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# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Labour backs Tory welfare meltdown

# Defend the Welfare State

**WHEN** even Kenneth Clarke says Labour is too obsessed with cuddling up to the City things must be really bad.

The Labour Party leadership seems determined to rip up ever decent policy in advance of the election.

Chris Smith's recent statements are indistinguishable from the Conservative party front bench. "It is time to get away" he says "from the sterile battle lines between public and private".

So it looks like private finance initiatives will be here to stay under a Labour government. The battering of health, education and housing will continue.

The media have devoted much space to the internal rivalries of Brown, Mandelson, Smith and Prescott. Tensions do exist.

But their differences are all about personal ambition. Not politics.

Many supported Blair's removal of Clause 4 because they thought it a necessary price to pay to secure the election of a Labour government in order to defend schools, hospitals and pensions.

The decision to abolish free universal education shows the direction of the party. Blair has no regard for the lives of working class people.



Single issue campaigns against cuts and closures in many parts of the country continue to grow

Photo: Linn Hjort

All the talk about community and stakeholding is hot air—the obsession with keeping down tax means continuing Tory austerity. Beveridge's Welfare State rests on a progressive taxation system.

The post-war settlement was flawed in many ways. It was necessary to fight to defend welfare provision so that benefits were index linked and that services democratically accountable to users and work-

ers. But the joint anti-welfare offensive by Labour and Tories now throws even minimal provision up in the air.

We are told that final decisions have not been made on removing child benefit from 16-18 year olds.

This cuts little ice where constituency and trade union involvement in real decision making have been seriously undermined.

The recent Policy Forum in Manchester contained no genuine debate.

If Blair has his way there will be no democratic discussion on the manifesto—just a rubber stamping exercise by plebiscite.

But there is resistance. The Welfare State Network organised a picket of Smith's surgery the week of his major speech and held a fringe meeting at the Policy Forum as part

of its weekend of action in defence of the welfare state.

Single issue campaigns against cuts and closures in many parts of the country continue to grow.

In Scotland and Oxfordshire action against education cuts has been particularly buoyant.

Socialist Outlook supporters are fully committed to playing their part in all these activities, linking them to the battle inside the Labour Party.

## Asylum Bill: Just say no

Simon Deville

THE CAMPAIGN for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON's conference on the Asylum and Immigration Bill was a small but important step in the fight against the Bill, gearing up the union membership in the struggle over policy at UNISON's national conference.

Just under 100 delegates attended. Most were branch or regional officials. Although the conference was relatively small, clearly the UNISON leadership are worried, as it spurred the NEC to organise their own conference on the Bill just four days later.

Originally, Unison proposed a conference last October, then again in January.

They kept these conferences a secret from the membership, then cancelled them due to "lack of interest".

The opening plenary started with speakers from two campaigns against state racism.

Bayo Omoyiola, a UNISON member, was given a written assurance from the Home Secretary that he would be allowed back into Britain if he went on an international inquiry into workers' rights in China. He has subsequently been refused re-entry to Britain by the Home Office.

Piara Power spoke on behalf of the Ibrahima Sey Memorial Campaign of how Ibrahima was killed by police, and more generally about the repression and brutalisation black people face at police hands. There were three workshops on the cuts in benefits and service provision, attacks on workers' rights and on drawing together a united approach to the various motions to UNISON conference.

There are more motions on the Bill and non-compliance than on any other subject this year and it is quite clearly going to be a central debate.

The NEC is doing all in its power to head off militant action against the Bill, while presenting a public face of opposition. As several delegates from Liverpool pointed out, UNISON has just spent two years and an estimated £500,000 trying to witch-hunt four shop stewards after they led a strike against racism. The hypocrisy of the UNISON leadership's "anti-racism" is already quite apparent to a wide layer of union activists.

The conference ended with a discussion on the forthcoming CFDU pamphlet on the Bill, and with moving speeches from Lola Onibiyo and Margaret Ilin about their struggles against Britain's racist immigration laws.

While the fight around national policy is going to be crucial at conference, resisting the implementation of this racist legislation is going to be take a lot more.

How the Bill is implemented will vary from one workplace to the next. To make this anything more than paper policy will require discussions at branch level on the implications of the bill and what workers can do to oppose it collectively.

Ultimately, success or failure depends on convincing workers of their collective strength, and that UNISON members do not stand alone but are supported by much wider sections of the community.

# Free Satpal Ram



Free Satpal Campaign continues around the militant slogans, "Self defence is no offence" and "Racist Attacks - We Fight Back"

### Pete Bloomer, Free Satpal Campaign

**SIMULTANEOUS pickets at Long Lartin and Brixton prisons on 18 April were mounted to protest at the brutality of Long Lartin screws against Satpal Ram and other prisoners.**

Satpal is in his tenth year of imprisonment, following a racist attack on him by six men, in which he responded to being

glanced by one by defending himself with a knife. His attacker died of a stab wound for which he refused medical treatment.

Satpal lost his appeal at the end of 1995.

Since then, he has been subjected to continuous abuse, brutality, solitary confinement, a starvation diet and a series of forced and attempted rectal examinations. After one of four assaults by screws in March, he wrote a letter saying: "I now know what Joy Gardener must have experienced in the last mo-

ments of her life, they nearly killed me."

Meanwhile the Free Satpal Campaign continues. Unity around the militant slogans, "Self defence is no offence" and "Racist Attacks - We Fight Back" remains an important political task for all those who oppose state racism.

• For further information, phone 0121-507 1618 or write to FSC, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B19 1HE.

## State hounds Asylum Seekers

A NIGERIAN asylum seeker, Bayo Omoyiola, has been refused permission by the Home Office to return to Britain from Hong Kong.

He had gone there in his role as President of Liverpool UNISON branch to attend an international trade union inquiry on workers' rights.

The Home Office decision violates natural justice. It denies Bayo the right to attend the appeal against the refusal of his own application for asylum.

A member of the Unity Party and well known supporter of the democracy movement, Bayo would certainly be at risk of persecution in Nigeria.

The decision also separates Bayo from his son.

This is at least the second occasion in recent weeks that the Home Office—with the connivance of British Airways—has attempted to split up a parent and a child.

On April 12 Audrey Grant was detained and taken to Manchester Airport to be deported. Her infant daughter Sereena had to be left in the care of a neighbour. Audrey was released seven days later after pressure from campaigners, including a picket of Manchester Airport.

Adam Hartman

• For a copy of the petition, contact Bayo Omoyiola Must Stay Campaign, c/o Liverpool UNISON, 4th floor, Produce Exchange, 8 Victoria Street, Liverpool, L2 6QJ. Tel. (0151) 236 1944.

