

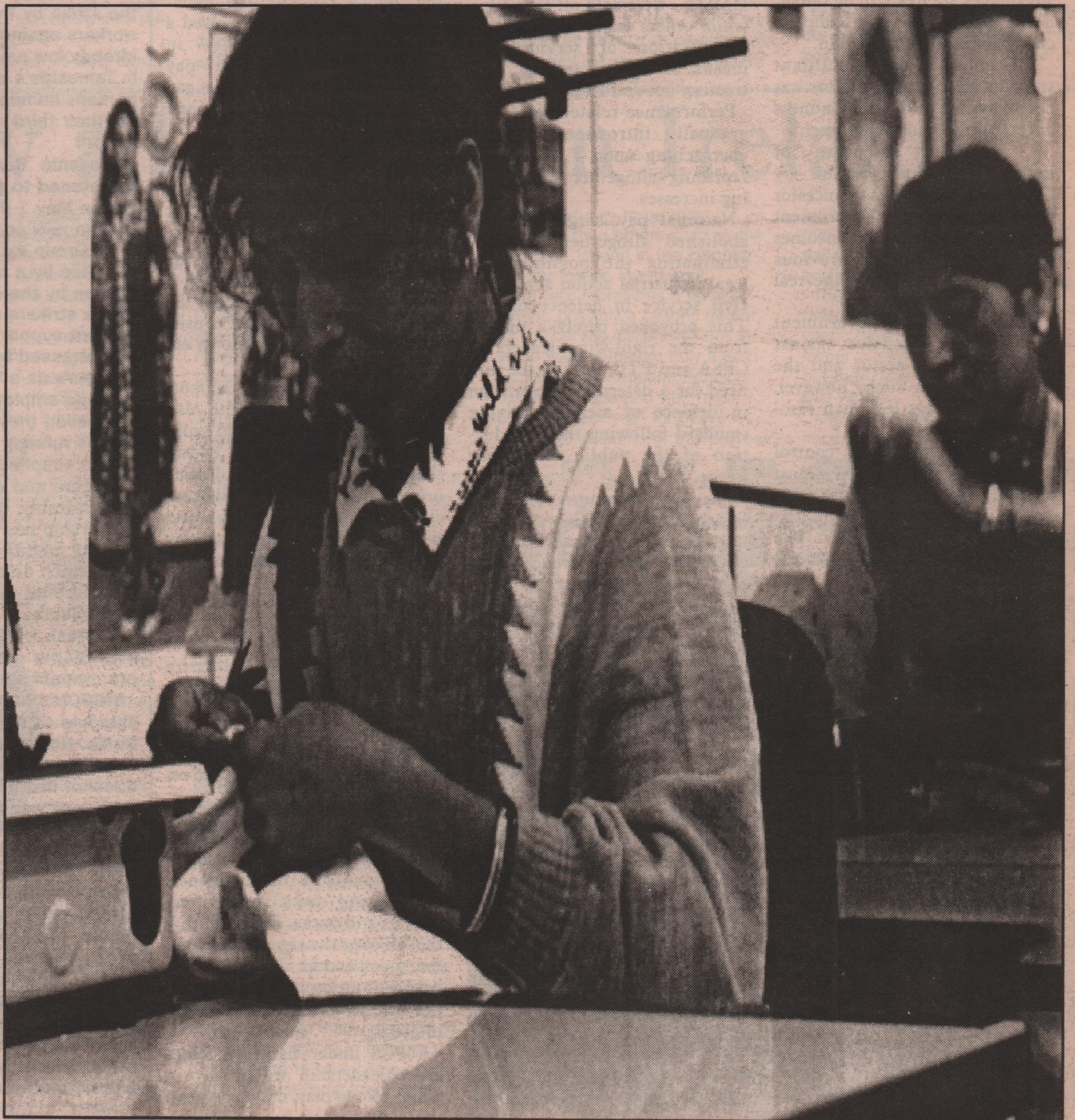
Socialist OUTLOOK

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Bitter fruits of New Labour:

- Poverty rate for minimum wage
- Bosses call shots on union rights

**HOW
LOW
CAN
THEY
GO??**



New Civil Service union must break with the past

Darren Williams (Branch Secretary, POS ONS Newport, personal capacity)

ELECTIONS are about to take place for the National Executive Committee (NEC) of Britain's newest - and sixth biggest - union.

The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) came into being on 10 March 1 following the merger of CPSA and PTC. With 250,000 members, POS represents the vast majority of trade union members in the civil service, covering all grades from low-paid clerical and support staff to middle-management.

Clearly such an organisation could potentially be a formidable force, capable of ending and beginning to reverse the long series of defeats inflicted on civil servants since 1979. The record of inept and treacherous leadership in the civil service unions suggests, however, that any such advantages are likely to be squandered unless there is a complete change of political direction.

The potential for a militant stand by civil service workers was demonstrated in the final months of the last Labour Government.

A sustained campaign of national industrial action by CPSA and the SCPS (an ancestor of PTC) forced the Government to back down from its incomes policy and honour previous agreements to maintain the real value of civil service pay.

As the Thatcher government went on the offensive against both the public sector and the trade unions as such, however, the response was less than resolute.

Throughout the 1980s control of CPSA's NEC alternated almost annually between the right-wing National Moderate Group and the Militant-led Broad Left. The latter's defiant words were not always translated into deeds when the opportunity arose, while the Moderates renounced industrial action altogether as the preserve of unrepresentative



The Civil & Public Serv
Association
OFFICIAL DISPUTE OFFI
Will new union use its strength?

extremists, preferring instead to rely on polite lobbying.

After 1988 the uninterrupted control by the right-wing ensured the consistent sell-out of members' interests, as the Government's onslaught intensified. Tens of thousands of jobs were cut. Some departments - like HMSO - were sold off altogether while others experienced partial privatisation of services, by means of market testing, contracting-out and PFI.

Performance-related pay was gradually introduced, steadily encroaching upon - and finally replacing, altogether cost-of-living increases.

National pay bargaining was abolished altogether in 1996, eliminating the possibility of legal industrial action across the civil service in defence of pay. This provoked barely a protest from the right-wing leaders of CPSA and PTC, despite the dire need for a determined campaign in defence of members' living standard following the introduction of the public sector pay freeze.

The continuation of such treacherous policies was facilitated by the bureaucracy's blatant disregard for conference decisions, persistent lying to members, and general abuse of the union machine. When the constitution of the merged union was written last year, activists were

disgusted to find that it was designed to institutionalise bureaucratic privilege, and prevent members from holding their elected leaders to account. In defiance of both CPSA and PTC conference policy, elections and conferences were made biennial, a legion of officials were given well-paid jobs for life, and major decisions were to be made by easily stitched-up referenda.

Unfortunately, the Left has proven somewhat wanting in presenting a clear alternative. The Militant-led Broad Left has maintained a resilient opposition to the right-wing and has been relatively open and democratic, in comparison to other union left. It has however relied far too heavily on electoral tactics, throwing its energies into winning control of key positions, and slipping back into relative inactivity once the election and conference season was over.

The smaller Socialist Caucus has the best record for campaigning among rank-and-file members. It has recently organised a cross-departmental forum in London to co-ordinate pay claims, helping to plug the gap left by both the bureaucracy and the established left leadership.

The unification, since the merger, of all the CPSA/PTC left groups under the banner of Left Unity has potentially created the basis for a strong challenge for control of the new union. While the initial signs are promising, it remains to be seen whether the left will provide clear arid consistent leadership, or slip into its old electoralist habits.

PCS members should support the Left Unity slate in the May NEC elections, and should build the Left Unity group to ensure that it functions as a full-time organised leadership for all those civil servants who are sick and tired of being walked over by departmental Management and by the government. They should demand that Left Unity makes the following its priority:

- * fight for action in pursuit of pay claims, building solidarity outside individual departments;
- * prepare for united campaigns with other public sector unions, in defence of jobs, to break the pay freeze and oppose initiatives like PFI;

- * return the union to control by the membership, making full-time officials subject to election and accountable to conference, arid cutting down their fat-cat salaries and perks. It is vital that the left wins the argument among the membership about the link between union democracy and the effective defence of members' interests;

A PCS under fighting, democratic leadership would have a major role to play, not just within the civil service, but in beating back the bosses' offensive which has been rejuvenated by Blair's pro-capitalist agenda.



Striking care workers stand firm against scrooge employer

Adam Hartman

WE REPORTED last month on the strike by Tameside care workers against cuts in their already low pay. Care workers in Tameside's eleven elderly persons' homes are now entering their third month of strike action.

Tameside Care Group (TCG) threatened to sack the strikers on May 1 if they refused to sign new contracts.

The Group extended the deadline by a month, clearly shaken by the determination of the strikers and the magnificent support for them, and embarrassed by their public exposure as a Victorian scrooge employer.

However, they have kept the homes running with scab labour supplied by Apex, Allied Medicare and other agencies.

Regrettably, the GMB branch leadership has recommended that its members accept a deal which delays most of the pay cut until next year: some GMB members have resigned in protest. UNISON members, over 80 per cent of the strikers, remain solid.

UNISON's national leadership has so far supported the strike. However, its sellout of the Hillingdon hospital strikers does not inspire confidence. They may well try to negotiate an unacceptable deal over the heads of the strikers. In this case, the role of the anti-union laws in limiting the effectiveness of industrial action, and the capitulation of the national leaders in the face of these laws, would be exposed yet again.

It is therefore vital that branches of UNISON and other unions maintain and extend their support for the strikers, in the form of solidarity greetings, donating the Carers' Quid and attending the mass pickets and demonstrations. This will give the

national leaders a clear signal that they will pay a high price for selling out the strike.

Labour Party members and affiliated unions must highlight the role of the Labour Party in the dispute. TCG is nominally owned by trustees, including local Labour MP Andrew Bennett, a local NUT branch secretary and a solicitor who does case work for trade unions. Tameside's Labour council has a 20 per cent golden share.

TCG says that cuts of £300,000 are needed, because the council is cutting its funding for resident placements. But the "non-profit making" trust made a £750,000 surplus last year which the Royal Bank of Scotland has allegedly frozen.

Managing Director Alan Firth tried to justify the pay cut by claiming that the market rate for care workers locally is around £2.80 per hour. Meanwhile, his market-based salary has increased by a handsome £9,000 to around £60,000 per year.

Nationwide, cash-strapped local authorities are transferring care homes to semi-privatised trusts at the expense of the workforce, and increase the role of private finance. The strikers have called for a public inquiry both into the running of TCG and the funding of care for the elderly.

■ Donate to the strikers hardship fund. Send cheques payable to "Tameside UNISON" to: 29 Booth Street, Ashton under Lyne OL6 7LB.

■ Take out a standing order to the Carers Quid, forms available from same address. Send or phone through messages of support on 0161-308 2452.

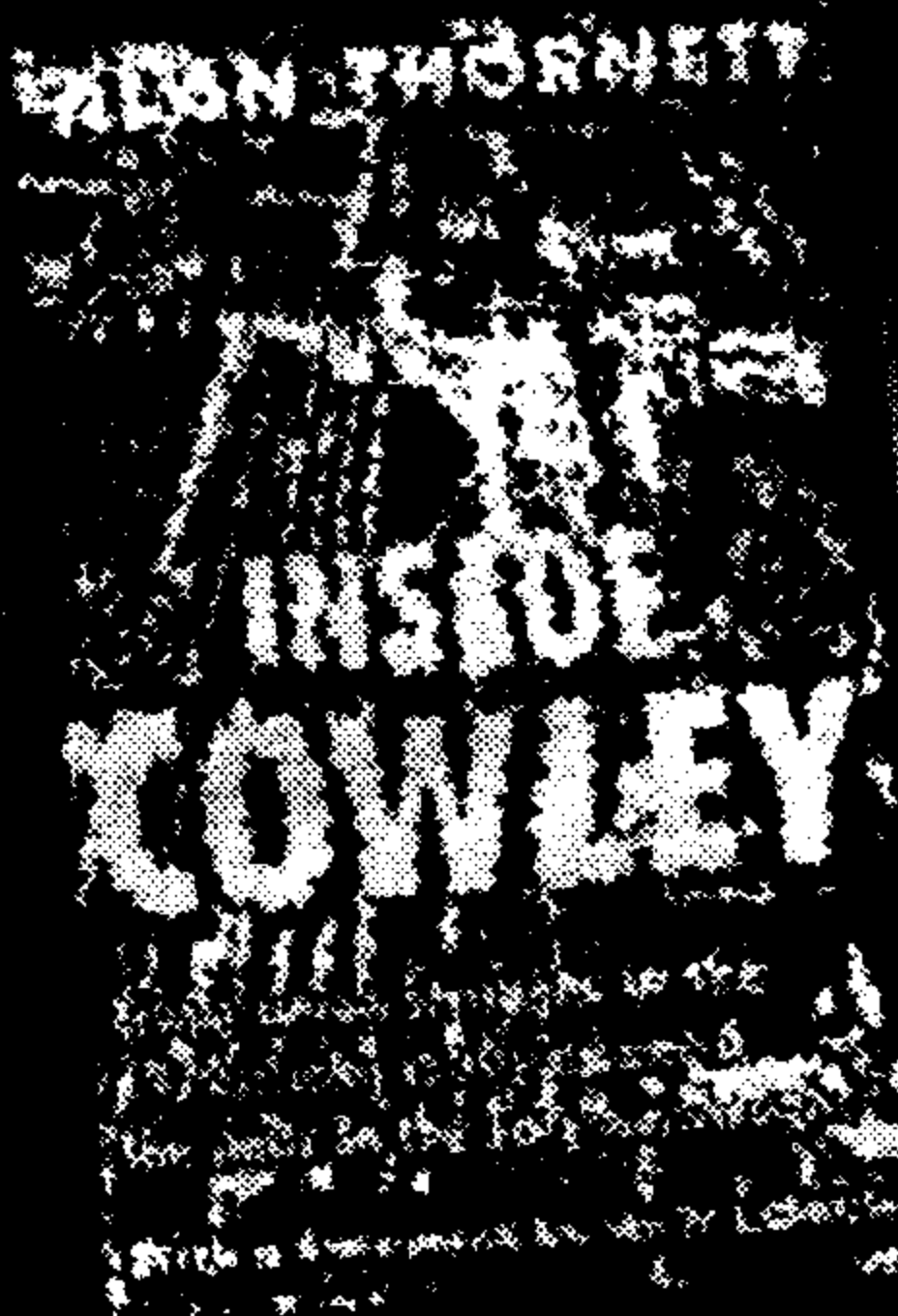
■ The next demonstration is on Saturday June 6 in Stalybridge (Astley Rd 1.00pm).

