billions to reassert Britain's imperialist role.

In 1983 a buoyant Thatcher trampled over a miserable Labour campaign to notch up a 144-seat majority, and the following year privatised British Telecom and went for the big battle, provoking the year-long miners' strike and spending billions to defeat the strongest section of the British working class.

Yuppies

Yuppies flourished on a diet of inflated property prices, privatisation and tax cuts. In 1986, after imposing increasingly rigid capping on rates, forcing rounds of council cuts, Thatcher dealt another blow to local democracy abolishing the GLC.

The 1987 election took place in the midst of Nigel Lawson's



An ill-starred friendship: Major with Neil Hamilton

"boom", with Neil Kinnock leading Labour to another miserable defeat.

Exploiting her 102 seat majority, Thatcher went on in 1988 to force through the Poll Tax and water privatisation, while the market-style NHS "reforms" were hatched up behind closed doors, to emerge as a White Paper in 1989.

1990 saw nemesis for Thatcher in the form of the massive popular opposition to and defiance of the Poll Tax: as the economy plunged into recession, Thatcher's leadership was challenged, and she tearfully made way for John Major.

Major's six years included the Gulf War, the Maastricht Treaty, the disastrous experiment with the Exchange Rate Mechanism, and the wafer-thin 21-seat election victory over a "professional" Kinnock campaign in 1992.

Since then the Tories, wracked by sleaze, scandal, BSE and bitter divisions over Europe, have resorted to the dregs of privatisation (Rail!) while struggling to cut down public spending - with education cuts in particular antagonising millions of their "natural" supporters in the shire counties of 'middle England'. Only the massive £3 billion prison building programme has remained intact.

The more "radical" the policies put forward by the Tories have served further to alienate their support, notably the privatisation of pensions, increased selection in schools.

Their defeat leaves the party demoralised and divided - just what they have done to so much of the country. 18 vicious, miserable years have left scars that will take decades to heal.

The task now is to ensure Labour dumps the policies that have done the damage.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TORIES ?

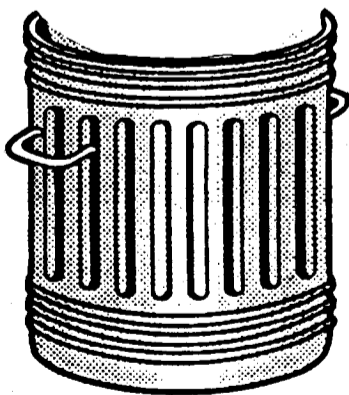
Alan Thornett

THE LABOUR landslide could hardly have been more devastating to a Tory Party which has been one of the most stable bourgeois parties in the western world and the most stable in Britain for the whole of this century.

They were reduced to a rump at Westminster, with no MPs in Scotland or Wales.

The reasons for the Tory debacle are clear enough. There has been a rejection of the Tory ethos of the 1980s and sleaze and corruption took their toll.

The central reason, however, was the civil war over Europe which has wracked the party for several years. A big section of the party had



written off the election of before it had started and were not prepared for a cease-fire even during the campaign.

Their problem has been that this has not just been a split in the Tory Party amongst people with different ideas - it has reflected a fundamental split in the British ruling class between those who advocate cling-

ing on to its previous world role as a major imperialist power and those who recognise its role today as a middle ranking power within Europe.

Finance capital in particular wants to retain its global role through the City of London, whilst manufacturing capitalists are looking for access to the huge European market without the problems of fluctuating currency exchange rates.

The divisions cannot be solved by appeals for unity. It is an objective problem, insoluble within the Tory Party, which has been a coalition of both wings.

The Tories are by any objective analysis two parties, and following the kind of defeat they have just suffered they would under other circumstances split into two parties

with competing political lines.

They may well do this - either before, or more likely after the leadership contest, with the followers of the defeated candidate leaving to establish something new.

The problem for those who would split is that the first past the post electoral system means that one Tory Party would have to smash up the other in the short term if either of them was to stand any chance of getting elected.

For the moment there will be a leadership contest which will follow pro and anti-Europe lines with the Eurosceptic right likely to win.

Whoever wins, however, and whatever the consequences, the European issue will not go away and nor will debacle they experienced at the polls.

It will take the Tory Party a long

Tories 'wound back' figures to hide growing tax gap

Labour's trusting leaders buy a clapped-out economy

Andy Killmister

THE LABOUR leadership may be satisfied with the Tories' massive political defeat on May 1. But the underlying economic problems of British capitalism, which in large measure led to that defeat, remain as acute as ever. Labour in office is no more likely to resolve them than the Tories.

The issues confronting Blair and Brown cover both immediate problems and long run questions. In the short term inflation finally appears to be beginning to rise quite sharply, largely as a result of the mini-boom engineered by the Tories for electoral purposes.

The financial markets know this and are expecting interest rates to rise quickly. This has meant that speculative money has poured into the British currency markets this year driving the value of the pound up. Interestingly, exactly the same is happening to the dollar.

Caught either way

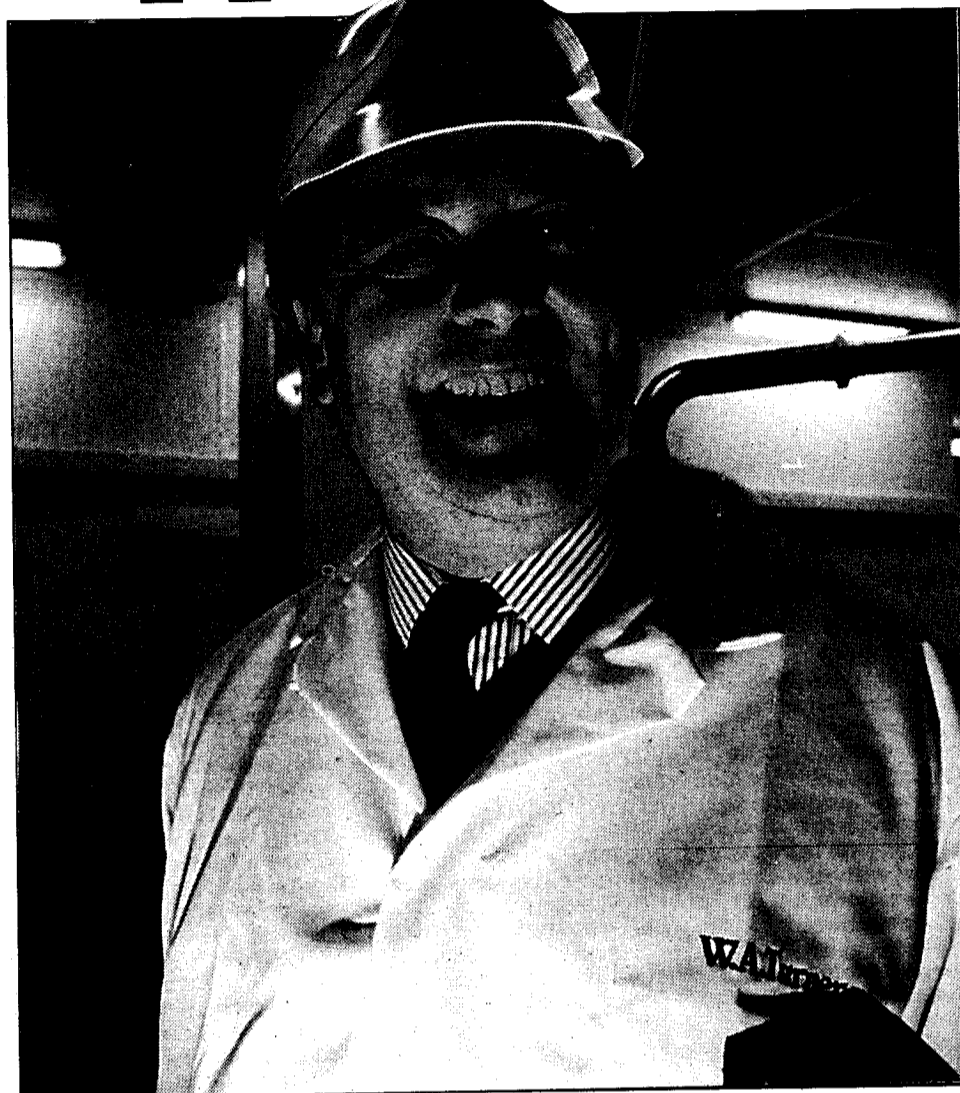
This means that the government is caught either way - if they raise rates they risk killing off what is still a weak and patchy recovery, if they don't British exports will be harmed by the high value of the pound.

Looking a bit further into the future the central issue is the public sector deficit and the Maastricht spending criteria. Kenneth Clarke has claimed that Britain will meet these targets easily.

Tory figures show the deficit at about the target level of 3 per cent of GDP this year, and falling to around 1.4 per cent next year. But this is highly misleading. The Tory plans are based on highly optimistic assumptions about growth, about tax receipts (especially cutting down on corporate tax avoidance) and on savage public expenditure cuts in the next few years.

To take just one example, while NHS spending has been rising at the (still inadequate) rate of 3 per cent in the last two years, Clarke's budget projects annual rises of only 0.5 per cent a year in the next two annual rounds.

Economists are generally agreed that to have a budget deficit of around £25 billion four years after the low point of a recession indicates serious long-run problems. At the corresponding point of the business cycle in the late



Kenneth Clarke assures us that the economy is a "good runner": do you believe him?

Andrew Ward

1980s the Tories actually managed to run a budget surplus.

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research has called for cutting £15 to £20 billion off the deficit. This would either mean a much more determined assault on low company taxation (not just cutting down on avoidance but raising taxes) and on the tax privileges of the rich than Blair is prepared to contemplate.

It is much more likely that Blair will sanction deep cuts in public expenditure and welfare benefits. Recent reports that Labour will limit rises in social security benefit as part of the programme to force claimants back to work are just the start of this process. So is the change of policy on approving further privatisations.

Single currency

If the single currency goes ahead at the end of this year, there will be tremendous pressure from British capitalists on Blair for such cuts, in order to enable Britain to join the currency in the 'second wave' in three years time.

However, the problems of public borrowing and exchange rates simply reflect the deeper structural problems in the economy. The 'recovery' created by the Tories rested on two main pillars, both of which are now potentially sources of weakness.

Firstly, the massive internationalisation of British capital in the 1980s enabled British companies to benefit from the upturn in certain sectors of the world economy in the early 1990s. In particular, British firms have been able to export to the growing Asian economies and to the US, while investments abroad have brought in record amounts of profit.

But this process has also left Britain especially vulnerable to any downturn in economic conditions elsewhere. The rise in the value of the pound has lowered the sterling value of the profits coming in from abroad as well.

The combination of slower growth in Asia and America with continuing recession in Europe is likely to mean that Britain can depend less on world developments for economic growth in the coming period.

The second basis of the Tory economic project was a relatively high rate of productivity growth in manufacturing over the last five years, and more generally since 1979.

The employers' offensive and the anti-union laws have meant that workers have been unable to resist new management techniques effectively and productivity increases combined with devaluation have allowed companies to compete in global markets and at home.

Higher wages

This strategy has three potential problems for the bosses. One is that workers will demand higher wages in return for the intensification of work. While real wages have grown in manufacturing this has not been a major problem for employers because of the current weakness of the labour movement.

The second problem is that the increases in productivity are very much one-off increases, based not on investment, which remains very weak, but on changing working practices. It is much harder to impose continuing defeats on the workforce year after year. As European industry is restructured British companies may once more be unable to compete.

