

NS 7

Socialist OUTLOOK

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Shock findings of new probe ...

A NEW probe has revealed clear evidence of life on what had been thought to be a barren and desolate landscape.

Many had argued that the poisonous atmosphere would make it impossible for even the most basic molecular life-forms to survive on the surface or in the deeper structures of what used to be known as the "red party".

Especially after the catastrophic eruptions of the last few years – which swept away many of the old landmarks and sheltering spaces – and the massive landslides, culminating on May 1, most observers had given up hope of finding any signs of life or activity.

But they were wrong. Despite the efforts of the Millbank Mafia to tighten their centralising grip on the Labour Party and crush any form of dissent as they cut the remaining links with the trade unions and the working class and float off as a US-style Democratic Party, stubborn activists are refusing to concede defeat.

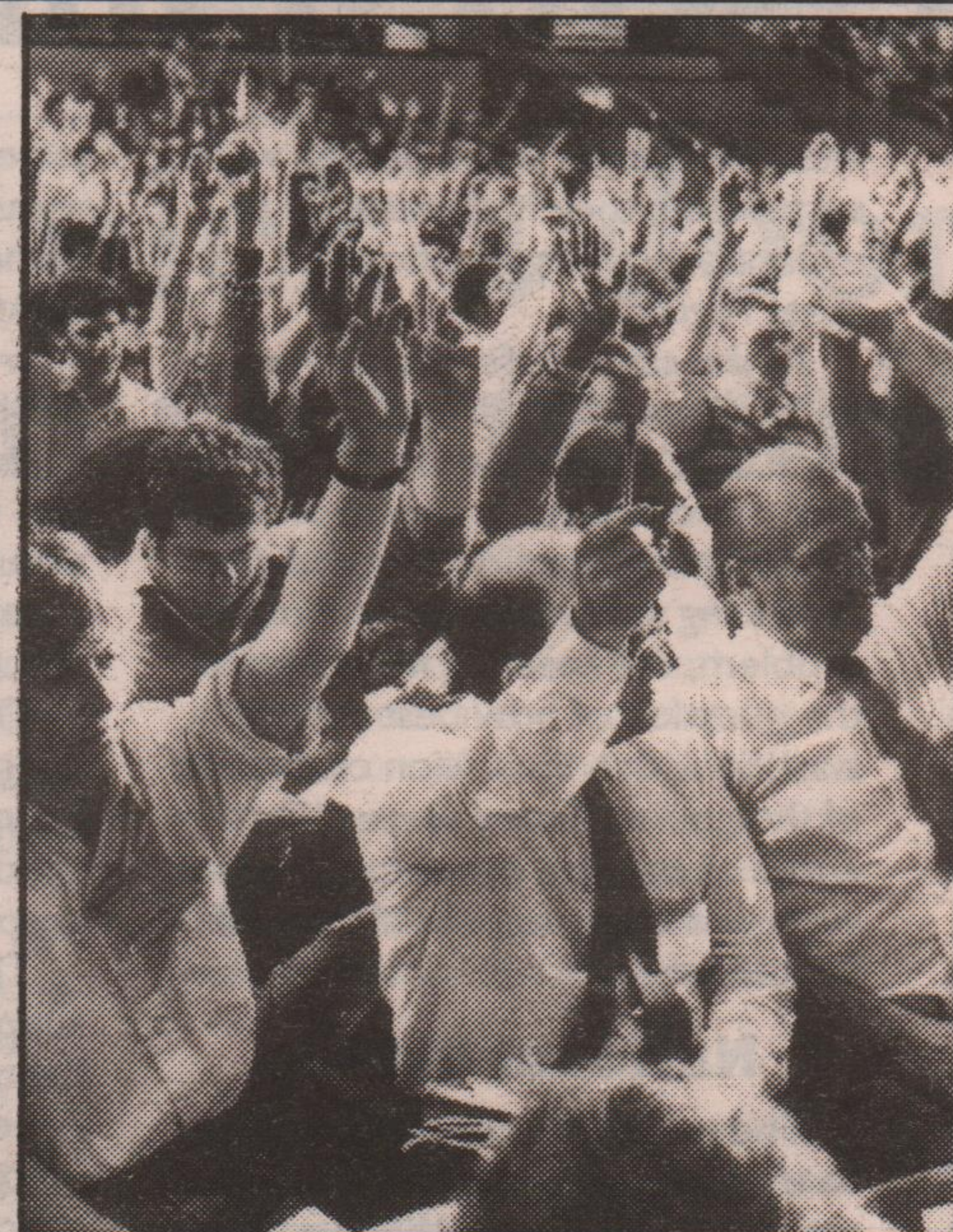
The first signs of rebellion have come from the trade unions, where a succession of conferences and policy-making committees during the summer have been voting with surprising strength to reject the controversial "Party into Power" document, through which Tony Blair's team seeks to neutralise the party's rank and file and quash the remaining powers of Labour conference.

But a much greater surprise to the Millbankers must have been the massive revolt against "Party into Power" by the section of the Party which Blair's New Labour offensive seemed to have totally invaded and subdued – the Constituency parties, which have given the scheme a massive thumbs down, and reflected this in resolutions to this

SIGNS OF LIFE IN LABOUR



Fighting for a genuine People's Europe: Alan Simpson MP with the Euro marches in Amsterdam last month



Hands up for the powers of Labour

year's conference.

There are even promising signs from the Parliamentary Labour Party, where an increasing number of MPs – from a range of different standpoints – are beginning to defy the threats and pressure of the whips, and to speak out independently against government policy on issues including the 'Welfare to Work' proposals, the Maastricht

Treaty and support for strikes. Ken Livingstone has even attacked Gordon Brown's Budget.

The unions, too, are showing the first signs of digging in to defend policies which run counter to Blair's policies. As we go to press thousands of BA staff are headed for a showdown with a scab-herding, union-busting management that is relying on the Tory laws which Blair

refuses to repeal. Public sector union UNISON has reaffirmed its opposition to the private financing of hospitals, even as Labour unveils its first list of NHS schemes to receive private funding.

There will be fresh opportunities for the emerging resistance to focus on key policies. The TUC will have to decide whether to learn from the BA fight and press on for the scrapping of the Tory anti-union laws. Labour Conference can link up the various sections of activists opposed to Blair's project to neuter the party.

By the winter, as NHS cuts begin to hit the headlines, councils start to draw up cuts in services for next year, and more teachers face redundancy, the early hints of life can flourish into a genuine fight for alternative, left wing and socialist policies.

That's why Millbank is so keen to stamp out all signs of dissent.

The freakish 'honeymoon' period, with Blair and Labour riding high in the polls, will come to an end as the reality of Gordon Brown's tight-fisted budget comes home to haunt those who work in or depend upon

public services.

And that's why the left – in the unions and in the Labour Party – must rally to defend the rights of those brave enough to take a stand, and prepare the policies and campaigns that meet the needs and demands of working people.

* Budget comment, page 3

Friend of Blair's is no friend of labour

BA strikebusters pose awkward questions for unions

AS WE GO to press we do not know whether the planned strike by British Airways ground staff and cabin crew will take place, although it seems increasingly likely.

Even if it does not, it has raised important issues for the whole of the labour movement.

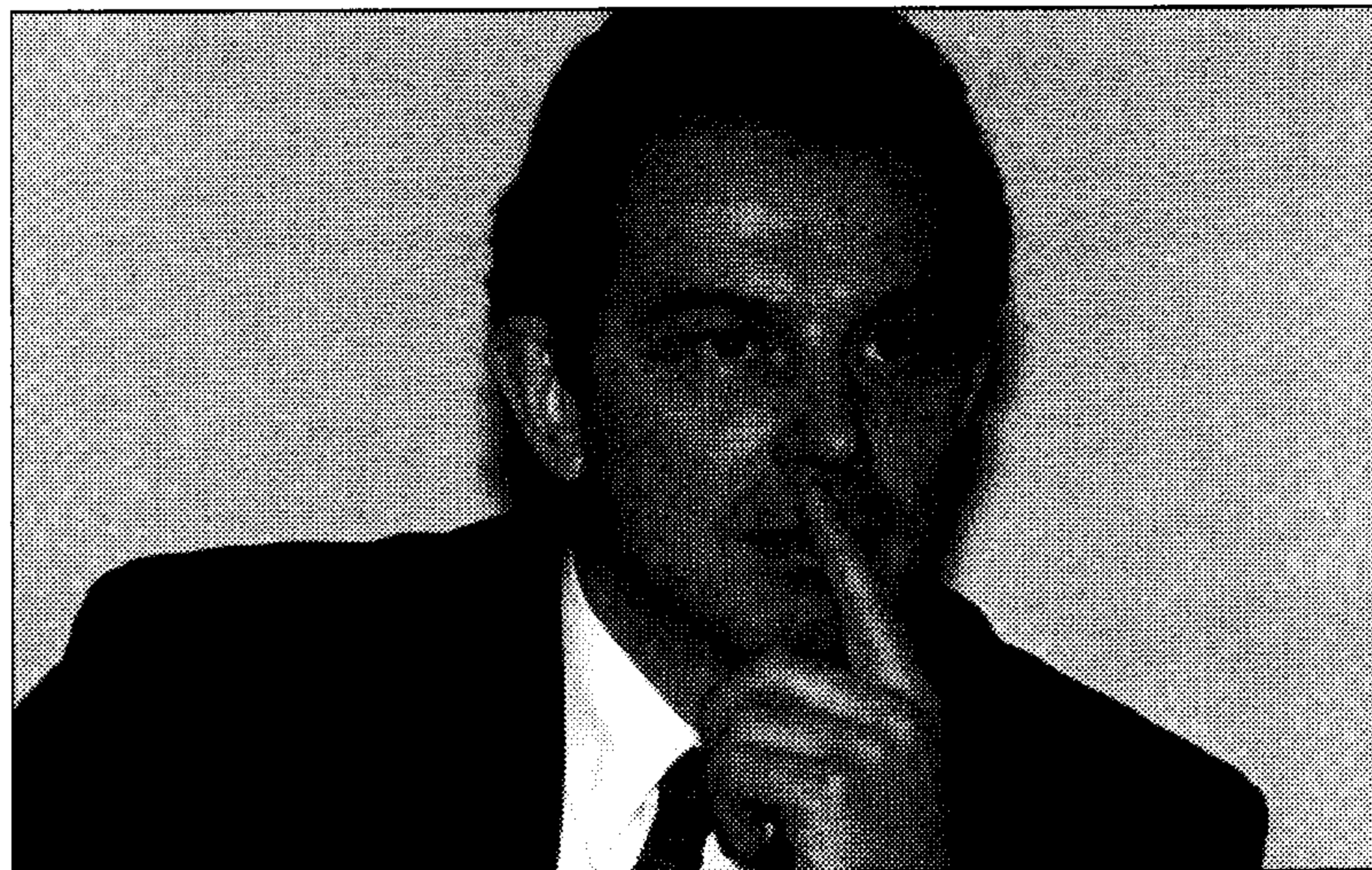
BA, in trying to maintain its edge in the highly competitive world of air travel, is trying to drastically reduce its costs at the expense of its workers.

It wants to contract out catering (along with all over ground services, including engineering) and impose pay changes on flight staff.

In the old game of divide and rule, it has got the agreement of the small breakaway union representing some cabin crew to agree the changes, and is now saying it will negotiate with the TGWU over the catering sell off but not the cabin crew conditions.

On top of this it has been training managers and back-up staff to do ground staff jobs, and said it will bring in a scab workforce and sue individual strikers for up to £400 a day.

No-one seems quite sure whether all this is legal, but it is a clear indication of the strength and arrogance management feel after years of working class defeat, backed up by the most vicious anti-



Blair: lines up with bosses as bosses line up against unions

union laws in Western Europe.

It also shows that all the delays built into the anti-union laws between a decision to ballot for action and the action itself are designed to allow management to make preparations for a dispute.

Cut these links!

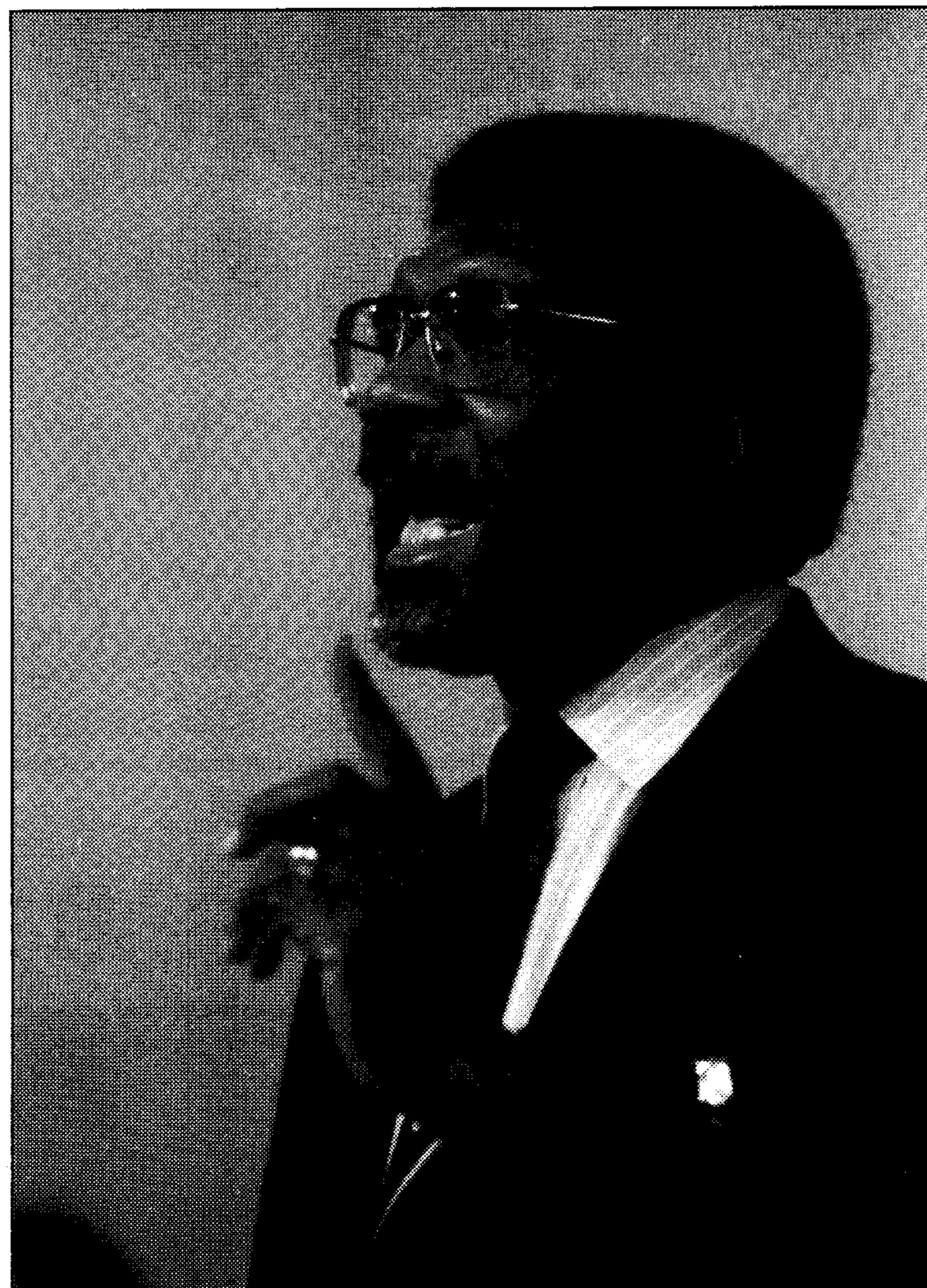
It not only emphasises the need to demand that Blair reverses his refusal to scrap these laws, but shows up the problems of Labour's wooing of big business.

Bob Ayling, chief of BA, has been fêted by Tony Blair and is said to be a personal friend. So is Bill Morris, general secretary of

the Transport and General Workers Union, which organises BA staff!

Morris has been going out of his way to avoid a strike by resuming negotiations, no doubt hoping for a deal which would essentially give BA what it wants while offering a few sops to the workers.

Blair has been saying the stand-off is nothing to do with the government. But it starkly shows that no government can be a friend both to big business and to its workforce, and how the anti-union laws, which are very much a government matter, back up one side against the other.



Morris: last-minute negotiations to avoid clash with scab-herding chum

Local 'old Labour' candidate dumped in Uxbridge

Bert Pritchard

IN MANY ways, it seems that Uxbridge has never recovered from the general election.

This is particularly true for Labour Party members who continue to have the haunted look of people who can't quite believe what is happening to them.

For them, this bewilderment does not stem from Labour winning the election (this is old news) but from the death of the Uxbridge Tory MP a week after the election, and the subsequent deselection of the popular local Labour candidate, David Williams, who came just 724 votes from taking the seat.

David Williams is not well known nationally as a figure on the left of the Labour Party because in many respects he is a truly local figure.

Council

As Deputy Leader of Hillingdon Council, he has built a reputation for dedicated advocacy on behalf of the people of the borough, and this is also a Labour council that until this year resisted making cuts (and even now has not made any compulsory redundancies).

David Williams has also worked setting up Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) as an anti-capitalist alternative for local unemployed and poorly paid workers.

None of this strikes you as particularly radical, however. Mr Williams is better known for his friendly manner than his socialist ideology.

It is particularly strange, then, that the Labour Party has decided to exclude David Williams from the by-election shortlist.

A shortlist of two outside candidates was imposed instead, from which Andrew Slaughter, leader of Hammersmith & Fulham Council, has been selected.

This has split the Uxbridge Labour Party and provoked an angry response from many at the selection meeting. More than a quarter of the ballot papers were spoilt in Williams' favour. A clear majority of the local party are deeply unhappy at the way the process has been handled.

Constituency secretary Rod Marshall commented: "David Williams received 8 out of the 16 nominations received but was excluded from the shortlist. This is completely undemocratic and is a sad indictment of the Labour Party today".

The Labour Party nationally has been unwilling to explain its decision, merely citing Mr Williams' supposed lack of TV experience as their reason. That Mr Williams is not a gushing supporter of New Labour has been mooted unofficially.

As Labour in government embraces the free market with more gusto than the last Tory government, it is also clear that party apparatchiks are aiming to rid the party of any last vestiges of democracy.

The proposals for this year's conference are an attempt to signal an end to any input from local parties and it is therefore perhaps fitting that Uxbridge CLP has been treated this way in the run up to conference.

Gordon Brown's austerity programme can only be strengthened through an increase in the stranglehold of the Labour leadership.

Campaigners take on uphill task

Stop the witch hunts!

Dave Amos

Officers from Leeds North East CLP called a national meeting in Leeds on 7 June, the eve of the inquiry into the suspended Leeds NE constituency, to discuss the widespread disciplinary measures being taken against the left in the Labour Party.

Activists from across England turned up to spend the morning exchanging experiences of the measures taken against individuals, branches and constituencies throughout the country.

Inevitably, common themes emerged as members described how they were hauled up in front of "inquiries" without being given information about the allegations against them or the procedures to be adopted.

The wide ranging powers given to the NEC and regional officials by the Labour Party rule book were a concern.

This was placed in the context of the increasing centralisation of decision making in the party, which will get worse if the "Party into Power" document is adopted.

Set against this, members out-

lined how, even when parties were suspended, they had managed to maintain local organisation and meet regularly.

At the same time, there were reports of members dropping out since Blair's landslide victory, saying that there was no prospect of fighting disciplinary action successfully.

Having analysed the nature of the problem, the meeting moved on to the question of how best to fight it, starting with a discussion on the use of the courts. There were differences of opinion, but the consensus view was that such a tactic was of limited use.

National link-up

The priority for the meeting was to try to construct a national organisation to fight the witchhunts. This is urgent in view of the likely outcome of the forthcoming Labour Party conference.

A small organising committee was set up with representatives from different areas affected by disciplinary action. The first task for this committee is to organise a further, broader based meeting before Conference, probably in September.

