

NS 57

Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 57. August 2002. 50p

OUTLOOK

INSIDE



Palestine Diary: centre pages

Socialists against the euro p8-9

New paper launched p3, p5

March to stop Bush's war! London Sept 28



Andrew Ward

In the run up to what is hoped to be the biggest anti-war demonstration for a generation, we can see cracks appearing in the New Labour consensus. Unlikely individuals such as Lord Healey and Michael Cashman are warning Blair that backing Bush in a unilateral strike could have dangerous consequences for the government's future.

These people don't oppose war against Iraq for the same reasons that we do. But we can use their dissonant voices to put pressure on Blair, and to build the campaign even more broadly than before. In the US support for the war has dropped by 20 per cent over recent weeks as the so-called doves have become more vocal.

Up and down the country the Stop the War Coalition are holding public meetings. From Edinburgh to Kent, local groups are mobilising against the war. Over 100 coaches are travelling from Birmingham, and 40 coaches plus a train have been booked in Glasgow.

While not everywhere will manage to match this support, it's clear we are heading for a huge demonstration. We need to strain every last nerve to make sure it is – and to make sure there is as much visible trade union support as possible.

Assemble 1pm, Embankment

Organised by the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain



Almost as if they've won already: striking Sunderland medical secretaries and supporters get in the winning mood

Scottish UNISON demands £5/hour NHS minimum

A pay revolt is growing among low-paid support staff in Scotland's health services.

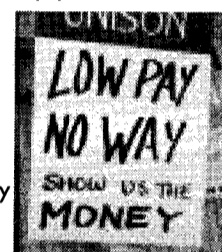
Following on the successful strikes by Glasgow medical secretaries and the subsequent upgrading of most medical secretaries throughout the country, UNISON is launching a campaign to raise the pay of other admin and clerical staff – and demanding a minimum of at least £5 for hospital ancillary workers.

A minimum of £5 per hour for ancillary staff throughout NHS Trusts in the Lothians, rising almost immediately to £5.20, was secured by UNISON earlier this year, and hailed as "the best minimum wage deal anywhere in Britain".

This landmark deal has been followed by claims in Ayrshire, and by five days of unofficial strikes involving up to 600 staff in Argyll and Clyde, which brought management rapidly to the negotiating table and a deal bringing all staff up to a

minimum of £5 per hour from the beginning of September. For many low paid staff the increase will be up to £20 per week.

UNISON has proclaimed these deals a "wake up call" for managers throughout the NHS in Scotland, and it is clear that workers throughout these



low-paid sectors have been strengthened by the succession of successful strikes.

The union's Scottish regional office is circulating standard forms to encourage and assist admin and clerical staff to demand upgrading, and waging a campaign for the upgrading of NHS nursing staff in a major offensive against low pay.

The example of the Scottish strikes has also had an impact south of the border, with medical secretaries discovering their industrial strength in successful strikes and upgrading claims in a growing number of cities across England.

Foundation Hospitals: Reinventing the flat tyre?

John Lister

Health Secretary Alan Milburn's idea of turning top-flight "3-star" hospital Trusts into "foundation hospitals", which will come before Parliament this autumn, has been roundly attacked by his predecessor Frank Dobson and by former Labour health spokesman Chris Smith.

Now the scheme seems doomed to founder under the onslaught of Gordon Brown's Treasury mandarins, who see in every bid for greater independence a hidden bid to beg or borrow more money.

Indeed one of the biggest lures to attract big fish like UCLH Trust chief executive Robert Naylor, and other top NHS bosses towards the bait of foundation hospital status was the initial promise that the new "freedoms" they would acquire would include the right to sell off surplus assets ... and to borrow money on their own account.

Funnily enough we have heard these promises before – when Margaret Thatcher's government first came up with their expensive and bureaucratic "market reforms" in 1989.

Then hospital chief executives were urged to "opt out" and become "self-governing" Trusts – and promised that in return they would be "free" to sell unused land, borrow money, fix local pay, and compete against other Trusts for increased contract revenue.

But even the free market fundamentalists of the Tory party realised that this level of financial freedom could drive a coach and horses through their system of cash limits for health spending.

So even before they had been launched, Trusts were reined in and subjected to strict External Financing Limits. And while a few

Trusts attempted to impose local pay deals – generally offering staff conditions worse than the prevailing national rates set under the Whitley Council system – most managers found themselves preoccupied with the endless rounds of contract negotiations with health authorities that were vital to ensure their survival in the new, competitive market system.

The system cost billions more, but delivered little if any improvement in patient care. Waiting lists soared. Numbers of senior managers and administrative staff rocketed as the system gushed rhetoric about business methods but became ever less efficient.

In 1997 New Labour came to office committed to just one apparently radical policy on health – to sweep away the internal market system.

Trusts remained in place, but with a new "duty to cooperate": local pay bargaining was scrapped and ambitious national talks opened on a new NHS pay structure; New Labour announced its determination to eliminate "post code" rationing and variations in care.

So when Alan Milburn revives essentially the same idiotic plans that Thatcher's team first raised 13 years ago, even if under a

different name, he is not so much reinventing the wheel as reinventing the flat tyre.

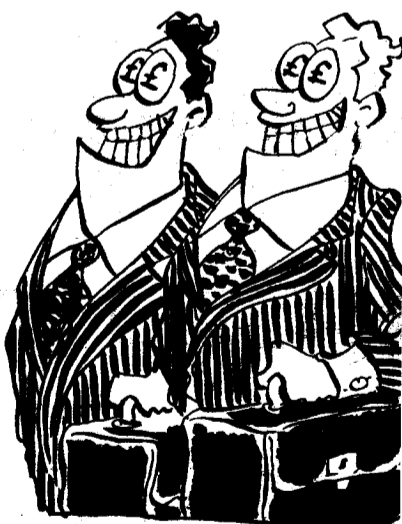
There are some differences, however: Foundation Hospitals, unlike the original idea of Trusts, are supposed to offer an elite status, and would be an option only for 35 top performing hospitals.

So in place of the generalised competition embodied in the Tory internal market, which rested on the

(deluded) idea of a "level playing field", the Foundation Hospitals would be given extra cash and freedoms – and thus gain a potential advantage against other hospitals.

In London, for example, UCLH could in theory spend some of its extra cash on enhanced pay rates to help poach specialist staff from neighbouring Trusts such as Barts and The London, the Royal Free and the Whittington – which are not eligible for foundation status.

However one problem they would have in doing so is that it appears foundation hospitals would be excluded from the NHS pension scheme – one of the few genuine perks for NHS-employed staff, so the incentives may even work in the other direction!



With the legislation to establish the new foundations not yet published, nobody quite knows what the details will be – though the first applications need to be submitted by November.

The hope of foundation hospitals would be to increase their share of the available work (and revenue) from the NHS in their area – leaving other hospitals struggling to sustain their income. But this could mean

better care to patients in their immediate vicinity, at the expense of falling standards and resources in other hospitals ... taking us back to the postcode lottery New Labour promised to end.

But there have also been hints that they would be allowed to supplement their budgets by treating private patients from home and abroad.

Foundation hospitals can be seen, together with the Private Finance Initiative (under which private companies build, own, run and lease hospitals like the new £420m UCLH to the NHS), and the Concordat (under which the NHS buys treatment from private hospitals) as another stepping stone from NHS provision of care to increasingly private provision.

But this brings yet another problem, one that was ducked by the Tories. If a foundation hospital is run as a business, and fails – could it go bust? The Tory reforms at first insisted that Trusts which failed in the internal market would be allowed to go broke: but in practice ministers intervened to pump in transitional payments to avoid bankruptcies.

Would Milburn do the same? And what sanctions would be open to ministers if standards of care or performance levels fall off in a foundation hospital?

The failure of Thatcher's reforms, and public disgruntlement at the state of the NHS were major factors in Tony Blair's landslide victory in 1997.

Perhaps this is another reason why the election-conscious Chancellor, having allocated big, popular increases in health spending, is sceptical about Milburn's attempts to implement policies that only a handful of NHS managers have asked for, and drag us 'back to the future'?

VICTORY for Glasgow UNISON hospital strikers!

Sodexho agrees to NHS terms and conditions

UNISON's Sodexho members at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary are celebrating a wonderful victory today after achieving their objectives of £5 an hour minimum, backdated, and a guaranteed phased return to NHS terms and conditions of employment by no later than April 2004.

Other major concessions include sick pay (3 months full pay/ 3 months half) improved overtime rates, a new 20% shift allowance and an extra public holiday.

Members agreed to accept the offer after a day in which Sodexho management tabled four offers: the fourth offer was accepted at a jubilant mass meeting, and the further strike action due to take place was suspended.

Carolyn Leckie, UNISON

Branch Secretary said, "This was a sweeping victory for Trade Union organisation. We first submitted the claim with a membership of less than 20. We balloted 222 and now have 342 members, well over 90% density and many new but now invaluable activists.

"This was a David and Goliath battle between the lowest paid workers and a brutal multi-national who pulled out all the stops to defeat us. They failed."

Frank Morgan, Sodexho Stewards Convenor, was ecstatic.

"We've been kept down, exploited and bullied for profit for too long. Now that we've won, Sodexho will know they won't get away with it ever again."

As we approach the anniversary of September 11, it is inevitable that the US war drums will beat louder against Iraq. At the same time, this very process has made it clear that Bush cannot count on the same level of support either as he himself had a year ago or as his father had at the time of the Gulf War.

At home prominent Republicans and generals have publicly opposed going to war without further evidence that Saddam threatens US power directly. Of course their concerns – for regional stability or for military reasons – are not the same as ours. But they weaken Bush.

Apart from Israel, Bush can rely on no one in the Middle East. Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar, Iran and even Saudi Arabia are against him – as are both India and Pakistan.

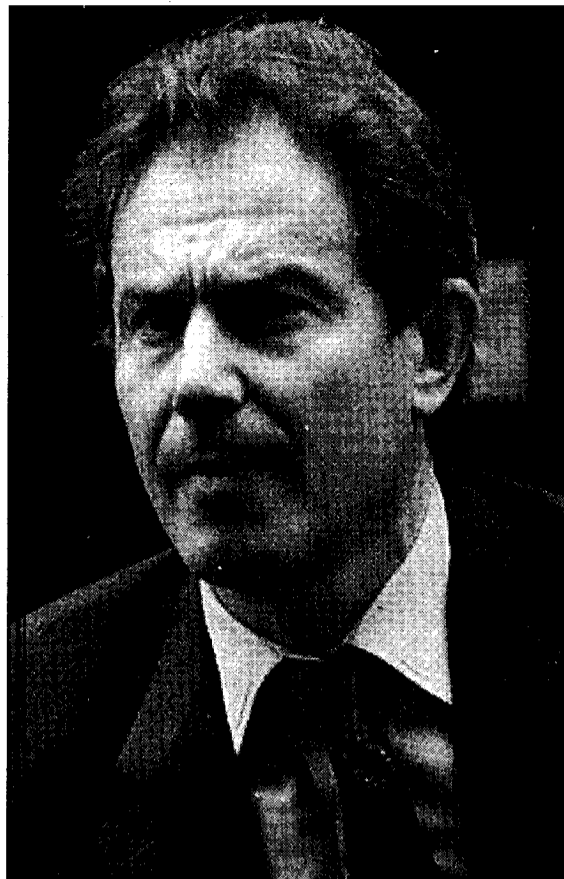
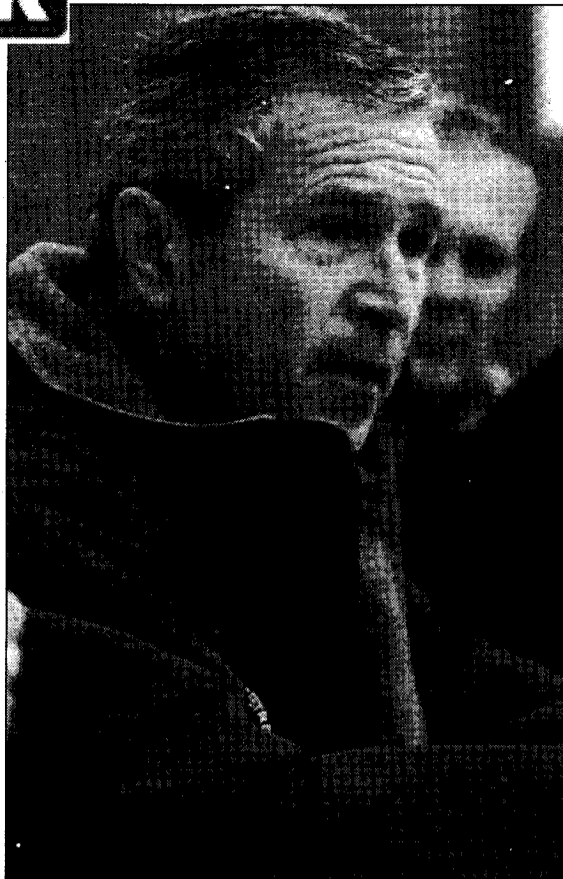
The leaders of these countries are not worried one bit about the innocent people who will suffer if there is a war. They are however concerned about their own positions of power. They know that widespread anger over the bombing in the region will be turned against their governments – particularly given the continued massacre of the Palestinian people.

The US administration is not worried by the lack of enthusiasm from most European leaders for their plans. But they are concerned about the growing anti-war feeling in Britain.

Lord Healey is not exactly some one the anti-war movement would expect to have on side, but he has clearly indicated his concern that support for US unilateralism over Iraq could not only cost Blair his job but New Labour the government.

Michael Cashman, likely to take over as Leader of the European Group of Labour MPs any day now and promoted precisely as a Blairite clone, is another unlikely doubter. He, too, is clearly worried – that anti-war sentiment in the Labour Party could lead to a new rise of the left.

Openly the US says they will go it alone if necessary – and may be in the end Bush would take that step. But the fact that his key ally, Tony



Target for Sept 28 march Break Blair from Bush!

Blair, is facing home-grown pressure is a real worry.

There is no doubt that the phone at number ten has been ringing off the hook – with Bush making sure that Blair is on board in his crusade. Blair has responded by making clear that he agrees that “inaction” is “not an option”.

Keeping up the pressure is vital if we are to have any chance of breaking Blair from Bush. Of course we

won't get Blair to oppose the US bombings. But we want to make it as difficult as possible for New Labour to actively join in his murderous plans.

Of course we need to beware of the arguments that some people are using in these debates. But at this point we want to march and organ-

ise with anyone who opposes the war – for whatever reason.

The *Daily Mirror*, for example, has been useful in convincing people to criticise Blair and Bush's plans – but it does so on the basis that there is no UN mandate to wage war against Iraq.

But if this changes, and Bush is forced to go to the UN, we can have no doubt that he will get the support he wants. The UN will in all

probability eventually do the bidding of the US.

So we need to be pushing the more basic arguments against invasion of Iraq, beyond these legalistic points, if we are to keep as many of these people as possible on board if this turns out to be the situation we are faced with.

For the time being, the culmination of the hard work that anti-war activists across the country have been working towards over these last few months is to have massive demonstration on September 28 – to show our “so called leaders” that the majority are against the war.

One key in the campaign is to bring on board the trade unions. Billy Hayes, the Communication Workers Union General Secretary will be speaking at the demonstration. The CWU are sending coaches from across the country. Mick Rix from ASLEF has also been a high profile opponent of any attack on Iraq.

The Stop the War coalition is backed by growing number of trade unions, but we need local branches to affiliate and to bring their banners to the march.

This is vital as we head towards TUC and Labour Party conferences. Trades unionists are against the war – but their money is going to a party whose leaders are hell bent on bombing.

We need to make a stand – or should we say a march?

If we can get over a hundred thousand people, socialists, trade unionists, peace campaigners, anti-capitalists and the Muslim community, then we can make a real difference. The louder our voice is, the stronger we are.

This war is not in our name. It is to be waged in the name of the free market – freedom to pillage and plunder and freedom to exploit the mass majority of the world's population.

This is not just about opposing the bombing of Iraq – this is about opposing the system that caused war in the first place.

● The Don't Attack Iraq petition is now on-line at www.stopwar.org.uk

● If you need stickers, badges, posters or leaflets call Husniye, Lucy or Paul on 0795 123 5915.

Why we're joining the resistance

IN A NEW venture, arising from a new spirit of cooperation and unity on the left, we are about to launch a new monthly newspaper. As a result, this will be the last issue of *Socialist Outlook* to appear in its current form.

The new paper will bring together the International Socialist Group, which has produced *Socialist Outlook* as a newspaper since 1991, along with the Socialist Solidarity Network, and a number of independent marxists, who will work with us to sponsor, write for, sell and help finance its production. An editorial board will be elected to ensure that the widest cross-section of supporters are directly involved in the process.

The working title for the new paper is Resistance: but the final decision will be taken on September 8. What is already agreed is that the first issue will be out in time for the anti-war demonstration on September 28.

Internationalism will be a central core of the new paper. Today the US war drums against Iraq are beating ever louder while the massacre and oppression of the Palestinian people by the Zionist state continues. Despite the growing pressure against war on Iraq, Blair continues his sycophantic relationship with Bush – and continues to drive forward neo-liberalism at home and

abroad.

In this context our task is not just to unite and reach out to the widest audience on the British left, but seek new ways to link up with radical movements developing on the world stage. One year on from September 11, US imperialism has certainly not succeeded in one of its key war aims – to silence the voices of dissent expressed in the anti-globalisation movement. In many ways that movement is stronger today than it was 12 months ago – though clearly in the US itself the reactionary government offensive did weaken it initially.

But in other parts of the globe, resistance to the war in Afghanistan and to the overall war drive has been fully incorporated into the aims of Global Justice movement.

Thousands of new young activists have come onto the streets in solidarity with the Palestinian people, in opposition to privatisation and poverty – like the 40,000 who have been demonstrating in South Africa as we go to press.

At the same time as the Global Justice movement and anti-war movements are mobilising against the increasing inequalities meted out by governments and corporations to the millions of working poor across the globe, new political formations are being created and strengthening:



they are a response to the fact that today social democratic parties and governments not only fail to resist this drive for ever more profit, but often lead the charge.

The growth of the Socialist Alliance is part of the same process that had led to the creation of the Left Block in Portugal, or the Red Green Alliance in Denmark or Rifondazione Comunista in Italy or the Scottish Socialist Party.

These new broad socialist parties are absolutely essential tools in fighting for an alternative to the murderous system in which we live. This understanding will be central to the creation of Resistance.

The ISG, the SSN, and the many individual socialists who are coming forward to sponsor the new paper agree on this perspective. There

is both the opportunity and a need to organise around these issues through the production of such a newspaper. We will be putting our political and organisational resources into Resistance to help ensure that it is successful.

This does not mean that there are no disagreements amongst those launching this new paper. We come from different traditions and different experiences, so this is natural.

Such different experiences will only enrich our work around the new paper, however, since we share a common aim – to play an important and constructive role in the reshaping of the left, which is going on today in Britain and internationally, and which is reflected in the SSP and the Socialist Alliance.

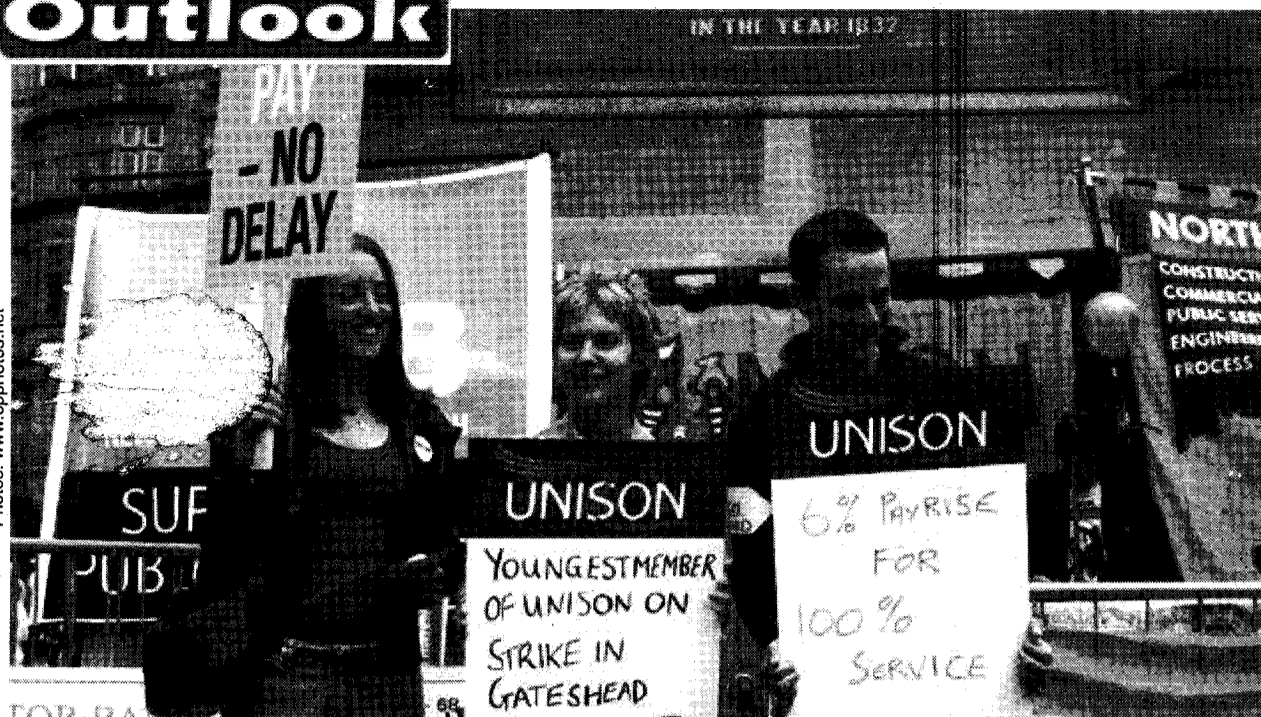
The ISG, of course, will continue to fight for the political ideas that define us as an organisation and as the British Section of the Fourth International.