• Write to Bayo's MP, Bob Parry, urging him to take up his case: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

• For information and to support Audrey and Sereena, write to West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, 1012 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B19 1NH. Tel. 0121 507 1618

# Labour backs PTA crackdown



Livingstone: part of the principled opposition to Blair's backing of PTA martial laws powers

Photo: Mark Salmon

NO ONE in the ruling class really believes the Prevention of Terrorism Act has any effect on the activities of the IRA. Its main purpose is to stifle political opposition to British rule in Ireland.

Spurred on by Jack Straw, the Labour Party abstained on the renewal of the PTA and helped the government rush through emergency amendments with almost no debate.

The Tories' stated purpose for adding to the PTA was to prevent an IRA

spectacular around the 80th anniversary of the Easter Rising. More likely it was to clamp down on any opposition to the peace process.

Labour does not want to be seen as soft on terrorism. As with other policy areas, the leadership is determined to smash the merest sniff of political opposition from within the party before Blair comes to power.

Take, for example, the Blairites' recent antics in Jeremy Corbyn's Islington North constituency.

The local party has been threatened with suspension after its General Committee passed a motion in support of Corbyn's vote against the renewal of the PTA. A leader of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, maddened by this refusal to swear undying allegiance to Blair, went public and virtually accused Corbyn of supporting the IRA.

Like everyone else Irish people want to be shut of the Tories. But they will not be cowed into silence on the British

presence in the Six Counties. Likewise, a significant number of Labour Party and trade union members continue to oppose the threat to civil liberties represented by the PTA and its extension for use against other groups.

It is also becoming clear to many people that the real aim of the peace process is the strengthening of partition. Getting the Labour Party at its next conference to restate its commitment to the repeal of the PTA is an important step in opposing this division and fighting for democratic rights in Ireland and Britain.

David Coen

**Model resolution:**

Conference regrets the decision of the Labour front bench to abstain in the vote on renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and thereby break with its long standing policy of opposition to the Act.

Conference resolves to restate its opposition to the PTA; calls on the Party leadership to declare its opposition to the PTA and to commit the next Labour Government to repeal the PTA.

We should also demand that repeal of the PTA and opposition to partition should be included in the programme of the other parties and organisation such as the Socialist Labour Party.

SLP foundation: small beginnings---bleak future

# Build the left inside and outside the Labour Party

**THE inherent problems in the formation of the Socialist Labour Party are increasingly apparent.**

When Arthur Scargill first mooted a new party he said that the Labour Party had fundamentally changed with the scrapping of Clause 4; it was now no different to the Tory or Liberal parties.

Yet he decided his new party would not stand for election against the Labour Party where there was a left candidate.

Scargill now seems to have resolved this contradiction. Several recent meetings have been told that it makes no difference whether the Tories or Labour are elected.

Leading SLP member and RMT Deputy General Secretary Bob Crowe said at the conference of Trades Councils that the SLP will stand against all Labour candidates—"including the Benns and the Corbyns".

While this is unlikely—given the problem of resources—it clearly shows a profound political problem.

We think the comrades are mistaken—not just because we call for a vote for the Labour Party, but because the left as a whole needs to unite around campaigning and action rather than electoralist adventures.

The foundation conference did nothing to address how the SLP defines itself in relation to the Labour Party or the rest of the left.

Indeed there was very little discussion of policy in general—the National Executive Committee will be left to decide.

Regrettably the policy documents prepared for the conference were posed in terms of the policy for an SLP government! Scargill clearly sees the SLP as primarily an electoralist party; a future of lost deposits awaits.

The thorny question of party democracy remains a serious problem.

The constitution is not up for discussion until 1997, having already been

## EDITORIAL

decided by Scargill and his closest circle of comrades. The outlawing of groupings within the party was not discussed.

Those who left the Labour party for the SLP frustrated by top-down decision-making and lack of democracy are finding their new situation remarkably similar to the one they left behind.

The ballot paper for the NEC contained a list of those "recommended by the outgoing NEC". Who elected this outgoing NEC in a party which had existed for two days?

Of the few policy debates which did take place, the one around anti-racism aroused most controversy. Adoption of support for "non-racist immigration controls"—traditionally the line of the CP—reflects the influence of stalinist politics over many of the party's members.

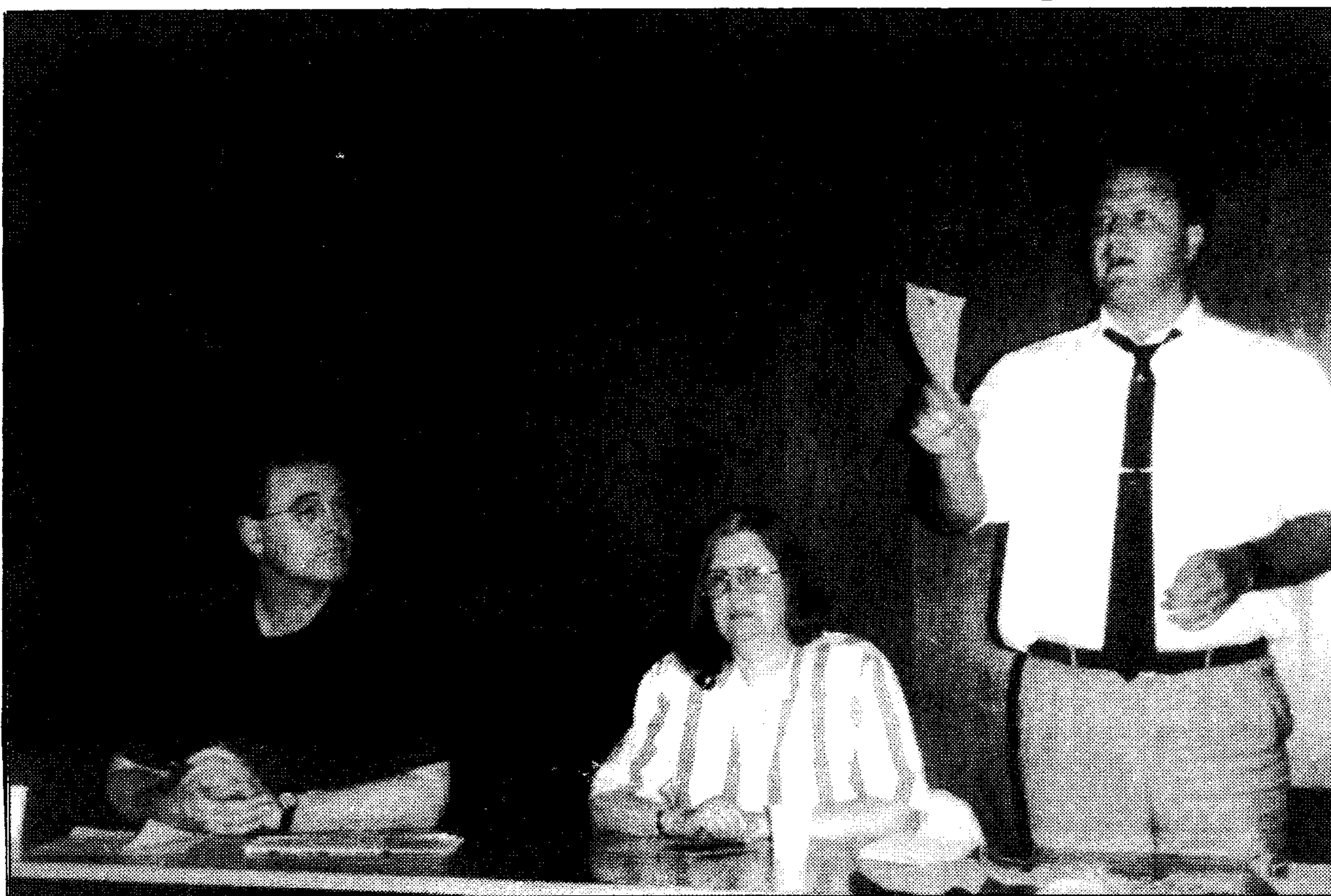
But it was appalling to see those who had until recently opposed all immigration controls as intrinsically racist changing their minds.