They are to contact other organisations in the Labour Party with

experience of fighting such measures or who might be sympathetic to such a campaign.

At the September meeting, an intervention into Conference will be planned. The form of this is yet to be decided; one suggestion was that other organisations should be approached to allow speakers at fringe meetings and articles in bulletins.

The meeting also decided that information about what is going on in the localities should be collated. A press release is to be prepared.

The campaign deserves the support of all socialists within the Labour Party, particularly as the impetus for it comes from those who have direct experience of action being taken against them.

Given the current climate in the Labour Party, such an initiative faces an uphill task, but all the participants in the meeting felt positive about linking up.

One member from Birmingham commented: "This meeting has given me a real boost".

The more such opposition to the Blairite project is organised, the stronger the left's position will be.

After 18 years, Brown unveils the long-awaited first Labour Budget ...

Was that it, then?

GORDON Brown has produced the most popular budget for 50 years. A Gallop poll for *The Daily Telegraph* showed 82 per cent believed the budget was "fair", with only 12 per cent disagreeing.

Labour's overall popularity has increased since the election – 61 per cent say they would now vote Labour. While there were no detailed questions which might have shown reservations behind the overall welcome, the political significance of this should not be underestimated.

Brown the conjuror managed to pull the rabbit out of the hat: having said he would stick with Tory spending limits, he then produced extra funding for health and education from reserves. These, together with the promised cut in VAT on fuel and the windfall tax ensured it felt very different to a Tory budget.

Although even by the end of the broadcast notes of caution were beginning to be heard, they barely rose above the applause.

£1 billion for education will not reduce class sizes, nor fund the teachers' pay claim. £1.3 billion for school refurbishment over five years will tackle some of the worst problems but still leave decay and disrepair in our schools.

The £1.2 billion for the NHS is not available until next April, and with no autumn spending round, the increase (equivalent to just 2.2 per cent – well below projected inflation) will do nothing to prevent a winter marked by further crises over bed shortages.

Housing crisis

The release to local authorities of £200m capital receipts this year and £700m next, will have to be used for much-needed repairs, not to stem the rising tide of homelessness.

David Fotheringham, principal policy officer of the Chartered Housing Institute, said it would be 'churlish' to criticise increased spending on social housing – but added "We would have liked to see a bit more – £1 billion a year for five years is what we were looking at".

Labour are increasingly looking to the Tory Private Finance Initiative to stave off deeper crises. At first glance, this can be seen an innocuous way of meeting the need for increased capital investment without raising taxes. But the apparent short-term savings are countered by the – still unknown – long term costs of servicing private

loans for the next 30-60 years. The real impact of these schemes on the unit costs of NHS Trusts has yet to be revealed, but several Trusts have already ditched PFI schemes as too expensive.

In the terms of conventional capitalist wisdom Brown's measures may not do sufficient to take the 'heat' out of the economy – although many working people have hardly begun to feel any warmth at all.

The most pernicious aspect of the budget is the one that has so far aroused least adverse comment – the "welfare to work" proposals. The programme remains co-ercive, despite what the TUC says.

Brown has ensured that it will now be down to Bank of England governor Eddie George to make the decisions on interest rates. There can be little doubt that the base rate will go up pretty quickly.

Some believe that 500,000 jobs could be threatened by the soaring pound as interest rates rise. Brown raised £6 billion in taxes for this year and £6.7 billion next – at the lower end of what was felt would be necessary to avoid the dangers of another boom and bust cycle.

The impact of this will be lessened by the release of council capital receipts (mostly from the Tory sale of council housing) and the spending of some proceeds from the windfall tax, which will pump £400 million into the economy this year and £1.9 billion next.

Critics have also focused on where the taxes were raised – the one-off windfall tax and the abolition of tax credits on pension funds will not affect what the City sees as dangerously high levels of consumer spending.

Brown assumes that continued economic growth, together with his tight fiscal measures will produce the stability that will be key to improved performance.

He has reasserted the 'golden rule' of public finances abandoned by the Tories during the recession of the 90s. Over the course of an economic cycle the Labour government will only borrow to invest, and current spending will be met from taxation.

Together with the expected fall in the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement, it seems that he is so far on target to ensuring that Labour is well within the Maastricht criteria for European Monetary Union.

This means Labour will almost certainly be able to decide on po-



New Labour, new case: but the economics have an old-fashioned capitalist ring to them

litical grounds to whether to go into the first round of EMU in 1999.

The most pernicious aspect of the budget is the one that has so far aroused least adverse comment – the "welfare to work" proposals.

allow participants to achieve at least NVQ level 2 and that child care costs are paid.

While some of this is to be welcomed, it misses the point. Labour may well come up with training programmes that are superior to Tory ones.

They may even assist a small number in securing decent jobs. But the programme remains coercive, despite what the TUC says.

Look at what is happening to disabled people. £200 million is allocated as part of Welfare to Work for training people with disabilities to get jobs.

Within days however Harriet Harman announced an inquiry to curb the £24 billion per annum spent on benefits to the long term sick and disabled.

Targeting supposedly fraudulent claims for incapacity benefit when the existing rules have seen many fail the over-stringent tests and lose all benefits when they also can't meet the requirement for the Job Seekers Allowance is yet another vicious attack on people with disabilities.

A major campaign must be mounted – to prevent more and more people being excluded from society. The numbers that disappeared off the register with the introduction of the hated JSA will pale into insignificance in comparison with what is to come.

Those currently in work have much to lose too. There is still no sign of the promised minimum wage as any guarantee for the lowest paid.

Blair's model is the American example, where claimants have been dragged into jobs vacated because cheapskate employers have sacked workers to gain state subsidies, while US wages have been dragged down at the bottom end of the labour market.

Unemployment cannot be tackled on the basis of training and subsidies to employers.

The only weapons that can be used effectively are interventionist ones – a massive programme of spending to create useful, properly paid public sector jobs together with nationalisation of private firms.

These are the very measures that Blair's New Labour has set its face so determinedly against.

Tories pick a doomed dome to see in millennium

William Hague's election as leader of the Conservative party holds little promise of stemming the tide of their decline, which was marked but not created by the general election defeat.

His victory, followed by the refusal of various advocates of monetary union to serve in his cabinet indicates the ascendancy of the Euro-sceptic right.

Hague's recent announcement that he was joining the campaign to save the hunt show once again to which mast his colours are nailed.

Whether any other outcome of the leadership contest could have healed Tory splits and reversed their crisis is highly questionable. The deep divisions in the Tory party have manifest themselves time and time over the last few years – most sharply, though not exclusively, on the question of Europe.

The pro-European position was

championed by Ken Clarke in the leadership contest and by others in the party, such as Ted Heath.

It is based on the fact that big business, on which these politicians rest, favours European integration as the best way to achieve competitive profit margins against Japanese and American imperialism.

Losers

Conversely the position of the sceptics is based on a material fear that the British petty bourgeoisie, crucial to the historic electoral base of the Tory party, will lose out in an intergrated Europe.

It is these vital economic interests which produce the deep the unpleasant jingoism propagated by these forces rather than the other way round.

The divisions in the Tory party are heightened by the fact that the big bourgeoisie, deeply wedded to the cause of European integration have come increasingly to see

Blair's Labour Party as a better bet.

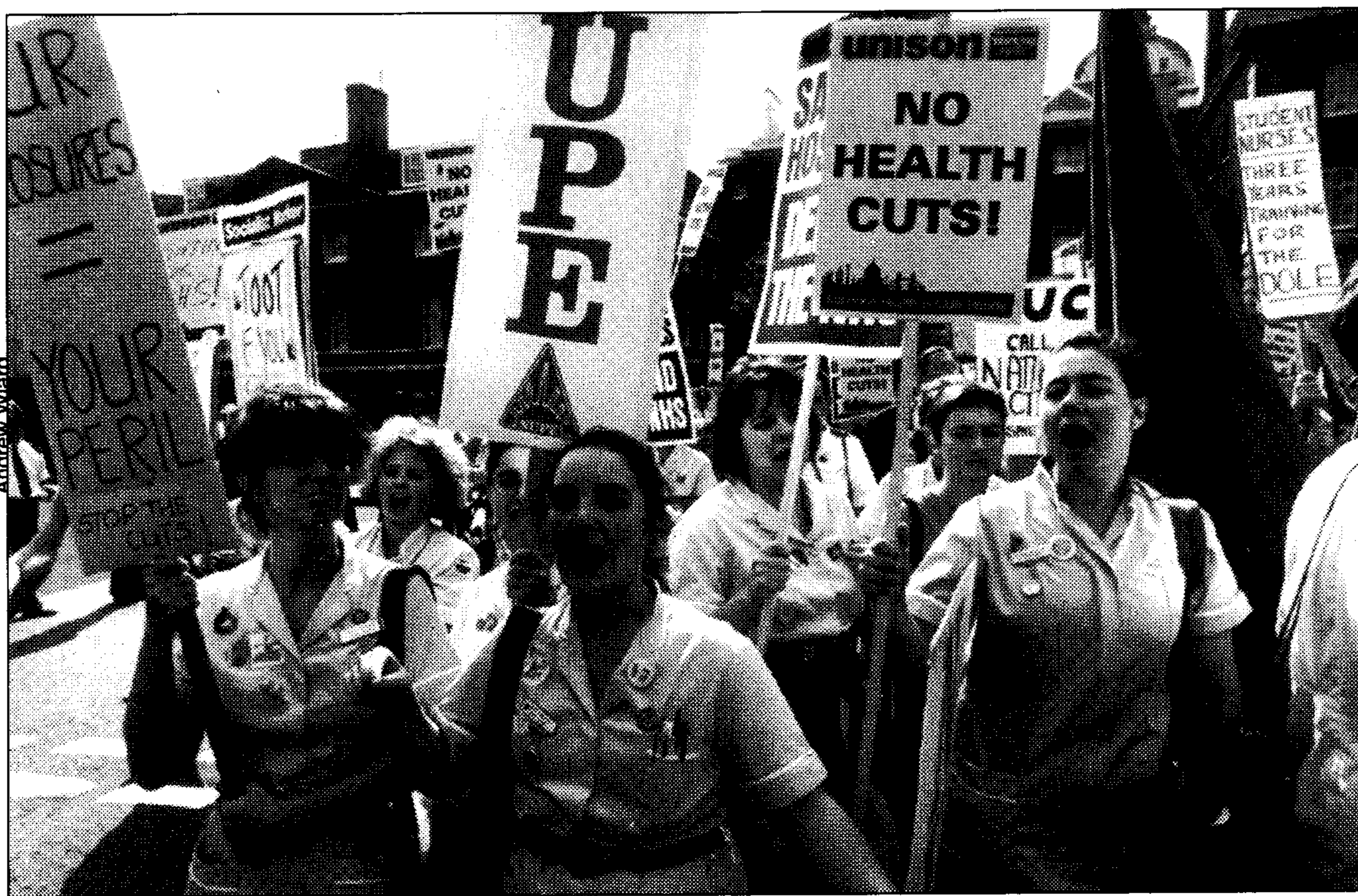
Blair has – so far at least – been much more successful in uniting his party behind his quest to join the single currency than the pro-European Tories are ever likely to be.

Of course support from the key sections of the ruling class for Labour is by no means permanently assured – the class struggle, and how Blair reacts will doubtless affect how long the present stance is maintained.

But even if Labour ceases to be a safe pair of hands it is not at all clear that the Tories will be in any shape to fill the gap.

While it would be too premature by far to say that a split in this party is inevitable, neither can it be ruled out. William Hague will need more than a spin doctor who it is suggested might rival Mandelson.

In the end politics is determined by much more powerful forces than cosmetics.



Has Labour decided to brave the anger of unions and campaigners and axe more hospitals?

Don't sell the Tube!

by a London tube train driver

SURPRISE surprise! New Labour are breaking their promise not to privatise the underground but keeping their promise to stick with Tory spending plans. Five minutes into a Labour government and Tube workers are already disgusted.

The huge funding crisis is already affecting the day to day running of the Underground and the effects will become worse as the lack of long term investment starts to bite.

Tracks and trains are not being maintained to the same standards,

escalators are causing problems, signalling desperately needs renewing. Staff in all areas have been cut to a minimum.

That is to say, we thought it was a minimum but the bosses are looking to cut another 400 jobs from safety and engineering staff, which would inevitably affect safety if they got away with it. On top of that, 450 guards' jobs are to be axed on the Northern Line.

Maastricht

Prescott's plans to deliver LUL are a direct result of the government's attempts to keep to the Maastricht criteria. Bankers have decided on these criteria which keep the public borrowing to three percent of gross domestic product.

So New Labour won't break their limit by investing in the tube. However, a public/private partnership allows investment to take place within the rules. It's no wonder the term "merchant banker" has another meaning to Cockneys.

Business "leaders" like the road lobby group "London First", the CBI and the London Chamber of Commerce are busily meeting with other greedy capitalists to get some of the jam from Prescott's plans.

Investment will have to be made just to keep the Underground going in its present overcrowded form, let alone cope with the big anticipated demand over the next few years.

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) is a type of privatisation that will cost the public more in the long run, however happy it keeps the merchant bankers. Whatever investment the private firms make will be paid back with knobs on by the government over a fixed period of years.

Furthermore, private firms will obviously take control of the work and find opportunities to cut costs, which means cutting wages, working conditions and safety.

The introduction of trains on the Northern Line, the last line with guards, is part of a Labour supported PFI.

Out of pocket

GEC supply the trains and have kidnapped London Underground staff who do train maintenance, cutting their pay in the process. By the time the taxpayers have finished paying off GEC, they will be millions out of pocket.

John Prescott has admitted that PFI is not the only option under consideration. Far from reversing the privatisation of British Rail, Labour is considering a similar privatisation of LUL. Obviously the outcome would be the same – increased subsidies, a worse service, attacks on workers.

So it's time London Underground workers recognised their enemy for what it is – capitalism. Since the second world war, Labour as well as Tory governments have followed an anti-rail, pro-road policy, which is certainly not about to be reversed, despite all the "green" rhetoric.

The Jubilee Line extension and Docklands Light Railway were paid for by us and are putting millions into the pockets of land speculators and businessmen. They won't be subject to a windfall tax, nor will LUL be relieved from the crippling cost of the Jubilee Line.

The simple fact is that the New Labour government and their establishment colleagues in Britain and Europe are out to get us. There's no relaxing now Labour's here – we have to put our mitts up.

Why Dobbo runs from health workers

Harry Sloan

FRANK DOBSON might have been expected to ride in triumph into this year's UNISON Health Conference.

He was the first Labour Health Secretary for 18 years, addressing an audience that had longed for the ousting of the Tories, and speaking for a government with a massive mandate to rescue the NHS.

In the event, things were very different. The normally rumbustious Dobson sneaked into the conference, refusing to meet even the handful of Blairites selected by the UNISON bureaucracy as a suitably tame "focus group". He gave a nervous, low-key speech – and then he was gone, refusing to answer any questions, running from even the hint of criticism or accountability.

Dobson's door may be closed to health workers and the unions, but it appears to be open to all kinds of unsavoury and right wing academics: only a few days earlier he had declared to a conference of NHS managers that "professional opinion" was now "agreed" that we need fewer hospitals. This went down well with health chiefs themselves embroiled in hospital cuts and closures, but Dobson really should get out more, and find out what people committed to the NHS are saying.

Same speech

With this exception, Dobson's UNISON speech was very similar to the one he gave to the NHS bosses. Speaking just two days before Gordon Brown's budget, offered only two glimmers of popular radicalism – promising to work with Jack Straw to jail people (many of them mentally ill) who use violence against health workers, and calling on NHS Trusts to open their meetings to the public.

Dobson offered no clues on how Labour plans to wind up the chaos of the Tory internal market system, no detail on what system is to replace the two-tier nonsense of GP Fundholding, no hope of any end to the continual squeeze on NHS pay, and no promise of any let-up in

the tide of service cuts and hospital closures Labour has inherited from the Tories.

Delegates who concluded from this that they should expect the worst may have been pleasantly relieved by Brown's announcement of an "extra" £1.2 billion for the NHS – until they realised that none of this money is available until next April, and that it takes the place of the normal autumn spending round.

While it represents a considerable (2.2%) increase on the standstill 1998/99 allocations proposed by Kenneth Clarke last November, this money falls far short of the real terms increase required to preserve front line services, and the jobs and living standards of 1 million NHS staff.

Worst crisis

Despite Brown's apparent generosity, the NHS faces possibly its worst-ever winter crisis this year, with many health authorities and Trusts already reduced to little more than an emergencies-only service for the foreseeable future as they struggle to deal with new cuts on top of £300m in deficits carried over from last year.

Brown's limited cash handout also carried a sting in the tail: he insisted that the money was only being made available on the strict understanding that a new rationalisation of London's hospital service would begin next Spring.

A key factor in Labour's electoral success in London on May 1 was public opposition to the Tory plans to decimate hospital services, with 14 on the list for closure: Tory MPs toppled like ninepins around threatened hospitals, notably Edgware, Queen Mary's (Rochampton) and Oldchurch (Romford).

Labour had pledged a moratorium on hospital closures and an in-depth 12-month review of health services in the capital.

In the event, to the anger and exasperation of campaigners and Labour activists, the incoming government decided within days to

rubber-stamp the closure of Edgware's bitterly-defended Accident & Emergency unit, allow a succession of small-scale closures of wards and services across London, and restrict the review and the moratorium to just four months.

Although the review panel includes a number of noted critics of Tory health policies, notably Professor Brian Jarman who openly challenged the continual reduction in numbers of beds, Gordon Brown's declaration that its findings are expected to result in a further rationalisation raises serious doubts on how detailed and objective the review will be.

Conspicuous by their absence from the list of hospitals to be examined by the review are the threatened Guy's Hospital (where Trust bosses are accelerating towards closure) and children's services in Hackney, which could be axed without replacement.

However, unlike the Tories' Tomlinson Report of 1992, it is inviting written contributions from individuals and organisations

No holds barred

More ominous, perhaps for those who live outside London, Brown has also pledged to complete the root and branch "no holds barred" financial review of the NHS. This is the review which has triggered speculation that charges might be introduced for prescriptions for "wealthy" pensioners, for seeing GPs, or for stays in hospital.

All of these options have previously been surveyed – and rejected – by the Tories as not offering sufficient revenue to justify the huge political backlash that would be triggered by implementing them.

But the day after the Budget Labour went on to implement another Tory policy which Major's government failed to get off the drawing board – the Private Finance Initiative. 14 PFI-funded hospital development schemes, costing an estimated £1.3 billion are to be given the go-ahead by the government, despite the fact that nobody

yet knows how much these schemes will cost the Trusts concerned.

Consortia of companies will design, finance build and own the new hospitals, which will be leased back to the NHS on long-term deals guaranteeing profits for 25-60 years.

For the first time since Labour nationalised the patchwork of private, charitable and municipal hospitals to form the NHS in 1948 companies will be able to make profits from owning front-line healthcare facilities.

The PFI policy, which has only drawn in the private firms by guaranteeing that the government will underwrite deals signed by Trusts which may later go broke, is in stark contradiction to Gordon Brown's insistence on imposing rigid limits on spending.

The long-term costs of raising the money from the private sector rather than from government funding could be massive: and the costs of servicing this new capital investment will be added to the costs of each item of treatment in the Trusts concerned, while the health authorities which must buy their services face cuts in their budgets. Private profits will therefore be piled up at the direct expense of patient care.

With the budget, Labour has marginally relaxed the threatened Tory squeeze and given a tantalising glimpse of what they *could* have done with a majority of 179 to rescue the NHS.

Ominously, in the background, right wing think-tanks and empire-building consultants are floating schemes for fewer, bigger hospitals, for selective charges, for "hypothecated" taxes – anything but the simple answer, the proper funding of health care from mainstream progressive taxation.

Brown may have cheered up some of the troops, but the battle lines in defence of the NHS will inevitably begin forming up again as soon as the temperatures begin to drop in the autumn.