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INSIDE COWLEY

Alan Thornett's first-hand account of trade union struggles in the car industry from the 1970s, with serious lessons for trade union activists today.

Pocupine Press. 448 pages, illustrated. £11.95 plus £2 post and packing, from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



Fairness to whom?

Fairness, freedom, families, firms - somewhere along the line the government's White Paper "Fairness at Work" seems to have got confused with an advertising slogan.

The aim of the White Paper has been clearly set out by Blair: "It seeks to draw a line under the issue of industrial relations law". Even after the changes we propose, Britain will still have the most tightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world."

Trade unionists will welcome some of the measures in the White Paper that will help change the balance of forces in the workplace. But there has been a massive retreat from the promises made before the General Election.

For the Liverpool Dockers, Magnet and Critchley workers the White Paper would have made little or no difference. For many millions of low paid, unorganised workers it offers no change whatsoever.

Activists must now demand that the trade union movement campaigns for TUC and Labour Party policy to be implemented in full - no more compromise - at the same time as arguing for complete repeal of the anti-union laws and their replacement with a new charter of union rights.

EDITORIAL

Proposals to outlaw blacklisting, stop discrimination against union members and allow sacked strikers to claim unfair dismissal are all to be welcomed, as is the reduction of the qualifying period for unfair dismissal cases at Industrial Tribunal to one year.

But this is a far cry from John Smith's clear commitment of full protection from day one. Even with the removal of the maximum limit on awards for unfair dismissal, the refusal to make reinstatement mandatory leaves workers vulnerable.

As the White Paper spells out the laws on picketing, secondary action, ballots and notice before strikes, the obstacles to unofficial action and interference in trade union rules will remain.

Instead we are thrown a few crumbs - simplified strike balloting without the need to provide the company with a list of union members; improved consultation on redundancy and transfer of work; and representation rights for individual grievance and discipline hearings.

The cornerstone is the condi-

tional right to trade union recognition. At a stroke this will exclude over 5 million workers in firms employing under twenty people.

These are of course the workers - mainly women, poorly paid and suffering the worse conditions - who most need the support of a legal framework. But even for the rest it will not be easy.

With the definition of recognition itself restricted, the hoops to go through will be time consuming - up to six months of bureaucratic wrangling - and restrictive, requiring a minimum of 40% of the workforce to endorse recognition.

Even then the bosses have many get-outs.

The government also proposes a similar "right" to *de-recognition*, and says that an unsuccessful application would lead to a three-year waiting time for any further application.

All of this is a long way from the policies laid down by the TUC, and generally endorsed by Labour prior to the General Election. Yet at the special TUC conference, now to be held on June 24, John Monks and co. will no doubt be calling for critical endorsement of the government

proposals. This is not good enough.

We must demand that the TUC abandon its hopeless search for a compromise and actually fight to see its policies implemented - for full legal protection from day one of employment, for the right to reinstatement of those sacked in lawful disputes, full rights to recognition without having to jump through hoops, the right to take secondary and solidarity action.

The call by the GMB's John Edmonds for a demonstration to equal in size the Countryside Alliance march must be taken up - the rhetoric turned into reality.

The problem is that the government and the TUC leaders share the same underlying philosophy. They believe that it is possible to "replace the notion of conflict between employers and employees with the promotion of partnership".

For them "Fairness at Work" is a way of building harmony and thereby strengthening the competitiveness of "British Industry". With one eye over their shoulder watching how their members react, the TUC welcomes the chance to compromise with the CBI as an end in itself.



The TUC's rotten compromises have led to the proposals on the minimum wage being set so low - it is clear they are also prepared to compromise over trade union rights.

For us things are different. We know that "partnership" is a farce - a war is going on. We want to see legislation not as an end but as a beginning, to change the balance of forces and encourage workers to fight back.

While even the smallest steps are welcome because they indicate that the tide is turning after years of Tory rule, we recognise that compromise is doomed.

The right to organise is fundamental. We should be fighting to dismantle *all* the anti-union laws - replacing them with a series of positive rights - as a start to rebuilding an independent workers' movement able to take on the bosses.

At a stroke over 5 million workers in small firms are excluded

Is it really all change in Ireland?

David Coen ABOUT 85,000 people in the South of Ireland voted against the Stormont Agreement, a surprisingly high figure given the fact that all the main parties including Sinn Fein supported it.

A vote against by Nationalists, North or South, was presented in the media as a vote for war, even though the "No" campaign in the South was based on maintaining the 1994 Cease-fire. Clearly there are still a substantial number of people in the South who do not concede the right of the British to rule a part of Ireland and who don't believe the Agreement will bring peace.

However, the scale of the defeat of republican and radical forces in Ireland should not be underestimated.

Of course Sinn Fein will continue with its political manoeuvres to further divide the Unionists and to get the (limited) All-Ireland bodies going. There will be a long dance over surrendering IRA weapons.

But the concessions already made in accepting partition to bring them into the mainstream of bourgeois nationalist politics, along with the SDLP and Fianna Fail in the South.

The main desire of both these parties is to reach an accommodation with imperialism - in the form of the British State. The Stormont Agreement offers the SDLP and

the Catholic bourgeoisie which it represents, the promise of a small share of the spoils of government, of which it was deprived for 50 years by the previous Stormont regime.

Dublin feared the threat of destabilisation from Republicanism spilling over from the North. It is no accident that the SDLP has rebuffed Sinn Fein appeals for an electoral pact and is making overtures to Trimble's Unionists; they fear the Nationalist working class, highly politicised and with expectations of a "peace dividend".

The benefits of such an alliance are mirrored on the Unionist side.

Sinn Fein's objective of replacing the SDLP as the main nationalist party looks increasingly far fetched. Since the Agreement they have been under pressure from the SDLP (as well as the British and the Unionists) to go further and make even more concessions.

There will be pressure on the Garvaghy Road residents to allow this year's Orange march to go ahead unopposed: the apparent reasoning is to save David Trimble from Paisley and the substantial Unionist minority opposed to the deal.

Another example of this way of thinking is the advice to Sinn Fein supporters to use their 3rd and 4th preferences in the Assembly elections in support of the Union-

ists.

The self-declared role of Sinn Fein in the new Assembly and in the devolved government will be to represent "its people" while the Loyalist working class will be (at least partially) represented by the Progressive Unionist party and the Ulster Democratic Party.

In this way the Agreement simply cements in place the sectarian divisions that have been so carefully fostered for so long. Partly because of its (fatal) alliance with bourgeois nationalism and mostly because of its politics, there is no chance of Sinn Fein breaking out of this sectarian mould and making common cause with Loyalist workers.

The problem for Sinn Fein - and the opportunity for socialists - is the unavoidable fact that the new Stormont has almost nothing to offer Sinn Fein's working class base.

Reform, let alone disbandment, of the RUC is very unlikely. Orange parades will still go through Nationalist areas, and the much discussed all Ireland bodies which Sinn Fein pretend are a bridge to Irish unity, will be blocked at every turn by the Unionist veto.

Nationalist and Loyalist workers may find themselves fighting over the crumbs which fall from the table of the Unionist bourgeoisie now strengthened by an alliance with the SDLP. Neither is there likely to a huge inflow of funds to buy off opposition; in fact the British hope to save some of the cost of maintaining a presence in Ireland.

All that is on offer is an appeal for investment by transnationals:

the opportunity to be more exploited than others such as the South of Ireland in the competition for foreign investment.

The vote represents a political defeat, possibly a historic defeat, for radical republicanism. But in some ways votes are only a wish list: offered an apparent choice between peace and war, most people voted "yes" for peace.

The real outcome of this process

will be determined by events on the ground, by what happens on the Garvaghy and Ormeau Roads and elsewhere.

The British ruling class, having failed to win militarily over 29 years, have tilted things in their favour a fair number of degrees, but they have not yet won a decisive victory.

It is the responsibility of all anti-imperialists to ensure they fail.

The Agreement simply cements in place the sectarian divisions ... The problem for Sinn Fein is that the new Stormont has almost nothing to offer Sinn Fein's working class base

**EURO DEMONSTRATION
CARDIFF JUNE 13 '98**



**EWRO WRTHDYSTIAD
CAERDYDD, 13 MEHEFIN '98**

NO to a bosses' Europe!

YES to Jobs, Public Services and Democracy!

MARCH through Cardiff

Assemble Sophia Gardens 1.30pm

4 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Fighting on to free the Campsfield 9!



The trial has just begun in Oxford Crown Court of the "Campsfield 9", asylum seekers facing charges of "riot" after being involved in disturbances in the Campsfield detention centre outside Oxford.

The charges have been raised on the initiative of Home Secretary Jack Straw. All nine defendants, incarcerated without charge, are black. Three are teenagers. The campaign for their release continues.

After Labour's minimum wage sell-out

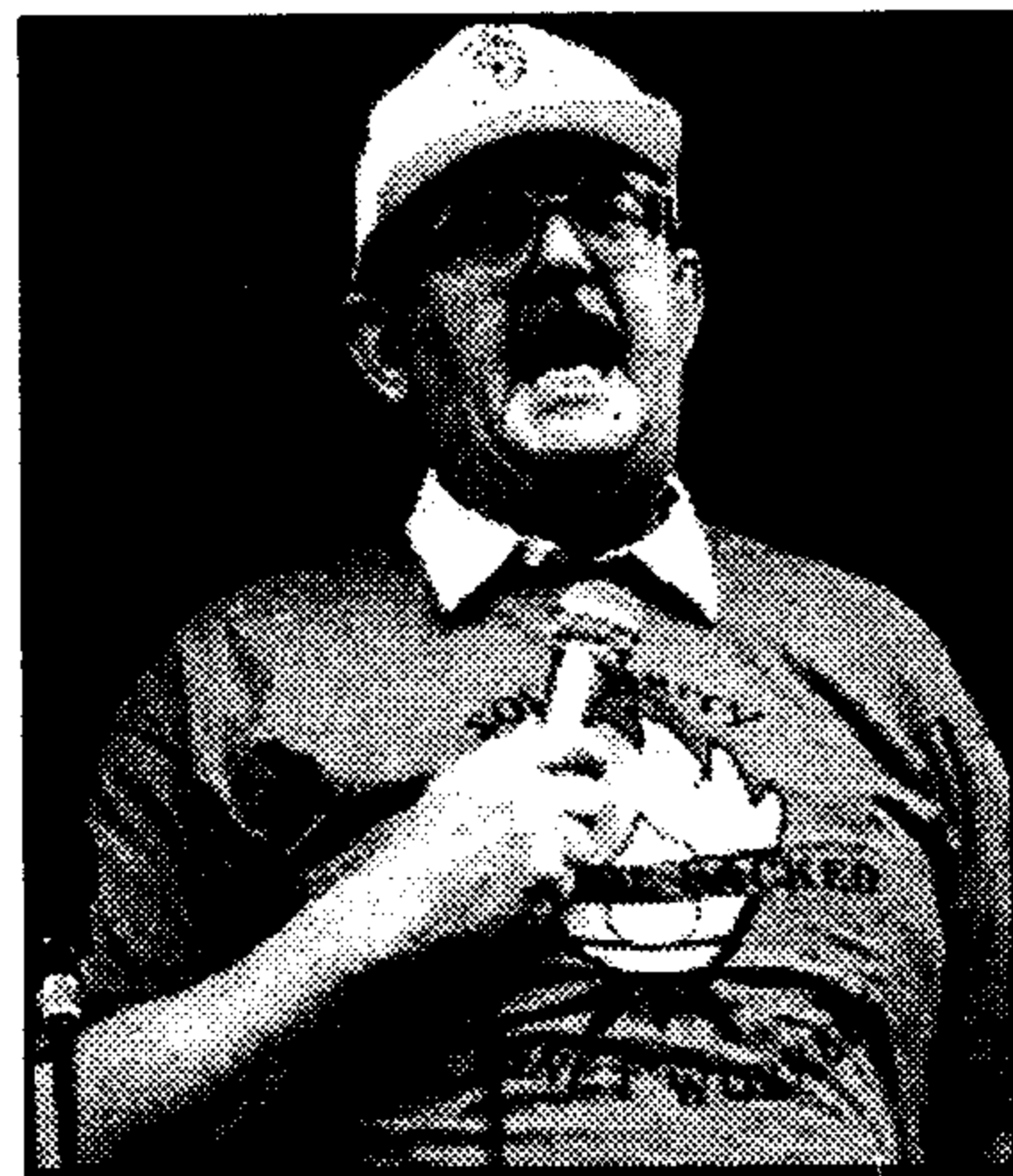
Organise fight for a living wage

Simon Deville

THE LOW Wage commission has finally made its proposals for a minimum wage - a pitiful £3.60 an hour with an even more disgraceful £3.20 an hour for under 21 year olds.