The Trade Union policy before conference committed the SLP to support for the defiance of the anti-union laws.

Yet Bob Crowe insisted recently repudiated secondary action at Craighentinn in Scotland.

The policy document rightly committed the SLP to a fight for union democracy and to commit the unions to defending the interests of their members. But there was no mention of building left organisation with other forces in the unions.

Membership was announced as



SLP leaders Pat Sikorski (left) and Bob Crowe (right) speak at a meeting planning industrial action on the London Underground

1,200—a lot less than those already in explicitly revolutionary parties.

An ironic touch was the greetings from the Spanish IU (United Left) and the Italian PRC (Party of Communist Refoundation) in which they defined themselves as "like you, alliances of groupings on the Left".

### Scargill simply left to set up his own party. He had not been willing to organise with the Left within the Labour Party, nor within the unions

The SLP is no such thing. In fact exclusions have already begun for breaking the ban on belonging to inner-party groupings.

The Socialist Labour Party is radically *unlike* the IU and PRC both in functioning and purpose.

Both Italy and Spain have a tradition of mass Communist Parties. The formations of the left that have arisen in the last few years in these countries rest upon their political fragmentation and recomposition. Britain is different.

The Communist Party of Great Britain has never been a truly mass force—

certainly not comparable with the continental parties. Although it has had an important implantation in a number of

unions, it has always never been a decisive component of the labour movement—compared, for example, to the Labour Party left.

The Labour Party is linked to the structures of the unions far more closely than social democracy in continental Europe. Unions have delegates to party meetings at every level, right up to conference and the NEC. This is not the case elsewhere.

There is no political or religious divide in the unions. They are all part of a single federation. This makes it possible to talk of a unitary labour movement very different from the situation abroad.

It means that those already involved in the structures of the movement still largely define themselves within the framework of the politics of the Labour Party, especially the Labour left. To abandon this terrain to the right is a big mistake.

Despite Blair's stampede to the right, the Labour Party is still based on the organisations of the working class. Militancy in the unions is reflected

in the party. Any political fight in the party has implications for the unions.

Scargill will not be able to replicate the patterns of continental politics because the history, politics and structures of the British labour movement are so different.

The call for a new party is therefore not just a problem of mis-timing—it is a diversion which will sap the energy of those who should be fighting elsewhere.

It diverts the left away from the site of battle. This can only strengthen the right.

The lack of democracy and perspective flows from a bureaucratic concept of organisation and politics. Scargill, with his flawed analysis of what happened to the Labour Party, simply announced that he was leaving to set up his own party. Now he has done it.

He had not been willing to organise with the Left within the Labour Party, nor within the unions. There has been next to no debate—even amongst supporters of the project. Instead there has been a number of set piece rallies.

The SLP is in the process of cutting itself off from developments in the labour movement through a combination of sectarianism towards Labour and an over-emphasis on elections. It is also depriving itself of a policy which can provide a lead to campaigns and struggles.

Instead of working with other socialists to build the fightback throughout the labour movement, the SLP leadership have turned away from this task.

Those involved should rethink.

## To Our Readers

# Eight pages of *Socialist Outlook* is not enough!

**WE ARE determined to maintain a fortnightly paper, we think it is most suited to reporting and analysing events in the class struggle internationally and in Britain. We want to improve it and aim to restore it to 12 and ultimately 16 pages as soon as possible.**

However this stretches our resources considerably, given the cost of newsprint,

printing, distribution and so on. While our sellers are pledging considerable amounts in their efforts to guarantee the fortnightly, we also need the help of our readers.

We aim to raise £3,000 by the time of the *Socialist Outlook* Summer School at the end of August. If you think keeping and improving a fortnightly *Socialist Outlook* is

worthwhile, you can help us by:

- Paying the Solidarity price of £1
- Making a donation to our Fund Drive
- Taking some copies of the paper to sell
- Rushing cheques and postal orders made payable to "Socialist Outlook Supporters Fund" to: PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

**Socialist Campaign Group (Supporters Network) National Committee meeting**  
Saturday June 1 12.30 pm Lucas Arms  
Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross, London NW1  
Main discussion on preparations for Labour Party Conference.  
Ensure your group is represented.

# Kill off Mail's "Employee Agenda"

## A postal worker

THE Communication Workers Union (CWU) is balloting postal workers on industrial action against Royal Mail's "Employee Agenda". The early signs are that a sizeable yes vote will be announced at this year's annual conference in Blackpool.

Royal Mail seriously miscalculated the mood of the workforce. The truth about the Employee Agenda has now emerged. CWU members are not impressed.

There are three main parts to the agenda—pay, restructuring, delivery standards and teamworking.

The union broke off negotiations when Royal Mail refused to remove teamworking.

Since then, more money has been offered to soften the pay restructuring package. In desperation management has protested that no jobs are threatened by its proposal to deliver all processed mail on the first delivery.

But they have refused to budge on the issue of teamworking.

Workers have been bom-



CWU Royal Mail strikers in Scotland took unofficial action earlier this year. Now let's make it official.

barbed with misinformation in the form of team-briefings, special issues of the management paper and direct mail from local managers. Headlines in the tabloid press scream nonsense about a 15 per cent wage rise.

