

NS 8

# Socialist OUTLOOK

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## Who'll be next to face rip-off charges?

# New Labour: new fees for education

TONY BLAIR'S government is hell-bent on imposing a frontal attack on higher education which even Thatcher and the Tories shrank from implementing.

Hiding behind the recommendations of the Dearing Report, Education Secretary David Blunkett wants to impose tuition fees of £1,000 a year on university students, marking New Labour's final, decisive break with the concept of free education funded from taxation.

The government is using a selection of breathtakingly cynical arguments to justify a policy that Labour would have sprung to denounce at almost any time in the 1980s, even while the new government poses as a champion of "education, education, education".

The envy and resentment of older, unskilled workers is being invoked to whip up a mood of hostility to graduates who according to Blunkett and co "benefit" personally from their university education, stepping easily into senior and well-paid jobs: the implication is that they should jolly well pay for the privilege. Of course ministers blandly ignore the growing numbers of graduates who have no jobs or who are forced into low-paid work.

But of course if Labour were to adopt a steeply progressive taxation policy, and raise taxes on those earning most, those graduates who do particularly well would automatically contribute far more over their working lives than a miserable £3,000: and the policy would generate extra cash NOW, not five years' time.

An alternative line is for Labour to argue that there is an increasing need for



Stalingrad O'Neill

There's even more to shout about under New Labour!

graduates, but that universities stuck in (Labour's) cash limits cannot afford to expand: the new levy on students is supposed to be offering new "opportunities" for young people!

Blunkett predictably offers no evidence to refute concerns that heaping debts on students is likely to deter new applicants – especially those from lower-income families – even if extra university places could be opened up.

The reality is that Labour, like the Tories before them, have seen higher education as a soft target for spending cuts and for the imposition of charges.

They have seen that while parents,

teachers, governors and pupils have mobilised in angry protests against school budget cuts, opposition to university cuts has been weak and muted, with the spineless leadership of the National Union of Students leading the retreat from any defence of free education.

They have timed the attack in such a way as to ensure that none of today's students will be affected, hoping to avoid any organised protest.

But nobody can afford to allow these new charges to be imposed. They are the thin end of a wedge which could undermine the fundamentals of the welfare state and the very concept of public services

funded from taxation.

If Blunkett argues now that university graduates should be charged fees as individuals because they "benefit" from their degrees, how long will it be before he or some other Blairite hack argues that A level or GCSE students, too, potentially benefit from these qualifications and should pay tuition fees?

How long before the same principles are applied to the NHS, arguing that patients "benefit" from operations and should pay as individuals for each item of hospital treatment – or even claiming that imposing charges would give more patients the "opportunity" to attend hospital?

As we can see in the NHS, where Labour have connived at the Tory policy of privatising the long-term care of the elderly and publicly flirted with the idea of new charges (alongside new efforts to persuade profit-seeking firms to build hospitals), once the notion of collective provision of vital services is abandoned, Labour is on the slippery slope to a privatised, increasingly polarised society.

And once the policy of funding basic public services from progressive taxation is repudiated, those who will lose out most heavily will be those already at the bottom of the heap.

There are signs that a growing number of Labour back-benchers are uneasy at Blunkett's latest disastrous policy. They must be called upon to speak out, and to join with teaching unions, students and the wider workers' movement to fight in defence of free education.



# Education: Labour "could do better"

**Roy Leach (NUT Executive, personal capacity)**

LABOUR'S education initiatives have been favourably & uncritically received by the 'education establishment' and media alike. Initiatives such as the 'Literacy Summer Schools' have been hailed a success and extended before any evaluation of their real effectiveness has been carried out.

Even the teacher trade unions have been generally positive in their reactions to the almost daily outpourings of ministerial statements. Certainly the abolition of the totally discredited nursery vouchers is welcome, as is the continued commitment to phase out (as opposed to the much more desirable scrapping outright) the assisted places scheme to free-up resources for reducing infant class sizes.

The promise of an extra £1bn on top of the Tories spending target for next financial year and £1.2bn extra capital expenditure (over the next five years) will also help.

Yet the reality for teachers in the classroom (and, of course their students) is that things haven't got better - and in many cases continue to get much worse.

The decision to impose the Tories' spending cap upon Oxfordshire & Somerset will result in yet more devastating cuts in education. Labour's much trumpeted 'crusade' to raise standards looks an

increasingly hollow promise, particularly in these LEAs, where yet larger classes and fewer resources are the inevitable consequence of sticking to the Tories' spending limits for another year.

Likewise the euphoria in the staffrooms on May 2nd which greeted Labour's landslide victory is rapidly evaporating. Blunkett's promise to listen to teachers and give them a fairer deal (no favours mind you) has given way to a renewed bout of even more vitriolic 'naming & shaming'.

### Pilloried

Individual schools - deemed by Blunkett & co. to be failing - have been pilloried and exposed to the full onslaught of trial (and summary conviction) by the media. For the teachers in those schools there is precious little evidence of their views being taken into account: no fair consideration of why their underfunded schools, often surrounded by predatory selective Grant Maintained or Grammar schools, should be failing to deliver the necessary numbers of A-C grades.

The White Paper - 'Excellence in Schools' - rounds on those who might not share in the enthusiasm for its prescriptions. In Blunkett's own forward he calls for "set[ting] aside the doubts of the cynics and...the perpetual sceptics".

Once again teachers are identified as the problem with their "culture of complacency" and the solution is to speed up dismissal



How long before protestors wise up and attack falling ministers?

procedures and "strengthening the management role of headteachers... so that appropriate action can be taken."

The White Paper also, under the disingenuous chapter "Modernising the comprehensive principle", seeks to impose setting by ability upon schools since Labour is not prepared to "defend the failings [sic] of across-the-board mixed ability teaching" and "unless a school can demonstrate that it is getting better than expected results...make[s] the presumption that setting should be the norm in secondary schools..[and is]...worth considering in primary schools."

Fast-tracking - where pupils are taught out of their age range - and 'accelerated learning' (for the privileged few) are also to be encouraged.

The White Paper is also at pains to point out that Labour's "priority is standards, not structures" but proposes to leave in place the privileged status of 'opted out' (Grant Maintained) schools by allowing their governors to choose 'Foundation' rather than 'Community' status in Labour's proposed tripartite system (the third type being 'Aided' church schools).

Although all schools within an LEA will be funded according to the same formula (bringing to an end the preferential funding GM schools enjoyed under the Tories) the existence of different statuses

will still allow 'Foundation' schools to promote the idea that they are somehow different and hence better than mere 'Community' schools.

Furthermore, only teachers in 'Community' schools will be employees of the LEA - all others will be employed by their school's governing body. With the Tories' anti-union laws still in place the existence of a plethora of individual small employers will continue to undermine the ability of teacher unions to defend their members.

Blair & Blunkett continue to maintain that education is their number one priority but their failure to challenge Tory spending limits and actually invest the necessary billions in education means that their promises are just so much empty rhetoric.

The tone of the White Paper makes it quite clear, however, that any failure to achieve its demanding targets will be the fault not of a Government unwilling to break from the austerity logic of the Maastricht Treaty and monetary controls but of "failing teachers" and "failing schools".

Instead of falling over backwards to find something positive in each and every Government statement the unions - and the NUT in particular - should be shouting loud and clear that none of it will work without extra cash!

## No return to the back streets!

**Veronica Fagan**

IT IS THIRTY years since the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act - the biggest step forward for women's abortion rights this country has ever seen.

It is certainly the case that the Act itself is far from perfect - but what went before was far worse with countless women dying of septicemia as a result of back street abortions.

Ask any nurse who worked on gynaecological wards before 1967 - ask any woman who was forced through lack of choice down this life threatening path and they will have no end of horror stories to tell.

While the 1967 Act does not guarantee a woman's right to choose much of pro-choice campaigners energy has been devoted in the intervening years to defeating reactionary legislation that would further undermine what rights we have won.

It is a positive step that the NUS Women's campaign have called a demonstration to mark the passage of the Act - this deserves as wide support as possible from individuals and groups.

Let's make it clear to Tony Blair that the hard won labour movement support for a Woman's Right to Choose is just as strong as ever. That is the best basis to prepare the ground for an offensive for strengthening our rights both in law and in practice.

## WHAT'S ON

### SEPTEMBER

#### Wednesday 10.

TULA TUC fringe meeting 8p.m. Brighthelm Centre, Brighton.

#### Saturday 13.

Emergency Conference in defence of Labour Party democracy. Organised by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, London NW1 (details page 7).

#### Sunday 14.

Socialist Outlook North West Day School on Ireland and the United Front, with a speaker from Socialist Democracy (Ireland). For more details ring 0589 056634.

#### Saturday 20.

European Marches Reportback conference. 11.30 a.m. -5p.m., University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1 (near Euston and Russell Square stations).

#### Friday 26 - Monday 29.

Welfare State Network march to lobby Labour Party conference.

For more information ring 0171 639 5068.

#### Saturday 27.

Demonstration in support of the Liverpool dockers, marking the second anniversary of their struggle for reinstatement. Assemble 12.30 Myrtle Parade Liverpool for march to St. George's Hall.

#### Sunday 28

Lobby of Labour Party conference called by University College London Hospitals UNISON branch. Assemble 3p.m.

#### Monday 29 - Friday 3

October, Labour Party Conference, Brighton.

### OCTOBER

#### Wednesday 1.

Day of Action on 2nd Anniversary of Hillingdon Hospital workers' strike. Mass picket 7a.m. at Hospital. March assembles 11a.m. from Colham Green, Colham Rd by Hospital to rally 1p.m. Ux-

bridge Civic Centre

#### Sunday 5

Socialist Outlook North West day school on the Labour Party and Women's Liberation. For more details ring 0589 056634.

#### Sunday 12

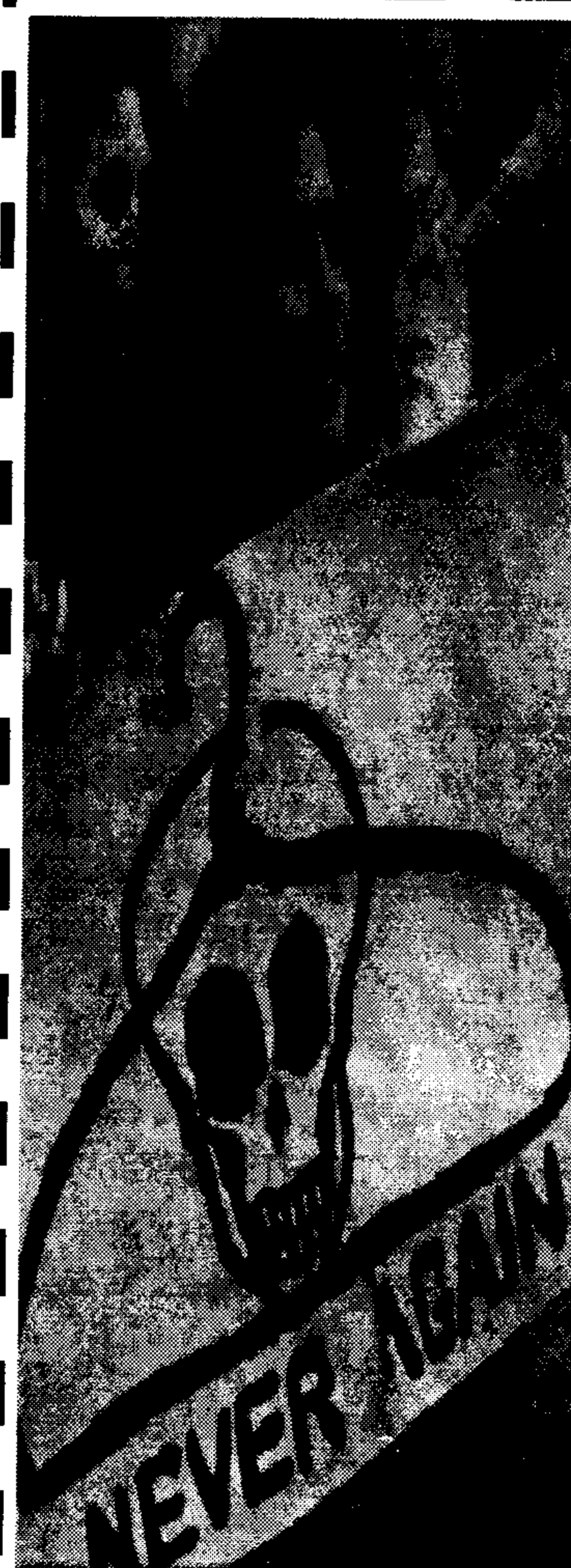
March for Unity through Southall. Organised by Southall Monitoring Group Unity. Assemble 1p.m. Dominion Road, Southall.

#### Saturday 18.

Welfare State Network Annual General meeting. London NW1. See page 6.

#### Sat 18 & Sun 19.

South Asia and the diaspora - 50 years after the end of British colonialism. Organised by the South Asia Socialist Group. School of Oriental and Asian Studies, Malet St., London WC1. Further details 0171 354 8744 or 0171 713 7907



Torchlight March  
30 years since  
the 1967  
Abortion Act  
**For a  
Woman's  
right to  
choose**

Assemble  
6.00pm  
WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER 29  
ULU, Malet St  
London WC1

March to a rally at  
Conway Hall, red Lion  
Square, Holborn



## The loneliness of the long-running picket line

# Solidarity with the fighters Labour prefers to forget!

It is an outrage that the Labour government has done nothing to intervene on the side of strikers in the mounting array of long standing disputes.

Those workers that have stuck out long days and bitter nights on the picket line deserve solidarity from the whole labour movement.

The Magnet strike 'celebrated' its first anniversary on with a demonstration through rainswept Darlington on August 23. Hundreds of activists from across the country marched behind dozens of colourful trade union banners in an impressive show of support for the determined workforce.

They and many others also participated in the two weeks of action with pickets of Magnet showrooms country wide before and after the demonstration itself.

The mood on August 23 was sharpened by two vicious attacks on the strikers the preceding day. On the evening of Friday 22 a scab drove his car out of the plant at a young boy on the picket line who fortunately was not seriously hurt.

There is no doubt that this was a deliberate attempt to intimidate the strikers and their supporters by any means necessary. It follows an earlier attack on adult pickets by thugs with iron bars who also burnt down much of the strikers camp.

Despicable as these assaults are, far worse is the behaviour of the local MP Alan Milburn who also attacked the picket - this time on television. Milburn, together with Tony Blair, who also has strikers in his constituency, has never visited the picket line or intervened

on the side of the strikers.

This time he went one 'better'. Interviewed in a news feature in which the strikers were able to put their case eloquently, he explained that he would not be joining the picket line as it was a 'futile exercise'.

Not surprisingly the strikers and their supporters were more inclined to listen to Arthur Scargill who pointed out that there was an easy way for Labour to end the dispute - by nationalising the plant and allowing it to be run by the sacked workers.

While John Edmonds of the GMB claimed at the rally that his union was full square behind the dispute, his calls for Labour to ensure an 'honourable' settlement are clearly open to wide interpretation.

This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that Edmonds claimed that the union had submitted a motion to Labour Party Conference which called for explicit support for the dispute and for the sacking of strikers to be made illegal. Perusal of the resolution booklet, however, does not bear out his claims.

The demonstration saw hot sales of Dockers T-shirts and activists planning to meet up again at the second anniversary demonstration on September 27 in Liverpool - if of course they did not coincide sooner.

As the Dockers' strike moves ominously close to the beginning of its third year there is little sign



that either the Labour leadership or Bill Morris are going to come to their aid. It is good to hear that the Dockers seem to be considering putting more energy into pressuring the leadership of the T&G to step up support - they have been left off the hook for far too long.

The anniversary demonstration and its preparations are more likely to receive a boost from the next International Day of Action planned for September 8, which looks set to be just as impressive as previous ones.

In January this year for example, US longshoremen shut down all major US West coast ports for between 8 and 24 hours, and other industrial action stretched across 27 countries.

The biggest news on this occasion is the decision of the South African TGWU, part of the COSATU federation, to impose a per-

manent boycott of fruit imported through Sheerness in solidarity with the dockers.

South African dockers remember the blockade of South African and Namibian uranium at the Port of Liverpool in 1988 before the abolition of the UK National Dock Labour scheme.

Oranges and other citrus fruits marked Capespan land in the UK at Sheerness which is 100 per cent owned and operated by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company through Medway Ports Ltd.

A twenty year contract to handle Capespan imports was recently announced by Mersey Docks. According to Medway Ports, fresh produce represents over a third of activity at the Port of Sheerness. Mersey Docks has invested over £17 million to upgrade facilities at the port.

The Liverpool strike is not the

only dispute nearing its second birthday. Sacked workers at Hillingdon hospital in West London are also planning a day of action on October 1 to mark their long two years on the picket line.

If Magnet workers have received official backing but little action and the Liverpool strike has remained unofficial since day one, these strikers are in a different position.

After the Hillingdon workers turned down an offer from management their union, UNISON, withdrew official support, without even a ballot of the women.

Scandalous as this was, the failure of UNISON's national conference in June to reinstate official backing means that, however bitter a pill this undoubtedly is, it is difficult to see any way the dispute can now be won.

This is not to criticise the courage and determination of the strikers, but an appraisal of the balance of forces in the movement as a whole and in UNISON itself.

Socialists have a duty to do everything in their power to build what ever solidarity they can - industrially and politically - with those in dispute. We need to strain every nerve to ensure that where victory is achievable it is attained and soon.

We want to ensure that the words of the song come true - 'You'll never walk alone!'

The movement as a whole owes a debt to all these workers and to those in other disputes such as Project Aerospace and Critchley Labels. They have kept the flame of struggle alive when those at the top of the labour movement - be it in the trade unions or Blair's New Labour Party have pronounced it dead.

## Labour's first summer of scandal

**SO MANY** outrageous things have been done by the Labour government this summer that some of the earlier issues have almost faded from memory.

Clare Short may protest to the media that someone's "out to get her" - but her comments on Montserrat were outrageous even as thoughts.

Robin Cook's attempt to regain credibility as an "ethical" foreign secretary after his refusal to cancel the Tory contract to sell Hawk jets to the Indonesian regime in occupation of East Timor is about as unconvincing as could be imagined.

And then there have been the scandals - with the suicide of Gordon McMasters at the centre, making public some pretty unsavoury stuff in Renfrewshire - and what has been published in England at least is only the tip of the iceberg.

It may well be true that the scandal, combined with the shortly to be published report on shady goings on on Glasgow city council will allow Blair to bring in local government reform that will further strengthen his centralising grip on



**Cook: sell the arms first, talk ethics later...**

the party in the name of "fighting corruption".

Never the less the antics of Tommy Graham and Lord Dixon have done his image no good, and neither has the scandal around Sawa in Glasgow. Bob Waring's nasty dealings with Serbia have at-

tracted less sustained attention - for the time being at least.

The press may have given the policy their more or less undiluted support, but the decision to charge fees to students has already caused significant outrage - and the anger will build as the impact is felt in practice.

How does this - together with vicious attacks on over worked teachers and so-called "failing schools" - square with the election pledge of 'education, education, education'? What other charges does New Labour have in store for us next?

Then there was the fiasco of Lord Simon's shares. Again the

mainstream right wing press predictably ducked the main issue: **what is a man like this doing in the labour government in the first place?**

British Petroleum stands accused of collaboration with the army in Colombia - and therefore of complicity in mass murder. But even if Simon did not have blood on his hands he is a representative par excellence of the ruling class, not of the workers the Labour Party is supposed to represent.

Blair's most crucial piece of class collaboration is obviously his pact with the Liberals. Coalition type politics have long be part of New Labour's trajectory, but the landslide victory seemed to put such deals on the back burner.

Not for long, it seems, with the announcement at the end of July of Liberals being given seats on a Cabinet Committee supposedly to aid co-operation over constitutional issues.

Its true of course that Liberal-labour pacts are as old as the Labour Party itself. Since its formation the Labour Party, after all, while it gave the trade union leadership a voice in Parliament, has

never acted consistently in the interests of working people. The political break with Liberalism was never more than partial.

But Blair's project is a bolder one than that of his predecessors. No wonder the papers suggest that this might be the 'harbinger of a broader realignment'.

Combined with the Labour leadership's project of neutering the internal life of the Labour Party through 'Partnership into Power', this is a vision to create a party that the bosses and the city can rely on more consistently, that ditches any notion that working people deserve their own voice.

The battle lines have been drawn and it is crucial that a major fight to defeat this whole approach is waged.

At the same time discussions need to take place on the left and throughout the rank and file of the labour movement - more openly than they are doing so far - on what sort of party we need that can really represent the dispossessed and exploited, and what sort of vision of a future is really in the interests of working people.



# Link up to defeat 'Partnership into Power'

**Pete Firmin**

FOLLOWING the "period of consultation", Labour's National Executive Committee has published the rule changes it will submit to Party Conference in October.

Their proposals show that the whole so-called consultation exercise was a sham.

Despite that fact that about 100 conference resolutions from CLPs either reject the draft proposals or call for any decision to be deferred for a year to allow for a fuller discussion, the NEC proposals are nothing very new.

Tom Sawyer's summary of the results of the consultation to the NEC is straight form George Orwell's 1984 "Newspeak".

Thus he claims "there was general support for the consultation exercise, with one fifth of respondents specifically welcoming the opportunity to make comment on the NEC document".