At the announcement of the figures some "left" trade union leaders such as John Edmonds complained that the figure was too low and that it discriminates against young workers. Such public statements however, are simply a sop to union members across the country who will be quite rightly outraged at these proposals.

From way before the general election all trade union leaders have fought tooth and nail against their membership committing the union movement to a specific figure. At the TUC many union leaders completely ignored their own



£3.60 an hour wouldn't keep big-talker John Edmonds in pies

mandates in order that TUC representatives did not have "their hands tied" in negotiations.

Having entered negotiations, with the CBI attempting to set the figure as low as possible, the trade union leadership has been intent on reaching a compromise with their "partners in industry", rather than

fighting for a minimum wage that will afford their members a decent standard of living.

It is extremely unlikely that the Labour leadership will introduce minimum wage legislation that goes against the proposals of the commission that they set up, unless they are faced with a mass campaign of opposition. If the TUC are serious about their claims to want a higher, single figure regardless of age then they must be made to put their money where their mouth is and start to organise such a campaign.

Rank and file trade unionists must not let the leadership get away with rhetoric and sound-bites. We must start to organise a campaign now that involves the whole trade union movement and that demands no discrimination against younger workers and a minimum wage set at least at half male median earnings.

Islington council's "equal right" - to be sacked!

by Elkie Dee

ISLINGTON Council sacked twelve striking workers on May 27, signalling the determination of management and the Council's leadership to get tough on workers and the unions which represent them.

The strikers are Housing Needs Officers, who work with homeless people and deal with rehousing applications. The strike was in response to the dismissal, under cover of a restructuring of the Housing Needs Section, of eight workers.

All the Housing Needs Officers had been made to reapply for their own jobs, and put through interviews and written tests, including the UNISON branch secretary, Rob Murthwaite, who is blind.

He refused to sit the test on the grounds that it would put at him at a serious disadvantage. Under disability discrimination legislation, disabled workers should not be required to sit such tests.

Initially, UNISON members within Housing Needs boycotted the selection procedure, and tests and interviews were postponed, but it did eventually take place.

A number of jobs within the section were advertised in the *Guardian* before the procedure had been completed, and in the light of what has occurred since, this suggests some anticipation that there were going to be dismissals. The union was at this point balloting the section for strike action against the restructuring.

Equal opportunities

Eight workers, mostly black and ethnic minority women, were handed letters at work telling them that they had been found unappointable to their own jobs. One was handed it in the middle of an interview with a homeless family.

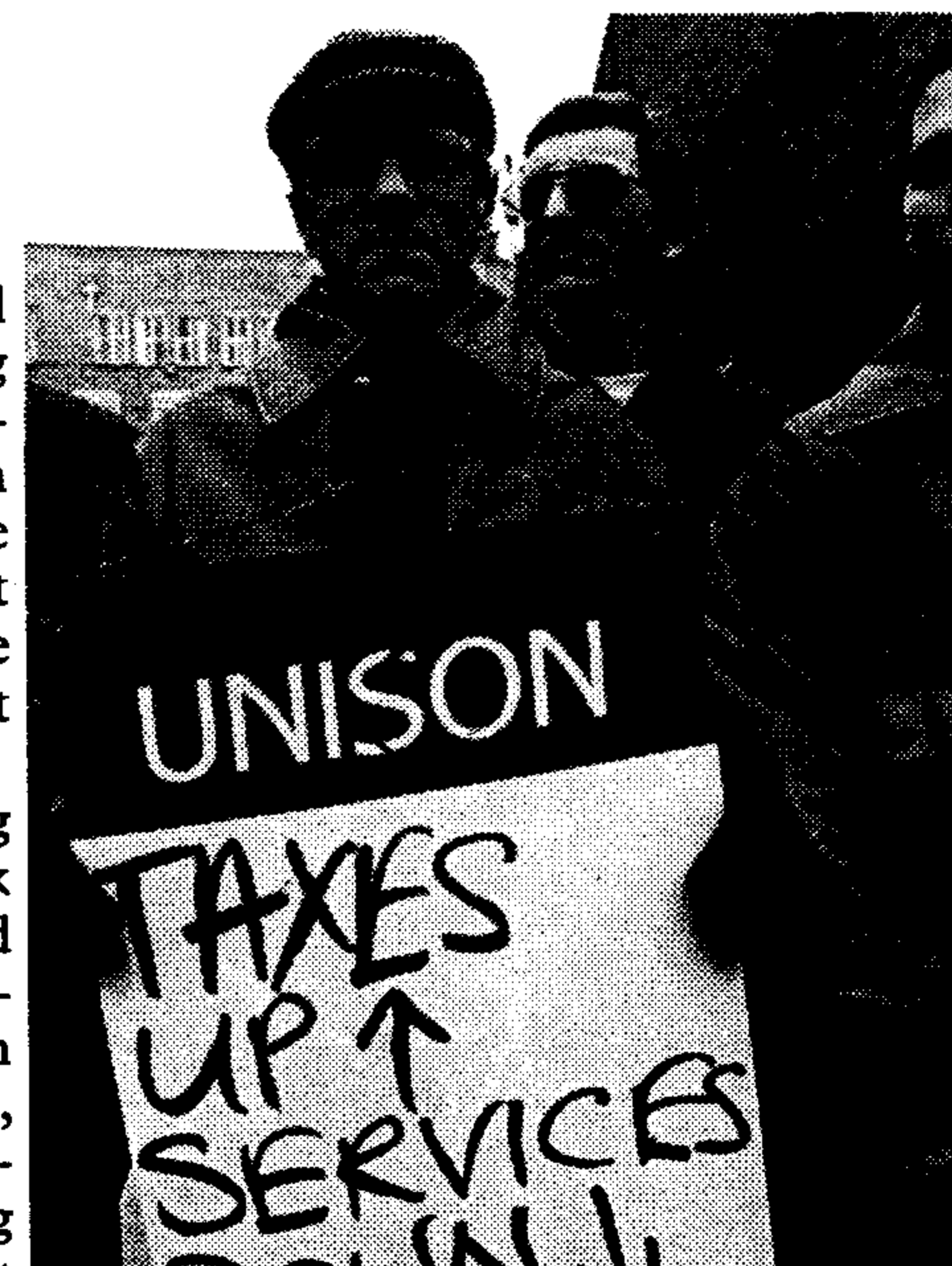
On the same day, the result of the section ballot was announced - a unanimous vote for action.

Incensed by their treatment, the strikers walked out on Monday May 18, without giving the Council the 7 days notice required by law. Some returned or told managers of other reasons for not being at work on Tuesday.

The union told the Council that the strikers would return to work. On Wednesday, 12 of the strikers received letters at home informing them that they had been sacked, with no right of appeal, for taking part in illegal industrial action, and thus breaking their contracts of employment.

The branch is now planning to ballot all its members for action in protest at the sackings, and there is a rally in Islington on Saturday June 6.

This dispute must be seen in the context of the determination



Another familiar theme of New Labour councils

of the Council's senior management and political leadership to drive through cuts and implement its policies as it wishes.

The chief executive, Leisha Fullick, maintains that this is the kind of action the council is absolutely right to take as part of my drive to "modernise".

Further, since the recent election, Labour only controls the council on the casting vote of the mayor, bringing fierce competition between the Liberal Democrats and Labour over who can attack the workers most effectively.

This also ties in with the desire of the council leadership to implement New Labour policies such as Best Value and PFI projects successfully. The Labour government has made it clear that it expects councils to cooperate with policies of tight control over public spending by making services more efficient (ie cutting them).

Like the struggles of Camden library workers and Tameside care workers which we have recently reported on, this struggle and its outcome are of crucial political importance.

Another group of Islington UNISON members, Special Education workers at Rosemary School, are striking over Rosemary School governors' refusal to pay a special allowance for their work.

This low-waged group of workers have campaigned for four years for this top up allowance which is paid to similar groups of workers in other special schools.

The governors have the money but are refusing to pay it. Requests for speakers should again be sent to Islington UNISON.

UNISON protest rally in Islington, Saturday June 6

Send messages of support and requests for speakers to Islington UNISON c/o Northway House, 257-258 Upper Street, London N1 2UD. Phone 0171-477 2489/2490/2491. Fax: 0171-477 2767.

Fax protests to Andy Jennings, Chief Housing Officer, Islington, 0171-477-4198.

London yes to a mayor: but who will get the job?

LONDONERS voted yes on May 7 to Tony Blair's scheme for a directly elected mayor and a small largely powerless London Authority.

Despite the claims to it being a revolutionary initiative, it clearly didn't enthuse the voters. Only about 30% bothered to vote and 25% of them voted no, despite the absence of a no campaign.

Under Blair's union recognition proposals this would mean the scheme had been rejected, but no such thought crosses the government's mind.

On the contrary, not only are they planning to introduce similar proposals for other cities, but Hammersmith and Fulham Council has already announced, without any kind of voter endorsement, that they are moving to such a set up.

Socialists need to learn the lessons of the London fiasco and

ensure they get their opposition to such proposals in early. Unions and Labour Parties should commit themselves to opposing their introduction, and if necessary mounting a substantial campaign against them.

In London the debate moves on to questions of how the mayor and assembly will be elected and precisely what they will be able to do.

London Labour Party members, refused any say in whether the capital should have such a mayor by the manoeuvres of the national party, now have to address the question of how the Party's candidate for mayor will be selected.

The hierarchy are making it as clear as possible that Ken Livingstone (and possibly even the gaffe-prone Tony Banks) will not be allowed to stand for selection if they can help it.

Having forced through the pro-

posals for a mayor with super powers, they now want to ensure that the person who holds them will not challenge the government in any way.

Articles are being encouraged in the media rubbishing the record of the Greater London Council under Livingstone's leadership as a way of undermining his campaign.

If Party members (and this includes trade unionists) are to have a proper choice of Party candidates for the election, then the pressure has to be built up now, without waiting until the leadership presents a sanitised list for members to choose between clones.