The third problem is the most serious. As productivity increases jobs are lost and demand falls. While profits can be generated by management changes that can't be realised as goods remain unsold.

Services

The solution to this has been to expand employment outside manufacturing, especially in services, both public and private. Here productivity growth has been significantly slower. This rise in employment has been based largely on low wages and insecure and casual employment.

It has allowed for a measure of economic growth. But this growth is also very insecure and fragile since wages and consumer confidence are so low. The employers are faced with a twin problem of low demand and a government deficit since low wages mean low tax receipts.

This means that a central priority for British capitalism is to raise the rate of productivity in services and distribution. In theory this would allow higher profits in these sectors, and some wage rises which would feed through into higher demand for the output of other sectors.

It is no coincidence then that the last two years have seen important and unresolved struggles over just this issue; in the post office, rail and tube network, higher and further education and elsewhere. Such struggles are likely to continue and intensify.

Job losses

In other, more weakly organised areas of the service sector, like banking and financial services, productivity increases are being forced through now, at the cost of huge job losses.

But this is a very high risk strategy for British capital, both because of the conflicts it will cause with the working class and also because if successful it might mean further big rises in unemployment. Consequently, it goes together with a determined attack on the rights of the unemployed, through measures like the Job Seekers Allowance.

Even if these are successful though, such a rise in unemployment might very easily prove self-defeating by undercutting the objective of raising demand and allowing the realisation of profits.

The New Labour government has some immediate breathing space. Resistance to the strategies of capital is still relatively weak after eighteen years of attacks, betrayals and defeats.

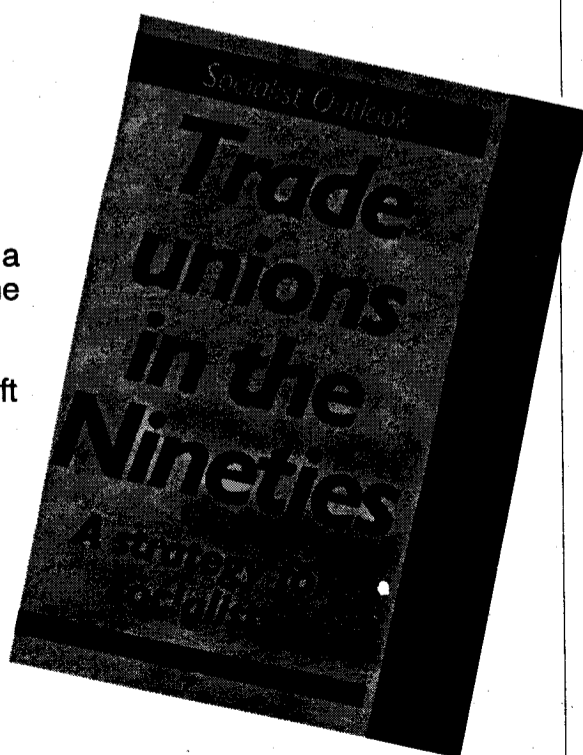
But the contradictions of British capitalism will force that government to renew the Tory attacks before long, and they are bound to encounter resistance. The nature and success of that resistance will determine the outcome of the next phase of the long story of the British capitalist crisis.

OUT NOW!

A 68-page pamphlet giving a comprehensive review of the impact of the Tory years on the trade union movement and a perspective for the left in the 1990s.

£2 including post and packing

From Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU



on the March to Amsterdam

a Socialist Outlook pull-out on the Euro Marches 97



Liverpool dockers are fully supporting the EuroMarches: their fight depends on international solidarity.

WE ARE MARCHING together from all the countries of Europe unemployed, in stable or insecure jobs, retired, immigrants and homeless.

We will march on Amsterdam where representatives of the European governments are meeting at another Intergovernmental Conference in June 1997

We are together, because although our solutions may differ, we all strongly oppose unemployment job insecurity and social exclusion.

We are marching to show our anger.

According to official statistics more than 20 million people are unemployed, 50 million are living in poverty and 5 million are homeless – anyone one of us could slide into this situation.

In workplaces throughout Europe millions of workers are forced to accept insecure jobs.

Within our male-dominated society women have been particularly targeted; suffering from lower wages, dead-end jobs and the imposition of part time work. Women are also the first victims of cuts in welfare provision as both workers and users.

Across Europe, immigrants are treated as criminals and exploited by unscrupulous employers. Repressive laws force them to live illegally, working in unacceptable sweat shop and conditions and appalling housing.

Families affected by unemployment are forced onto the streets while thousands of unoccupied buildings lie empty in Europe's towns and cities.

Young people are without a decent income. Unable to support themselves they are left to survive as best they can or forced to accept the worst pay and conditions. Many are pushed into "training schemes" without hope of a job.

Insecurity in all sectors of the population is growing.

The peoples of Europe are frightened of the future, unable to plan their own destiny, paying more for a small safety net.

This social climate promotes individualism, nationalism, and racism. Workers in different countries are forced to compete with each other.

Public services are being attacked throughout Europe. Education,

Euro Marches 97

"We are marching against unemployment, insecurity and exclusion"

health, housing, social security, transport. The arts and energy are forced to bow to the market while trying to serve the community.

At the dawn of the 21st Century the free market is driving a wedge between the peoples of Europe, pitting north against south east against west.

We marching together because we are against the way Europe has been built. We are opposed to a society in which the poor get poorer and the rich still richer. Governments are hiding behind the constraints of the Maastricht convergence criteria which are affecting both the unemployed and employed workers throughout Europe, forcing them to accept lower wages and lower benefits and removing their rights in the name of "progress".

Together all across Europe we are marching because we want something different:

- * A Europe built on solidarity from the ground up which welcomes others.
- * A Europe of real citizens, real freedoms and equality
- * A democratic Europe which will not accept massive unemployment
- * A Europe for the people, where

the people and not big business make policy

* A Europe open to the world with equal relations with the east and south.

We demand all forms of exclusion be outlawed.

We demand a radical European solution to unemployment, and we know there will be no changes without a massive mobilisation of all those directly and indirectly affected by unemployment.

We are actively campaigning for a massive reduction in the working week without loss of pay and supporting the ongoing struggle for women's rights.

Act together

The marches gives us the opportunity for us all to act together and demonstrate, breaking down the frontiers between us, persuading those we are working with to cry out that enough is enough!

Against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion, throughout Europe and world wide,

we demand:

* An end to forced redundancies, cut backs and downsizing made in the drive for greater profits resulting in growing unemployment

* That everyone have the right to a job of their choice with a decent living wage

* Against all attempts to force the unemployed into low-paid dead end jobs and against forced part time work and fixed term contracts.

* For a decent minimum income for all the unemployed including youth

* For a massive reduction in the working week without loss of pay

* A massive creation of socially useful and ecological safe jobs

* An end to free market policies and an end to the ceaseless drive against public services.

* Equality for disabled people

* Decent health provision for all

* The right to education

* Decent benefits for all who need them

* Investment in the infrastructure of public services

* The right to a decent state pension

* The right to housing for all: the end to evictions without decent rehousing. A huge programme of public house-building for those on low incomes and requisitions of property sitting empty

* A Europe where men and women are treated equally

* Equality of status and income for all whatever their nationality

* A rejection of all false solutions to unemployment especially those which rely on forcing women back into the home or into part time work

* A Europe open and free without racism and xenophobia

* Unemployment is not caused by immigration but by the drive to greater profits. An end to all forced repatriation

* We demand a Europe where the frontiers are open, where immigrants have the right to full citizenship and where all those without permits are given them. The right of asylum must be respected and enlarged. Freedom of movement should not be restricted to capital and goods – people should have the right to live and work where they choose whatever their nationality

Redistribution

An end to unemployment and social exclusion will only come through a complete redistribution of wealth and a continuing struggle against speculation of all kinds.

We want an economic programme which is in the interests of the greatest number of people preserving both the human and ecological equilibrium.

We are marching so that discussions on the future of our society are not held in secret. The time has come to take our future into our own hands

Together we are marching on Amsterdam to the IGC so that our voices can be heard and to proclaim the demands of those 'without a voice': the unemployed, the youth, the homeless the workers.

We call on you to join us. Come on the march, come to our meetings, support us financially. Join us in Amsterdam!

The time has come to take our future into our own hands. Join us in Amsterdam on June 14!



Single currency: not at our expense!

Campaigning against Fortress Europe

Simon Deville

LAST Christmas, one week before the start of the European Year Against Racism, 280 migrants were murdered off the coast of Greece. They were forced at gunpoint off the boat that had smuggled them through the barriers of Fortress Europe into a boat designed to carry no more than 100 people. The captain then rammed their boat and sank it.

People are forced to take desperate measures to escape repression and poverty that is imposed upon the under-developed world by western capitalism. This incident was exceptional only in the number of people involved in a single incident.

A week later 16 migrants were found deserted in a lorry outside Potsdam with no shoes or winter clothing in temperatures below minus 20 degrees. The driver had deserted the lorry and several of the migrants had to have had limbs amputated.

Every year hundreds of migrants die or are killed trying to enter or live within Fortress Europe. Their lives are seen as worthless not just by the black marketeers who profit from their plight, but by European governments themselves.

The EU governments sponsoring the European Year Against Racism have, for a number of years, been discussing how they can implement co-ordinated policies to keep migrants and asylum seekers out of the EU and to police the minority communities that already exist.

In Britain, mass immigration was effectively ended by successive rounds of racist legislation from both Tory and Labour governments between the mid 1960s and early 1970s.

Under the Tories, racist ideology and legislation has focused on two areas, refugees and asylum seekers on the one hand and criminalising black communities on the other. Numerous rounds of legislation have further restricted the right to



asylum, the right to benefits, legal aid and the basic rights granted to UK citizens.

At the same time the paramilitary style policing that was tested out in the north of Ireland, in the inner city riots of 1980-81, and during the 1984-85 miners' strike, have become commonplace in deprived

working class communities, against black people in particular.

This type of policing goes hand in hand with a whole range of racist policies from exclusions in schools to the courts and the prison system.

Such policies are not limited to little England Tories, and won't simply go away now that the Tories are out of office. They are very much in line with the overall trend across Europe.

The Schengen agreement and various subsequent EU agreements aim to tighten up immigration policy and its implementation across the European Union, taking the most draconian aspects of each member state's legislation to form a

unified policy. Similarly, an imperialist policy based upon the economic involvement of each member state is emerging. For example Germany will demand the greater repression of Turkish militants throughout the EU, as will France of Arab activists or Britain with Irish Republicans.

Labour's landslide election will open up some opportunities for positive change in some areas at least if we can keep up pressure through mass campaigning and trade union support.

In their policy statement on asylum, Labour's stated aim is to bring legislation in line with international agreements such as the 1951 convention on refugees, which would mark a significant step forward. Labour policy on the benefit cuts to asylum seekers is that it would 'review' them, though the financial burden placed on local government is likely to provide an increased pressure to restore benefits from within the party.

Whenever Labour front-benchers have been forced into discussing asylum and immigration, however, they have always stated that Labour will be 'tough on illegal immigration' and stressed their

policy of 'fast-track' appeals procedure. Labour's policy document claims that not enough asylum seekers who have their appeals turned down currently leave the country. Presumably new Labour aims to deport more people than the Tories.

On the issue of policing it is difficult to see any difference between the views of Jack Straw and the Tory right, which is likely to be a much more difficult issue to tackle.