We will produce *Socialist Outlook* in a new format, with reduced frequency. We will maintain the ISG web site and continue to produce leaflets and pamphlets in our own name.

At the same time we will be fighting to build Resistance and working closely with all those who support and sponsor it. We hope all *Socialist Outlook* readers will agree with us that the launch of Resistance is an important step forward, and will want to join us as readers and supporters of the new paper.

■ See subscription form and launch statement on page 5.

Photos: www.cphphotos.net



Debate rages over 2-year pay deal for council staff

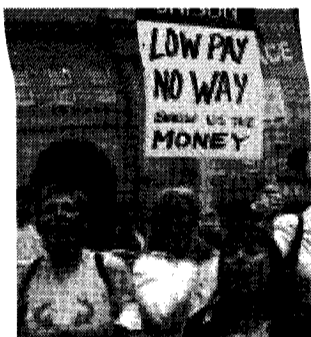
Terry Smith

HALF a victory – or half a sell-out? That's the question to be answered in any verdict on the pay offer to two million local government workers after the massive one-day strike action across the country on July 17.

'Half a victory' might be the view of those who focus primarily on the fact that a grudging, tight-fisted bunch of employers were forced to improve their "final" offer, and concede an ACAS-brokered deal which for the first time will bring a minimum wage of over £5 per hour for the lowest-paid council staff.

They will of course still be low paid, and the 3.5% offer for other sections of staff falls far short of the 6% demanded by the unions as a means of redressing the long-term injustice of pay levels that lag far behind other comparable groups of workers.

But a deal which would raise the pay of up to 275,000 workers by around 50p per hour – giving many of them increases of £20 per week over the 18 months to April



2004 should not be brushed aside as insignificant or an outright defeat. Their increase over the 2-year deal will be worth almost 11%, while the increase for other grades will be just over 3.5% per year, compared with a previous offer of 3%.

Already it seems that the example of the militant action by local government staff and the achievement of the £5 minimum has helped to encourage at least one other group of public sector workers – Scottish hospital ancillary staff – to take action on similar demands.

But however positive it may be for strike action finally to show some positive results, the outcome is still

half a sell-out.

The strength of the turnout and the mood of the strikers showed that the three main unions UNISON, GMB and TGWU have the potential to force a significantly better deal than the phased 2-year 7.7% settlement. Another day of strike action had been planned for August, and many branches were convinced they would deliver as strong or even stronger support that day than on July 17.

Squeeze

The old motto "when you know you've got the employers by the vitals, just squeeze" suggests that had union national officials kept their nerve they might have forced more money out of the council bosses.

Instead they suspended the action for six weeks, while a "consultation" process takes place: these six weeks (concluding on September 16) will allow tempers to cool and make it more difficult to crank up any further rounds of action – even if a majority view in the three unions favours further action.

That is no accident: union officials knew it would happen. It is hard to avoid the view that they were desperate to get off the hook, and find a pretext to settle with the employers: when the chips were down, it was the union bureaucracy that blinked first.

Some UNISON officers have been quick to argue that there is no guarantee that more strikes could deliver a better offer. But they will have their fingers crossed that this view is not put to the test.

Indeed the biggest obstacle to further improving the deal by renewed action is that fact that national union bureaucrats have gone on record promoting the current deal, and would therefore have little credibility leading a renewed charge.

UNISON is also stressing the significance of the new Commission on Local Government Pay, the establishment of which is included as part of the settlement, and which may offer a platform for raising a whole series of anomalies and issues which otherwise remain neglected. Workers will need to be convinced this will be more than a talking shop designed to take the steam out of future pay demands.

Opposition

It is hard to predict the outcome of the consultation, since the vocal opposition seems to have come from the "usual suspects" and much of the membership of the three unions is in areas which have yet to declare a view: the debate is no doubt still raging at local level.

But whether or not the fight is resumed in a hot autumn, it is already clear that local government staff, in their biggest show of strength since the 1970s have at least managed to secure some positive results which are likely to form a building block for other resistance among the low paid.

Change at the top brings real prospect of change in the RMT

Greg Tucker

The thought of a leadership team of Bob Crow and Pat Sikorski has been a nightmare haunting the RMT right wing for some years. Despite two attempts by the leadership in the last four years to ban him from standing in any elections Pat Sikorski has now succeeded in being elected as Assistant General Secretary of the union.

Whilst all sorts of questions remain to be answered and the balance of forces is by no means resolved, it is clear that the direction of the union is undergoing a significant shift.

At the political level this was clear at the union's Annual General Meeting. Taking a lead from Bob Crow, the conference agreed to cut its affiliation to the Labour Party to a bare minimum. It confirmed a change in its sponsorship of MPs – away from sponsoring the constituency parties of a group of MPs, many in the top ranks of the government, who have consistently refused to support union policy – towards supporting the campaigning activities of another group of MPs who have the temerity to actually agree with what the union stands for.

But significantly the conference also agreed a resolution to prepare rule changes to be brought forward next year to allow branches, regions or the executive nationally to financially support other "socialist" organisations.

At the industrial level, Pat has taken responsibility for the union's main train operating companies. The Arriva Trains Northern strike continues – still going strong after seventeen days. London Underground workers are being balloted over pay. And

concrete moves are now being taken to produce a strategy for national pay bargaining.

Next month representatives from every train operating company are to be brought together by the leadership in the union can unify all pay claims, with common timetables and linked claims, with the aim of forcing the TOCs into one national bargaining system.

Whilst such a campaign is fraught with difficulties it is clear already that – this time around – the union leadership is willing to fight for our demands, and not just pay them lip service.

In addition, plans by RMT train crew for action over safety issues have moved forward dramatically. Over the last five years there has been a consistent battle over the safety Rule Book laid down by the Railtrack safety division, now officially independent as "Railway Safety".

Having succeeded in diminishing the safety role of train guards, Railway Safety was forced to review its actions under threat of strike action last year.

A review of RMT proposals by a truly independent group of safety consultants has confirmed the union's position that the majority of the Rules changed should be restored to their original form. But now Railway Safety has reneged on its promise to abide by the results of the review.

The RMT is calling on every TOC to support the union in demanding Railway Safety honour its commitment. Failure to do so will lead to ballots for industrial action leading to the prospect of a national train crew strike in late autumn.

Under new leadership the union is throwing its full weight behind this campaign.

More waiting for London weighting

London council staff have also seen their demand for a major increase in London weighting shunted into the sidings of negotiation, after four successful days of strike action.

Julia Coleman, chief trade union side negotiator and UNISON regional head of local government, has confirmed she wrote to the employers early in August seeking a positive response to the London weighting claim, which was lodged over a year ago.

The Association of London Government, which negotiates on behalf of all 33 London councils, has agreed to meet to

discuss the claim on September 12.

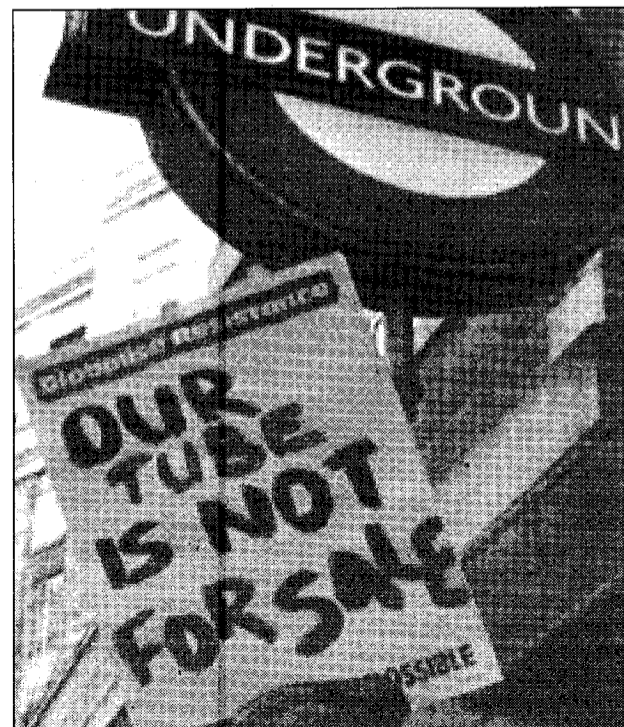
UNISON, with 55,000 London local government members, is the biggest of the local government unions, but has been pursuing the claim jointly with the GMB and TGWU. Council staff receive just £1,407 weighting in outer London and £2,674 in inner London.

The high cost of living in London, Europe's most expensive city to live in, is a serious problem. Key workers such as dinner ladies, street cleaners and classroom assistants, many of whom barely make £9,000 a

year, are being forced out of the capital due to the cost of accommodation and transport.

The unions point out that the Metropolitan Police, which increased its London Weighting to £6,000 a year plus free travel on public transport within the M25, has managed to stem its recruitment crisis as a result.

A joint union meeting on August 21 warned that if the talks with the ALG do not yield quick and positive results they will call further stoppages, and step up efforts to disrupt the work of councils while protecting the general public.





A new paper on the left

International Socialist Group
Socialist Solidarity Network

Why we're launching a new paper

The International Socialist Group and the Socialist Solidarity Network, along with individual sponsors, are taking the initiative to launch a new paper – *Resistance**

We think this is necessary to express and build support for a distinct political position which, despite differences among us on secondary issues, we share. We want to deepen the fight for a broad socialist party in England on the model of, for example, the SSP in Scotland and the Party of Communist Refoundation in Italy.

We want to strengthen the fight for inclusive, creative and forward looking Marxist politics on the British left. We will do this in the Socialist Alliance, the SSP, the anti-globalisation movement, the movements of the oppressed and the labour movement generally.

In taking this step, we base ourselves on the following positions:-

1) World capitalism has moved into a major new recession, which is exposing the contradictions of modern capitalism ever more blatantly. This recession will bring hardship and despair to millions who see their savings and pensions disappear or substantially reduced – so much so that even George Bush speaks of the danger of the American people "losing faith in our free enterprise system!"

2) This crisis is impacting on the third world through mass poverty and austerity,

and in the worst of cases mass starvation. More than ever, the role of the transnational corporations and the institutions of imperialism like the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF is being exposed – leading to an explosion of support for the anti-neoliberal globalisation movement, which has survived the impact of September 11.

To environmental destruction, mass poverty and unemployment is now added the constant danger – and daily practice – of imperialist militarism, already impacting on Afghanistan, Colombia and other countries, showing itself in the escalation of Israeli barbarity against the Palestinian people, and most likely leading soon to a massive assault on Iraq.

3) This new crisis of world capitalism, together with the collapse of Stalinism, and the abject capitulation of social democracy worldwide, exemplified by Blairism in Britain, has created a new space for left and socialist alternatives.

But this is happening in a period when the labour movement internationally is still on the defensive, and when rebuilding the labour movement and social movements of the oppressed, and the traditions of mass solidarity and resistance is still ongoing.

4) We see the movement against neoliberal globalisation as a key instrument for helping resolve the crisis of the labour and social movements. We want to learn from its refreshing dynamism, creative ways of organising and spirit of renewal.

Within this movement it is crucial to fight for socialist, anti-capitalist perspectives and against those which see the possibility of a

'reformed', 'humane' capitalism.

5) For us a crucial aspect of that is the fight to build broad socialist parties, exemplified by the Scottish Socialist Party and Communist Refoundation in Italy, which can begin to act as a political alternative for at least a section of the masses.

We do not believe that existing far left organisations, even the largest of them, are politically broad enough or have enough organisational strength, to play this role on their own – although they have a vital role to play in bringing new socialist parties into existence and leading them.

We note, for example, that the French LCR, even after its electoral success in the presidential elections, launched an appeal for a broad anti-capitalist formation, which could become a new broad socialist party. We think this is the right way forward.

In the existing crisis, reactionary as well as left-wing alternatives are being forcefully advanced, as exemplified by the successes of the

far right in elections in France, Holland and elsewhere. The far left is in a race with racist reaction for mass allegiance, as the political centre collapses or goes into crisis.

The formation of broad socialist parties able to intervene in elections and beyond, and posing a credible alternative, is crucial to stopping the advance of the far right. It would be irresponsible not to fight for a broad socialist alternative in the face of this danger.

We will seek to promote:

■ A creative, inclusive and forward-looking Marxism, which implies a willingness to reach out to, learn from, and engage in a dialogue with, those from other traditions as well as a wide range of campaigns, movements and activists who do not see themselves as Marxist or even socialist.

■ The fight for the Socialist Alliance to become a broad socialist party when the organisational and political conditions for this are ready. The precondition for

this is activity to build the Alliance and extend its political scope.

■ The building and rebuilding of mass movements of resistance to racism and the war on asylum seekers, the oppression of women, lesbians and gay men, and people with disabilities. The vast majority of the victims of this oppression are working class; building these movements will strengthen and help unify the working class movement and the left within it.

■ The rebuilding of the fighting strength of the labour movement, and within that the fight for class struggle politics and democracy in the unions.

■ Socialist internationalism, expressed through deepening and consolidating links with like-minded socialists and movements in Europe and beyond; and also in the fight against the witch-hunt of asylum seekers, and support for Globalise Resistance and other movements against neo-liberal globalisation, and the Stop the War Coalition.

■ Through these things we want to help extend the fight for inclusive and forward-looking Marxism to new layers of young people.

We think that the development of more comradely relations and collaboration between different viewpoints on the far left in Britain over recent years is a major step forward.

However we also think within this framework, sponsors of *Resistance* have something distinctive to contribute, which is why we are launching the paper.

In addition to putting forward our own political views as outlined above, we will actively seek to reflect and give a platform to debates within the left in Britain within the pages of the paper.

We believe that the politics outlined here enjoy significant support. If you agree with us, we ask you to support us in this project.

*Resistance is a working title for the new paper, a final decision on the name has yet to be taken.



A new mood of resistance is already taking shape in the unions

Sign up for the new paper!

If you agree with the principles outlined in the statement, why not subscribe to the new paper, and make sure you receive every issue?

We are offering a special introductory subscription rate 1 year for £10 (UK), £15 (Europe) or £20 (other overseas). For more details simply fill in this coupon, ticking the appropriate box and send to us c/o PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU

Please make cheques payable to **RESISTANCE**

Please send me a year's subscription to the new paper. I enclose £10 £15 £20

I enclose a donation of £.....

I agree with the statement. Please send me more details on how to become a sponsor of the new paper.

Name Age Phone

Address Post Code

email

Germany: Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants 2002

**War creates refugees!
Refugees do not
create war!**

Asylum right is a human right!

We are here because you destroy our countries!

We refugees, in unity with immigrants and with all persons rejecting racism and for human progress, call on you to:

Join the Caravan Tour 2002, August 17 (Bremen) – September 21 (Berlin)

During the decisive phase of the general elections in Germany – which will mainly be fought out to the detriment of the refugees – we will tour the Federal Republic, just as we did in 1998.

Up till the eve of election day the “Caravan Tour for the Rights of Refugees and Immigrants” will have stopped over at more than 25 cities, towns and refugee camps in all parts of Germany.

Our aim is to strengthen the cooperation with progressive forces, intensify the cooperation between refugees’ organisations, and to support the struggles of the refugees.

Already – since the first drastic change to the right of asylum in 1993 – less than 4% of all applicants are recognised while 95% and more are rejected yearly. More than 50,000 people are deported every year.

Deportation is the sharpest expression of state racism.

Asylum applicants are segregated and isolated from German society. Many camps and hostels are situated in remote wooded areas or on the outskirts of small villages.

The residential restrictions of the so-called “Residenzpflicht” forbids us to leave the local district. On the one hand the state attempts to make us invisible as human beings, on the other hand we are publicly depicted as a threat.

With the Caravan Tour 2002 we will step into the public and overcome our isolation!

We are fighting against:

- the criminal practice of deportation and the new policy of detention camps
- the horrible conditions for us refugees in Germany

and racist persecution - racist propaganda in the media and from politicians

We are fighting:

- for our rights as refugees and migrants
- for those we left behind in our home countries
- against war and destruction of our countries

We will not stand idly by and watch as the right of asylum is swept away by those who have no respect for human rights.

Join the the Caravan! For a strong solidarity movement for our rights!

Against human alienation, against the destruction of social relationships!

We urgently need donations! Bank account:

Initiative Grenzenlos; Sparkasse Halle; Kto: 38 13 08 546; BLZ: 800 537 62; key word: Karawane

Asylum right is a human right!

With the new “immigration law” the offensive against us refugees has been further intensified and the last rest of a right to asylum in this country abolished! German economic interests are the only criteria to decide who is wanted here and who is not!

Social exclusion and isolation and the criminal deportation practice will increase. Employment prohibition, further reductions of social assistance, and an increased limitation of free movement are just a few points of this law which will be used to deny us any perspective.

On a daily basis we are humiliated by the incessant racist police controls on the streets and denied the right to a normal and decent existence as human beings.

All over the country so-called transit camps modelled on the infamous prototype projects in Oldenburg, Braunschweig (Project X) (Niedersachsen) and Ingelheim (Rheinland-Pfalz) are being constructed where thousands of refugees will be detained until deportation.

Other than three meals a day all social assistance is denied. This atrocious programme will affect the majority of the approximately 250,000 refugees with a “Duldung” status.

The non-recognition of asylum grounds after the date of flight (Nachfluchtgründe) is intended to prevent our political activities in exile. The German state wants to silence us and prevent us from speaking out against



The previous caravan on the road

the repression in our home countries and to deter us from struggling for improvement.

With the so-called “anti-terrorism laws” passed in the wake of September 11 our political persecution – which yesterday was the basis for political asylum – can now be defined as terrorist activities.

Politicians and media misuse us in that they redirect the social discontentment among the German population against us. The fuel racism in order to veil the unjust distribution of economic wealth.

We are here because you destroy our countries!

Many of our countries possess enormous wealth from which the people however do not benefit. The majority of people live in absolute misery and suffer from poverty, hunger, persecution, and war.

This is caused by corrupt elites in our countries who only serve their own interests.

This is caused by the western multinational companies who exploit our countries while refusing to make appropriate payment.

This is caused by the western governments who, in cooperation with the governments in our countries, prevent any progressive, socially, and economically just development.

This is caused by the imperialist countries who push through their interest in a military way, continuing the devastation and destruction of our countries.

After September 2001, as the imperialist “war against terrorism” makes inroads into Africa, Asia, the Middle East and in Latin America we see human lives in our various home countries becoming increasingly worthless.

Repressive regimes all over the world are using the US-led war to silence critical voices at home. Powerful states like Britain and Germany are following the USA with their armed forces into the hearts of our countries in an effort not to lose out as the last resources of the world are distributed.

This new war has no respect for the sanctity of the lives of the most oppressed people, nor for human rights in the poorest countries in the world.

As we fled our various countries to seek safety in a foreign land, our hearts remained with our beloved ones who are at the centre of the hard and daily struggles to liberate our peoples.

We will never for a second overlook let alone forget the unspeakable suffering, torture and death which are the direct results of the wars and dictatorships perpetuated and supported by the western powers.

From the war in Afghanistan to ‘Plan Colombia’, the endless war in the Middle East, the violation of human rights and peoples struggles in Iran, Turkey/Kurdistan, Peru, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cameroun, Nigeria, Togo and many countries more the end result is refugees.