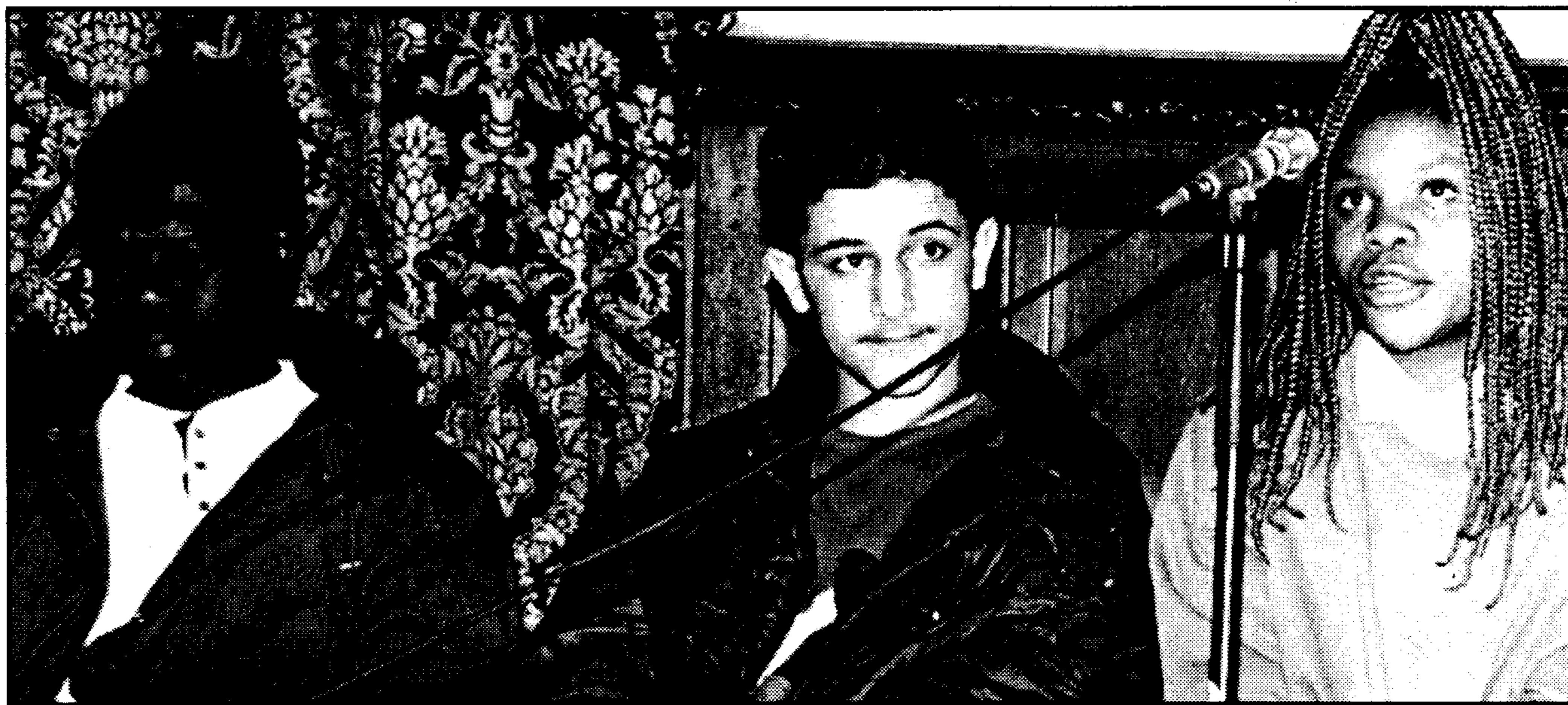
Unions and Parties have to demand a democratic selection procedure in which all candidates nominated by a certain minimum number of constituencies are placed on the ballot paper without preconditions.

Fighting Labour's racist laws

A PRESS CONFERENCE and a lobby of Parliament were held on April 29 by the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, as the "New" Labour government digs in to defend the racist laws of its Tory predecessors.

Among those on the platform of the press conference were Abdul Onibiyo - a victim of deportation under the Tories whose genuine status as a political refugee was belatedly recognised after a bitter campaign- and Bayo Omiyiola, a Liverpool City Council housing officer who also faced deportation to Nigeria.

The lobby was supported by a number of campaigns, but still needs much stronger backing from the wider labour and trade union movement to force a change in government policies.



Labour's NEC election

Use campaign to build the Left

Pete Firmin

ALL SIX candidates on the Left/Centre-Left slate for election to the Constituency section of the NEC have received at least the requisite 3 nominations from different Party regions. Several have received many more.

The leadership has also put up a slate of the great and the good - Council leaders, media stars and the like.

They are rumoured to be organising a team of students to use the phones at Labour's headquarters to call members, encouraging them to vote for the favoured candidates.

A further indication that they are prepared to pull out all the stops is shown by the fact that MPs have been handed ballot papers for their section of the NEC with the leadership's candidates printed in!

A substantial vote, or even victory for the Left in the election would not in itself change much - it is only for a section of an NEC, which has anyway been sidelined in terms of its ability to take decisions in favour of the Joint Policy Forum with an in-built leadership majority.

Such a result would, however, indicate a growing rejection of the government's policies.

The task for the left in the

next three months is to ensure the biggest possible campaign for the candidates. This does not simply mean a drive to get members to vote in the one member one vote election for the candidates, but to use the election to organise the opposition.

The election of several, or even all six, candidates will not mean much if the campaign is not used to organise their support.

Weak platform

The political platform on which the six candidates are standing is very weak, but they should be encouraged to speak out on their own views which go well beyond this, and the Network of Socialist Campaign groups will be producing leaflets spelling out the key issues in the election.

Emphasis needs to be put on linking up with those involved in the unions and single issue campaigns around key policies.

Several campaign groups and other left bodies around the country are already planning meetings with candidates and supportive MPs in July (precedent suggests ballot papers will be sent out towards the end of July).

These need to be organised in all towns and regions to widen the audience for alternative politics.

Local Elections

Labour maintains its hold, but left vote has risen

Neil Murray

Despite the many attacks meted out on working people since last year's General election, local election results on May 7 in general confirmed Labour's hold on local government and continuing popularity among voters.

Blair will undoubtedly be pleased that May continues to be a month of celebration for him.

The low turnout can be put down to several factors. As the powers of local government diminish more and more, fewer and fewer voters see much point in turning out to vote. Central government determines more and more what local government can do and its spending powers, so the cynical don't see much point in voting.

While Labour's proportion of the vote held up, there was obviously no great wave of enthusiasm to turn out. Disillusionment with the government is setting in, without people particularly turning to the Tories or Liberal Democrats, or as yet, seeing a credible left alternative.

Where councils and seats did change hands, this was often due to local factors. The Liberal Democrats often very active on local 'bread and butter' issues tended to gain where Labour had been discredited locally. The Tories are held in contempt and the morale of their local activists remains at an all time low.

The changes in control were certainly not uniform even in London. The Tories increased their hold on Wandsworth reaping the benefit of exceptionally low council tax. The Liberal Democrats nearly took Islington Council from Labour because of the high council tax combined with poor services - Labour hung on to control purely by the casting vote of the outgoing mayor.

Brent went from no overall control (a Lib/Lab coalition) to a 20 seat Labour majority. In Hackney, which has seen a major split in the Labour group with defections to both the Tories and Liberal Democrats, Labour kept control of the Council, but the

outgoing leader lost his seat to the Green Party.

Elsewhere, Labour didn't make the gains it had hoped for (though some of this might have been hype to cover for expected losses), and lost control of Sheffield to the Liberal Democrats. Here again, the Labour leader of the Council lost his seat. The Liberal Democrat gains seem to be due to disgust at Labour's cuts in council services and privatisation policies.

As far as the Labour leadership is concerned, there are no real lessons from the election results other than complacency. They claim, contrary to much evidence, that 'New Labour' candidates did better than 'Old Labour' ones.

The gimmicky attempt to boost turnout by putting a polling sta-

tion Labour councils are saying they will be making further cuts.

The votes of left-of-Labour candidates varied enormously, but some of them got a significantly higher proportion of the vote than was the case in the general election a year ago.

Most noticeably, Dave Nellist, ex-MP and Socialist Party candidate, got elected in Coventry with 55% of the vote. Ian Page, a former Labour Councillor who joined the Socialist Party, got 38% of the vote in a Lewisham ward in South London. Other candidates got highly respectable results. Others, however, got derisory votes.

While these results also vary with local circumstances (thus, the SLP got some of its best results in Newham, where Labour holds every Council seat, and was therefore not under any kind of threat), overall they indicate that some space is opening up for socialist candidates critical of the government's (and local council's) policies.

But this can only really be realised where a real campaign is built and the candidate is well known.

For instance, in Leeds, the Socialist Party's candidate who is part of the campaign against the stadium development did better than the others. Many left-of-Labour candidates who simply put out one leaflet (if that) got tiny votes. The space is there to build a left opposition to the government, but it has to be worked for, not assumed.

Disillusionment with the government is setting in, without people particularly turning to the Tories or Liberal Democrats, or as yet, seeing a credible left alternative.

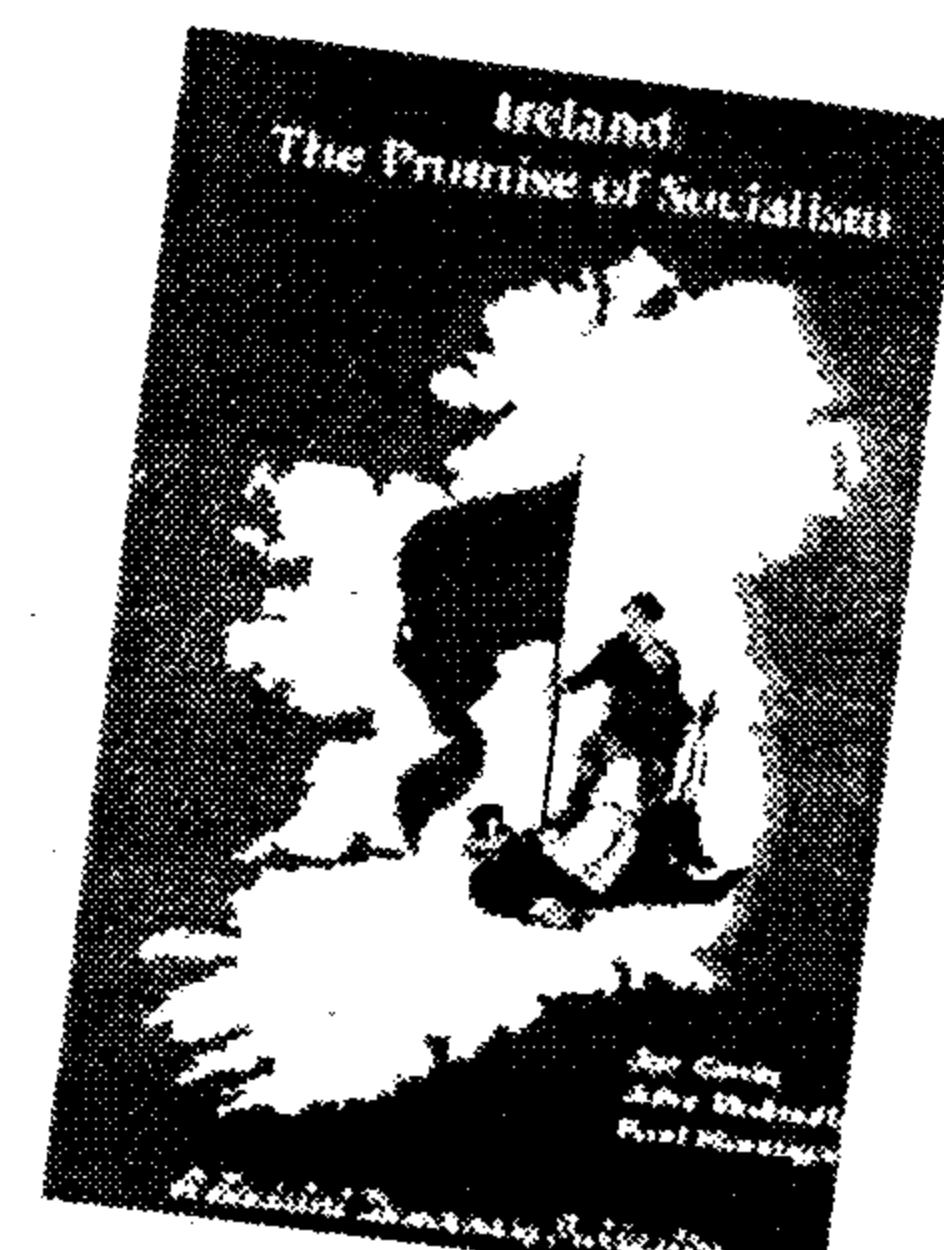
tion in a supermarket was a dismal failure (turnout was no higher than at traditional places). Already, within weeks of the elec-

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July 5 anniversary looms

NHS: a birthday or a funeral?

John Lister

ON THE EVE of its 50 birthday, the National Health Service is under massive pressure.

As health authorities and Trusts grapple with the cuts in spending required to balance the books by April 1999, indications from around the country suggest a new, concerted management drive to reduce the number of front-line acute beds and slash the number of general and community hospitals.

Health Secretary Frank Dobson's obvious embarrassment at the government's breach of its far from ambitious promise to cut waiting lists for hospital treatment is leading to a series of mutually incompatible and increasingly impossible demands on NHS Trusts.

On the one hand he has insisted that they prioritise emergency treatment, and the new government's allocation of £300m last winter was specifically targeted in this direction.

But with ever fewer beds remaining open in hospitals, priority for emergency admission necessarily means delaying the admission and treatment of "elective" patients on the waiting list.