To go much beyond tinkering with relatively minor aspects of a system that is racist through and through requires a challenge based on militant anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggles throughout Europe and beyond. Various member states have tried to justify the tightening up of racist legislation on the basis that if they didn't go along with the rest of the EU their particular country would be overwhelmed with a 'tide of immigrants'.

Increasingly the challenge to racist legislation in one EU country

will necessitate a struggle against racist legislation throughout the continent.

The Euromarch Campaign aims to develop an alternative vision of Europe that challenges all forms of racism throughout the EU, with participants in each country organising meetings, demonstrations and events. A number of days of the march in Britain will focus on anti-racist themes, explaining the effects of racist legislation across Europe and trying to strengthen the fight against this.

Many issues surrounding agreements on immigration are held in secret, and documents relating to them have been called 'non-papers'. In February this year one such secret meeting of EU ministers in Noordwijk was discovered by the Dutch Coalition for a Different Europe and the direct action group Counter Control.

50 activists, dressed up as famous spies and detectives surrounded the conference, with binoculars, hearing aids and long distance microphones.

Though the non-papers aren't supposed to exist, the Green group in the European Parliament has obtained copies of some and put them on the internet.

Though there are no concrete proposals within the paper, it is clear that signatories of the Schengen agreement are pushing for it to be adopted as EU policy, that there are proposals that refugees are not accepted from other EU states, and that 'Third Country Nationals' given the right to enter one EU country will not be allowed the same freedom of movement throughout the EU that is envisaged for EU citizens.

UNITED, the largest anti-racist network in Europe, is organising a 2 day conference in Amsterdam on 12 and 13 June, prior to the Inter-Governmental Conference. This must be used as a starting block for anti-racists to build the kind of alliances needed to co-ordinate the forthcoming struggles against Fortress Europe—from inside and out.



Euro would slam door on women

Gill Lee

The Equal Opportunities Commission has recognised that women will receive a 'double whammy' as a result of the Single European Currency in its report on Women and Europe.

"The check to growth of the service sector and its rationalisation will be the principle structural shock of European integration", the report said.

Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the 'social wage' upon which we depend to take advantage of the limited gains made in the 1960s and 70s.

The attack on the welfare state begun under the Tories, and to be continued under New Labour, threatens women with social exclusion. Many women's jobs will be lost and more casualised. The means by

which many women escape from the isolation of the home is under threat.

The huge expansion of state education in the sixties allowed women for the first time in some numbers to take part in higher education. This was crucial in stimulating the birth to the women's liberation movement which was to fight, along side the trade unions, for equal pay, legal abortion and against sex discrimination.

The welfare state provided contraceptive and abortion facilities and so allowed women to make some decisions over work, education and bringing up children. In an often partial and problematic way, it became more possible for women to leave violent husbands and partners through the existence of refugees, council housing



and social security benefits. Single or divorced parents could just about subsist economically and women gained limited access to pre-school childcare, play groups and care for elderly or sick relatives. All of these gains gave women more possibility of paid work. By the middle of the nineties women made up almost half of the working population and were choosing to work for much more of their lives, rather than just in the years before they had children. All of these gains are threatened by cuts in the welfare state. Women's jobs are increasingly part time, temporary and casual. Many jobs which were previously highly unionised and permanent, within the NHS or local government are now privatised and

derecognised.

Part time work often appears to 'suit' women because attacks on jobs are matched by attacks on the quality of women's lives. Much of the care that was previously 'socialised' has been reprivated back into the family and onto women's shoulders.

Cuts in play groups, pre-school education, home helps, meals on wheels, sheltered housing, convalescent time in hospital, old people's homes... The list of ways in which women's burden has been increased by cuts in social services and the welfare state is a long one. Women are forced back into the home or into part time jobs as a type of social exclusion.

Women are often increasingly physically excluded from the New Europe. Racist immigration laws can make it particularly hard for immigrant women to gain entry into Britain, or

for British women who marry men from other countries to gain the right to live united with their families in the country of their choosing. For black families and black women, social exclusion often means physical exclusion from the new Europe of the bosses.

Women will participating in the Euromarch because we recognise the importance of countering these particular attacks as well as to participate in the general struggle against the Europe of the bosses.

We will organise within the marches to ensure that issues that specifically affect women are given a high profile—highlighting for example the threat that nursery vouchers pose to under fives provision or the way that the Job Seekers Allowance particularly impacts on women.

In the opening weeks of the long sought Labour government a high profile for the issues that affect women is crucial.



Full Employment across Europe!

Build on gains of Euromarch

Terry Conway from Socialist Outlook talked to Christophe Aguiton from the European Secretariat of the Euromarches on May 4 when he came to London to speak at the London May Day festival.

SO: What have been the most important gains of the campaign so far?

CA: This is not the first European-wide mobilisation because we have the action in Belgium, France, Spain and Italy around Renault-Vilvorde but it symbolises the year 1997 in which we are beginning to see the construction of pan-European social movements. This is really new in Europe.

We did have the tradition of mobilisations across by farmers because half the budget of the European Union was for the Common Agricultural Policy but at the level of the working class there was nothing.

We had the first experience of a European strike with a one day strike on rail three or four years ago and last year there was the first strike in Telecommunications. The actions around the closure of Renault-Vilvorde were critical because it showed a change of mood in some of the key countries of Europe - in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain.

It is in that context that our campaign and our march exists.

It is the first mobilisation in all

the European countries - even Luxembourg had a national committee to build the marches.

We have people mobilising in Switzerland, in Norway, even little things happening in Iceland. These mobilisations are also attractive to those outside the EU: in Morocco, Egypt, South Korea, Brazil and Mexico for example.

SO: The campaign in France had a head start over most other places because you were able to build on previous campaigns by Agir Chomage (AC! - one of the organisations fighting unemployment which previously had very successful marches). Has this campaign been able to go beyond those previous successes?

CA: Yes, definitely. Through this campaign we will have organised more than 150 meetings in more than 150 towns across France with the support of lots of unions and unemployed groups.

The actions around the closure of Renault-Vilvorde were critical because it showed a change of mood in some of the key countries of Europe - in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain.

All the organisations of the unemployed are involved this time together with groups like DAHL - the movement for homeless people and many unions.

At the same time it is important to recognise that while these movements are very important in French social and political life what we can

organise at this stage are symbolic events, popular events rather than mass movements.

We must understand this is the beginning of the movement - we have small forces but with important support in public opinion. On this basis it is possible to build something much bigger which will last for the years to come.

SO: How successful have you been in involving women in the campaign?

CA: The women's movement in France was very important in the 70s but in the 80s was in decline. Now we see some important changes. At the beginning of the big strike wave in 1995 we had a huge demonstration on November 25 for women's abortion rights.

Then recently there was a huge Assizes or convention of women with 2000 people, the vast majority women, with the support of all the left parties and unions. This convention supported the march, and



of the struggle for the right of immigrants in France affected the march?

CA: The development of the 'sans papiers' movement over the last year has been very important. It started with an African leadership and now other groups are coming forward reflecting the diversity of immigration to France.

This movement is linked to the marches because there is reciprocal solidarity. During the sans papier struggle many from the unemployed movement were involved. We have discussions planned to discuss how the 'sans papiers' will support us.

SO: What do you think should happen after the mass demonstration in Amsterdam?

CA: There are two important interrelated tasks. Firstly we need to strengthen the existing networks:

for example the European Network of the Unemployed which is the only European organisation of the unemployed that exists.

It is also necessary to open the European TUC to other forces. Some unions such as the CGT and SUD in France are not part of the ETUC and this must change. We must try to build all the existing networks.

At the same time we need to build co-ordination between activists involved in the different networks - the official structures are not sufficient for what we need to do. Those organisations are not the only voice we need.

We think the Euro-march campaign can give a complementary voice and complementary actions between the different social movements to the official structures. We can build a very broad network.

Robbed pensioners look for Labour action

Jane Brown

PENSIONERS' income has been slashed under the Tories, and already pressure from the Labour Party's backroom boys has brought about damaging retreats on this issue from the unions.

The Public Service Pensioners' Council has retreated from its previous position of demanding that pensions be linked to the better of earnings and prices (a retreat challenged and successfully rejected at recent NUT Conference), arguing that it is 'unrealistic' that any political party would commit themselves to restoring the link. Fortunately many pensioners' organisations reject that approach too.

The offensive against pensions is another facet of the attack on the welfare state required to meet the convergence criteria for the single European currency. It is an attack aimed at one of

the most vulnerable sections of the working class which cannot threaten to withdraw its labour in support of its demand for dignity, but which is increasingly willing to organise to publicise its demands, as shown through the massive pensioners lobby of last year's Labour Party Conference for example.

As if attacks on pension levels themselves were not enough the services older citizens rely on have been slashed in the last eighteen years. Pensioners have been at the sharp end of many of the attacks on the welfare state, since they disproportionately rely on the NHS, social security

benefits, public transport and public services.

The imposition of VAT on fuel disproportionately hit older people, who spend a higher percentage of their income on heating.

The much publicised £79 million shortfall in Kent County

Council's funding last year was to be partly met by closing 10 old people's homes. The cuts in Glasgow City Council's budget meant cuts in home helps, warden support in sheltered housing, and meals on wheels services.

Thousands of old people's homes have been privatised under the Tories, resulting in worsening conditions for those who work in them and for the people who live there.

Many benefits are now means-tested, and frequently older people will not apply for them or cannot figure their way through the bureaucratic layers to get to them. These indirect attacks on pensioners have been matched by attacks on the pension itself.

One of the early acts of the Thatcher government in 1979 was to sever the link between pensions and average wages. Single pensioners would be around £23 a week better off today and couple £32 if they had not been robbed in this way.

The British government's response to European Equality legislation has been to level down women's access to pensions so

that they have to work until 65 to receive the state pension.

Only 15 per cent of women receive the full state pension in any case, although that proportion will rise as women reaching pension age have spent more of their lives in paid employment. But the state pension is of even more importance to women than men, as over two thirds of women have no occupational pension. Huge layers of the over 60 age group are now living in poverty.

Under the Tories the whole existence of the state pension was looking increasingly under threat. It is vital to ensure that Labour understands that neither pensioners nor the trade union movement will stand for an attack on this basic and vital right.

Pensioners have already paid for their right to security in old age through years and years of National Insurance contributions - they must not be stolen from

them.

The Secretary of the Public Services Pensioners' Council assured it that the Council 'would not be taken seriously' if it continued in the run up to a General Election with the call to link pensions to the better of earnings or prices.

Pensioners will not take seriously a trade union movement which does not fight for retired workers. Nor will they take seriously any government which says it cannot fund pensions while refusing to tax more highly those earning over £100,000 per year and continuing to pay billions for Trident missiles.

The Tory government looked after its people; the bosses, bankers and arms traders. The Labour Party - with its massive majority - must be forced to look after all of ours.



On the March

Euromarches launched

Six marches head for Amsterdam

FROM SOME of the furthest reaches of Europe: Morocco, Spain, France, Bosnia and Finland, the marches are on the road.

Over recent months workers in many European countries have demonstrated and taken strike action against the threat the convergence criteria is posing to their jobs, living standards and working conditions. Miners and steel workers in Germany, Renault workers in Belgium and France and many others have joined battle against the effects of Maastricht.

The struggle of black people deprived of their rights by Schengen and other racist restrictions as Fortress Europe is strengthened by campaigns like that of the 'sans papiers' in France and the hunger strike at Rochester prison in England.