**WAR CREATES REFUGEES!
REFUGEES DO NOT CREATE WAR!**

We don't have a choice but to unite with refugees from all nations, cultures, and languages and to fight for our rights here and for our countries!

Anyone not rejecting injustice today perpetuates injustice and probably will be its victim tomorrow!

Further Information:
email: mail@humanrights.de,
free2move@nadir.org,
caravan.halle@gmx.net,
agif@gmx.de

Blunkett bid to block NCADC Lottery funds

Veronica Fagan

New Labour's attack on asylum seekers took a new turn over the summer with a despicable attempt by Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell and Home Secretary, David Blunkett to stop a lottery grant going to the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation campaigns.

The campaign had been awarded £336,261 over three years to expand its work. Nearly all new asylum seekers are being dispersed to the North East of England and Scotland, where existing resources are limited.

The grant was to enable NCADC to open and staff a new office in the north-east – most probably in Middlesbrough in addition to their existing bases in Birmingham, Manchester and London.

The organisation provides invaluable support to many individuals and families threatened with deportation. As Tony Openshaw, NCADC's north-west co-ordinator explained:

“NCADC's website is frequently the first port of call when asylum-seekers and deportees need advice. Most of them contact us through our website...”

As a result of the clearly political intervention by the government, further investigations are now taking place into the workings of the campaign which are not currently completed.

The issue was first brought to Ministers attention through the kind offices of the *Daily Mail*, who ran a story on August 10 under the rubric

“Is this the barmiest lottery handout of them all?”. This followed a press release from the Community Fund outlining their latest round of decisions on grant applications. Rather than treat the “report” with the disdain it deserved, the response of the Home Office was to ask the Community Fund to investigate whether NCADC was operating “within the law”.

The joint statement subsequently issued by Ms Jowell and Mr Blunkett read: “Funding organisations to campaign is clearly acceptable. However, organisations which engage in political activities are not eligible for lottery funding.”

Ms Jowell claimed that she and Mr Blunkett had not “intervened” but had merely “raised questions”. Then a Home Office spokeswoman told the press: “This organisation is a political organisation in our view.”

Probably the clearest statement of New Labour's position came in an interview by Tessa Jowell on

Radio 4's World at One in which she said

“There are two simple questions. First, is lottery money being used for political purposes? Second, is there any evidence this organisation encourages people to break the law?”

NCADC was first awarded a lottery grant in 1998 and has therefore been vetted several times to check that it complies with the regulations which determine such awards.

And despite their best attempts, government lawyers have not for example been able to find any examples on the campaign's web site which they were able to argue encouraged people to



break the law. Even officials at the Community Fund seemed somewhat taken aback by the heavy handed intervention. Boni Sones, head of public affairs at the Fund said ministers had not explained the precise nature of their concerns or offered new information.

“As far as we know they [the coalition] have acted within the law; but, if circumstances have changed, then we need to know full details.”

Ms Sones added: “Out of 21 grants, we gave at least half to groups engaged in lobbying. We gave money to the National Osteoporosis Society, and the health secretary did not intervene.”

We do not fund groups that engage in political activity, but there is a grey line. A great number of groups we fund lobby for changes in the law - Esther Rantzen's ChildLine is one of them, and they have just received a grant.

Ms Sones also said that voluntary sector organisations had specifically highlighted the needs of asylum seekers when the fund consulted them on how to spend its money.

Blunkett and Jowell have won themselves few friends by their actions which were so transparent in their attempt to close down an organisation that is fighting for justice.

Despite this, campaigners need to be on the alert in case the Community Fund investigation does result in a further threat to this vital organisation.



Andrew Ward

No sanctuary given to Afghan refugees

Susan Moore

At 6.00am on the morning of Thursday July 25, West Midlands police and Immigration officials in riot gear stormed the Gnausia Jamia mosque in Lye, near Stourbridge. They smashed the doors open with a battering ram and arrested two Afghani refugees Farid and Feriba Ahmadi, who had taken sanctuary in the mosque.

The couple's daughter Hadia, six, and son Seera, four, were not in the mosque at the time. Campaigners were able to obtain an injunction preventing the immediate deportation of the family that evening.

Asian youth who were angry at the desecration of the mosque and gathered in the hours that followed to protest peacefully were dispersed with Police dogs. Despite this intimidation, several other local protests took place in the days and weeks that followed in support of the family.

Mr Ahmadi, 33, a mechanic, and his 24-year-old wife, who wants to train as a nurse, fled Afghanistan in 2000. They were persecuted and tortured because Mr Ahmadi is the son of an army brigadier who was a prominent opponent of the Taliban.

They fled to Germany and spent seven months in asylum camps, where they faced racism and religious bigotry. Ms Ahmadi suffered two breakdowns and was twice admitted to hospital.

After the raid, while Farid and Feriba were taken to Harmondsworth detention centre near Heathrow, the children remained free and were cared for by friends until August 9.

On that Friday they came to Harmondsworth to visit



The Ahmadi family: send donations for the campaign to CDAS BM Box 4289 London W1X 3XX

their parents, and were then taken by Immigration officials and detained themselves. Despite legal challenges, the following day a High Court judge upheld right of the Home Office to hold them.

As Elaine Heffernan of the Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers argued "This is legalised child abuse - that is what it is called when you take children from a place of safety and place them in terror. The whole thing is basically a publicity stunt for the government in an attempt to convince the British people that they are in control of asylum."

On Wednesday 14 August the family was taken from Harmondsworth and flown to Germany, where they had initially applied for refugee status in a specially-chartered jet at a cost to the taxpayer of an estimated £30,000.

Their lawyer Pierre Makhoul had lodged an appeal for a judicial review before the removal, when the Home Office failed to consider psychiatric reports on Feriba before making its final decision.

The point of the action at that time was to "oblige the home secretary to consider the evidence that he has not yet considered" Makhoul said.

The report concerned was

the first to expert diagnosis on Mrs Ahmadi which showed the psychological damage she would suffer by being returned to Germany and that her only hope of recovery was to remain in Britain where she would be supported by friends.

Following the deportation, the family finally succeeded in winning a judicial review of the decision to deport. Lawyers for the Ahmadi family were able to show that a Home Office letter of August 13 contained inaccurate information about what their immigration status and rights of residence would be on arriving in Germany.

The Home Office claimed that the family had been granted residency in Germany on humanitarian grounds. It stated that the family would not be settled in a reception centre and that they would have "settled rights" including full access to the German social and welfare system and be housed in the community.

However, Nick Blake QC, representing the family, told the high court that this was not the case. The Ahmadi family were put in a reception centre on arriving in Munich last week and then moved to a refugee camp.

The status they had been given in Germany did not entitle them to full access to the country's welfare and medical system, he said.

Though the right to a review was granted, the family have not been allowed to return to Britain in the interim.

Speaking to The Guardian from Landsberg camp, near Munich, Mrs Ahmadi said she was anxious about the family's future despite being pleased by the ruling.

"We're still waiting," she said. "We have been told nothing about what is going to happen to us or where we're going.

"How long can I wait? I

still want to be in England with my friends and family. I miss my college, I miss studying. My children are due to start back at school. We're all very, very worried."

Gary Younge was to point out in a powerful article in The Guardian on August 19 the hypocrisy of a government which uses the plight of Afghan women as a pretext for its warmongering in their own country but treats them with extreme brutality when they seek asylum here.

"The government's twin priorities seem to be to create chaos abroad and to insulate itself from the fallout at home. Not content with screaming fire in a crowded cinema, it wants to close all the emergency exits too. Those who perish inside get sympathy; those, like Feriba, who manage to escape get scapegoated."

While every deportation case inevitably involves horror stories - of the desperation which leads people to leave their homes in the first place but also of the racism and inhumanity of the asylum system here, this case is particularly outrageous.

He lies that were told to justify the deportation must be exposed - and campaigners need to be alert that similar things are not happening in other cases.

It is clear that the government is determined to step up the removals - at whatever cost to human dignity and justice.

Home Office Minister Beverley Hughes, who was responsible for the letter, should resign.

The Ahmadi family must be allowed to return for the case, and be granted indefinite leave to remain. Most important of all, this case and the many others like it must strengthen our resolve to work until no one is illegal.

Yurdugal Ay, a Kurdish woman from Turkey, and her four children, Beriwan (14), Newroz (12), Medya (7) and Dilovan (11), are fighting deportation from Britain.

Yurdugal's husband, Salih was sent back to Germany, supposedly a "safe third country", by the Home Office some time ago. On May 11 he was deported from there to Turkey. Since then there has been no news of him, and Mrs Ay is very worried about what has happened to him.

Yurdugal and the children were snatched from their home and were first sent to Tinsley House Detention Centre at Gatwick. After 10 days they were moved to Dungavel detention centre near Glasgow, far away from friends and community. A bail hearing on August 27 was unfortunately unsuccessful.

Yurdugal explains how she and her family ended up in Britain:

"I am from Diyarbakir. My husband and I were living in Sirkak which was a dangerous area at that time (1988). The soldiers and jandarma (military police) kept coming to our villages and putting pressure on us, coming into the houses and beating us, asking if we were supporting the guerrillas. Husbands were being taken to the jandarma station and being beaten. They were also beating the children and women in the houses. We went to Germany."

"For eleven years we lived under a hellish psychological war in Germany. Twice the police came to the house to try to deport us. Once they said to us 'You are politicians - go and do politics in Turkey'. The children grew up in that atmosphere, and were all affected by it. Also they've always heard bad things about Turkey, which

is somewhere they've never been."

Yurdugal says she has never slept properly since she left home, always fearing the police will come and deport her. She says: "How long am I supposed to go on like this? The children were born in Europe but don't feel safe. If I had rights in Turkey I would live there."

In spite of this, the Home Office wants to deport Yurdugal and the children to Germany too, although the family are terrified. What happened to Salih gives them no hope that they won't also be sent back to Turkey. All the news suggests that the level of ill-treatment of Kurdish people in Turkey has risen in the last year and we know that those sent back are routinely targeted.

Yurdugal's appeal against the Home Office's refusal

of her asylum claim has been refused, but an application for a judicial review has been lodged. But in the meantime, the Home Secretary should exercise his discretion and allow the Ay family to stay here on compassionate grounds.

Send a letter to Home Secretary David Blunkett or the Minister for Nationality and Immigration, Beverley Hughes, at the Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT or fax them on 0207 273 3965, demanding that Mrs Ay and her children be allowed to remain. Please quote HO Ref APX/99/953 and send a copy to the campaign. (A model letter is available at www.ncadc.org.uk)

For further information: email ncadc.london@appleonline.net or phone Haringey Kurdish Community Centre 0208 880 1804. e mail sarahp107@hotmail.com if you would like to be included in a list of campaign supporters.

Ay family must stay!



Home Office Minister Beverley Hughes

AWL contorted logic on Euro There is no Maastricht road to socialism!

Review of new Alliance for Workers Liberty pamphlet *For a Workers Europe*
Alan Thornett

The Socialist Alliance is currently debating its position on the Euro in the expectation of a referendum next year. It will hold a conference on October 12th to vote on the issue. The two main planks in the debate are the "vote no" position (supported by the ISG, the SWP and others) and an abstention position supported by the AWL, the CPGB, Workers Power and the RDG.

The clearest expression of the abstention camp is the AWL – partly because they have been doing it longer. The AWL (or rather one of its predecessors Workers Fight) was the only far-left organisation to call for an abstention in the 1975 referendum on Britain's EEC membership. Since then it has evolved in an increasingly pro-EU, and consequently pro-Euro direction.

The position of the AWL on the Euro is informed by their overall position on the EU – which is to see it as a progressive development in European capitalism, albeit with some unfortunate, and nasty, anti-working class features. The case for this supposed progressive nature of the EU is spelled out most clearly by Sean Matgamna in the new AWL pamphlet on European integration.

He argues:
"Undesirable aspects of the European unity which the bourgeoisie has created notwithstanding, it [the EU] is much better than the older Europe of separate, often hostile and sometimes warring nations... The basis exists now as never before for working class unity all across Europe: for a Europe-wide working class struggle to create a democratic and socialist United States of Europe".

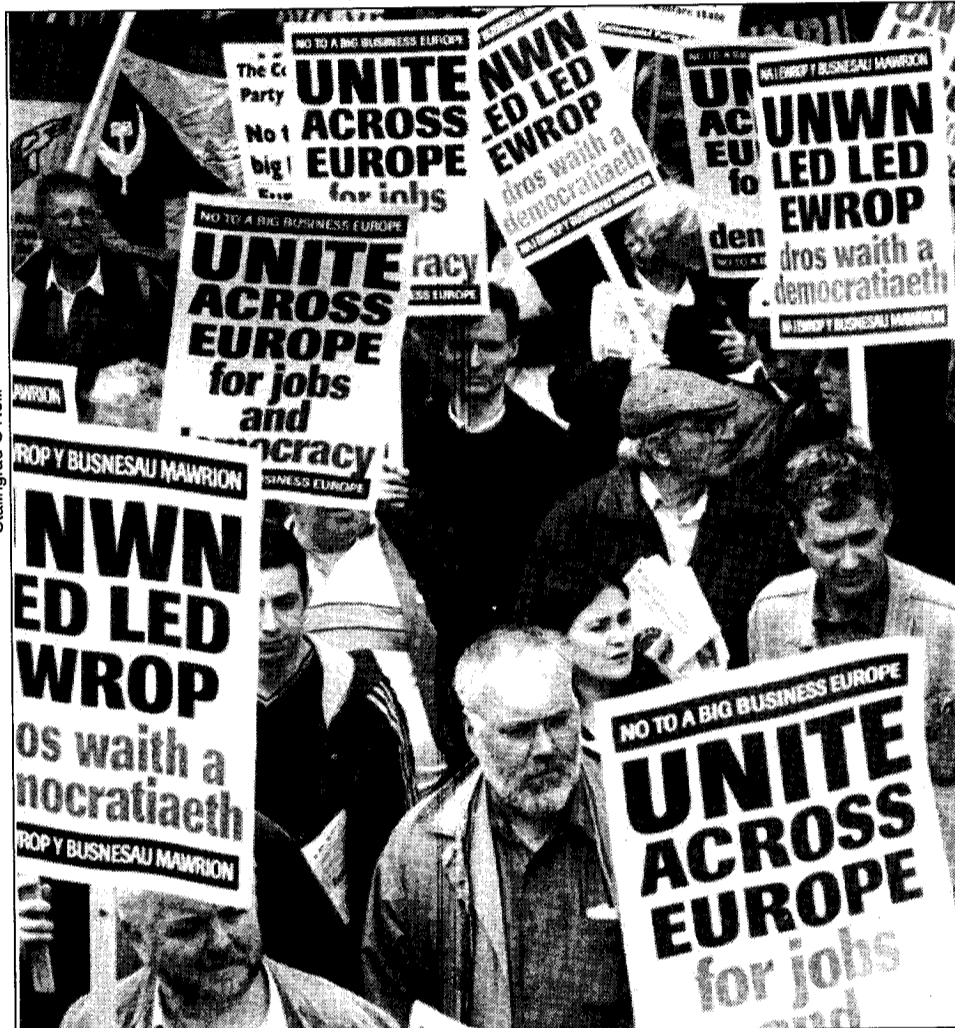
Later he advocates: "... building on what the bourgeoisie has created and uniting the working class across the EU to fight the bourgeoisie for democratic and social reform and, in the course of doing that, building towards socialist transformation by working class revolution on a European scale..."

He repeats that: "The EU represents a necessary capitalist development," and goes on to call for the defence of the EU against all those who call for its break up:

"And it [the AWL position] does commit us to European unity and to opposing politically all those who advocate the break up of the EU and implicitly back the restoration of the old, long bankrupt, European bourgeois nation state system".

The AWL, therefore, see the EU as a positive and necessary historical development of European capitalism – one which they claim (remarkably) has eliminated antagonisms between its member states! The AWL seem to see European integration under the EU as some kind of necessary stage in the struggle for socialism in Europe – a sort of 'Maastricht road to socialism' – with the democratisation of the institutions of the EU creating the basis for simultaneous socialist revolutions across Europe, as the most likely form of socialist transformation.

Yet simultaneous social revolutions in the 15 (soon to be 25) diverse countries of the EU do not seem the most likely process of revolutionary change in Europe. It is far more likely that a revolution in one European country would fire up revolutionary situations in others – with or without the EU, inside or outside the EU.



Whatever we may wish as revolutionary socialists, the fact is that the bulk of the class struggle continues at the level of the national state – which has far from disappeared in the way Sean Matgamna claims.

This reality is reflected in the highly appropriate motto of the anti-globalisation movement: "think globally: act locally". This recognises that although many of the attacks on the working class are co-ordinated internationally they are implemented by national governments, and by employers located at the national and local level.

The international agencies of capital, from the WTO to the World Bank and the EU are structured in such a way as to ensure that things continue to work in this way. Individual states carry out the policies and decisions handed down to them from these trans-national agencies. This means that struggles usually take place at different times in different countries, which was the case even with the battles over qualification for the single currency.

Socialists have to get the relationship between the struggle at the national and international level right. Attacks emanating from the international level certainly have the potential to generate a response at the international level, and to develop class consciousness in the process. That is why there was an increase in internationally co-ordinated struggle following the Maastricht Treaty and the introduction of the convergence criteria. Workers could see where the attack was coming from.

Neo-liberal globalisation initiates the same process on a world scale – hence the anti-globalisation movement. This does not mean that neo-liberal globalisation is a good thing, or is progressive, or that capitalism itself is progressive because it is driven to globalise.

It means there is a response to its offensive by the working class. A multi-national com-

pany has the same effect if it chooses to attack its workforce simultaneously across national boundaries. This does not make it a progressive institution. Otherwise why don't we propose reforming an inherently progressive capitalism?

Socialists must grasp all opportunities to internationalise the struggle in order to equip the working class more effectively to fight its own ruling class. That was the role of the European Marches in the latter 1990s, and that is the role of the anti-globalisation movement today.

Attacks on the working class emanating from the EU have the potential to generate an international response: but if the attacks are successful they will strengthen the employers, and the national governments, and weaken the working class at both the national and international level.

Working class unity, nationally or internationally, is a concrete thing. It depends for its development on successful struggles, and winning a favourable balance of forces between the ruling class and the working class.

The road to workers' unity, therefore, is not through the more effective reorganisation of European capital against the European working class, but through the mobilisation of the working class in each country against its domestic class enemy, and the co-ordination of these struggles at the international level. That is the task, whether the EU exists or not.

We don't need the EU, or NAFTA, or the WTO, to exist in order to fight for international solidarity. We were fighting for it long before they existed, and we are fighting for it today. They just strengthen the ability of capitalism to fight back.

What does this imply as far as voting on the Euro is concerned? Well, if the EU is such a

good thing, and should be defended against those who want to break it up, it is hard to see why the AWL do not call for a yes vote. The EU would certainly be damaged by a no vote in a referendum in Britain.

In fact the AWL repeatedly argues, in the debate, that a no vote would be a disaster. Indeed if you really do think that the EU is "better than the old Europe", has created the basis for "working class unity all across Europe", and the best conditions for achieving a "democratic and socialist United States of Europe" [no less!], a yes vote for its central project is logical.

In the pamphlet the AWL justify not voting yes by saying that they can't be seen as endorsing cuts and privatisations. They put it this way:

"The Euro is not just a discreet, small measure – it is a giant step towards capitalist integration which at this time necessarily means a package of cuts and privatisations. We cannot be seen, as we would be if we say yes, to endorse those attacks".

Indeed. But surely this seems a good reason for voting no?

In an informal discussion at a meeting of the SA Executive, Martin Thomas (a leading member of the AWL) said that if he was forced to vote one way or the other he would vote for the Euro, "but there is no need to make such a choice at the present time". This is presumably because it would put the AWL out on a limb in the debate.

Another argument the AWL is advancing is that to vote either yes or no for the Euro (rather than abstain) is to choose between two capitalist strategies, and this is something socialists should never do. Capitalism is capitalism, they argue, whether it is in the form of the national state, the EU, or anything else, and the workers' movement should not choose between them. It is up to the capitalists how they organise against the working class, and we should not concern ourselves with it.

The AWL approach (presumably) therefore means fighting the concrete effects of the capitalists' strategy, whilst having no view on the strategy itself. How can the movement develop politically from such a position? No one learns anything!

This makes no sense. Some forms of capitalist rule, and capitalist strategies against the working class, are more effective than others. How can we be neutral on that?

The workers' movement has to take this into account if it is to be effective. Without an analysis of the politics behind the attack the movement is disarmed. If the capitalist class change their form of rule (either on a national or international level) in a way which is detrimental to the working class, how can we be neutral?