One fifth is general support?

The report states that 24 per cent of those responding expressed explicit support for the proposed revised composition of the NEC. Does that mean 76 per cent rejected it?

We are not told what proportion wanted to retain the right of individual members to vote for MPs for

the NEC. We should be told.

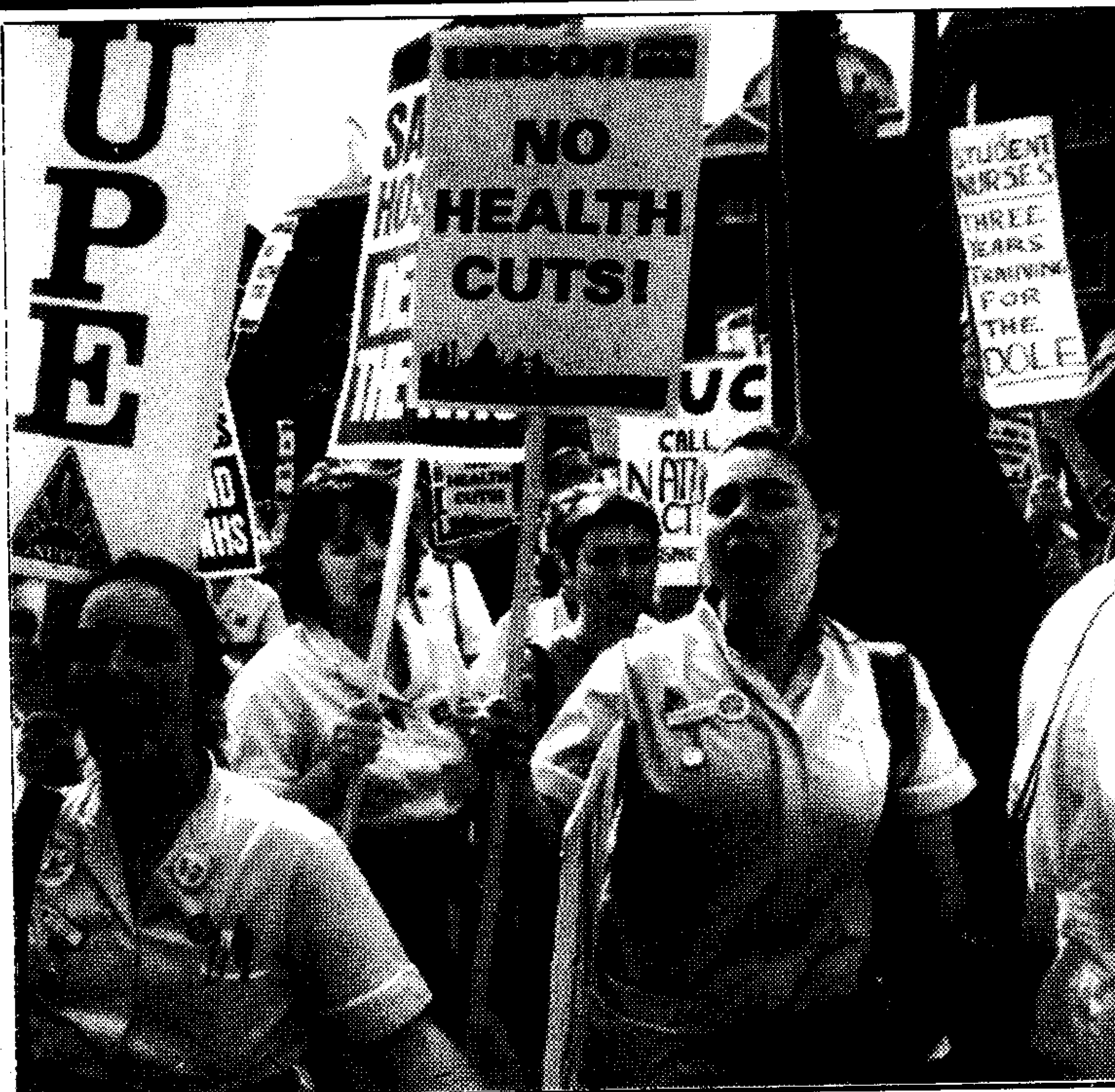
Even this rigged report admits that there was 'substantial' (unquantified) concern that conference must remain the sovereign policy-making body of the party, with 'real' debate taking place at conference.

Behind this façade of 'democracy', the leadership remains intent on ramming through its undemocratic proposals. Concerns about lack of time for serious discussion of the proposals are brushed aside with the argument that the changes will take time to be implemented, and anyway the government is already delivering its side of the partnership.

## Amendment

There is only one amendment to the proposed rule changes compared to the original document. Because substantial concern has been expressed that unions and CLPs would no longer be able to submit resolutions direct to party conference, and more importantly because it looked like some major unions might reject the whole package because of this, a cosmetic job has been done.

The proposed rule change says that "Affiliated organisations may submit one motion on a topic which is either not substantively addressed in the reports to Confer-



The issue of Labour Party democracy hangs over other policy battles

ence of either the NPF [National Policy Forum] or NEC or which has arisen since the publication of those reports.

"The CAC [Conference Arrangements Committee] shall determine whether the motions meet these criteria and submit all issues received to a priorities ballot at the start of Conference."

As clear as mud - but it might be used by some union leaderships to wriggle out of their mandate to oppose the lot.

The attack on Party-Union link within the general assault on Party democracy of 'Partnership into Power' is made clear in the proposed make-up of the National Policy Forum.

Commitments to maintain the 50 per cent union input into Party Conference are shown to be hollow when we see that on the National Policy Forum, which in many ways would displace conference as the body discussing policy,

the proportion of union delegates is only 17 per cent. And this body would only have a total of 175 delegates!

The reasons for rejecting the rule changes remain the same as those for rejecting the original consultation document: Conference would be downgraded from the sovereign policy-making body to a talking shop endorsing reports from the leadership.

The NEC as the body elected by the whole party would be effectively sidelined by a new 'Joint Policy Committee' with an in-built cabinet majority.

CLPs would no longer have the right to nominate their MP for the NEC, and members would no

longer be able to vote for MPs for the NEC, with the new PLP section of the NEC being subject to leadership patronage.

Much of the function of conference would be passed to the unrepresentative and unaccountable national Policy Forum.

Blair hopes that Party Conference will be a euphoric rally hailing the victorious leader and endorsing his every word (and electing his sidekick, Mandelson, to the NEC). He is obviously relying on those union leaders whose conferences passed ambiguous policy on the consultation document to persuade their delegations to support the rule changes on the basis of the sop he has made to them.

Blair may be right, but the indication from conference resolutions and even the opposition of MPs to arms sales to Indonesia, is that the ride might be rougher than he expects.

While there are many important issues to challenge the leadership over at Party conference, such as benefits, welfare to work, the anti-union laws and arms sales, the question of Party democracy overshadows them because if these proposals are carried there will be little scope to change policy at future conferences.

Union and CLP activists should be pulling out all the stops between now and Party conference to ensure the changes are defeated. Pressure has to be brought to bear on delegates to ensure they carry out mandates in defence of the union-party link and wider party democracy.

The emergency meeting called by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups on September 12 to stop the NEC rule changes is already receiving broad support in unions and constituencies - it is vital that all activists make it a priority.

# Uxbridge - the shape of things to come?

**Paul Urwin**

The forthcoming inquiry into Labour's surprise defeat at the Uxbridge by-election on 31st will no doubt scapegoat hapless regional officials and local party members for Labour's hopeless "from triumph into disaster" campaign in the West London constituency.

The real reasons for the defeat however, are signalled in Labour's disastrous public relations record in August (crabs and Monserrat) and are summed up in the ironically titled "Partnership into Power" proposals coming before the Labour Party conference at the end of September.

Both encapsulate the accelerated trend towards complete centralisation in the Labour Party that appears to go hand in hand with the desire to out-Tory the Tories wherever possible ("pay per bed" in the health service, tuition fees and the abolition of grants, continuation of local government capping, refusal to allow asylum seekers to stay in Britain etc.)

While the chickens will come home to roost in the short to medium term through increasing struggles, industrial action and voter unpopularity, the internal La-

bour Party changes are an even more immediate threat to any notion that Labour is a place for radical politics and a vehicle for progressive change.

Uxbridge illustrates this nicely. The useless Andrew Slaughter was not picked for his dazzling oratory but because "he is totally new Labour and a complete supporter of mine" (Tony Blair's words a week before polling).

At the selection meeting back in June Slaughter was asked whether there were any circumstances he would break the Labour whip in parliament eg over charges for NHS beds. He out new-Laboured his opponent and veteran right wing hack Willy Bach in answering in the negative.

Labour claim to have discarded the General Election candidate David Williams "because by-elections are national campaigns" and I was told that there would be an emphasis on phone canvassing and as few door to door calls as possible - as in America, new Labour favours razzmatazz rather than local involvement or discussion.

Thousands of pounds were lavished on huge posters to create an image but there was a complete absence of any message. Whereas soundbites may once have been a

summary of something more substantive they are now completely meaningless - "Uxbridge deserves the Best" - and Uxbridge gave its answer.

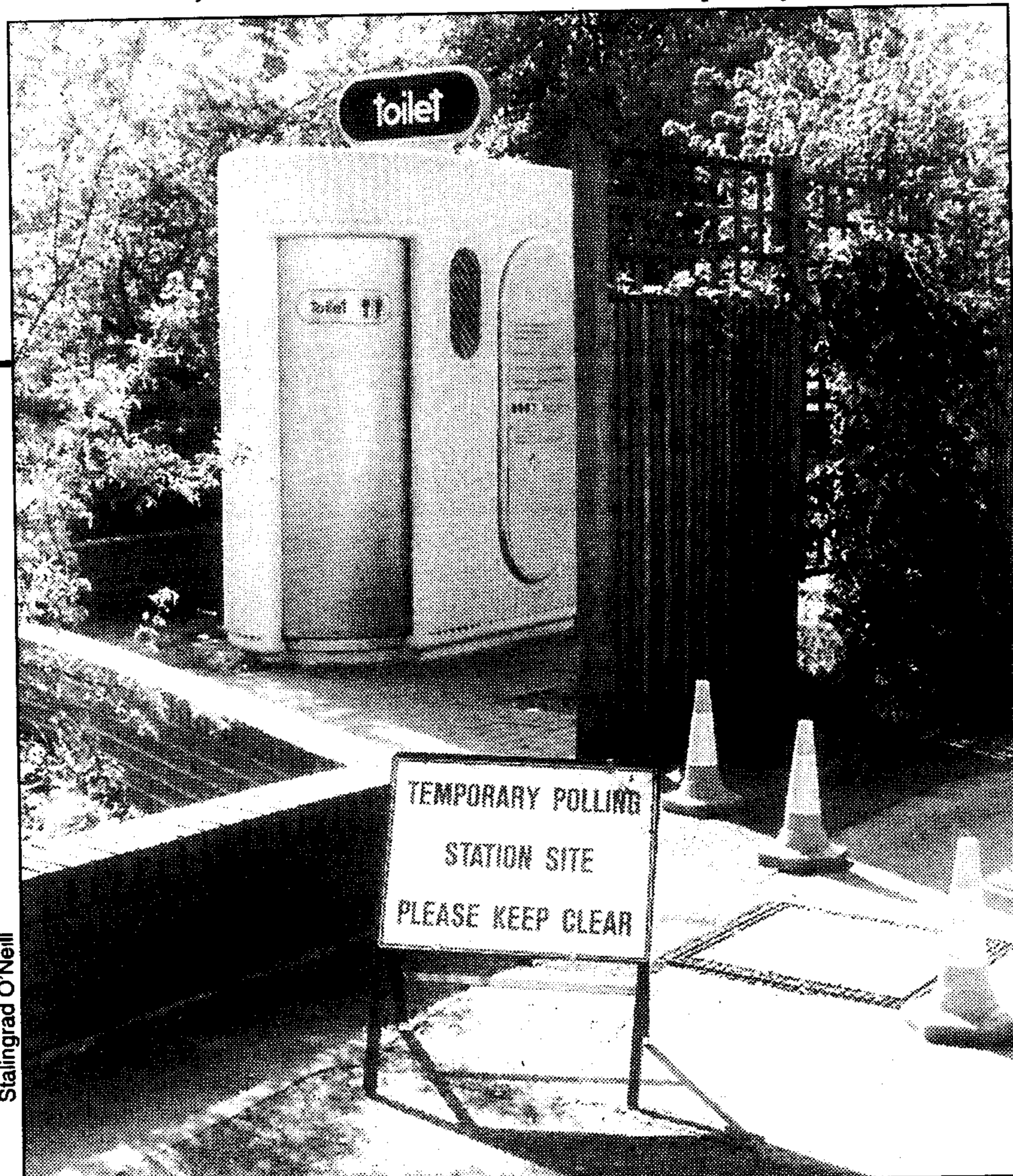
In Uxbridge Blair and co have signalled their continued intention to run campaigns completely from the centre and with the absence of any politics whatsoever.

This, they obviously feel, was what was responsible for the general election result, not an overwhelming desire by working people to throw out the Tories.

With Partnership into Power the proposal is very clear - conference will no longer decide Party policy and the NEC/CLP influence will be reduced.

This all puts in writing what has been the practice since Blair became leader - that politics, particularly those which offend the City of London - don't matter any more. All that matters is winning elections - by any means necessary.

For a while some of the people remaining in the Labour Party have apparently accepted this notion on the grounds that ousting the Tories



After the first flush of enthusiasm, are Blairite politics getting bogged down?

was of prime importance.

The left has always warned that this abdication would lead to a Labour government that promised nothing for working people and bereft of any vestige of socialist policies or radical debate.

This is the time that is now dawning. When the honeymoon finally ends, when cuts and charges really bite, when the next by-election is lost - then maybe the message will get home to people at large.

Uxbridge and "Partnership into Power" signal an important step in

the erosion of the Labour Party as a party linked to the struggles of working people via the trade union leaders.

Ironically it is those very trade union leaders who will probably deliver "Partnership into Power" to Blair next month.

A concerted campaign in the unions as well as amongst Labour members is therefore still urgently needed so that Uxbridge does not become the turning point that all those who loathe socialist ideas hope it is.



# Union rights side-lined as Labour courts bosses

WITH A LABOUR Prime Minister addressing the TUC for the first time in two decades what does the trade union movement need from the new government? GREG TUCKER, from the RMT Executive gave some views.

WHATEVER else we might want in terms of social policy, in particular real movement towards full employment, we require two things – a reversal of privatisation and the repeal of the Tories anti-trade union laws.

Unfortunately, privatisation seems to be continuing, though dressed up differently, as "Public Private Partnership". And Tony Blair remains committed to keeping the Tory laws. The trade union movement needs to make it impossible for Labour to continue to ignore our needs.

We are demanding change, not out of some blind dogmatism, or to make life easier for us, but because the combined effect of privatisation and anti union laws directly threatens to destroy our lives.

Rail workers are increasingly concerned that a major rail accident is waiting to happen. With the railways fully privatised, conditions for rail workers have been progressively deteriorating. With responsibility for the system treated like a game of pass the parcel, it is only a matter of time before we face another Clapham or Kings Cross. Rail workers' lives are daily being threatened, passengers may also be at risk.

Instead of the improvements promised by the Tories, privatised rail has meant increased fares – now the most expensive in the world – and worse services as old, clapped-out stock runs over poorly maintained lines.

Rail unions need to develop a strategy which can protect their members in the new climate. But they are faced with obstacles set out at every turn by eighteen years



RMT confronted the Tories, but must still battle against anti-union laws under Labour

of Tory anti union laws. A clear example of this is the problem we face in our current dispute over the safety role of train guards.

## Guards' Jobs

This spring, Railtrack announced that it proposed to effectively do away with train guards' safety role. Despite itself being privatised, Railtrack has the role of maintaining the Rule Book for all rail companies.

Behind all the obfuscation it is clearly the case that at least some, if not all, of the operating companies have been exerting pressure to get Railtrack to act on their behalf.

They want to be able to replace the guards with new employees whose first responsibility is collecting tickets, or selling cups of coffee rather than protecting passengers.

The RMT immediately launched a campaign to defend their members' jobs. But a legal industrial dispute with Railtrack is impossible – it employs no guards, who work for the train operators. In turn, these operating companies have declared that no dispute exists – they only work to the Rules laid down by Railtrack!

Only after some time and effort was it possible for the RMT to place itself in dispute. Industrial

action ballots have now been held in a majority of the train operating companies.

But again, rather than one national dispute, over 40 separate ballots have been necessary. And, of course, for each one it is required that full records of all to be balloted have to be passed on to the company. Arriving at a position where industrial action is even possible has taken months of preparation and jumping through legal hoops.

Despite these hurdles the RMT is committed to taking action. It is vital that is effective. For whilst there are many jobs under threat, removing the guards' safety role will also put the public at risk.

## Track Maintenance

In the other, less obvious, side of the rail system problems are equally intense.

A handful of major building contractors are now responsible for track and signalling maintenance. They, in turn, are subcontracting out their work.

Within the last year, track workers have found themselves being moved from company to company. Each move has made it harder to defend working conditions. In some cases workers, who all started out working for British Rail, have ended up in short term contracts

for companies with only half a dozen employees.

This fragmentation has been used to hide drastic cuts in maintenance schedules. Even where work is still formally requisitioned the new contractors are forcing their workers to cut corners.

Lax safety standards have been the result. Whilst individuals are being threatened, the companies have so far been let off scot free. Labour is talking about increasing the powers of the rail regulator – but not at least until

next year and only if parliamentary time can be found. Even then their proposals will do very little to protect rail workers and rail users.

Serious incidents are regularly being covered up. Rail workers have lost their lives, and it is only a matter of time before passengers become involved as well. But most workers are scared of blowing the whistle.

In one example this year, an RMT activist who had helped expose one serious incident was subsequently sacked on trumped up charges. Defending him through "legal" channels proved impossible, not least because to ballot his fellow workers required over a dozen separate ballots.

Even then some of his closest colleagues were potentially to be involved in "secondary action" such is the complexity of rail company ownership.

While the laws remain as they are the bosses will always be able to play around with contracts and formal ownership to stop legal industrial action.

## Longer Hours

Rail workers have always worked long hours. This year things have gone from bad to worse.

New contracts are being im-

posed, some by introducing personal contracts with widely varying pay and conditions, some through the collusion of the other rail unions. Rostered shifts of 11 or 12 hours a day for 6 days in a week have become commonplace.

For drivers this is particularly dangerous. At least one operating company is now being investigated by the Health & Safety Executive, despite the fact that the majority drivers' union has ganged up with the company to try to gag any complaints from its own local Health & Safety representatives.

In another company a deal has been agreed where drivers will work 11 hours a day, 13 days out of 14 for two months over the summer. Woe betide any passenger on the last day of the deal, when any driver faces losing £3,000 if he or she goes off sick.

These attacks are going on in the core sectors, where workers still retain some industrial strength. For others the situation is far worse. Cleaning, catering and other unskilled sectors are being contracted out to ruthless anti-union employers.

With a high staff turnover most workers fail to have the two years service necessary to gain even the minimum of personal protection. The companies are prepared to buy out any former BR worker with generous redundancy packages, leaving the rest unorganised and unprotected.

The RMT is launching campaigns to try to win recognition in these new companies. It is clear this will be a hard fight.

One major part of the rail network remains in the public sector – London Underground. But here too, the pressure is on to privatise. Despite Labour commitments, LUL management are still planning to sell off some train and track maintenance work. Whilst they may privately say that the Tories' Private Finance Initiative is a waste of resources, Labour Ministers will not reverse policy.

Their only change has been to its name. Now dressed up as "Public Private Partnership", it is still privatisation.

Over the next few weeks Ministers have to decide whether to approve of the sell off of Acton Works (train maintenance) to Adtranz – a company with a long record of asset-stripping rail workshops, and of the Jubilee Line track maintenance to AMEC – a company threatened with being thrown off other rail contracts because of its unsafe performance (it even managed to nearly drown some of its workers recently when it sank a barge overlaid with rail equipment).

The RMT will be pressing the government not to agree these sales. But the TUC should demand that all privatisations are reversed. ■ The RMT LT Regional Council is organising a lobby of the Secretary of State for Transport on Friday September 5, 13.30 hrs DoE, Bressenden Place, Victoria)

## Whatever happened to the British Airways dispute?

### Neil Murray

BACK IN July it looked like there would be a prolonged and very bitter dispute between British Airways and its workers. In a cost-cutting exercise management wanted to contract out all ground services (catering, engineering etc) and impose changes in pay and conditions on cabin crew.

Both sections voted to strike and management threatened to bring in a scab workforce and sue individual strikers for up to £400 a day.

One 3-day strike of cabin crew did take place, with considerable disruption to BA flights. So many workers were intimidated by management threats that a high proportion

reported sick rather than tell management they were on strike.

Management endeared themselves to doctors by demanding daily (!) sick notices. Then when the strike was over, management refused to roster strikers for several days afterwards, leaving them kicking their heels (unpaid) while waiting by the phone.

This could have been the precursor to a highly successful defence of conditions. The 3-day strike cost BA millions, and the decision of ground staff to strike could have meant co-ordinated action disrupting BA over the busy holiday period.

There were already offers of supportive action by airport staff internationally. What's

more, BA's hard line had alienated public opinion.