Countless other struggles against social exclusion are in progress: against homelessness in France, against the Job Seekers Allowance in Britain for example.

The marches set off over the weekend of 12 and 13 April and will arrive in Amsterdam for the Inter-



The 'sans papiers' movement in France is challenging EU racist laws

tions. The northernmost leg of the march set off from Ivalo a tiny village in Lapland, 300 miles inside the Arctic circle, over 1,000 miles from Amsterdam. The marchers will visit over 80 towns and villages in their journey south.

The four legs of the march from Finland and will converge in Helsinki and Turtu on May 10 - the first anniversary of the reduction in unemployed benefit in Finland. Finland has an 15 per cent unemployment and Lapland is almost double that. The only work there is forestry, reindeer herding or servicing tourists visiting the midnight sun or looking for Father Christmas!

Morocco

The march started on April 11 from the offices of one of the two major Moroccan unions. Moroccan, Spanish and French marchers were on this leg.

Most Moroccan marchers were prevented from entering Spain under the Schengen provisions when the march crossed the Straits of Gibraltar. 100 marchers arrived in Algesiras and a campaign was launched to get the Moroccans through.

When this leg reached Madrid they linked up with a group of workers made redundant at a fac-



tory in Palencia.

Spain

The main Spanish march left Murcia on April 16 with 200 marchers on route for Alicante. A delegation of 6 French marchers is included.

A debate has been organised in Barcelona on the rights of immigrant workers.

Bosnia

On Monday April 14 there were symbolic starts of a march in Sarajevo and Tuzla in Bosnia. A series of debates was organised with miners, postmen and hospital workers in Tuzla. Two students, two miners, two postmen and two nurses will join the march to Amsterdam.

Italy

There is not an actual march from Italy, but a series of events

throughout the country including a rally at the ENI chemical factory in Crotona in the south with hundreds of workers present organised by the unions to mark the start of marches from other places.

Greece

Although a full march is not possible from Greece the project has big support and large delegations will be joining the march to Amsterdam. The campaign was started with a meeting of 300 people addressed by the Vice President of the CGT (the Greek trade union federation). Buses and an aircraft have been booked to get the largest number to Amsterdam.

Ireland

The Irish march is due to set off in June. An official launch rally for the march took place in front of the European Commission Offices in Dublin on April 14. The rally was well covered by the media with interviews with INOU officials and with Christophe Aguiton for the European Coordination.

Paris

On Sunday April 13, 400 unemployed activists occupied the Palace of Versailles to mark the start of the marches. They took over the King's rooms, and symbolically spoke from the King's balcony, protesting about new measures being taken against the unemployed in France. This was the balcony where on August 4 1789 the abolition of privileges was declared.

Frankfurt-on-the-Oder

May 1 Departure of the 1st German March

The official departure was from the Polish side, where 30 Solidarnosc militants gave the marchers a good send off across the Oder Bridge. The day was organised by the DB (the large confederation of German unions). Later on some Polish people will join the march.

Barcelona

March from Almeria
When the march arrived in Barcelona there was a lot happening. A strike on the underground had started which was planned to last until April 30.

A demonstration was organised by women and youth against temporary work agencies which have become the most glaring symbol of job insecurity. There was a hunger strike by immigrant workers demanding "permits for everyone" in the Saint Louis Gonzala church. A demonstration of 2-3,000 was organised by the marchers in a show of unity between the different groups taking action.

Toulouse

May 1: a Joint trade union march with over 1200 people, supported by 200 militants of the European March. A picnic for the Euro-

marches took place - 500 people came to wave goodbye.

March from Tangiers

Thursday May 1, Bayonne: a joint trade union march with over 1000 people. The European March banner led the cortege. Afterwards, there were speeches in the three regional languages, Basque, Spanish and French. In the afternoon, there was a debate on the problems of unemployment which was held on the local union's premises.

Pyrenées

April 29 at the Somport Pass in the Pyrenées, 12 Spanish marchers decided to stay on the march into France with the French marchers. The marchers met local small farmers who were fighting against the construction of a motorway.

50 marchers on the Bedous-Oloron part of the march rode along on bicycles.

Later in the afternoon, the marchers occupied the local job centre in Oloron and mounted a campaign for free transport for the jobless by using public transport, in a large group, without paying.

In Hendaye, the march converged with the other leg of the Spanish march.



Perpignan

March from Almeria, Spain
Wednesday April 30, Immigration day, the marchers held a ceremony to erect a memorial plaque in homage to the 11 Moroccans without official papers, who all died in a car accident just before the Perthus frontier.

200 people made up a cortege in the direction of Perpignan.

Alençon

May 1 - March from Brest
400 demonstrators united behind the banner of the European March.

Local members of the CFDT which fully supports the marches walked behind the European March banner.

This display of Labour Day solidarity, turned out to be a very big demonstration for Alençon and a real pleasure for the marchers...



governmental Conference on June 14, after two whole months on the road.

Marchers from other countries will join them on the way. Tens of thousands will have joined this protest at the social effects of the bosses' Europe.

Finland

The marchers started out in great enthusiasm despite polar condi-

International Chequepoint

Socialist Outlook has promoted the campaign for the Euromarch since the autumn of last year.

Together with our sister organisations of the Fourth International across Europe we believe that there is a great need for unity of those in struggle against the Europe of the bosses.

Now the marches in Britain are almost on the road. Our resources have been stretched by the money and time we have put into building this cam-



paign. We want to ensure that we are able to get our ideas over to those on the march and those who attend the meetings along the route.

We want to make sure that the Fourth International is able to produce a leaflet in different languages for the mass demonstration in Amsterdam on June 14.

We are launching a specific appeal for £1,500 for this purpose. Rush your cheques to: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

French left alternative to Socialist Party austerity

“100% left” candidates

Duncan Chapple

Right wing French President Jacques Chirac has called a snap general election to decide on French entry into the Euro, the single European currency.

He aims to catch the left unprepared and to win popular support for the right. To join the single European currency the French government must cut social provision and increase taxation. An early election win allows them to press ahead with their plans without fearing defeat at looming elections.

Chirac was elected because he promised to mend the fractured French society with social reforms and job creation schemes. This 'social Chiraquism' was invented to head off militant working-class and youth mobilisations in 1995. Economic difficulties made it impossible for Chirac's rightist party, the Rally for the Republic, to deliver on these populist and almost workerist pledges.

Austerity was opened by the Juppé government instead. This has led to a profound social and economic crisis. Very diverse parts of society are fighting the government. They are connecting these attacks to the neo-liberal policies needed to allow France to meet the criteria set for joining the single currency.

The two social-democratic parties, the misnamed 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties, are trying to turn the fightback into a one-sided campaign to get a coalition government led by themselves elected.

They claim to oppose the criteria for joining the Euro. However they also favour a common currency for



Thousands of anti-racist protesters marched through Strasbourg in protest at the National Front conference

the European Union.

This is not good enough. Because the European Union is a capitalist union, and deep in recession, any single currency necessarily leads to austerity.

The far left will take advantage of France's two round election system to drive the message home. Rather

than vote for these parties whose promises are not to be believed in the first round on May 25, our French comrades are standing revolutionary candidates aiming to build "a left wing that is 100% left".

The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), Socialist Outlook's sister organisation in France, will

stand its own candidates and back others who want to build a radical alternative to the Socialist and Communist parties.

The League's platform explains the need to use the snap election to build the fight in the unions and the social movements against both the right wing government and social austerity. The League will build on the successful European Marches against austerity, unemployment and social exclusion.

In the second round, voters must choose either the social democrats or the current government.

The Socialist and Communist parties' campaign promises to unfreeze spending, to immediately reduce the working week to 35 hours, and to create 700,000 new jobs for young people.

They also 'promise' to cut public

1999. They will not therefore be able to carry out the progressive parts of their programme – these are hollow promises.

The LCR will vote for the social democrats and against the government in the second round on June 1.

This is not the policy of others on the far left. In the first round the Worker's Struggle (Lutte Ouvriere) group is likely to get a good response to its presidential candidate, Arlette Laguiller. However it will not campaign to kick out the right in the second.

Its newspaper, *Lutte Ouvriere*, equates Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin with rightist prime minister Alain Juppé: "Jospin or Juppé, two J's paired up against the workers.....If Jospin replaces Juppé only to conduct the same war against the working-class, what kind of change is that?"

This understandable sentiment is striking. A defeat for the right will place more pressure on the existing leadership of the working class to improve the position of working people.

It will make it harder for the Communist and Socialist parties to exclude the far left from the movements against fascism, the Maastricht criteria and from common left slates in local elections which aim to defeat the National Front.

You can help!

The 100 per cent left candidates need your money!

This month, the League needs your help in raising FF20,000 so that the "100% left" candidates can have a militant campaign. If you agree with the LCR's campaign, give it your financial support.

IN BRITAIN: send cheques payable to 'Outlook International' to PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU. Please write "LCR election" on the back.

ELSEWHERE: Send cheques in French Francs payable to 'LCR Souscription' to "100% gauche", 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France.

Doctors protest

"No to English-style medicine", was one of the slogans on the 20,000-strong demonstration by junior doctors through Paris on April 13.

Contingents of doctors – many of them on strike against the Juppé government's controversial austerity reforms – came from all over the country, even from Corsica.

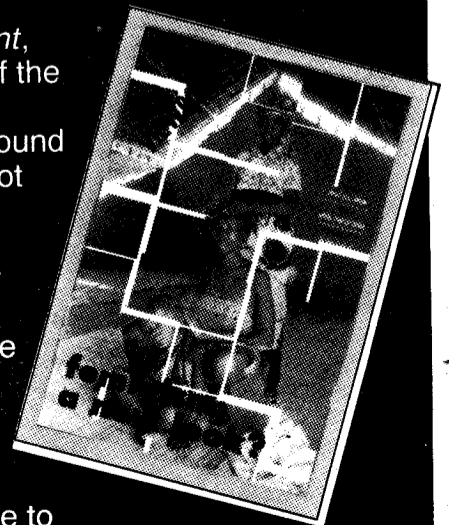
The French government's moves to impose strict cash limits on health care – part of the measures to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria for a single currency – are seen as an attack on the freedom of doctors to deliver quality care to patients.

The noisy, good-humoured and colourful demonstration was supported by contingents of health workers from two union confederations, FO and CGT.



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International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Fourth International, carries all the background information you cannot find in the bourgeois press. IVP's normal selling price is £2 per month, but British readers can subscribe jointly to IVP and *Socialist Outlook* for just £30 per year. Send your details and a cheque payable to *Socialist Outlook* to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.





Checking his secret bank accounts? Arafat plays a central role in Israeli plans to contain Palestinian resistance

Roland Rance

THIRTY years on, Israeli military rule over the Palestinian territories occupied during the 1967 war (the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem), as well as over the Syrian Golan Heights, continues without let-up. Despite the deal made in Madrid and Oslo, and finally signed in Washington, most Palestinians see little real improvement in their situation.

Economic, social and political conditions in the Occupied Territories have sharply deteriorated since the Oslo agreement, according to US academic Sara Roy, the author of *The Gaza Strip: The Politics of Development*.

Between 1992 and 1996, per capita GNP fell by almost 40%, to \$1500 a year in the West Bank and \$700 in Gaza. Malnutrition is rising, and there are increasing reports of begging, sifting through rubbish for food, sale of body organs to Israeli hospitals, and prostitution.