Socialists are not indifferent to various forms of bourgeois government either. We don't just say that they are all capitalist. We were not indifferent to the significance of the Thatcher governments of the 1980s and we are not indifferent to Berlusconi in Italy today, for example.

We vote for social democratic governments as a (capitalist) alternative to the parties of the right because this puts the working class in a better situation than under governments of the right. We don't just say that they are different forms of capitalist rule: which they are.

Military rule is a capitalist strategy used under certain conditions, as is fascism. We are not neutral towards these either. We don't just say: well they are all capitalist, its up to them how they rule!

"The CPGP (who work with the AWL in the debate) have made a number of wild proposals (even by their standards) – such as "mobilising the workers to burn the ballot boxes", and calling for strike action in the work places in favour of – yes – an abstention in the referendum! We can look forward to seeing in which workplaces the CPGP even make a serious proposal along these lines."

How would socialists vote in a referendum which proposed the suspension of liberal democracy and the imposition of some form of military rule? We would vote against it, not abstain or have an "active boycott".

The same applies to a reorganisation within an individual capitalist enterprise. If a capitalist enterprise decides to impose new and harsher working conditions, we don't just say it's all capitalism anyway – which it is. We are in favour of opposing the new conditions. When workers in the post office are faced with a new management plan to cut jobs we don't just say "it's all capitalism" – which it is. We campaign to get it defeated.

However the AWL go on from this contorted logic to argue that to oppose a new form of capitalist rule is to endorse the existing form of capitalist rule. To oppose the EU, they say, is to support the individual nation state, to oppose the Euro is, they say, is to support the pound.

Again, this makes no sense. To be opposed to a new, worse form of rule does NOT mean that we support or endorse the old form of rule.

If workers reject new more harsh working conditions, it does not mean they support what previously existed – which they might have been fighting to improve anyway. It means they are opposed to something worse. If we are opposed to military rule, it does not mean that we endorse liberal democracy, only that we are opposed to military rule as an alternative.

The referendum when it comes will not be a choice between the Euro and the pound, but for or against the Euro. Obviously we would still have the pound if the Euro were rejected – but that would be the case if everyone abstained, since the Euro would only come in if Blair gets a positive mandate for it. So if a vote against the Euro is a 'vote for the pound' – so is an abstention!

The AWL position also implies that socialists should only support socialist options. A bit like (as someone said in the e-mail debate) the ultra sectarian Socialist Party of Great Britain, who refuse to campaign over wages and will only campaign against the wages system, with a memorable slogan "Don't work for wages!"

It would be very nice to have a socialist choice more often, but most choices the working class are faced with are capitalist options, and they have to decide which one is in their best interests. In any case revolutionary socialists are not opposed to reforms: far from it, in fact Marxists should be the most effective fighters for reforms, seeing them within the context of a revolutionary programme.

The pamphlet also advocates the strange "active boycott" argument. The AWL claim that they are not in fact calling for an abstention, but an "active boycott": something of a contradiction in terms, in such a referendum.

It is hard to be credible saying that the single currency is such a big threat to jobs and welfare that we are going to abstain! But to accept the logic of this, says Matgamna, would be defeatist.

The problem the AWL face is that if the issue is worth campaigning for it must be worth a positive vote. Whatever spin you put on it, an abstention remains an abstention in real terms. It means you have decided not to vote yes and not to vote no but, yes, to abstain: "actively" or otherwise.

They also face the problem that the Euro is a huge issue in European politics, but they have nothing to say about it in a referendum – because they are neutral between capitalist policies.

So they have decided to make a fuss about it even if they are calling for an abstention.



Protests like this in Seville show British socialists are not alone in fighting against the strengthening power of European capital

That's how they wind up with the idea of an "active boycott"!

The difficulty the AWL face in this is to define what the "active" part of such a campaign can be. It is hard to be militantly in support of – well, doing nothing. An active campaign implies mobilising people around something you are saying is important and makes a difference.

If voting one way or the other makes no difference – which is what an abstention means – what is there to campaign about?

You can picket the polling stations, knock on doors, or give out leaflets, but in the end you are saying: this is such an important issue that we are here militantly campaigning – to ask you to, er, abstain! Or join our picket and urge the voters, er, not to vote.

You may as well go home and leave the campaigning to those who think that there is an important choice to be made.

Trying to square this particular circle has led the CPGP (who work with the AWL in the debate) to a number of wild proposals (even by their standards) – such as "mobilising the workers to burn the ballot boxes", and calling for strike action in the work places in favour of – yes – an abstention in the referendum!

We can look forward to seeing in which work places the CPGP even make a serious proposal along these lines. Not many, we can confidently predict.

Sean Matgamna's own proposal in this wacky campaigning vein is that socialists should have their OWN ballot papers, and ballot boxes, and run their own completely different ballot – calling for votes in favour of workers' rights.

Wow, that will get the bosses on the run – particularly if they manage to find out that it is happening. But this is still essentially an abstention in the actual ballot which is taking place, and on which such antics it will have absolutely no impact.

There are several other arguments which the AWL advance:

1) We will have cuts anyway – with or without the Euro.

This is a passive and complacent position to take. Yes we would still have cuts with or without the Euro. There is a neo-liberal offensive going on that does not rely on the existence of the Euro. And new Labour have their own attacks to carry out on the welfare state.

But with the Euro we will get extra cuts, organised and co-ordinated through the EU

Stability Pact. Double trouble, as it could be called. Why would we want that?

On top of the cuts organised at the national level we will have more cuts organised at the European level as soon as problems arise with the Stability Pact. It is like saying to workers: don't bother to oppose the job cuts which have just been announced at the European level, because they will still attack you at the national level anyway.

What kind of position is that?

2) Socialists can't vote the same way as the Tory right

Why not? Why should we allow the Tory right to decide how we vote? That is completely unacceptable. They will be voting 'no' from a position which has nothing to do with us. Their motivation is British nationalism, ours is the defence of the interests of the working class.

There is a constituency of people who oppose the Euro from a socialist anti-nationalistic point of view, workers in the public sector unions for example. Who is going to represent them if there is no socialist non-nationalistic campaign?

In fact the existence of what will undoubtedly be a strong right-wing campaign for a no vote makes a socialist, anti-nationalistic, campaign even more important – since without it the right-wing will dominate the debate unchallenged.

This is where the abstention position plays into the hands of the Tory right. It would leave us wringing our hands on the sidelines with nothing to say, whilst the Tories held

the whole stage. There would be no socialist voice in the debate – other than on the sidelines, calling for an abstention

This would be a disaster in a referendum.

3) A no vote would 'boost nationalism'

They argue that a win for the no position would be a disaster because it would boost nationalism. What is the evidence for this?

Is it true that a referendum campaign in Britain would boost nationalism, at least to some extent. That is because of the nature of the Tory right and the tabloid press in Britain. But this could be the case whatever the result.

It is not the result, but the campaign that would do it. The thing which would be the biggest boost for nationalism is not to have a non-nationalist campaign for a no vote. That would hand the whole thing over to the nationalists.

4) A no vote would result in a Tory government

This looks even more unlikely given the state of the Tory party and the depth of their split over the Euro.

But what is certain is that a 'no' vote would throw new Labour into crisis, whilst a 'yes' vote would give it a new lease of life. Is that what the AWL want?

At the same time a 'yes' vote would be a major boost to the European project, with an historical obstacle to its future development being removed – i.e. British capitalism's lack of commitment to its central project.

Each of the AWL's arguments lead the left towards a cul de sac, would isolate socialists from a major debate, and strengthen rather than weaken the nationalists and the right.

That's why we say what is needed is a campaign against the Euro, based on the interests of the working class, and with the socialists at the centre of it.

This would be impossible on the basis of abstention.



campaign for a no vote makes a socialist, anti-nationalistic, campaign even more important – since without it the right-wing will dominate the debate unchallenged.

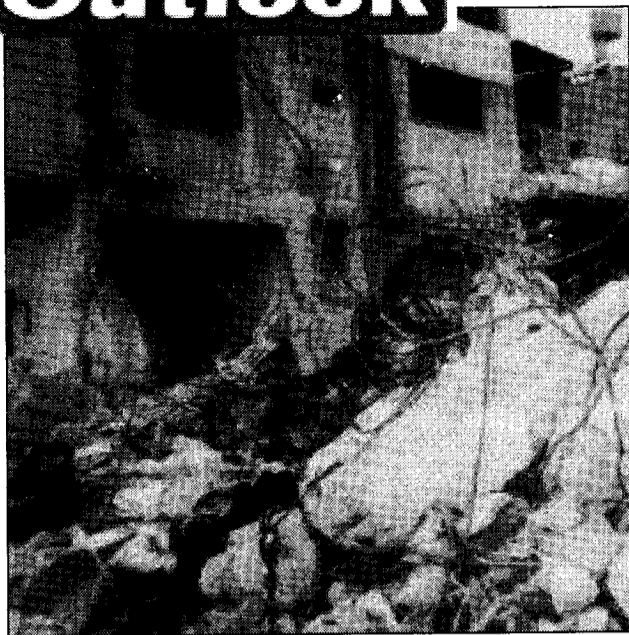
This is where the abstention position plays into the hands of the Tory right. It would leave us wringing our hands on the sidelines with nothing to say, whilst the Tories held

NEW! The socialist case against the euro



Hot off the press – a new, up to date analysis by Alan Thornett of this key political issue, as Tony Blair decides whether to chance his arm with a referendum.

Available £1.20 including P&P from T1 Research, PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU.



Bombed-out house in Nablus (above): Internationalists help clear the way for long-awaited water tanker in Iraq Boreen (centre): kite-flying and curfew breaking (right)

Palestine diary

Tony Richardson

On arriving at Tel Aviv airport, the security cannot understand why anybody would want to come to Israel for a holiday.

For the first two days I stayed in Jerusalem, waiting for training. So I walk around the old city looking at the various religious sites. This is extremely difficult because the traders are desperate for customers, and I appear to be the only tourist. So I elicit a Palestinian tour guide.

We reach a position overlooking the Wailing Wall, and as we look at the Al Aqsa mosque an Israeli man, seeing that I was accompanied by a young Palestinian, said "That is where we are going to build our Third Temple". Since this would mean knocking down the third most important Muslim religious site, this was quite a statement.

Apart from all the soldiers walking about the Palestinian part of the city, there are also armed settlers, with their hands on their Uzis.

Later on, as I walk past Damascus Gate, I notice some soldiers have lined up a group of Palestinians, and occasionally kick them, whenever they seem to protest. Apparently this is because they have the wrong colour identity cards. Palestinians from the West Bank are not allowed into Jerusalem. Never mind the importance to them of this city.

I then head for Beit Sahour, for training. The International Solidarity Movement training involves agreement on our activities being non-violent, on avoiding cultural offence, and making it clear that we're here to support the Palestinians, and not tell them what to do. It also involves measures to maintain our own safety. We are all assigned to affinity groups, who look after each other, and we

each have a buddy, who specifically watches the other, in demonstrations or other activities.

One thing I learned, whilst here is that there are large number of Christian Palestinians, something you never hear in the media - obviously because this goes against the idea of some kind of cultural war.

We make a visit to Deheishe camp. Here we visit the home of a suicide bomber: the Israeli army is threatening to knock it down. It is a large house with the mother living on one floor, and three brothers each having a floor with their families. In these refugee camps the houses are built together, with only a narrow roadways between. If the house is knocked down, at least six other houses will be heavily affected. Even the neighbours have moved some of their furniture away, because when the Israeli army comes it only ever gives 20 minutes' notice to get out. So the residents have no time to take their possessions.

When we talked to one of the brothers, he said that if he had known his brother was going to do what he did, he would have stopped him, as would their mother. But he also explained the mental state that his brother had been in: it was at the time of the Jenin attacks by the Israeli army. He himself said that he was in favour of discussing with the Israelis to achieve a peaceful settlement, as he would still be even if they knocked down his house.

As we looked from the roof of this house at the surrounding hills we could see two large Jewish settlements. But he also pointed out a caravan parked on the hill facing us: he explained this was the start of a new settlement, and it was on Palestinian land. There was



nothing they could do about it. Our guide explained that he had a piece of land, that he had been trying to get building permission for seven years.

The settlements dominate everything. In the area of Bethlehem these settlements used 87 per cent of the water, and during summer the Palestinian areas have varying periods of water shutdown. This of course never applies to the settlements, which continue to use their sprinklers, swimming pools etc. Special roads, which only the settlers are allowed to use, are built to the settlements.

Whilst I was there, there was a case reported in the newspapers, in which some Palestinian families had gone to court to try to stop the Israeli army knocking down their houses, for a road to a settlement. The judge argued that the fact the settlement was illegal was irrelevant, that the army had a duty to provide security for Israeli citizens, and therefore could knock down these houses.

All the settlements are illegal, but the Israeli state defends them on the grounds that they were gained in a war of legitimate self-defence, from Jordan and Syria, and they are kept on the grounds that they are part of the "historic lands". UN resolutions have been passed, demanding the return of the land that was taken in the 1967 invasions. Not only does Israel continue to ignore these resolutions, but it lays claim to the

land. What a difference here from the way the US and other countries treat Iraq's attitude to UN resolutions.

On the Saturday, 10th August, we attended a demonstration of 700, in Bethlehem, next to the Church of the Nativity. This was meant to be a joint demonstration, for peace, with a Jewish group, Ta'ayush. The 300 Jewish demonstrators were stopped at the Beit Sahour checkpoint, and fire hoses used to stop them getting through. The Israeli state regularly tries to stop joint demonstrations.

We then left for Nablus. We as well as many Palestinians, including a woman with an obviously sick baby, were held for about an hour at the checkpoint outside Beit Sahour.

NABLUS:

We went through the checkpoint at Nablus without too much problem. The town had been under a 24 hour curfew for 55 days at that point. The curfew was only lifted for a couple of hours every few days.

It has wide streets, and looked like one of those movies after a nuclear holocaust, deserted. Then the children started coming out to greet us, asking the question that was nearly to drive us mad "What's your name?"

Then came a deafening noise, and as it came closer the streets cleared again. This was

tanks, which ignored us, and thundered past.

We met up with the ISM organisers, and were allocated various duties. The following day I and two young Americans were to go to a village, and hear about their problems.

New Nablus, which contains the University, is on the way to the village. Here we encountered a road block, by a military vehicle. This was mounted 24 hours a day, and was designed to stop villagers from several surrounding villages entering Nablus. The soldiers stopped us, took our passports, and kept us for one hour.

Two Palestinians were stopped for a similar length of time: the elder of them was only 100 yards from his mother's home. The soldiers were only 18 or 19 years old, with the man in charge not much older. He argued he was just doing his job, didn't want to be there, and didn't believe that politics should be mixed with the military. It was strange to hear this argued by a man with a machine-gun pointed at Palestinians... a situation which is at the centre of world politics.

To reach the village, we have to go over an earth barricade. The village is called Iraq Boreen. Iraq means big rock, which is what it is built on. A dramatically beautiful place. We met our contacts, and were fed and accommodated for the next two days.

The problems of the village were not exactly the same as Nablus. The people could walk in the streets, but not really leave the village. The Israelis had blown up their well, and so they had to get their water from another village. But the Israelis had built two earth barricades between the two villages, and so they were desperate for water.

The people with work in Nablus could not go to work. Most of the workers are farm workers and so relying on the sale of their fruit in Nablus, they took the cactus fruit and figs by donkey. But they are not allowed to take the donkeys past the checkpoint, and had been made to sit out in the sun for two hours that morning. This fruit was being ruined.

If people are sick, they can't get medicines, the village has no doctor. Ambulances cannot get to the village, and on one occasion we saw a sick man who had to walk miles to meet

an ambulance. Children have to walk through checkpoints to get to school, and they are often stopped. Students from the villages who go to university have to get rooms in town, with the added expense, to be sure of getting to their courses.

Freedom of movement is denied to Palestinians. This is the starkest of the problems, and cannot be understood unless you see it. We saw its meaning at the checkpoints, people unable to visit their fiancé, or their mother in hospital, or go to a wedding. Such things as eating out, going to the cinema, theatre or music are out of the question. One is imprisoned in one's home, or village. No wonder many homes have satellite TV: and what a surprise see Mr Bean so popular.

Another problem is the difficulty of having any kind of family life. One woman described how her husband goes away for 4 weeks at a time, to work, then comes back for one day. Another man told how his wife had a Jordanian identity card, and went to visit her parents in Jordan 2 years ago, but was not allowed back, he has not seen her since. (Compare this to people only having to claim Jewish grandparents, to come from anywhere in the world to Israel.)

Threat to houses. At the end of June two villagers from Iraq Boreen, and one from nearby Tell, were shot dead by IDF forces. They had been working away, and were returning to their families: one was 21 and another 20. As they were returning the IDF forces were carrying out an operation, and took them for fighters, and shot them dead.

They then did the usual cover-up, putting guns alongside them, and claiming the dead men were fighters. But everybody I spoke to in the village assured me that they were not - and people tend to be proud of fighters. The Israelis are now threatening to knock down their family houses.

It should be explained that the Palestinians consider anybody killed by the Israelis as a martyr, while the IDF threaten to knock down the houses of anybody known to resist, though the media presents it as though they are only threatening the houses of suicide bombers.

That evening we sat and drank tea on the roof of a house from which, on a clear day, you could see the



Tony in Nablus: "if they'll do this to an ambulance, will this tourist hat really protect me?"

Mediterranean. We watched the sun go down, and realised how beautiful this would be if the Palestinians were free.

On the Tuesday morning we went, with the donkeys, down to the checkpoint. The soldiers would not let them through. A fire engine arrived, to pick up a worker from nearby. The army stopped it, and made the workers all get out, and open up the sides. The driver said he had permission from the area commander. They were still made to wait for 20 minutes.

Community workers like these, ambulances, refuse workers, are supposedly allowed to function, but the previous day a power worker had been stopped in Nablus, and when he got out of his vehicle was shot in the head. This was one of the few times the IDF said they had made a "mistake".

At the checkpoint the soldiers had said to us that while we just saw four Palestinians, they saw four potential bombers. Could there be a clearer statement of collective punishment? It seems no one is innocent until proven guilty!

When we arrived back in Nablus we learnt that the army had come to one of the houses in Balata camp, that internationals had been sleeping in, at 2.30 in the morning. Ever since the Israeli court judgement that cleared the IDF to destroy houses, the ISM had been allocating people to martyrs' houses, to try to stop them being destroyed, or at least publicise the IDF's activities.

The particular house was that of the Atiti family. One brother had been killed on a mission in Israel, and the army was searching for Allah, another brother. They had started by firing against the walls, and then had sent in a human shield, a neighbour.

The army had agreed to stop this practice, in the Israeli high court, 3 months earlier. All they did was to change its name to "neighbour practice". (Three days later a 19 year-old Palestinian was shot dead, when the IDF used this technique to protect themselves, they also bulldozed the house with the militant inside it).

The IDF had told the Atitis that they would be back to destroy the house. So the next night 15 of us were allocated to this house. Techniques were devised, such as some agreeing to be chained to the walls, to make it difficult for the IDF. The

newspapers were informed about our plans, and the army decided not to return. I stayed the remaining three nights in that house.

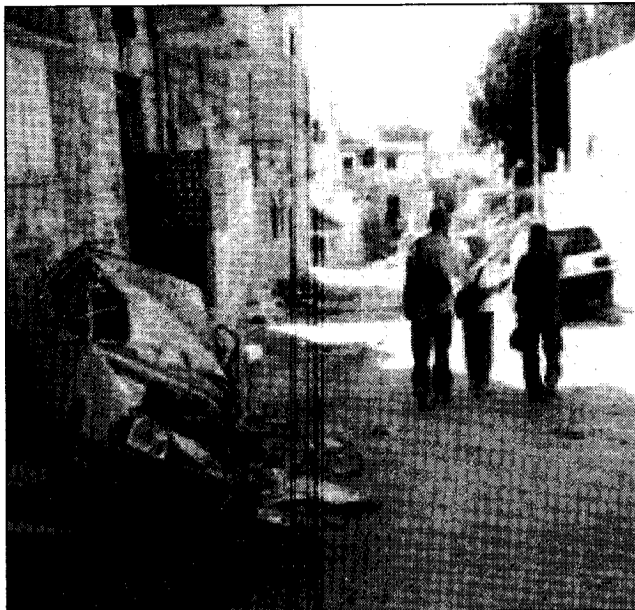
In the morning about a dozen of us returned, with picks and shovels, to Iraq Boreen. With the help of villagers we knocked down the two earth barriers between that village and Tell. It was great to sit in the village and watch the water lorries. It took two lorries 5 days to resupply the village.