But the union has struck a real chord with its members. Workers are fed up with the bosses' bully boy tactics and are

not prepared to swallow a deal that will force postal workers to police themselves.

Teamworking would require postal workers to cover all vacancies and absences for no extra pay. Each team would be set a mythical productivity figure which could only be achieved by working flat out all day, every day.

Teams would also be expected to deal with any paper work connected with their job in their own time. Then if all the targets were achieved, a monthly bonus would be paid.

Union members know that the real agenda is massive job losses and the destruction of the union. Small wonder that even management's own survey

showed that only a miserable 22 per cent felt that the "Employee Agenda" would be good for them.

Opposition to the bosses' plans must now be turned into the biggest possible yes vote for industrial action.

The union's joint General Secretary, Alan Johnson, has talked about a series of one-day strikes to force Royal Mail back to the negotiating table. But it may become necessary for postal workers to take action on an indefinite basis. To ensure that the union achieves the best outcome for its members CWU branches must maintain pressure on the union leadership.

Organised opposition from branches forced the union's negotiating team to break off talks. The union's annual conference is an ideal opportunity to bring together activists to discuss putting even more pressure on the leadership.

The CWU's aim has got to be clear—a 35-hour week, working hours spread over no more than five days work, six weeks annual leave after twenty years of service, no to team working.

Victory is possible if the CWU demonstrates its ability to take national strike action and reject any compromise on teamworking.

## UNISON 'too willing to take back seat'

BRIAN GARDNER speaks to GEOFF MARTIN, newly elected Convenor of UNISON's London Region about the union's future.

FOR Geoff Martin there is still a big problem in UNISON: "We don't at the moment have an effectively merged union".

The combination of NALGO, NUPE and COHSE brought workers together from many different areas. Of his new job he says that his principal role is "to develop common themes which can unite all of the mem-

bership."

One of these is jobs: "That brings in so much: competitive tendering, short term contracts, use of agency staff, casualisation. It is the major political issue. The feel-bad factor means that many people don't know if, in twelve months' time, they'll have a job or not. The union needs a strong campaign against job insecurity."

It seems to me that many employers claim that short-term contracts equal efficiency when in fact the reverse is the case.

"Definitely", says Martin. "In the Health Service, no-one's got any stability in their life. Well-qualified nurses and radiographers are bailing out in

droves."

He agrees that Labour Party policy on public services is extremely problematic. Although it is against compulsory tendering in local government, it still favours the voluntary contracting out of services.

"At a meeting recently I was banging on about Labour councils who've embraced tendering and someone got up and said 'Embraced it? They've taken it to bed and shagged it!'"

The modernisers in Blair's circle will not voluntarily sign up to the abolition of tendering.

"It's too bloody useful to them. It's a stick with which to beat the unions, it's a mechanism for cutting back on services and keeping expenditure down."

I put it to him that UNISON's progressive policies on such issues as the minimum wage, full employment, defence of the welfare state, are often not adequately promoted or defended.

"UNISON has been far too willing to take a back seat and leave the modernisers in the Labour Party to ride roughshod over Labour Party policy. I don't think that should be allowed to continue."

Although he was originally one of its key players, he is at present unhappy with the major broad left grouping in the union, the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic UNISON (which includes supporters of *Socialist Outlook*).



The modernisers in Blair's circle will not voluntarily sign up to the abolition of tendering

"The CFDU is never going to break out of its ex-NALGO ghetto. It is simply not capable of reaching ex-NUPE and ex-COHSE members who are pissed off with the Blair agenda and who are getting hammered day in and day out"

In the election for General Secretary earlier this year, he supported Rodney Bickerstaffe against the candidate of the CFDU. He is critical of the CFDU's choice of someone who is a supporter of Militant Labour.

"It allowed Militant to dictate the terms without any real consideration about wider issues in terms of the Labour Party or anything else. It is really dangerous to ask people on the left in the Labour Party to

vote for someone who supports running against Labour candidates."

Another reason for his support for Bickerstaffe was that the CFDU and others on the left had not initially spotted the danger posed by the right wing candidate Peter Hunter, an ex-member of the Tory Party. Anti-abortion, against gay

Martin regards Bickerstaffe as one of the better trade union leaders. He cites Bickerstaffe speaking out for asylum seekers and travellers, and is careful to distinguish him from what he terms "the rest of the upper echelons".

I ask him about his own relationship to the bureaucracy, not all of whom may be so well disposed to his ideas and what he might like to do.

He is very optimistic: "I don't see a problem. I stood

on a very clear platform. It was to raise the profile of UNISON in London, and to create a situation where the former partner unions became welded together as a fighting force. So off we go. If there's a row there's a row."

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**"It is really dangerous to ask people on the left in the Labour Party to vote for someone who supports running against Labour candidates."**

## Liverpool's Women of the Waterfront

# 'Now we're here we're not going away'

**DOREEN McNALLY** chairs Women of the Waterfront (WOW). She was interviewed by **GLENN VORIS**, the Secretary of St. Helens Trades Council on Merseyside.

**GV:** How was the Women of the Waterfront formed?

**DM:** At the first demonstration/rally at the beginning of October, I was asked to speak. I'd never spoken at a meeting before, let alone a rally, but I just told the truth.

Afterwards, many wives and partners spoke to shop stewards about the need to set up a women's group. Two weeks later we held our first meeting - around 50 women turned up. Most were dockers' wives but some were SWP, Militant Labour, Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures (formed during 1984-85) miners' strike and other left organisations. They showed us how to start a women's group. We decided to meet weekly and called it Women of the Waterfront (WOW).

**GV:** Has WOW consolidated and grown since its inception?

**DM:** Yes, most definitely. We have a hard core of around 60 wives and partners who regularly attend our weekly meetings.

However, most of the others are not able to commit themselves as much because of family commitments, or because they have to work more hours to make ends meet. But most do turn up to demos or rallies.



"We'll win by building up the international boycott that we've developed with dockers all over the world"

**GV:** What initiatives and activities have WOW been involved in?

**DM:** As we've gained confidence, we started speaking regularly with workers across the country at Trade Union meetings and at dozens of dockers' support groups that have been set up.

WOW now speak at meetings on their own and organise our own Tours for fund raising. We've linked up with women's groups, which has been an inspiration, seeing other women organise independently. So far, we have spoken to over 500 meetings. We also attend the picket lines every day at the

docks with the men and are not intimidated by the police. If anything, the police feel intimidated because they don't know how to handle us.