Instead, the TGWU, which had been seeking ways out of calling a strike from the beginning despite BA's hard line, persisted in saying it could offer alternative ways for BA to make the savings it would make from cutting staff conditions.

Eventually BA management agreed to negotiate on this (no doubt with background pressure from Tony Blair, friend to BA's chief Ayling).

It is unlikely that sacking management and placing BA under workers' control is on Bill Morris's list of proposed 'savings'. It is far more likely, especially given Morris's record in trying to get the Liverpool dockers to accept pay offs, that

the proposals involve alternative cuts in conditions.

This (non)progress of the BA dispute is an indication of much that's wrong with British Trade Unionism at the moment.

Rather than pursue strike action from a position of strength to force management to back down, union leaders enter into negotiations on the basis of accepting the need for savings in wages. This acceptance of capitalist logic hinders any fight back.

BA workers should insist on being kept informed of negotiations and reject any deal which sells out on pay and conditions.

The Left in the unions must go on the offensive against the logic behind such deals.





# Build on the successes of the Euromarch

**Terry Conway**

AFTER the magnificent success of the Euromarch campaign last year its time to gear up again for the September 20 Conference.

The day will give marchers and their supporters the opportunity to discuss the lessons of the campaign so far. Reminiscing about our successes will give us the impetus to plan new tasks for the months ahead – and a full calendar looks likely to emerge.

Local campaigning strength especially in the North East and North West has been the bedrock of our success so far and must be sustained.

The battle against Blair's Welfare to Work is likely to be harder than campaigning against the JSA and Project Work as tragically more people in the trade unions – and even some amongst the unemployed have illusions that these schemes may benefit them.

Never the less the lessons of previous campaigns here, together with the bitter fruits of Clinton's reforms in the States will stand militants in good stead battling against unemployment and job in-

security. Linking up with others campaigning across the continent on similar themes will strengthen our resolve and allow different experiences to be built on.

At the same time plans will be laid for action around the Cardiff Intergovernmental Conference in June – the last before the planned introduction of the single currency.

It may well not be possible to replicate the spectacular demonstration of Amsterdam in June and there needs to be an assessment of whether we should attempt continental wide marches of such length again – but there is more than one way to skin a goose. There seems little doubt that buoyed up by the spirit of solidarity and comradeship we have engendered so far we will ensure that our voices are heard in Cardiff.

The support that has been built in the British trade unions – with eight national unions so far supporting our demands – means that heightened intervention into next years union conferences and into the TUC itself next autumn is a realistic prospect.

Hopefully discussion can also

develop as to how we ensure greater participation of women in the campaign. After all we are so often at the sharp end of attacks – whether as unemployed, at work or as users of services. May be it is time to talk about a Women's day of action in the run up to the Cardiff summit?

Discussions I heard at a recent meeting in Southall involving the Hillingdon hospital strikers and Southall monitoring group around their determination to campaign against job insecurity and low pay in the black community made me feel that there had to be a way of making stronger link-ups on these issues too.

These are just a few thoughts of mine and I'm sure everyone else has at least as many good ideas of their own. It looks like a busy year ahead but one in which I am confident we can build even more on the successes of the last.

**Saturday September 20.**  
European Marches Reportback conference.  
11.30 a.m. - 5p.m., University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1 (Euston).

# Uniting against communalism and racism

**B. Skanthakumar (SMG-Unity)**

**A RALLY for unity among Southall's predominantly South Asian communities took place on August 17 amid official celebrations of India and Pakistan's fiftieth anniversary of independence.**

The Rally was a response to recent tension and outbreaks of violence between gangs of Sikh youth from Southall and Muslim youth from Slough which has polarised both communities and introduced new difficulties to communities increasingly stratified on class lines.

The initiative against communalism drew controversy among so-called community leaders as well as Sikh organisations agitating for independence from India.

The Sikh separatist (Khalistani) movement was prominent in protests and picketing of all celebrations of Indian independence in Britain, among which it mistakenly included the August 17 event.

In the week preceding the Rally the premises of the Southall Monitoring Group (SMG) were fire-bombed and its Director, Suresh Grover, was the target of death threats and a vicious poster campaign.

Fortunately no one was hurt in the arson attack and damage was confined to the first floor of the building. While no one has claimed responsibility for the fire-bombing its timing appears related to the rally and the public intervention of SMG against communal groups and their activities.

Key workers at SMG and other political activists formed in June a new organisation called SMG-Unity to undertake campaigns against communalism and racism particularly attractive to Southall youth.

Undaunted by the cowardly threats and abuse, SMG-Unity proceeded with the rally which was well attended and had speakers from a range of local organisations including local Labour MP, Piara Singh Khabra.

Southall is also home to a large refugee community from Somaliland and there was participation in the event by Somali women who spoke and performed making their own poignant plea for tolerance, goodwill and unity.

The mainstream media in its simplistic analysis of the situation claims that communalism is being imported from the sub-continent into the diaspora in Britain and beyond.

Yet young people (usually males) drawn to these obscurantist ideologies know little of society or politics in South Asia, having been born or grown up in Britain. Few have even visited those countries.

Instead these communal identities are appropriated to fill the void created by racism and insecurity.

These political-religious movements offer an illusory way out from grappling with the daily problems of unemployment, poor and overcrowded housing, low wages and the loss of educational and recreational facilities through council cuts.

They offer a solidarity and support of their own based on communal loyalties and identity politics, when class based organisations have failed to attract and mobilise youth across ethnic and religious divides to struggle against oppression and injustice whatever its form and whomever its subject.

This is the challenge ahead of SMG-Unity, to focus attention on precisely those issues which confront people every-day in the real material world while seeking also to understand the craving for an identity which helps make sense of "who we are?", "why we are here?" and "where we belong?"

These questions are not novel and in the struggles of the past when black communities stood together against the racists, fascists and the police we have asked these questions in other ways and found answers to questions we didn't know we had.

It is that memory of struggle, that tradition of resistance, that spirit of solidarity that SMG-Unity is trying to recover. Along the way it will need to innovate, to find an appropriate vernacular, original styles of organising and rhythms of activity.

It does not have the answers nor know the routes it will take but it proposes that it is the process and method of struggle and a critical assimilation of the theory that contributes to its resolution.

On October 12, a March for Unity through Southall will take place. It has already attracted the widest base of support locally and will include forces from across London.

In a determined effort to make this event inclusive, accessible and enjoyable to all sections of the community, the March will be followed by a celebration with music, talks, poetry and comedy.

Leading the March will be the Hillingdon Hospital Strikers and it will be accompanied by drummers from the Dhol Foundation. Current supporters include Tariq Ali, Imran Khan, Hanif Kureishi, Indira Jaisingh and Achin Vanaik (both from India) among many others.

In facing down the reactionary forces in our own communities and in our constant battles for self respect and dignity this March is a manifestation of our resolve.

It deserves the active support and mobilisation of the left and labour movement.

If you/your organisation would like to get involved in planning for the March, publicising and building it and/or participating in it, please contact SMG-Unity at 0181 843 2333 or PO Box 304, Southall, UB2 5YR

**Welfare State Network Conference**

**Saturday 18 October**

South Camden Community Centre, London

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**11.15 am-5pm**

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 18**

Opening Plenary with Tony Benn MP, Sharon Allen, MSF President, Maria Exall CWU Executive – and WSN annual report

Workshops on Welfare to Work, Pensions, NHS, European unemployment, Education, Local government/PFI, Student fees  
Registration £5 waged/£2 unwaged from Welfare State Network, c/o Camden People's Centre, 183 Queen's Crescent, London NW5 4DS.

For details of deadlines for motions, eligibility to vote and for Steering Committee, ring WSN on 0171-639-5068.

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 12**

**March for Unity**

Organised by Southall Monitoring Group Unity. Assemble 1p.m. Dominion Road, Southall.



**Scandal of deaths in custody**

**At the sharp end of police racism**

EARLIER in the summer two very determined women won a small but significant victory against the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which was forced to concede that the evidence on which they had previously decided not to take action against the police after the deaths in custody of Shiji Lapite and Richard O'Brien was seriously flawed.

Socialist Outlook spoke to Helen Shaw from Inquest, which has been involved in these particular cases about the background and some of the wider issues they are working to raise.

Inquest was founded in 1981 as a result of campaigns around people who had died in custody. It monitors deaths in prisons, police custody and detention centres and offers practical support and advice to the friends and families of those who have died in custody.

**SO - Could you explain a bit about the Shiji Lapite case and about the recent inquest verdict.**

HS - Shiji Lapite was the third black person to die as a result of a neckhold after being severely beaten by police officers in December 1994. It's a really shocking case, and as usual the family had to wait years to get answers to their questions about what happened to Shiji. Shiji died when his larynx was crushed in the neckhold.

Clinton McIrvine died as a result of a neckhold and then Oliver Price, some years ago. After those two deaths there were recommendations from the Police Complaints Authority and even the Association of Chief Police Officers that officers should be warned about the dangers of neckholds. They said they should only be used as an absolute last resort to restrain someone because it is so dangerous.

In Shiji's case there was clear evidence that the officers had not used excessive force "accidentally", and that they were lying in their account of events at the inquest. The pathologists report said that the injuries that Shiji sustained and the lack of injuries on the police meant that the police account of events was not possible.

In our view, and that of the family, the solicitors and the cam-

paign, the fact that the inquest gave a verdict of unlawful killing and that the jury clearly didn't believe the police officers involved means that the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) not to prosecute any of the officers was wrong and should be overturned.

In July there were Judicial Reviews of this case, the case of Richard O'Brien and of Derek Tredaway (which was a case of torture). The CPS conceded before the cases had even started that they needed to look again at the decision not to prosecute the police because the evidence was flawed.

If it hadn't been for the tenacity of the family and the campaign, their strength in being able to carry on through this long drawn out legal process (it is two and a half years since Shiji died), none of this would have happened.

The CPS has been forced to look again at the evidence. They won't necessarily prosecute the officers but it is a first step towards a review of what they did.

In our view the CPS just pay lip-service to the investigation - they don't look at the evidence properly. But it is hard to prove that there is a lack of political will for the CPS to prosecute the police.

**SO - Well what will happen now with the case?**

HS - The CPS will have to make a decision on whether to prosecute and obviously we will keep raising the issue and the campaign must continue to publicise Shiji's case.

In our view it is not enough for cases like this to be investigated in court by judges, that's just one aspect. There needs to be a public inquiry into the whole way deaths in custody are investigated.

Until they look at the whole policy making process including policing policies and the whole question of institutionalised racism, we're not really going to see a reduction in the number of deaths.

**SO: What are the similarities and differences with Shiji's case and Richard O'Brien's?**

HS: Richard O'Brien died after a struggle with police in April 1994 when he was held face down with his hands cuffed behind his back and his legs bent back at the knees. He died of positional asphyxia.

The police made racist comments to Richard when he was lying on the ground. His family and friends were harassed by the po-



*Taking the heat: Olamide Jones, widow of Shiji Lapite*

lice.

Again his wife, Alison O'Brien is a really strong woman, who has put up with this long drawn-out struggle through the courts.

What was different is that she has struggled on without the support from a strong campaign. She has had some support from the Irish in Britain Representation Group and from Inquest.

The question of deaths in custody has always been an issue taken up by the black community, particularly over the last few years, and there is more of a community mobilisation around those issues than there is within the Irish community.

Cases are reported in the Irish press but there is little sense of any communication across different parts of the Irish community about deaths in custody. They are not generally taken up in either a national or political way.

**SO - Why do you think there is this difference between the Irish community and the Black community?**

HS - I think that there is a greater politicisation amongst black people about being policed by a racist police force. Deaths in custody are just seen as the tip of the iceberg of a systematic form of racist policing that most black youth experience on a daily level.

People are stopped and searched all the time. The black community is also to an extent better organised.

There is also a reluctance amongst many Irish people to see it as their issue, despite the fact that Irish people are over-represented in the prison population and so on.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act does to an extent discourage Irish people from becoming politically involved in Britain but there is also a greater experience in the black community of really terrible brutal deaths, and people are very frightened that it may happen to



*A protest march to Knightland Road, where Shiji Lapite died in custody*

them.

**SO - Ibrahima Sey's inquest opens in a few days time, could you explain the background to his death?**

HS - Ibrahima Sey died after a struggle with police in which CS spray was used. What's really shocking about this case is that a few months after, all the police were authorised to use this spray.

Research was carried out on the spray which said that although the inquest was still pending on Ibrahima's death, the spray was safe for police to use. What really concerns us is that every time a new weapons is given to the police, somebody dies as a result of its use.

Inquest's view is that there is a tendency to arm the police with new weapons rather than look at ways that they can take the heat out of a situation where there may be violence.

In Ibrahima's case the inquest is going to be a lot of argument about the medical cause of death. What this will point out again is the inadequacies of an inquest as a forum to investigate the circumstances surrounding deaths in custody.

It will not explore issues around police training, policing of the black community, police violence. As happened with the Wayne Douglas and Brian Douglas, inquests the focus is likely to be on medical arguments rather than the actions of the police involved.

It strays away from the issue that someone who was arrested for allegedly committing a crime ends up dead. There is no other forum to take up these kind of issues. What we hope will happen is that there will be an unlawful killing verdict but, as with previous cases there is no guarantee that this will result in

a prosecution of the police.

**SO - How can people get involved in campaigning around issues of deaths in custody?**

HS - It is difficult because in the past people have become involved with a bereaved family in a not very positive way, and families have sometimes felt used by campaigns.

People should take the issue into campaigns and organisations they are involved in, trade unions, political parties, and take up the broader issues of deaths in custody and their investigations. It is important to get involved in family campaigns but what happens with all these cases is that the way that the state looks at them is that they are all individual cases.

At Inquest, although we see each case as individual, we also look at the pattern between all these individual cases.

It is important that when people take these issues up in broader campaigns and organisation that there is a debate that addresses all the issues surrounding deaths in custody, policing and the investigation process itself.

We should be demanding a public inquiry into investigations and racist policing. It's not an issue that the left has been particularly good at integrating into its public campaigning.

There is need for a national organisation or campaign that deals with the whole issue of policing, not just around deaths in custody. Inquest can't be that, it is only a very small organisation. There are a few surviving campaigns around, monitoring police actions but only a very small number. If there was a national campaign it would help to establish much broader campaigns across the country.

**For further information about the Ibrahima Sey Memorial Campaign contact Newham Monitoring Project, PO box 273, London, E7, telephone 0181-555 8151**

**Inquest can be contacted at Inquest, Ground Floor, Alexandra National House, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4 2PJ, telephone 0181 - 802 7430**

**EMERGENCY CONFERENCE**

**Unite for Labour Democracy!**

**SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 13**

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Admission £1/Details Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, c/o 3, Blades House, London SE11 5TW. 0171-254-0241



# Education, Education, Education? More like Managerialism, Underfunding, Inequality

**Richard Hatcher**

LABOUR'S new Education White Paper *Excellence in Schools* has been widely welcomed by a spread of opinion from the teaching unions to the Tory press.

All teachers and parents should welcome the ending of some of the worst features of Tory education policy – the assisted places scheme for private schools, nursery vouchers, opting-out, more 11-plus selection – and improvements in provision such as maximum class sizes of 30 in infant classes.

But it is not surprising that the Murdoch press, from the *Times* to the *Sun*, also approved.

Firstly, because *Excellence in Schools* accepts the bulk of the education reforms of the previous government, rather than replacing them. The Conservatives' national curriculum, the national tests, league tables, the Tory version of local management of schools, the Ofsted model of inspection, all remain.

Secondly, the rationale for what is different about New Labour's education policies is that they will serve the needs of the capitalist economy *better* than those of the Tories.

## Managerialism

One of the main criticisms of Tory education policy was the huge increase in central government control. New Labour's approach is an even more centralised managerialism.

The White Paper sets national targets for pupil achievement. It tells schools when to teach literacy and maths, and soon they will be told *how* to teach them. LEAs are rescued from the Tory scrap-heap, but only as the local implementers of national government policy.

The clearest signal of the character of the new regime was given by the government, only a few weeks after it was elected, when Stephen Byers, junior minister (and vice-president of the Socialist Educa-

tion Association!) named 18 "failing schools", and Chris Woodhead, the chief inspector, called for more teachers to be sacked.

Among the sacrificial victims are Islington Green school, in spite of an increase in GCSE grades A-C from 25 to 38% in one year, and Ingram School in Croydon, where a quarter of the teachers are told that they must "improve" by Christmas or be sacked, overriding agreed employment procedures.

The government's defence is that all this is justified if it raises standards in education, and who could be opposed to that? There are two

could disagree with wanting to improve standards, but a system which perpetuates selection holds down working class standards.

It isn't just a question of the failure to limit in any way the privilege and power of the private schools, nor the obvious reluctance to tackle the remaining grammar schools. It's the reinforcement of class-biased hierarchies within the comprehensive system:

- Grant-maintained schools will become "foundation" schools, deprived of the Tories' double-funding but still privileged, owning their premises and employing their

tage working class pupils who end up in the bottom groups.

## Funding

While not every proposal in the White Paper costs money, most of them do. Gordon Brown's July Budget gave an extra £2.3 billion for schools. This is a one-off increase from the windfall clawback and from reserves, which at best postpones for a year the chronic underfunding of schooling.

£1.3bn is for capital spending, but spread over the next 5 years. This falls far short of what local authorities say they need – £3.3bn

education.

## Education Action Zones

The clearest test of Labour's policies, and the sharpest expression of their limitations and contradictions, is what they will mean for poor working class areas.

The White Paper proposes to create up to 25 Action Zones over the next two or three years in socially deprived areas with 'underperforming' schools, each having 2 or 3 secondary schools (at least one of which will be a 'specialist' school) and associated primary schools.

Each Action Zone will be based on an 'action forum' of community, business and education representatives. There is obviously the potential here for exciting developments, but there are also dangers of repeating past failures such as the Education Priority Areas and Community Development Programmes of 20 years ago.

No extra money is to be allocated, though the AZs will have first call on some national support programmes. No account is taken of wider economic and social factors outside the schools.

And the White Paper suggests that the 'action forum' may put forward plans to close schools and open new ones – again, Labour's "management by threat" approach.

## Support and Pressure

Support and pressure is what the White Paper says schools need – though the combination of managerialism and underfunding means it's a lot more stick than carrot.

That could also sum up the response we should make to Labour's education programme. Certainly we should support what is positive in it. But we need to build the maximum pressure – among teachers, parents, communities and the wider labour movement – to oppose its anti-democratic features.

The first lines of defence are likely to be around:

- Funding – the campaign led by FACE against Tory cuts will need to revive to challenge Labour underfunding.

- Selection – old and new forms of selection will combine to favour middle class children and young people at the expense of the working class (with some ethnic minority groups particularly hit).

- Management by threat – in particular, the crude victimisation of "failing teachers" and "failing schools" as scapegoats for a system which inevitably creates a few "winners" and many more "losers".

But it is not just a defensive struggle. *Excellence in Schools* offers New Labour's 'can-do' vision of education – what is our alternative?

The Education Action Zones initiative is an opportunity for the left to put forward its own ideas for what an education in the interests of working people could begin to look like.



Labour's commandist approach leaves little room for the individual needs and pressures on schools and pupils

problems here.

One is its narrow and instrumentalist definition of the goals of education. Being able to read and getting good GCSEs are important, but New Labour has little notion of wider, let alone emancipatory, aims in education.

The second problem is that New Labour's approach may well raise standards overall, but it will also increase rather than decrease inequality in education, and in particular the wide gap between what middle-class and working-class pupils gain from it.

## Selection

Blunkett says what matters is standards, not structures. No one

staff, and seen by many parents as 'better' than the LEA 'community' schools.

- "Specialist" schools are encouraged, selecting pupils by 'aptitude'.

They will inevitably disadvantage other neighbouring schools, as the American 'magnet schools' on which they are modelled have demonstrated. They will also be required to secure private funding.

- There is no national admissions policy of 'nearest and siblings first', leaving the door open to covert social selection.

- Grouping pupils by ability will be the norm – setting, fast-tracking, 'accelerated learning'. Yet the evidence is that these often disadvan-

for outstanding repairs now, and a total of £5.9bn over the next 3 years. Blunkett's answer is the Tories' Private Finance Initiative, mortgaging the schools to the banks.

The other £1 billion is for education spending, but at least half of it will be needed to fund teachers' pay – which the White Paper has nothing to say about improving.

Councils will be under pressure to transfer some of the remaining money to other services such as Social Services which the government is starving of cash.

## Pupils, parents, teachers

The consequence of New Labour's commandist managerialism is that, in spite of the rhetoric of 'partnership' with teachers, parents and school students, Labour has already written their scripts for them.

- Teachers will be even more regulated, not just in what they teach but how they teach it.

- Parents are offered more places on school governing bodies, and representation on Education Committees, but without structures linking them to the mass of parents these are largely token.

- There is no place in Labour's thinking for pupils as young people with gender, ethnic, sexual and class identities, bringing to the classroom their own experiences and purposes.

As a result, the opportunity is missed to release the creativity of teachers, pupils and parents working democratically together to radically reshape working class

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**Socialist OUTLOOK**

Pamphlet by Alan Thornett, Dave Pocker and John Lister

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# Fighting for Lesbian and Gay Equality in Europe

Peter Purton, long time activist in the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR), gave a presentation at a workshop of lesbian and gay rights at the European Counter Summit in Amsterdam on June 15 1997. Here we print a shortened version of his contribution.