15% of the children in Gaza suffer from malnutrition, 60% of the babies have anaemia, and 90% have intestinal parasites, according to Israeli activist Amira Hass in a recent book, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza*.

The frequent closures, which restrict or ban free movement within and between areas, have severely damaged the economy.

In 1996, there were over 100 days of total closure, and countless periods of partial closure. Unemployment is rising, totalling 29% of the 540,000 labour force when closures are lifted.

In Gaza, where unemployment reaches 40%, over 40% of the families have sold property in order to buy food. At the same time, there is a large increase in child labour. Land confiscation for Israeli settlements, military bases and roads also continues, with 44% of Gaza and 78% of the West Bank now in Israeli

30 years of occupation and repression

A grim anniversary in Palestine

hands.

Meanwhile, the Arafat regime becomes daily more brutal and autocratic. Nearly every day, further reports are received of the arbitrary and undemocratic way in which Arafat and his cohorts carry out their task as Israel's surrogates in the slums and refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Human rights activists, such as researcher Bassam el-Eid and psychologist Eyyad el-Sarraj, have spent lengthy periods in Arafat's prisons.

Twenty-four political prisoners – one of them a lawyer – are reportedly held at the Interrogation Center for the General Intelligence in Jericho, and denied the right to see their lawyers and, in many cases, their families.

Several detainees have died under interrogation and torture in these prisons, often at the hands of gaolers who had themselves suffered similar techniques in Israeli prisons.

During the early years of the Intifada, Israel arrested Palestinian teachers for teaching, which had been forbidden. Now, they are arrested for union activity.

On 21 April, the Palestinian Authority arrested over 30 teachers leading a strike demanding better wages and conditions. For several months, teachers had been de-

the strike continues.

The assault on democracy and on the institutions of civil society painstakingly developed by Palestinian activists through the first two decades of Israeli occupation and the early years of the Intifada serve the interests of the Israeli and Palestinian regimes alike.

As Israeli Professor Tanya Rein-

Israeli settlers continue their racist provocations, the Israeli army continues its undercover operations, the Israeli government continues to expropriate land and to build homes and roads for Jews only, and the Palestinian Authority plunders and tortures the masses who struggled for their return and rule.

manding a 100% increase in their salaries, which now average about \$300 a month.

Despite claims of their release, human rights activists report that teachers are still in prison and that

hart noted recently,

"It takes at least 30 thousand 'policemen' and a spy in every house to oppress the Palestinians struggle for independence. The Israeli army just does not have the 30 thousand

soldiers needed to replace, daily, Arafat's policemen".

According to Professor Edward Said, "Arafat and his 'Palestine authority' have become collaborators with the military occupation, a sort of Vichy government for Palestinians . . . Far from bringing peace, (Oslo) brought greater suffering for Palestinians".

Striking evidence of this collaboration was provided in the recent disclosure of Arafat's private slush fund at the Israeli National Bank in Tel-Aviv.

Over the past three years, Israel has transferred at least \$150 million to this account in Tel Aviv, access to which is limited to Arafat and his senior economic advisor Muhammad Rashid. Much of the money comes from the levies imposed by Israel on all exports from and imports to the Occupied Territories.

Arafat is believed to have other secret accounts in Cairo, Riyadh, and Amman, though these might not be available to him if he were overthrown.

The purpose of the fund in Israel is to enable Arafat to establish a government in exile if necessary; it also ensures that such a 'government' would continue to be loyal to Israeli policy.

The irony is that, having originally fostered and encouraged Hamas as a counter to the secular nationalism of Arafat and the PLO, Israel is now reinforcing Arafat as a counter to Hamas and other Islamist groups.

In neither case, of course, was Israel interested in the opinions and needs of the Palestinian masses. This meddling is a classic example of imperialist "divide and rule"; Israel has apparently learned well from the British experience.

So, after thirty years of military occupation, and ten years after the start of the Intifada, which for a while threatened both Israel and the Arab regimes, the Palestinian people are more oppressed, more immiserated, and more lacking in leadership than at any time since the great disasters of 1948 and 1967.

Israeli settlers continue their racist provocations, the Israeli army continues its undercover operations, the Israeli government continues to expropriate land and to build homes and roads for Jews only, and the Palestinian Authority plunders and tortures the masses who struggled for their return and rule.

When the Intifada erupted, in December 1987, the Israeli government and many commentators who accepted the official line were surprised. They should not have been.

There had already been several small uprisings, and it was clear to most independent observers that a major uprising was likely, though the date and form could not have been predicted.

A similar situation is developing now. The clashes over the tunnel under the Old City of Jerusalem and over the settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim were bloody but short-lived.

They are unlikely to be the last. Under a brutal double occupation, forgotten by the world and abandoned by most of their erstwhile allies, Palestine is a bomb waiting to explode. Hamas and its allies appear ready to offer a different leadership and a different goal, while much of the nationalist left seems to have abandoned the struggle.

The responsibility of Palestinian socialists, and of socialists in the Arab world as a whole, has never been greater.

Kabila is coming!

B. Skanthakumar

KISANGANI, Mbuyi-Maji and Lubumbashi have fallen in quick succession to the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL).

Now they are advancing on the Zairean capital Kinshasa where residents eagerly cry, "Kabila Yaka! Kabila Yaka" (Kabila is coming! Kabila is coming!) as the AFDL leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila comes to symbolise this popular rebellion.

Up to even a few months ago few dared to believe that the dictator Mobutu Sese-Seko would so soon be reduced to watching helplessly as under his very nose people protest in the streets demanding "Mobutu must go".

This wily manouvreur who has plagued Zaire for thirty years, treating its coffers as his private purse and its people as his servants is on his last legs.

Abandoned

Publicly abandoned and humiliated by his western backers (save France) and wracked by cancer, his end is not far away.

It was his own destruction of his country that accounts for the speed of his downfall. Wherever the AFDL troops arrive they are joyously welcomed by a local population which has for decades been abandoned by central government excepting being terrorised by his Army and secret police.

The Zairean Armed Forces (FAZ) has simply not confronted its enemy, which has minimised the number of casualties on both sides and among the civilian population.

However they continue to harass unarmed people, raping, looting and pillaging as they flee towards Kinshasa.

Many soldiers have deserted to the AFDL where at least they get paid regularly and stand a better chance of survival.

Mobutu's regime has had to rely on the combined forces of the former Rwandan Armed Forces and its allied Bahutu militias as well as white mercenaries for any resistance that there has been.

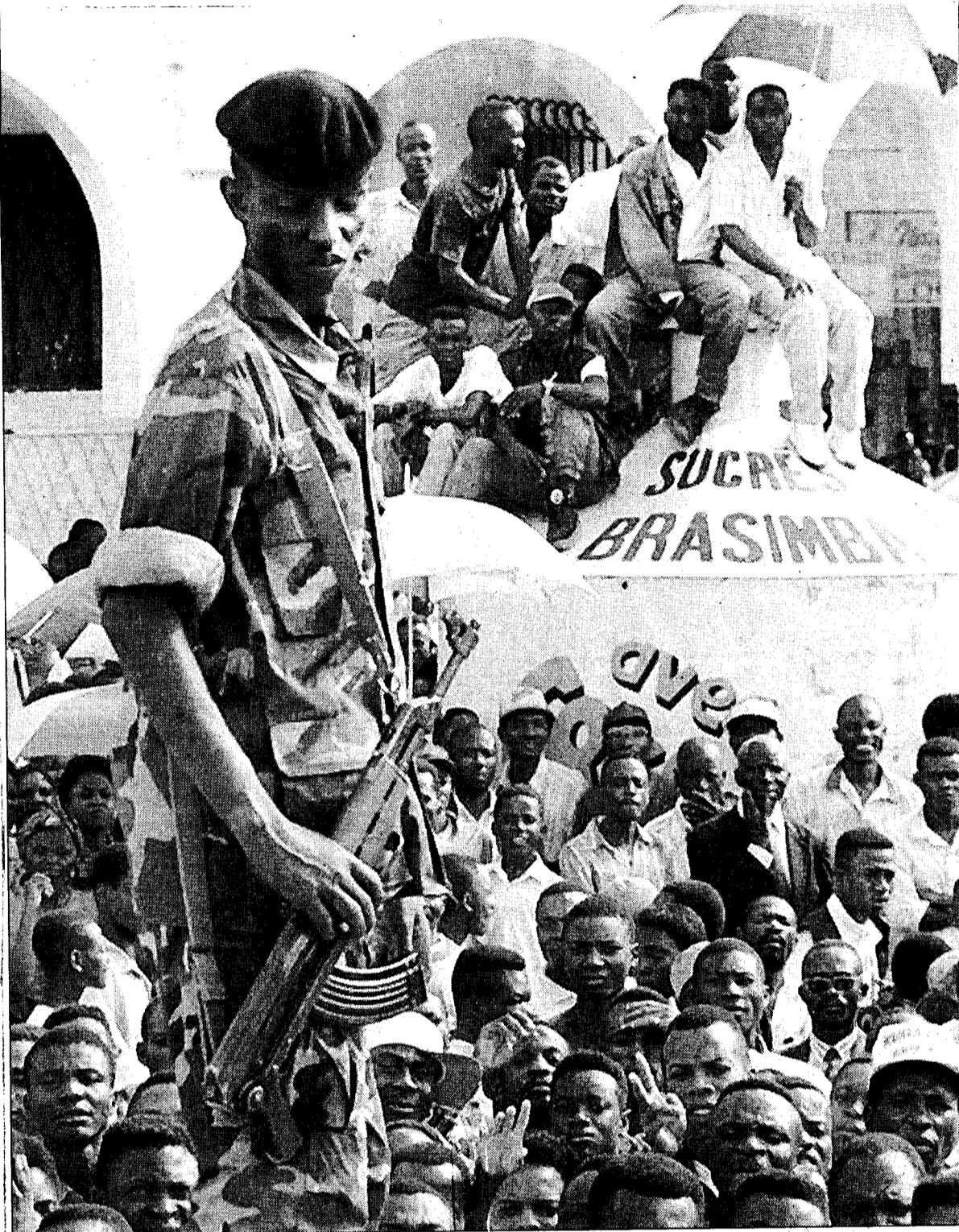
These mercenaries from Serbia, Croatia, Russia and France are paid upwards of US \$2,000 a month whereas Zairean regulars (infrequently) receive a mere US \$1 a month - contributing to the latter's low morale.

Bombardment

The mercenaries have been involved in front-line action in the air bombardment of civilian populations in Bukavu, Walikale and Shabunda. Even they have been frustrated by the collapse of the Zairean army and bouts of dysentery and malaria which has encouraged many to leave the country.

Kabila has matched his military prowess with political acumen. He successfully forestalled the introduction of western troops as so-called "humanitarian intervention" which the French government continues to favour seeing it as their last chance to save a client regime.

While the western powers and Mobutu's supporters like Daniel Arap Moi in Kenya have been pressing the AFDL to cease fight-



Rebels take over control in Lumumbashi: Mobutu's regime has had to rely on mercenaries

ing and negotiate some sharing of power with Mobutu's regime, Kabila has been intransigent in his goal.

"The only thing to negotiate" says Kabila, "are the modalities of Mobutu's departure".

Unlike the opposition politicians in Kinshasa who over the years have played a game of musical chairs for the Prime Minister's post where President Mobutu is always the choreographer, Kabila has not allowed himself to be seduced likewise.

While western governments seek assurances that Kabila will share

power with opposition leaders like Etienne Tshisekedi, he rightly perceives them as part of Zaire's problem and not part of the solution.