**GV:** Have you been contacted by women's groups internationally?

**DM:** Yes, all over the world, to Europe, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada.

The first WOW delegation to go international was to Sweden in March. We were invited by the Swedish Syndicalist Union (SAC) and took our banner on a march through Stockholm to a rally where we addressed over 500 people. We attended several press confer-

ences. There is more about the Liverpool dispute in the Swedish press than here. We've also been invited to San Francisco. The United Secretariat of the Fourth International plans to organise an extensive tour across Europe of one docker and one member of WOW, which we're really excited about.

**GV:** Has your involvement changed your life?

**DM:** Most definitely. When our men were sacked, we, the wives and partners, were right there with them, and we celebrated their 5-1 vote to refuse the £25,000 offered in March and up to £30,000 for our pensions to sell our jobs.

Their fight is for the future. We've realised that we women have a place in the fight. We've become seasoned pickets. We didn't know each other before and none of us had done anything like this before, but now we're here we're not going away. The dispute has changed our lives and would never go back to the old days. The women now have a voice and there's no turning back. We now understand the national and global problems of how workers are exploited - this must change.

**GV:** How do you think you'll win the dispute?

**DM:** We'll win by building up the international boycott that we've developed with dockers all over the world.

The Liverpool port only has half the ships going into it now, so it's only a matter of time before the MHDC is forced to re-instate all the sacked men.

• Please send messages of support to WOW c/o Transport House, Islington, Liverpool, L3. Fax: 0151-207 0696 Tel: 0151-207 3388

Send donations made payable to Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Appeal to: Jimmy Davies, Secretary, Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, c/o Transport House, Islington, Liverpool, L3.

## Unity behind dockers grows

**Glenn Voris Sec. St. Helen's TUC personal capacity**

SOCIALIST Outlook supporters saw the need to co-ordinate nation-wide support for Liverpool's striking dockers.

In February we proposed at the Merseyside Shop Stewards Conference the idea of galvanizing the movement by calling a national conference in support

of the dockers. This was fully endorsed by the dockers and the conference. It was further agreed that the MATUC and the dockers jointly organise the conference, to be held on 25 May in Liverpool.

However on 28 April the dockers held a national conference where it was agreed to set up a National Dockers Support Committee (NDSC). During the National Trades Council Conference on the 9, 10 and 11 May, discussions were held with Jimmy Nolan, the chair of the Mersey Docks Shop Stewards Com-

mittee, to incorporate the setting up of the NDSC at the 25 May conference.

Nolan issued a letter on 12 May explaining the set up of the NDSC. He invites all unions, TUCs, support groups and political organisations to nominate delegates to the new NDSC. This is a major step forward.

Details of the conference have been widely circulated and it is hoped that all sections of the movement will unite together to ensure a victory for the dockers.

## Trades Councils back dockers

**Keith Sinclair, delegate Hull Trades Council (personal capacity)**

The Kettering Conference of Trades Councils attracted around a hundred delegates from trades councils across England and Wales.

The motions that were passed covered a wide range of issues and included calls to affil-

ate to the Welfare State Network and to step up opposition to the Asylum Bill.

Support was given to Hull trades council's campaign against Project Work and a useful emergency motion on education was passed calling on trades council's to support FACE. This needs to be followed up by approaches to local trades councils by all education campaigns.

Over £500 was collected for

the Liverpool dockers for whom Jimmy Nolan spoke. An excellent motion was passed calling upon trades councils to campaign for the dockers and build the May 25 conference organised by Merseyside County Association of Trades Councils.

The Socialist Labour Party held a fringe meeting with Bob Crowe from the RMT. Despite his efforts, there was little support. Delegates raised their objections to the timing, policies

and the way the SLP had been launched. Other than from the speaker, there was a wide consensus that the key task was to kick the Tories out, calling for a Labour vote while raising demands such as the repeal of the anti-union laws and the defence of the welfare state.

Supporters of *Socialist Outlook* intervened in all the major debates. We also took on the practical responsibility of organising the fund-raising initiatives for

the Liverpool dockers. Overall it was a successful conference.

However, the real test is whether the resolutions that were carried actually make a difference away from the heady rhetoric of conference debates. What is certainly true of this conference is that the resolutions passed make it much easier to raise campaigns in trades councils and through them in hundreds of trade union branches.

## Exiled Ivory Coast student leaders Henry Tohou and Nicole Ake speak:

THE Ivory Coast has one of Africa's most brutal dictatorships, it is supported by French armed force. In the 1990s students and worker have started to build up democratic and socialist opposition movements.

BILL McKEITH spoke to two leaders of the UK branch of the exiled Party for Progress and Socialism. Previously known as the Ivorian Socialist Party, the party obtained between 30 and 50 per cent of the vote in some areas.

Student leader HENRY TOHOU, General Secretary of the PPS/UK branch, looks at the fight against the repressive regime, the tasks facing the opposition and the need for a new party to replace the discredited leaders of the PPS

and other organisations now co-operating with the regime.

Former political prisoner NICOLE AKE, a member of the PPS/UK staff, describes the development of Ivorian women's organisations.

# "Comrades were forced to drink the blood of others"

"THE people of the Ivory Coast have lived through a period of fascism since winning independence from France in 1960.

The regime, established by president Houphouët Boigny, was supported by successive French governments. The country fell into a one party system. Anyone who opposed the regime was assassinated.

In 1970 attempts were made by Dr Kragbe Gnagbe to create an opposition party, but he was assassinated along with 4,000 people from his tribe. They were killed by the Ivorian security forces and French soldiers, and buried in a communal grave in Gaba, Gnagbe's native village.

In 1990 students arose spontaneously to protest and demand a multi-party system. We won it by the sacrifice of lives of our comrades who were killed during that struggle. But multipartyism does not equate to democracy.

The democratic left parties decided not to enter the 1990 elections if the



The Ivory Coast regime is supported by French armed force

government refused to adopt a fair electoral system. Gbagbo's FPI decided to enter the presidential elections without informing the other three parties. It weakened the left, and allowed the weak ruling party to 'legitimate'

itself through the fraudulent elections. Young people and students kept on fighting against the dictator. He decided to attack, and if possible to kill, the student leaders. We still remember the invasion of 17 and 18 May 1991 when the police and the soldiers descended on the university campus of Yopongon.

Yopongon is one of the biggest campuses in the capital city, Abidjan. The most determined militants in combatting the present regime live there—you can find Maoists, Leninists, Marxists, Trotskyists and Guevarists.

The dictator sent special forces to combat us and kill the leaders who lived there. Comrades were killed, tortured; the girls have been raped and some of our comrades were forced to drink the blood of others who had been seriously injured. Brothers and sisters were forced to have sex.