Young guinea pigs wanted: just say no!

George Thompson

THE PICTURES of Tony Blair announcing his welfare to work scheme surrounded by smiling, fresh faced youth reminds one of Mao Tse Tung's propaganda in China promoting himself as the 'Great Leader'.

Youth are supposed to be eternally grateful to the 'Great Leader' whatever he does. Yet who'll thank Blair when they find themselves conscripted into a cheap army of labour for the bosses?

Who will keep smiling as he introduces even more reactionary policies against youth than the Tories?

Curfews

The Labour Party has had very little debate on fees for students, ID cards/curfews for teenagers or workfare for the unemployed. Blair is busily adopting a whole gamut of ideas which would make even former leader John Smith turn in his grave.

By destroying Labour's democratic structures, Blair hopes the party will never be able to voice any criticism of his 'new' programme.

Yet Blair cannot silence a debate in society. Much of the electorate voted against the agenda Blair wishes to pursue. The policies for youth will increasingly be seen as a threat to all workers.

Even under the Tories many trade unionists were arguing that

plans similar to 'Welfare to Work' led to job substitution, not job creation. Many people will recognise the introduction of ID cards for youth (under the premise it will prevent under-age drinking) is a step towards a more widespread use.

The crusade led by Jack Straw against alcopops and soft drugs is against a tide of public opinion blowing in favour of a relaxation of drugs laws. His promise to bang up young offenders goes against mounting evidence prison is not the (only) answer in crimefighting.

Blair's policies for youth are increasing inequality rather than challenging it.

Fees for students will deter working class students from university and make it again a haven for the rich. 'Welfare to Work' and removing under 25s from any minimum wage legislation will increase the wage differential between young and older workers.

The effect of Labour's benefit cuts on youth and the maintenance of Tory laws in areas like housing reduce the ability of youth to live independently from their families.

Youth are being treated by Blair as guinea pigs.

Drinking his potions will lead to collective lunacy. Don't just say No! Struggles for real jobs, wage rises and a better Welfare State must be fought now.

Jowell misses real target on abortion

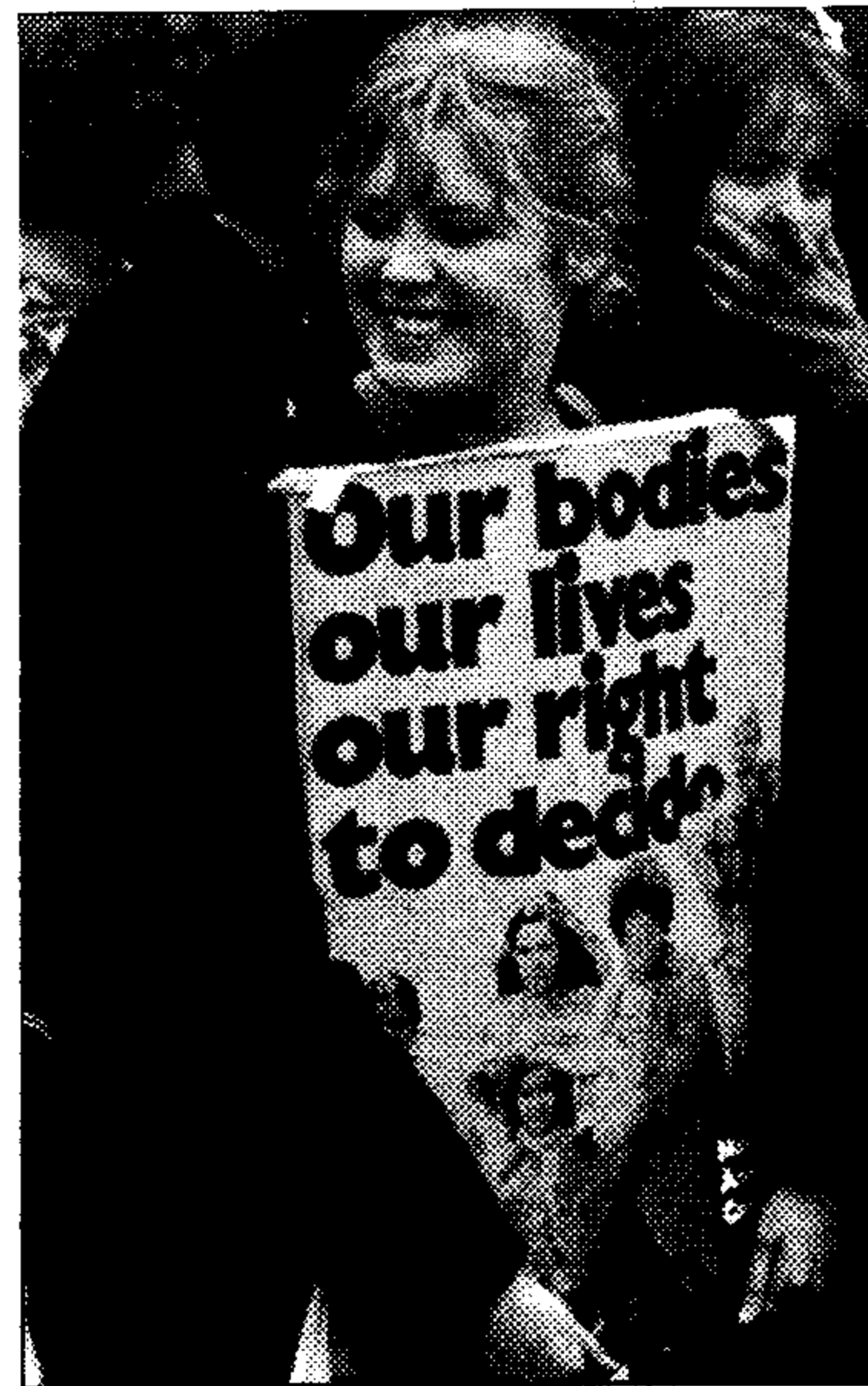
Gill Lee

TESSA Jowell, Labour Minister for Health, has rebuked the Chief Executive of the Marie Stopes Clinic for suggesting that quick abortions could now be performed 'during a working woman's lunch break'.

The real problem with abortion is not how fast the operation can be performed but how long it actually takes to get on the NHS.

The waiting time in the NHS in South London for example is currently five weeks for a scan to confirm dates, with the abortion performed some days after this. As a result many women 'choose' to have their abortion within days in the private 'charity' sector.

An abortion under 14 weeks costs about £350 with an organisation like Marie Stopes. The abortion pill, RU486 costs more because, unlike in other European countries, where it is treated as a normal prescription, three visits to a clinic are required. The cost of abortion rises to £550 with the



number of weeks gestation.

Consultants for Marie Stopes say they are seeing many more women than in the past and this can only be because of cutbacks in the NHS. Women who attend private clinics are not typical clients of private medicine.

They have been forced into private abortion because of the waiting time on the NHS.

Tessa Jowell was quoted as saying "the decision to seek a termination is a difficult and almost always

agonizing one for any woman".

For some women it is. For many others, abortion is a welcome relief. This can itself force women to feel guilty as there is social pressure to feel that abortion should be a difficult choice.

For women who are unclear about their decision a waiting time before an abortion can provide a space to think. But this waiting time should be a choice.

For women who have made a clear decision to have an abortion a wait can be traumatic: five weeks during which the woman's body changes to adjust to the pregnancy and after which the operation can only be more of a physical shock and one which is more risky.

For some women who have irregular periods, for example because they are very young or menopausal, five weeks could mean the difference between being entitled to a legal abortion or not.

For women who seek abortion after rape, a five week wait may increase psychological trauma.

Tessa Jowell should be concentrating her energies on ensuring the NHS meets women's demands for free, safe and legal abortions not criticising doctors who wish to make the procedure easier for women.

Youth camp: why Graham and others need your support

"My name is Graham Morris and I am from St Helens. I was happy to take part in the Euromarch - I marched all the way from Preston to Amsterdam. I wanted to protest about the large number of people unemployed.

"The rough estimate is that there are 5 million unemployed in Britain and 20 million across Europe. What we need is full employment across Europe.

"There were 30 marches from 17 different countries taking part in the long trip to Amsterdam for the Intergovernmental conference on June 14.

"About 50,000 people protested against the single currency and for full employment. We were opposing the massive poverty that exists and demonstrating in defence of the welfare state.

We had a lot of press coverage - I thought that was tremendous.

"We were well supported by the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers, the 300 sacked Magnet workers and the 53 Hillingdon women who were sacked because they

would not take a pay cut. The bosses only think about themselves and no one else.

"I think we did a good job. People should be proud of what we have done. It was the best experience I have had. Now I can't wait for the Youth Camp in France so that I can tell people my story."

GRAHAM Morris is one of a group of young people who were involved in the Euromarch who are desperately keen to attend the International youth Summer Camp organised by the Fourth International in late July.

He hopes to be part of the biggest delegation going to the Camp from Britain for some years.

There is only one problem - and that's money. When you are on the JSA, finding the money for even a cheap week away is pretty nigh impossible.

That's why Socialist Outlook are appealing for donations to our appeal to make sure all those who want to go can. We've already raised £500 in the last few days before we went to press: we need another £500 in the next fortnight.

Rush your cheques to Liberation Publishing, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Project Work - What is Labour up to?

Keith Sinclair, Secretary, Hull Trades Council

NEW Labour has decided to 're-focus' Project Work, the Tory workfare scheme.

Speaking in Parliament on June 20 1997, Andrew Smith MP stated that "All Project Work pilots will in future include intensive help with basic skills for those who need it...Enhancing the help given by Project Work pilots is an integral part of the Government's drive to tackle long term unemployment".

Smith did add that "Project Work, as inherited from the previous government, is far from perfect".

In an accompanying press release, Smith claims that he made a particular point of "talking to people taking part in Project Work" and that they wanted training in basic skills.

Until now, Labour has held a distinctive position on Project Work with Labour councils refusing to offer placements.

Indeed, David Blunkett wrote in January 1996, "Project Work is a workfare-type scheme. Labour is opposed to workfare. We do not believe in punishing the unemployed".

How easily they change sides! Now in government, New Labour seem to think that Project Work might be part of the solution to long term unemployment!

The reality is that Project Work always was and remains an attack on the unemployed. Hull TGWU unemployed activist Geoff Collier is currently on Project Work, he told *Socialist Outlook*,

"Labour should abolish Project Work immediately. The scheme I am on is teaching me nothing that could help me get a job. What's required are real jobs at reasonable rates of pay."

Geoff added, "My problem is the lack of a job not my ability to read and write! Help with basic skills should be available to all and not mixed up with this failed Tory scheme."

Pressure should immediately be put on Labour MPs to demand the ending of Project Work. In particular, campaigns need to be launched (or re-launched) in the 29 areas where Project Work extension will now be implemented.

*** (Hull Trades Council can help with your local campaign. Ring 01482--858383 (day) or 01482--802050 (evenings).)**

Party into Power: Blair's bridge too far?

Blair's proposals on restructuring the Labour Party, 'Party into Power', are coming under increased fire.

The proposals include abolishing the right of CLPs and Trade Unions to submit resolutions direct to conference, creating a new supreme committee, the Joint Policy Committee, on which the Cabinet would have an in-built majority, and denying CLPs the right to vote for MPs for the National Executive.

It was obviously hoped to ram the proposals through on the back of post-election euphoria and a lack of time for discussion.

They are part of Blair's plan to prevent the Party, and in particular the unions, being able to revolt against unpopular government policies.

While they attack party democracy in general, proposals to give greater importance to unaccountable Policy Forums, on which the

unions are seriously under-represented, show the link to be under particular threat.

Responses to the 'consultation' on Party into Power had to be returned by July 4th, and the July NEC will be considering the submissions and drawing up final proposals to put to conference in October.

No doubt we will be told that some large percentage of those who responded to the consultation 'welcomed' Party into Power. This doesn't mean much, since many responses welcome the consultation - and then go on to reject some of the central proposals.

Link defended

The comments submitted by MSF, for instance, strike a positive note and support the idea of a rolling policy programme (designed to restrict what can be discussed at conference) and the representation of 'all stakeholders' (PLP, EPLP,

Cabinet!) on the NEC - but then go on to strongly defend the Trade union/party link, including the 50% vote of the unions at conference, and the right of CLPs and unions to put motions direct to conference.

The GMB conference endorsed a statement from its executive which welcomed the document while defending the direct submission of resolutions.

Other unions, including the RMT, GPMU, ASLEF and CWU rejected the proposals outright at their conferences. This however, did not stop the CWU bureaucracy attempting (unsuccessfully) to overturn this decision in a paper submitted to the executive as their response to the consultation.

Following RMT conference, Jimmy Knapp, on the other hand, submitted a paper to the RMT executive which rejected every essential of Party into Power.

At the time of writing, TGWU conference is about to happen, but there will certainly be a lively debate around the issue and Margaret Prosser's role in promoting the proposals.

UNISON, however, has wholeheartedly welcomed the proposals, in large part because many sections of the left in UNISON have played no role in the union's Affiliated Political Fund, and the APF conference was almost immediately after the Election.

The response from CLPs has been overwhelming. 40 resolutions have been submitted to conference rejecting Party into Power outright, while a further 60 call for a year's deferral to allow for further



Lining up in defence of the link: even the GMB has joined the criticism

discussion.

This amounts to more resolutions on a single topic than were submitted at the height of the struggle by the Left for constitutional change in the late 1970s.

It is rumoured that Standing Orders Committee is being 'encouraged' to rule the deferral motions out of order on the grounds that if you want to deferral you vote against the S.O.C. Report.

Alienate

However, this would probably only serve to alienate CLPs which have not rejected the proposals outright.

A further important development is the leaking of a response from the 'New Left in New Labour' group, written by Derek Fatchett, Peter Hain and Jean Corston, deputy chair of the PLP.

This not-so-left grouping is close to Cook and Prescott. Their response, while again generally welcoming the document, defends the right of conference to discuss 'topical issues' and direct trade union representation on the Party

structures, including at least a third of NEC members.

Blair now has a problem. He is arrogant enough to believe that he can get his proposals through conference regardless. However, he might come unstuck. If he waters down the proposals to take account of some of the criticism, he will be seen as having backed down.

Union and CLP activists have to drive home their advantage, arguing that the proposals need to be thrown out in their totality now, and mandating delegates to do so.

While half-measures would be a defeat for Blair, they would also leave the door open to come back for more later.

The 'Keep the Link' campaign will be producing a response to the new proposals, speakers should still be invited to meetings and affiliation won.

* The 'Keep the Link' campaign can be contacted c/o 138 Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE.

Don't stand up, fight back!

John Stevenson on the UNISON Conference

When last month David Blunkett came to address local government delegates to UNISON's conference it was rather embarrassing for the platform. Leaping to their feet as one, they tried to lead a standing ovation - but everyone else stayed firmly glued to their seats.

Overall the conference was a low key affair - the sort of atmosphere you might expect when activists carry few illusions in Labour but are at the same time not quite sure what is going to happen in the future.

And about some of it there was a distinct air of unreality. The left pushed for and won a reaffirmation of the union's existing policy of renationalising the privatised utilities.

But in the short term it isn't possible to conceive of UNISON's leadership making this concrete demand of the new government.

There was also the great debate that never was - a motion of censure of the executive for pulling the plug on the Hillingdon Hospital strike. The standing orders committee ruled it out of order, and an attempt to overturn this was lost on a card vote.

In many ways Hillingdon stands as a symbol of what happened to public services and unions during the Tory years - low paid workers sacked by a private company operating in the Health Service; a union bureaucracy conveniently intimidated by anti-union laws and giving no support to members in struggle.

Now we should be demanding of Labour that all this should change, not standing up and applauding.

Sacked Hillingdon workers: still fighting on for justice

by Elkie Dee

The Hillingdon Strikers Support Campaign (HSSC) has called this conference in Uxbridge on 13 July to discuss the way forward in the campaign for the sacked Hillingdon women's reinstatement.

Pall Mall was recently bought by Granada Health Food Services. The union leadership knew at UNISON conference in June that this was happening but said nothing as resolutions on the dispute were debated.

The Hillingdon Hospital workers and their supporters feel betrayed by this dishon-

esty, after 22 months of struggle.

The organisers of the conference ask that "If you cannot attend as delegates, then please attend as observers - but please attend."

Conference: Sunday 13 July, Civic Centre, Uxbridge (Uxbridge tube, Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines) from 11 am to 2 pm

The sacked Hillingdon workers still need your support - send donations to: HSSC, 27 Townsend Way, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 1TG.

MSF welcomes Labour - but not its policies

Veronica Fagan

MSF conference in Hove in June passed a whole range of policy motions which were well to the left of Labour's manifesto commitments. On several this was with the support of the unions leadership despite General Secretary Roger Lyons previously sycophantic relationship with Blair.

MSF leaders, together with many of their co-thinkers in other unions, are becoming increasingly frustrated with Blair's stance since the election.

For Lyons, the particular tension has been on the question of trade union recognition. He prided himself on being the architect on TUC policy on this issue and has been more than a little irritated at the fact that beyond GCHQ Blair has said nothing.

On the issue of pensions, the top table tried to hold the line for New Labour - and failed. While initially it seemed that they might get their way, eventually conference backed index linking and the restoration of SERPS.

Politically this middle ground felt a huge relief at the Tories defeat - but were unsure as to whether to give Blair the benefit of the doubt or to attempt to push for the im-

provements they felt his government should be introducing.

On 'Party into Power' the Lyons clique were able to keep control of the debate to some extent through the production of a statement which while welcoming the document made sharp criticisms of most of its key proposals.

Conference essentially agreed this approach while adding further areas in which the status quo should be retained.

Merger

One of the keynote debates as expected was on the proposed merger with IPMS. In the run up to conference it became clear that the NEC were not going to accept that the decision of IPMS conference to reject the proposed merger terms meant that their project was dead in the water.

While few speakers in the debate showed any enthusiasm for the new union whole sale rejection of the leadership's approach was not agreed. Lyons' hands were tied much tighter than he would have liked however.

The notion that he might bypass the democratic structures by a membership ballot prior to a full debate at conference was resoundingly rejected.

Conference also succeeded - after countless bureaucratic manoeuvres to prevent them even being discussed - in passing important motions against the witch hunts of two MSF full time officers who have fallen foul of the Lyons machine.

Dave Peters was sacked more than a year ago and conference stated that if his legal challenge proved that this was an 'unsafe' decision he should be reinstated. Joe Bowers stood against Lyons in the recent General Secretary election and has faced problems with disciplinary action ever since.

Conference demanded this should stop, and that the union who had championed an anti-bullying campaign should stop bullying its own employees.

Fairly mild you might think - but the vitriol with which it was opposed demonstrated how bitterly the leadership and their Blairite cronies are determined to silence all dissent.

The outcome was thus patchy over all - as was the showing of the left. Deep divisions on the left have opened over past months, especially on the question of the merger.

Fresh blood on Labour's hands

Veronica Fagan

AFTER the Drumcree events, Labour's Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam has blood on her hands. No disclaimer that the decision was taken by Ronnie Flanagan, the chief constable of the hated RUC, can absolve her from her guilt – and that of the Labour leadership.

As we go to press, two fourteen year old boys are in hospital with serious injuries from rubber bullets fired to protect the Orange ascendancy.

Yet the marching season has only just begun – the Twelfth is still ahead. Then nationalist communities in both Belfast and Derry may well face further sieges.

How high a price will the nationalist community have to pay before there is a real outcry? Certainly Labour's honeymoon is dead and buried for the Irish – but where are the protests from the British labour movement?

No one can surely buy Mowlam's hypocrisy when she tells the world that she was forced to allow the pa-

rade down the Garvachy Road because of the threat of loyalist terror.

It must be obvious surely that this is not how she, or any of her predecessors have responded to demands from the nationalist community. Then the British stock reason for refusal is – we can't give in to IRA terrorists... Something strange here don't you think?

So late on Saturday night the residents of Garvachy Road were pushed off the road and barricaded into their homes. These enforced curfews brook no exceptions – it does not matter how urgent a reason you need to get out of the area – you can't.