IN BRITAIN today, there is a sense of a new age, a new range of opportunities, a new world. The lesbian and gay communities in their great majority voted for Tony Blair's "New" Labour Party. They have great expectations.

But what exactly did they vote for? They voted to get rid of a Conservative government so hostile to the idea of lesbian and gay equality that it introduced laws which made our position worse – such as Section 28 which outlawed the "promotion of homosexuality" by local authorities.

They also voted Labour because they wanted to stop being outcasts and become part of the New Britain which Labour promised to create.

## Radicalism ditched

Labour Britain will have similar economic policies to those of the Conservatives. All the radical or socialist policies have been abandoned. But Blair did promise "fairness". Not very concrete, but it seems it was enough.

Among the policies it held onto were those LCLGR had won during a long campaign in the 1980s and 90s. When we first started, Labour had nothing to say about us apart from a short sub-committee document which was gathering dust.

We argued and struggled to be taken seriously and eventually won a comprehensive Labour conference policy. In 1994, 80 per cent of Labour MPS voted for an equal age of consent. Ten years before such support would have been beyond imagining.

But there is a big difference between a Conference vote and action by the leadership, and every time we found the leaders more backward. Each time we persuaded them, they changed!

The big support for Labour in 1997 from our communities has not always been there. When we were successful, newspapers like the "Pink Paper" concentrated not on the advance, but on the fact that some Labour leader still held reactionary views.

While we were trying to "talk up" Labour support for equality, our press was denouncing them as betrayers! Now ironically the same community press has fallen in love with New Labour.

Throughout the years of struggle few have shared our view that the best way to win lesbian and gay equality was to work through the la-

bour movement. Few have shared our commitment to involving and fighting for the needs of the most oppressed in our communities.

So is it all over now? Will Labour introduce equality laws for us? Will Britain, which today has the most reactionary laws on homosexuality, become a country which takes the lead in Europe?

We know Labour's public commitment. It will allow a free vote on the age of consent repeal Section 28 and incorporate the European convention on Human Rights into English law.

But when they do these things and whether they go beyond them depends to a great degree on what we do.

## Don't wait

I fear that our communities will sit back and wait – wait for Tony Blair and rights from Europe. This will be the worst choice. Labour has many other priorities. After these there may be another election coming up, not the time to introduce anything controversial.

Maybe we should be looking at a second term of government. You can see it all drifting away and they can still argue – surely you prefer us to the Conservatives?

The age of consent for gay men may be lowered in the autumn. Repealing Section 28 – in any case a gesture (albeit a significant one) – will not happen this year. A new Human Rights Commission is possible – but will it include us? Not automatically or by chance!

These reforms ignore the interests of whole sections of our community and concentrate on the interests of the noisiest and most powerful – white gay men:

Lesbians' rights to custody of their children, and fostering and adoption for all lesbians and gay men would be left out and the current discrimination would continue.

**"In 1994, 80 per cent of Labour MPS voted for an equal age of consent. Ten years before such support would have been beyond imagining."**

The specific concerns of black lesbians and gay men, of disabled lesbians and gay men would be ignored.

Whole areas where discrimination is not so much widespread as unchallenged, like in the education system, would remain, thus assuring the continued transmission of anti-gay ideology.

Of course, an early opportunity to win an equal age of consent would be a fantastic victory. It will help to change the mood of the "public" over the issues, just as it did in 1994. It may create a momentum, but sustaining it may be very hard.

Tens of thousands of lesbians and gay men – yes, lesbians too, even though they are not directly affected – mobilised on the streets and in every town to call for this reform. But only hundreds took any

part in the 1990 campaign against rules to prevent lesbians having access to fertility treatments. Apart from LCLGR gay men were invisible.

My fear is that after the age of consent is made equal the thousands of gay men will go back to partying. They will be content, they will probably vote Labour again too, so Labour will be content. There may be few active supporters and therefore little weight behind our call to press on to more substantial reforms.

Partly for this reason, I am also very much in favour of Britain adopting the European Convention on Human Rights. We need an extension of the Convention so that lesbians and gay men are included explicitly.

For us in Britain two things are essential. The new measures must include the explicit outlawing of all discrimination on grounds of sexuality. Whatever commission or body is established our community must be present on an equal basis with all other groups represented there.

I fear these things are not in Labour's current thinking. We will have to campaign and to lobby to make sure they are.

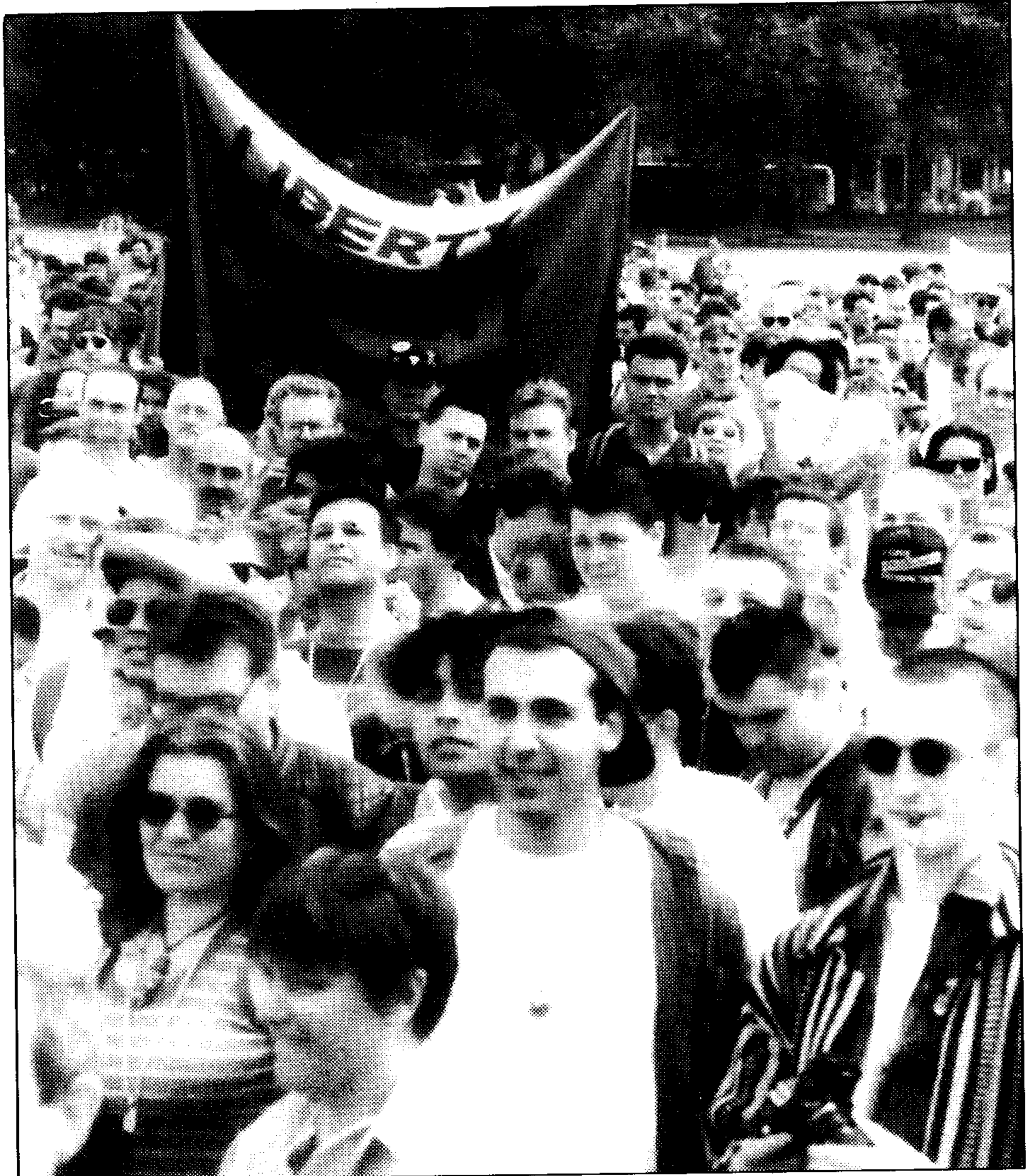
None of this will be given to us. It will have to be fought for. We will have to campaign vigorously, in

public, trying to win support for our demands from other forces in society. We want the support of the labour movement not only because it is part of changing public opinion itself but because it is just that – a movement of millions of people whose interests lie in unity, in equality, in common action.

We need to be a part of that movement for social progress, for social change.

To achieve legal equality for lesbians and gay men will be an enormous triumph. It will be a giant stride on the road to liberation – but it will not bring liberation.

The principles adopted by our organisation also suggest, we believe, a framework for campaigning in the European Union. Already for many years, people from Britain have appealed against our reactionary laws to European courts and in



many cases have won.

Not surprisingly after 18 years of reaction many people believe that further integration into Europe would be good for lesbian and gay equality.

## European integration

We support the use of these institutions to achieve positive results but we must also be cautious because there are also negative aspects to these institutions.

The institutions of Europe are not accountable to us. The Parliament has no power. We have no control over the council of ministers and even less over commissioners and bureaucrats. Genuine democracy is a necessary accompaniment to permanent social progress.

Britain and the states of the European Union all possess the same capitalist system and all have the same social order, one in which homosexuality has never been allowed an equal role. Even in liberal society homosexuality is not of equal worth. It may even be "natural", but it is still not equal.

Nowhere are we treated as well as heterosexuals in anything we do or wish to do. I do not myself believe in marriage as I see it as the institutionalisation of an oppressive relationship between men and women. But I support demands for recognition of lesbian and gay partnerships as a move towards equality. In how many countries can we make even that choice?

The crucial issue is the family. Tony Blair is against prejudice, but he also believes that the heterosex-

ual two-person family is the superior way to raise children.

A campaign for equality which only seeks legal changes either within a single state or within the boundaries of the European Union has limitations. Even with the best laws, discrimination will continue. We will still be queer-bashed, still find it hard always to be honest about our sexuality.

When the day comes when we can associate freely with each other, when we have no fear of being attacked, or dismissed, or discriminated against, because of our sexuality; when there is never any question about being completely open about ourselves to everyone; when children are taught in school about lesbian and gay relationships as equal choices for them: then we will have achieved some kind of liberation. That is a big step from making these things not illegal, which is where we are still in Britain.

## Social order

To get to the causes of this oppression, which has been around for a long time, means more than gaining an audience with liberal politicians. It means challenging the social order, alongside the many millions of others who have an interest in creating a better world.

As a socialist gay I view my work as being part of the struggle for a better world for lesbians and gay men, as part of a better world for all humanity, in Britain, in Europe, and beyond Europe too.



# YES - IE! for a Welsh Assembly



**Dafydd Rhys and Brendan Thomas**

ONE OF the positive consequences of the election of a Labour government has been the decision to call referenda on a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly.

The proposed Welsh Assembly will be a 60 seat body, with limited powers. It will be elected by an additional member system, 40 seats being elected by first-past-the-post based on the Westminster boundaries and 20 seats allocated from Party lists, based on the vote gained across the 5 Euro constituencies.

Democracy is central to the arguments being put in favour of a Welsh Assembly. During their 18 years in office the Tories constructed a highly undemocratic quango-state in Wales.

1400 appointees sit on Welsh quangos, in contrast to 1273 councillors elected to Welsh local councils. The Welsh Office currently has a budget of £7 billion, £2.3 billion of which is spent directly by the quangos.

Under the Tories, the post of Secretary of State for Wales was increasingly used as a testing ground for young hopefuls, such as John Redwood and William Hague. Far from being representatives of Wales in London, they were very much the representatives of London in Wales.

Labour's current proposals for Wales, though limited, would at least give control over most Welsh Office functions to an elected body. Socialists should support any measures which extend the control of ordinary people over their politicians and the state.

Perhaps more importantly, the Assembly has the potential to become a focus for the demands and struggles of Welsh workers. With around 50 per cent of the Welsh vote in the last two general elections, Labour will more than likely have a majority in the Assembly.

The dominant political force in the Assembly will therefore be elected by and claim to speak in the name of the Welsh working class, so we must demand that it speaks and acts to defend our interests.

Many in the Labour Party support the Assembly proposals for very different reasons to these. The traditional core leadership of the Wales Labour Party, based on local government and the trade union bureaucracy, has grudgingly conceded that an elected body should be set up.

This is due to a steady growth of support for an Assembly at all levels of the labour movement in Wales.

They hope to turn it into little more than a glorified county council, stuffed with the kind of yes-men who populate Labour councils in most valleys.

The Blairite project is more sophisticated. They acknowledge the

the South-East.

So the Assembly proposals are part of a move towards the creation of regional assemblies across Britain in a strategy that seeks to spread the blame for the difficult times that lie ahead.

Neither of these scenarios should cause the left to reject a Welsh Assembly.

On the contrary, our task is to subvert both these projects, in an effort to create a genuinely representative, popular and campaigning Assembly, unafraid of criticising the right-wing policies of the current Labour government. The demand that women are equally represented in the Assembly is crucial in this respect.

Support for an Assembly is now almost universal on the left in Wales. A conference was held in Cardiff on July 19, entitled "Socialists and a Welsh Assembly".

The purpose of this event was to begin to develop a socialist agenda for a Welsh Assembly and to debate whether socialists should call for a YES vote in September. The conference was attended by activists from the Labour Party, Plaid Cymru, the Communist Party, Trade Unions, pensioners' and unemployed workers' organisations and the far-left.

It was found that broad agreement existed on our approach to the Assembly and a statement, dubbed the "Cardiff Declaration", was adopted. The conference organising committee is continuing to meet in order to produce campaigning material under the slogan: "Socialists say YES!".

The NO campaign, after several shambolic false starts, has now found a sponsor in the form of Sir Julian Hodge, a multi-millionaire living in tax-exile in Jersey. He is joined by a few members of Rhondda Labour Party and by Lord Tonypany - who supported the Referendum Party in the last election - and an assortment of other reactionaries.

These people share a common hatred for any expression of Welshness which goes beyond the stereotypical male voice choirs, leeks and rugby!

Their campaign consists of little more than scare-mongering - about who will control the Assembly: "North Wales under the thumb of South Wales" - and how much it will cost: "Welsh taxes soaring by £1,200 a head".

Anti-Assembly Labour MPs have been careful not to associate themselves with this rag-tag bunch. Nevertheless, left wing MP Llew Smith needs to explain how he can support a NO vote, a position which only the Tories support in Wales!

Socialism is inconceivable without widespread national and local autonomy and yet Llew Smith seems to prefer the existing British state, which is both centralist and anti-democratic, to the limited democratic gain which a Welsh Assembly would represent.

There are a number of differences between this campaign and that of 1979, when Labour's devolution proposals were voted down in the Welsh referendum.

The 1979 proposals were those of a deeply unpopular Labour administration, while the current proposals come on the back of a landslide Labour victory. This is acknowledged in the present Labour emphasis on a Yes vote being a loyalty vote.

The creation of the quango state, and the economic and political marginalisation of Wales under the Tories, have fuelled support for a Welsh political institution, both to address the problems of the people of Wales and to promote Welsh interests in the EU. And crucially,

majority opinion within the Welsh labour movement is clearly in support of the Assembly.

In 1979 the NO campaign was led by a group of prominent Welsh Labour MPs. It also received serious funding from a number of trade unions in Wales and significant opposition to devolution existed in Welsh local government.

Today there is no significant labour movement opposition to the Assembly.

On the contrary the Labour leadership, the Wales Labour Party and the Wales TUC are all calling for a Yes vote, while support in the labour movement for the NO campaign is weak and fragmented.

It is vital that socialists, in particular the Labour left, support the call for YES votes in Wales and Scotland.

Socialists in England must raise the issues within the English Labour and Trade Union movement. A victory in September will be a gain for the working class throughout the British state.



need to address the demand for greater democracy in Wales and the Assembly proposals are designed to do this in a minimal fashion. But the Assembly has a second political function.

Labour lacks an economic strategy that would begin to deal with mass unemployment and has to fall

**Left wing MP Llew Smith needs to explain how he can support a NO vote, a position which only the Tories support in Wales!**

back upon Peter Hain's suggestions that under the Assembly a new "economic powerhouse" development agency will revitalise the Welsh economy.

The new agency will have no increased funding however, since the maastricht targets for European Monetary Union require reductions in state spending.

Nor is there any proposal for a serious break from the existing (Tory) regional economic strategy of infrastructural development and investment incentives. This strategy has failed to alter the pattern of uneven economic development both within Wales and across Britain as a whole, with mass unemployment and low wages in Wales and the North of England and relative prosperity in

## The Cardiff declaration

### Socialists Say YES!

This Conference declares its support for the right of the people of Wales to self-determination and calls for the establishment of a Welsh Assembly with the right to decide for itself which powers to retain in Wales and to determine its relationship with the rest of Britain and Europe.

Such an Assembly will need to have the law-making and financial powers necessary to begin to overcome the damage inflicted upon Wales by 18 years of Tory rule from Westminster. It should pursue policies for full employment, the expansion of public services and for greater democracy. As a first step it should cancel proposed hospital closures, abolish the quangos in their present unaccountable form, and take back into public ownership Hyder and other privatised utilities.

### A Representative Assembly

Its electoral system should ensure that it is representative of the whole of Wales, through a system of proportional representation for the election of all seats in the Assembly, and is composed of equal numbers of women and men.

Members of the Welsh Assembly should not be able to hold simultaneously any office as MP, MEP or councillor, even though councillors are not waged.

Labour's proposed Assembly falls short of these objectives but at least offers the people of

Wales some measure of democratic control over the decisions which affect their lives. Furthermore, it will be an important line of defence against any future right-wing government at Westminster. It is therefore essential to win a substantial YES vote in the referendum on September 18th.

We call upon all socialists in Wales to campaign actively to maximise that vote.

We completely reject the stand-point of those in Wales who advocate a NO vote on supposedly socialist and internationalist grounds. It is a hollow internationalism that cannot recognise the specific needs and aspirations of the people of Wales, a strange socialism that is so fond of the centralist and outdated British state.

### Campaign for a YES Vote

This Conference resolves to publicise this declaration under the slogan: Socialists Say YES!; to work with all existing YES campaigns and to argue the socialist case for a YES vote throughout the labour movement and the left in Wales. We will also take every opportunity to fight for a strengthening of the proposals, in line with the objectives set out above.

We call upon the Labour Party to conduct a vigorous mass campaign in support of the Assembly proposals. Victory will only be assured if Welsh working people are convinced that an Assembly will give them a real democratic voice.

## What you can do

Help to distribute the Cardiff Declaration as widely as possible. A shorter A5 campaign leaflet is also available, along with a poster, putting the socialist case for a Welsh Assembly. Contact: Socialists say YES!, Cardiff Centre for Trade Union Studies, 131 Crwys Rd, Cardiff CF2 4NH. Tel: 01222 390273.





# Yes, Yes, we want more democracy in Scotland!

## Gordon Morgan

THE WHITE Paper on a Scottish Parliament outlines a devolved Parliament with substantial economic and legislative powers.

It will have full legislative powers over Health, Education, Local Government, Economic Development, Housing.

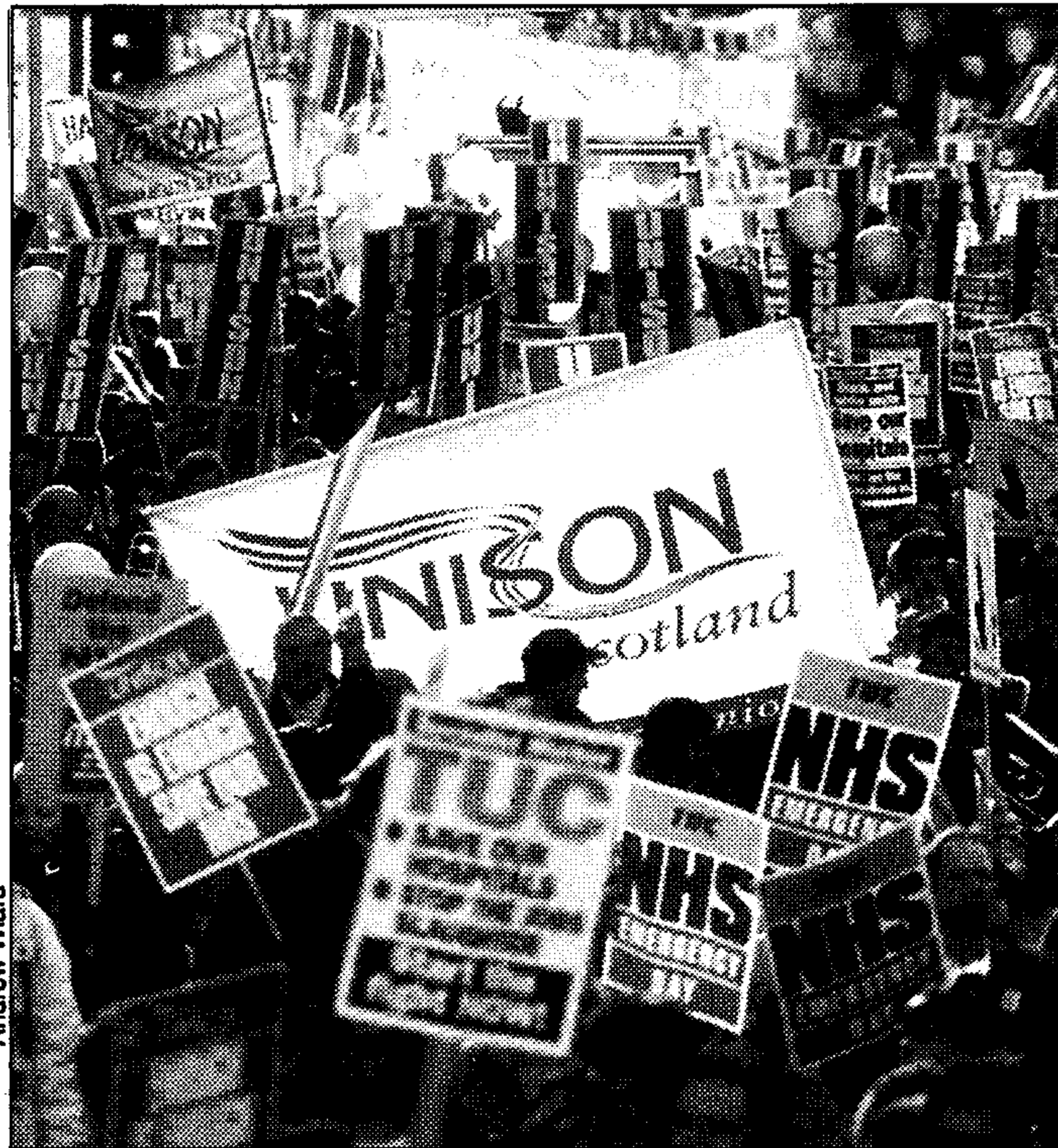
It will manage a Budget of £14,000 million and will have powers to adjust some existing taxes such as Business rates and could vary Income Tax by 3p in the pound.