Partly out of respect for Nelson Mandela and partly to moderate the mounting international pressure over the Rwandan refugee situation in eastern Zaire, Kabila agreed to the direct talks in Gabon with Mobutu.

While many including perhaps the South African government will urge Kabila to form a transitional government with Mobutu to pave the way for free elections, he must stick to his earlier position of Mobutu's removal from power and

the cleansing of all aspects of Mobutuism from the political system.

The Alliance's political and economic programme have become clearer in recent weeks.

As a coalition its common manifesto is influenced by the nationalist ideas of Patrice Lumumba from the 1960s but shorn of the Marxist colouring that Pierre Mulele and even Laurent Kabila once gave it.

There are two planks in their programme which Kabila in an echo of his radical past recently called a "national democratic revolution".

"Redemocratisation" means a western liberal democratic system

and separation of powers between an executive presidency, legislature and judiciary, as well as full freedom of the press, association and assembly.

Also reconstruction and development, which has been described as the "return to the Congolese population of control of the production, distribution and consumption of their land and mineral resources".

In particular the Alliance has identified the need for primary health care for all, education and housing and the development of the rural infrastructure and increasing personal consumption power.

What remains unclear is a timetable for its implementation and precisely how the economy is to be managed in the interests of the people when foreign mining companies have effective control over their diamond, gold, cobalt and copper concessions and their exploitation.

Uganda model

Some speculate that Kabila will follow the Ugandan model of his friend and ally Yoweri Museveni where political parties are banned (excepting the liberation movement) and a market capitalist economy is encouraged under authoritarian political leadership.

It would be a mistake to think that Zaire with its sheer size, ethnic and political diversity and after the legacy of Mobutu's dictatorship will be amenable to this system of government.

What should be institutionalised in the short term is transparency, accountability and participatory government within genuine federalism.

Any new regime must permit the organisations which emerged in the 1990s as part of the partial democratization full freedom. These include the women's and religious associations as well as peasants' and workers' unions, student and youth groups, and so on.

All of which is still some way into the future.

The old regime will not abandon Kinshasa as easily as they did other towns.

Mobutu recently appointed a senior army officer Major-General Likulia Bolongo as Prime Minister, the third incumbent in as many months.

He hopes that the Zairean Armed Forces will not desert one of their commanding officers and may even be tantalising them with the prospect of direct military rule if they can face down the Alliance forces.

Much of the opposition in Kinshasa is now reconciled to Kabila's forces taking control and is leading a campaign of non-violent resistance against the state of emergency that has been declared.

Western troops from the United States, France, Belgium and Britain have been steadily building up in neighbouring Congo, Gabon and off-shore near Kinshasa, apparently to evacuate their nationals.

This last leg of the military campaign may be the most difficult yet.



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Sri Lanka Left leaders arrested

THREE leaders of Sri Lanka's New Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) have been detained by police in connection with an arms cache police claim to have discovered in a building occupied by a Health Workers Trade Union.

NSSP General Secretary Vickramabahu Karunaratne has been released on bail, and will appear in court on 9 June, in connection with the alleged discovery of 32 weapons in the building of the Health Workers Co-operative Society.

Police have still not released Ajith Forseka, President of the co-operative society, and P.D. Saranapala, General Secretary of the Janaraja Health Workers Union, which has offices in the same building.

Both men are members of the NSSP central committee, though the workers centre is open to health workers of all political persuasions.

In a statement after his release on bail, Karunaratne stressed that the NSSP "categorically denies" all allegations against its members. "Reactionary forces are trying to implicate the NSSP in a conspiracy to use concealed weapons," he said. "By these lies they hope to discredit worker struggle against price increases, the genocidal war [against the Tamils] repression and privatisation.

"Their other aim is to proscribe the NSSP,"

he continued.

"Yes, our party defends the right of the masses to rise up against this unjust capitalist system. But we have always disassociated ourselves from individual terrorism and intimidation as methods of revolution. Such tactics actually undermine the active movement, and sap the democratic initiative of the masses."

In 1989 the UNP government issued arms to the NSSP, and other components of the United Socialist Alliance, so that they could defend themselves against the Deshapriya Janatha Viraparaya (Patriotic Peoples Movement), a chauvinist section of the JVP.

At least 24 NSSP members were murdered by DVP chauvinists. Trade union centres were also issued with arms, after a leading Communist Party trade union leader was also killed.

According to an earlier NSSP press statement, "The NSSP returned all its arms when the government demanded them. It has not given arms to the Health Workers union centre, and is therefore not responsible for this arms discovery."

The arrest of Bahu Karunaratne, NSSP General Secretary, is definitely a political conspiracy to isolate the NSSP because of its resolute opposition to the privatisation programme of the Chandrika government.

The NSSP is also a clear opponent of the war against the Tamil people. Bahu Karunaratne has been identified as a determined opponent of the government's policies.

Since his election to the Colombo Municipal Council he has become a very popular mass leader.

The NSSP asks friends and comrades abroad to send messages demanding the release of Ajith Forseka and P.D. Saranapala, and the dropping of charges against Vickramabahu Karunaratne to:

Her Excellency the President, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kurnarunge, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 01, Sri Lanka. (fax +94-1-333703)

and The Secretary, Ministry of Defence (fax 94-1-54-1529) Please send a copy of your protests to the NSSP at fax +94-1-334822.

Donations to the legal fund should be sent to United Federation of Labour, A/C 16 500 599 62, Peoples Bank, Union Place, Colombo 02, Sri Lanka



Tokyo workers on a May Day demonstration: elsewhere, 60,000 marched in Mexico City and 1.3 million in Havana!

US nurses fight billion dollar giant

THE GIANT Kaiser Permanente corporation, which runs hospitals and healthcare services across the USA, is locked in an increasingly bitter struggle with nursing unions over hospital cuts and closures, job losses and pay cuts.

Thousands of California nurses at 45 Kaiser hospitals and clinics walked out on a one-day strike on April 16, warning that the company's ruthless drive for increased profits were putting the health of its subscribers at risk.

Its rationalisation of services has included the closure of intensive care units, restricting the use of Emergency Rooms (A&E), limits on tests, specialist care, hospital admissions and patient stays, and the axing of 15% of qualified nursing staff, even while more potential patients are signed up as subscribers.

Profits over the last three years are \$2.2 billion dollars, despite a 700% increase in Kaiser's marketing budget and spending over \$100m on management consultants.

But nurses are even more angry at the threat of further closures coupled with calls for a 15% pay cut for Registered Nurses.

Having flouted federal safety standards in several states including Texas, Kaiser also faces the possible termination of its lucrative federal Medicare and Medicaid contracts, worth a massive \$2.9 billion in 1996 out of the corporation's total revenue of \$13.2 billion.

The Texas Attorney General has warned that Kaiser's violations are serious enough to revoke its license to operate in the state.

A Department of Insurance report, which Kaiser has tried to suppress, has alleged that the company disallowed Emergency Room treatment. It is also facing a growing number of wrongful death lawsuits.

The stakes are high: clearly the 'free market' in health can cost you more than an arm and a leg.

Dreaded end to Lima siege

B. Skanthakumar

THERE WAS never any doubt that the storming of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima could have only one conclusion: the death of the Tupac Amaru militants within it.

April 22 was the day we had feared and hoped would never come.

The Peruvian President, Alberto Fujimori, sensitive to his opinion poll ratings and his pro-military and anti-terrorist image had made it clear that the lives of the Edgar Sanchez commando would not be spared.

"The order was to leave no one alive", said one soldier after the massacre, referring to the fourteen militants of the MRTA led by Commandante Nestor Cerpa Cartolini.

Fujimori, never one to lose an op-

portunity for good television footage, twice visited the scene sporting a bullet-proof flak jacket. It was the next best thing to pulling the trigger himself.

The 71 hostages were never harmed by their captors even in the final moments. The Peruvian military was not so noble.

They gunned down those who surrendered, and then shot the dead again for good measure.

Over two hundred years ago an Inca chief named Tupac Amaru led a popular rebellion for dignity and freedom against the Spanish colonists.

When he was finally captured, his tongue was cut out and his arms and legs tied to four horses and quartered. Then his limbs were sent to four different parts of the country and the rest of his body burned.

It wasn't enough to kill him. They had to destroy his corpse and then

try to expunge the memory of his very existence.

The MRTA action on December 17 was a blow against the security forces and their criminal acts of daily terror on the campesinos, workers and students of Peru.

It was a beacon of hope and faith across the Andes and the continent to all those who struggle unheard and unnoticed against the violence of the state and the neo-liberal model.

The ruling class could not arrive at a peaceful solution with the Edgar Sanchez commando regardless of the lives of the hostages.

State terror

They feared that compromise might encourage other revolts and rebellions and weaken their terrorist strategy sometimes known as "counter-insurgency".

Their allies in the United States, Britain and Japan knew it too, and rushed them technical expertise and military advisors. Fujimori was never going to concede on the only demand: not their own lives or safe passage for them but the freedom of 400 of their comrades who rot in Peru's jails.

For us to whom each one of the lives lost is so precious and so wasteful, we scream out in pain and anger that they acted recklessly in their occupation of the ambassador's residence.

Those who planned and then executed this operation would reply that they had little choice.

The MRTA and the notorious Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) movements have been battered in recent years with their top leadership imprisoned.

The popular movements which were the only progressive dynamic against the terror and counter-terror of the state and Sendero Luminoso have also been debilitated by the International Monetary Fund economic policies which consign

seventy percent of the population to poverty and hunger.

Meanwhile the legal left is paralysed into inaction stunned by the bravado of the candidate they once backed as President and strait-jacketed by their parliamentarist approach.

Guerrilla action was supposed to substitute for the decline in mass struggle. Yet Che Guevara himself once warned against the implications of this idea.

He rejected any opposition between the two, cautioning: "guerrilla warfare is a people's war; to attempt to carry out this type of war without the population's support is the prelude to inevitable disaster."

And therein lies the bitter truth. There should have been protests and movements within Peru in solidarity with the MRTA which prevented Fujimori from even contemplating such a response. There was none.

Some of us abroad picketed the diplomatic missions and demonstrated - but we were too few and too distant to be effective.

Our efforts must now be to focus attention on conditions within those giant prisons where their comrades are tortured and abused.

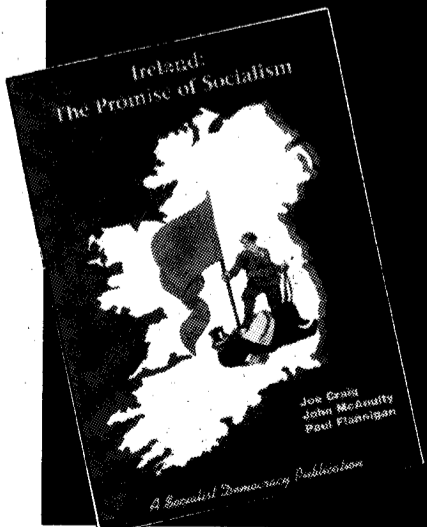
There must be an international campaign of solidarity with Peruvian political prisoners and their families who are persecuted by the government.

We salute the memory of those brave militants who confronted with the choice of passive acceptance of poverty, degradation and injustice or armed struggle for freedom from want and oppression and for socialism chose the latter.