The operation was led by the sectarian RUC – pleased to be of assistance to their friends in the Orange Order – but the British Army had a higher profile than in recent years.

Socialists in Britain have an urgent duty to ensure that this stark illustration of Labour's bipartisanism has one positive outcome. There needs to be a new push to raise demands for British withdrawal and Irish self-determination. If not, more blood will be spilt.

Photos: Andrew Ward



Scenes that Labour seems determined to see repeated. Nationalist youth in Derry turned out last year in protest at Orange marches that flaunt the alliance between the British government and the loyalist bigots.

For Blair the future is Orange

David Coen

What's the difference between Tony Blair and David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party?

The answer lies partly in Blair's recent *aide memoir* to the Republicans telling them what they can look forward to if they declare a permanent cease-fire and hand over their weapons.

There will be "...equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem ... the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law; a review of training opportunities for young people: a commitment to equality of opportunity in the labour market; a commitment to legislate this year on the North Report (on parades) and a commitment to implement proposals to develop a policing service capable of securing the support of the whole community..."

There is also a "...recognition of the particular sensitivities of prisoner issues on all sides."

Surrender

And that's it: in return for IRA surrender there will be a specially adapted – but not much – version of the "New" Labour programme for Britain. In due course there will be "devolved government, sensible and significant North-South arrangements and a revamped relationship between the two governments".

Brisk British common sense, and in double quick time. With or without the Republicans, the peace train must leave now and pull into "Settlement Station" by next May.

Tony Blair rushed to Belfast to assure unionists that the future was Orange and that the outcome

of the peace process would be the continuation of partition for generations.

In doing so he abandoned what remains of Labour's policy of unity by consent. On a day on which a victim of loyalist sectarian violence was being buried, he thanked the loyalist death squads for showing restraint. Now Blair's only difference with Trimble is that of tactics.

His reforms are much less radical than Heath's 1974 Power Sharing Executive, brought down by the Loyalists with active encouragement from what is now the Thatcherite faction of the British ruling class.

Trimble and the Unionists can be more confident of Blair's unionism than they were of Major's. As such they'll probably go along with the plan.

Nationalists are however left unimpressed, and do not believe there is any real chance of achieving "parity of esteem" within a revamped Six County State.

Nowhere will Blair's chances of reform be displayed more clearly than at Drumcree on July 6. The march at Drumcree has become the focal point of a campaign by the Orange Order for the right to strut their bigotry anywhere in the Six Counties.

Immediately after the election the new Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam signed an order extending the legal notice required for marches from seven to twenty-one days.

The catch is that this does not apply to traditional sectarian marches but will act to block any protest against sectarianism.

The events at Drumcree and the

Lower Ormeau Road last year blew away the illusions sown by John Hume of the SDLP about British even-handedness. One of the main reasons for the increase in Sinn Fein's vote in the recent elections was the clear perception by nationalists that the Unionists would concede no reforms and that the RUC – and behind them the British – would capitulate to them.

Trimble's grudging acceptance of Blair's terms for the "peace" talks is based on the quid pro quo that the Orange marches will go ahead unimpeded, though with of course, some token concessions to the Nationalists.

Impossible

Trimble does not want Sinn Fein in the talks, which is why he keeps demanding an IRA surrender. He knows that reform of the

Undoubtedly a significant section is opposed to calling off the armed struggle just to get a new Stormont replacing the one abolished by Heath following Bloody Sunday in 1972.

These militant republicans have however a difficult choice to make. Do they follow the Adams leadership into talks in which the ending of partition is already ruled out or do they return to war?

The latter is not a serious option. A divided movement would have little chance of inflicting a military defeat on the combined forces of Britain and the South. Most likely there would be bloody military, followed by political defeat. This is in fact the outcome strongly desired by the Unionists and the ruling classes in the South and in Britain.

Republicans should not how-

on the notions of consent and veto.

There is an argument that if the Unionists have a veto on nationalist aspirations to a united Ireland then equally Nationalists should have a veto over what happens in relation to marches.

This traditional Republican position of non-sectarianism is abandoned and replaced with "an equality of two traditions" position. Sinn Fein speaks for the Catholics/Nationalists and the Loyalists/Unionists represent the Protestants. Followed to its logical conclusion, this kind of communalism will simply reinforce sectarianism and cement working class divisions.

To see the future only in terms of a choice between capitulation or war is a false perception.

Republicans should begin to develop a programme which will win loyalist workers away from the already fractured Unionist bloc. Participation in the "peace talks" should be limited to building mass opposition to British plans to restructure partition.

Sectarian statelet

Republicans should demand the dismantling of the sectarian statelet and totally oppose any revamped Stormont. The Six County State cannot be reformed. Its creation as a sectarian state was carefully crafted, and any attempt to make it more democratic is bound to fail.

The struggles over Orange parades provide a model for the kind of mass agitation which has in the past rocked the ruling class on both sides of the Irish Sea.

In the end, neither Trimble's Unionism or Blair's paler hue can be imposed against the mass opposition of the Nationalist people of Ireland.

Six County State is impossible and, like Paisley and the Democratic Unionist Party, wants to smash the Republicans once and for all.

He fully supports the Orangemen in banging their drums through Nationalist areas in order to demonstrate their ascendancy. He wants to reassure them that this will not be threatened by the talks.

Meanwhile the Republican movement is also wondering what to make of Tony's commitments.

ever give up their arms. The British state cannot be relied upon to provide protection from loyalist murder gangs.

Sinn Fein leaders of residents' groups are not in principle opposed to Orange marches. What they demand is that the Orangemen seek their consent before marching.

Many in the Sinn Fein leadership now seem to think that politics in the North should be based

"To see the future only in terms of a choice between capitulation or war is a false perception. Republicans should begin to develop a programme which will win loyalist workers away from the already fractured Unionist bloc."

Deportations increase under Labour

Terry Conway

THE ELECTION of a Labour government in May was preceded by the biggest campaign ever in the black community in Britain to make its voice heard in that arena – Operation Black Vote.

While black people have traditionally been Labour voters increasing numbers have become disillusioned with politicians cynically taking their support for granted and then ignoring their needs in office.

Along with other sections of the working class, particularly in the inner cities the black community has increasingly stayed at home.

Operation Black Vote set out to reverse that trend and had some success in doing so. Their intervention, together with the deep hatred of the Tories undoubtedly played a part in delivering Labour's victory.

While Labour had made as few promises on questions of racism and immigration as on other issues neither the black community nor those who had been involved in the fight against the Tory Asylum and Immigration campaign expected that things would in fact get worse after May 1.

It's true that there have been some positive moves – although the reformulation of the 'primary purpose rule' is less progressive than it seemed at first sight. What has become increasingly worrying as the weeks have rolled past is that the rate of deportations have actually increased.

Some have pointed out that the Tories had many cases stacked up, already processed and waiting to be carried through once the election was over. This may of course be true but misses the point.

Under a Labour government, black people have been subject to knocks on the door in the middle of the night leading to instant removal to the airport and from there to destinations where they may face serious dangers.

These racist and reactionary practices need to be challenged not only through support for the campaigns around the individuals concerned but at a more general political level.

The particular outrage that

best typifies the stance of the government – and its hypocrisy – has been its response to Abdul Onibiyo.

Below we print the appeal from the defence campaign which explains eloquently what has happened and what needs to be done.

"To all those opposing deportations. We write today with the shocking news that the Home Office have taken the decision not to grant entry clearance to Abdul Onibiyo. Clearly, this is a decision which places Abdul at great risk.

The family's solicitors are preparing for a Judicial Review at the High Court and when we have a date we will be calling on all our supporters to join a demonstration outside the Court.

In the meantime we need to show the home Office the huge level of support for Abdul and his family and we are asking once again for your help in faxing Mike O'Brien urgently to ask that he uses his powers of discretion to allow Abdul to enter Britain. Below is a model letter which you can copy or amend."

Please FAX your letters to Mike O'Brien at the Home Office, Fax number 0171-273-2043, quoting Abdul's Ref. number 0107625.

Please send copies of any faxes to the National Coalition of Anti-deportation Campaigns, 22 Berners St, Birmingham, B19 2DR. You can also contact the campaign on Tel 0121 554 6947 Fax 0121-507-1567

E-MAIL
johno@ncadc.
demon.co.uk
Web Site
http://www.pop
tel.org.uk/ein/n
cadc/
* Onibiyo family anti-deportation campaign c/o Lambeth Union, 6A Acre Lane, Brixton, London, SW2. Phone 0171--737-2134 Fax 0171 501 9670



Re: Abdul Onibiyo Ref: Number 0107625

Abdul settled in Britain in 1964 with Joyce, his wife and has 5 children, the eldest of whom were born here. He was granted permanent residency status in 1976 but lost this when he fell foul of the '2 year rule' during contract work in Nigeria.

The Onibiyo family have been viciously torn apart by the actions of the Tory government with the removal of first Abdul and then the deportation of his son Ade. The threat of deportation still hangs over Joyce and her 2 youngest daughters, Toro and Yemi.

Whilst in opposition, many Labour MPs, including Cabinet ministers, joined the huge public outcry against the Tory government's treatment of the Onibiyo family. Jack Straw made representations to Michael Howard against Ade's impending deportation to Nigeria pointing out that Nigeria was not a safe place. Now they are in government we are asking them to end the injustice which they joined with us in opposing.

Abdul was handed over into the custody of Nigerian officials at Lagos airport when he was forcibly removed 26/10/95.

This is in spite of the fact that he was an active pro-democracy supporter and opponent of the Nigerian military regime. He was imprisoned and beaten while in detention in Lagos.

He attempted to flee Nigeria, once bailed, and succeeded in reaching a neighbouring country on 3 June. He is now in poor health both mentally and physically and needs urgent medical attention.

The Nigerian Government have publicly attacked the Onibiyo family in the British press as traitors, sent their agents into the High court to watch the proceedings during Ade's case, and even produced a fictitious report that Abdul was not in detention but was living happily in Nigeria.

This was disgracefully used by Anne Widdicombe in her attempts to deport Ade to Nigeria in May 1996. Thanks to the massive support for the family, Ade was given 'safe haven' in Guyana.

Abdul's fate is now in your hands. We are appealing to you to urgently review your decision and allow Abdul to enter Britain as soon as possible, to save his life and allow him to be re-united with his family back home in Britain.

Yours Sincerely

Indonesia arms sales: Britain tops table

BRITISH firms are set to increase sales of equipment to the Indonesian armed and security forces in 1997, despite the worsening human rights situation in Indonesia and East Timor.

Britain is already the most important arms supplier to the Suharto regime. Indonesia is a key test of Robin Cook's pledge to put human rights at the centre of Britain's foreign policy.

Two recent World in Action documentaries exposed the special relationship between Britain and the repressive apparatus of Suharto, in particular KOPASSUS, the elite counter-insurgency force spearheading the war in East Timor, and security police, the regime's first line of attack against internal protest. Photographs of Tactica water cannons in use against student protestors in Bandung in June 1996 neatly illustrate this relationship.

Shady figures

The British side includes captains of industry, the SAS (Special Air Service), and shady private figures operating in the twilight world of military procurement and training with advantageous contacts in the export licensing section of the Department of Trade and Industry.

The catalogue of exporters includes:
* British Aerospace: 24 Hawk jets contracted in 1993. A further 40 Hawks awaiting an export licence. Hundreds of machine guns, made in Nottingham, supplied to KOPASSUS by BAe subsidiary Heckler and Koch.

* The Rover Group: Hundreds of landrovers, made in Solihull, supplied to KOPASSUS, later mounted with heavy machine guns.
* GKN: Nearly 300 armoured vehicles, including Tactica water cannons, made near Southampton by GKN subsidiary Glover Webb, supplied to the Indonesian police.
* Alvis: 50 Scorpion armoured vehicles, made in Coventry, licensed in December 1996.

* Nitor: Godalming-based firm headed by ex-Royal Marine and MOD Mike Hitchcock OBE, supplying "Ultimate" weapon training systems and close quarter battle houses to KOPASSUS. Computer simulation exercises targeting civilian protestors ("moving targets"), shopping malls, discos and mosques accompanied these sales.

* Procurement Services International: Headed by a captain in the Scots Dragon Guards and based in Salisbury, PSI acts as an agent for GKN and Nitor, and claims to be the largest European supplier of equipment to the Indonesian army and police, with sales totalling £400 million since 1993 and an order book worth £700 million.

* The SAS trains KOPASSUS, whose counter-insurgency tactics are modelled on Britain's colonial war in Malaya.

Meanwhile the wave of repression against the pro-democracy movement continues, with the recent sentencing of People's Democracy Party (PRD) president Budiman Sujatmiko to 13 years in prison. There is mounting evidence of the torture and extra judicial killings of East Timorese prisoners.

Both Budiman Sujatmiko and Jose Ramos Horta, leading representative of the East Timorese independence movement, have called on the new Labour government to halt all arms sales to Indonesia. Robin Cook has stated that he will not export equipment likely to be used for internal repression or external aggression. This would include armoured vehicles and water cannon.

However, this position differs more in emphasis than in substance from the previous government which also claimed to use human rights criteria in granting export licences. It falls far short of the full embargo demanded by the liberation movement in Indonesia and East Timor.

Options open

It leaves open the option of selling military equipment which has not been directly linked in photographic evidence to repression, including Hawk jets.

In fact there is evidence from eye-witnesses, and statements by Indonesian officials, that Hawks have been and will be used for bombing in East Timor.

The Indonesian Minister of Technology admitted that "the planes will be used... also for ground attack" (The Times, 18 April 1993).

Cook will come under enormous pressure from Britain's arms manufacturers to back down on his commitment to human rights. It is vital that campaigners in the labour movement counteract this pressure and fight to hold Cook to his commitment.

With Europe's workers against Europe's bosses in the fight to end Maastricht MISERY

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Socialist Outlook

Pamphlet by Alan Thornett, Dave Packer and John Lister

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Spectre of Europe's workers haunts Amsterdam summit

Counting the cost of failure

Harry Sloan

BANKERS, bureaucrats and politicians are still assessing the damage done to their dream of a European super-state after the failure of June's Amsterdam summit.

No sooner had the fudged documents been adopted and self-congratulatory communiqués issued than the real scale of the problem began to surface.

One top German banker has attacked the Amsterdam Treaty as a "ragbag" and "patchwork" of decisions which do nothing to tackle the "lopsided construction" of moves towards a single currency.

The drive towards greater political integration, and the reform of the EU's decision-making institutions which are vital if it is to open its doors to up to 10 new countries in eastern Europe, came to a grinding halt.

Instead new divisions have begun to emerge, under pressure of mass resistance to the austerity programmes forced on by the convergence criteria for the single currency.

Austerity

The Euro marches may have been kept well away from the summit meeting, but each national delegation was painfully aware of the growing mood of opposition to austerity that has taken various forms across the continent.

So great are the tensions as national governments attempt to defend their own interests at the expense of their previous commitment to the development of the EU that some analysts talking already of a process of "disintegration".

Ironically it was one of the keenest previous advocates of greater integration, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who helped stamp on the brakes, even while he struggled to salvage his hopes for a single European currency.

Amsterdam saw the first substantial break in the crucial Franco-German axis that for 10-15 years has been the driving force towards the strengthening and expansion of the EU, and more recently in pressing for progress towards a single currency.

This liaison was rudely interrupted in both countries in the last 12 months, by a wave of opposition in Germany involving workers' protests and increasingly outspoken criticism by conservative financiers worried at the potential weakening of stability if the Deutschmark is dissolved into the euro, and in France by the mass strikes against austerity, leading to the shock defeat of the right wing

government by a Socialist Party critical of the Maastricht Treaty.

Although France's new Socialist Prime Minister Jospin met Kohl as usual before the Amsterdam proceedings, for the first time they failed to agree a common line, with both governments feeling the heat of popular opinion at home.

Jospin clung formally to his electoral stance of demanding the Stability Pact agreed in Dublin last December be renegotiated to include a specific commitment to growth and job creation.

Kohl for his part opposed any measures which would lead to state spending on job creation, and attempted to undo the political damage caused by his government's



Haunting the bourgeoisie: growing popular opposition to EMU

public row with the Bundesbank over financial juggling tricks to ensure Germany meets the Maastricht convergence criteria for a single currency.

In the summit itself, under pressure from right wing President Chirac, and from the even more right wing Tony Blair, Jospin's rhetoric

"A stalemate has developed over the single currency while France, Germany, Italy and Greece wrestle with intractable deficits as the clock ticks down towards the deadline for convergence"

dissolved into a passive acceptance of a fudged formula renaming the Stability Pact as the *Stability and Growth Pact*.

This may have seemed easy enough at the time, but it will cut little ice with French workers, who are angry and threatening new action over the failure of Jospin or the EU to prevent the closure of Renault's Vilvoorde plant in Belgium, and impatient to see the promised package of job-creation policies implemented in France.

Since the summit Jospin has given a major speech to the National Assembly insisting that he will carry out all his election pledges, promising a reduction in

the working week, and to limit the right of private employers to sack workers.

The latest French financial statistics also show a worsening budget deficit, making it even less likely that the country could meet the convergence criteria for the single currency; but it is already clear that the political priorities of the new government are being shaped more in response to domestic problems than by any overarching project of European Union.

Kohl for his part attempted to re-

"The Austrians and the British talked up new clauses on animal welfare; the Belgians praised a declaration on local sports teams; the French and Spanish inserted a new language on remote regions; and everyone praised a new employment chapter, which is long on exhortation but acknowledges that national governments rather than Brussels should take the initiative."

Indeed the British government's most popular export during the summit was the Thatcherite policy of deregulation and "flexibility" of labour it inherited from the last 18 years.

The employment and growth pact pledges EU member states to review their tax and benefit systems to get rid of disincentives to job creation, increase the "adaptability" of labour markets, and increase the "employability" of their workforce through training programmes.

Platitudes

The policy was lifted wholesale from the New Labour platitudes of Tony Blair's manifesto and Gordon Brown's budget, and is of course a recipe for the spread of British-style low-wage, insecure and part-time working throughout the continent.

Worse, agreement around these vague and evasive phrases was sufficient to pull in the French and Swedish governments which had been the most outspoken critics of the Maastricht Treaty, and thus keep the wheels on European Monetary Union, even if the gearbox is jammed.

"You could say we have rescued EMU," a minister told the *FT*, "although I would be grateful if you did not say it too loudly."

Gordon Brown was a bit more up-front on the EMU question when he pointed out that his Budget would enable the British economy to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria.

Blair's team has always seemed likely to look with greater enthusiasm than the Tories on the single currency.

But the lasting impact of Amsterdam is likely to centre on its political failures, and on the emergence of popular pressures within member states as a factor in policy de-

bates, obstructing any real prospect for enlargement to the East or greater political integration.

With key governments singing not only in different languages but from counterposed hymn sheets, the chances of any leading member state taking the political gamble of monetary union must be reduced.

A senior member of the Bundesbank's governing central council, Reimut Jochimsen, spelled out the problems facing Helmut Kohl when at the end of June he warned that to launch EMU on inadequate economic and political foundations "may lead to the disaster of political disintegration".

Pointing to the French government's admission that it cannot get its public deficit down to the 3% Maastricht maximum, Mr Jochimsen warned that Germany too will find it hard, and it could be "almost impossible" to meet the additional criterion of cutting the public debt to 60% of GDP.

To wriggle round this (and similar problems in other countries) by creative accountancy, he warned, would "build EMU on very shaky foundations". Such "pure political opportunism" would risk "a serious crisis of confidence".

Resistance

The antics of Europe's political leaders are a visible result of the growing international resistance to austerity. That fight is likely to grow as the squeeze on welfare spending and drive for speed-up is intensified by employers.

Despite Tony Blair's cynical hi-jacking of the phrase "People's Europe", originally raised by campaigners opposed to the Maastricht criteria and the project of a capitalist super-state controlled by bankers, big business and bureaucrats, it is clear that there is a yawning gulf between the fudge and phrases of Amsterdam and the needs of Europe's workers and 20 million unemployed.