Now ministers have thrown in another lump of money, with orders that it should be used to reduce the numbers waiting: but with only peanuts to spend – insufficient to open extra beds – this must mean that the extra patients "cleared" from the waiting list will be only the cheapest and most minor cases, who can be treated as day cases and sent home to nurse themselves.

Meanwhile health authorities seeking to minimise the size of waiting lists are resorting to other, more covert measures, including the wholesale exclusion of certain types of treatment, and imposing strict limits on the numbers receiving certain types of operation.

Dobson's attempts to resolve

the problem of "bed blocking" by giving extra cash to social services to arrange the discharge of frail elderly patients to nursing homes is also riddled with contradictions. Lack of suitable places, social service budget cuts and the weakness of GP services are leading to ever more elderly patients filling the beds which Dobson's cash emptied last winter. Meanwhile the NHS has increasingly abdicated from any responsibility to provide continuing care for the frail elderly – the generation which built and paid for the NHS.

While this represents a major change from the NHS since the time of its foundation, one area which has been constantly neglected is mental health care. Since 1961 successive governments have spoken of the advantages of community care – but failed to deliver the cash required to make it work.

New Labour is no exception and campaigners are furious



On the campaign trail: 12,000 marched through Kidderminster to defend their hospital against closure as Worcestershire HA seeks to axe over 300 beds.

that the £500m they had been led to expect for mental health services over the next few years will not be available: only a fraction of this amount will be grudgingly handed over.

The carefully leaked rumours that tight-fisted Gordon Brown was about to come up with a £6bn or £8bn handout for the NHS should also be taken with a shovel-full of salt. Such sums would be significant if provided over and above inflation: but if NHS spending is to rise by only £6bn in cash terms over the next three years, this would represent a bigger cut than the Tories ever made.

The heat is on. Labour wants health authorities to balance their books by next year so that

they can persuade increasingly sceptical GPs to take over a growing responsibility for purchasing services. But the desperate measures required to cut around £500m from spending during a single year has triggered angry campaigns across the country, while it threatens to axe more health workers jobs.

As NHS bosses pass round the vol-au-vents and sing hymns in the church services to mark the NHS birthday, they will be keeping their calculators warm for the next round of cuts.

£6-£8 billion above inflation would be a real birthday present for the NHS: anything less will be another miserable betrayal of Labour's mandate for change.

EAZs: a Trojan Horse for privatisation of schools

Gill Lee, Officer, Lewisham Teachers' Association

EDUCATION Action Zones threaten to undermine teachers' national pay and conditions; introduce business involvement and the profit-motive into the running of state education; and increase social inequality in education.

On May 9 around 80 activists gathered in London to build a campaign against the EAZs. Those present recognised that the EAZs represent a 'Trojan horse' which, in the name of tackling social disadvantage, will actually enshrine inequality while introducing business interests directly into the state education system.

The Campaign is a response to the defeat on EAZs at the National Union of Teachers Conference at Easter which failed to adopt a strategy of all out opposition to the Zones. Instead the Broad Left (ie right wing) Executive's 'new realist' policy of 'constructive engagement' was adopted.

Delegates were told that Blair was too authoritative, too determined, and had too much international prestige to back down under union pressure, and that total opposition to EAZs would leave the union marginalised.

Many of those present on May 9

were from areas which have formulated bids and a number of key features quickly became apparent. Many of the bids have been formulated in secret, with parents and teachers in targeted schools often unaware a bid had been drawn up.

Businesses involved in the Zones are aiming to make indirect profits by involving teachers in using educational materials they have drawn up which will promote products or particular viewpoints.

For example in Lewisham, Carlton Television will be a partner in the bid, presumably using working class pupils in the EAZ area as guinea pigs for new educational programmes.

In other areas business partners aim to extract more direct profits. The Edison project, which runs 25 schools in the States and is negotiating with four local authorities in England – Tameside and three others which prefer not to be named, has helped the US charter schools initiative siphon off £35 million from state expenditure this year alone.

The Labour government's proposal to allow business to make profit out of education is part of their so-called 'third way' eco-

nomic policy which allows the restructuring of public finance to the benefit of private companies.

It builds on the blossoming Private Finance Initiatives in education which allow the ownership and management of schools to come under the private sector.

The PFI bid for Pimlico School in Westminster is to replace the existing school and the 22 million contract is for 25 years. The winner of the bid will take over cleaning, dinner staff, IT, CDT, Art, school keeping and other jobs; everything except teaching itself.

All the existing staff will lose their jobs, and have to reapply for them. In "exchange" for the investment, between 25% and 40% of the school playground will be sold off for luxury housing.

In Lewisham catering firm Chartwell's is about to take over the management of school meals and will spend £4.5 million upgrading run-down school kitchens and canteens. In exchange they would like to introduce outlets for Kentucky Fried Chicken and Taco Bell in schools.

In Ealing repairs to buildings are under a PFI contract which allow only one firm to repair school buildings, reputedly for

exorbitant fees. The battle of the Hillingdon workers with Pall Mall should tell us the conditions and pay that workers can expect once private firms are allowed to take over what have previously been publicly owned services.

While the EAZ initiative at least represents a recognition on the Government's part that social deprivation and educational achievement are linked, the Zones look for the solution in the wrong place – private industry – and through the wrong prism.

The solution offered is for working class pupils to spend more time in school (an extra 2 hours in many Bids) and less in their homes and communities, since these are seen as the barriers to achievement.

In so far as the Bids address the nature of education, they enshrine social inequality rather than challenge it. Each EAZ will contain a specialist school. Those proposed so far seek to specialise in sports or performing arts.

This narrow, stereotyped view of the talent of working class pupils is reinforced by the power of the EAZs to disapply the National Curriculum and the proposal in many Zones to substitute a narrow vocationalist curriculum of extended work experience, literacy and numeracy.

In a context in which the

In "exchange" for the investment, between 25% and 40% of the school playground will be sold off for luxury housing

In other areas business partners aim to extract more direct profits.

majority of middle class pupils receive the 'gold standard' of the National Curriculum, pupils receiving a reduced curriculum will be less likely to find jobs or further educational opportunities.

The danger is that in using the rhetoric of deprivation, in promising some extra money for EAZ schools (which will largely be swallowed up in extra salaries for superheads and the provision of services "in kind" by the private sector partners) and in promising a work-based curriculum to parents who fear unemployment for their kids, Labour is driving a wedge between teachers and parents.

In building opposition to the EAZs teachers should be ready to engage in a debate with parents about why the current education system is failing working class pupils and why the EAZs are no solution.

Activists at the May 9 Conference agreed a series of measures to draw attention to the EAZs, including local public meetings, a national demonstration and a fringe meeting at Labour Party Conference.

A reconvened steering committee will be held on June 13 in Manchester Mechanics Institute at 1.30pm.

Rail: on track for June offensive

Greg Tucker

TRACK engineering workers in seven companies spanning the country have overwhelmingly voted for industrial action.

As we go to press, the ballot results from workers in three other companies are expected to see similar endorsement of the RMT's campaign for decent wages and conditions. A special Engineering Conference on 6th June will discuss what action should be taken.

At the same time a ballot of RMT members on LUL will conclude. The time has come to start to fight back against privatisation.

The RMT has already notched up one major victory this month. Train Crew on South West Trains were facing the introduction of Driver Only Operation (DOO) which would have resulted in the loss of some hundreds of jobs, with worse conditions for those left to pick up the work.



After a strong campaign amongst the membership a ballot endorsed strike action by a massive majority. Faced with a united workforce the company was forced to back down.

They abandoned their plans and are now having to dismantle equipment at every station they had just installed at great expense.

This is the first time in twelve years that DOO has been stopped through industrial action.

It is a clear indication of how vulnerable the new rail companies are.

However, the engineering workers' dispute will not be solved so easily. The two to one vote for action to win decent pay and conditions now has to be translated into an effective campaign of action. It is clear that one-day strikes here and there will not work.

The engineering companies have already laid plans to deal with such sporadic action. The special Engineering Conference must recognise that long term action will be necessary. At a minimum this means striking for a week at a time, if not all out. This will have to be fought for throughout the country.

From the meetings held in the build up to the ballot, it is clear that the activist membership in many areas is preparing for such a struggle.

But to be translated into



Remember when Labour leaders marched with the rail workers?

reality the whole membership will need to be convinced that the Union is wholly committed to their struggle.

Meetings and rallies organised through the RMT, but also bringing in the wider movement, will be vital in preparing the ground over the next weeks for the solidarity campaigns that will be needed when action starts.

How Adams cooked his own goose

A Brighton Aslef member

THE RECENT General Secretary election in ASLEF saw Lew Adams defeated by SLP supporter Dave ("Mick") Rix. This opens up opportunities for the left as a whole.

For many members, the rot started with the 1995 pay deal. A series of one-day strikes for a "substantial pay increase", the last chance nationally before privatisation, were called off after two days, for a rise below inflation and a promise of restructuring.

On Connex South Central (London suburban and Sussex coast), Adams called off a rest day ban last summer, despite overwhelming support, on flimsy promises from Connex management.

As this was during ASLEF conference, he needed their agreement to do this. He told them that Connex had "totally surrendered", that their negotiating team had been replaced and their proposals for restructuring torn up and begun afresh.

The representatives for the negotiations were not even consulted. The next week, when they went back, they found business as usual.

Adams' closeness to the Labour leadership did not help him either. Despite widespread anger at Labour's plans for privatising London Underground, he has equivocated. He also ditched ASLEF's demands for renationalisation of BR, at Blair's request, and sat on disputes in the run-up to the general election.

Indeed, in those disputes that have taken place, he sought to direct anger away from management and onto the RMT.

At times this was just ignored, but at others he has created an atmosphere of bitterness over recruitment that promised to lead to all-out war, with ASLEF taking a right-wing company union role.

Mick Rix, to his credit, has opposed this sectarianism, and will hopefully capitalise on the anger at privatisation, restructuring and Labour's record.

Rail engineers signal new militancy

by a Shovel Hand

THERE IS no doubt that the experience of two years plus of privatisation has opened the eyes of most of our members to the realities of the situation.

There is almost universal condemnation of blatant favouritism in the form of so-called "suitability", asset-stripping activities, victimisation and harassment of elected union representatives and rank and file members, and constant erosion and attacks on rights at work, transport and allowances generally.

The restructuring plans of the privatised rail maintenance companies are little more than a sick joke. All documents have presented to RMT a farrago of

assaults on sociable working hours, hard-won allowances and transport to work facilities and financial losses in take home pay to the tune of a hundred pounds plus.

So our members are faced with a prospect of losing out in every area that makes life worthwhile or at least bearable and getting a de facto pay cut on top, just to rub insult into injury.

RMT's counter-proposals, known as "The Blue Book", seek to put the skids under such proposals.

Our members are sick of the constant refrain of threats to pull out and lose contracts as if they themselves would be to blame if this should come about. Outside

agency labour is already being used to undermine our members.

The "Yes" vote will to a great extent put the TUC and Labour leadership under the spotlight, not least because there is a great deal of public sympathy for workers in conflict with privatisation cowboys.

A direct confrontation is in the offing with the privatised companies and a consequent indirect one with New Labour generally. It will be the first national rail stoppage since the signalworkers humiliated the Tories in 1994 and is thus of

great significance.

All socialists, trade unionists, trades councils and those sympathetic to us must organise and rally to us in the current dispute.

Additionally, from the recent development of left wing advances within railway trade unionism (eg the victory of Dave Rix of the SLP in ASLEF) there is a prospect of forming a strong industrial union uniting all grades of railworkers for the first time ever in history, thus ending the endemic sectionalism that has hamstrung our movements for so long.

There is a great deal of public sympathy for workers in conflict with privatisation cowboys

Tube privatisation - industrial action the key

THE TORIES may have privatised British Rail, but privatising London Underground is all New Labour's own work. For all the talk of a "Third Way", it is clear that John Prescott's plans are no different than the Tories'.

When BR was sold off, Knapp led the RMT into a dead end - with a policy of holding back on any action, waiting until Labour is in office and hoping everything would be put to rights.

The bankruptcy of that strategy is now obvious to all. This time round there can be no excuses. The only way to defend tube workers is through industrial action.

The RMT will announce the result of a ballot of its LUL members on June 3. A positive result will lead to action.

The task of winning the ballot has been made harder by Prescott's strategy.

Instead of a clear sell-off he has opted to focus in the first instance on privatising the LUL infras-

structure workforce. Train crew and station staff are being fed the lie that their jobs will be protected.

But leaked documents from LUL management show that all staff will ultimately be affected, and that even in the short term they have been given the green light by the government to launch an attack on all tube workers' jobs and conditions.

Every tube worker is threatened by privatisation. RMT activists have pumped that message out over the last weeks.