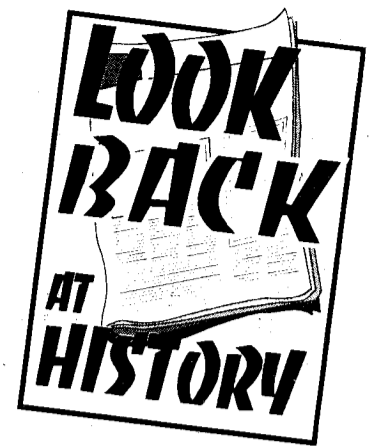
We failed to protect your lives but we will never forget your sacrifice.

Ireland: The Promise of Socialism

A major publication by Socialist Democracy (Ireland). The most extensive Marxist analysis of Ireland since the 1940s. Available from *Socialist Outlook* for just £5.50. Send cheque payable to Socialist Outlook Fund to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



How do we get to socialism from here?



Harry Sloan

WE ARE so near – and yet so far. For the second time in history a Labour government has a majority big enough to do whatever it wants: but Tony Blair's policies are so right wing his team makes Clement Attlee's post-war government look like a bunch of Trotskyists.

Millions of workers have voted Labour longing for a real change, for radical policies, disregarding Blair's constant efforts to deflate and defuse such aspirations. How can this lust for progress, fuelled by 18 miserable years of Tory onslaughts, be directed towards the fight for socialist policies?

This is the key issue for the survival of the left in the labour movement, as the Blairites sharpen their knives for a renewed and even more determined offensive – designed to sever once and for all the links between the Labour Party and the unions and working class which created it.

Past experience suggests that workers will be more willing to fight for their interests now that the Tories have been defeated. In the past these demands have been successful.

The last Labour government, elected 23 years ago, in March 1974, began as a minority government and only won a majority of four (dropping almost at once to three with the defection of John Stonehouse) in the follow-up election in October.

Pressure

Yet the pressure on that government was sufficient to force through much more radical policies than anything now on offer from Tony Blair: among the concessions were an increase in pensions and the establishment of a link between the state pension and average wages, the repeal of anti-union laws, and the introduction of the Employment Protection Act, the Health and Safety at Work Act, the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.

Immediately after the election, in an ill-fated effort to contain wage demands by holding down prices, Labour spent hundreds of millions in food subsidies designed to keep the Retail Price Index below the level that would trigger "threshold" pay increases.

Working class militancy, which had helped to precipitate the election, continued and even increased, despite the spineless performance of the union leaders, as workers quickly realised they could not expect the new government to solve all their problems.

The election had been triggered by Tory leader Heath's attempt to whip up an anti-union "who runs the country" hysteria in the midst of the miners' strike, while inflation, boosted by the increase in oil prices, was gnawing away at wages and salaries.

Harold Wilson's was no left wing cabinet: it included Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams who would later found the SDP, Reg Prentice (soon to defect to the Tories) Jim Callaghan and Denis Healey.



Nurses joined marches, lobbies and strikes in 1974 – and won – despite being denounced by bureaucratic union leaders

Michael Foot was hailed by the Tory press as an "imaginative" choice as Employment Secretary. The economy had – [as now] – been trashed by the Tories, and the *Financial Times* pointed out sympathetically that:

"Labour is faced with the unpleasant task of trying to induce a sharp reduction in real incomes over the next 12 to 18 months in order to make resources available for the balance of payments."

Within a week of taking office Harold Wilson's Queen's Speech had not only ditched all of the party's nationalisation pledges, but (after paying out sufficient to end the miners' strike) embraced the Phase 3 wage controls imposed by Heath's government.

Tory laws

The new government also avoided any commitment to repeal the Tory Industrial Relations Act or the Housing Finance Act which had jacked up council rents and led to heavy surcharges on Clay Cross councillors who defied it. And the six building workers (Shrewsbury 6) jailed on frame-up charges for picketing were to remain in jail under Labour. Labour's NEC called on the government to lift the Clay Cross surcharges, while the TUC was lobbying for the Shrewsbury pickets – both were ignored.

Healey's first budget, three weeks after the election, confirmed the Tories' massive cuts in public spending, and pumped £500m into food subsidies – propping up profits while appearing to curb prices – but sharply increased charges for electricity, phone calls, stamps, rail fares, petrol, alcohol, tobacco and confectionery.

Two days later the engineers' union AUEW was fined £47,000 by the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC), bringing the total fines to over £200,000 – including £217 to cover the cost of a company-financed holiday for three scabs!

On April 9 the Industrial Relations Court threatened to seize the entire assets of the AUEW after it refused to pay the £47,000 fine, but still the government made no move to repeal the Act. The AUEW re-

taliated by threatening national strike action, which received overwhelming support. On the eve of the strike an anonymous donor paid the union's fine and costs, and the strike was called off.

But by this time the NIRC was scheduled to hear a £3 million damages claim against the TGWU – and Michael Foot was finally persuaded to step in and repeal the Act.

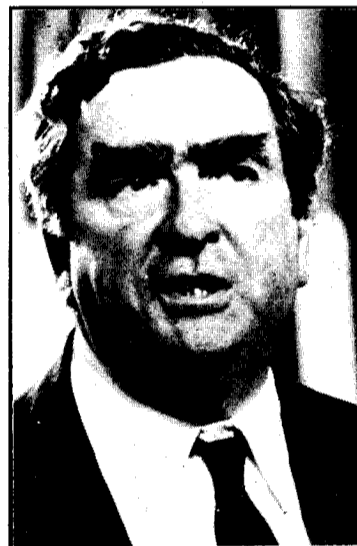
However Labour ministers and the top levels of the TGWU bureaucracy blatantly connived in the efforts which began immediately after the 1974 victory to smash the strength of trade union militancy in the car industry, which had led the fight to defend living standards and working conditions.

They – and the Tory mass media – saw the Trotskyist-led workforce at British Leyland's Cowley assembly plant as a key threat to any attempt to "solve" the economic crisis at the expense of the working class. In April, amid a succession of stoppages triggered by new speed-up on the production line, BL management stepped in to withdraw recognition from deputy convenor Alan Thornett.

A month-long strike in Thornett's defence ended when a rigged TGWU inquiry cleared him of the company's allegations, but criticised the running of the union in the plant, and ousted convenor Bobby Fryer and the former leadership by imposing new elections by ballot in the teeth of an unprecedented media witch-hunt.

As the Labour government turned increasingly to union leaders to curb the actions of their rank and file members, there were to be more witch-hunts and victimisations of left activists in various industries and the public sector unions.

But in March, health unions had thrown out a pitiful pay offer for nurses and other NHS professionals. And at the end of May, nurses – denounced by NUPE leader Alan Fisher as "irresponsible, amateur adventurers" – took up a programme of industrial action against the continuing Tory pay laws. This included demonstrations, canteen boycotts, token strikes and restric-



Subsidising bosses: Denis Healey

tions on hospital admissions.

The nurses were supported by the Society of Radiographers, who mobilised nearly half their 8,000 national membership in a march through London, while radiographers in ASTMS staged strikes in London and the north east.

The pressure forced Wilson's government to launch a face-saving inquiry into NHS pay, headed by Lord Halsbury. Reporting in July, the Halsbury committee found nurses to be a "special case", and awarded increases averaging 30% (though some grades got as little as 6%).

Fighting back

The arrival of a right-leaning Labour government had not, therefore, deterred the working class from defending itself. Union leaders found themselves dragged into action by the anger of their members.

In their effort to escape from this, key union leaders signed up in the summer of 1974

for a "Social Contract" imposing voluntary limits on wage demands after Heath's Phase 3 pay controls ended.

But Healey's November 1974 budget did little to help union leaders win support for the so-called deal, allocating a massive £1.5 billion to his efforts to "improve profitability and liquidity in the

company sector and shifting resources from consumption into investment and exports".

Union members were even less impressed when companies showed their attitude to the Social Contract by announcing an ever-increasing list of closures and redundancies: by April 1975, unemployment had reached 950,000.

While Labour ministers pumped subsidies into the coffers of private industry and attempted to deliver a low-wage workforce to ensure the continuation of British capitalism, the union leaders continued to balance between the power of their shop-floor membership and that of the profit-hungry employers.

While workers remained strongly organised and willing to fight back, they were politically weak, their trade unions controlled by timid reformist bureaucrats, the Labour Party by parliamentary careerists with no shred of socialist commitment.

Open the books

Even apparently limited demands, such as the opening of the books of private firms to elected trade union committees – flying in the face of "business secrets" – and the call for a sliding scale of wages to ensure pay levels stayed ahead of inflation were seen (correctly) by union chiefs as a threat to their position and to the system, opening up a logical route towards demands for workers' control of production, and a system based on the needs of the working class majority, not the profits of the capitalist few.

This type of approach is essential if large numbers of working class activists and broader layers of the trade union movement and wider campaigns are to be won to socialist politics.

But the left in the 1970s was unsuccessful in building any broad alliance of class struggle forces in the unions which could move politically beyond these limitations.

It remained fragmented and predominantly sectarian in its politics, late to recognise the emergence of a new "Bennite" left which grew after Labour was ousted in 1979 but which was, in turn, largely extinguished by the setbacks inflicted on the working class and its organisations by successive years of Thatcherite offensive and the emergent politics of "new realism".

The challenge to socialists in 1997 is to recognise the scope of the opportunities that are likely to open up – some only fleetingly – as an expectant working class movement, exultant at the defeat of the Tories, runs into conflict with the hard-line right wing politics of "new Labour".

If the left again fails to develop and popularise a socialist programme, win support and fight for it in the broadest possible campaigns throughout the labour movement, it faces more decades in the doldrums.

Socialist OUTLOOK

Where we stand

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

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

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

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

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

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

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

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

So what IS workfare?

Keith Sinclair reviews *The Rights of the Unemployed*, by Anne Grey (European Labour Forum Pamphlet, Spokesman Press, £1.95)

WHAT EXACTLY is workfare? This may seem a funny question to ask. Many of you will know that I have spent a significant amount of the last year fighting Project Work which we have all dutifully condemned as workfare.

Ann Grey's pamphlet argues that workfare should be seen as having a broader impact than simply the explicit workfare programmes like Project Work.

Grey argues that the impact of a whole series of policies over the last few years has been to introduce a growing consensus between the two major parties in favour of what she describes as 'soft workfare'.

By this she means the introduction of policies such as the Job Seekers Direction within the Job Seekers Allowance legislation.

Anne Grey explains clearly the effect of 'soft workfare' on the labour market. She argues convincingly that:

"Much of the debate about workfare has centred round the moral issue of when or whether claimants should be disqualified if they refuse work or training. The fervour of this debate has detracted from the economic functions of workfare, from its role in the wage fixing process, which in the end is more important"

Grey also makes the important point that when workers are forced to take low paid jobs then the downward effect on wages hits at those already earning low wages.

One of the good things about this pamphlet is that it made me think though my own ideas. Grey rejects campaigning for 'full employment', arguing that this leads



Unemployment: a problem that spans the generations

to a defence of 'harmful forms of work'.

However the reality is that nationally eight people chase every single vacancy. To demand that the state provide a job for everyone is a legitimate demand as part of a programme to fight unemployment.

In arguing that there is a growing political consensus in favour of 'soft workfare', Anne Grey does not grapple with the conundrum that the Labour Party nationally - and crucially local councils - have held the line against Project Work.

It's important to ask why that opposition has taken place.

One possible danger of using the

term 'soft workfare' to describe a fairly wide range of programmes is that it could blunt the edge of specifically anti-workfare campaigns.