The links forged in the Euro march campaign can be a crucial building block for a genuine internationalist fightback, strengthened by the obvious signs of weakness from many European governments.



The usual suspects: Amsterdam saw Europe's political leaders facing in different directions



Internationalist campaign blocks drive for bosses' Europe

Success of Euro marches

Alan Thornett

FIFTY THOUSAND people joined the demonstration in Amsterdam on June 14 at the climax of the European marches against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion.

Slogans against Maastricht, the single currency and unemployment across Europe rang out in a dozen different languages. "The people united will never be defeated" "Maastricht - con trick" and "decent jobs and decent pay - single currency no way" were the favourites of the British delegation.

The demonstration brought together a wide coalition, ranging from the trade unions - the largest single component - to large numbers of young people and environmental campaigners.

The demonstration was the first internationalist event of its kind. The Dutch organisers estimated between 15,000-20,000 people from Netherlands. More than half the demonstration therefore consisted of international delegations.

These included 5,000 from France, 4,000 from Italy, 350 from Greece, and delegation from every country of the EU and beyond. Around 500 people went from Britain. Alan Simpson, the president of the British campaign for the marches, joined the demonstration though Amsterdam.

Free trains

The Italian delegation, organised primarily by Refondazione Communist, provided the most remarkable story of the day. 4,000 unemployed people had turned up at Milan station and demanded the government lay on free trains to take them to Amsterdam. They got their trains!

When they arrived in Amsterdam - hours late because of border delays - 200 were held by police due

to alleged graffiti damage to one of the carriages. The rest refused to leave the station and were then attacked by riot police.

The Italian delegation eventually marched into Dam Square at 6 pm on Saturday evening - four hours after the assembly time and just in time to catch the tail end of the huge circular march returning. They then had an unplanned overnight stay in Amsterdam waiting until 7 am on Sunday morning until the last of the two hundred held by Dutch police had been released.

Despite the huge and vibrant demonstration on the Saturday for the 500 core marchers, many of whom had been on the road for two months, the joining up of the marchers on the previous day was probably the most emotive and



memorable part of the whole campaign.

The marchers had already amalgamated into two columns of about 250 each - one entering Amsterdam from the north, the other from the south. The column comprising the Irish, French, Belgian, Spanish and British legs arrived in Dam Square first after an inspiring march into Amsterdam.

Twenty minutes later they were charging down the road to meet the other column which had appeared in the distance. There was then a joint march through the city before being welcomed by the mayor at the

Town Hall.

The strength of the marches was their enduring political relevance. The process of European integration and the project of the single currency and the response of key sections of the working class to the effects of these plans of the bosses and bankers with mass strikes and demonstrations has been headline news through much of the last year.

The marches addressed the central political issue in Europe today - mass unemployment - and the biggest single factor which is set to increase it still further - the current plans for a single currency.

It is remarkable that the political relevance of this focus was not only maintained but increased during the year from the launch of the campaign to its conclusion in Amsterdam. Indeed the issue will continue to be central for the foreseeable future.

Solidarity

The most important political gain of the campaign across Europe was to lift the increasing trend towards internationalism and international solidarity to a new level. This was symbolised most strongly on the demonstration by the delegation of Renault workers - who themselves have been taking international action to save jobs.

In Britain, the marches have helped to shift the debate on the single currency within the labour movement, particularly the unions. The TUC opposed the marches, sending out a letter to affiliates.

The TUC Combine of unemployed centres went further :conducting a nasty campaign of vilification against the marches right through to the end, on the political line of the TUC.

In the face of this, the marches themselves have helped to develop a serious challenge to the official line

of the TUC on Europe and the Maastricht Treaty, with the support of trade union and unemployed activists.

The FBU was committed to the TUC line at the start of the marches. By the end, the leadership line had been challenged at FBU conference by a supporter of the marches, several regions supported the marches, and the national union sponsored a marcher.

While the marches were on the road, NATFHE conference voted to support the marches, making NATFHE one of five national unions supporting the initiative; the others were the Bakers Union, the RMT, the Professional Footballers Association and the FBU.

Nearly 100 Trades Councils backed the marches, and this was



carried unanimously at Trades Council conference.

The Trades Councils' role in providing practical and logistical support for the marches on the road was crucial, as they organised receptions, food and accommodation for the marchers.

There were debates and pressure at every level within trade union and other organisations over support and sponsorship of the campaign.

The marches in Britain also achieved a degree of media attention which was out of proportion to the size of the marches at that time,

reflecting the campaign's European dimension.

During the Euromarch campaign, links were made with workers involved in current disputes. The Liverpool dockers and their supporters backed the marches from the start and sent a strong delegation to Amsterdam.

The Magnet strikers organised for the North East leg in Darlington and supported the events. The marchers occupied several Magnet showrooms en route, staged an occupation of the Project Aerospace plant and visited the Hillingdon picket line on the way into London. The Hillingdon women spoke in Amsterdam and marched with their banner on the demonstration.

Achievement

Keeping the two legs of the march on the road through Britain without any major breakdowns was a major achievement in itself. Of the 34 towns and cities where the march stayed overnight, only two or three fell through.

Altogether, the march passed through 90 cities and towns, linking up with various struggles and campaigns taking place along the way. A key activity was the occupation of Job Centres, protesting against the Job Seeker's Allowance and low pay, together with solidarity actions in support of the various strikes.

The campaign itself and even more the experience of being on the road were definitely exhausting.

But any sense of tiredness is superceded by the renewed energy generated by the impact of our ideas and the sense of solidarity we built.

It is that spirit which is taking us forward into discussions as to what the next steps are both here in Britain and internationally.

Next steps on from Amsterdam

Alan Thornett and Terry Conway

BUOYED UP by the success of what we have achieved so far, Euromarch activists both in Britain and across the continent are beginning to discuss what the next steps for the campaign should be.

An initial meeting of the international co-ordination in Paris on June 28 discussed ideas for action around the European unemployment summit which will be held in Luxembourg in October or November and the Cardiff summit next June.

It also pledged itself to strengthening co-ordination of the unemployed on a pan-European basis as a complement to the already existing European Network against Unemployment. A larger meeting is planned for October 4-5, with delegates from the different national campaigns to take forward these plans.

In Britain the National Steering Committee of the campaign met in London on July 5. An extremely positive meeting discussed the achievements of the campaign so far. Among those in attendance were Magnet strikers who have been keen participants in the campaign for many months. The meeting was happy to pledge support for the next mass picket of Magnet in Darlington on August 23.

Discussion focused first on the need to develop opposition to Blair's Welfare to Work proposals. Those present understood this will do little to deal with the scourge of unemployment and poverty, but in-

stead will further penalise those on benefits.

The slogan of the Euromarchers for "decent jobs and decent pay" will be apposite in this approach. Not only will those currently unemployed be affected, but also those with jobs who may be under threat as employers pick up government subsidies to take on new workers – and might then get rid of some of their existing employees.

The meeting took place in the context that the battle over Europe itself will remain centre stage. Not only will the next summit take place in Cardiff under British presidency in 1988 but a referendum on the single currency could even precede it if Labour decides to try and take Britain into the first round.

Whether or not this turns out to be the case it is vital that plans are laid now for a left campaign for a 'no' vote. Euromarch campaigners can make a valuable contribution to these developments.

Cardiff

Discussions are already taking place amongst activists in Wales planning a forum at the time of the Cardiff summit – whether it is possible to repeat a mobilisation on the scale of Amsterdam remains to be explored.

Christophe Aguiton and Robert Cremieux, who were central to the co-ordination of the Euromarches, explained in a recent article in *Politique-La Revue* that militants in different European countries have slightly different priorities.

They argue that pan-European mobilisations assist in giving a wider perspective which enhances



Renault jobs helped focus the international fight: the next stage of the campaign must build broad alliances

better understanding and further co-operation.

They say that despite the real differences in political culture and national priorities across Europe there is agreement on the key demands but then go on to discuss the different emphases.

"In Britain, there is no minimum wage or legal limit on the number of hours you can be asked to work. While British EuroMarchers are obviously in favour of a reduction in the working week, they preferred to stress the importance of a decent income and full employment. In other words, a reversal of the reforms of the Thatcher years.

"Meanwhile, German unemployed groups are most concerned about "forced labour" – new regulations forcing the unemployed to accept any job offered, whatever the conditions, or lose part of their unemployment benefits.

"In western Germany, mass unemployment is a recent phenomenon, and a larger part of the population believes that those without work are not really looking, compared to most other countries.

"Obviously, there is no fundamental contradiction between the priorities of the British and German unemployed movements. But

it takes time to establish a common platform.

"...The form that popular mobilisations take in the coming months and years will have a clear influence in the strategic debate. If mobilisations remain essentially within the national framework, then this is the level at which people will perceive the political and social confrontation.

"But if it is possible to develop pan-European struggles, then it will be easier to put forward collective demands, thus elaborating another strategy for "really building Europe."

The same sort of approach has been one of the hallmarks of the British campaign, and was continued by this latest steering committee.

For a key layer in the campaign it is the battle against unemployment that dominates their concerns and time, while they are well aware that the Maastricht criteria make this struggle all the more bitter.

For others, the initial impetus towards the campaign was the need to fight against the Europe of the bosses and bankers, while carrying this through in practice has led to an increasing understanding of the centrality of the fight for jobs.

How these different emphases will play out in practical terms over the next year will be further discussed at the report back conference being planned for September 20 in London.

Euromarch calendar

July 22

Meeting in Cardiff to discuss plans for alternative forum to co-incide with Intergovernmental Conference Cardiff June 1988.

August 23

Mass Picket and demonstration in Darlington in support of Magnet strikers

September 20

London report back Conference organised by British Euromarch campaign

October 5-6

European meeting to discuss future plans for Euromarch campaign.

A powerful guide to the emerging Europe

The Question of Europe, Edited by Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson, Verso, 414 pages, £15.00

Reviewed by Duncan Chapple

"MONNET wrote 'We are starting a process of continuous reforms which can shape tomorrow's world more lastingly than the principles of revolution so widespread outside the west.' Who can deny the genius of this conception of political advance – as if the ambitions of Napoleon could be married to the methods of [Peter] Taaffe."

(Perry Anderson on the 'father of Euro-federalism' Jean Monnet)

Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson are two academics powerfully influenced by the work of the Fourth International in the 1970s and 1980s. They have edited an outstanding collection of essays explaining the political, economic and theoretical questions posed by the integration

of Western Europe.

Four major themes are taken up in this keenly priced book. The first section looks at the idea that post-war European integration came from a wish to strengthen rather than erode the authority of national member states.

This is the view of Alan Milward, whom Anderson correctly praises as the historian who has most illuminated European integration.

Milward explains how different needs coincide in the integration process, yet misrepresents these needs as being those of the working people, partly animated through the ideas of Jean Monnet and other founding federalists, rather than of the ruling elites in western Europe and the USA. Discussion of Milward's invaluable contribution is balanced by Anderson and William Wallace, the heavy-weight academic authority on policy making.

The second section assesses the Maastricht treaty and the Europe it is producing. Politically wide-ranging authors, including Conor Cruise O'Brien and German CDU foreign affairs spokesperson, Karl Lamers, look at the possible futures for

Europe.

The links between economic development and welfare generation are discussed, and Peter Gowan powerfully argues that British approaches to integration have been continually subordinated to domestic political concerns.

The economics of monetary union are especially examined in the third section and placed in the context of German hegemony and slow expansion to the east.

Sam Aaronovitch and John Grahl attempt to outline a plan for the introduction of a single currency which avoids austerity and promotes growth. Other contributors highlight the reality of the single currency increasing insecurity and doctrinal devotion to deflation.

Jurgen Habermas, Jacques Attali and others contribute to the concluding section of the book, examining the possible futures for Europe. The possibility of a European constitution is debated and the development of a European identity is discussed.

Both members of the New Left Review editorial board, Gowan and Anderson might be expected to pro-



Our Europe or the bankers? The workers must fight to decide

duce a critique of European integration. This they do, but they also draw in the best representatives of pro-integration thought, including the single currency's animator – Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa.

Drawing together the full range of the sharpest writers on European integration, *The Question of Europe*

provides a powerful guide to the lines of stress and movement within the integration process.

Choosing tactics for building a different Europe, a social Europe that goes beyond capitalism, is made easier by the careful analysis in this book.

A look at the campaign behind open letter of European economists

Winning new allies against EMU

THE MARCH against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion was one of many initiatives taken in the run up to the Amsterdam summit which posed alternative approaches to that taken by Europe's bosses and bankers.

On June 12, major European newspapers carried the story of 331 European economists, 66 of them from Britain, who fiercely attacked current plans for European monetary union and demanded that the summit should be fostering growth and jobs.

They argued:

"This EMU is ... not a good model for extensive European economic integration. You may have been operating under the assumption that economists are in agreement about this EMU, and that all the adjustments might be very distressing from a social and political point of view but are nonetheless truly necessary from an economic point of view.

"This is not the case. There is no solid, scientific foundation for the EMU, and many of us have drawn attention to this fact in the past...

"We therefore call on you to reconsider this EMU project. Not that we ask you to put an end to European co-operation; on the contrary. A common currency and monetary policy could offer considerable advantages. But this EMU is governed by timeless criteria and dogmas. Wise economic policy must not be replaced by rigid rules, but must be determined essentially by circumstances.

"This is also a question of democracy: the framework of the EMU is wrongly discharging you and your colleagues from your precious democratic duty to take responsibility for your political choices.

"Under the current conditions, this EMU offers no perspective whatsoever of an adequate response to environmental problems, of improvement in the lot of Europe's 20 million unemployed and 50 million poor or for the defense and extension of the welfare state.

"As critics of the EMU, we are reproached with putting European co-operation in danger; we are told that we would do better to keep quiet.

"We are firmly convinced, however, that the greatest danger for Europe lies in fact in the design of this EMU, which has already led millions of Europeans to identify Europe and the euro with austerity policies and social suffering.

"It is high time that politicians realise: the peoples of Europe have the right to an economy that serves the interests of human beings."

This project was co-ordinated by Dutch economists Geert Reuten, Kees Vendrik and Robert Went. Terry Conway from Socialist Outlook spoke to Robert Went.

SO: Why did the three of you decide to launch this open letter?

RW: This European wide initiative followed an initiative that we took four months earlier in The Netherlands.

There was no serious discussion in our country about the social, ecological and democratic consequences of the euro-project and we were horrified by the idea that only the colour and design of the new money provoked discussion.

So we decided to try to get Dutch economists to sign an appeal against this project and partially to our surprise 70 signed, among which were several well-known professors and six trade union economists. The Minister of Finance said on TV that we are "dangerous" and other politicians said we were "idiots" and "too late", but our statement provoked a real discussion in the press and in all kinds of meetings for the first time. Since then we have been referred to as "the group of 70 euro-sceptical economists".

Politically this discussion has been very important, because we state that we are not against a common currency in itself, on the contrary, but against this project with these criteria, central bank, policy goals and consequences.

This differentiates us from right-wing nationalist criticisms and helped create the space for a progressive internationalist opposition against this project, this



Europe, for a social, ecological and democratic Europe.

Our Dutch statement got some press coverage in other countries and colleague economists from other countries contacted us to try to do something similar on a European level just before the Amsterdam summit. As the Dutch held the presidency of the EU, we were asked to coordinate that and so we did, again with a lot of success given the short period in which all this had to be done.

SO: Was it easy to get support? Did many that you approached reject what you were saying?

RW: In Holland we were surprised by the support (we now have over 100 supporters) and internationally I was struck by the number of economists that signed from Britain (the biggest group), Greece and also Italy, where our national organizer expected that it would be very difficult.

In several countries we did not have enough economists with time to work to collect signatures, otherwise I think we would have had over 500 names.



Very clever: but how many can you fit in your pocket? Bankers are jumping the gun by designing euro coins

As for negative reactions, I don't know about other countries, but I find it striking that very few economists tried to defend the existing project publicly.

Many more seem to have doubts and their arguments in favour are also getting more and more catastrophic, to de-politicize the debate. "We cannot stop now after all the work and money invested, or we'll get a big political and economic crisis in Europe", they say. The positive reasons to be in favour (more work, growth, saving of transfer costs) that were given in the beginning for the project are now not credible any more, because we see the results are the reverse.

Since the Maastricht Treaty was signed unemployment in the EU increased with almost 4 million: who wants to explain that 20 million is less than 16 million?

SO: Why do you think you were so successful in getting media coverage?

RW: More and more people begin to get doubts about the project and it is not at all certain that they can force it through.

As a Green Finnish member of the European parliament recently said to me in a panel discussion in Amsterdam, the importance of our statement is that it makes clear that you can be against the euro without being against Europe. I think that position is new for many journalists too and that helped to get a good echo in the press.

SO: The debate in Britain has tended to focus on the restrictions set out in the Maastricht treaty and the impact the resulting cuts are having and will continue to have on jobs and services. You seem to argue in the appeal that we also need to pay attention to the further regulations agreed through the Dublin stability pact. The debate following Jospin's victory in the French elections in the

run up to this summit also tended to focus more on this question. Can you explain where the Dublin agreement fits in to the process?

RW: The stability pact that was agreed in Dublin and finalised in Amsterdam is indeed very important, as it lays out how the future common currency will function.

According to Maastricht all government deficits have to be reduced to 3 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The Stability Pact is there to make sure that no country that is allowed to participate in the common currency will ever go over this 3 per cent, which is as we explain in our letter a completely arbitrary figure.

The pact therefore says that all countries must reduce their deficits even further to "close to balance", i.e. 0 per cent or even +1 per cent. This means that all the cuts and austerity policies that we have had over the last few years will continue until far in the next century.

It also means that new recessions will be even deeper than they already were. This pact is a pro-cyclical straitjacket that in reality prevents reflationary policies in periods of economic ebb.

There are severe sanctions in the pact, including penalties that can go up to 0.5 percent of GDP, for countries that go over the 3 per cent deficit. Socially this is of course totally unacceptable, and even from an orthodox point of view nobody can give an economic justification for it.

SO: What assessment do you make of what happened at the Amsterdam summit? To what extent were there real disagreements between Jospin and the rest? What does the employment chapter mean? What do you think about the role played by Tony Blair?

RW: I think there are real differences, but unfortunately Jospin gave in almost immediately. As one of the major Dutch papers said in an editorial: it took Mitterrand two years, Chirac six months and Jospin only two weeks to change their policies.

Tony Blair is one of the main opponents of even the moderate social-democratic changes that Jospin won the elections with. There was a conference of European social-democracy in Malmö in Sweden before the Amsterdam summit and nobody there supported Jospin.

The Dutch minister of social affairs, who is the social face of the government and social-democracy in Holland, said he supported Blair's proposals for more flexibility in the labour market and more competitive policies, and suggested that Jospin would soon have a lot to explain to his voters that he did not dare tell them before.

What happened in the end with the stability pact in Amsterdam is scandalous and an insult for the unemployed and poor in Europe. Nothing is changed in the rigid stability pact and there are only some vague intentions added about job creation, without one penny to do something real. This is the sixth "employment plan" since the mid eighties and again it will create almost no jobs.

Everybody knows this: Robin Cook asked by a French paper how many jobs this will create said "At least eight"!

SO: Do you have plans for any further initiatives?

RW: We are only starting to discuss that now, so I can't tell you what we're going to do. I am sure that after all the support and encouragement that we got, is that there will definitely be new initiatives.

The last British colony in Asia

Bobby Chan

SINCE the beginning of this year media coverage of Hong Kong has been steadily increasing. Last month, just before the handover of the colony to China, it reached a crescendo.

Most newspaper articles criticised China's lack of democracy and forecast that many pro-democracy activists resident in Hong Kong faced repression. The clear implication was that Britain should never have agreed the handover.