But a successful ballot is by no means the end of the story. LUL management, with government support, are talking of a legal challenge on the grounds that any action against privatisation is by

definition a political strike and thereby unlawful.

Whilst the RMT leadership is confident of its legal arguments it must be prepared to stand up to any such challenge by organising action in any case.

The RMT has been prepared to sponsor campaigns against the Tory (and new Labour) anti-union laws and has long had policy to oppose them in action. In this instance it has no alternative.

Knapp's strategy of quiet lobbying of the government has clearly failed: not even one of the RMT's sponsored

MPs was prepared to come out in opposition to Prescott's plan. Industrial action co-ordinated with action by the ex-BR engineering workers gives the best hope of success.

Leaked documents from LUL management show that all staff will be affected by privatisation

Not peace, but imperialist pacification!



PEACE AT LAST! That's the popular conception of the vote on the Stormont agreement. Tony Blur, walking on water across the Irish sea, persuades the warring tribes to shake hands.

If that sounds like the old racist stereotype of the Irish question that's because it IS the old stereotype reborn, serving as cover for a policy as reactionary as any in the new labour arsenal - the pacification of Ireland.

The problem for socialists is that the outcome of the Irish referenda was a triumph for imperialism and a mass endorsement of its policy, a triumph made greater because it marked publicly the political collapse of the republican movement.

The central element of the British triumph is the return of Stormont, "improved" by a promise that some elements of sectarian privilege will be reserved for the nationalists and that they will have a protective veto.

The second element is that the British will become invisible. The Stormont shield will disguise the fact that they retain direct control of the sectarian statelet through security and finance.

The third element is the global acceptance of the unionist veto over democratic change on the island which the British can now argue represents the exercise of Irish self-determination and removes that issue from political discourse and the history books.

The bourgeois nationalists get stability, an advisory role for Dublin and junior partnership for the SDLP in the running of the sectarian northern assembly. The unionists get a restoration of power and increased sectarian privilege.

The promise of a lesser level of sectarian privilege for the SDLP was enough to ensure that the bigots got almost 50% of the unionist vote. The deal was so embarrassingly pro-unionist that Paisley was reduced to complaining about prisoner remission and the fact that Sinn Fein was likely to be a very junior partner in the executive!

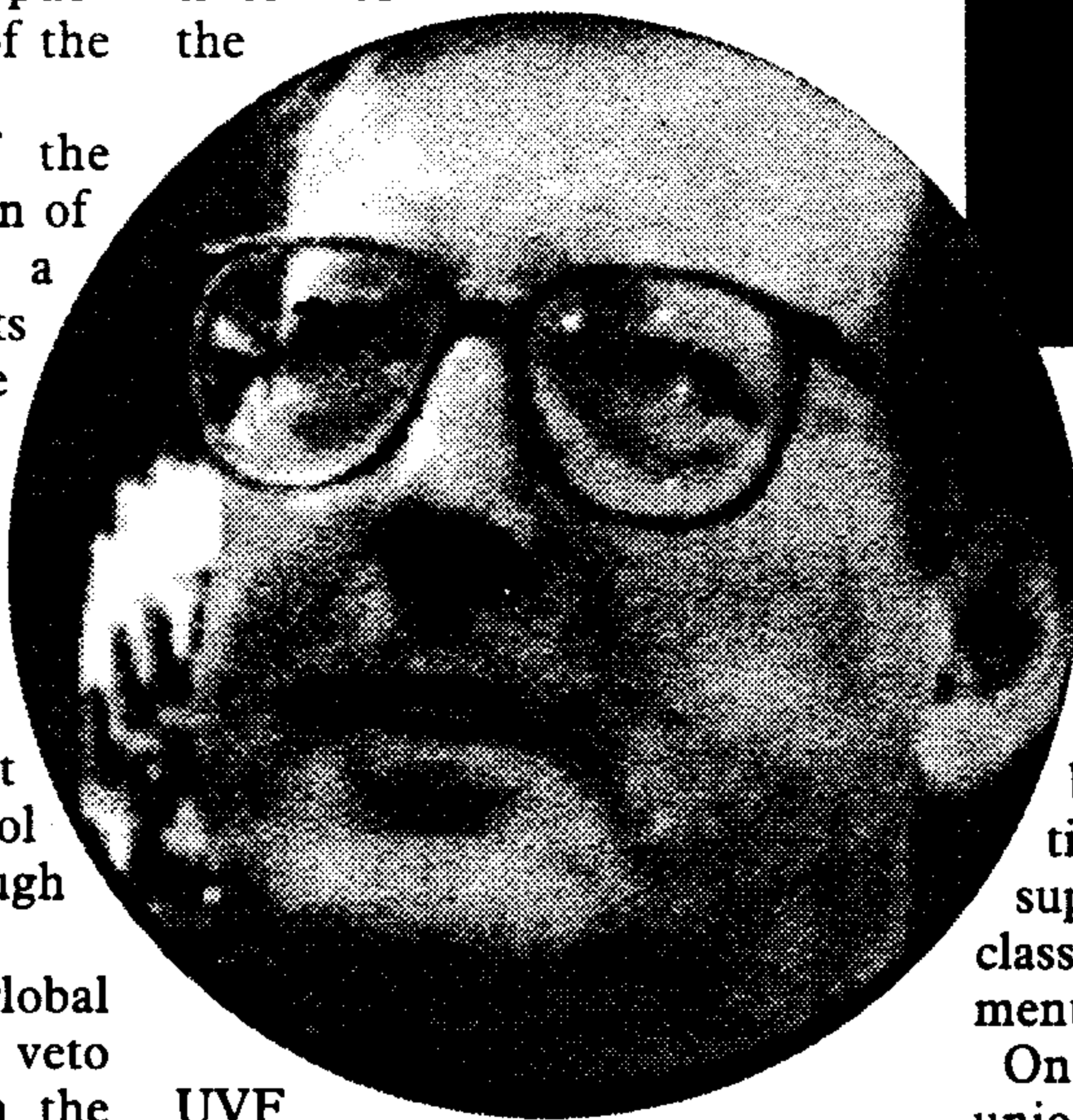
For the republican movement their endorsement of the deal was a clear indication of what the whole peace process had been for them - a gradual process of assimilation by the politics of bourgeois nationalism.

This means participation in a

process of re-establishing British rule in the North with a new program of reformism around a promised "equality" agenda as vague and ambiguous as the proposals on Stormont are sharp and unambiguous.

On the back of the republican collapse has come a whole tide of reaction. The Women's Coalition, a post-modernist feminist organisation that has dispensed with the need for a programme, has, with the help of the Communist Party, established itself as the "left" of the peace process.

Together they are helping to give a leg-up to the representatives of the



UUVF death squads in the "Progressive" Unionist Party and establish them as the "left" representatives of Protestant workers.

The far left have fared little better. The Socialist Party, formerly Militant Labour, held a meeting immediately after the deal was agreed and denounced it as institutionalising sectarianism.

However their conclusion was to call for a 'yes' vote on the grounds that this would give

the working class a breathing space. This fits in well with their call for a Stormont parliament strong enough to bring in socialism!

The Socialist Worker's party re-established themselves as un-serious, denouncing a "bosses' settlement" - as if that were the only problem with an imperialist victory that handed power back to the bigots!

They ignored a request for united action from Socialist Democracy, and a week later were meeting to discuss "the lessons of May 1968". The lessons of May 1998 seem to be beyond them.



Offering nothing to nationalists: Mowlem and Trimble

British strategy had been all along to get moderate unionism to accept some sharing of sectarian privilege so that it could continue with a mass loyalist base to support its occupation and still draw upon the support of the catholic middle classes and the Dublin government.

One of its problems was that unionist "moderation" was represented by the hero of Drumcree, Trimble. In the end the British played the Orange card, publicly endorsing the unionist case during a spate of loyalist killings and forcing Dublin to accept Trimble's 'heads of agreement' as the basis for settlement rather than the original framework deal.

Paisley and the others who could not be reconciled wanted the old unionist program - military repression of all nationalist opinion and a full and undiluted expression of their sectarian privilege.

Loyalist consent

The problem of a settlement based on loyalist consent quickly became evident. The fact that imperialism was assured of a majority 'yes' on both sides of the border was not enough.

The only democratic mandate that would count would be a majority within the Protestant/unionist community. The campaign became a mass intervention by the British government to conciliate the bigots without actually conceding to them.

Blair bent the agreement inside out to assure the far right that

Sinn Fein would be humiliated when it tried to enter the executive.

Interpretation of the vote in the North is not easy. There was no division into electoral wards and only the overall percentage was recorded. However the overall vote of just over 71% indicates success for the British, with a slim majority of unionists supporting the deal.

The difficulty in winning unionist support is an indication

of the overall instability of British rule, but in the short term divisions within the "no" unionists should erode their effectiveness.

They will however have the potential to wreck the agreement if they achieve a high assembly vote so the British will need more conciliation of the bigots, more sweeteners for Trimble and so on through the election, the setting up of the assembly and indefinitely into the future.

The nationalist vote in the North was overwhelmingly in favour, with a no vote of 4-5% and a high turnout. This indicates that Sinn Fein has managed to dump its programme and bring its base with it: the republican opposition is small and isolated.

In part this is because there is a "new" Sinn Fein that offers a material base for reformism in a large community and voluntary sector funded by British and European money.

There are however many problems ahead for Sinn Fein. The base for reformism is not a base for reform and there is no way that the needs of their working class supporters can be met in the sectarian hell-hole the North is re-inventing.

At the moment pragmatism (in reality opportunism) rules all, with Gerry Adams telling the Ard Feis to vote 'yes' (for the leadership) and "whatever way you like" in the referendum. The belief is that a growing Sinn Fein vote will destabilise unionism and force the British to step in and improve things. A drop in the Sinn Fein vote would tend to

destabilise this, and this is a possibility with "old" Sinn Fein, who provided the base of the machine, quietly retiring.

The vote in the South to amend the constitution and recognise the unionist veto, with a 'yes' vote routinely in the high 80s or 90s, appears overwhelming and will be used by pro-imperialist forces to argue that the Irish working class were given their right to self-determination and chose to negate it.

It's important to remember that all the major parties in the South, including Sinn Fein, united to tell workers that the yes vote was a vote for peace.

In these circumstances, with northern nationalist workers appearing to endorse the vote and in the absence of struggle what's surprising was the low turn-out of just over 60% and the fact that nearly 10% voted against.

In the same poll, on an issue on which many workers had a clearer view of their own interests - the Amsterdam treaty - the yes vote was down to 60%.

When Bernadette McAliskey visited America after the Stormont deal she was asked by US socialists what could be done now. Her answer was; "Two things. We have to look for opportunities to mobilise people on specific issues, even limited ones.

Analysis

"We also try to engage in political discussion, encourage people to examine the basic realities of the relationship between Ireland and England. We need analysis and new thinking. It has been a problem in the Irish movement for some time that there has been little study of history or political discussion. This has got to be overcome.

"The deeper the understanding that people have of the basic issues, the less likely they are to be misled. This is the first step that has to be taken before we can start to move forward again."

Socialist Democracy will be part of such a regroupment. We will bring to it a class analysis that enabled us to understand correctly the evolution of the peace process from the Hume-Adams talks to the political collapse of republicanism.

We will struggle for the independence and self-organisation of the working class and we will from the beginning try to root out the illusion in militarism and nationalist unity that even republican opponents of the peace process cling to.

The unionists get a restoration of power and increased sectarian privilege

Arms race to secure right wing rulers

Terry Conway

Those who failed to understand the significance of the recent Indian elections have been forced to pay attention by the rush to nuclear testing first by the Indian government and then in tit for tat fashion by Pakistan.

Historically India always cited the moral factor as a major reason why it would not behave like nuclear élites elsewhere. Following the installation of the BJP government - elected on a communalist programme but without an overall majority - such concerns have been unceremoniously dropped.

The BJP is happy to use the old card of war-mongering - especially in relation to Muslim Pakistan to bolster support for the illusory and reactionary dream of Hinduvata. But while the BJP have initiated tests, the ground was certainly laid by previous Congress governments and, as our Indian comrades explain below, the tests have had wide support across the political spectrum.

Indian socialist Achin Vanaik explained after India's tests: "There will now be tremendous domestic pressure on Pakistan to carry out its own test in retaliation. If this happens, which is more than likely, the pressure on India to go a step further and openly deploy nuclear weapons will become intense. Once this happens, Pakistan will follow suit and the regional nuclear arms race will begin."

In Pakistan, too, support for the tests has come across the political spectrum. As Tariq Ali pointed out in *The Guardian* (May 29) the opposition leader Benazir Bhutto had for several weeks been taunting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for hesitating before exploding bombs. She called for "rogue nations" to be taught a lesson and for a pre-emptive strike against India's nuclear installations by the West. Cricketer Imran Khan was another player in this grotesque campaign.