In the areas facing Project Work Extension the key immediate task is to campaign against the Extension.

Overall, Grey has provided an excellent pamphlet which describes the history of the various employment schemes over the last decade.

Everyone campaigning against Project Work should get a copy and make time to study its arguments.

WHAT'S ON

Sat May 10

MSF Campaign for a Democratic Union, Annual Conference, 10a.m.-4p.m., University of London Union, Malet Strret, WC1.

Sat May 17

British leg of EuroMarch leaves Jarrow

Sat 24th May

African Liberation Day March and Rally. Assemble 1p.m. Max Roach Park, Brixton Road, London SW9 for march to Trafalgar Square.

May 30-June 1

National Conference of Trades Councils, Blackpool

Sat May 31

Network of Socialist Campaign Groups Conference, 'What Are We Going To Do Now? A Socialist Strategy for Labour'. 10a.m.-5p.m., London Welsh Centre, 157 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 (near Kings Cross).

Sat June 7

EuroMarch arrives in London. Departs Southall 8.30am, marching to Hyde Park 1pm, Rally in Westminster Central Hall.

June 12-13

International conference against racism in Amsterdam. For more details contact UNITED, PB 413, NL-1000, AK Amsterdam.

Sat June 14

Mass demonstration in Amsterdam as culmination of EuroMarches. Coaches depart London June 13, return June 15. Tickets £50 (employed and sponsored) or £20 un-waged (limited number of places). Bookings: ring Roland on 0181-800-7460.

Sat 28th June

Capital and Class conference, School of Oriental and African Studies, London 9a.m.-5p.m.

July 19-26

International Youth Camp, central France.

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Wales: PR would open door to Popular Front

I WOULD like to comment on Darren Williams' article "Welsh Assembly plans advance" *Socialist Outlook* April 1997.

The unity of the workers' movement in Britain is threatened by our home grown coalitionist and renegade Labour leaders on the NEC of Labour Party Wales, along with Ron Davies. As Tony Blair's agents in Wales they have refused to fight for a majority Labour government and subordinate the Labour Party in Britain to the pro-capitalist Liberals.

In Wales they subordinate the struggle of the Welsh working class against British imperialism and bureaucratic centralism to the ideological illusions of petty bourgeois Welsh Nationalists.

The referendum in Wales is a diversion, an attempt by the Labour and TUC leadership to tie up the workers' movement from within our own ranks.

During the general election campaign we in Brecon and Radnor Socialist Campaign Group advanced the following slogans:

Labour to Power!

No Coalitions!

For a Majority Labour Government!

Only these slogans, we argued, would allow the Labour Party in key marginal seats like Brecon & Radnor to win. We demanded a break from the umbilical cord of pro-capitalist parties.

We told the bitter truth that a fight for a majority Labour government would not come by itself. It must be fought for even against our own leaders who are the saboteurs and architects of our defeat.

We did not fight for these slogans for Ron Davies or Darren Williams to give power back to petty bourgeois nationalists in Wales by supporting the election of a Welsh Assembly on the basis of a proportional electoral system.

We call for the Welsh Assembly to be the tribune of the working class in Wales. PR for the Welsh Assembly is a fraud against the working class in Wales.

The Labour leadership want a coalitionist Assembly for the purpose of making deals with the petty bourgeois nationalists and Liberal privileged cliques in Wales.

Williams seems to want the same thing, the only difference is that he presents a leftist face to on constitutional change.

It is very easy to blame in print but much harder to fight inside the

Labour Party the "reactionary South Wales bureaucracy" of which he is a member, sitting as he does on the Welsh Labour Party Executive.

This is the same "reactionary bureaucracy" including Ron Davies which Welsh Labour Action seems to court rather than fight. Williams is fostering illusions within the labour movement in Wales that the imperialist bourgeois British state and the bourgeois democratic processes are in some way progressive, reformable and can be used by the working class in Wales to advance its interests by merely advocating change in the electoral system, by introducing some form of PR system. This is parliamentary cretinism of the most reactionary kind.

The nationalism of the working class and small farmers in Wales is only the shell of their social rebellion against the centralised capitalist state; while the nationalism of the petty bourgeois and Liberals is only a pawn in their play with the British state against the Welsh working class.

It seems that not only Ron Davies fails to draw the line between the nationally oppressed workers and small farmers in Wales and the ruling class and their shadows.

Davies is in no hurry to throw the nationalists and Wales off the back of the Labour Party. Williams would also rather spend his time constructing a 'popular majority' through a Welsh Assembly elected by PR (ie with petty bourgeois political parties) which in my ABC of Marxism is the same thing.

Marxists construct alliances with nationally oppressed workers and small farmers, not with reactionary and nationalist political parties who use their political machines to line up declassed elements and the financially distressed petty bourgeoisie behind them and against the organised working class, only to allow them in turn to be exploited in the name of international finance capital and the bourgeois imperialist state.

This drama is not without its comical side. New Labour in Wales moves alongside the restless working class with the precious load of nationalists and Liberals on its back.

It answers the protests, complaints and curses coming from the working class in the voice of a slapstick comedian: "Look at these creatures on my back! They are my sworn enemy. I will list their crimes against you: pay attention! etc etc."

And when the crowd, amused by this spectacle, begins to laugh, New Labour takes advantage of this favourable condition to carry its load a little further.

If this is what is meant by struggling against the Nationalists and Liberals in Wales, then what is meant by a struggle in support of them?!

Stefan Cholewka
Secretary, Brecon &
Radnor Socialist
Campaign Group



FEEDBACK

Send us your letters on any topic, to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Letters over 400 words may have to be edited for length.

German role in frame-up

YOUR article on Róisín McAliskey in the last *Outlook* was factually wrong in one important respect.

You say "The German government have made clear that they have no objection to her being bailed - it is the British state and the RUC who are responsible for her incarceration".

This question has been analysed extensively within our campaign in Dublin.

Contradictory statements have been made by various representatives of the German state from the beginning - embassies, politi-

cians, the Federal Prosecution Service itself.

The factual position is that every time there is a bail application a representative of the German Federal Prosecution Service indicates opposition - on this basis the magistrate refuses the application.

Key role

If the German state withdrew its opposition, unambiguously and in open court, Róisín McAliskey could not legally be denied bail.

The German state's attempts to

distance itself from the bail issue are a shameful cover-up.

Emphasising the responsibility of the German state in the affair does not mean being in any way "soft" on the disgraceful role of the RUC and the British state. It does mean not letting the German state off the hook.

Finally, I do not know if you are aware of the "Kontraste" programme on German television. In this, Manfred Schmidt, named as a key eyewitness in Róisín McAliskey's extradition case, denied the claim of the German police on the warrant against McAliskey, that he had recognised her from photos shown to him.

He owned a cottage which was allegedly used by IRA members as a base for a mortar bomb attack on the Osnabruck British Army base. Schmidt told the television interviewer that he was shown photographs but did not recognise any of his tenants.

In short, falsified information was included in the warrant by the German Federal Prosecution Service - to what extent this was done in collusion with the RUC is a very interesting question on which we can only speculate at the moment.

John Meehan, Dublin

Don't be too kind to the Patient

BRIAN Gardiner's interesting review of 'The English Patient' raised a lot of useful points. But I think Brian was too kind to the film and not kind enough to the book on which it is based.

The novel is not simply more interesting than the film because the emotions of the characters are dealt with in more detail.

It is also an intensely political work, especially in the way it deals with issues of colonialism and racism, culminating in the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

It does this primarily through the character of the Sikh sapper Kip, and his relationship with Hana; which mirrors and comments on the love affair of the English patient. But this charac-



ter is almost entirely omitted from the film. This both distorted the balance of the film and meant the loss of almost all the political content which is so powerful in the book.

It would be a shame if socialists were to treat 'The English Pa-

tient' just as an enjoyable love story and to miss exploring the other issues which Michael Ondaatje raises, both in this book, and in some of his remarkable other novels.

Andy Kilmister
Oxford.

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Socialist OUTLOOK

A monthly marxist review * New series No. 5 * May 1997 * 50p

Urgent fight to keep Labour's link with unions

Once the initial euphoria dies down after Labour's landslide, many who worked for a Labour victory will be turning their attention to the battles that now need to be fought with Blair.

He has made clear he intends to govern as 'New Labour', and to recreate the Labour Party in his own image. He sees the massive parliamentary majority as a mandate for carrying all of this through.

However, the swing to Labour and the opinion polls show that people voted Labour precisely because they want change not a continuation of Tory policies.

Will MPs who have kept quiet for the last year start to challenge Blair's policies and support workers who come into struggle against the Labour government?

Of the trade union leaders only John Edmonds, at Scottish TUC, spoke out during the election campaign, with a critical speech, but will he and the other union leaders follow it through?

Union conferences over the next months will give an indication of the response among activists to Labour's victory.

Celebrations

Will the conferences insist that Blair has to deliver now he's won, or will they merely be victory celebrations? Will they be demanding that Blair repeals the anti-union laws and rebuilds the welfare state?

The test comes on two fronts: a challenge to Blair's policies in words and in action is needed, as is rejection of his proposals for restructuring the Labour Party.

For Blair the two go together. He knows that if he is to pursue capitalist policies he has to remove the ability of the unions and Party members to influence policy and call him to account.

The 'Labour into Power' proposals drawn up by the NEC are a far-reaching attack on Party democracy in general and the union-Party link in particular, in that they would remove the right of unions to put resolutions to Party conference.

They are currently out for consultation, but most of the 'consultation period' has been taken up with campaigning for a Labour victory.

They will be rewritten, together with an 'Action Plan', but not until after the deadline for resolutions to Party conference. The deadline for resolutions to



Blair plans to pull up the ladder!

conference has been brought forward. This is all carefully planned to allow the proposals to go through as smoothly as possible.

Conference

They would remove the right of unions and CLPs to submit resolutions directly to Party conference. Conference would only discuss reports submitted to it by a new Joint Policy Committee, with the Cabinet having an in-built majority.

Resolutions would go to the unaccountable and undemocratic national Policy Forum and a series of commissions before even reaching the NEC and JPC.

Conference would become a series of presentations by ministers instead of a forum at which the movement discussed the priorities of a Labour government and Party.

The NEC would be restructured, allowing for direct representation of the Parliamentary Labour party, the European

PLP, the Cabinet and Councillors, and removing the women's section in favour of quotas.

MPs could not stand for the constituency section as at present, meaning the likes of Dennis Skinner and Diane Abbott could no longer get elected. It would be downgraded to a purely organisational role, with its policy role taken over by the JPC.

If these proposals go through, they would be very difficult to reverse, since the mechanism to do so would have been removed.

Blair may decide to go further and completely sever the link with the unions and introduce state funding – either at this year's conference or in the future. This task will be so much easier for him if the existing proposals meet little opposition.

Resolutions have been tabled for affiliated union conferences rejecting these proposals, and fringe meetings have been organised at many by the 'Keep the Link' campaign and other forces in the unions.

Mandate

A fight must be organised not only to win these motions but to commit the union delegations to voting against them at Labour Party conference.

Constituency Labour Parties will be discussing conference resolutions over the next month.

The Left should be pushing the model resolutions being circulated by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups on aspects of the 'Labour into Power' proposals.

We must also attempt to mandate delegates to vote against the final NEC document.

■ **Affiliate to the 'Keep the Link' campaign, sign its petition, get a speaker to your union branch or CLP. Keep the Link can be contacted c/o 138 Crampton St., London SE17 3AE.**