The creation of this parliament will go a long way to ending the democratic deficit in Scotland whereby the Secretary of State acts as a colonial governor in allocating funds by personal fiat and Scottish laws are largely tagged on to English bills with no concern for the different circumstances of Scotland.

Despite many concerns in the lead up to the White Paper and predictions of backsliding on key questions, Donald Dewar has maintained the spirit and most of the detail of the Scottish Convention proposal.

It was reported that the first draft of the paper was withdrawn accused of being too "Braveheartish" by Jack Straw and others. The Scottish Office response was to hold the referendum on September 11 – the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Stirling Bridge when Wallace defeated Edward's army.

Most concern related to adjustments to the PR system – to reduce the numbers to secure a Labour majority in the Parliament. Not only has the Convention system been adopted, but certain fine details have been added which increase the likelihood of a fair proportionality and it is unlikely that on the present scheme Labour alone would have a



Andrew Wilson

Yes, Yes vote defends the right to spend more on health and education majority.

The scheme is based on Euro-Constituencies. Each elects 9 members by first past the post, and seven additional members to adjust discrepancies in the proportion of

guarantee a seat; however, under most conceivable circumstances a seat will be gained with 7 per cent and may be gained with under 6 per cent.

The scheme proposed is in fact

**Many Scottish MPs are looking to Edinburgh for their future. If the Left and the SNP can continue to demand justice for the poor and mobilise against Government attacks – perhaps Donald Dewar will become more "Braveheartish" and lead Scottish Labour to the left.**

seats gained. If all 16 members were elected proportionately, 6.25 per cent of the vote would guarantee a seat and 5 per cent would be most likely to win a place.

Under the proposed scheme in theory 12.5 per cent is required to

that worked out over 10 years ago following discussions in the left most notably the Scottish Socialist Movement and Scottish Labour Action. As one of the proposers of the scheme (within the context of the perceived options) in general I

support the proposals now.

The main disadvantage is against smaller parties – there is no national top-up, meaning that proportionality operates only at Euro Constituency level. Thus the Scottish Socialist Alliance in theory could receive 5 per cent in every constituency, but win no seats.

If however, it only stood in Glasgow and received the same vote as at the last Euro elections it would gain 1 seat. In practice this forces the left and environmental parties to review their attitude to joint slates.

Labour, the Liberals and the SSA were committed to a Yes vote. The SNP waited for the paper and now supports a Yes vote. Once again Donald Dewar persuaded doubters by affirming that if the Scottish Parliament voted for independence then independence would almost certainly follow.

### Different agenda

In this as on other issues the Scottish team seem to have a different agenda to Blair and Mandelson. Mandelson's statements in his most recent visit were effectively rejected by the Scottish Office team.

For once the entire Scottish political establishment is united in support of a Yes vote. The SNP are openly campaigning for a Parliament as a step to independence, La-

lems.

Until after September 11 there is effectively a political truce in Scotland. Attacks are muted, friendliness amongst political rivals is the order of the day.

But under the surface all is not well. Labour in England and Scotland is preparing to impose further cuts on local authorities and wishes to change their powers – a centralist agenda.

Corruption in Glasgow and Paisley suit this agenda and Labour will keep issues like this in the headlines for months to come. The main revelations are however, being postponed till after September 11 – Glasgow's report is expected on September 24.

I expect 6 months of sleaze headlines leading to proposals to change the powers and functions of Local Government. Commissions looking at 'economies of scale', at 'best value', and at relations of power between Edinburgh and local councils, are being set up.

Not all is negative. On Education, on Health and other issues, Scottish Office ministers are presenting a different agenda to Blunkett et al at Westminster.

Brian Wilson at present has the full support of the Scottish teachers' union the EIS.

Many Scottish MPs are looking to Edinburgh for their future. Donald Dewar has openly hinted he would like to be the first Minister of the Scottish Parliament and combine this with being the last incumbent as Secretary of State for Scotland.

If the Left and the SNP can continue to demand justice for the poor and mobilise against Government attacks – perhaps Donald will become more "Braveheartish" and lead Scottish Labour to the left.

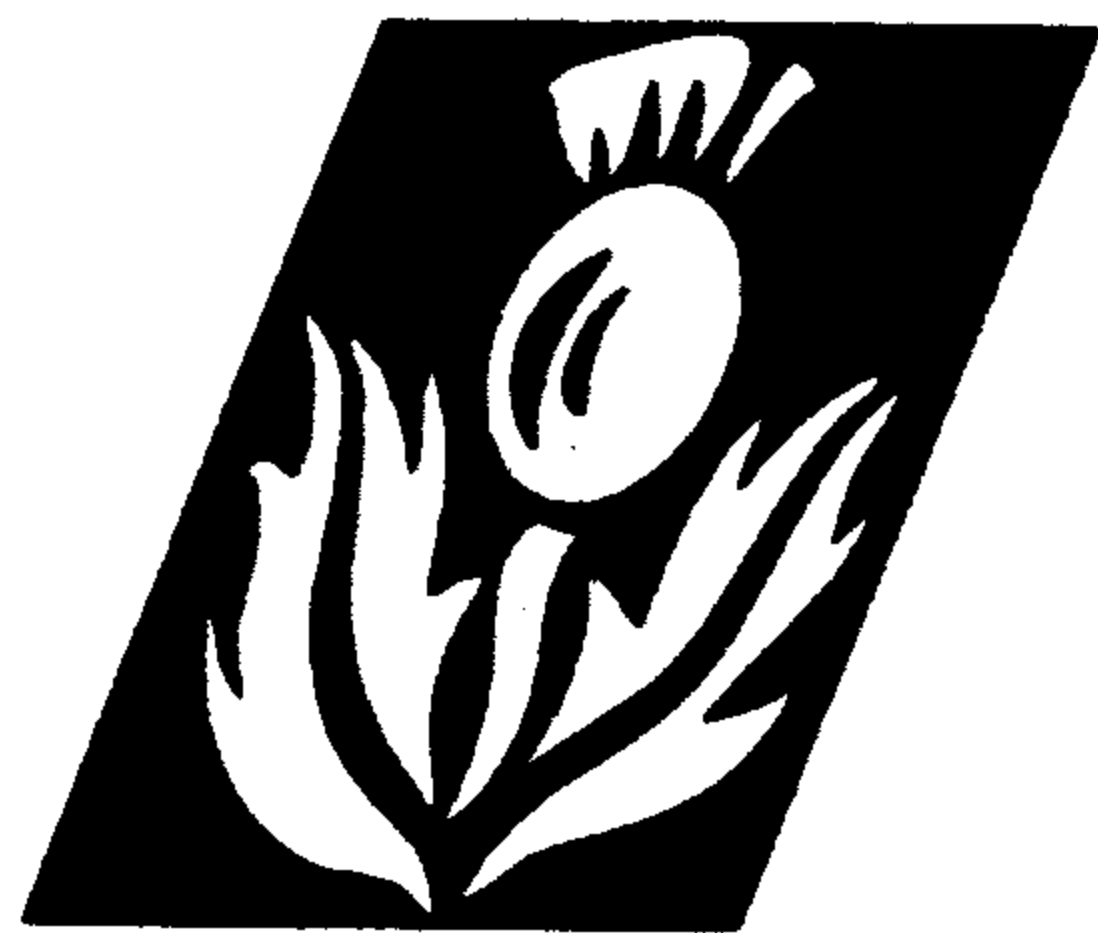
## Scottish left lines up for double Yes

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Alliance (SSA) – a formation with no equivalent south of the border – held its first conference in June.

The SSA has had an impressive first year on the streets, leading campaigns against council cuts in Glasgow, including protests against school closures and the occupation of two community centres, and has campaigned against domestic violence.

Its showing at the General election was less impressive than many expected – it remains to be seen what lessons will be learnt for the elections to the Scottish Parliament. CAMPBELL MCGREGOR reports on the debates that took place at the conference.

**THE ALLIANCE was formed last year by socialists from a wide range of backgrounds. Scottish Militant Labour (SML), who retained this name in Scotland are the largest component.**



The Scottish Socialist Movement also played an important role in the formation of the SSA. The movement was formed in parallel with the Socialist Movement in England and Wales, but did not evolve in quite the same direction.

The SSA's politics are largely but not exclusively informed by those of

Militant, which led them to over-reach themselves by standing candidates in 16 seats, including all 10 Glasgow seats, although they did refrain from standing in Labour marginals.

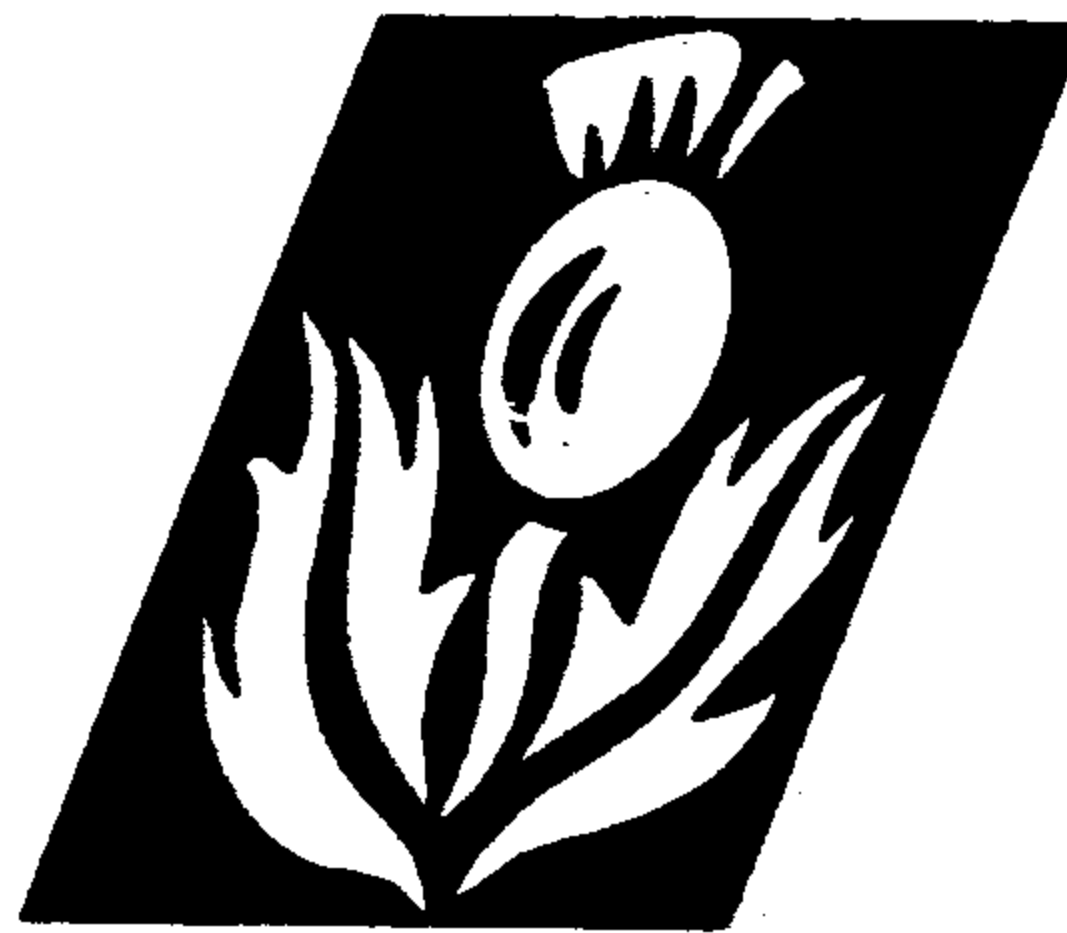
It would be wrong to accuse the SSA of electoralism. Tommy Sheridan won 11 per cent of the vote in Glasgow Pollock, the largest share of the vote for any candidate in Britain not backed by a major party, and one of the best results by a leftist candidate for many years. But the others did not do so well, and the next best result was 3 per cent.

Last year the SSA won 19 per cent of the vote in a local by-election, but this was through activists from all over Glasgow descending to canvas the ward in a way which wasn't possible with resources spread so much more thinly. To stand 10 candidates was a tactical error.

The "Charter for Socialist Change" drawn up by the SSA's National Council is basically a left social democratic document, although with large sections serious revolutionaries could support.

The National Council's document on "Campaigns and Elections" was better, with a correct emphasis on putting campaigns first and a realistic view of the SSA's electoral success.

SSA conference voted overwhelmingly for a double "Yes" vote in the referendum in September, but



there was only a narrow majority in favour of participating in the campaign set up by the Labour Party, "Scotland Forward".

The dissenting voices on this issue in the SSA come from two quarters. The CPGB in Dundee has an ultra-left position of calling for a governmental referendum on a Scottish

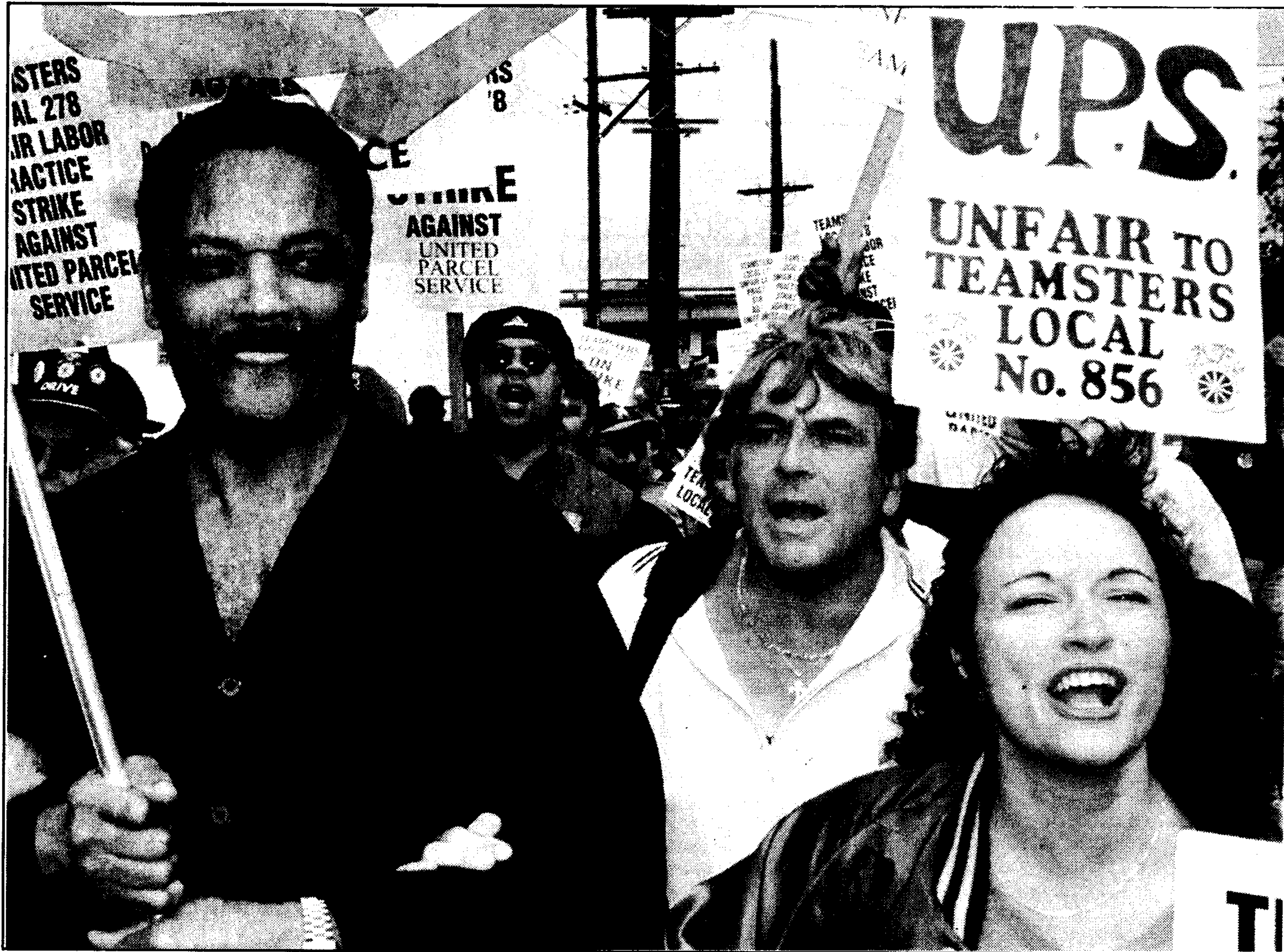
parliament. The Republican Workers' Tendency in Edinburgh calls for a write-in campaign for a Scottish republic.

The Socialist Labour Party (SLP) has not engaged the SSA in a head-on confrontation but has established some niches of its own, in Motherwell where it has a base in the RMT, and in the former coal mining area of Ayrshire and Fife. They stood three candidates. There was a tacit understanding that the SSA and the SLP would not stand against each other.

Some activists in the SLP and the SSA are personally on reasonable terms and many would prefer a closer relationship, but SLP members feel they cannot do anything which the London leadership would disapprove of.

Further information on these issues is available on the Internet on the SSA's home page; <http://wkweb/cableinet.co.uk/diblake/>





## Teamsters for a Democratic Union Teamsters win big victory

ON MONDAY, Ron Carey and Ken Hall, our union's lead negotiators declared victory. Carey argued that the agreement has most of the features of the union's pre-strike proposal that we've been fighting for, and that it bears little or no resemblance to that so called "Last Best and Final" that the strike defeated.

Carey has made clear that this victory belongs to the members who fought to win it.

TDU National Organizer Ken Paff stated, "This victory is in part accumulation of two decades of Teamster reform. Teamster members worked hard to get our union ready to fight and win. A decade ago our International officers were orchestrating secret deals with UPS management and forcing UPS Teamsters to accept contracts that were rejected by majority vote. That's now in the past. Now we have a union leadership and membership that can win a major victory for all of labour."

If you look at the union pre-strike offer and the company's "final" offer of July 30, the agreement appears to fall about 90 per cent on the union side. In other words, we won!

We won because we built a reform movement over two decades that got our union in a place to lead this fight. We won because we elected a Teamster International leadership willing to fight, not sell out.

We won because we campaigned for six months. We targeted the right issues, we took them to the members and the American people, we unified the members.

In short, our union did what a union should be all about. We won because we reached out and made this the best supported strike in decades. We won because UPS Teamsters stuck together and surprised the company - which underestimated the unity, determination and will-to-win of Teamster members!

### Now where?

Now we move forward to spread this spirit, this victory. We can start with the upcoming national freight contract and move on to every part of the Teamsters and the labour movement.

Now we move forward to build that reform movement - to bring out the best in unionism, and to make possible innovative struggles, fresh leadership and Teamster victories.

If we do that, this will be only the first of a string of new Teamster victories that help make labour into a growing, dynamic force.

# UPS strike - a victory for all

THE UPS Teamsters strike this summer was the first time a major North American union had called a national strike of such significance in many years.

The victory the workers achieved will be an inspiration across the United States and across the globe - demonstrating that militant unionism is not dead and that real victories can be won

by supposedly outmoded methods of struggle, solidarity and unity.

Below we print comments on the strike and its outcome, the first from Against the Current, a radical American magazine. The second is from a press release from Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

## Unity defies bosses' gamble

### Martha Gruelle

The UPS Teamsters strike was about the future of living-wage jobs in the United States but it was also a test.

How well had management done on winning the loyalty of its work force, and how well have the new democratised union and Teamsters for a Democratic Union counteracted "Brown Culture"?