The actions of both governments should be roundly condemned by all socialists inside and outside the region. At the same time the left should also oppose sanctions against these countries.

As we have seen in Iraq, sanctions attack the weak and poor, not the governments and rulers - who are indeed often strengthened by them. It is completely hypocritical for the nuclear imperialist powers to impose sanctions on other countries for daring to join them.

Indian socialists warn that Bomb threatens working masses

The main enemy is at home!

Gone are the voices of discord. Congress, Janata, Samajwadi, and various regional parties are tripping over in their bid to hail the shiny, new-found national unity in the aftermath of India's nuclear explosions.

"National security" has become the watchword with which the Vajpayee government, and the [Hindu communalist] family, are seeking to mobilise public opinion.

"National security," agrees happily Mulayam Singh Yadav, ex-defence minister, spurious socialist, and supposedly the BJP's major rival.

"National security," agrees the [opposition] Congress Party, stressing that they, not the BJP, are the real father of India's nuclear teeth. And "national security," mumbles the shame-faced left. But who is threatening whom? Whose security will the nuclear explosions safeguard?

For the Indian working class, the answer is clear. The day the nuclear devices were exploded, Maoist activists were still being murdered in Bihar state by the Ranvir Sena, a private militia closely linked to the BJP.

Striking nurses in Delhi were being threatened with eviction, arrest and any number of repressive measures. Delhi University teachers, recently on strike for better pay and other benefits, were threatened with pay cuts for the period of strike.

The wave of chauvinistic nationalism has drawn in the major parties of the Indian left. The CPI and the CPI(M) have done no more than slightly distance themselves after the second round of explosions, after ensuring that their bourgeois allies will not be too upset by their criticisms.

The threat of war is always a good weapon. It whips the petty bourgeoisie, and even layers of the working class, into a frenzy. It isolates the class conscious vanguard. It gives the regime legitimacy in attacking working class living standards, in attacking and seeking to smash trade unions.

In today's India, the BJP can also call on the mass organisations of fascism that have been built up over the years, particularly the RSS.

Already, the politicians have warned that "sanctions must be faced with determination." Indian capitalism clearly has the required determination. Determination that the costs must be passed on to the working class, and that the union-protected, hard-earned rights of the workers must go.

As sanctions begin to bite, struggles by the working class to maintain its standard of living will be branded treasonous activities. Every major strike will face, not only state action, but the organised violence of the fascist forces.

Are India's security and sovereignty truly threatened? By whom? Can Pakistan really invade and dismember India? Had there been no sustained history of repression in Kashmir, had their right of self-determination not been trampled underfoot, just as West Pakistan had done with the people of then East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), then Pakistan would have been able to do nothing in that region.

What are nuclear weapons supposed to do?



No imaginary line on a map will stop radioactive fall-out. An Indian nuclear bomb dropped in Pakistani cities like Lahore or Karachi will also affect Indians, quite apart from the fact that Pakistan may retaliate in kind.

Is it the sovereignty of India vis-a-vis USA that the government wants to demonstrate? This is farcical. Internationalisation of capital has meant that the sovereign state plays a very limited role in many crucial areas. Neither India, nor any other country, can ignore the WTO or the international financial institutions. Nothing short of world-wide workers' struggles, culminating in workers' revolutions, can do that.

What is being sought is far more sinister. Indian capitalism, rallying behind a fascist-militarist tendency, wants to strenghten state power against its own most mortal enemy, the Indian working class.

The economy of India is not yet like Jamaica or Sri Lanka.

Significant sections of the working class still get substantial cost-of-living increases, and struggles, by bank employees and others, have politically blocked certain moves in the direction of liberalisation. This rangles with the upper classes. The sovereign state is now urged to exercise its mind in this, direction.

Obviously, there is also a foreign policy dimension - the attempt by the Indian bourgeoisie to attain big-power status. Increasing sections of the military, the state bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie are adopting the long-cherished RSS vision of an armed, combative India, dominating Asia from Kabul to Singapore. This vision is being enthusiastically fed to middle class public opinion by the paid "opinion-makers".

This big power status means India will be able to dominate neighbours like Pakistan, so long as direct US interests are not challenged. This is the meaning of Prime Minister Vajpayee's private messages to Clinton.

This is bound to raise tension in the region, and create a local arms race, involving India, Pakistan and China. With Vajpayee and Defence Minister Fernandes now identifying China as the main enemy, India is virtually declaring that India wants to re-negotiate the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, to ensure parity between India and China.

Since China has a declared stockpile of 300 nuclear arms, and knowing that producing the nuclear warheads is only a small part of the total cost of weaponisation, the indica-

tions are grave. The Indian government is willing to rush into missile production at a very high rate, and enter into a contest with China, which is three times as rich as India, and has a faster-growing economy.

This can be done. In the 1930s, Hitler rearmed Germany at a breathtaking pace. And the USSR maintained an arms

race with the USA for many years, despite its weaker economy.

But the cost is very high, and inevitably falls on the working class, though, for a certain period of time, militarisation can offer large profits, and provide a major area of investment.

From the point of view of Indian capital, such a programme may compensate for the effects of Western sanctions.

The United States is showing its usual hypocrisy. This is the only country to have actually used the atom bomb, and the first country to test the hydrogen bomb and make the neutron bomb. The United States has fought more destructive wars than any other country since World War II.

They say sanctions are intended to ensure that nasty weapons do not fall into the wrong hands. But by what standards are 'their' hands the right ones? The imperialist butchers of Korea, Vietnam and Iraq have no moral right to dictate terms

Like Nehru and Indira Gandhi, India's current rulers want to exploit the legitimate anti-imperialist feelings of the mass of the people for their nefarious ends. Threats and sanctions will be used to consolidate the RSS-BJP position, just as the savagery of the second Gulf War has strengthened the power of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

India's testing of nuclear devices was wrong, just like every testing of nuclear devices.

It is not the neighbouring country, but the ruling class at home, that constitutes the main enemy of the toiling masses. This kind of "national security" jeopardises the lives of millions of ordinary Indians, by exposing them to the risk of retaliatory nuclear attacks.

As well as replacing nationalist hype with clear, class demands, those who want peace and amity in the sub-continent, should unite to fight for India's immediate signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty with no further negotiations.

This does not mean supporting sanctions against India. On the contrary. Nuclear weapons are unsafe in any hands, but the struggle against the bomb must be a progressive and internationalist struggle, and oppose every ruling class attack on the proletariat anywhere.

● This is a shortened version of an article produced by the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan (Indian Section of the Fourth International) and published in *International*

Both governments should be condemned, but he left should oppose sanctions against them As we have seen in Iraq, sanctions attack the weak and poor, not the rulers who are often strengthened by them.

This kind of "national security" jeopardises the lives of millions of ordinary Indians

Inflation rises sharply

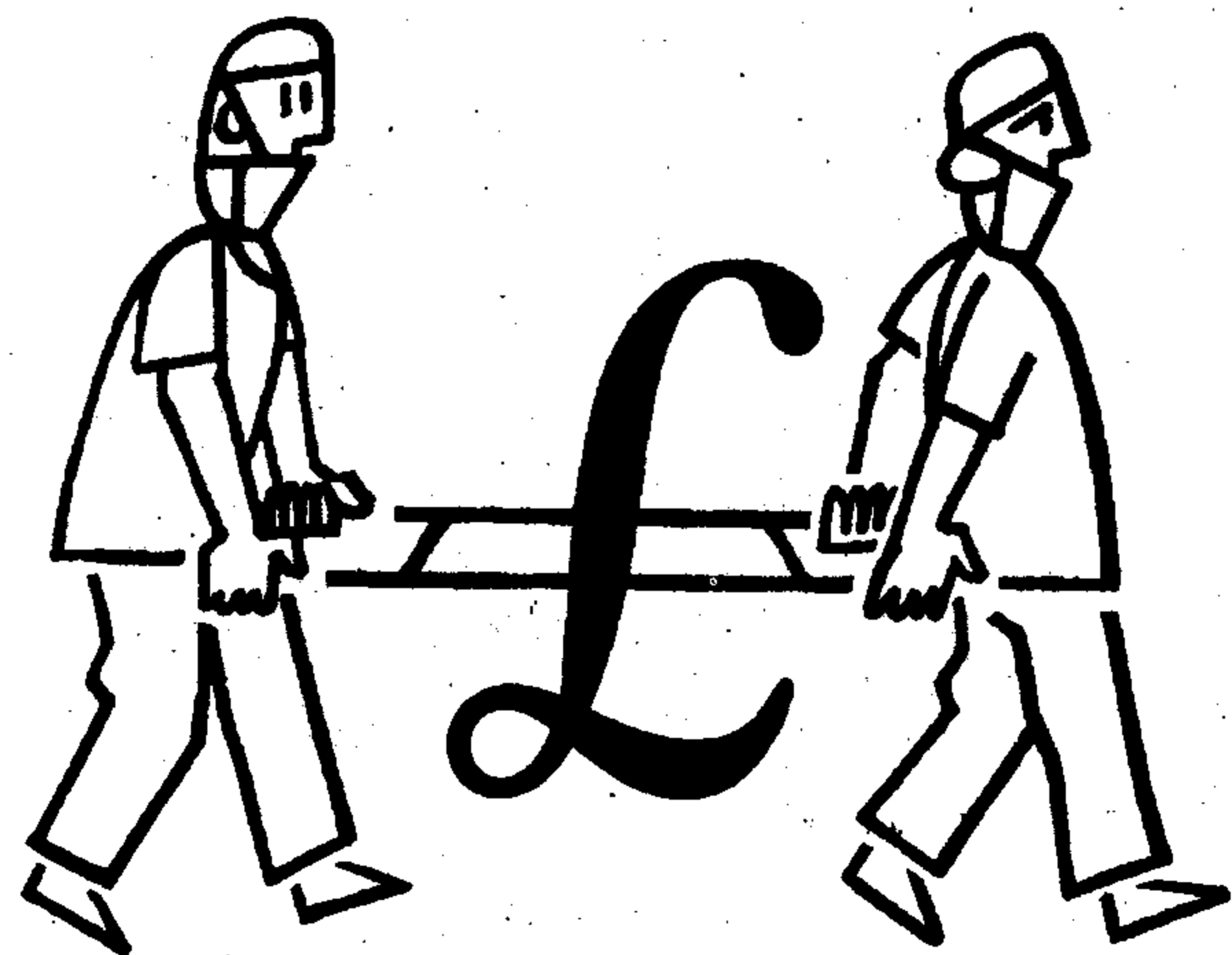
Stormy times ahead

ANDY KILMISTER looks at the latest evidence on the state of the British economy

THE MOST recent economic figures show clearly that despite government and employer rhetoric the underlying problems of British capitalism remain unsolved.

The annual inflation rate currently stands at 4%. This is higher than any other of the rich industrialised countries; about three times the level in the USA, France and Germany and double that in Japan. Wages growth is also higher in Britain than in comparable countries and is accelerating.

As a result the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England has



talked of the possibility of a further rise in interest rates, although the rate of growth is slowing sharply and manufacturing output is hardly growing at all. Indeed, the last three months actually saw a decline in British industrial production compared to the previous quarter, while comparable production in Germany, France and Spain grew strongly.

The relative calm of the British

economy since the exchange rate crisis of 1992 has already lasted longer than most expected. The combination of fairly steady growth with low inflation was always dependent on a particular combination of factors - the weakness of the labour movement in the face of mass unemployment, the amount of spare capacity in the economy and quite strong export growth as sectors of the world economy boomed. Now exports are dropping back dramatically, to a large extent because of the crisis in Asia.

Weak investment over the last five years means that the economy is now operating close to full capacity. While the level of industrial action remains low, falling unemployment has given private sector workers some confidence to demand higher wages and has meant that employers have been prepared to make some concessions.

The main reason that this has not fed into higher inflation levels earlier has been the very high

level of the pound, which has kept import prices low.

In the last few weeks the pound has fallen - and this has translated directly into an increase in the inflation rate.

But at the same time the interest rate rises which have already occurred are hitting investment, while leaving consumer spending relatively unchanged as incomes rise for some - and as those who live on interest income (mainly the wealthier section of elderly people) benefit.

With consumer spending still growing fast and investment stagnating, the trade deficit has opened up quickly.

Over the last year, Britain ran the biggest trade deficit in the European Union, at over £15 billion, with only Spain coming close.

The British economy continued to depend on the earnings of the City of London and on investments abroad, to meet this gap. Yet many of those investments are located in just those East Asian regions now facing economic crisis.

Faced with the possibility of increasing inflation and a growing trade deficit, the government and the Bank of England are moving towards slowing the

economy down. But with manufacturing so weak this risks tipping the whole system into recession. And such a recession would not guarantee a reduction in inflation if the pound continues to fall.