We then returned to Balata. It should be said that the IDF could not enforce the curfew within the camp. So the market stalls continued, and the cafes, chemist shops etc. opened. Every so often the tanks would come to the entrance, fire in the air, and the kids would come out throwing stones. The nights were different, there was firing throughout the night on the Tuesday night, sometimes as close as two tiny streets away. Nearly every night somebody was shot dead in Nablus: one night three were killed.

A demonstration of young people within Nablus took place without incident. A lot of the internationals' activities were with the young people. One particularly symbolic activity took place on the Thursday. One of the few things that young people can do in their houses, from the roofs is fly kites, and every night the skies of Nablus are filled with kites. So an event was organised, in a large field next to Balata, flying kites.

The Israelis tried to disrupt the start of this breach of the curfew, by sending tanks, and



Car crushed by Israeli tank on the narrow streets of Nablus

drawing out the kids to throw stones. But a group of internationals chased them away. For the rest of the afternoon a large crowd of children, and their families came out, with the food vendors, a great family day. The internationals stood in the way of any returning tanks.

As a group of us left Nablus on the Friday morning, the internationals had just completed knocking down a barricade between Balata, and another refugee camp Asker.

workers not being able to get to work, that it is a political decision that closed the checkpoints. The DWRC also train workers, and campaign for better social services.

The previous day a demonstration of more than a thousand workers in Gaza had demanded better Social Insurance. The trade unions had called the police, because they saw the demonstration as being against the Palestinian Authority, as the Israeli media tries to present it. But the problem is that the PA controls the purse strings, so who do you go to if you are desperate?

Some, such as teachers, and bank workers have workers' committees that act for that workplace, and some have got together, but not many. Obviously with the level of unemployment (figures between 55 and 80% were quoted at me) not much "normal" trade union activity can take place.

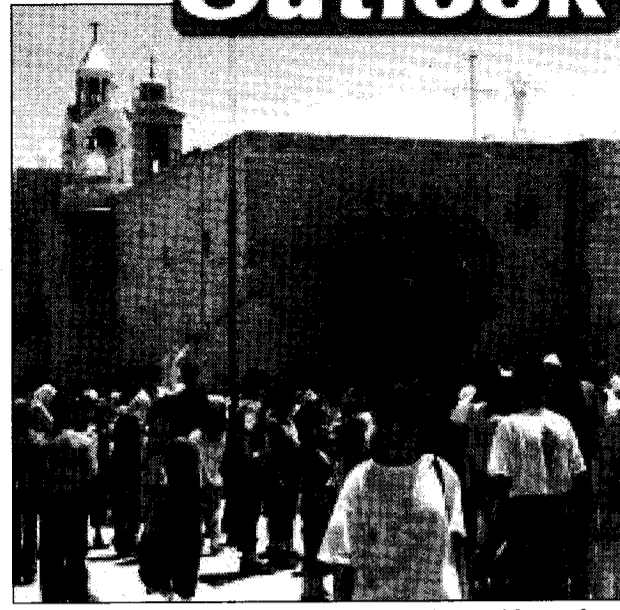
But the centre believes in trying to train people for this activity, they have had relations with Ruskin College in Britain and the Trade Union International Research and Education Group, in the past. They hold courses, some just for women. They also try to support working class students. I agreed to send Trades Council addresses, and keep in touch.

Next stop was the Media group, HDIP but unable to get interview with Mustafa Barghouti, as he was too busy. This is one of the problems of the present situation, the inability to plan as to where you will be, and when.

Next stop Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions. My host Mohammad Aruri, who is on the Executive of the union, runs the Ramallah office, and is in charge of their legal affairs department.

This small office is incredibly busy, with people queueing in the mornings: this again is to deal with masses of legal cases, and with payments. The IDF had broken the doors in April, taken all their computers, printers and records. Now they have just one computer, but luckily they had kept copies of their records.

Mohammad has been imprisoned seven times by the Israelis, and was at the Madrid Peace talks, since when he has not been picked up. He explained the difficulty of functioning, when you can't move about. The Executive can't



Jerusalem: shops and cafes function normally ... with guards on the entrances

meet, he can't go to their head office in Nablus, he can't go to Jerusalem, where they have 14 lawyers acting for them, dealing with 3,500 cases. The lawyers can't come to Ramallah.

The unemployment is by far the biggest problem. Places are closing all the time, or they are saying to workers come back in a month, with no money.

The logistics of functioning a workplace, with the checkpoints, and curfews is a nightmare. First you have to get your raw materials, from a source in the West Bank, that may not be able to farm, or produce it, or from Israel, which controls all borders and therefore can make you buy expensive Israeli goods. Then you have to get your workers in, and back out if a curfew exists; sometimes the workers have to go through checkpoints, and therefore change shared taxis, thus making it too expensive, and time consuming for them. Finally you have to distribute your commodity, either locally with great difficulty, or through the borders, and make tax payments to the Israeli state. No wonder the unemployment is so high. The PA employs about 150,000, without this it would be catastrophic.

The PA has decided to distribute most of its aid to workers through the unions. So although the unions don't touch the money, they issue the cheques. This involves aid money, and donations from Arab countries etc. Whilst I was there they were issuing 500 Shekel cheques (about £70), and they sometimes issue food vouchers. But Mohammad tells me that they don't get enough to do this frequently enough for people to survive on this money.

They also issue health vouchers, which mean their members get free basic treatment in

state hospitals. For 25 shekels a year membership, it is no wonder that he can claim that union membership has gone from 30% to 90% in the last 2 years.

The union also runs courses on the new Palestinian Labour Codes (the first they have had), ten in Ramallah this month, and get the people to them. They want help with a project to teach staff, and legal dept. about International labour laws, ILO conventions, and labour rights. Had coffee with Mohammad in beautiful art cafe. Then back to hotel.

In the morning a guide took me around. Went to Arafat's compound, and back past bombed school, then in to centre. Here there was a demonstration, complaining about the continued encirclement. Consisted of several dignitaries, including interior minister, and Moustafa Barghouti.

JERUSALEM:

I returned to Jerusalem, where I arranged a discussion with a radical Jewish activist. He was quite defeatist, believing the present regime was rolling down a slope, with nothing to stop it, and receiving the backing of the US.

He said that many of his friends were considering leaving Israel, or at least sending their children away. He said that on previous occasions their had been sizeable opposition to some of the state's activities, but this was now very small.

I walked back through West Jerusalem, where the shops and cafes are functioning normally, albeit with guards at their entrances.

In the morning I had a last look around the old city, there you could buy tiny IDF jackets for small children, as well as hats. Will this be on the front of the Sun?

Then off to the Airport and home.

**National day of
action**

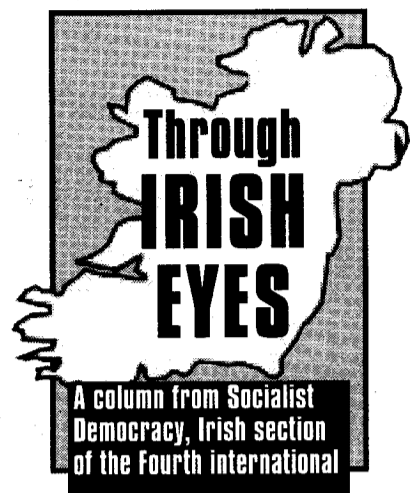
14th September

Boycott Israeli Goods
details: email big@palestinecampaign.org
www.palestinecampaign.org

28th September

Palestinian Solidarity section of anti-war
march. Aim of March includes Justice for
Palestinians.

Benchmarking Report on public sector pay – what does it mean?



Joe Craig

The long awaited Report of the Public Services Benchmarking Body set up under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) was published on June 30. Despite grandiose claims that 'such an exercise had never been attempted in Ireland or overseas' (*Irish Times*, 2/7/02), it is a take it or leave it document that will set the parameters of 230,000 workers pay for the foreseeable future. It destroys the framework of relativities between jobs that had determined pay rates up until now.

Originally set up in July 2000, the process behind the Report was a transparent attempt to delay payment to public sector workers during the height of the Celtic Tiger boom. It aims to facilitate the enforcement of private sector terms and conditions on workers in the public sector under the euphemism of 'adaptability, change, flexibility and modernisation.'

It therefore received the enthusiastic endorsement of the ICTU hierarchy. Indeed it was hailed by Joe O'Toole, former head of the teacher's union INTO, as an ATM machine from which workers could simply withdraw money.

The average increase in pay arising from the report is 8.94%, which considering the South is now the second most expensive place to live in the euro zone, according to a report released the previous week, makes nonsense of this remark.

The terms of reference of the report listed a number of criteria that were to determine its findings. These included evaluation and measurement of work; comparison with the private sector; equity; recruitment, retention and motivation; modernisation and effectiveness and implications for national competitiveness.

Since these criteria are not necessarily compatible, are ideologically driven or entirely subjective, it is not clear how the recommendations arose from them.

The economist Jim O'Leary who was originally on the Benchmarking body, but who later resigned, has raised questions about how the criteria were applied and the findings arrived at.

He questions the rationale for the recommended rises on three grounds. First, he argues that the need for increases in public sector wages in order to attract workers who might go to the private sector in a period of low unemployment is not borne out by the growth in public sector employment which is higher than that of the private sector.

Secondly he says there is no evidence that equity considerations apply as 'broadly speaking' public sector pay has kept pace with the private sector.

His last point is that the require-



ment for changed conditions of public sector workers is unclear and does not appear related to level of awards. Some workers are recommended a 2 to 3 per cent increase while others 15 to 18 per cent or higher but presumably they are required to 'change' just as much.

This criticism from the right will no doubt help the leaders of ICTU in selling the report but the fact that such criticisms can be made only exposes the thinking behind benchmarking. It is possible to reply to O'Leary that the level of vacancies and staff turnover as well as issues of motivation and morale must be taken into account when judging the relative attractiveness of public sector employment - but this is only to argue on the ground of the enemy.

Worker's attitude to what constitutes equity should not be that of ex-trade union bosses, employer's representatives, management consultants or High Court

"a workers enquiry into public sector pay should have been set up, one made up of the workers themselves with the collaboration of their private sector colleagues. Such an enquiry would have been everything the Benchmarking body isn't: open, transparent and accountable"

judges. If workers in the public sector felt they were losing out, a workers enquiry into public sector pay should have been set up, one made up of the workers themselves with the collaboration of their private sector colleagues. Such an enquiry would have been everything the Benchmarking body isn't: open, transparent and accountable.

This report is an ultimatum, a classic case of divide and rule where some workers are offered 2.5 per cent and others 25 percent. The report generally gives bigger increases to higher paid staff and discriminates against women who fall disproportionately into those sectors offered lower rises.

Bertie Ahern has said it must be agreed in total or not at all. This is a united approach by the state but a divided one by the workers where every individual union has to take its own view under pressure from ICTU and other unions, where workers may have done better, to accept.

Not only is there no justification for any of the recommendations given but the whole exercise was designed to ensure none would have to be - the Benchmarking Body dissolved after the report and made clear no clarification would be given.

The totally spurious reasons given for this approach, that the confidentiality of those who assisted and advised the body should be maintained and that it was set up as part of the PPF and must therefore fold, only reveals the cynical nature of the exercise. Explaining the figures does not require revealing anyone's identity and since the PPF is still going why isn't the Benchmarking

body hanging around to explain itself?

The statement by the Nursing Alliance should be supported: 'The Nursing Alliance feels that the benchmarking process should be accountable, and its recommendations should be justified and open to verification by the unions representing the grades affected.' This should be the demand of every union.

If this is not accepted, the report should be rejected and a conference of public sector workers called to determine a strategy to win increases that really are equitable and respond to the real needs of public sector workers. This is the

means by which all public sector workers can unite to reject the report.

In some ways, the report can already be seen to have achieved its objective. It has delayed increases and divided workers intent on better increases, most notably the teachers. The report and the government's response show it will be the springboard for further attacks.

Contrary to what ICTU leaders argue, the demand for compliance with 'adaptability, change, flexibility and modernisation' is a real threat. It will be the immediate excuse to delay payment of the 75 percent of the award for which ICTU, with its great negotiating skills, got no guaranteed payment date.

The immediate rush by ICTU to defend and sell the report's recommendations and emphasis on getting it through as quickly as possible can be the means to implement changed terms and conditions that otherwise might prove difficult to push through. This is especially so given the looming deficit in the public finances.

Making competitiveness a criterion for awards might not have seemed problematic during the height of the boom, but once it is accepted, what defence is there when the government claims it as justification for changes, now that the economy is doing much less well and government finances consequently squeezed?

Even the 25 per cent which was supposed to be automatic and backdated to December last year will now only be paid when 'solid negotiations' are underway on the conditions for paying the remaining 75 percent.

This obviously means when the government are happy with the conditions upon which it will be accepted. Crucially, they have made clear this will mean acceptance of a new

social partnership deal to follow the PPF next June. So the 8.94 per cent will not just be a part of the current deal but of the next one.

In this context, the increases seem much less impressive. They not only cover claims that built up before the body was set up, in July 2000, and not just the two years it took to put unexplained figures together, but also the unknown period over which the next deal will apparently run.

This is what lies behind ICTU's hurried embrace of the report and threats to any section of workers who might want to reject it. Acceptance will be part of a larger agenda as was seen the last time the public finances were in difficulty, in 1990.

At that time the new partnership deal, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP), delivered wage restraint, tax increases, privatisation, unemployment and public services cuts. A new partnership deal this time round will tie workers to renewed wage restraint and cuts in services. Privatisation is already underway but will be accelerated.

Charlie McCreevy has already made it clear in the Dail that tax rises are on the way. Just as the PESP witnessed a tax amnesty for the rich while taxes for workers increased, we are about to witness publication of the Ansbacher report detailing how the rich broke the law for years through tax evasion.

This is highly appropriate because the real meaning of social partnership will be revealed. The rich will get away with it. The government will not prosecute. The union bosses will strand in the way of effective political outrage by workers because these people are, after all, their partners.

It would be comforting if resistance to all this had grown or developed over the last dozen years but sadly this is not the case. The working class is objectively stronger - for example there is less unemployment.

But a minority of militants have not organised strongly to oppose the partnership deals. While the left has created rank and file campaigns, they meet less often and are therefore less democratic than the bureaucracy they claim to oppose.

The benchmarking report is a major challenge to workers. It can effectively divide the workers while uniting the state with the trade union bosses.

There will be a lot of pressure on dissatisfied sections of workers to accept low increases at an unacceptable price. To resist this will require unity across sectional lines. Whether there is any section of workers able to achieve this unity remains to be seen but the price of not doing so will be great.

You must do more

John North

As Loyalist sectarianism and violence spiral out of control Blair warns Adams: "You must do more".

The mass sectarian intimidation of school children at Holy Cross school in Ardoyne, Belfast last year has been followed by a growing campaign of sectarian war by the UDA and UVF, focused mainly in North and East Belfast but extending across all of the North of Ireland.

The situation has become so serious that British Prime Minister Tony Blair has had to issue a formal warning to the republican movement.

This has led to furious complaints from Irish nationalists and republicans, protesting Blair's lack of logic.

Yet given what Socialist Democracy has consistently argued in relation to the strategy behind the Good Friday agreement, Blair's statement is entirely logical.

The Good Friday agreement was not meant to end sectarianism but to formalise and stabilise a new sectarian state. In order for this to happen, the agreement and the structures that come out of it had to move further to the right and become even more sectarian. The republicans had to retreat much further than the initial capitulation involved in accepting partition and the new sectarian statelet.

So the process of the Good Friday agreement has been a process of growing sectarianism kept stable by a steady stream of retreats and capitulation by the republicans.

Now the stream has become a torrent. The republicans must do more and they must be attacked and punished as they retreat until they have completely disbanded, kow-towed to unionism, given full support to the RUC and accepted the daily discrimination and petty apartheid that make up every day life in the north of Ireland.

The republican response has been to see themselves as part of a broad coalition of pro-agreement forces – the 'nationalist family' including the SDLP and Dublin government and a broader pro-agreement coalition including Unionists, London and Washington. The alliance must manoeuvre to prevent loyalists bringing down the agreement. This is wrong on a whole series of levels.

The loyalist actions, though vicious, fall well short of an overall offensive. The main demand is that the agreement be modified to preserve sectarian apartheid and prevent Catholic families living where they wish.

The main political expression of the loyalist programme is through the Loyalist commission – and the leading members of that are close advisors to David Trimble. There is much rivalry between the loyalist factions, but no real division on the demand that the Good Friday agreement be made more sectarian.

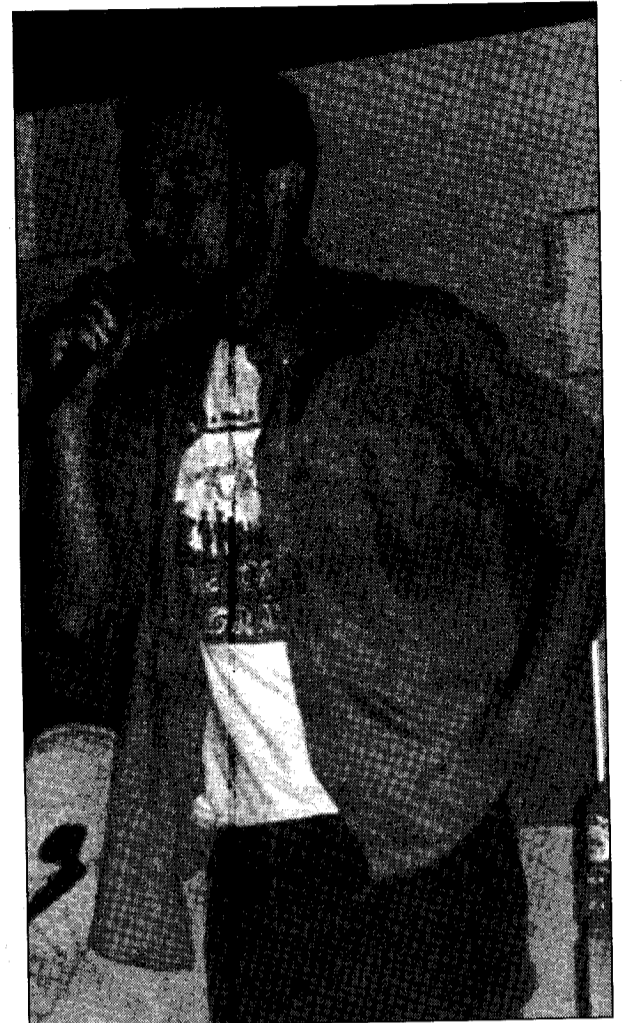
Following the Holy Cross attacks, British Secretary of State Reid made a speech proclaiming the "Northern Ireland had become a cold house for Protestants". This was a green light for the loyalists, which was further reinforced by recent meetings between Reid and the Death squads.

Finally the British rebuke to the republicans was counter-signed by Dublin and Washington – they all want stability in the North of Ireland and if that means a sectarian hell-hole then so be it.

Alternatives are thin on the ground. Dissident republicans have grown and no longer seem wide open to British intelligence, but their killing of a Protestant worker with a booby-trap bomb shows that they offer no alternative.

There has been a lot of working class anger at the loyalist offensive, especially when it has involved the killing of workers in their workplace or ambushes of Fire and ambulance services. They are however full aware from recent demonstrations that the trade union leadership are afraid even to speak the name of the Loyalist gangs, let alone oppose them. This leadership has in fact attached itself to the growing industry advising the Loyalists how to express their sectarian demands more clearly.

In the short term the danger is that loyalism will prove so rabid and uncontrollable that the agreement will collapse to the right despite the republican retreats. In the longer run the reality is that nationalists workers will wake up to find themselves trapped in a sectarian state with all the promises of democracy and equality evaporated into the thin air of which they are composed.



Enthusiasm at the final rally: (right) LCR Presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot spoke at the opening rally

Unity or purity? FI youth debate

Karen O'Toole and Julia Brandreth

The Fourth International's summer youth camp, held in Brioude in France at the end of July, was both an uplifting and sobering event to attend as youngish independents in the English Socialist Alliance. Uplifting because of the quality of debate, enthusiasm and belief that the hard left can win every important battle – and sobering because of the lack of similarly strong structures for youth on the British far left.

500 socialists from Fourth International groups all over Europe and beyond came together for a week of discussion, debate and drinking.

LCR presidential candidate, Olivier Besancenot, addressed the opening rally with a rousing and well-balanced speech about the importance of engaging as socialists in united fronts: working with as wide constituencies of groups and individuals as possible, whilst never losing sight of revolutionary goals.

The week was split up into a series of educationals and workshops, on a wide range of subjects, including Trotskyism, autonomism, imperialism, women's liberation, the economy and Palestine.