### Militaristic

UPS has brown trucks, workers wear brown uniforms. There is a very militaristic culture with rules

for everything including the importance of shiny shoes. Everything is timed - it should take 30 seconds to do this, 2 minutes to do that - so the drivers are really pushed to perform day in, day out.

The crisp, uniformed image and "tightest ship" slogan influence both the public's and workers' view, and evoke efficiency. UPS consistently uses internal promotions to capture the aspirations of workplace leaders.

The cultural, some say cultish, atmosphere of reward for self-sacrifice is combined with a con-

stant scrutiny of workers' pace that keeps many of them working through breaks. Meanwhile, decades of comfortable relations with Teamsters International leaders have led less sophisticated workers to think that management chose to pay drivers decent pay and benefits.

### Company's risky bet

The company seemed to be betting they'd won the hearts-and-minds thing - that there would be significant scabbing as the weeks wore on. UPS lost the bet.

The union's flagship issue - the demand to turn part-time into full-time jobs - turned out to be wonderfully unifying, as well as a cause for widespread public sympathy, a rarity in today's industrial disputes.

UPS part-timers do the behind-the-scenes work of sorting packages and loading them on trucks for delivery. It's intense, dangerous work, lifting and placing thousands of parcels of wildly varying size and weight.

A high proportion of sorters and loaders only last a few days or weeks.

The Teamsters fought to slow or reverse the sharp expansion of part-timers. The union also wanted good wage rises, including the first increase in the part-timer starting rate in fifteen years.

The Teamsters put their case for "decent full-time jobs" to a public

now sensitised to the growing problem of part-time, contingent work. Every young worker and every parent of a twenty-something knows it's hard to find full-time, decent paid permanent jobs.

### Pensions

Meanwhile, in demanding control of UPS workers' benefit funds, the company aimed to split off feeder drivers, who tend to be older and have sometimes organized for higher pensions.

The point of multi-employer pension funds is mutual protection.

When the freight industry consolidated in the eighties, UPS and other companies' negotiated pension contributions helped ensure retirement income for thousands whose companies closed and left a debt to the pension fund.

Now UPS asked its union employees to turn their backs on other Teamsters.

Events showed how deeply strike sentiment and union consciousness ran among UPS Teamsters. Fewer than three per cent broke ranks in the first week.

By holding strong, with widespread public support on their side, strikers shut down the company's only profitable operation, which it can't possibly move overseas.

After fifteen days on strike, that proved to be enough.

## INSIDE COWLEY

### Trade union struggles in the British car industry in the 1970s.

This sequel by ALAN THORNETT to his book From Militancy to Marxism is a unique account of trade union activity in the British Leyland car plants in the 1970s. Its analysis of the conflict between rank and file and union bureaucrats under the last Labour government raises the question: Who opened the door to Thatcher's onslaught?

This 430-page, illustrated volume is due for publication in November at £11.95.

Pre publication offer: just £7.95, plus £2 post and packing.

Make cheques to Alan Thornett and send to 14, Colyton Rd, London SE22 ONE





# Plavsic – accomplice of Bosnian genocide

**Geoff Ryan**

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic famously remarked that having to choose between Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman was like making a choice between leukaemia and a brain tumour.

The Serbs of Republika Srpska are faced with a similar 'choice' – Biljana Plavsic or Radovan Karadzic.

Karadzic's record is well known: that of Plavsic, the West's current favourite Bosnian Serb, rather less so. She is as much a war criminal as Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic. While the latter organised genocide against Bosnia's Muslims, Plavsic provided the ideological justification.

According to Plavsic the Serbs were oppressed as a nation under Tito. Moreover, she also claims to have consistently opposed the Tito regime, arguing that the worst crime of Tito's Yugoslavia was that everyone had to think as the party did.

Such 'national oppression' and 'opposition' did not, however, prevent her becoming dean of the Faculty of Natural Science and Mathematics at the university of Sarajevo.

Moreover, this supposed champion of the 'oppressed' Serbs, chose to do her degree at the University of

Zagreb in Croatia. Logic and consistency – let alone respect for facts – are not Plavsic's strong points.

Plavsic is a geneticist by profession: her politics reflect this training. She argues that Bosnia's Muslims were originally Serbs, but Serbs of 'genetically deformed material' who embraced Islam. Inter-marriage between Muslims and Serbs led to further deterioration in the Serbs' genetic material – a process which has led to a 'de-Serbianisation' of Bosnia's Serbs.

Yet, when 'pedigree' Serbs like Karadzic and Plavsic came to power the supposedly 'degenerate' Bosnian Serbs suddenly regained national consciousness.

## Absurd

Such absurdities would be laughable if they had not had such serious consequences.

Plavsic takes her socio-genetic nonsense further. Whilst berating the Bosnian Serbs for their genetic deficiencies she also argues that the Serbs of Bosnia are, at the same time, politically and racially superior to the Serbs of Serbia.

Living in frontier regions supposedly led the Bosnian Serbs to develop a special ability to sense danger to the Serb nation and develop mechanisms for self protection.

One can only wonder why Plavsic was in favour of the unity of



Two faces of ethnic cleansing: new western favourite Plavsic (left) and arch villain Karadzic (right)

all Serbs within a single state. Her biological determinism should surely mean that the 'pure' genes of the Bosnian Serbs would be diluted by contact with the 'inferior' genes of the Serbs of Serbia.

Plavsic is known in Bosnia as the 'Iron Lady', the 'Serb Empress' and even the 'Goddess Biljana'. Mirjana Markovic, however, has called her by a rather different – and more appropriate – name: Dr. Mengele.

Markovic's husband, Slobodan Milosevic, claimed that Plavsic should be detained in a psychiatric institution after a bizarre speech in which she virtually welcomed NATO bombs. 'Even if six million Serbs perish', she said, 'the other 6 million will live decently'.

Today Robin Cook and Madeleine Albright try to portray this champion of biologically determined racism as a 'moderate'. S-For troops have intervened on her side in the battle she and her supporters

are waging against Karadzic.

Western leaders clearly hope Plavsic will win September's elections.

An electoral victory for Plavsic, however, would not mean an end to the division of Bosnia. Indeed the elections (including those in the so-called Muslim Croat Federation) will take place in conditions where people will be able to vote in the area where they now reside – i.e. where the original inhabitants have been 'ethnically cleansed'.

This is expressly against the provisions of the Dayton Accord yet is being sanctioned by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

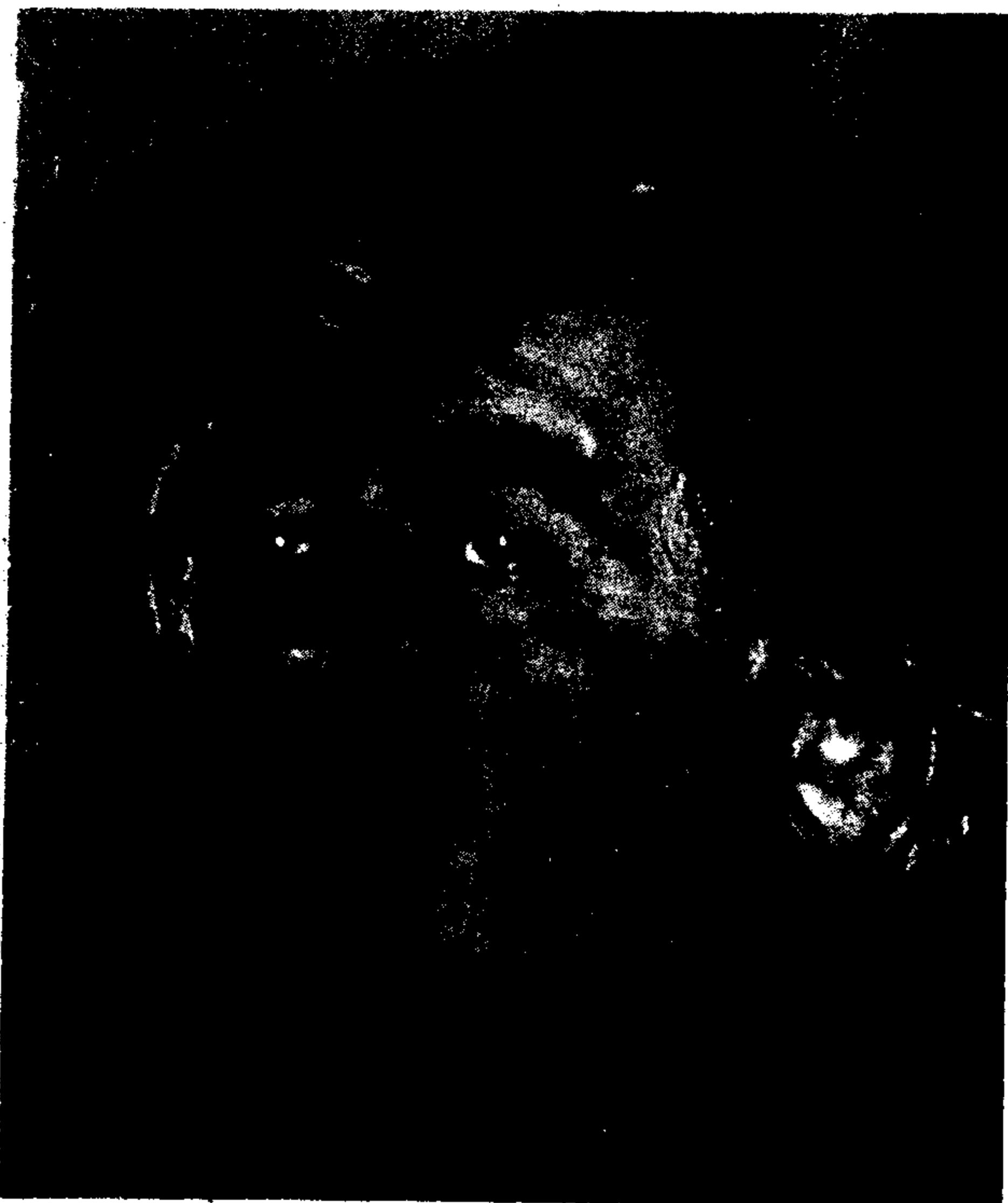
The electoral procedures agreed by the OCSE legalise 'ethnic cleansing' and can only encourage an intensification of ethnically based politics in Bosnia. These manoeuvres

by the OCSE led to the resignation from the Provisional Electoral Commission of Kasim Begic, the representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But just because the West is backing Plavsic – including with military force – this does not mean socialists should support Karadzic. We do not take sides in a conflict between two gangsters.

Neither Plavsic nor Karadzic have anything to offer Bosnia's Serbs, let alone the non-Serb population.

Certainly we are in favour of the arrest and trial of Karadzic – by the people of Bosnia. And when Karadzic and Mladic do find themselves in the dock they should be joined by Biljana Plavsic, their accomplice in crime.



## “Fear got under the skin...”

'The Tenth Circle of Hell' by Rezak Hukanovic (Little Brown & Co 14.99)

**Reviewed by David Crosher**

**READERS will recall television and press pictures of a Bosnian man with a wasted body standing behind a barbed wire fence. This was in August 1992 in Trnopolje prison camp.**

The story was subsequently put about by pro-Serb nationalists that the man was suffering not from starvation and maltreatment at the hands of Bosnian Serbs, but from cancer. He did not have cancer. Nor, contrary to more recent allegations in *Living Marxism*, was he posing behind barbed wire so that ITN could cook up a story!

Rezak Hukanovic also survived an ordeal in a prison camp run by Serb nationalists. He was in Omarska.

The Tenth Circle of Hell is Hukanovic's account of what happened to him, his son and his neighbours.

In this account he is also describing the fate of many thousands of Bosnian people. "Over the course of two days more than three thousand inhabitants of Prijedor and its outlying villages were arrested in their homes and brought to ... Omarska".

Hukanovic's own arrest happened like this: Soldiers burst into his cousin's home, apparently looking for weapons. One of the soldiers said "There's shooting all over the place. We'll take you some place safer until it stops." They knew his name but Hukanovic did not recognise them behind their masks. He was taken to the local police station and questioned. He had "passed into the first circle of hell".

From the police station, prisoners were taken on buses to Omarska. Hukanovic describes the filthy and overcrowded conditions in which only lice and disease could thrive. They were not given food for four days. On the fifth day there was food but, the prisoners were told, not enough. Many had to wait another day.

In one building, so many people

were crammed that they had to try to sleep standing up. They were deprived of water. "When somebody took a leak, others gathered round to cup their hands and catch the urine, wetting their chapped lips and even drinking it."

Hukanovic writes in the third person, giving himself the name of Djemo. He says that at the time he felt that the events he endured must have happened to someone else.

The writing style is calm and matter of fact. The content is devastating.

We are told of the constant stream of beatings and of methods of torture so shocking that you wonder how a human mind can think of them. And we are told of the enjoyment which the torturers seemed to derive from their actions.

The purpose of the beatings and torture was not primarily to extract information or confessions, although this was done. The aim seems to have been to humiliate and instil fear in the prisoners.

"When new prisoners were brought to the camp ... they were given a bloody welcome with all kinds of truncheons as soon as they stepped out of the bus. Many never made it as far as the dorm: the guards would have smashed their heads against the brick walls of the building.

That was a truly horrible sound – a skull being smashed ... fear got under the skin..."

With the frequent new arrivals there were frequent departures: prisoners who were taken away and who have not been seen since.

For those who did come back after being tortured, the prisoners provided what help they could.

Splints were made from wood torn from the doors and bandages were made from shirts.

There seemed to be no limit to the cruelty of the prison guards.

One prisoner disobeyed an order from drunken guards to undress. For his refusal he was savagely attacked by two guards with knives. "Never in his life was Djemo to see a more horrifying sight."

Rezak Hukanovic was eventually transferred to Manjaca prison camp where a less barbaric (but still barbaric) regime prevailed. Later he

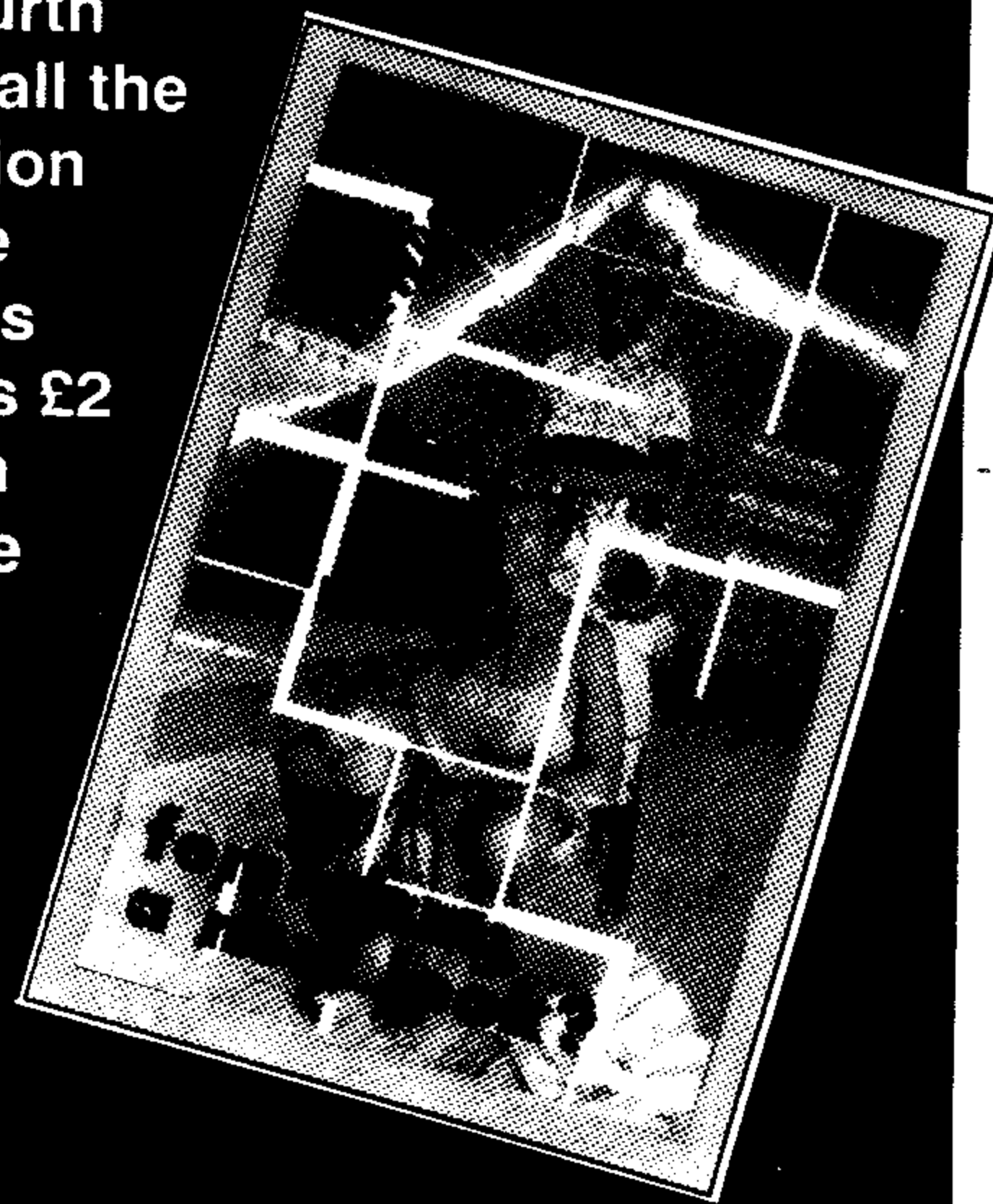
A foreword to this book by Elie Wiesel makes some questionable observations, including the often repeated but never explained assertion that Germany's recognition of Croatia's independence helped to ignite the war against multi-ethnic Bosnia.

But this in no way detracts from Hukanovic's powerful testimony and one can only agree with Wiesel that this book is "overwhelming, often unbearable" and that it is imperative ... to read this book – and to ensure that it is read."

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Andrew Ward

While attention tends to focus on ending the repression in the North, this book reminds us that the Southern Irish bourgeoisie is nearly as big an obstacle to socialism as the British

# Fianna Fail, a symptom of workers' political weakness

'Fianna Fail & Irish Labour: 1926 to the Present' By Kieran Allen (Pluto Press 1997) £13.99

Reviewed by David Coen

WHEN, ONE evening in 1995, Ben Dunne, the joint owner of Dunne's Stores (the Irish equivalent of Marks & Spencers) climbed out onto the window ledge of a hotel room high above Las Vegas and had to be talked down by the police, his sister and partner, Margaret, was not impressed.

Public frolics with cocaine and prostitutes were very unseemly to a devout Catholic like herself. Out of the ensuing row and the recent public enquiry came the disclosure that Dunne had paid £3 million to Charles Haughey, Fianna Fail leader from 1979 to 1990.

Fianna Fail was founded by Eamon de Valera in 1926 after a split from that section of Sinn Fein which had opposed the 1921 Treaty with Britain and fought the Civil War. De Valera led Fianna Fail into government in 1932 and they stayed there for all but 7 of 41 years. Fianna Fail's base came from small farmers, particularly in the west and south of the country, from small town businesses and most notably from workers.

Allen looks at the ways in which Fianna Fail has consistently dominated working class politics in Ireland despite its pro-capitalist politics. The book's strengths derive from its Marxist standpoint.

Most writers on Southern Irish politics deny or fail to find its class roots and the so-called "revisionists" of recent years deny or downplay the role of imperialism in the development of Ireland.

For Allen, the hold of Fianna Fail over the 26 County working class is based on its history as a British colony. Marx wrote in the previous century that Ireland was nothing but an agricultural district of Britain, to which it supplied men and labourers.

At the time of the Treaty in 1921 there

was little industry of any account outside of Belfast and what was based on agriculture. Guinness's Brewery in Dublin was the largest industrial employer in the South of Ireland at that time. The Civil War which followed the Treaty was a fight between the large farming and banking interests who were opposed to any break with Britain and the smaller business and farmers who were continually squeezed by the banks and Britain's cheap food policy.

## Tariff wals

Fianna Fail governments between 1932 and 1958 attempted to build native industry behind high tariff barriers and Allen draws a comparison with populist governments in South America at the time. In an economy dominated by cattle production this had the effect of creating jobs.

Another basis of Fianna Fail's appeal to workers in the Free State was its opposition to the fascist Blueshirts, a Catholic inspired

## For all the talk about the "Celtic Tiger" they are still as tied politically to the British as they were before independence.

organisation set up in 1932 to stop what the larger farmers considered was the drift to communism following Fianna Fail's election victory.

By the late 1940s the limitation of Fianna Fail's industrialisation policies were clear. Exports were uncompetitive and industries folded.

Having been neutral in the War the South received little Marshall aid.

Emigration rose, particularly to Britain. No amount of scapegoating could cover the failure. Many in the ruling class questioned whether an independent Irish state was viable. Some looked back nostalgically to the pre-independence times. It was at this time that Fianna Fail became known as the "Fine Failures".

In 1958 the party made a complete about-turn. Abandoning native industrialisation

they decided to throw open the economy to foreign capital and to allow native capitalists to try their fortunes on world markets. De Valera was replaced as leader by Sean Lemass and the new buzz words became "export led growth". The reasons for this reversal of policy have been much debated and throw some light on the nature of the Dublin ruling class.

One reason was the fact that getting some Marshall Aid meant adopting the free trade policies of the US. Another was that the South was up to its borrowing limits and the World Bank demanded changes to the economy. The main reason was that independent industrialisation following the pattern of the earliest capitalist economies was simply not possible.