There was very little mention of how Hong Kong came to be a British colony. Clearly the British do not wish to be reminded of their ugly and imperialist past. However the colonisation of Hong Kong also represents the end of Imperial China and the beginning of a new era in Chinese history.

The Opium War

Before the Opium War in the 1840s China was isolated from the rest of the world. Governed by the Manchurian dynasty, its closed door policy existed because it believed it had all it needed. A limited amount of overseas trade was restricted to twelve appointed companies in Guangzhou in the south.

However the need of the west to trade with China increased—in particular in terms of the tea trade. The early trade between China and the west led to a trade deficit in silver bullion. The British government needed another product which could be sold to China in order to prevent this. The product chosen was opium—imported from India.

The use of opium led to untold social and economic problems. Various elements within the Manchurian Dynasty argued for a total ban of the trade to be upheld by force.

What is commonly referred to as the Opium War raged from 1840 to 1842 at the end of which China's defeated rulers were forced to sign the



Blast from the past? Protest outside Chinese news agency in Hong Kong

Nanjing Treaty. Hong Kong island was given to Britain as a base for trade with China. Britain was also allowed to import opium and open five areas for trade with China losing control of custom.

Manchurian decline

From here on, massive industrial products were imported into China and as a consequence local production was destroyed. For the Manchurian Dynasty it was the beginning of the end.

In the middle of the century it faced a number of insurrections, the most significant being the Tai Ping rebellion.

At the same time China was again subject to imperial aggression. Between 1857 and 1860, Britain, France, the USA and Russia, together raised war against China.

British demands included the continued legal importation of opium. The war ended with the signing of the Beijing treaty and the further annexation of the Kowloon peninsula to Britain.

Following China's defeat in the 1894-5 Sino-Japanese war the Manchurian Dynasty was forced to borrow widely from overseas. China was forced to give up Hong Kong and the other "New Territories" on a 99-year lease.

Colonial rule

Throughout most of the twentieth century the British ruled Hong Kong through traditional repressive colonial methods. During this period the most radical challenge to British rule was the 1922 general strike in Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

After 1967 the British Government realised they had to change the way they ruled Hong Kong and that some local Chinese had to be included in the decision making process.

However the nature of colonial rule didn't change all that much. Until very recently white expatriates continued to control all levels of government. While British citizens had the right to seek work in

Hong Kong without restriction, citizens of the colony had no such reciprocal right in Britain.

It was clear from the beginning that the British government did not want to hand Hong Kong back to China. Margaret Thatcher argued that the three unequal treaties were all valid. When she realised that the Chinese government would not accept this and that she could not do what she did with Argentina over the Falklands, she began to float another idea—the British government would accept the sovereignty of China but would carry on administering the colony for a further period.

Eventually when the British realised they had to hand Hong Kong back they refused to grant a right for Hong Kong citizens to choose which country they wished to live in. This was effected through the 1981 British Nationality Act, which created a new category of British National (Overseas) with no right of settlement in Britain.

Only 50,000 families of "essential" Hong Kong citizens (mostly rich and high or middle ranking bureaucrats) were allowed to settle in this country.

Unholy Alliance

From the 1970s onwards a small number of Chinese were hand-picked to join the Executive and the Legislative Council as unofficial representatives for the Chinese population. These were usually the rich and famous. However the Council had no real power, this still resting with the British-appointed governor.

When the British government finally accepted that Hong Kong had to be handed back these "British allies" were never consulted. Realising they had been sold out, they shifted their allegiance to the Chinese government.

Many of them are now members of the Preparatory Committee established by China in order to ad-

minister Hong Kong immediately after handover.

In recent years the focus of pro-democracy activists has been to criticise the undemocratic nature of the Chinese state. In turn the British government has used this in its campaign against Chinese government rules.

The pro-democracy activists are not an homogenous group, and their views range from anti-imperialist to pro-British. Not surprisingly they do not all originate from the same social and economic base.

Many of them now believe privately that the best way forward for Hong Kong would have been for it to become independent like Singapore.

The next step

Over the past ten years, unemployment and under-employment have been increasing due to the moving of the manufacturing sector into China.

The working class in Hong Kong needs to struggle for a minimum wage and an increase in social welfare expenditure which is equivalent to at least the rate of inflation. This can only be ensured if the right to organise trade unions and political organisations is protected and extended.

The present empty struggle for democracy in Hong Kong diverts attention away from the need to build organisations which link the struggles of workers in both the former colony and in China. We need demands that are more concrete than the ones made by the so-called pro-democracy movement.

The last minute imposition of bourgeois democracy in Hong Kong was a cynical move by the capitalists, but in that it contains limited but genuine rights for workers, these will need to be defended. Labour movements in the west will be called on to take solidarity action.

Hong Kong: fight for democratic self-rule!

By our correspondent
IN THE 155 year period of occupation, British rule was exploitative of labour in Hong Kong as well as politically repressive in order to maintain its domination.

Activists fighting against imperialism and colonialism were subject to repression through such laws and regulations as the Public Order Ordinance.

The fact that British rule over Hong Kong lasted until the end of the century and was not, as with other British colonies, terminated soon after the Second World War, is due to the ruling Communist Party of China being prepared to tolerate its continuation.

After 1949, economic developments in China were slow; in contrast, Hong Kong took a faster path of development. This was not however due to the superiority of British rule but a combination of many factors, one of which was the hard work put in by Hong Kong workers.

The end of British colonial rule and the removal of constraints should mean the people of Hong Kong having more self control of their lives.

However, such possibilities have been thwarted by the imposition of

domination and repression from the authorities in Beijing who are taking over control.

The formula of "one country, two systems" is used rhetorically to promise there will be no change of the social system. Yet its formulation and imposition from above is a deprivation of the right of the people of Hong Kong to decide on the social system they prefer.

Anti-democratic

The whole process of transition has been both undemocratic and anti-democratic. The Basic Law Drafting Committee was appointed by Beijing. It proposed laws in the interests of Beijing bureaucratic rule and corporate capitalists.

The Chief Executive and the Provisional Legislature were not elected democratically. Some repressive parts of the Public Ordinance Bill have been restored to intimidate and restrict struggles by the people for their rights.

Now that the change-over has taken place, rule by a small minority of Beijing bureaucrats and corporate capitalists will usher in further repression of political freedoms and the social and economic rights of the people.

The new government has already demonstrated its reluctance to im-

prove social welfare or increase public expenditure on health, education or housing. This is despite a handover of a reserve of \$90 billion by the outgoing government to the new one.

The amount of money spent on the handover "celebrations" was obscene. The fireworks display alone cost \$40 million.

The people of Hong Kong must actively take matters into their own hands rather than wait for benevolent changes from above. Both political and social issues are closely linked.

The fight for more spending on health, education, housing and social welfare in order to improve the quality of living cannot be separated from the struggles to safeguard the political and democratic rights of decision making, access to information, free association and political organization, and so on.

People's Congress

We propose that the focus of the fight for political and economic rights should revolve around the demand for democratic election to a Hong Kong People's Congress. This would make major decisions relating to the self-rule of Hong Kong by the people.

In the struggle for political and

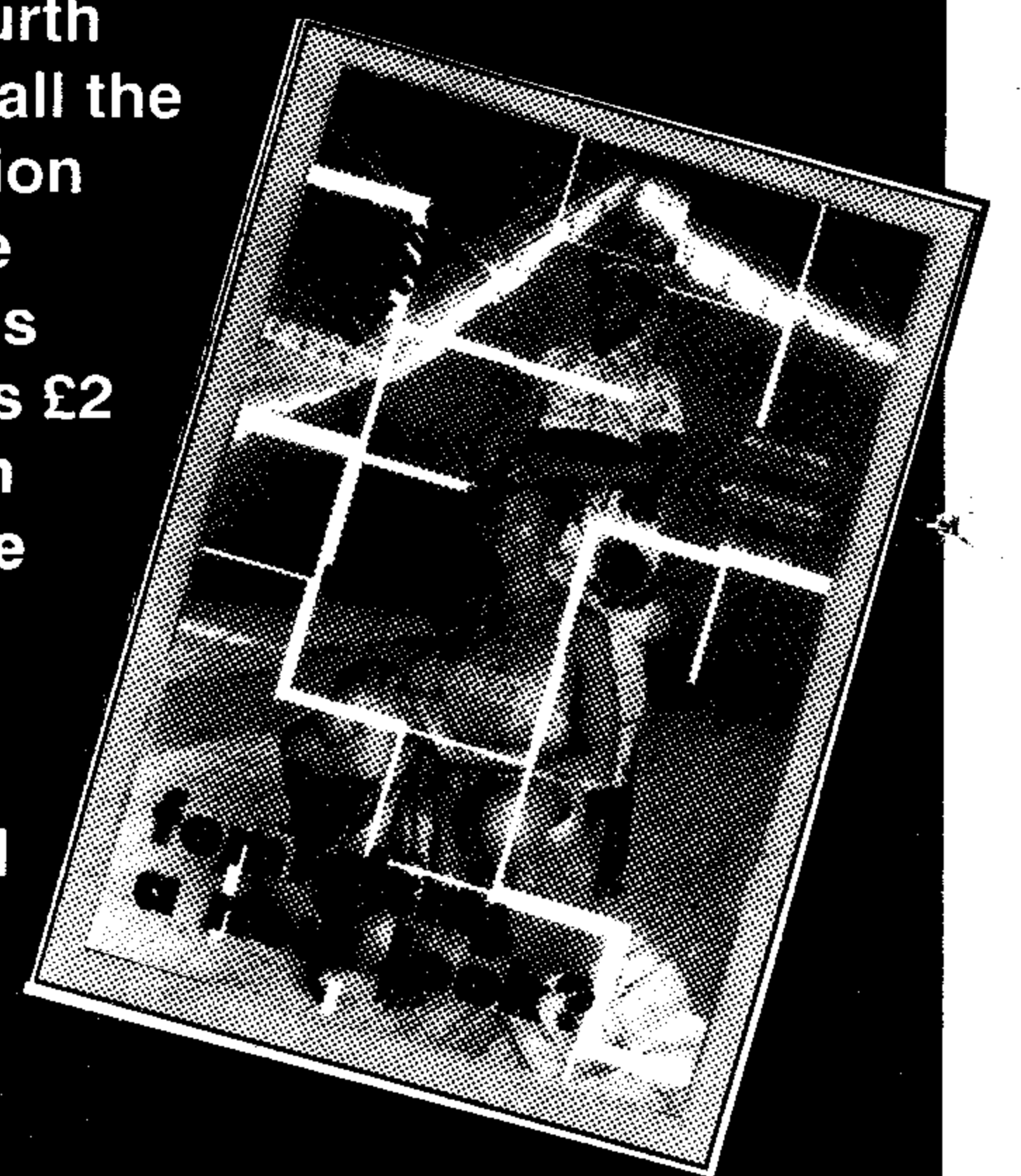
social rights the people of Hong Kong are now much more linked to the people of the mainland. Facing common enemies their joining hands

nist Party bureaucrats and corporate capitalists is now made much more possible.

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How India forced the British to quit

Geoff Ryan

IN 1914, when King George V declared war on Germany on behalf of the British Empire, opposition in India was limited. One and a half million Indians fought, on every military front, on behalf of their imperial rulers.

Twenty five years later the imperial Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, committed India to war with Germany. This time the reaction was very different. Not even all the rulers of the supposedly autonomous 'Princely States' enthusiastically endorsed Britain's war effort.

In those areas of India under direct British rule (the vast bulk of the country) reaction was much more hostile. Only the Muslim League, which by then was committed to an independent Pakistan, supported the war. Too much had happened in India between the two world wars for Indians to meekly follow British bidding.

The massacre at Amritsar in 1919, the suppression of every challenge to British rule and, for Muslims, British deceit in the Middle East had greatly strengthened nationalist feelings.

This was fuelled by the racist treatment of Indian troops during the First World War and the continuing racism experienced by the overwhelming majority of Indians in the inter-war years. While the former white colonies were allowed to decide for themselves whether or not to go to war in 1939, India had the decision made for her.

The all-white Simon Commission in 1927 inflamed even the most moderate Indian politicians, while the 1935 Government of India Act only gave Indians some say at a local level. It maintained separate seats for religious minorities, a provision opposed by Congress but supported by the Muslim League.

In 1929 the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, had announced that India would be 'given' some form of self-rule - though not just yet! However much these measures reflected British determination to maintain the Empire, they did show that the Raj was coming to an end.

They were concessions wrung out of the British by the mass movement which gave legitimacy to Congress, despite British claims that Congress had little support.

Repression

The limited nature of the concessions and the frequent resort to repression increased nationalist determination. By the outbreak of the Second World War Gandhi's demand for Dominion status had been replaced by the call for complete independence put forward by Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress left wing. Gandhi himself now supported independence.

The consequences of this shift became clear during the war. In 1942 Stafford Cripps, a leader of the Labour left and a member of the wartime British cabinet, was sent to India to try to negotiate active Indian support for the war. His Draft Declaration was rejected by Congress.

Illuminations and fireworks in Bombay greet the British handover. Below (left) Jawaharlal Nehru with Mahatma Gandhi, below (right) Lord Mountbatten with Muslim leader Jinnah



The British government offered only Dominion status and a constituent assembly whose members were to be elected by regional assemblies or nominated by the rulers in the case of the 'princely states'. It also made concessions to the demand being made by the Muslim League for a separate Muslim state, Pakistan.

Moreover, none of the proposals were to be implemented until after the war. Congress rejected the Cripps proposals and launched the 'Quit India' movement in August 1942.

Arrests

On August 9 1942 the main leaders of Congress were arrested. Mass protests took place throughout India, with women and young people playing a particularly important role.

Police stations, post offices, railway stations, courts and other symbols of imperial authority were attacked. National flags were raised on public buildings. Railway lines and bridges were blown up, telegraph and telephone wires were cut.

In Ahmedabad mill workers struck for three and a half months. In Bombay there was a general strike for a week, and in Jamshedpur for two weeks. In Ahmednagar and Poona strikes lasted for several months. School and college students joined the strikes and often became couriers for the underground movement.

These parallel governments developed in response to the arrests of the known leaders.

Although the mass protests subsided after two months the underground movement continued, with its activities broadcast over the clandestine Congress Radio. In a number of areas the underground movement developed parallel governments.

In Tamluk in Bengal the parallel government lasted from December 1942 until September 1944, while in Satara in Maharashtra it lasted from August 1942-1945).

These parallel governments organised education and helped with famine relief. They carried out some land redistribution, set up people's courts and organised sabotage activities against the British and their local collaborators. Despite their supposed adherence to Gandhian principles, they set up armed formations.

The 'Quit India' movement was met by savage repression. By the end of 1942 over 60,000 people had been arrested: nearly 45,000 were detained under the Defence of India Rules. Only half of these had been convicted of any offence, in a situation where obtaining a conviction was not difficult.

When Gandhi began a 21-day fast on February 10 1943 the British government ignored all appeals - including from the US government - for his release. Troops were placed on standby to deal with any uprising if he died.

The following year terrible famine hit Bengal, and the British government exacted re-

venge. The wartime coalition government refused to send aid. Not one Labour member of the government dissented. Five and a half million Bengalis died.

The importance of the 'Quit India' Movement must be seen against the background of the Second World War in Asia. By August 1942 Japanese armies had captured Burma and Singapore, and were on the threshold of India. British confidence was weakened. The defeat of European armies by Asians massively strengthened Indian self-confidence.

In this situation arose one of the least understood (by the British) movements in Indian history, the Indian National Army. The INA was founded in Malaya by a former officer of the British Indian Army Mohan Singh, who decided to approach the Japanese for help rather than join the retreating British soldiers.

By the end of 1942 40,000 Indian prisoners of war had joined the INA, which claimed it would only go into action at the request of the Indian National Congress. This was also seen as a means of preventing a future Japanese occupation of India.

The INA is usually associated with Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the leaders of the left wing of Congress alongside Nehru. Chandra Bose followed the old nationalist maxim that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". Hence he turned to Hitler and Japan for aid - though he was disillusioned by Hitler's professed admiration for the British Empire.

Submarine

In 1943 Bose was brought to Singapore by German and Japanese submarines. However there were clear differences between the aims of the INA and the Japanese military. The former wanted an independent India, the latter an India under Japanese rule. Hence Japanese attempts to limit the numbers of Indians under arms.

The success of the INA was certainly related to its links with the Japanese: once the Japanese armies were in retreat, the INA had no role. Nevertheless, despite the massive British propaganda at the time (and since) Chandra Bose was not a stooge of German or Japanese imperialism. He was an Indian nationalist who had considerable success in uniting Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims within the INA. This was duly noted by Congress.

When Bose died in a plane crash in 1945 Nehru, Gandhi and others defended him against British attempts to portray him as a fascist agent.

When the British organised trials of former members of the INA, mass demonstrations supported the accused. Congress, the Muslim League, the Sikh League, the Communist Party of India and smaller parties, alongside some of the Indian 'princes' demanded the release of all INA prisoners.

Nehru acted as lawyer for some of the accused. Even large numbers of traditional 'loyal' Indians - in Government service or the army - opposed the INA trials.

This was just one aspect of increasing discontent in the Indian armed forces. In February 1946 naval ratings of the HMIS Talwar went on strike in Bombay in protest against racism, inedible food and abusive treatment.

Airforce strikes

Further strikes, involving 20,000 ratings from 78 ships and 20 shore bases, followed. Strikes also took place in the Royal Indian Airforce and the army.

There were also strikes amongst British military personnel, particularly aircrews. Whilst the main demands were for demobilisation and repatriation, many of those taking part expressed disgust with the newly-elected Labour government for continuing Tory colonial policies, and proclaimed support for the Indian independence movement.

Not all actions, however, were progressive. There was also considerable fighting both between and within different communities - between the supporters of a united India and those who favoured Pakistan.

Faced with massive opposition in India, the Labour government moved rapidly towards British disengagement. Wavell, the then Viceroy was removed and replaced by Mountbatten, who arrived in India in late March 1947.

At midnight on 15 August 1947 the independent states of India and Pakistan, their boundaries determined by a British civil servant Sir Cyril Radcliffe, came into being.