Participation in united fronts was a central issue in the week's debates, which focused around the anti-capitalist movement.

Delegations from Europe, north Africa and south America gathered to debate the tasks for the left.

A recurring theme was the role that the left should play within the movement: should revolutionaries involve themselves at all and if so in what ways? It was interesting to see the diversity of opinions within the Fourth International.

Whilst the majority position was that revolutionary socialists should have a strong presence in the anti-capitalist movement, some rejected the anti-capitalist movement as not a workers movement and as a distraction from revolutionary struggle.

The diversity was played out in the permanent commissions, which focused on thrashing out more detailed strategies for intervention. We attended the commission on the anti-capitalist movement, where comrades reported from Italy France, Spain and Brazil.

The aim by the end of the week was to plan a united intervention at the European Social Forum in Florence in November.

One concern put was that reformist organisations such as the DS in Italy and ATTAC in France would be influential at the ESF. The strategy of these organisations, and of NGOs, has been for inclusion in committees that determine international policy.

More recent events at the Earth summit in Johannesburg show how problematic even such mod-

erate demands for a place at the table are. We can be sure that the failure of these gatherings to solve basic questions of human survival such as access to clean, safe water will mean the most important feature of the world's summits – the protests – will continue to grow.

Given the recent success of the LCR amongst young voters in the French Presidential election (13.9% of the vote of 18-24 year olds) and the fact that the camp was in France, it wasn't surprising that French delegates were out in force: the LCR, JCR and Socialisme Par en Bas were all represented. It was interesting to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of youth self-organisation as seen in the JCR.

There appeared to be differences in policy between the LCR and its youth organisation, comrades from the LCR seemed more immersed within the anti-capitalist movement, so what was the role of the youth wing?

Strong women's and Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender self-organisation was also in evidence. It was impressive that self-organisation of women and gays was right at the heart of the week's timetable, in a way that was very different from the usual practice of the British left. However, the expression of self-organisation at the camp wasn't always as clearly politically

focussed as it could have been: we spoke to many delegates who didn't understand the purpose of the women's and LGBT spaces. Black and ethnic minority self-organisation was not prominent either.

Which brings us to the issue of the anti-war movement, which has been incredibly successful in the UK, but not in France. Members of the LCR did not attend the anti-war workshop, citing as a reason their opposition to the approach of the British antiwar movement, which they felt had adapted to Islamist currents. For some in the LCR Islamic fundamentalism was at its worst akin to fascism.

Arguments also emerged as to the very future of the trotskyism tradition. Should the FI explicitly identify itself with the term Trotskyism or identify with a broader definition of revolutionary socialism, and if so, what does this mean for the future of revolutionary Marxism?

We think that the left is in a period of flux from which it will only emerge as a strong force through its relationships to anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, social movements and the labour movement.

The Fourth International youth camp was a valuable debating forum for activists wrestling with involvement in united fronts. In the end unity won out over purity: let's hope this points the way to the future.

NEW!

vital reading
on Irish politics

'Prisoners of Social Partnership'

by Joe Craig

Published by Socialist Democracy Publications,
Available £7 incl p&p
from ISG, PO Box 1109,
London N4 2UU



Nepad: goodbye to colonialism?

For South Africa's Thabo Mbeki, the evictions of land protestors and the drive to privatisation are central to his vision of a supposedly modern South Africa in a supposedly modern Africa. One illustration of the road he is travelling is the role Mbeki has played in the replacement of the Organisation of African Unity, which for all its weaknesses promoted itself as a tool of liberation struggles, with a new neo-liberal institution, the African Union.

Here we print an article written for Indymedia South Africa in July, by Dale McKinley, on behalf of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (Johannesburg)

RECENT ISSUES in the South African mainstream media certainly give the impression that there are precious few South Africans offering dissenting voices aimed at the soon-to-be launched continental institution, the African Union (AU), and its programmatic sidekick, Nepad.

The consistent and lavish praise heaped on both of these endeavours, and on their main architect, President Mbeki, paint a generally uncritical picture (save for a few disgruntled northern NGOs).

We are led to believe that the AU and Nepad present an unparalleled historic moment in which Africa will say goodbye to the "epoch of colonialism and neo-colonialism", enter into a relationship of mutual respect and fairness with the core capitalist countries (the G-8) and embark on a fast-track path towards "good governance", economic growth and social equality.

Why on earth would any South African (or African for that matter) want to go and spoil this glorious picture by raising voices of critical dissent?

The answers are simple. First, the ideological basis for both the AU and Nepad, a supposedly African version of a "reformed" and/or "ethical" capitalism, is grounded in exactly the same exploitative productive and social relations that have historically underpinned the real (not rhetorical) relationship between the capitalist North and Africa.

In other words, capitalism by any other name is still capitalism, whether it is labelled post-colonialist, modernist or Africanist. While a sugar coating might make things initially look and taste sweeter, ordinary Africans are the ones who will be left eating the bitter core of a re-made imperialism.

Second, there is absolutely nothing unique, home-grown or mutually affirming about tailoring Africa's national or international political economy to fit the contemporary 'rules' of the global capitalist game: it is simply a matter of saying and doing what the G-8 demand.

True sovereignty is an extremely poor cousin of effective capitulation, no matter how much President Mbeki and other African politicians like to believe that their numerous international bosberads and agreements represent a sea change in global power relations.

Third, key policies envisioned as underpinning the modus operandi of the AU and Nepad, such as 'free trade', privatisation and labour market 'flexibility', have already practically failed the empirical 'test' of improving the lives of the vast majority of Africans.

Like GEAR here in South Africa, there will be very little trickle-down but plenty of trickle-up combined with lots of talk about entrepreneurship and self-help minus the political will, fiscal prioritisation and public sector institutional support necessary to meet the most basic needs of ordinary Africans.

While the political and economic elites celebrate the launch of the AU and Nepad, residents of Soweto will continue to resist electricity cut-offs, in Tafelsig and Tembahlile people will not halt their struggles against forced removal, and inhabitants of Chatsworth will persist in the battle for free water. There are many dissenting voices here and across the continent, and they will increasingly be heard.



Landless People's Movement march for 'bread land and jobs': and on August 31, a massive 40,000 protestors marched on the summit

Summit focus on South Africa's neo-liberal line

Terry Conway

With the eyes of the world's media focused on the Johannesburg summit, the brutal contrast between the plush suburb of Sandton and the poverty in which most South Africans continue to live has become visible to more people than at any time since the end of apartheid.

What has received less attention is the fact that the current South African government is trying to impose the same neo-liberal policies as their friends in the rest of the world. The struggle against the proposed privatisation of electricity and the fight for land are two of the key demands that have animated protests over recent months.

The South African electricity company ESKOM is a major sponsor of the WSSD, and has worked diligently with the ANC government to increase corporate influence in the meetings, while portraying itself as responsible in its growing African business. It is linked to the recently established South African Business Co-ordination Forum (BCF), a business body that is working in the preparations for the summit.

Record of abuse

ESKOM also has an increasingly negative record of abusing poor electricity users across South Africa. Campaigns against this and the proposed privatisation of the company have been growing. Eight years after the first democratic elections, the government has failed to deliver free basic services as promised.

Living conditions have worsened as water and electricity cut-offs now occur on a regular basis. With an unemployment rate of 75%, households are not in a position to purchase pre-paid electricity cards and many have resorted to bridging electricity boxes

Most recently, anger and determination to act is growing among the residents of Orange Farm, a poor community on the outskirts of Johannesburg, as members of the ANC Youth League and Sanco, subcontracted by ESKOM, continue to spy on their neighbours, seize electricity boxes, and extort bribes from their fellow community members in the case of "illegal" consumption.

Landless struggles

The Landless Peoples' Movement (LPM) is one of the other major organisations that has animated activity at the summit and linked up with international protestors including on one of the 2 big marches held on August 31. The demands of this march included an end to forced removals in urban areas, an end to the market-led approach to land reform, and a land summit with government where the landless will be given an opportunity to discuss and decide on their own future.

"The agenda of Sandton is the agenda of the multinational corporations, that land must be sold as a commodity, that water and energy must be privatised," says LPM leader Andile Mngxitama. "They have been losing legitimacy, and now they are trying to get new legitimacy through the United Nations"

The protests in South Africa during the summit itself have followed the pattern of mobilisations at other international summits - most of the protestors are local and the key issues are those that concern their daily battle for survival. Counter-summit events and international participation in the actions build solidarity with these campaigns which have a life beyond the media glare.

While the summit itself seems extremely unlikely to have any positive results, the protests

have recorded victories. The original stance of the South Africa government was to ban the main demonstrations of August 31, due to march from Alexandria township to Sandton, as well as to mete out repression to protests taking place earlier.

Demonstrators were only to be permitted in one small - 1.8 metre - area, named a "struggle pen" in which demonstrators could be easily controlled.

In this, the ANC seem not only to want to establish themselves as "safe hands for business" in the eyes of the rest of the capitalist club, but also as just as intolerant of dissent as the US or Italian states.

Repression had any rate been building up against the most effective opponents of the government - for example 50 anti-electricity privatisation activists in Soweto were jailed in April following a march they organised. While bail was granted one week later following massive protests, these campaigners together with 36 others are still facing charges arising out of these events.

Arrests

This wave of arrests began before the summit itself, with around 100 veterans of the ANC being arrested in advance of a planned march in Cape Town on August 16 and two days of mass arrests greeting mobilisations from the Landless Peoples movement on August 21 and 22 in which hundreds were jailed.

All in all, in the 2 months leading up to the summit more than 500 protestors were imprisoned. The Anti-Privatisation Forum also came under the spotlight when its Johannesburg office was visited by the head of the South African National Intelligence Agency.

On Sunday 25, the police fired stun grenades on a peaceful

demonstration by candlelight outside Wits University, sending four people to hospital, and leaving children traumatised on the scene. The march was itself calling for the right to protest and the end of censorship.

This act of vicious repression was conducted despite the presence of noted international NGO activists and intellectuals and the global media coverage. The day after there was widespread condemnation of the police behaviour.

As well as using the heavy hand of police batons, the South African government was happy to enlist the support of the local media.

Anti-globalisation activists were dismayed that papers like The Sowetan seemed to be swallowing the government's line. On August 27, the front page of the paper carried the banner headline "Government warns marchers" and a photograph carried the caption "militant groups" that will "stop at nothing to disrupt the WSSD".

Violent police

As a reply written by Indymedia South Africa pointed out, the only people who had shown themselves prepared to stop at nothing were the South African police in their violent attacks on demonstrators. The South African government followed in the footsteps of previous hosts of these international junkies in spreading ridiculous rumours as to what was being planned by protestors to justify their own actions.

They attempted to suggest that the protestors were mainly white middle class international summit hoppers - an only slightly new twist on the misinformation spread at other international protests.

But all these attempts at intimidation were clearly targeted at silencing voices opposing the government's policies and practices. In fact they awakened still louder protests, not only in South Africa but across the world.

Actions took place demanding the release of the prisoners and supporting their demands in Britain, Argentina, Mauritius, Canada, Germany and elsewhere. As a result the government was forced to release the detainees and allow the A31 marches to go ahead as planned.

Phil Ward

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg was convened to review "progress" in meeting the commitments made by governments resulting from the Rio summit in 1992.

The Rio summit met amid a flurry of diplomatic activity following the 1990 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a gathering of scientists who model world climate change resulting from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Growing concern over global warming led to heightened ecological awareness.

The 1987 report "Our Common Future" by Labour ex-Prime Minister of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland was also influential. This report first gave common currency to the term 'sustainable development', and tried to analyse the role of poverty and inequality in environmental destruction, in contrast to earlier environmental studies, which were basically completely reactionary in their approach.

This growing environmental awareness was expressed in the UK in the Green Party obtaining an incredible 15% of the national vote in the 1989 European elections.

Rio may have played a role in defusing the pressure for action as a result of these events, but the WSSD finally exposes the limitations of the "expert reports and international diplomacy" approach to dealing with the ecological crisis.

Any review of Rio cannot escape from the complete failure of international capital to meet its commitments in the four areas where there was meant to be some action:

- Stabilising CO2 emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 (for industrialised countries). This was later amended at Kyoto to overall targeted reductions of 5.2% on 1990 levels by 2010, which in turn is nowhere near the third IPCC report's recommendation that worldwide emissions be reduced by 60%.

- Implementing "national sustainable development strategies" (Agenda 21).

- Increasing overseas aid from the OECD countries to 0.7% of GNP.

- Adopting and implementing a convention to protect biodiversity.

The draft political declaration (http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/docs/documents/summit_docs.html) makes some vague generalisations about the last three of these but does not mention Kyoto explicitly, presumably as a result of US pressure. The declaration then offers some pious hopes about how trade liberali-



Summit of rank hypocrisy



South Africa's Thabo Mbeki

sation and globalisation should be used to promote sustainable development and not inequality.

As we reported in the last *Socialist Outlook*, the US is pushing for a commitment to supporting GM technology. This is touted in many quarters as a "cure" for the agricultural problems that could be caused by climate change (increase in crop pests and changes in water supply and temperature).

This may cause some friction at the conference, but the issue is largely symbolic, as the multinationals and their client governments are going to carry on with business as usual, irrespective of the pious declarations coming out of the WSSD.

The Johannesburg summit is likely to mark the beginning of the end for the strategy of lobbying for more radical interna-

tional agreements, adopted by many environmental and development campaigners and NGOs.

This is likely to impact on the anti-globalisation movement, which has been an uneasy coalition of reformist "lobbyists" and anti-capitalists.

Already, a debate on the issues of development, globalisation, trade and the environment has arisen as a result of Oxfam launching an international campaign for the South to have more access to the North's markets. Oxfam argues "international markets, like national markets, can be made to work for the poor by challenging power relationships".

In a complex debate, the Philippine activist Walden Bello chides Oxfam for playing into the WTO's hands by providing an excuse for the latter to exchange some access to the North's markets for increased liberalisation in agriculture and services.

Bello argues that the mass movement in the North and South must be mobilised to prevent this. Green socialist Colin Hines adds, "instead of drawing the conclusion that more control over the domestic economy is

the best way to ensure poverty reduction, [Oxfam] calls for countries to increase dependence on exports".

This debate has a direct bearing on several environmental issues. Hines points out the transport (and therefore carbon dioxide emissions) implications of increased focus on South-North trade.

To this can be added degradation of land, which is generally more fragile in the South, and increased deforestation. George Monbiot has drawn attention to the

obscurity of white landowners in Zimbabwe growing tobacco for export during a famine. Finally, increased emphasis on exports will be accompanied by increased power of the large landowners in the South.

These debates about the environment and neo-liberal globalisation pose a number of questions for revolutionary Marxists. We have to be able to provide a series of concrete political demands that address the central contradiction of sustainable development that capitalism is incapable of overcoming: how to ensure a rising quality of life for the masses of the world, while at the same time protecting the environment.

The demands must not conflict with the immediate interests of the working class and their allies, who are the only forces that can challenge capitalist power. We therefore oppose measures, such as fuel tax increases, or congestion charging, which discriminate against poorer people. Instead, we propose collective solutions, such as free public transport.

Our cities must be restructured to reduce the need to travel long distances. Housing must be socialised and flexible so that people can move easily. More collective forms of living, that promote sharing of consumer goods and reduced energy use through efficient use of space, must be developed.

Laws that defend the bourgeois nuclear family must therefore be repealed in favour of ones that promote collective living. Any reduction in production (especially in the car industry and all its supporting industries) must be met with a reduced working week, with no loss of pay.

A radical land reform should be implemented that promotes collective agriculture and the repopulation of the countryside. This land reform is essential if agriculture is to be flexible and food production is to be protected from the ravages of climate change. Such demands are relevant both North and South.

More hot air on climate change?

*A note on the "Climate Change Debate": It may be objected that socialists, or socialist organisations, should not take a position on the truth or otherwise of the assertion that human activity is making a major contribution to global climate change though our emissions of GHGs.

It is true that we should probably refrain from claiming that the issue is 100% certain and we should also avoid the elitist trap of claiming that participating in environmental debates requires a certain level of scientific knowledge.

Climate change is a political, not a technical issue. What is clear, however, is that if no action is taken until near certainty about climate change is reached, and the cause is found to be GHGs, then remedial action will be much more difficult.

It is therefore better to act to reduce GHG emissions immediately.

What is sustainable development?

The common definition, from the Brundtland Report of sustainable development is "development which meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Brundtland argued that overcoming poverty and inequality required sustained economic growth both North and South. By growth she meant the capitalist definition – increase in Gross National Product (GNP) – not what a socialist would use – improved quality of life and access to use values.

New Labour, therefore says in its sustainable development strategy: "Our economy must continue to grow. We need increased prosperity, so that everyone can share in higher living standards and job opportunities in a fairer society." Their main indicator of sustainability is GNP.

Ultimately, New Labour relies on technology and the market to deal with the environmental crisis. A good example is Eggborough, which was to use a new process to burn willow and produce electricity.

After the building of the plant and using government grants to get farmers to plant the crops, the government allowed its closure with the loss of 40 jobs on August 8, when its backers, Yorkshire Water, decided it was not financially viable.

New Labour's approach has angered many environmentalists, for example Friends of the Earth, who have an alternative sustainability indicator, which can be studied interactively at their web site (http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/sustainable_development/progress/).

Blair's Junket

Blair's junket to Johannesburg contains a number of his corporate cronies, including Bill Alexander, chief executive of Thames Water, Sir Robert Wilson, executive chairman of mining company Rio Tinto, and Chris Fay, non-executive director of Anglo American, another of the world's mining giants.

The three companies have been involved in a number of high-profile and damaging accusations over their environmental record.

Thames Water, the largest water company in the UK with 12 million customers, has been prosecuted by the UK Government's Environment Agency

watchdog for pollution on more than 20 occasions since 1996. It has also been fiercely criticised in the past for operating in Indonesia while President Suharto was in power.

Rio Tinto, the largest mining conglomerate in the world, is well known for its poor environmental record in many parts of the world – including in Southern Africa. It is currently pursuing a uranium mine at a World Heritage Site in Australia.

Mining giant Anglo American has been embroiled with planned operations in Peru and pollution in Zambia. The company, once a pillar of apartheid South Africa, has left behind a legacy of billions of dollars of damage to the environment and communities around Johannesburg itself, and is only beginning to respond to community pressure demanding AIDS treatment for employees.

A leaked EU report shows why they are going. Privatisation of services under GATS is on the table in Sandton, as well as an opportunity for business to cleanse its image.

Meanwhile, most South Africans will continue to confront the effects of these policies cutting off water and electricity to millions of people, as the privatised Earth



Brazil elections –

**Revolutionary
candidate refuses
to stand alongside
her mother's old
bosses!**

Heloisa Helena is coming to the end of her term as Senator for the north-eastern Brazilian state of Alagoas. Until a few weeks ago she was standing as the Workers Party (PT) candidate for Governor of the state. To most people's surprise, she looked like having a serious chance of winning.

But then the PT's presidential candidate, Lula, and the majority leadership, decided to impose an electoral alliance across the country with a minor but distinctly right-wing, bourgeois group, the Liberal Party (PL). It's a rag-bag organisation, which likes to lean on its nationalist credentials.

It includes a multimillionaire textile magnate, the founder of the main yellow trade union confederation, and the owners of a second-rank media empire – loosely bound together by an allegiance to the evangelical Universal Church of God. This cast-list was too much for Heloisa. She resigned as candidate for governor.

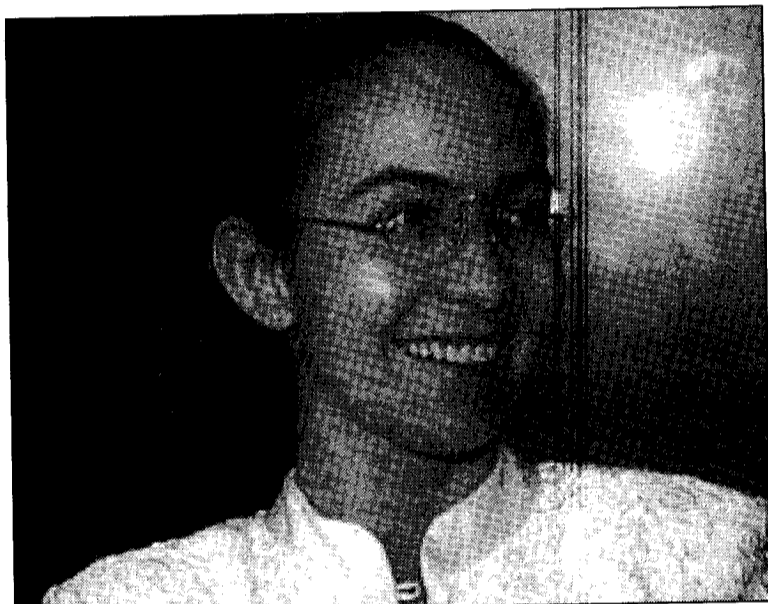
All of these manoeuvres from the majority leadership of the PT are in the context of the forthcoming election – the first round of which will take place at the beginning of October. Opinion polls show Lula likely to win the second round. The multi-millionaire textile magnate is now standing as Lula's running mate for vice president.