In making the change Fianna Fail seemed to abandon part of their base to a new role as agents and suppliers to the transnational capitalists who were attracted by the tax holidays and grants. But this was

simply a recognition of the real situation. In the global economy, Irish capitalists would anyway be agents and gofers looking for niches and cracks in which to insert themselves.

## More debts than Mexic

The switch in policy meant using the Southern State and the tax revenue from the PAYE sector to sweeten the pill, to attract transnational capital but also to help native capitalists in servicing them. This became much easier after they plugged into the EEC gravy train in 1973. Even so, in the early 1980s the per capita national debt was higher than that of Mexico - a country which was technically bankrupt.

In 1979, two years after a Fianna Fail landslide, there was a huge revolt by workers on PAYE and Charles Haughey ousted

Jack Lynch as leader. He attempted to tackle the crisis by negotiating a "National Understanding" with the trade unions.

In return for small or no wage increases workers were promised more jobs and greater government spending on education and health. Haughey also put his hawkish reputation on the national question to good use to try to hold his shaky political alliance together.

Fianna Fail under Haughey never achieved an overall majority in the Dail, and haven't since. The ruling class feared that his nationalist rhetoric would whip up anti-British sentiment and strengthen Sinn Fein. They considered his borrowing reckless but most of all feared that the national question would combine with the economic crisis of the early 1980s to destabilise the Southern State.

Numerical weakness is only part of the reason for Fianna Fail's domination of the working class in the South. To these must be added the party's ability to use its alliance with the Catholic Church to whip up militants and its use of the national question to win support from workers.

More recently (and oddly since corporatism is so out of favour) the "social partnership" has been effective in reducing independent workers' action.

Another major weakness is the willingness of the Labour Party to form coalitions with both the main bourgeois parties. Though Fianna Fail has steadily lost its working class support, this has been mainly to a disparate group of independents who provide no clear alternative for the working class.

Bringing about socialism in Ireland requires the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, North & South. Neither has any desire for Irish unity as it would take away their main political prop. Standing behind both is the British ruling class and here is the big weakness of Allen's approach because "opposing the state fashioned by Fianna Fail out of partition" means ending partition.

He rightly point out that the republicans cannot rely on the Dublin ruling class to help with this but opposition to partition will always bring socialists up against the British State. Allen has argued elsewhere that the South has somehow escaped its former neo-colonial status and that therefore the Southern Irish bourgeoisie is almost as big an obstacle to socialism as the British.

But for all the talk about the "Celtic Tiger" they are still as tied politically to the British as they were pre-independence. In that sense their political development and that of the labour movement in the South, as well as the North, will be shaped by the continuing decline of the British State. Fianna Fail's rhetoric on the national question is declining. The labour movement, North and South, still must resolve it.

Kieran Allen's book is a valuable contribution to that debate.



Behind new Irish ceasefire

# Diplomacy clashes with reality

All the real concessions that have been made to open up this month's peace talks in Ireland have been made by the republican leaders, and the whole situation could swiftly unravel, warns John McNulty in Belfast.

**THE NEW IRA ceasefire in Ireland reflects the outcome of a sustained round of secret diplomacy by the new Blair administration in Britain. Unfortunately for the peace process mark II, it also coincided with the annual British and Loyalist assault on the nationalist population of the Gervagh road and graphically demonstrated the limits of what is on offer.**

The Sinn Fein leadership's explanation for the failure of the peace process in Ireland was based on what they saw as former Tory leader Major's dependence on unionist votes and an unsympathetic regime in Dublin.

They had posited a dream ticket of a strong Labour government, a Fianna Fail administration in Dublin and increase in their own vote. In June all these elements of the dream situation came into play in a series of elections.

This analysis, borrowed completely from the leader of the local nationalists, John Hume, left out of the picture the whole question of the interest and strategy of British imperialism. That interest was spelt out with a vengeance by the new Labour administration. They brought new energy to the process, but left no doubt about the destination of the peace train, nor the price of a ticket.

## "The future is Orange"

Tony Blair rushed to Belfast to assure unionists that the future was Orange - that the outcome of the peace process would be the continuation of partition for generations. He took the opportunity to thank the loyalist death squads for their restraint - on a day when one of the victims of loyalist sectarian violence was being buried.

The new British secretary, Mo Mowlem, adopted a no-nonsense, "meet the people" diplomacy. The result was the same - on the 6th July British forces moved in at dawn to attack the civilian population of the Gervagh Road in Portadown in order to support the "right" of local bigots in the sectarian Orange order to assert their supremacy over the minority population by staging their annual march through the na-

tionalist area. A leaked official document - a "game plan" - showed that the British had decided weeks before that this would be their policy, and that Mowlem's posturing had simply been a PR exercise.

Mowlem had hoped to talk the loyalists around, but given that the loyalists already knew that the march would proceed she had no prospect of winning any agreement from them. The fact that all this happened when the British had already finalised the diplomatic details of a new ceasefire shows just how little is on offer from the peace process.

## British policy

In order to understand this we need first of all to understand British policy. The British, through the Irish peace process, have enlisted local nationalist politicians and the Dublin government to shore up the northern state. S

ir Patrick Mayhew, the former British secretary, spelt out the limits of what Britain could offer in return after Drumcree II - a carbon copy attack on civilians by the RUC, the sectarian local police force, in 1996. The British had never promised to confront Orangism (hardly surprising, given that they are the mass base for the British occupation of the area). What they had promised to do was try to talk them around.

This policy was faithfully applied when the most extreme loyalists began a series of weekly attacks on Catholics attending mass at Harryville, Ballymena. For a year, with the support of the Catholic hierarchy who pushed the RUC into their schools in an attempt to rehabilitate them, the British tried to marginalise the ultra bigots.

They fired up a whole series of local loyalist dignitaries, including Robert Saulters, the Orange leader, to denounce the demonstrations. This had absolutely no effect and after a year of demonstrations and sectarian attacks the loyalists walked over the half-hearted resistance of the RUC to break into the church, which suspended services shortly afterwards.

The same policy was applied by British secretary Mowlem in the run up to

Drumcree III - again with the same result: the bigots marched and the state assaulted the residents.

## A test for Sinn Fein

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams called Drumcree III a test of the British. It was also a test for Sinn Fein - and it showed a seriously dis-



The "peace process" at work in Drumcree 1997: the bigots marched and the state assaulted residents.

oriented movement.

Adams rushed back from Tralee in the west of Ireland to a hastily convened rally on the Falls Road and assured his audience on eight occasions that he was an Irish republican. He briefly broke politically from the peace process, criticising the establishment parties and the trade unions for their silence and calling an open meeting that Monday to discuss mass action.

By the time the meeting was held the republican leadership had closed ranks, debate was barred, and instead a bizarre session was held where the audience was asked to make tactical suggestions without being allowed to discuss strategy or policy.

It was clearly indicated from the platform that Socialist Democracy were not welcome at the meeting.

The strategy that finally emerged was one where the leadership held on firmly to the nationalist family and their interpretation of the peace process, and continued to hoist the SDLP onto their platforms.

The vehicle for activity continued to be the narrow residents' committees. These are confined to areas directly under attack, with no attempt to build a broader solidarity. They are the local expression of the nationalist family, with concessions made to the Catholic church and

Orange leadership into retreat and the cancellation of a number of marches through nationalist areas.

## Political decommissioning

Within days a new ceasefire was announced by the IRA. Rarely have the timetables of diplomacy and rank and file action been so at variance. The decision was too close to a raw exhibition of the reality of the sectarian state and to the British role in support of that state and led to a number of expressions of discontent by Sinn Fein activists.

The basis for the IRA decision was that the roadblock of prior decommissioning [that is the IRA surrender of weapons] had been overcome. What the republican leadership did not explain was that they had made a further political retreat around the question of the Mitchell principles.

These principles are the contribution of US imperialism to the process, and call for the surrender of arms during negotiations and for the disbandment of the IRA. Whatever assurances the republicans received about the question of arms, there is no doubt about the political aspects of the demands made by Mitchell.

The report demanded a commitment to exclusively peaceful means,

pudiated the article. In a nice bit of peacespeak he claimed he had been "miscontextualised". Emergency rallies were held in Belfast and Derry to reassure supporters that the primary aim of the movement remained a united Ireland.

What the speakers did not say was that the "primary aim" would not - and could not be - realised through the peace process, and that the drift to reformism meant that the revolutionary elements of their programme were being moved to a long and indefinite future.

So the ceasefire returned, but without the fanfare and support that existed at the base of republicanism in the past. The focus will now shift to unionism.

## Unionist division

In a mirror image of their role in the sectarian marches the British have managed to talk around some sections of big business and thus pressure elements in the leadership of the Unionist party.

They have voted against the decommissioning document, thus putting the process on hold ... but they have not walked out. This reflects a division some business sectors, who are willing to accept some cosmetic reform, and elements of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie wedded to the full expression of their sectarian privilege.

The British have engineered these situations before, and the Loyalist base has always won. All the initiatives of the past 20 years have fallen to the right under the pressure of loyalist bigotry.

The British calculate that this time the unionists are even more fragmented and that they will be able to use the representatives of the death squads, whom they have helped to dress in the sheep's clothing of working class moderation, further to weaken the reaction.

However it does not take much imagination to see how little the leadership of unionism will concede under this kind of pressure how difficult it will be for the republican leadership to sell the limited cosmetic changes as a stepping-stone to a united Ireland.

Drumcree III spelt out how little substance there is to British peace proposals. They will yet live to regret uncovering the reality.

\* John McNulty writes on behalf of Socialist Democracy, the Irish section of the Fourth International.

## The British have engineered these situations before, and the Loyalist base has always won. All the initiatives of the past 20 years have fallen to the right under the pressure of loyalist bigotry.

the middle-class Social Democratic and Labour Party.

By their very nature they are Catholic committees and this allows organisations like the trade unions to stay firmly out of the picture and obscures the fact that the answer to Orange sectarianism is not a Catholic counter-organisation but organisation of the workers' movement. (The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) contribution was to announce that it would kill Orangemen if they marched through disputed areas.)

However the demonstrations that they held were clearly not on the same basis as in '96, where they had demobilised the resistance in favour of diplomacy.

Now for a brief period they tried to broaden and generalise mass action and in the end that proved decisive, forcing the British and the

but it made it clear that this commitment did not extend to the state forces.

It also made the demand that those participating accept in advance the outcome of the talks. This is actually a demand for political surrender, and it appears that the republican leadership have conceded this.

The day before the ceasefire, in a move clearly linked to the secret diplomacy with the British, Gerry Adams published an extensive document setting out the new programme of the leadership. It lists a number of reforms in tackling discrimination and repressive legislation and went on to call for a renegotiation of the union - a clear recognition that the demand for a united Ireland could not be realised through the talks.

Following criticism Adams re-



## Nick Robin

Writing an obituary is hard. How can you sum up someone's life in a way that does them justice, that reaches out with your memories to those that read it in a way that they can recognize the person whose life, whose achievements, whose loss is at the centre of it.

Nick Robin, life-long socialist and activist, died on July 10 1997 aged 41 after a prolonged battle with cancer. He was an exceptional person; demanding near perfection of himself but patient with others' shortcomings, warm, incisive – a pleasure to know.

He is sorely missed by all who had the privilege to know him, by his many friends, by partner Bridget and children Scarlet, Liam and Joel.

Nick threw himself into politics at Sussex University in the 1970s and quickly joined the International Marxist Group.

A fervent internationalist, he became prominent in the Turkish Solidarity Campaign formed after the 1980 coup and declaration of martial law. With his usual thoroughness he became well versed in the history and politics of Turkey, and visited the country several times. He became well known in the exile community here as a comrade and as a friend.

For revolutionaries being able to communicate ideas clearly in an accessible manner, producing material that invites involvement from the reader is as vital a skill as any other we need.

Nick became not only a vivid writer but skilled too at the unseen but equally vital backroom jobs of editing, layout and production.

In this capacity he became a vital part of the print staff of the International Marxist Group and later the Socialist League.

The same skills were also crucial to the production of the first issues of *Socialist Outlook* as a bi-monthly magazine.

These talents, developed in his political life were to stand him in good stead professionally. In 1984 he became publications manager for the housing charity, Shelter.

In 1989 he moved on to become editor of the magazine of what was then the Health Visitors Association. It was no surprise to anyone that knew his work, his dedication and his talent that within two years it won the TUC's trade union journal of the year award.

In tribute to Nick we publish here one of the articles for which he is best remembered, a major feature for *International*, the magazine of the Socialist League, early in 1983.

Terry Conway

# Storming heaven

On March 18 1871 the workers of Paris seized power and ruled for two months. Theirs was the first proletarian democracy in history. Nick Robin reassesses the Commune.

KARL MARX and the first International had counselled the workers of Paris against rising in such hostile circumstances but they threw their full support behind them when they did.

Members of the International participated in the movement with the enthusiastic backing of their Executive Committee. Marx, in London, wrote of 'this glorious harbinger of a new society (whose) martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class'.

In 1870 the imperial adventures of Emperor Louis Napoleon, Bonaparte's nephew and the absolute ruler of France since the revolution of 1848, resulted in the defeat of the French armies by Bismarck of Prussia and the capture of the Emperor himself.

On September 4 1870, with the Prussian armies at the gates of Paris, a Republic was once again declared in France. The French army was crushed and demoralised and Paris was defended by the armed people, known as the National Guard.

The French bourgeoisie was frantic to make peace with the Prussians in order to turn on its own insurrectionary subordinate classes. It organised itself in a 'Party of Order' of monarchists, Bonapartists and, as Marx put it 'all that was dead in France' and set up a 'National Assembly' at Versailles outside Paris.

The remnants of the army were withdrawn from Paris and regrouped in Versailles. The leader of this decadent assemblage was Auguste Thiers who, according to Marx 'was consistent only in his greed for wealth and his hatred of the men that produce it'. His was truly a 'regime of avowed class terrorism and deliberate insult to the "vile multitude"'.  
Armed Paris, the only obstacle to the counter-revolution, was besieged and starving. Thiers' assembly could not deceive the National Guard into giving up their arms and ending their fight for the defence of the Republic and for revolutionary Paris.

So on March 18, with the Prussian armies still stationed at the gates of the city and collecting massive reparations from the National



Guard, the 'Versaillese' sent a battalion under General Lecomte to seize 400 guns – which they claimed as 'state property' – from Montmartre in the very heart of revolutionary Paris.

The local population fraternised with the troops. The only shots fired that day were those that killed General Lecomte, fired by his own soldiers.

The Central Committee, a body of delegates from the National Guard battalions in each of Paris's twenty neighbourhoods (arrondissements), issued a manifesto in the name of the population:

'The Proletarians of Paris amidst the failure of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs ... they have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing the governmental power'.

To which Marx adds, in *The Civil War in France*: 'but the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for their own purpose'.

This was the prime lesson of the Commune and one well understood by the Communards themselves; their experience prompted Marx and Engels to make their only correction to the *Communist Manifesto* to include the necessity of the destruction of the bourgeois state.

The Central Committee immediately prepared elections and on March 28 the newly-elected representatives of the people of Paris declared the Commune and with it the destruction of the old state machine.

The standing army was abolished, the separation of church and state was decreed and enforced, the police and army were replaced by citizens' militias whose officers were instantly recallable, as were the judges. In the Commune's short life, two chiefs of the militia, Cluseret and Rossel, were both sacked by popular demand.

The brutal and authoritarian *Code Napoleon*,

a 'parasitical excrescence upon civil society' was abolished at a stroke. In place of the old state with its 'ubiquitous and complicated military, bureaucratic, clerical and judiciary organs (enmeshing) the living civil society like a boa constrictor', a completely new form of state was brought into existence.

The Commune was a working body in which legislative and executive functions were combined and delegates and other state officials were paid no more than the wages of a skilled worker.

Nine commissions were set up from among representatives to oversee the police, labour, education and so on. Factories abandoned by their owners were put to work under the control of the workers. The Mint, for example, was managed by Camélinat, a member of the International. Night baking was abolished, war widows and orphans were provided for, pawnshops were closed as contradicting the right of workers to their tools and to credit.

This was the very antithesis of the Imperial state: 'the reabsorption of the state power by society, as its own living forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organised force of their suppression.'

All this was prosecuted with the maximum order and efficiency, while outside the city the execrable Thiers plotted his invasion and culminated against the 'unknown' band of criminals which had Paris in its grip.

Who were these men and women of the Commune? As Marx had written after the elections: 'Never were elections so sifted, never delegates fuller representing the masses from which they had sprung. To the objection of the outsiders that they were unknown – in point of fact that they were known only to the working classes – they proudly answered "so were the twelve apostles" and they answered by their deeds.'

They were by no means all members of the International; the majority were Blanquists, Proudhonist utopians and Jacobins, representatives of previous periods in the class struggles in France in which the independent voice of the proletariat was drowned out by the masses of petit bourgeois, artisans and intellectuals, all with grievances of their own against the bourgeois dictatorship. These forces were united in the Commune.

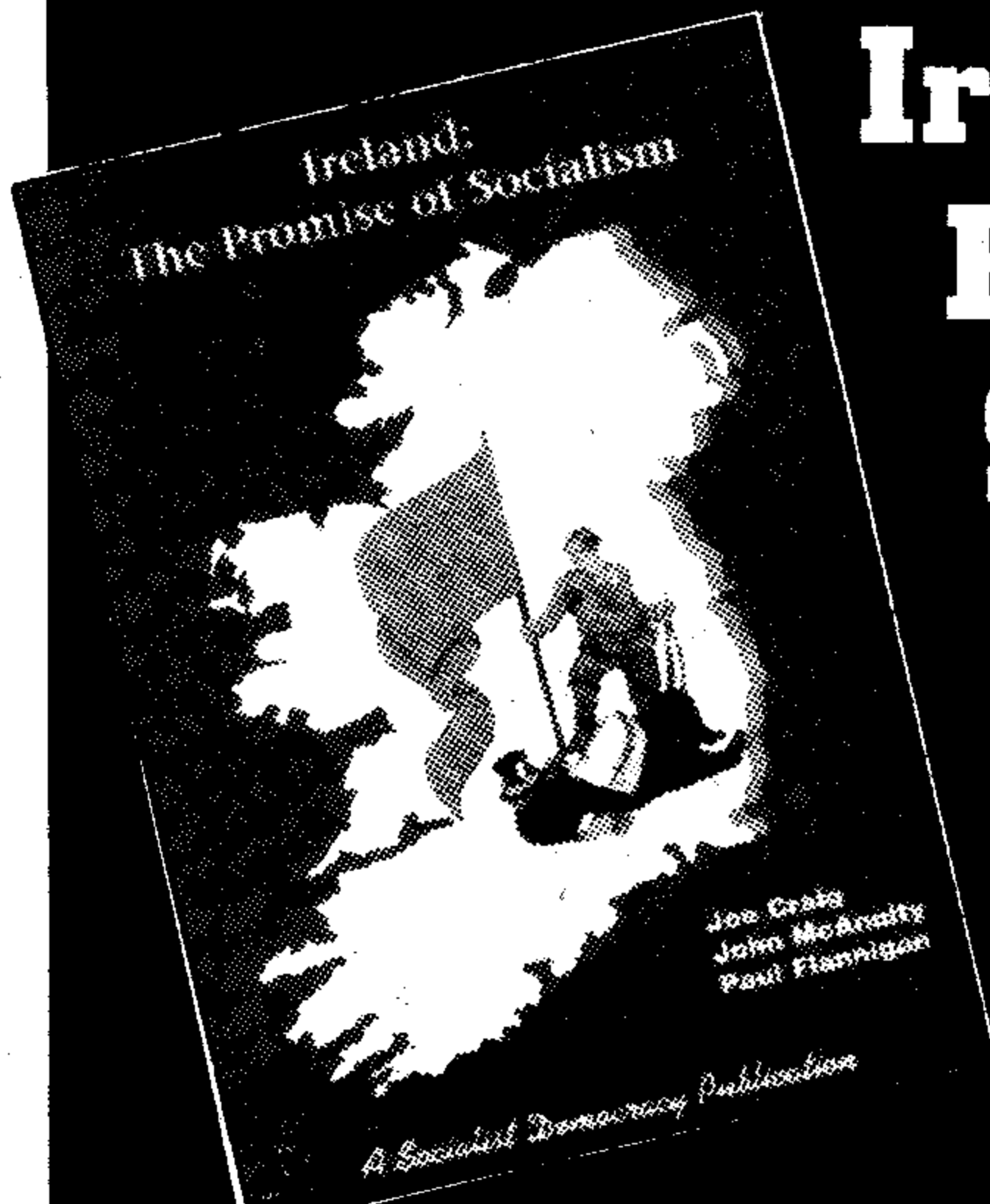
There were people like the 24 year old Paul Rigault, head of the Commune police, who started in office by arresting the Archbishop of Paris and whose Jacobin hatred of the clergy is expressed in his questioning of some Jesuit priests. 'What is your profession?', he asked. 'Servant of God'. 'Where does your master live?'. 'Everywhere'. 'Take this down', says Rigault to his secretaries. 'So and so alleging himself to be servant of one God, vagrant'.