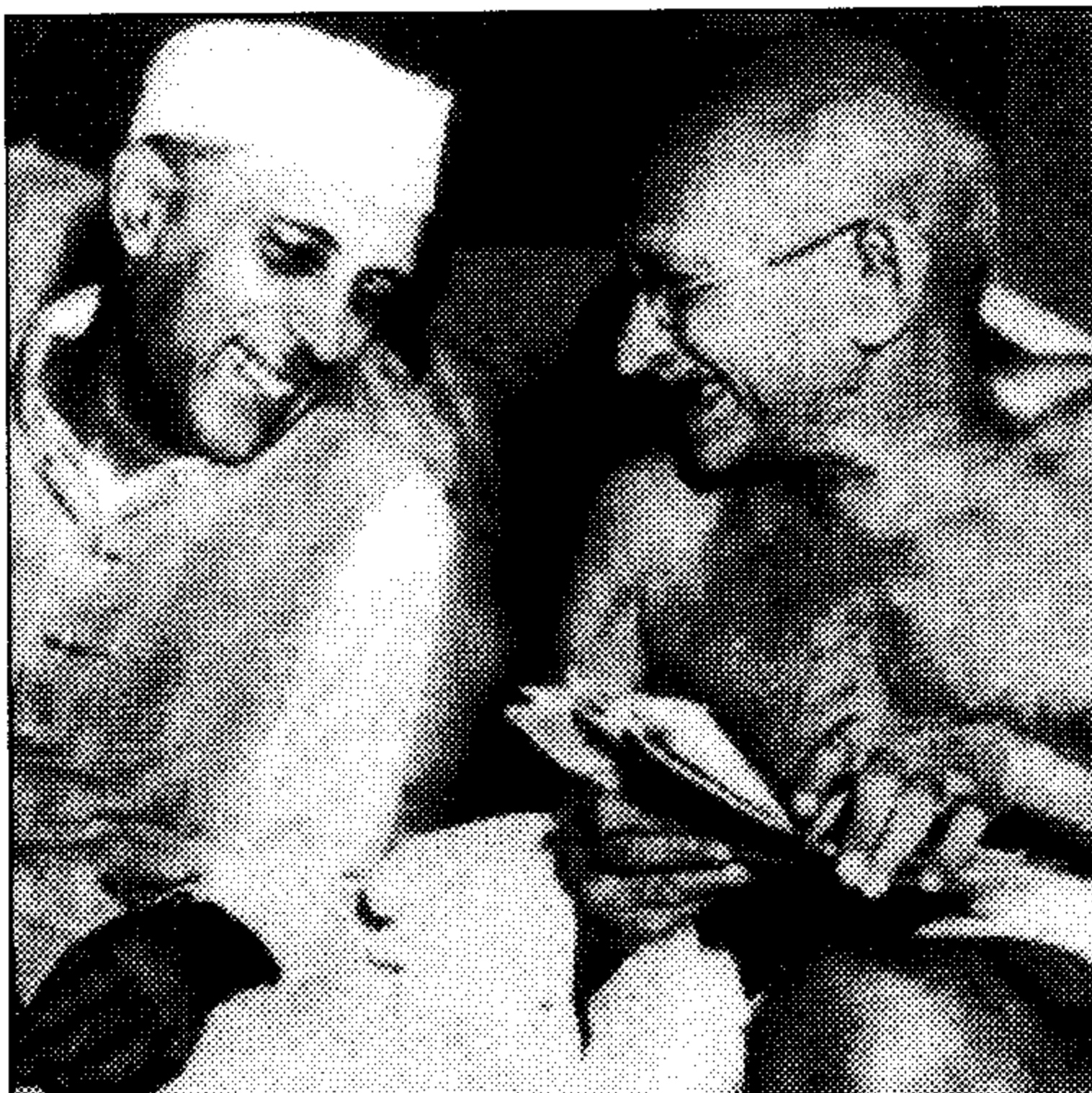
Much ink has been spilt on whether or not British imperialism set out to divide India. Communal divisions were not invented by the British: they were, and still are, a feature of Indian society. Certainly the British had exploited them to divide and rule.

Separate seats

They had consistently defended separate seats for Muslims, and during the war the Muslim League had a privileged relationship with the British. However this was because Congress refused to support the British war effort whilst the Muslim League gave its full backing.

The Muslim League leader Jinnah believed, correctly, that by 1947 the British were in a hurry to get out of India. All he had to do was wait and the British would cave in to the demand for Pakistan.

All the evidence suggests that the British wanted to maintain a united India. It was the objective result of past policies, not a conscious decision at the end of the Second World War, that led to the division of India - in the course of which another half million Indians died.



Irish workers reject "Celtic tiger"

John McNulty

In the recent general election in the 26 counties a number of interesting patterns were apparent.

The first and most obvious was that of an unbroken tradition going back 20 years – the defeat of the governing coalition. The fact that on each occasion working class voters have taken their revenge is a stark comment on claims that the southern state is a "Celtic tiger".

There was also a clear dismissal in advance of the programme of the new Fianna Fail-Progressive Democrat coalition. The junior partners, advocates of a program of deregulation and privatisation, won

only four seats. The new administration is relying on the votes of independents.

Above all there was the classic situation of the left paying for the programme of the last coalition. This was such a successful programme for capitalism that the right-wing Fine Gael party actually increased its vote while the Labour party vote halved.

The need for self-organisation of the working class was thus posed anew.

It expressed itself in a turning away from the major parties and an increased vote for smaller parties and the independents. The inability of the Greens to tap into this was

expressed in their call for water metering – a cost that would fall on the working class.

Sinn Fein stood as a junior version of the bourgeois nationalist Fianna Fail – and immediately voted for a Fianna Fail government.

Two parties of the far left stood. The Socialist Workers Party ran a standard recruiting campaign of little electoral significance. The Socialist Party, formerly

Militant Labour, established a significant electoral base in Dublin



Two losers exchange notes: Irish Labour leader Dick Spring with Tory N. Ireland Secretary Mayhew

and Joe Higgins was elected to the Dail. They have built up their base with local campaigns rather than addressing the major question of a workers' party.

They must now be pressed on this and on their reactionary positions on the national question.

The construction of a genuine party of the working class rests on

opposition to the present Labour policies of political coalition with capitalism and to industrial collaboration through "partnership" agreements.

(John McNulty is a member of Socialist Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International).

Essential reading for union activists facing hard Labour

Trade Unions in the Nineties: A Strategy for Socialists, Socialist Outlook pamphlet reviewed by John McIlroy

SO FAR, Tony Blair has had little time available to help Britain's trade unions. He has been far too busy with the really important political tasks – consulting Mrs Thatcher, appointing businessmen to his government, attacking teachers and single mothers and lecturing EU leaders on the need for more deregulation and greater competitiveness.

Thatcher's anti-union laws are now Blair's anti-union laws and if the government has its way they will remain on the statute book forever.

The speedy restoration of union rights to GCHQ workers shows what could be done. Yet on the minimum wage front the Low Pay Commission has not even commenced its deliberations – which will, of course, be subject to an employer veto. A White Paper on Union Recognition will be published in the autumn, with legislation promised by ... summer 1999.

The core of the Tories' legislation, including bans on solidarity action condemned by the International Labour Organisation will remain.

Public sector wage restraint will continue. The proposals in the document "Labour into Power", which will marginalise the unions' influence in the Labour Party they spent so much to bring into government, will be pursued at this year's Party conference.

Those who oppose government policy in the unions must urgently get together to exchange ideas, dis-



Postal workers last year ran up against Tory laws – now Labour's anti-union laws

cuss alternatives and organise for them.

We must do all we can to support the struggles already taking place. There are small disputes – the dockers, Hillingdon Hospital and Magnet workers – but also the redundancies in Sheffield and the education cuts promised by John Prescott capping council budgets.

Secondly, we must build real living rank and file links between trade unionists in Britain, Europe and beyond. The activities around the dockers' dispute and the Euro-marches are exemplary. We can all learn lessons from the militancy which has spread across Europe since 1995.

Thirdly, we need to take up these issues not only in the unions but in the Labour Party – and here the proposals for weakening the unions role are of vital significance.

They don't break the link. They commit the unions to a new link, which by concentrating power

over decisions in the hands of the Parliamentary leadership, turning conference into a Tory style rally and diluting union strength on the executive. They silence the voice of the organised working class.

The unions still have 50% of the vote: we have to mobilise to turn back these measures.

Finally, the legislation. Recent TUC Congresses have supported resolutions committing the TUC to repeal the Tory employment laws – at least one of these resolutions was supported by the General Council. We have to uphold TUC policy and ensure its implementation.

But we have to be specific. Going round sloganising "Repeal the anti-union legislation" is insufficient. The best way is to prioritise the implementation of the Manifesto promises on the minimum wage and recognition.

The way they are implemented – the detail – will be important. We can use the fight for a mini-

mum wage and recognition to launch recruitment drives and to rebuild workplace organisation.

We should try to mobilise alliances across the unions and on the Labour Left. We should highlight specific aspects of the Tory laws – the bans on solidarity action, the scabs' charter which prohibits unions from disciplining those who violate ballot decisions – in the context of seeking to replace the Conservative laws with a positive code of rights to organise strikes, take solidarity action, and so on.

In all this, the new pamphlet *Trade Unions in the Nineties* will be of great help. It provides valuable context, advice and ammunition for what will continue to be an uphill struggle.

It documents the depressing state of the unions after the long years of Tory rule. This highlights what we have to work with. TUC membership down 5 million since 1979, only a third of workers in unions, shop stewards in less than 40 per cent of workplaces, strikes running at their lowest levels this century.

The authors vividly depict what we are up against – changes in the world economy and European Labour markets hostile to trade unionism, barbarous new management techniques, and a debilitating web of anti-union laws. We face union leaderships whose only answer is to trumpet partnership with the employers – a partnership the employers just don't want.

Yet if things look grim they are far from fatal. These changes create the classical conditions for the growth of fighting trade unionism in a casualised insecure exploited working class whose leaders deny it the legal protection to defend itself.

There are useful sections on women in the unions, black workers and anti-racism and the vital question of the youth. Union membership amongst young people, the well-spring of our future, are dangerously low.

The framework is international, the authors repeatedly stressing the need for solutions at a European level. A renewal of union democracy is seen as central to any strategy to revive trade unionism.

There is cogent criticism of rank and fileist approaches whilst starting from a separation of the struggle in the workplace and the struggle in the unions and Labour Party ends up in sectarian virtual reality on the borders of our movement. The short cut turns into a dead-end.

There is also a powerful emphasis on the need for broad working class alliances. The pamphlet contains material important to educating young people in the history and method of militant trade unionism as well as discussion of more immediate demands.

All trade unionists should read it and take to heart its key message. "The way forward for the trade unions is not in the gift of Blair, Brown or Brussels. It is in the hands of the working class itself". Amen.

*** John McIlroy is the author of a number of books including *The Permanent Revolution? Conservative Law and the Trade Unions Today and Trade Unions in Britain Today*. He is a member of the AUT.**

***The pamphlet *Trade Unions in the Nineties* is available (£1.50 inc postage) from us at Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**

A timely analysis of India in turmoil

The Furies of Indian Communalism. Religion Modernity and Secularization, by Achin Vanaik, Verso, £14.00

Reviewed by Terry Conway

THE TIMELY publication of "The Furies of Indian Communalism" coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of partition and Indian independence.

As the introduction explains, partition itself was "a communal holocaust... in which millions died" (p 3) but it was hoped that the official commitment of the Indian state to secularism would prevent the repetition of similar nightmares.

While initially this seemed successful, over the last 25 years Hindu communalism has grown in strength. The question as to how far the politics of Congress allowed this sleeping monster to emerge strengthened deserves further attention, but is not the main subject of this study.

The Furies of Indian Communalism combines rigour in its analysis of the dangers of communalism with thought-provoking, at times heretical, argument as to the tools and alliances that need to be employed against it. The argument is somewhat weakened by rather patchy editing, which leaves whole passages of repetition which derive from the fact that it was originally written as essays.

Readers of Vanaik's previous work *The Painful Transition* will be struck by the different tone in this work which engages with strategies for the future as well as analysing what is today.

Dominant

In the 1990s the threat posed by majority communalism has become one of the dominant questions in Indian politics. Vanaik concentrates on the need for the secularisation of civil society rather than on the Indian state.

The secularism on which this state was founded was different from that in the post-enlightenment west. In pre-independence India, "secularism was perceived as the unifying principle mediating between and collating different religious communities in order to forge a common struggle for national liberation" (p 67).

In the post-independence situation the new secular state was to interpret religious impartiality not as abstinence from religious affairs but "by its fair involvement on India's multi-religious terrain" (ibid).

The rise to prominence of the Hindu communalist BJP (the Bharatiya Janta Party) has rarely been analysed outside the sub-continent. If the BJP were to take control of the government this would represent, in Vanaik's words "the coming to power of a reactionary rightwing and authoritarian yet

populist political party" (p 317).

Their project is a complete break with the principles of the Nehruvian consensus of post-independence India.

In the 1996 Lok Sabha (parliamentary) elections the BJP won 161 seats out of 545, becoming the largest single party in a significant leap forward from the 1991 national elections.

The BJP's support is concentrated in the north and west of the country. Its voters are 96 per cent Hindu (Hindus are 82-83 per cent of the population as a whole), with its strongest base of support among the small section of the upper castes and highly educated Hindus (52 per cent of this section voted for it).

A coalition of other forces were able to gain the support, although not the participation, of Congress and form a government. Still, the BJP is by no means a spent force and the need to find effective ways to combat its hold remains pressing.

The role of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), heading a group of organisations which are the contemporary expression of organised Hindu communalism, is even less explored than that of the BJP.

While the fortunes of the BJP and its predecessors are subject to fluctuation, the impact of the ideology of Hindutva, the communal banner under which these forces rally, has increased more steadily.

Vanaik outlines the circumstances which led to the destruction of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya in 1992 by the forces of Hindutva and the consequent carnage. This was the peak of a campaign of communal hatred which had lasted for over a decade.

Muslims are only 12 per cent of the population, concentrated in the poor and illiterate sections of society. It is not easy for the forces of Hindutva to argue that Muslims dominate Hindus.

Ayodhya was to allow the spreading of a slightly different but equally dangerous myth - that the government was favouring Muslims and betraying the Hindu community.

Temple

Ayodhya was the mythical birthplace of the Hindu God-King Rama and there was a local belief, not based on empirical evidence, that it was also the site of a temple to Lord Rama which was destroyed in the sixteenth century by the first Mogul emperor Barbar and replaced by a mosque.

The broad forces of Hindutva took up this issue from the early 1980s but the BJP itself made the running after the election of the weak Janata Dal government of V P Singh in 1989, which was reliant on BJP support to stay in power.

The BJP used extra-parliamentary mass mobilisations to call for the destruction of the mosque and the building of a new

Massacre of Bengalis in Assam, 1983. The "holocaust" of partition has developed 50 years later into a rampant communalism



temple. In autumn 1990, they launched a rath yatra - literally a chariot tour - through more than half the country, leaving a trail of violence and devastation.

Singh refused to act but eventually the march was halted by the (Janata) government of Bihar. The BJP withdrew its support for the government and mounted a further offensive in which communal forces occupied the mosque with impunity.

During the subsequent election campaign Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated and a weak Congress government elected under Rao's leadership. The BJP made significant gains, emerging as the largest opposition party, most importantly winning the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh in which Ayodhya is situated.

Concessions

Rao made a series of concessions to the BJP, including the issue of Ayodhya. Both Janata Dal and Congress governments had legitimised much of the rhetoric of the BJP. They were more concerned with their parliamentary majorities than protecting the rights or even lives of the Muslim community.

Vanaik's account of this critical point in Indian politics is accessible for those who have little previous knowledge.

He points out that 1992 saw the peak of extra-parliamentary activity by the BJP as it was much easier to mobilise around the destruction of the mosque than the construction of a temple.

While the book concentrates on the rise of Hindu communalism it also argues that a serious strategy to combat majority Hindu communalism must also combat minority communalisms.

Vanaik justifies his emphasis while pointing out that no justification is needed by explaining: "India cannot become a Muslim state; it can certainly become a Hindu state" (p 5).

The aspect of the book which has aroused the most controversy in India is the analysis of fascism. The Indian left, dominated by Stalinist and Maoist traditions, has tended to argue that communalism and fascism are the same - or so similar that the differences are not worth stressing. On the contrary, Vanaik argues, to go down that path leaves us disarmed against the threat of communalism.

The kernel of his argument, which he makes in relation to the "third" world in general is that "the victory of fascism and its years in power represented the consolidation of a most dramatic rightwing shift in the relationship of forces

not only nationally but also internationally" (p 20).

Vanaik's debate with the anti-secularist post modernist school is compelling. This 'intellectual' current has gained ground in Indian academia and more worryingly has influenced the general debate on communalism and secularism.

As he explains, "it claims to represent a third position which opposes communalism and its various manifestations but not in the name of a supposedly Westernized concept of secularism and the secular state" (p 153).

Such arguments pander to and strengthen the misunderstanding of secularism as defended by the Indian state and, whatever the subjective intention of their authors, give actual succour to communal hatred.

While the details of the particular polemic that Vanaik engages in are specific to the Indian situation they are also familiar to anyone who has engaged in debates with post modernism.

The passages covering movements which challenge the rise of communalism, most importantly the Dalit (untouchable) ascendancy, but also the rise of Indian feminism, are weakened by brevity.

Vanaik presents a balanced view of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of these movements but perhaps presumes too much in terms of his non-Indian audience's grasp of their potential.

Project

Vanaik's plea for an understanding of the urgency of the battle against communalism ends with a call for a new political project in India. This 'New Social Democracy', would have to break decisively from

the rational of neo-liberalism and emphasise social welfare.

It would have an "unwavering commitment to maintain and deepen the secularity of the Indian state while also promoting the secularization of civil society" (p 352).

It would base itself on the rural proletariat, marginal farmers and the urban working class, both organised and unorganised, and on the lower and middle sections of the backward castes and core minorities. As he points out "oppressed classes and oppressed castes broadly correspond" (p 351).

Problematic

This for me is the most problematic part of the book. The arguments both for the necessity of the project and how and why it could succeed are somewhat superficially sketched.


I remain unconvinced that this path, rather than the building of an explicitly revolutionary force in India - and worldwide - is either necessary or possible.

Vanaik in putting forward this scenario seems to conflate the need to forge broad alliances against communalism with the creation of a political and electoral force under this banner.

Have a number of steps in the argument been spelt out elsewhere which are then taken for granted in this exposition? Maybe future writings will clarify.

Despite my lingering frustration with these conclusions, *The Furies of Indian Communalism* is a stimulating and valuable work which should be read both by those familiar with Indian politics and society and those who are inquisitive to find out more.

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Dealing with difference

Anita and Me, by Meera Syal, Flamingo: London 1997, 328 pp, £5.99

Reviewed by B. Skanthakumar

Meera Syal skilfully conveys a sense of the wonder and bewilderment of being a child and of reading the world through those eyes in one of the best and funniest books of the year.

Anita and Me is a loosely autobiographical tale of a pre-teen Meena, child of an Indian family in Tollington, and her exploits with her idol and sometime friend Anita.

The immigrant experience of dislocation, culture-shock and racism is recent and raw enough to make it a rich seam, and Meera Syal the comedienne and script-writer of "Bhaji on the Beach", excels in an original and humorous way in mining it in her first novel.

Take Meena's wry account of when her "aunties and uncles" come to visit on the weekend.

Of course they aren't relatives but family friends to whom tradition and community demand this honor-

ific be given.

But as their cars roll up on weekend visits disgorging the passengers and contents, Meena isn't sure her neighbours realise this.

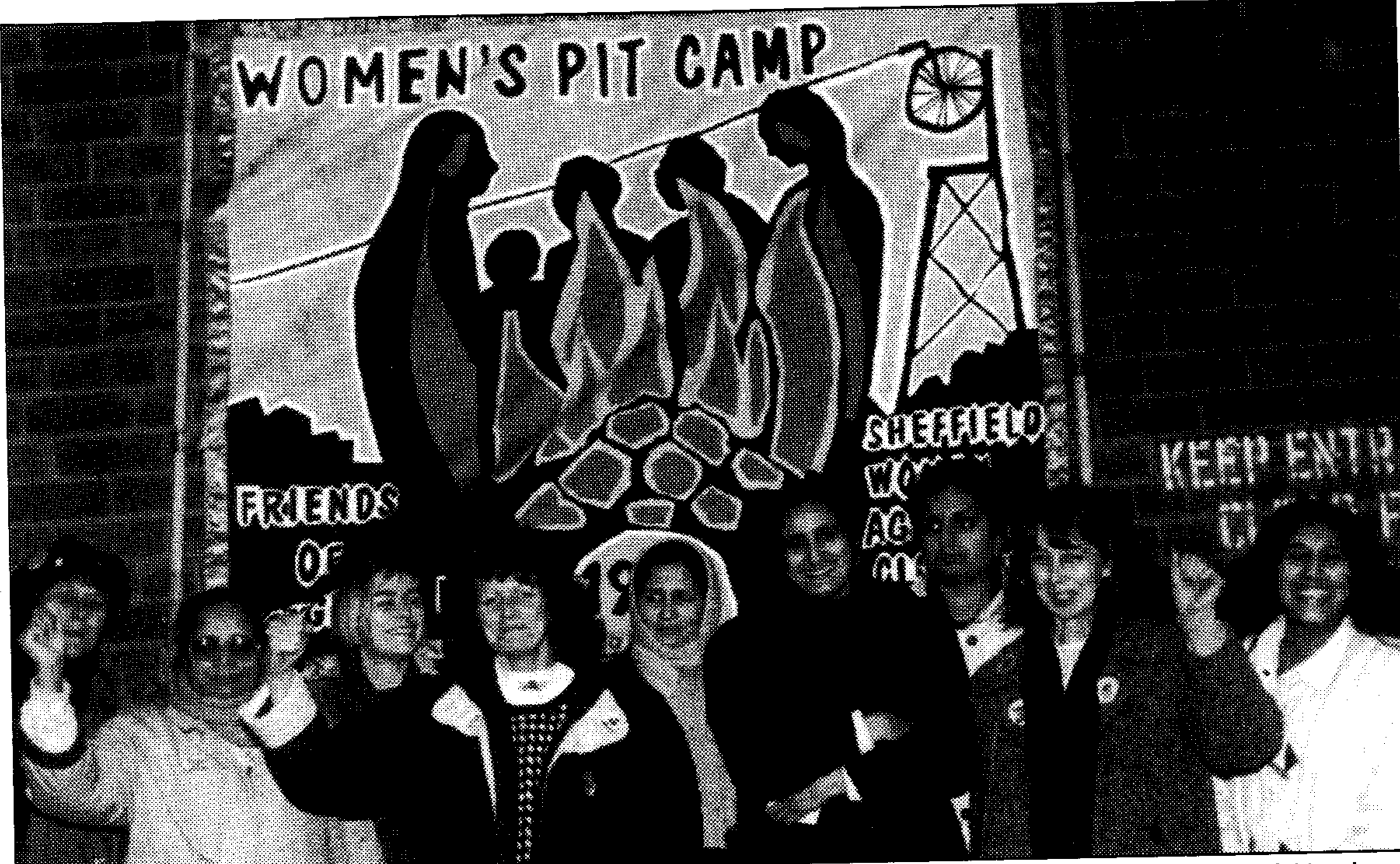
"I could see our neighbours shift uncomfortably, contemplating the apparent size of my family and the fact that we had somehow managed to bring every one of them over here."