Then there was the IMF bail out of Brazil's flagging economy – when the much more acute situation in Argentina has been constantly turned down for funds. But three quarters of the money will only be paid out after the elections – a clear message that anyone who deviates from current austerity measures will be punished.

Heloisa's stand hardly came as a surprise. She had built a formidable reputation in her home state as the scourge of the local oligarchy. In 1997 she became the figurehead of a campaign of mass demonstrations to oust one particularly corrupt governor.

Her surprise election to the senate a year later, on the back of this campaign, turned her into one of the best known figures on the left of the Workers Party. She regularly crossed swords on the national news with the grandees of the Brazilian political establishment, many of them from the old sugar planting families of her own north-eastern region.

Heloisa Helena: "If this alliance is imposed in Alagoas, albeit with a broken heart, I will not be able to stand for Governor of the state"



Her exposure of malpractice by the most powerful of these figures – then the President of the Senate – led to his expulsion from the Senate and helped break up the governing coalition earlier this year.

Heloisa Helena is a member of Socialist Democracy, the tendency of Fourth International supporters within the PT.

Below we print a part of the moving speech she made in the Brazilian senate to explain why she

could not stand for election alongside the local representatives of the PL.

It illustrates the deep tensions within the Brazilian Workers' Party – between the leaders who are so desperate to project an image of themselves as "responsible" candidates for power, and a large part of the membership and wider public, who expect a Lula victory to bring fundamental social and political change to Brazil.

"I need to speak very directly today to the people of Alagoas, because I love that state. Everything I am I learnt there.

"When girls like me are born in Alagoas, they are already marked out either for prostitution or the maid's quarters. Yet the people of Alagoas made it possible for me to reach this Senate. I was lucky. I never had to walk the streets of my state and sell my body for a plate of food.

"But I did frequent the maid's quarters, and it was there, from my mother, that I took my first lessons in honesty. I remember my mother staying up late into the night, sewing those beautiful blue sequins onto Madame's dresses. I begged her to let me have just one to put on the dress of my only doll. But my mother ticked me off because any sequins left over had to be returned to Madame.

"I learnt a lot in Alagoas. The geography of the houses for example. We lived in the maid's quarters. We weren't allowed beyond the kitchen. I remember peering down the length of the corridor at a beautiful shelf of books, which no one ever touched, and trying to make out what they were about.

"It was in Alagoas too that I found my first real sources of knowledge, from a communist and from the history of the people of God. The communist was that great Brazilian novelist, Graciliano Ramos.

"The other I learnt from the Dutch nuns and Brazilian priests in my home town. They all taught me the persistence and courage of the oppressed, the excluded, the humiliated, of the survivors. ...

"Everyone has followed the endless debates in the PT over a possible alliance with the PL. That chapter is now closed. We will submit to the decision of the majority of the National Leadership. We will be there, working as hard as we can, to promote Lula's campaign, because we have no doubt that this is a chance to make this wonderful country a real homeland for the great majority of Brazilians.

"But unfortunately, in Alagoas, it will not be possible to implement this alliance. ...It's not that we are masochists in Alagoas, and want to go it alone. But there are limits. We cannot, and will not, ally ourselves in Alagoas with a group of low-life lackies of the local sugar mill owners, who look down on and insult me and my comrades in the PT.

"We will not ally ourselves with people who have been named by the parliamentary inquiry into drug trafficking, "investigating the existence of organised crime in various Brazilian states, involving businessmen, politicians, magistrates and police officers, all connected to the narcotics trade, theft, murder and other crimes". ...

"If this alliance is imposed in Alagoas, albeit with a broken heart, I will not be able to stand for Governor of the state. We will continue to campaign, with passion and joy, for Lula.

"But the day that I – in order to stand as candidate for Governor – have to ask for permission, permission from the mill-owners' to step out onto their varanda, or permission from their hired gunmen to leave the kitchen, then I will lose all moral authority to look my children in the face and tell them that "the greatest satisfaction of any thinking person is to be utterly scrupulous in all they do and all they think".

"Let me use more popular language, so that people in the backlands of Alagoas can understand the situation.

"The day that the state's sugar barons put a halter round my neck and tell me which way to go, that day I will lose the right to teach my children what I have taught them all their lives, to face the world with pride on their faces and love in their hearts."

**News
form the
World
Social
Forum**

**Another Asia
is Possible**

Two hundred representatives of grassroots organisations, social movements, trade unions and NGOs from across Asia met in Bangkok in the middle of August to discuss how economic globalisation and militarisation are intensifying poverty, violence and repression. It was an important step towards the Asia Social Forum that will take place in Hyderabad, India, from 2-5 January 2003. Like the European Social Forum in Florence in November, it's all part of the move to extend and

deepen the movement that emerged in Porto Alegre.

**WTO and
privatisation
as priority
targets**

In the course of the discussions in Bangkok, Walden Bello of the Philippines and Focus on the Global South, won much support for his suggestion that the World Trade Organisation is currently the weak link in the chain of corporate globalisation. He said "it is vital to stop the train of trade liberalisation ... and the only way to stop that train is to derail it at the next WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun next September".

This priority fits neatly with the decision of ATTAC in Europe – taken at their meeting during the Seville EU Summit – to make a top priority their campaign against GATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services, in other words the WTO's attempt to



Marching against neo-liberalism in Buenos Aires

force governments to privatise public services). ATTAC also identified the WTO's Cancun ministerial summit in Mexico next year as a strategic target for the movement.

Obviously this needn't detract from the importance being attached by much of the movement, especially in Europe, to mobilising for the G8 Summit in Paris a few months earlier. But it does suggest the need for clear thinking and clear discussion about exactly where and when most pressure can be brought to bear. In addition to bigger and bigger demos,

nothing will do more to build the movement than a few victories, temporary or tactical though these may be. Seattle itself showed that.

**Thematic
Forums –
Neo-liberalism
and War**

In the days immediately following that meeting in Bangkok, the International Council of the World Social Forum also met in Bangkok –

on their agenda, the organisation of the 3rd World Social Forum, to be held again in Porto Alegre from 23-28 January 2003, as well as two thematic forums around the movement's two main themes of neo-liberal globalisation and war.

**Argentina
Thematic
Forum**

The first of these, on neo-liberalism, has already taken place in Buenos Aires. It brought together thousands of grassroots activists from a broad array of Argentinean social movements to discuss two main themes – firstly, how and why Argentina became the most dramatic proof yet of the bankruptcy of neo-liberal policies; secondly, the laboratory of alternatives that the extraordinary and varied growth of self-organisation amongst the Argentinean people has become.

This Argentinean Forum

counted on an important international presence, including a number of guest speakers from the left wing of the Brazilian Workers Party and CUT trade union federation, from ATTAC in France and the MRG in the Spanish State (in all of which comrades of the Fourth International played a significant part).

**Palestine
Thematic
Forum**

The other thematic forum – on war – is perhaps an even more audacious initiative. The meeting in Bangkok agreed to begin discussing again the possibility of organising such forum in the Palestinian city of Ramallah this December.

If it happens, this could indeed be an unparalleled opportunity for the movement to demonstrate that – in the face of the war drums being beaten in Washington and London – another world is possible.

Bacardi: shooting more than the breezers?

Killer firm that hates Castro

Bacardi, the Hidden War, by Hernando Calvo Ospina, Pluto Press, reviewed by Paul Wilcox

HERNANDO Calvo Ospina's book traces the history of Bacardi, the world's largest rum company, with annual sales of over 240 million bottles in over 170 countries. Its history stretches back to 1862 when it was founded in Santiago de Cuba by Jose Leon Bouteillier and two brothers – Jose and Facundo Bacardi. For over 40 years it has been in the business of trying to overthrow Fidel Castro and the Cuban Government. Mind you won't see that in the adverts.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 profoundly changed economic and social life in Cuba. The revolution created a planned economy, with virtually all industry, large commerce, and land holdings removed from private ownership and run for the common welfare instead of for private profit.

For over 40 years revolutionary Cuba has been a thorn in the side of the Yankee imperialists. And since the fall of the Soviet Union, it has stood alone against history's most ruthless and most powerful imperialist behemoth just 90 miles from its shores.

Cuba, with a population of just over 11 million, has been under an "illegal" blockade for nearly half a century, as the US government backed by its big business handlers has tried to drive Cuban people into submission.

This has failed: despite immense pressure from the US and global capitalism – the Cuban people have defended their gains. They support Castro – who unlike many in the region who had sold out their beliefs and their people, has remained a fighter for communism in a world of capitalist reaction.

It is important to understand that the Bacardi empire had left Cuba prior to the revolution. Ospina's book gives us a very good account of the Bacardi company national roots. Bacardi would like us to believe that it is a product of Cuba – when in fact it is in all senses a multi-national.

The book sheds light on the Yankee domination of the Bacardi business, which is based in Bahamas, and uses its "Cuban roots" to hide the fact that it is tool of Yankee imperialism. But insofar as it has a national base, it is neither Cuba nor the Bahamas, but the United States of America. Ospina's book also sheds

light on the US and its involvement in terrorism, while we wait for the present president of the US, George W Bush, to bomb Iraq in the name of "fighting terrorism". It shows the US and its relationship with Bacardi for what it is – and exposes the US itself as a terrorist state.

In fact Bacardi is the bit player in all this – the book unravels the complex relationships in the terrorist web, in which the US government, Cuban exiles and the Mafia are all linked to the Bacardi company, in the one aim they all share and that is profit.

All the players in the game wish Cuba to return to the "good old days" of the gangster island that it was under Batista.

Mind you some of the terrorist attempts were a complete farce. Jose Pepin Bosch, the boss of Bacardi in the mid-1960s, planned a bombing raid on Cuban oil refineries to leave Cuba in darkness and ensure "a state of national subversion would be created".

Unfortunately for Bosch the B-26 bomber he bought did not have rockets. He searched most of South America to no avail, until the Brazilian dictatorship gave him two rockets.

With the plane ready to take off from Costa Rica (a favoured place for the CIA terrorist activities) the bombing run was delayed due to the fact that on the second page of the New York Times

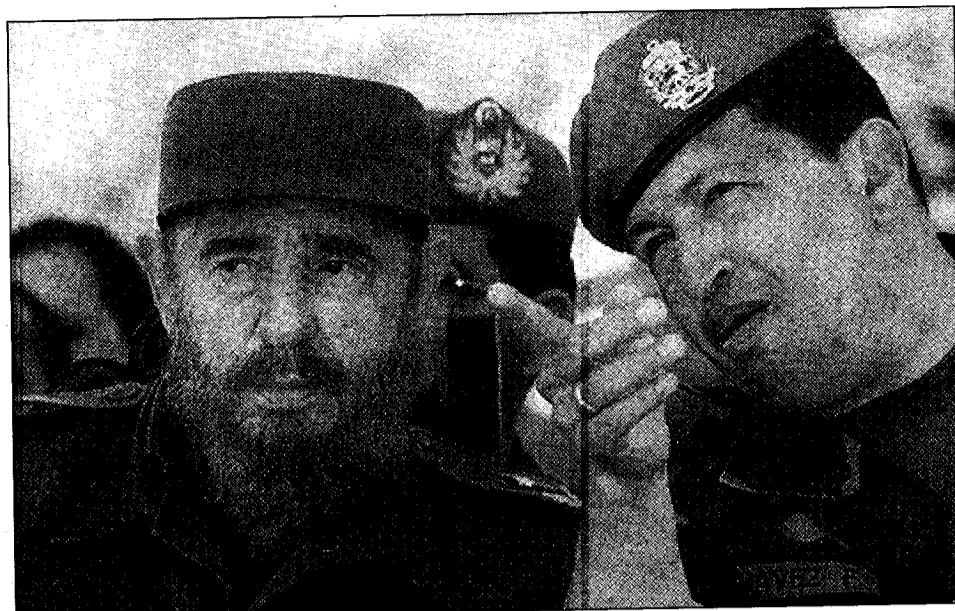
was a picture of the said aeroplane. Facing a scandal, the Costa Rican government had the plane withdrawn.

For the most part, this farcical approach was not the norm. The Bacardi company was to make use of the US congress and especially senators Jesse Helms and Dan Burton, who gave us the Helms Burton Law which imposes the economic boycott of Cuba.

Bacardi has admitted that it "has historically supported the embargo", and that they made their lawyers available on request to advise on technical aspects of drafting the Helms Burton Law. By supporting such laws, Bacardi are helping to keep alive a policy that the American Association of World Health has said causes deaths among children in Cuba.

The fact that all this evidence is in the public domain sheds light on the corrupt nature of the so called "free world". Information is probably the most powerful tool that the capitalists have. They control the flow of information through governments and the media.

There is no doubt that without Bacardi, there would be no Cuban American National Foundation (CANF). CANF was set up in the 1980s by Bacardi with the help of the Reagan administration. Its fore-runner was the Cuban Representatives in Exile (CRE) which was set



Still a thorn in the side of US imperialism: Castro (left) with Venezuelan leader Chavez

up by Bacardi boss Pepin Bosch – himself once a minister in Batista's government.

The CRE were involved in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, in which a CIA-led force of over 1,200 mercenaries and supported by US warships, was defeated by the Cuban people and armed forces led personally by Fidel Castro.

Bacardi has also been involved in countless other terrorist atrocities, constant assassination attempts on the Cuban leadership and chemical warfare against the Cuban People. In one such attack an epidemic of Dengue fever in May 1981 killed 101 children. A CIA agent later admitted bringing the virus to Cuba.

Pinochet

Pinochet's regime in Chile funded and trained Cuban counter revolutionaries, including terrorist Orlando Bosch, a known CIA-agent and friend of Jesse Helms, who was involved in the CRE and was responsible for the bombing of a Cuban Airlines plane, which was dynamited in mid flight in 1976. The bodies of 73 people were strewn across Barbados.

The only thing about this book at which I would point a big critical finger, is the absence of any reference to

the Soviet Union. You cannot separate Cuba from the Soviet Union, which played the part both of the saviour and of the oppressor in the continuing story of the Cuban revolution.

Moscow gave economic support after the blockade started, but they also forced bureaucratic structures on Cuba and its people. (Not that I'm arguing that the Cuban leadership did not have a part to play in these bureaucratic deformities).

But this debate is missing in the book. In one sense this is good, as it opens up the story of the corrupt and murderous Bacardi company to a wider audience without going through the old polemic of what sort of state Cuba is. But the debate is still valid now, perhaps more than ever.

For anybody who has a little knowledge of Cuba or for the new radicalised generation of anti-capitalists and anybody who is opposed to Bush's cynical "war against terrorism" this is an excellent book, well worth a read.

But it's more than just a book: it is a campaign tool. At the present time there is a debate in the National Union of Students (NUS) about getting Bacardi banned in student unions.

Recently the commercial arm of the National Union of

Students voted to accept a three-year sole supply deal with Bacardi. The deal, worth around £625,000, means that student bars will in future only stock Bacardi white rum and not Havana Club, which is produced by the Cuban government in partnership with French drinks giant Pernod Ricard.

Last year, student unions from Oxford, Sheffield, London and Middlesex universities asked the NUS to stop buying Bacardi, in line with its ethical mandate. It is vital for all students to support this call.

Whatever your view of the Cuban leadership, we must support the Cuban people and defend their revolution against Bacardi, the US and all imperialist aggression.

We must oppose the economic blockade, the continued presence on Cuban soil of imperialist troops (in the Guantanamo base), Washington's covert aid to terrorist squads operating out of Florida, and any direct move by the US war-machine against Cuba.

Down with the multi-nationals and HANDS OFF CUBA.

Join the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, C/O Red Rose Club 129 Seven Sisters Road, London, N7 7QJ
www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk

Lifting the lid on rural reaction

The Rich at Play: Fox hunting, Land ownership, and the 'Countryside Alliance'. Published by Revolutions Per Minute, £4.

(www.red-star-research.org.uk).

Reviewed by John Lister

AS THE SO-CALLED Countryside Alliance promises to mobilise hundreds of thousands in another march through the streets of London later this month, this booklet is a useful reminder of the politics and practices defended by this strange organisation.

"Neither green nor pleasant" is the summary headline for one chapter, which points to the eagerness with which fascist and far right organisations have been keen to latch onto what is essentially a rural backlash movement in defence of fox-hunting.

Populist

Just as fascist parties themselves make use of issues affecting the poor and working people in order to build more populist support – but also turn these issues in a reactionary way – so the Countryside Alliance has expressed concern about the loss of jobs, the break-up of rural communities and the affordability of rural housing.

But as The Rich at Play points out

many of the toffs, big farmers, aristocrats, bankers and estate agents who lead the Countryside Alliance have themselves made vast fortunes selling off or renting out high-priced land and housing to wealthy "townies".

It offers a detailed "Who's Who" of the CA's inner core, showing that in the final analysis almost all of the key players within the Alliance are active around one issue: the defence of the right to hunt foxes with dogs.

Landowners

The predominance of landowners in the organisation is also confirmed by the Alliance's hostility to the Right to Roam, while insisting on the right of the hunt to roam freely in pursuit of the fox.

The pamphlet runs through some of the historical background to the issue of fox hunting and land ownership, with some fascinating details.

It points out that far from representing some ancestral "British" freedom, the central assumptions of fox hunting – that the private pleasure of the wealthy few takes precedence over the interests of the majority; and that landowners should be free to do whatever they liked on their own land – date back to William the Conqueror and the Norman invasion.

William, a passionate hunter, estab-

lished the early rituals of hunting, including the wearing of elaborate and expensive costume: he also brought in draconian laws against poachers, including castration and blinding. By the mid twelfth century almost a quarter of England was royal forest, largely set aside for hunting.

But early hunters pursued edible deer rather than foxes. Fox hunting with dogs is a relatively recent innovation dating back no more than 200 years.

Like deer hunting, it required vast areas of land, and has always been an expensive hobby, open only to the well-to-do.

And while all proletarian blood sports (cock-fighting, bear-bating, dog fighting) have been made illegal, the "aristocratic" forms of blood sports remain, including the wholesale slaughter of game birds with shotguns.

Pheasant strangler

The booklet reminds us that the Queen has been pictured wringing the necks of pheasants, of Prince Philip's eagerness for the hunt, and of Charles, Camilla and other Royals riding as the 'unspeakable in pursuit of the unearable'.

But it also looks at the scandalous inequality of land ownership, which of course reinforces the oppression of the

rural poor. Throughout England and Wales 0.28% of the population owns 64% of the land. A grand total of 189,000 people own 88% of the land in Britain (40 million acres).

They receive vast subsidies, totalling £4 billion a year from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. And though Tony Blair's half-hearted reform of the House of Lords has removed most of the hereditary peers from the House of Lords, nothing has been done to diminish their billions in land and property assets.

Gentry

The booklet – in a rather repetitive but bright style – reminds us that the Countryside Alliance is not the voice of the rural dispossessed, but a front for the leisure interests of the landed gentry and assorted business people.

But its politics are a bit of a jumble, and, falling short of offering any more detailed programme to mobilise rural workers on an independent basis, it is a little bit disappointing in its conclusions, offering only a stripped down 3-point policy:

- * A right to roam and repossession of the land
- * Stop foxhunting with hounds
- * The right to hunt the rich!

Ceri Evans, 1965 - 2002

"The most complete Welsh revolutionary"

Terry Conway

The celebration of Ceri's life that took place in Pontypridd two weeks after his death heard an array of speakers from very divergent backgrounds pay tribute both to the enormous political contribution that Ceri made to Welsh politics, but also to the personal impact he had on everyone who had the privilege to know him as a friend. The irony was that almost no one else could have brought together so many leading members of Plaid Cymru and of the Welsh Labour Party with militants of the Fourth International from both Wales and England as well as messages from further afield. Ceri would have loved to join in the conversations.

The Fourth International and the International Socialist Group are weakened by Ceri's death. While for us an understanding of the national question is key to our marxism, those who can develop a concrete analysis of their in own countries and so enrichen our overall understanding are a particularly valuable asset.