Many students disappeared.

After pressure the dictator consented to an inquiry into these horrible crimes.

We considered this a victory. The Commission of Inquiry could not deny all the crimes committed by soldiers and police under the special order of the head of state. The inquiry ordered sanctions, but the dictator refused saying: "The army is my own weapon, my own knife. I cannot turn my own weapon against myself."

We started huge protest demonstrations to force the government to carry out these sanctions.

The president, unable to punish the military, decided to attack us. Over two weeks most student leaders were kidnapped. On the day of the demonstration the government paid unemployed people and foreigners to provoke a riot.

The government used it to torture the opposition leaders; to imprison them with the student leaders, to rape women in public.

It was only in July 1993 that these

people were released because of national and international pressures.

After the dictator Houphouët Boigny died in December 1993 his son Henry Konan Bedie proclaimed himself president. He chose the most dangerous assassins as ministers of defence, security, and of the interior.

They made a list of the opponents to the dictatorship and aimed to assassinate us. That is why Ivorian youth fled the country.

Today most are living in Britain, Norway, Canada, Finland, the USA — but not in France.

October 1995 was the date for the general election. The people protested against the unfair electoral laws, and demanded an independent committee to supervise the elections.

The opposition forces formed an umbrella movement called The Republican Front, which launched a demonstration. They intended to boycott the elections if their requests were not accepted.

Unfortunately the dictatorship decided to attack the demonstrators. More than ten people were killed by the security police. Women once again were publicly raped by the security police.

Just like his father, the dictator proclaimed himself the elected president.

What has been painful and shameful for us is that the opposition leaders went to see the self-proclaimed president to sign an agreement in order to be included in the legislative elections—of course they were defeated.

Along with other PPS branches in Europe, we consider this a shameful betrayal of the people. The opposition parties abandoned their previous position—for which people have been killed—to finally sign an agreement with the dictatorship in order to go to the elections, become MPs, and increase their monthly income.

We are now organising an extraordinary congress to create our own political party: to find our own way for the total liberation of the Ivory Coast."



Ivorian youth fled the country

## The 'Co-ordination of the democratic left'

### Henry Tohou

In 1990 student struggles won a multi-party system.

Four parties formed an organisation called the co-ordination of the democratic left. It aimed to create the conditions for democracy in the Ivory Coast, for example by demanding a national assembly.

The founders were:

● **PSI: Ivorian Socialist Party.** Led by Professor Bamba Morifere which became the PPS (Party for Progress and Socialism) during its last con-

ference in the Ivory Coast.

● **PIT: Ivorian Workers' Party.** Led by Professor Francis Wodie who entered by the 1995 Presidential elections, thus betraying the other opposition parties.

● **USD: Union of Social Democrats.** Led by Professor Zady Zaourou who, since February 1994, became a minister in the self-proclaimed Presidential Government.

● **FPI: Ivorian Popular Front.** Led by Professor Laurent Gbagbo. Gbagbo's party came second, supposedly with around a sixth of the vote, in the unfair 1990 Presidential elections.

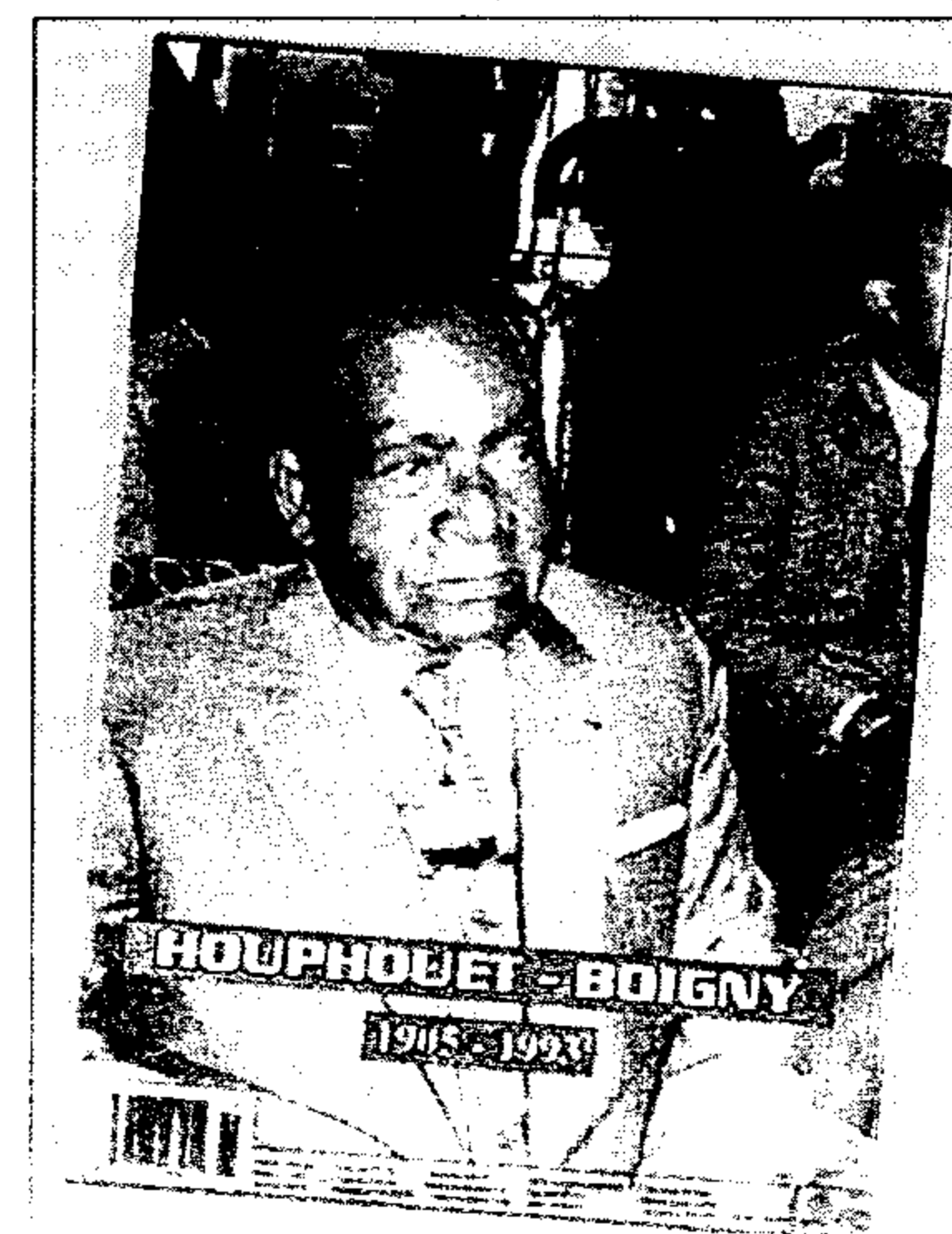
## Defending women in the Ivory Coast

### Nicole Ake

IVORIAN women have been fighting for justice for a long time.