There was Louise Michel, organiser of the women's battalions of the National Guard, who said from the dock after the defeat of the Commune: 'I belong entirely to the social revolution, and I declare I accept the responsibility of all my acts. I accept it entirely and without reserve. You accuse me of having participated in the execution of generals. To this I answer, yes.'

Gustave Courbet, the well-known painter,

## Ireland: The Promise of Socialism

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“In place of the old state with its ‘ubiquitous and complicated military, bureaucratic, clerical and judiciary organs (enmeshing) the living civil society like a boa constrictor’, a completely new form of state was brought into existence.”

was put in charge of the Commission of Education. He was as famous for his ‘revolutionary system of absinthe drinking’ as for his passionate espousal of utopian socialism.

The aged revolutionist, Auguste Blanqui, was elected delegate to the Commune from two different arrondissements despite his incarceration in the south of France. It was Blanqui who observed of Rigault that ‘he was nothing but a guttersnipe, but a policeman of genius’.

There were many veterans of the barricades of 1848 and subsequently of many prison cells, among them Delescuse and Feliz Pyat.

On April 12, six days after the public burning of the guillotine, the whole of working class Paris assembled to observe the destruction of the chief symbol of the Empire. The enormous column in the Place Vendôme, on top of which stood a statue of Napoleon as the Emperor Caesar, was reduced to rubble by skilful engineering.

The column, the epitome of a savage and warlike dictatorship, had been inscribed ‘a monument of barbarism, symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism, a negation of international right’ (Marx) and draped with the red flag.

To the strains of the Marseillaise the Place Vendôme was renamed the Place Internationale: a fitting tribute to the internationalism of the Communards who accepted as citizens the oppressed workers of the entire world, who appointed as two of its principal military defenders the Poles Dombrowski and Wroblewski, and designated the Prussian internationalist, Frankel, its ‘minister’ of labour.

The destruction of the Vendôme column was a symbolic act but a powerful one. Lissagaray in his participant account *History of the Paris Commune* (translated into English by Marx’s daughter Eleanor) puts it like this: ‘It showed that a war of classes was to supersede the war of nations’. It was not surprising, therefore, that ‘one of the first acts of the victorious bourgeoisie was to again raise this enormous block, this symbol of their sovereignty. To lift up Caesar on his pedestal they needed a scaffolding of 30,000 corpses.’

To look for a detailed governmental programme in the Commune is a waste of time. Its short existence was absorbed in a life and death struggle against the armies of the bour-

geoisie. Yet the International recognised in the Commune the germs of a new society.

Sometimes, it is true, it was, in Lissagaray’s words, like ‘a concert without a conductor, each instrumentalist playing what he liked, confusing his score with his neighbour’s.’ Yet the Communards taught a crucial lesson to the international workers’ movement: ‘That the political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation’ (Marx).

The experience of the workers in power was worth a thousand books or articles. The news from Paris spread fast and demonstrations of support broke out all over Europe; throughout the major cities of France, the Commune was declared.

In Paris itself the debt-ridden middle classes aligned themselves with the working class against the predatory bourgeois creditors; the workers championed their demands to be rid of clerical oppression.

The middle classes, Marx wrote: ‘Feel that only the working class can emancipate them from priest rule, convert science from an instrument of class rule into a popular force...’

**“The Commune was a working body in which legislative and executive functions were combined and delegates and other state officials were paid no more than the wages of a skilled worker.”**

Science can only fully play its genuine part in the Republic of Labour’.

The Commune commanded the overwhelming support of all sections of the masses. On March 29 the Freemasons joined the Commune with a demonstration of 10,000 headed by a banner declaring ‘Love one another’ after Thiers had rejected their attempts at reconciliation.

The Commune legislated the abolition of conscription and the taxation of the bourgeoisie to pay for the war, the key demands of the peasantry. This was another lesson of the Commune, the lesson of Permanent Revolution, that the working class is the only class which can lead the social emancipation and liberation of all the other oppressed classes against their rulers.

The Commune also put paid to the ideologies of utopian socialism by proving that the real movement of the working class would be

the agent of social change.

But we jump too far ahead; there was, after all, a further lesson of the Commune – the bloodthirsty character of a ruling class confronted by an insurrectionary people. The collaboration of the Prussian army with Thiers and the disorganisation and technical inferiority of the Commune’s forces ensured that when the army did enter Paris on May 21, it took only eight days to destroy the Commune; the provincial communes by then had already been crushed.

As the barricades crumbled, the ruling class and its army indulged in an orgy of massacres and blood-letting. The population of Paris was no more than half a million; yet between 20,000 and 30,000 were killed of whom perhaps only a quarter fell in battle.

In his diary, M Audéoud, a Paris bourgeois, wrote: ‘What a joy to see them lying there, their flesh in rags... it is a pleasure to bathe and wash our hands in their blood!’ (Jellinek). 40,000 were taken prisoner.

The Commune’s final death agony came with the massacre at the cemetery of Père Lachaise where 147 National Guards were slaughtered on the site now known as the ‘wall of the Federals’. Engels described the wall as ‘a mute but eloquent testimony to the frenzy of which the ruling class is capable as soon as the working class dares to stand up for its rights’. Thus was order restored in Paris.

The trials, executions, and deportations to the Pacific colony of New Caledonia, dragged on for five more years. Marx commented: ‘A glorious civilization, indeed, the great problem of which, how to get rid of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over’.

It is well known that Marx and the International had counselled against a rising of the Paris working class against the bourgeoisie while the Prussian army was still on the offensive. But Marx never placed himself outside the living movement of the working class whatever his detailed criticisms of this or that aspect of the struggle. When the Communards rose, Marx’s solidarity and admiration was total.

In a letter to Kugelmann, he wrote: ‘What elasticity, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisians! After six months of hunger and ruin caused by in-

ternal treachery more than by the external enemy, they rise, beneath Prussian bayonets, as if there had never been a war between France and Germany and the enemy were not still at the gates of Paris! History has no like example of their greatness!’

Despite their bloody defeat, the workers of Paris, by ‘storming heaven’, vindicated in practice many of the central ideas which were Marx’s life’s work: ‘A new point of departure of world-wide significance has been gained’, Marx wrote to Kugelmann.

The Petersburg Soviet of 1905 was the first confirmation of this and the October revolution its victory.

When Lenin left for Finland in July 1917 he took with him two books: Clausewitz’ *The Art of War* and Marx’s *Civil War in France*. He arrived back secretly in Russia two months later having jettisoned Clausewitz and written *State and Revolution*.

Paraphrasing Marx, he wrote that the Commune was ‘the political form “at last discovered”, by which the smashed state can and must be replaced’ – a revision, incidentally, of his previous position in *Two Tactics for Social Democracy* in which the Commune is criticised for ‘confusing democratic and socialist tasks’.

The Commune heralded a new era. The dispossessed and exploited took power and governed without bosses or generals. The Communards not only showed the workers of the world the possibility of a new society free of exploitation, they created one.

One hundred years after Marx’s death, sixty years since Stalinism contaminated the notion of proletarian dictatorship, Marxists should forcibly reassert the true, genuinely democratic, content that our tradition attaches to these words.

With Engels we point: ‘Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.’

[First published in *International* January-April 1983]

**Further reading**

- Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*
- Frank Jellinek, *The Paris Commune of 1871*
- Lissagaray, *History of the Commune of 1871*
- Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*
- Lenin, *Selected Works*.



# Get Indonesia out of East Timor!

**B. Skanthakumar**

**ROBIN Cook** visited Indonesia at the end of August, just one month after agreeing to complete the sale of 16 Hawk aircraft, 50 armoured cars and water cannon, to unveil his six point plan for improving human rights.

His plan aims to limit access to British arms sales to countries with a "significant continuing record of internal repression". The plan involves an offer of British advisors on "non-violent crowd control".

In short, the Indonesian dictatorship will have to use its water cannon, armoured cars and Hawks in a peaceful way, just as the British state does in the North of Ireland, if it wants Britain to continue the sales of £439 million of arms every year.

In Occupied East Timor there has been an upsurge in armed activity in recent months. Shortly before the rigged Indonesian general elections on May 29 units of FALINTIL, the armed Timorese resistance, launched attacks on army and police units killing over fifty of them.

The timing of this campaign suggests it was aimed at disrupting the fake electoral process and at demoralising further the Indonesian military stationed there. It appears to have succeeded.

Meanwhile in a number of large towns the unarmed resistance which operates as a clandestine front of all East Timorese groups organised attacks on polling booths and was involved in street fighting with police and army personnel.

Indonesia's army of occupation responded in its customary way. It launched punitive raids on villages in areas of FALINTIL activity terrorising their inhabitants. Many have been beaten, arrested and taken to torture centres to extract information and false confessions. The whereabouts and fate of others abducted or arrested is unknown.

The absence of foreign journalists and independent human rights monitors and the censorship of local media make it difficult to establish an accurate picture of the situation.

Fresh detachments from the feared Kopassus (Special Forces Command) unit headed by President Suharto's son-in-law Major-General Prabowo Subianto have been rushed from Indonesia.

The capture on June 25 and



Still cosying up to Suharto behind the scenes? Mandela

probable death in custody of David Alex, the legendary second-in-command of FALINTIL, is a blow to the resistance forces and the Maubere people as a whole.

The military claim that Alex died from injuries sustained in his capture but it seems that he was either tortured to death or murdered in some other way. He

was buried under tight secrecy and his family members were not shown his body nor have military permitted exhumation and an autopsy.

The state visit of Nelson Mandela to Indonesia in mid-July focused attention on international efforts to mediate on East Timor but has also deflected attention from the gross violations of human rights and tyranny of the Indonesian regime.

Mandela visited Indonesia at the invitation of "Dictator Retired General" Suharto once before. In 1990 on a fund raising mission for the then recently unbanned African National Congress he called on Suharto - who promptly donated US\$10 million.

Mandela was rightly criticised in South Africa and in international anti-apartheid circles for soliciting money from one of the bloodiest and most corrupt of South East Asia's autocrats.

In an effort to make amends he has recently made some high profile statements on the situation in East Timor and publicly called for the release of FALINTIL leader Xanana Gusmao who is

serving a twenty year prison sentence.

While in Jakarta, Mandela sought and obtained an unprecedented private meeting with Gusmao to assure him of his personal support.

However many East Timor campaigners are sceptical of both Suharto's good faith and Mandela's good offices.

They note the close business links between Indonesia and South Africa which inevitably involve Suharto, his family and cronies as well as the evident interest that the South African arms industry enthusiastically supported by the ANC-led Government has shown in the Indonesian 'market'.

As the US Congress blocks arms sales and the Labour Government faces pressure in Britain over its sale of Hawk aircraft, the Indonesians are looking to South Africa and Russia for their purchases.

There are rumours that the regime may agree to Gusmao's early release and exile to Europe to lessen the consistent condemnation of its occupation and brutalities in East Timor. However Gusmao himself has reportedly said that the issue at stake is not his own freedom but the freedom of his people and the independence of his country.

**Jamie Stuart's view**

## International youth camp A breach in Fortress Europe

### The Journey Begins

10.30pm - Thursday night - I hopped the bus to London. I wheeze for a cigarette the next day.

6am - Friday morning. I arrive in London. Stopped off in a greasy spoon café for a cigarette and a coffee. After leaving the café I came across this old woman sleeping rough. I offered her some food but she said "give the food to someone else". She I asked her for tube directions and she said good-bye.

That evening we caught the bus to Paris from Victoria.

### Arrival in France

We got to Paris, hopped on the tube across Paris to that main train which took us to Brioude. The train journey was long and hectic, 6-7 hours. We finally got there, tired and knackered and we still had another journey of three more miles to the camp.

### Arrival at the Camp

We got to the camp and we pitched our tents and as I looked around I noticed that there were a lot of Che Guevara T-shirts and people with red scarves - there were hundreds of revolutionaries there.

Everybody seemed to just get on with everybody else - the camp was great! The discos and parties were great. There were discussions on a lot of stuff including the massacre of four resistance fighters from the area in the war. We discussed the politics of the right wing and how we can fight to make a better world.



### Simon Deville

FIVE HUNDRED young revolutionaries attended the fourteenth youth camp in solidarity with the Fourth International.

Discussions started with the struggle against Maastricht, the racist Schengen accords and other convergence criteria and progressed to more strategic questions such as why and how to fight for socialist revolution.

Young people exchanged experiences of struggles against budget cuts in education, against racism and fascism, for the defence of the environment, to develop the mutual understanding which is an indispensable basis for common work. After the Euromarches and the counter-summit in Amsterdam

in June, the mobilisations must continue and the links between struggles and activists in different countries be strengthened.

The camp was held near Brioude in the French Massif Central region, where four Trotskyists were massacred by Stalinists after their escape from a Nazi concentration camp. Louis Maitan spoke in memory of one of the four, Pietro Tresso, a founder of the Trotskyist movement. We also heard from Raymond Wacheron, a well-known activist in the region and co-author with Pierre Broue of a recent book on this event.

A high point of the week was the meeting on Latin America where 5,000 young activists attended a camp organised last year by the Youth Front Against Repression. Patsy Perry from Uruguay, one of

the central organisers of that camp, spoke about the situation in Latin America and the struggles of young people, of the landless peasants of Brazil, of the indigenous people in Mexico with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation...

A commitment was made to build a youth network against the bosses' Europe, starting with events such as the demonstration at the next European summit in Luxembourg in November.

The camp is also an occasion to try to put our principles into practice. It is first of all a place where racism, sexism and homophobia are not tolerated. It is also a space which is self-managed by the young comrades.

The leadership of the camp remains in the hands of the daily meeting of the representatives of the different delegations. Young people from Portugal to Poland, from Sweden to Italy, learn to work together - whether organising political discussions and debates, the food or social events.

Women comrades have a place for themselves, to organise discussion, have parties or simply to be with other women. And at the end

of the women's day - a day when the theme of all the discussion is around women's struggles - the disco itself becomes a "women only" space, so that a big party ends this day with an affirmation of the strength and solidarity of the women in the camp.

Another much appreciated party during the week was that organised by the Portuguese comrades in solidarity with the third world, with Latin American, African and Asian music.

The last, and for many the best, party in the camp was that organised by the lesbian and gay comrades, another camp tradition. Throughout the week there is a lesbian and gay space with discussions and exhibitions for all those who want to participate. The party also aims to encourage everybody to think about their sexuality and some of their inhibitions.

This camp was very successful, despite a drop in participation compared with previous years. For our Basque comrades, the important events in their country just before the camp made it impossible to send even a small delegation.

However, for the first time there was a small Russian delegation which, together with the ever-strengthening presence of our Polish comrades, helps us to make a reality of the breach in Fortress Europe.

With a big "thank you" to the French comrades for all their hard work, the delegations left, promising to meet again at the fifteenth camp in Denmark in 1998.



# 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".

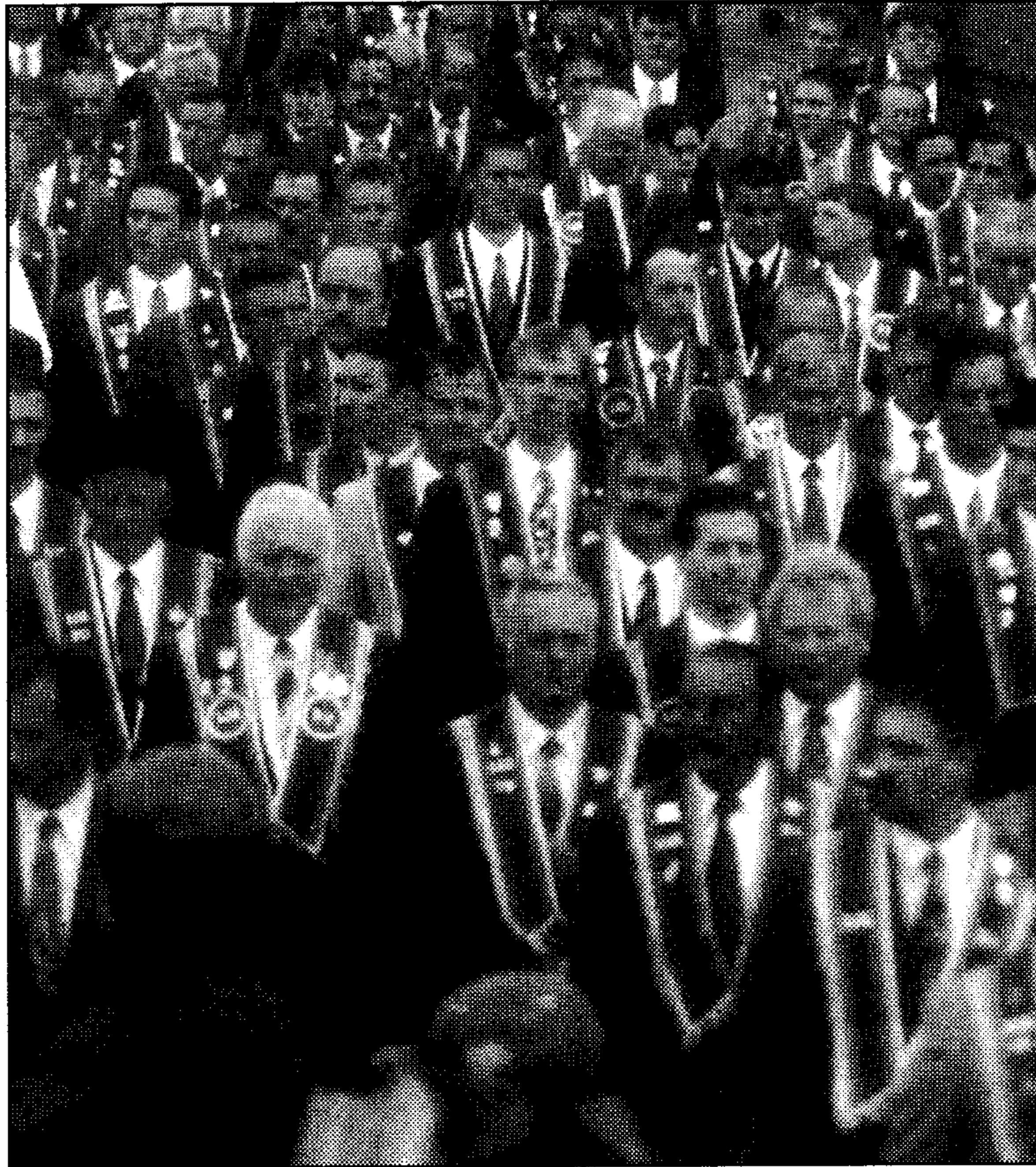
The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations which respects their legitimate autonomy.

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.



### 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.



## Sectarianism plays into hands of British state

RELIEF should not bind us to reality. The Orange Order blinked on the edge of chaos. It made a tactical retreat and

as a result there are divisions within its ranks.

That's a gain, but neither the Loyalists nor the British have

conceded anything in principle. Patrick Mayhew spelt out British policy after Drumcree II and that policy was confirmed in, the 'game plan' for Drumcree III.

There was no question of opposing sectarianism. What the British had promised to do and what they would do was try and talk the Loyalists around.

That's what they did at Harryville.

That's what they did at Drumcree III. That's what they did prior to the 12th. With a mass nationalist revolt on the cards they finally got the Orange leaders to blink.

So what we have is a process controlled by a government that has ruled out in the harshest terms any consideration of a united Ireland and has also made it clear that any reform needs the co-operation of the Trimbles and Saulters of this world.

That means that the long term outcome of a review of parades is likely to be the institutionalisation of sectarianism. On the broader political front it means a peace process that can only end in the same way.

The peace process and the national family proved useless in the run-up to Drumcree. The only thing that prevented complete disaster was Sinn Fein breaking in action from that family and calling for mass action on the streets.

We need a strong united 32 county action against sectarianism. Local committees are too weak and give weight to reactionary forces such as those in the Catholic church and other members of an imaginary nationalist family.

As socialists we specifically call on a silent trade union movement and on Irish working class organisations to condemn the concept of "equality of the two traditions". This is a barely disguised recipe for sectarianism built into the fabric of a new state.

The only real alternative to sectarianism is an Irish workers' movement united against Orange sectarianism and British sponsorship of that sectarianism.

**John McNulty, for Socialist Democracy**

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# Socialist OUTLOOK

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## In SCOTLAND,

### vote

# YES



**The referenda on a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly raise the prospect of democratic change in the structure of the British state.**

Labour's proposals will not solve national or social questions in either Scotland or Wales, but defeat for the anti-democratic unionism of the Tories will be a victory for workers and the oppressed throughout the British state, be they in England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

It is also clear that the existence of bodies of Scottish and Welsh government combined with continuing regional inequality has the potential to deepen the political crisis of the British state.

As Marxists we favour constituent assemblies for Scotland and Wales. By this we mean elected bodies that define their own powers, both legislative and executive; that are not subject to Westminster veto or veto; that are prepared to act on all economic, political and cultural questions; that are independent of all British state structures and can themselves decide on their relations with the EU.

We would demand that such assemblies act to defend the interests of Scottish and Welsh workers against British and international capitalism. Labour's proposals fall far short of this. Indeed, constituent assemblies will not be established by a ballot alone, but through the struggles of Scottish and Welsh workers.

We call for a 'Yes' vote because we support a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly as democratic advances and because we regard the YES campaign as a starting point in the struggle for real constituent assemblies. And we urge all socialists to campaign for a 'yes' vote.

## In WALES,

### vote



# YES