I treasure the book of Lorca's writings Ceri gave me when I visited him earlier this year in the Rhondda. Here too was someone who had a passionate relationship with the place he was from but was also a confirmed internationalist. Here too was someone for whom political ideas were not just found in theory but in song, in dream, in all the small things of everyday life.

I remember Ceri as some one who was never satisfied that he fully got across his message across, impatient to know that he had fully convinced me of his argument. I on the other hand always wanted more time to reflect.

I remember him as I remember him as a friend as well as a comrade. I hope he knew how much he meant to so many people.

Donations can be made to the Ceri Evans Memorial Fund c/o 2 Wellington Mews, Wellington St. Cardiff CF11 9BE or contact edgeorge@usuarios.retecal.es

Ed George, Darren Williams, Leanne Wood and Brendan Young

IT IS DIFFICULT to make an objective assessment of the life of someone who has only just died, especially when that someone was as close to us – as a friend and comrade – as was Ceri Evans, who took his own life at the beginning of August at the age of 36. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mark his passing

Ceri was first drawn to revolutionary politics as a teenage activist in the anti-missiles movement of the early 1980s. He joined the International Marxist Group, British Section of the Fourth International, in 1981 – in the same month as his sixteenth birthday. From then until the day he died he remained a revolutionary socialist, an internationalist, a Marxist, and an irreconcilable atheist.

As a revolutionary socialist in Wales for over 20 years Ceri participated in a range of struggles. He played a prominent role in CND and Youth CND in the early 1980s. He was arrested on the picket line during the 1984-5 miners' strike. He worked full time for Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg. He acted as secretary of the Cardiff Miners' Support Group during the fight against pit closures in 1992. He was active in the struggle against the poll tax and against the Blair clique's rewrite of Clause Four.

For Ceri revolutionary socialism was nothing



Ceri with Leanne Wood

**"Though I am personally filled with despair I know there is hope in the political ideals that we share with millions around the world".
Ceri Evans August 2 2002**

without internationalism. He was a consistent opponent of British imperialism's presence in Ireland, which led him to oppose the Good Friday Agreement. He was infuriated by the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people. He recently came to the view that Palestine occupied the same place for the left today that Spain had in

the 1930s and suggested the setting up of a Medical Aid for Palestine campaign in Wales.

But Ceri was not just an 'activist', pursuing one 'good cause' after another. He wrestled with Marxist theory and came to a deep understanding of its fundamentals. For Ceri, not only was it true that 'without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice' but that Marxist theory, divorced and separated from practical living struggles, would only finish as meaningless dogma. The dialectical unity of theory and practice – the heart of the Leninist conception of revolutionary organisation – was at the core of his understanding of politics.

Ceri's foremost political contribution is in relation to the national question: both in general and specifically with regard to Wales. The IMG had taken – almost uniquely among the English-dominated revolutionary left in Wales – a serious and enquiring approach towards Welsh national identity, its history, and its consequences for revolutionary socialism.

Ceri built upon the work of the IMG and related it to the rise of national movements both in western Europe and in the former Soviet Union and East European 'people's democracies'. Aided by other comrades and by the work of the late Raymond Williams, he developed an understanding of how the struggle against national oppression lay at the heart of the struggle for socialist revolution.

Ceri favoured Welsh self government, expressed in the demand for a Constituent Welsh Assembly: an Assembly which would have

full power to decide on all aspects of its functioning and its international relations, without being subject to a veto from London.

His theoretical understanding was matched by a commitment to practical work. Ceri fought for a serious position on Welsh self-government within the Welsh Labour Party. He was a key instigator of Welsh Labour Action, a pressure group within the Labour Party set up to deepen policy on democratic accountability and representation, and on the powers that the Assembly would have.

Ceri was also a key figure in the Socialists Say Yes campaign, and he campaigned hard in the 1997 referendum itself. Such was his role that figures within Welsh Labour Action, Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Labour Party – including First Minister Rhodri Morgan – have acknowledged that without Ceri's efforts, it is moot whether Wales would have an Assembly today.

But Ceri vigorously opposed the fake 'regional' politics of the European Union with its meagre handouts and sham structures of representation. The united Europe that he fought for would be one in which there would be real democracy – with self-determination for the peoples of Europe guaranteed – and in which regional inequalities would be addressed on the basis of the needs of working people, not capital. To this end he was one of the central organisers of the demonstration held to counter the June 1998 EU Summit in Cardiff.

Ceri was not alone among socialists to be disappointed at the aftermath of the 1997 Assembly referendum – and especially with the way that the Labour left failed to use the positive result to consolidate a socialist politics in Wales. He decided that the Welsh Labour Party was no longer the best place for his energies.

Last February he publicly broke with Labour and joined Plaid Cymru – with the intention of organising with the left in Plaid to advance work-

ing class and national struggles throughout Wales (His letter of resignation can be read at <www.tribanoch.com>).

The degree to which the left in Plaid will build struggles and united fronts – and the correctness of Ceri's decision – remain to be proven. But to characterise his move as some kind of 'break from socialism' would be a travesty: a knee-jerk response based on a Greater British chauvinist economism which can only see in national struggles a diversion from the 'pure' class struggle. Revolutionaries must make tactical decisions about which mass organisations they participate in, flowing from their assessment of how best to advance the class struggle in specific social and political conditions. When national movements emerge, the working class must provide a lead. If it does not, other class forces will do so.

Ceri, who was Welsh-English bilingual, was brought up in Ynystawe and Swansea. He lived his adult life in Pontypridd and Cardiff, and briefly in the Rhondda. He worked as a researcher and lecturer in electronics at the University of Glamorgan. He was regarded as an expert in his field – control systems for gas turbines – and won prizes for his work in international academic competitions. Although he was no saint – he could be irascible in argument – he was also sensitive, witty, intelligent and engaging.

Ceri had been ill for over four years when he died. In 1998 he was diagnosed with Repetitive Strain Injury, which developed as an occupational injury – he couldn't get his department to give him a proper typing chair until it was too late. This was followed by the onset of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Over the past two years he suffered from depression – possibly as a consequence of his other illnesses. From March to June of this year he suffered a severe manic episode and although depressed, he appeared to be recovering recently. On 2 August however, he killed himself. It appears from his last actions that this was a considered decision. A note he left says that what prompted his suicide was despair brought on by fear of a future that could be filled with physical and mental pain.

Such are the facts of his death. But his closest friends believe he was let down badly by the

Sex, politics and Surrealism

mental health system, which provided no follow-up after his breakdown in March. He was particularly let down by the 'specialist' he went to for treatment of chronic fatigue. This man put him on a combination of anti-depressants, something regarded as dangerous in clinical psychiatry (See British National Formulary Section 4.3) because of the risk of triggering a manic attack – including by the so-called 'safe' SSRI's (the Prozac-type drugs). But he would not take calls from Ceri's partner when he reacted badly to the doubling of a drug dose in February.

This negligence was exacerbated by the stigma attached to mental illness, which inhibits discussion of mental ill health, drug treatments and their associated risks. If we are to avoid similar tragedies in the future, the left must take up the fight for user-led mental health services; and deal with mental illness if it arises in our own lives and the lives of our friends in an informed and candid way.

The mark of Ceri's contribution, and the deep respect and love with which he was held by friends and comrades alike, was evident at a memorial meeting held in Pontypridd just two weeks after his death. Close to 100 attended. Moving and often inspiring tributes were paid to his memory; and messages of condolence from all over the world were read out.

A Ceri Evans Memorial Fund was launched, with a view to publishing a collection of his writings.

Where do we go from here? One of Ceri's closest comrades reminded us at the memorial of Trotsky's words, written shortly before his assassination in 1940, with which Ceri, even right at the end, would have agreed: 'Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full.'

Honouring Ceri's memory surely means taking this message to our hearts, and fighting to realise it.

Thursday, 29 August 2002

A thread is broken

I lost one of the basic threads of my life with Ceri's death. He was the first Welsh fighter I met and the most complete Welsh revolutionist. I learned Welsh at the age of 13 or 14 back in the early 1950s. It was part of my self-education in the cultures of the oppressed. Welsh was the first language I learned from a book. I made the acquaintance of a Welsh bookseller who took it on himself to teach me about the world of Welsh culture and books.

I learned the dilemma of the Welsh people early and saw it in connection with the dilemma of my own people, the Irish, as did Ceri, who as his understanding of the Welsh national question deepened took up the study of the Irish language. I think that he had this in common with the best radical Welsh cultural activists.

When I started coming to Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, I looked for Welsh revolutionists. I was directed to Ceri, and we started a life-long friendship and correspondence. A shared knowledge of an oppressed culture also provided an intimate bond. When I was working as a full timer for the Fourth International in Europe, I sometimes wrote to him in Welsh.

He was delighted to be able to communicate with an international revolutionary centre in his own language. He had a deep sense of the oppression of Welsh speakers in imperialist and racist Britain. He came to understand it more and more consciously as he grew older.

In the last few years of his life, he came to a more complete understanding of the revolutionary meaning and potential of the fight for Welsh national liberation. He was excited about his conclusions, which he shared with me. He wanted me to come to Wales and help him to discuss them with the influential figures in the liberation movement that he was meeting, and help to put the question in a broader international context for them. I and he were disappointed that I could not come. My expulsion from Britain some years ago under the Thatcher regime made travelling to Wales just too difficult when the opportunity was there.

All working class and progressive movements have suffered blows from the reactionary governments put in power by the capitalist offensive that began in the 1970s. The Welsh nation suffered grievous wounds from Thatcher's crushing of the miners strike. There is no telling how many people have suffered because of the running down of the National Health Service, which the reactionaries hate but do not dare to destroy outright. This seems to be what finally cost Ceri his life.

When the workers and the oppressed regain their breath and fight back against this capitalist offensive, there are many wrongs that will have to be avenged. But some losses cannot be recovered. One of them is Ceri's life. But I look forward to meeting the Welsh revolutionists who will arise to take his place. Having known Ceri makes me confident that they are coming.

Gerry Foley

I feel obliged to reply to Jane Kelly's letter in response to my article 'Andre Breton and the Politics of Surrealism' (SO No.55 May-June 2002).

Jane cites two examples of Surrealism's shortcomings – the role of women, and Breton's attitude to homosexuality. She uses these examples to imply that while coming "very close to Trotsky's politics in the 1930s", the Surrealists were really a rather reactionary bunch.

I'll deal with Breton's "homophobia" first. While it's true that Breton personally found it difficult to deal with the question of homosexuality, it's also true that there were a number of openly gay and bisexual members of the Paris circle – they remained Breton's close allies and were fully accepted as group members.

Early on in the life of the Paris group sexuality was openly debated, in a way that was quite remarkable for its time –



this was 1928, not 1968 (see 'Investigating Sex', Verso, 1992).

Jane is perhaps being naïve when she criticises Breton for his views on the subject, given that most revolutionaries up to the 1960s tended to accept the Freudian view of homosexual-

ity as problematic (even if they were liberal enough on the legal position of gays).

Breton must be seen in the context of his time if we are to approach him from a Marxist (rather than a moralistic, abstract) perspective.

Jane's comments on the position of women in the Surrealist movement seem to echo the studies by bourgeois feminist critics that came out in the 1980s – studies that were just as hostile to revolutionary politics as they were to Surrealism.

The notion that women were oppressed fellow-travellers within the movement has fallen out of favour as more work has been done on the question.

Penelope Rosemont's recent collection of writing by women Surrealists – 'Surrealist Women - An International Anthology' (University of Texas Press, 1998) – firmly and definitively

buries the myth that women were junior partners.

True, this is often how they were seen from the outside – by academics, by male art critics, by bourgeois feminists – indeed by all those who had a vested interest in denigrating the exceptional work (in both the visual and poetic fields) that women Surrealists had done. But within the groups themselves women often played a key role.

One final point. Jane claims that "few [women Surrealists] confronted their own, female sexuality in the way that Bellmer, with his Dolls, investigated his male sexuality." Now this is a bizarre statement.

The paintings of Dorothea Tanning (see for example "Birthday", 1942), the self-portraits of the bisexual female photographer Claude Cahun (exploring sexual roles and masks), the novels of the contemporary writer Rikki Ducornet – these are more or less random samples of the incredibly powerful, diverse and brave work produced by women Surrealists in this area. Here as elsewhere I find Jane's criticisms unsustainable.

**Jay Woolrich,
Leicester**

Is it really "naïve" to criticise Breton?

Dear Outlook

A few comments on Jay's reply to Jane (above).

Whether specific bourgeois feminist criticisms of Surrealism are just or unjust (and some of them are likely to be just, especially given that they have partially filled a space left by the omissions of Marxist theory and historiography on these questions), I think that there is value in conducting a socialist feminist critique of Surrealism, or, more broadly, a critique in the light of the enrichment of Marxism by work on special oppression since the 1960s and 1970s.

Jay says, for example, that to criticise Breton for his attitude towards homosexuality is "naïve", given what most revolutionaries' attitudes were up until the sixties.

But it is not either naïve or moralistic to do this, if we genuinely think that Breton and others were wrong. Marxism is a materialist method for discovering the



Andre Breton (left) with Diego Rivera and Trotsky (right)

truth – its business is to identify past mistakes and analyse why they were made, in order to avoid repeating them.

For instance, it's arguable that no Marxist in the USSR in 1920-22 had adequate theoretical tools with which to grasp the phenomenon of bureaucratisation. Would we leave it there, simply saying that this was inevitable, or would we trace the roots and consequences of such a lapse?

Or let's take the Surrealists on racism and colonialism,

which I have just been reading about. The Surrealists rightly condemned the French Colonial Exposition of 1931 for turning the cultures of colonised peoples into an exotic spectacle.

Is it then wrong to point out that they perpetrated something similar in their own deployment of "indigenous art" in the context of the anti-imperialist counter-exposition?

Or that there is something suspect about the way that Breton and fellow-Surrealist Paul Eluard put up for sale

African and other art from their own collections during the Exposition?*

Should we say that it is "naïve" or anachronistic to criticise the Surrealists with the benefit of hindsight – or should we do just that, taking full advantage of later studies (often no doubt very bourgeois) on Western cultural appropriation and the politics of museum display?

Beyond this, I feel that there is a danger the debate might be polarised between those who feel that Surrealism is in its essence reactionary or in its essence revolutionary.

What if it's neither? What if "it" has the potentiality to go in a number of directions?

Perhaps Surrealism, like Marxism, is above all a method, and cannot be reified as a fixed thing. But then is it a single, revolutionary method? I would welcome further discussion on this.

**Comradely
Andrew Kennedy**

*Information is from an article by Jody Blake in the January Oxford Art Journal.

Socialism on the web

Socialist Outlook web site: www.labournet.org.uk/so
International Socialist Group: www.3bh.org.uk/ISG

Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 57. August 2002. 50p

OUTLOOK

Support the fire fighters!

Stand up for public services

It has been a summer of struggle for public sector workers – with the prospect of an autumn of unrest if the Fire Brigades Union proceeds as threatened with strike action insupport of their bold 40% pay claim. They already have a clear majority of public opinion behind them.

Two million local government workers have staged their first coordinated national strike since the 1970s. London council staff have staged four days of strike action pursuing their demand for a big increase in London Weighting payments to compensate for soaring costs of living in or even near the capital.

And in Scotland, health workers have been blazing a triumphant trail of action, following the lead of the successful medical secretaries' strikes for upgrading. Thousands of UNISON health workers in the Lothians and in Argyll and Clyde have won a ground-breaking £5 an hour minimum wage.

Hundreds more have fought the scab-

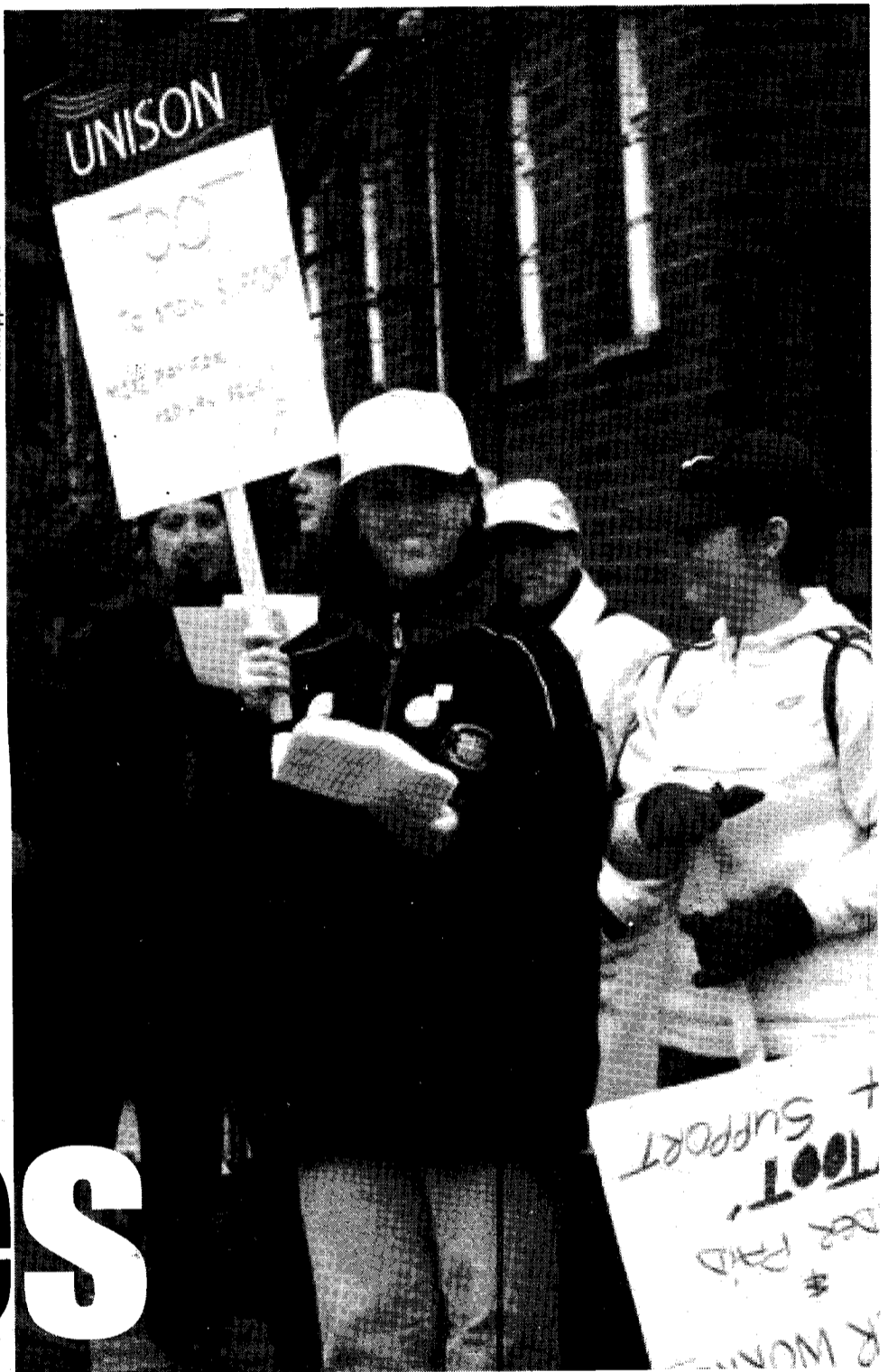
herding multinational Sodexo to a standstill and secured a big increase and the restoration of NHS pay at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. And elsewhere in Scotland the fight is being stepped up to drive out the handful of private contractors clinging on to hospital contracts.

But while public sector unions feel their new strength and begin to flex their muscles, evidence keeps coming that the private sector and Private Finance Initiative bring an expensive, embarrassing series of failures – whether it be gerry-built hospitals, or the chaos of the privately-run Criminal Records Bureau.

The fight must be stepped up to defend the public services and the staff who work in them against further waves of privatisation.

As the conference season looms again onto the horizon, the message to delegates at TUC and Labour Party conferences must be loud and clear: stand up for public services!

www.cphotos.net



DON'T ATTACK IRAQ
Freedom for Palestine
DEMONSTRATE SATURDAY 28
SEPTEMBER, 1PM, EMBANKMENT,
CENTRAL LONDON

Organised by the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain. Supported by CND, Tribune, NUJ, ASLEF and many others.

URGENT FINANCIAL APPEAL

In order to ensure the maximum turnout for this crucial demonstration, the Stop the War Coalition needs your help. We urgently need donations to meet the many costs involved in organising and organising the demonstration. Please send cheques today to Stop the War Coalition, PO Box 3739, London E5 8EJ. For more information on the demonstration and to find out more about how you can help build the movement to stop the planned war on Iraq, please phone the Stop the War Coalition office on 07951 235 915.

Stop the War Coalition • www.stopwar.org.uk • office@stopwar.org.uk