Men fighting for independence were often arrested by French colonisers.

There were important marches by



The dictator Houphouët Boigny

women protesting against these arrests. They became the subject of a novel.

It was the women who won freedom for their husbands.

The Ivorian dictator learned early that women can also threaten his regime. To avoid this he created a women's movement. The Association of Ivorian Women (AFI) became a branch of the party in power. Even in May 1991, when the Ivorian President sent soldiers into the Yopougon university campus to rape the girls and to kill students the movement which was supposed to promote women's rights organised a meeting around the dictator Houphouët Boigny to congratulate him.

Since then opposition parties have created another women's movement, the Ivorian movement of democratic women (MIFED). This movement is fighting to promote and to defend women's rights in the Ivory Coast.

## Obituary

# Alec Acheson: a convinced Marxist revolutionary

**SOCIALIST Outlook's Alec Acheson died last week at the Loros hospice in Leicester. BERNIE HYNES recalls the life of a dedicated socialist.**

OVER fifty comrades, friends and family remembered Alec by singing the *Internationale* at his funeral service last week.

Indicating the breadth of Alec's activity, tributes were offered by East Knighton Labour Party, Socialist Outlook, members of the Socialist Labour Party, the Troops Out Movement, the Irish Studies Group and veteran Trotskyist Harry Ratner.

Alec was an active supporter of the Fourth International for sixty years of his life.

Since the war Alec spent his time as an activist in his union, the Labour Party and the anti-racist movement. He was an honorary President of the NUT.

He was a founding member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

He will be remembered as a teacher, a good friend, a secularist and a leading representative of what he once called the "red thread" that links the present revolutionary movement to the experience of

the twenties and thirties.

While stationed in North Africa and the Mediterranean during the Second World War he was in contact with Trotskyists in the Middle East.

Alec had a great love of reading, particularly Irish literature and culture.

A wake is to be organised in the near future with Irish musicians and dancers.

We all shall miss Alec's friendship, experience, knowledge and personal warmth.

**CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN describes his encounters with Alec in the thirties.**

THE DEATH of any comrade is a loss to our movement, but to me it is particularly sad to contribute to the obituary of Alec Acheson.

Alec was one of the tiny handful of pre-war Trotskyists who was still in the ranks of the Fourth International until his death.

My earliest memories of Alec go back to 1937/8.

We were both in the Islington branch of the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). He was closely associated with the veteran Trotskyist, Hilda Lane, John

Lawrence and the Finch brothers and sister.

In those days we used to hold open air meetings in Highbury Fields. I clearly remember one evening, when the speaker who had to follow me failed to turn up. Alec, who was selling our paper *The Militant*, but who had never addressed a public meeting before, mounted the platform and spoke.

He was clearly nervous but there was a job to be done for the revolution, and he did it.

This was typical of Alec—his never-failing devotion to the fight for socialism, which to him were synonymous with the building of the Fourth International.

When war broke out in 1939 Alec threw himself into the revolutionary opposition to the war.

On January 6 1940 he organised a conference of sixty delegates from the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party Guild of Youth, the ILP, the Communist Party, the National Unemployed Workers Movement, Leicester Trades Council and local trades union branches. It was addressed by Fenner Brockway and Starkey Jackson.

When he was conscripted into the army he continued his socialist activities as far as it was possible.

When he was sent to Egypt he contacted comrades living there. There was an election going on and the Trotskyist Group supported the socialist candidates. Alec, in defiance of military discipline, took part in the election campaign, going round to the houses and tenements where the workers were.

Together with another British comrade Joe Pawsey he drafted a leaflet on the developing situation in Greece, which was duplicated by the Egyptian comrades. It called on the squaddies in the British army not to fight against their working class brothers in Greece.

They were nearly caught by the military police.

This was Alec Acheson, a convinced Marxist revolutionary.

## The Contribution of Ernest Mandel to Marxist Theory

Seminar organized by the Ernest Mandel Study Centre (EMSC). Amsterdam, July 4-6, 1996

• Jesús Albarracín and Pedro Montes (*Economists, Bank of Spain*): The theory of late capitalism as a Marxist interpretation of post-WW2 capitalism • Robin Blackburn (*Editor, New Left Review, London*): The place of Ernest Mandel in the history of Marxist political thought • Alan Freeman (*Economist, University of Greenwich*): Economic dynamics: Mandel's legacy • Michael Löwy (*Sociologist, CNRS, Paris*): Ernest Mandel as a revolutionary humanist • Francisco Louça (*Economist, IESG-University of Lisbon*): Ernest Mandel's contribution to the theory of long waves of capitalist development • Charles Post (*Historian, City University of New York*): The theory of bureaucracy • Catherine Samary (*Economist, University of Paris XI*): The conception of the transition to socialism • Enzo Traverso (*Political Scientist, University of Amiens*): Ernest Mandel's vision of the relation between capitalism and barbarism.

For information about inexpensive accommodation and entrance fees and for registration forms (reservations necessary: due to space limitations only a limited number of people can attend): EMSC c/o IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 RG Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Fax: 31 20 6732106. Phone 31 20 6717263. E-mail: IIRE@Antenna.nl

For financial support to the Ernest Mandel Study Centre send your cheques to IIRE, or make a bank transfer to account 630-0113884-65 at Caisse Privée Banque, Brussels, Belgium.

## What's Happening

### MAY

Saturday 25 National Dockers Conference, 11am, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool.

### JUNE

Friday 14 Fight for Comprehensive Education, meeting 7.30, Union Club, Pershore Road, Selly Park, Liverpool.

## Beat the International Viewpoint price rise

*IV* is the hard-hitting monthly news magazine of the Fourth International. *IV* lets revolutionaries in over sixty countries speak for themselves. It has unequalled analysis of political developments and campaigning. On June 1st, *IV* subscription prices increase to £25. Until then, the price remains just £22. Send your cheque or PO today. Make it payable to 'Outlook International'. Send it to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



Birmingham. Speakers include Roy Hattersley, Birmingham Socialist Campaign Group and Socialist Teachers Alliance.

Friday 21 to Sunday 23 Counter-Summit to the G7 meeting, Lyon, France. Details: Cedetim, 21 ter, rue Voltaire, 75011 Paris. Tel (00 33 1) 4371 0911.