Her preoccupation though is with her neighbour in the former mining village of Tollington and the changes wreaked on work and community in the 1960s.

The colliery had long since closed and in its place as main employer is a new ... ball-bearings factory.

There isn't the work for everyone there. Not the men who have been laid off and consequently lead an ethereal existence in their homes, "men in vests and braces, with rumpled hair who clutched half read papers and fiddled absent-mindedly with their testicles while their wives flung them hurried goodbyes", as they left for work.

It was the women whose labour was wanted, "women who do piece-work and feel grateful, women whose nimble fingers would negotiate their machines, women who un-



An exception proving the rule? The solidarity of Women Against Pit closures managed to break through usual racial barriers.

like their husbands, would not make demands or complain."

Meanwhile the motorway opens through the fields bringing the outside world and suburbia ever closer while the television set and not the fire-place becomes the real focus of the home, in a two-up two-down house with outside toilet and a shed doubling up as a bath.

The leitmotif between the troubled relationship between Meena and the exterior world is her on-off friendship with the older, worldly-wise Anita Rutter.

Meena is continually reminded

that she is different, though she doesn't particularly want to be, and she spends much of her time trying to minimise that difference, through for instance exaggerating her broad Black country accent, eating fish-fingers instead of Indian food and in endearing herself to Anita.

It is almost as if recognition by Anita will mean acceptance from wider society as well.

For this is also the Britain where Harold Wilson's 'white heat of technology' meets Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood'.

At the cross-roads are boys like

Sam Lowbridge, who believes Britain is for Whites only and doesn't shirk from 'Paki-bashing' when opportunity presents itself, but is also puzzled when Meena despises him. "I never meant you, Meena! It was all the others."

How bitter-sweet that a white youth denied to fascise deny that it was her he was talking about and committing violence against when evoking in her the realisation that she is indeed one of the "others".

Meena does not seek difference. She has difference forced upon her.

Wrestling with sex and lentils

Brian Gardner reviews Mira Nair's film *Kama Sutra*

IT'S A PITY *Kama Sutra* is not actually a film version of the famous and ancient sex manual of the same name. That would be more interesting.

In a fictional sixteenth century India, Sarita Choudhury's Tara, a princess, is to marry the king of a neighbouring state. However on her wedding night the king cannot stop himself from being enticed by the allure of Tara's chum, the servant girl Maya (Indira Varma).

When Maya's sin is discovered she is exiled from the court and falls in with the sculptor Jai Kumar (Ramon Tikaram -- Ferdie in *This Life*). After a long flirtation they finally get down to it while covering each other in lentils.

The brooding Jai lives only for his art. "We can't be together -- don't fall in love with me", he pleads. Abandoned by her lover Maya resolves to receive instruction in the art of being a courtesan.

Stumbling across Jai and some of his creations the king recognises one of them as bearing an uncanny resemblance to Maya. As a reward for finding Maya for the king Jai is allowed to wrestle with him.

I'm not sure why this is, but it does provide an excuse for Andrews and Tikaram to strip to their loin cloths and get down to some manly sport.

So we have a love triangle -- Tara loves the king who loves Maya who loves Jai who only loves himself. Maya becomes one of the King's courtesans but will not give him her heart.

Meanwhile the King blissfully



Chin up, old chap. Ramon Tikaram (Ferdie from BBC2's *This Life*) avoiding any compromising positions

ignores the fact that his brother-in-law has teamed up with the Shah and threatens to invade his kingdom.

The film looks good. It's beautifully costumed and photographically and leaving aside smutty references to lentils, the sex scenes are not ridiculous and have about them a raw sensuality. But those are the only virtues.

The acting is wooden and the

characters have no real depth. There are some really awful lines - the sort that unintentionally make cinema audiences chuckle - such as when Maya says to her condemned lover:

"You have to be very brave my love. They take you tomorrow and I will be with you always. Always!"

Stylistically there are more than a few problems with the narrative's continuity. Over half way through

the film, it suddenly dawns on us that years have passed. A Maya who doesn't look any older tries to apologise to Tara when she says: "I was young. I had no idea that what I did would change your life forever."

The plot meanders all over the place and as with Tara's suicide attempt, there is no attempt to build up tension before dramatic events.

There is no real historical context and no exploration of how differences of class or caste might affect attitudes to sexuality.

The king's immersion in sensual pleasures reminded me of another ruler in which an Indian ruler ignores the coming of an invading army, in this case British - Ismail Merchant's and James Ivory's *The Chess Players*.

That film, however, is clearly located within the early days of British imperialism. In *Kama Sutra*, until they enter at the end carrying their banners emblazoned with the crescent moon, we really have very little idea who these invaders might be.

Were it not for the dialogue being in English we could be in Bollywood - and a lot of Bollywood is much better than this. There were several times after some of the hammiest lines when I thought/hoped the actors were about to break out into song.

How the director of the powerful *Salaam Bombay* came to make this piece of vacuous twaddle I'm really not sure. Much more interesting than the film itself is her court battle with the Indian censors who have banned the piece. In a recent *Guardian* interview she stated:

"Sexuality in Indian cinema is always cloaked in rape and violence, the women as whores or virgins, and never the twain shall meet".

There is certainly a conscious attempt to move away from this and perhaps one of the reasons for the film's failure is that Nair is not at this stage bold enough to place such a transference within a real historical or social context.

Socialist OUTLOOK

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Leon Trotsky. His 'History of the Russian Revolution' drew James to Marxism, while his theory of Permanent Revolution helped inspire *The Black Jacobins*.

CLR's formidable odyssey

Charlie van Gelderen reviews 'Caliban's Freedom - The Early Political Thought of C.L.R. James', by Anthony Bogues (Pluto Press £13.99)

C.L.R. James rightfully takes his place in the pantheon of revolutionary thinkers of the 20th Century, with Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Gramsci, who have enriched Marxism with original ideas. One can disagree with him on several issues but no one can deny the stimulus of his contributions.

This book by Anthony Bogues - the first of two volumes - maps James' political evolution from his youth in Trinidad in 1901 until his deportation from the United States in the early 1950s. It is a truly formidable odyssey.

While still in Trinidad James became interested, though at first not involved, in the anti-colonial movements. Yet he always maintained the fount of his political identity came from Europe and America: "I am a Black European, that is my training and outlook."

James always maintained that he came to Marxism through Trotskyism. It was Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* which first inspired him.

His first book after his adherence to the Trotskyist movement was *World Revolution* (1937), a critical history and analysis of the Communist International. Although the book was written from the perspective of the Trotskyist Left Opposition, it was by no means uncritical of Trotsky.

While complaining of a "formalistic" and one-sided quality in the book's analysis of Stalinism, Trotsky accepted some of James' criticisms of his earlier positions and stressed "It is very important to convince James that his criticisms

are not considered by any of us as an item of hostility or an obstacle to friendly collaboration in the future."

Later in his life James was to develop further his differences with Trotsky and to question the validity of the Leninist Party. But he could not have written his magnum opus, *The Black Jacobins*, the story of the Haitian rebellion led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, without a profound knowledge and understanding of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution.

His major critique of Trotskyism was presented in *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950):

"Our position is that the chaos in the (Fourth) International is due to the fact that Trotsky's method of analysis and system of ideas is wrong and (this) will continue to grow until a new system is substituted for the present one."

Role of party

Differences with Trotsky were to lead inevitably to disagreements with Lenin, not only on the role of the vanguard party but also on the traditional Marxist paradigm that the socialist revolution could only be achieved through the seizure of power by the proletariat. Against this James postulated:

"The revolution is not the means by which workers achieve new socialist institutions to replace the old bourgeois institutions. The revolution is the means by which the socialist institutions emerge and destroy the bourgeois institutions which restrain them."

This conception of the working class achieving consciousness through their own self activity - almost a theory of spontaneity - was to become central to James' theory of revolutionary politics.

This was to be developed further with his conception of the "invading socialist society".

He also broke with Trotskyism on the class nature of the Soviet state, maintaining that it was a

capitalist state, with the bureaucracy performing the same tasks for State Capitalism as the American governmental bureaucracy carried out for Ford, General Motors, and so on. To Trotsky's call for a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy he countered the demand for a social revolution.

Even before he went to the United States, James was actively involved in the anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia. He played a leading role organising campaigns against Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, even volunteering to go and fight in Haile Selassie's army.

His experience of Negro (sic) politics in America enriched his understanding of the dialectical inter-relationship of socialism and the liberation struggles in the colonies.

But it was Trotsky who taught him and the American Trotskyists that the "chauvinism" of the Black Americans was not the equivalent of the chauvinism of White America, just as he had previously taken the position that the chauvinism of Black South Africans was progressive, the first step to revolutionary consciousness.

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NEXT ISSUE

Socialist Outlook is taking a well-deserved summer break. Our next issue will be published in the first week of September. Letters and articles for publication should be at our office for August 25. ...For now, we will fight them on the beaches ... [Sorry, someone is going delirious, Ed]

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■ You can send us letters or articles by e-mail: Outlook@gn.apc.org

■ Look up our Web page. You can find us at: <http://www.gn.apc.org/la-bournet/so>

Obituary

John Harris: Comrade and friend

Geoff Ryan

John Harris, a former member of the International Marxist Group (the then British Section of the Fourth International), died recently.

John joined the International Marxist Group in 1969 and was actively involved in the main work of the organisation at that time: solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution.

He helped build a branch of the IMG in Norwich, where he was a student, before moving to East London where he was active in the squatters movement.

In the early 1970s John moved to Manchester and worked in the engineering industry. He tried to build an opposition inside the AUEW to the Communist Party which had a stranglehold on the union at that time.

In 1974 the Scanlon leadership of the AUEW, supported by the CP, left Manchester engineers to fight alone in what was supposed to be a national strike. John's was one of the few voices raised at national meetings of shop-stewards against this betrayal.

In 1979 John began working on the buses in Manchester. By this time he had left the IMG but he remained a fighter for the interests of the working class. John was one of the so-called 'Gang of Four' who eventually forced the right-wing branch secretary to resign.

He also continued to involve himself in political activities - supporting the right of the people of Ireland to self-determination, defending lesbian and gay rights and arguing for women's liberation.

Four years ago John had to give up his job as a bus driver because of ill-health. For much of the last few years of his life he suffered considerable back pain, probably a result of his work.

For the last three years of his life John had isolated himself from former comrades and friends. Un-

able to walk even a few hundred yards to his local pub and no longer able sit in comfort, he either had to stand, or lie flat on his back.

Since John was always a very sociable person, liking nothing better than a good argument over a few (usually quite a few) pints, this enforced isolation must have been very hard for him.

Tragically John died when his condition was gradually improving and he was able to emerge from his isolation, dying at an open air concert.

Music was one of his great loves and John's taste was extremely wide. I will always remember him for introducing me to the music of Bob Marley at a time when almost the only Reggae available was boring, repetitive stuff that found its way into the lower reaches of the Top Thirty.

Many people remember John as one of the few revolutionaries who could actually sing the *Internationale* in tune (and knew all the words).

John was born in Newport and he had no doubt that his home town was in Wales. He was fiercely proud of his Welsh nationality, particularly when watching the Welsh Rugby Union team. However badly Wales had played they were always robbed in John's eyes.

Appropriately his ashes will be taken to his beloved Wales to be scattered. John's funeral took place on June 20 and was attended by former comrades from the IMG, members of other political organisations and a delegation of bus workers.

A number of people travelled considerable distances to pay their respects to a working class fighter.

John left the Fourth International many years ago but, unlike so many former members of revolutionary organisations, he never sold out. He would have been pleased to know that at his funeral a collection raised over £150 for the Liverpool Dockers.



FEEDBACK

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

Bigots on parade

THIS SUMMER the marching season in the north of Ireland seems likely to attract controversy.

I cannot write from first hand experience of the situation in Ireland, as I have only made 2 short visits to that country, but based on my own experience of having grown up as part of the Protestant community in the

west of Scotland, where Orange walks do take place to some extent, I would say that the people of Catholic areas such as Drumcree and the Ormeau Road are absolutely right to object to the Orange Order marching through their area.

Actually, there are some run-of-the-mill community organisations, not causing any serious

harm, associated with the Protestant churches, such as the Boys' Brigade, the Women's Guild, and the Scripture Union.

But the Orange Order is not like that, it is an organisation whose whole reason for existence is militant anti-Catholicism.

People should not allow themselves to be fooled, I find it difficult to believe that those who want to march through a Catholic area playing "The Sash My Father Wore" do not know what they are doing - engaging in a deliberate act of provocation or intimidation.

These marches are generally perceived as expressions of anti-Catholic bigotry, and those Protestants who hold reasonably tolerant attitudes towards Catholics tend to avoid having anything to do with them.

The Orange Order is a Protestant community organisation in the way that the Ku Klux Klan is a white community organisation.

Campbell MacGregor
Glasgow

No retreat on jobs!

I AM NOT convinced by Adam Hartman's argument that the left should drop the demand for Full Employment as one of the slogans we use when campaigning around the issues of workfare and unemployment.

The key point of the demand for Full Employment is surely to place the demand on the state to create jobs. We should reject any notion that full employment is no longer possible.

We should restate the basic arguments such as the obscenity of thousands being homeless at the same time as building workers are on the dole.

Public sector workers are not being sacked because there is suddenly no demand for teachers or home helps - they are being sacked because local authorities do not have the funding to pay them.



The experience of the Hull campaign against workfare is that the

single key demand of the unemployed is for a job.

When ASDA opened a new supermarket in North Hull, hundreds queued simply to get an application form!

We used the ASDA example to argue that the basic problem is there are not enough jobs and conversely the problem is therefore not individual unemployed people.

A number of British unions such as the GMB have adopted the demand for full employment - as did the recent Convention for Full Employment held in Brussels.

Socialists should welcome these developments and get involved in any initiatives, however limited, that arise from them.

The fight for Full Employment coupled with the demand for a national minimum wage are at the heart of the fight against workfare.

Keith Sinclair
Hull

WHAT'S ON

Friday 11 July

12 noon to 2.00 pm. Picket for democracy and clean elections in Mexico. Mexico tourist office, 60 Trafalgar Square (south side), London.

Saturday 12 July

12 noon to 9.00 pm. TUC Respect Anti-Racist Festival 97 (free), "Celebrating cultural and racial diversity" Victoria Park, London E3

Thursday 17 July

8 pm 'Redemption Song' performed by Banner Theatre (£5/£3), a benefit for the Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign. Queen's Hall, Ealing Town Hall, (Ealing B'dwy tube).

Saturday, 19th July

'Socialists and the Assembly', 1a.m.-4p.m., County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff. Speakers include Peter Hain, Cynog Dafis

and Sue Essex, Cardiff Cllr.

July 19-25

International Youth Summer Camp, Southern France

Saturday, 19th July

Free Trades Union conference called by Liverpool City UNISON and the Welfare State Network, 11.00-5.00, Liverpool University Student Union, Maryland St..

Saturday 19th July

Steering Committee of Network of Socialist Campaign Groups

Saturday 26 July

11.30 am to 1.30 pm Picket Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Bus 81 From Hounslow West Tube Or Bus U3 From Heathrow

Sunday 3rd August

Socialist Outlook North West region day school. For more details contact Steve, 01942 882 267.

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Socialist Outlook

A monthly marxist review * New series No. 7 * Summer 1997 * 50p

IN REFERENDA to be held in September, Scotland and Wales will be offered their own legislative bodies. In keeping with Labour's election manifesto, Wales will be asked to accept or reject proposals for an Assembly while Scottish voters are to decide firstly whether they should have their own Parliament and secondly whether it should have tax-raising powers.

This will undoubtedly be the most important political development since the Labour government took office and socialists should play a central role in the campaigns. The left needs to recognise the opportunity which the devolution proposals present.

Of course, no reform of the political process can ultimately solve the problems of the working class while remaining within the context of the existing British state whose limited democratic processes are constrained by the power of the capitalist class.

This does not mean however that socialists should not support democratic reforms. Any measure which gives the working class and oppressed some leverage over the exercise of power and which build their confidence and willingness to fight for more is to be welcomed.

The Parliament and assembly being offered are certainly far from perfect: both are intended to be subordinate to the Westminster parliament and the Welsh Assembly will have neither tax-raising nor primary legislative powers.

Nevertheless both offer a far greater measure of democratic control than has previously existed in Scotland or Wales and socialists should campaign vigorously for a yes vote on this basis.

At the same time they should be putting forward the arguments for these bodies to have greater powers—and ultimately for them to decide their own powers and their relationship with the British state and with Europe.

Both bodies are also to be elected by a form of proportional representation (PR) which is a progressive development in itself and will add to pressure for the Westminster parliament to be elected on the same basis.

The left has always been divided over PR. Many have put the argument that by spreading parliamentary representation more evenly PR would diminish the pros-

IT'S BEEN a long time coming, so Scottish and Welsh socialists must grab the chances opened up by devolution



Mobilise for democracy in Scotland and Wales

pect of a minority Labour government able to legislate for socialism.

This argument is based however on the illusion that the existing state—inextricably tied to the interests of the capitalist class—can be used as an instrument for socialism.

PR would in fact allow Parliament to reflect more accurately the real balance of

forces in politics and society. By giving a voice to the broader span of the political spectrum it would create opportunities for a wider debate and allow a challenge to the current concentration of power and wealth.

The 'left' opponents of PR hope to take a short cut to socialism by ignoring the inconvenient diversity of political opinion

and the complexity of the battles to be won.

In Wales, Llew Smith MP belongs to this tradition. He opposes not just PR, but an assembly as such on this basis—that it would weaken the British state and divide the 'British' working class.

Socialists in Wales should challenge such arguments, but should also support Llew's right to express his views publicly and not rely on the bureaucratic methods unsuccessfully employed recently by Welsh secretary Ron Davies to silence him.

In Scotland fortunately the left is more united in support of a parliament—the struggle for socialism and national rights have long been intertwined here.

There has been the beginnings of a realignment of the left around the issue primarily in the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) which is taking mainstream political debate beyond the confines of traditional labourism and

nationalism.

The SSA recognises that a Scottish parliament would give a vital weapon to the working class—as would the Welsh Assembly.

Socialists in both countries must fight determinedly through all the existing campaigns to win massive yes votes in September.