### July

Friday 19 to Sat. 27 International Youth Summer Camp, Portugal.

Saturday 20 Respect!, anti-racist music festival sponsored by TUC, Finsbury Park, London N4.

### AUGUST

23-26 Socialist Outlook Summer School, Aberystwyth, Wales.

# WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING FOR

UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won public services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis – an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

*Socialist Outlook* exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism. The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command. The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism. We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism. Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing the working class. We are a marxist current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

OUR SOCIALIST alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth – and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

*Socialist Outlook* is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises in over 40 countries. Unlike some other groups on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism. But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as racism and fascism – in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate differences. If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in cities across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

## Contact us now! Get Organised!

- I want to know more about Socialist Outlook.
- I would like to sell Socialist Outlook.
- Please send me your introductory pamphlet: 'Socialism after Stalinism'. I enclose a PO or cheque for £1.00 payable to 'Socialist Outlook Fund'.
- Please send me details of the Socialist Outlook Fourth International Supporters Association.



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Post to: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

# Socialist OUTLOOK

## India swings right

K. Govindan

INDIA'S new government is the Hindu right-wing Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP). It won over 185 seats in the 545-member Lok Sabha and 25 per cent of the popular vote.

The eleventh general election result confirmed the meteoric rise of the Hindu communalists and their fascist allies and the ignominious fall of the Congress (I).

Two important issues contributed to the ruling party's defeat.

In the Hawala scandal, a business family was revealed to have large sums of money to leading politicians in both the previous government and opposition parties over many years. Corrupt politicians in hock to the rich are the plot of many Indian films. Corruption is assumed by most people.

Congress (I) leader Narasimha Rao has traded on a clean image. The revelations have confirmed the institutionalization of money politics at the highest levels.

Another, more diffuse, issue is the effect of the New Economic Policy on the poor and lower-middle class. Finance minister Manmohan Singh introduced the NEP in 1991. The national economy has implemented the neo-liberal mantra: "liberalization, privatization and globalization". Transnational plunderers have prised open the economy. The



Young Communists burn effigy of new prime minister Rao at Jantar Mantar

NEP has spurred middle-class consumerist attitudes and behavior.

Congress (I) is plagued by factionalism. Rao remains its parliamentary leader only because his strongest rivals have deserted or been expelled from the party.

Rao's opportunism led to an electoral pact with a megalomaniac former actress who is Chief Minister for the southern state of Tamil Nadu. Rao's pact consigned the local unit of Congress (I) to political oblivion. But he relied on his new friend to save the national

government of the Congress (I).

Local members were enraged by this transparently cynical measure. They split the local unit of Congress (I) to form a new party, little better than its parent, which made a coalition with the Communist Party of India. The coalition won a clean sweep of national assembly seats in Tamil Nadu.

The BJP temporarily toned down its activity for the elections. It virulently attacks Muslims and provocatively campaigns to 'reclaim' the sites of Hindi temples.

The destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by its supporters in December 1992 opened a series of riots. They spread across India and spilled over into Bangladesh and Pakistan. The attack on the temple outraged liberal opinion and ostracized the BJP.

The BJP has made political capital out of Congress (I) corruption. It also led protests against India joining GATT and against transnational food corporations. However BJP leaders are implicated in the Hawala scandal. The party claims economic liberalization would favour India's economy. This reflects its base of support amongst would-be capitalists with greater aspirations than ability.

The BJP attacks and scapegoats India's 100 million Muslim minority. It threatens to 'assimilate' them into a mythical Hindu identity or to force them out of India. They threaten nuclear war against Pakistan and Bangladesh in order to defend India from Islam—while selling it

to the World Bank and IMF.

Many hopes rest on a third front of all the secular parties except the Congress (I). It includes the bourgeois populist Janata Dal, regional and lower caste/dalit parties and the two mass Communist parties. Political pragmatism unites these parties against the BJP and Congress (I).

The Communist parties confine their ambitions to bastions in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Elsewhere they aspire to be junior partners to 'secular democratic forces'—with a liberal share of crooks, charlatans, landlords and other scoundrels.

A new force needs to be constructed. Socialist politics must be committed to secularism, democracy, regional autonomy and an economic programme which serves the oppressed and exploited.

A moderate bourgeois alternative to Congress (I) cannot survive more than one term. Congress (I) has a well-oiled machine. Its national spread and assets are to be reckoned with. Political obituary writers can put away their pens.

The BJP may not have long to savour victory. They face a parliamentary motion of confidence on 30 May. Virtually every opposition party aims to defeat them.

India's uncertainty and confusion will not end then. A solution rests in linking the strategy and tactics of the Indian left to the needs of those in struggle on the land and in the towns.

## BMA revives Tory NHS nightmare

John Lister,  
London Health Emergency

HEADLINE-GRABBING complaints by top hospital consultants, backed by the BMA, are the latest reminder of the rolling crisis caused by the Tory government's creation of an "internal market" system in 1991.

They are not the only NHS professionals warning that the system is at breaking point.

● In February, top consultants and

medical doctors from all 23 acute hospitals in South Thames region wrote to Stephen Dorrell, warning of a growing crisis in emergency services, with insufficient beds and health authorities refusing to pay for emergency patients.

They demanded the government step in to halt any further bed closures, and asked "How much is spent supporting the bureaucracy, annual contracting and the purchaser/provider split?"

● In February, March and April, more Trusts became publicly locked in conflict with their purchasing health

authorities, claiming that impossible demands were being placed on them. Newham Healthcare Trust issued a press release denouncing the local East London and City Health Authority; it has halted all elective surgery.

Many other Trusts have still not signed contracts for the new financial year.

● On May 8 leaders of the NHS Trust Federation warned Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell that hospitals across the country are facing the deepest crisis for years.

● There are signs that the Tories are on the retreat, seeking to defuse

a damaging situation. Already an extra £25 million has been shared out between nine floundering Trusts—in Hampshire, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, Solihull, and parts of south east London. The two giant acute Trusts in Leeds have been given special sanction to overspend heavily this year.

● But many more Trusts are struggling for survival, including the Southampton University Hospitals Trust (£11 million adrift), and London's Royal Hospitals Trust. More crises are waiting in the wings.

The market system which was seen

by Thatcher as an ideal device to enable the government to stand back and wash its hands of problems in the NHS is erupting into a predictable chaos in the run-up to the next election.

With normally subservient quangos and even pro-market consultants joining the outcry, Dorrell will have a battle on his hands to keep the issue from becoming a major electoral liability. Now is the time for campaigners and health unions to step up the pressure, with a real chance of forcing concessions and saving vital services.