The root cause of the economic dilemmas New Labour faces lies in the persistent weakness of large sections of British capital. For all Blair's talk about the virtues of flexible labour markets in Britain a recent report by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research painted a picture of large sections of British industry with productivity levels well down on other EU countries, notably Germany.

A recent report showed much of British industry with productivity levels well below other EU countries

This situation, primarily the legacy of long years of low investment, leaves the British economy chronically vulnerable to cycles and instability.

The last six years represent one of many attempts by both Tory and Labour politicians to argue that such instability has been eliminated and that capitalism can ensure unlimited crisis free growth.

The events of the last few months indicate that this period is drawing to a close and that the next few years are likely to be considerably more turbulent.

Denmark still divided on the European Union

Age Skovrind

By a 55 per cent majority, Danish voters said "yes" to the Amsterdam Treaty in the May 28 referendum.

The population remains as divided on European policy as it has been in all the five referendums held since Denmark joined the European Community in 1972.

Most outstanding, a majority rejected the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, sending shock waves through the Danish and European establishment.

This time, "only" 45 per cent ignored the recommendation of all the so-called responsible parties, all union and employers leaders, and almost all newspapers.

This figure indicates an enormous gap between the electorate and the political establishment and a massive distrust to the political leaders as far as the European Union is concerned.

The four parties recommending a "no" vote - the Socialist Peoples Party and Enhedslisten (Red-Green Alliance) on the left side, and the nationalist Progress Party and Danish Peoples Party on the right - altogether represented only 18 per cent of the electorate two months ago.

Social Democracy in particular has always been hit by this contradiction, because in Denmark opposition to the European

Union tends to express workers' and social interests.

It is mainly workers, who would normally vote for the Social Democrats, who go against the party recommendation and vote "no".

In 1993 it was every other Social Democratic voter, and according to the first surveys it's 45% now. This shows that the general tendency remains, even though the picture has differed slightly.

Right wing and nationalist forces played a significant role in the campaign against the treaty.

The Danish Peoples Party, emerging as the leading far right party during the last year, filled the streets with posters saying "Vote Danish, vote No". Also the biggest daily newspaper, Ekstra Bladet, built an aggressive "no" campaign on a very narrow-minded basis.

At the same time, part of the old left intelligentsia has abandoned its opposition to the European Union and turned to a "progressive" policy inside the Union framework.

This tendency is reflected inside the Socialist Peoples Party whose parliamentary group was divided equally, while the official party line shifted to a "no" this year compared to a "yes" recommendation in 1993 when the Maastricht treaty, including

exceptions for Denmark on four points, was approved in a second referendum.

Thus, arguments against the Amsterdam treaty were put forward from the left as well as the right. Social Democrats insisted that the treaty represented an improvement in terms of peace, environment and employment

However, since it is included in the new treaty, the Schengen agreement and the question of border control became a very important issue during the campaign.

The left argued against the creation of supranational bodies without any democratic control, entitled to make a register of "suspicious" citizens, and against the construction of a Fortress Europe directed against immigrants and refugees, while the right wing focused on the defence of the Danish border.

The "yes" side insisted in the necessity of international co-operation against criminality. Another important issue has been the enlargement of the European Union towards Eastern Europe. For the government and the "responsible" opposition parties, a yes vote would be the only way to continue the process of enlargement - not to lose this "historical chance to help these states in their liberation from the communist heritage", and so on.

On the no side, most people support the perspective of integrating these states into the EU (except Enhedslisten), but argues that the Amsterdam treaty is not a condition for this but rather an obstacle to a fair and full enlargement of all applying countries.

Finally, much discussion focused on the possible conse-

quences of a "no" majority.

The "yes" side argued that Denmark would lose influence or even be more or less excluded from Europe, while "no" arguments varied from "nothing happens, life goes on", to the perspective that Denmark would - again - be at the centre of European debate and have the possibility to start a fresh discussion between free member states.

The referendum result was a victory for the government. It has left Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in a comfortable position after two stormy months in Danish politics.

On March 12, Social Democracy did much better than expected in the general elections and Rasmussen was re-elected. A few weeks later, a majority of workers rejected the bargaining agreement proposed by union leadership and the employers federation, and went on strike demanding a full sixth week of paid holiday.

After 10 days, the government, together with the right wing opposition, used the law to stop the strike. Despite widespread union disagreement, no serious action was taken in response - mainly because the absence of a left current inside the unions.

However, new political challenges will come up. The government is not based on a parliamentary majority and will have to negotiate with opposition parties in every major case.

Certainly, the European question will remain at the centre of the political debate and will be put to new referendums, whether because of attempts to abandon the Danish exceptions from the Maastricht treaty (for instance the common currency), or the signing of a new European treaty.



but these are general aims without any immediate implications. This tended to favour a debate, not about the social content of the European Union, but about "national sovereignty", "more or less Union" and so on.

By a big majority and without any public debate, the Danish parliament voted to sign the Schengen agreement only one month before the referendum.

have their funding phased out over six years; those that lose Objective 2 status over four years.

The document is committed to promoting labour flexibility, in line with the decisions of the Luxembourg Summit last November, stating that "a key task of structural policy will be to underpin the reform of labour market policies and practices". The convergence criteria are also invoked, in that control over the allocation of cohesion funds will be "strengthened to prevent excessive public deficits in the context of the stability and growth (sic) Pact."

With the current summit being held in Cardiff, it is appropriate to take Wales as an example of the effects of Agenda 2000. Under the current system, most of the country is covered by either Objective 2 or Objective 5b status. This has resulted in annual funding of around 100 million Ecu (£150 million) a year for the period 1994-99.

This is indeed a small amount of money, compared to the British state's allocation of over £7 billion to the Welsh Office budget! But most of this is set to disappear by the year 2003, since Wales does not currently qualify for Objective 1 status and only small parts of the country will qualify for Objective 2.

The proposals have predictably raised a storm of protest from governments and politicians across the Union, worried about the effect that such drastic cutbacks will have on their electorates (11).

The response in Wales, which mirrors that in Britain as a whole, has been threefold:

* To argue that using unemployment levels to establish Objective 2 status does not take account of the real poverty of a nation or region.

This has some justification, since the claimant unemployment rate in Wales is below the EU average, while the average household income is the lowest in the British state.

* Frantic efforts have been made to redraw the "poverty maps" prepared by the EU statistics agency Eurostat, so that smaller sub-regions can qualify for Objective 1 status, or at least be guaranteed Objective 2 status.

* An intensification of the long-standing argument that Wales must become more efficient and effective in its lobbying and bidding operations (12), through improved professional support, better co-ordination between local authorities and an enhanced role in Europe for the new National Assembly for Wales (13).

Each of these approaches, in their own way, miss the point. The key issue is that regional funds were inadequate to begin with. The cash pot has suddenly got much smaller, and any attempts to redefine criteria or redraw maps will only result in some regions securing funds at the expense of others.

Far too much money and effort is already spent by poor regions in competing for scant EU funds: to intensify this scramble still further is a desperate lunacy.

All of the approaches accept the logic of taking part in an enormous competition amongst the poor for a shrinking pot of EU assistance. A competition both within the existing member states and between the poorest regions, East and West, within an enlarged EU.



Launching the Euro: they will all be this big

The starting point for the left must be to reject this whole approach and in so doing, to reject Agenda 2000 as a basis for enlargement.

The Marxist left has generally given insufficient attention to the regional dimension of EU politics (14). This reflects, perhaps, its concentration in the metropolitan centres, where regional aid is less of an issue. And yet at present, 51% of the EU population lives in areas covered by regional programmes.

The funds involved are indeed small, in financial terms, but their real importance lies in the ideological gloss and justification which they provide for social democratic and left politicians to support the Maastricht process. Hence, the visible outrage (and thinly disguised panic) in response to the current proposals.

It is clear that the European left needs a wide ranging discussion on how to respond to Agenda 2000. It is perhaps useful to propose at the outset some general points on which the discussion should be based:

■ The left should not oppose EU enlargement to the East. We must stand for an inclusive Europe and mount a struggle over the social and economic basis on which such a Europe is constituted.

■ We should, however, oppose Agenda 2000 as a basis for enlargement. We should demand that all social democratic and left parties vote against this proposal in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

■ Pro-Maastricht politicians of the left have in the past hidden behind the excuse that the EU is dominated by right-wing governments. There are now social democratic governments in both France and Britain, with the prospect of a third in Germany. The time for excuses is over, we should demand that they formulate a Europe-wide plan to tackle unemployment.

■ We demand a massive increase in regional aid, both from state governments and the Union, to fund regional development and enlargement. Regional spending should not be restricted to infrastructure projects and promoting small and medium sized enterprises but predominantly aimed at directly creating jobs through a programme of public works.

■ Any moves towards further privatisation or erosion of the welfare state must be opposed.

■ These measures must be paid for by direct progressive taxation across the whole EU and a Europe wide tax on foreign exchange transactions unrelated to trade.

Of course, none of these demands will be won, or even forced onto the agenda, without a concerted effort. It is time that the

EU has no plans to end debt, home or abroad

leaders of our trade unions and the left parties gave some real content to their talk of a social Europe, by mounting active campaigns on demands such as those above.

It is also vital that we continue to develop the existing Europe-wide campaigns on these issues, such as those which have successfully mobilised for the Summits in Amsterdam, Luxembourg and Cardiff.

The Single European Act, the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam and the Dublin Stability Pact were each, in their own way, blows against the workers and poor of Europe. Agenda 2000 threatens to further reinforce a "Europe of the core regions" at the expense of an impoverished periphery to its south, west and east. It must be opposed.

● Ceri Evans is active in Cardiff West Labour Party and is secretary of the Cardiff Euro Demonstration Committee. He can be contacted via the committee: full.employment@cableol.co.uk

● The position argued here on enlargement to the East is contentious among Socialist Outlook supporters and we will carry further material on it in subsequent issues.

It is time that the leaders of our trade unions and the left parties gave some real content to their talk of a social Europe



EU regional funds were inadequate to begin with, but now the cash pot has suddenly got much smaller

Notes

1. "GDP in the Regions", Eurostat Report, April 1998. Available from: <http://europa.eu.int/eurostat.html/>
2. Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of the total goods and services produced in a given region.
3. For a more detailed discussion of uneven development in Europe, see Brendan Young, "Wales in Europe: the poor relation?", Conference Papers, Socialists and a Welsh Assembly, Cardiff, July 1997.
4. Ash Amin and John Tomane, "EC policy muddle will fail the poorer regions", *The Guardian*, 13 July 1992.
5. Wayne David, "Building on Maastricht: a left agenda for Europe", *Tribune Group of Euro MP's*, March 1993.
6. "Agenda 2000: the legislative proposals",

7. "The common agricultural policy", *International Viewpoint*, Special Issue on the EU, No 290, 1997.
8. Catherine Samary, "Can the EU absorb the east?", *International Viewpoint*, No 278, June 1996. Also, "The EU's eastward expansion", *International Viewpoint*, No 290, April 1998.
9. Marc Champion and Tim King, "Long road ahead to the EU for eastern applicants", *The European*, 1-12 April 1998.
10. One Ecu = 0.65 British pounds, 0.79 Irish punts or 1.1 US dollars.
11. Martin Walker and David Gow, "Poorer UK

- regions face 'colossal' Europe aid cut", *The Guardian*, 19 March 1998. Also, "Agenda 2000 - protests at regional reform plans", *European Parliament News*, April 1998.
12. See, for example, Victoria Winkler, "Strategic partnerships and a communitaire spirit", *Agenda*, Institute of Welsh Affairs, Summer 1996.
13. The National Assembly provides a limited measure of autonomy for Wales, though its powers fall far short of those granted to the Scottish Parliament or regional governments in Catalonia and the Basque Country.
14. A notable, and interesting, exception is the article by Claude Gabriel, "The crisis of citizenship and the future of Europe", *International Viewpoint*, No 228, May 1992.



Why women won't be conned by EU propaganda

The Equal Opportunities Commission (Wales) held a conference in May about the new equality provisions of the European Union – The Part Time Work Directive and The Parental Leave Directive. Through the development of equality provisions such as these, and the provision of social fund money to retrain women, the EU has promoted itself as a positive force for women's rights, reports Cath Larkin.

EU PROPAGANDA claims that the Treaty of Amsterdam places employment and citizen's rights at the heart of the Union.

The treaty also contains a specific commitment to equality between men and women and to fight discrimination on other grounds.

These fine words are belied by the economic policies that are written into the same treaty and by the ineffectiveness of rights that ignore fundamental economic disparities along the lines of class and race.

The process of Economic and Monetary Union across the EU demands that labour is 'flexible'.



This is an acknowledgement that industrial restructuring has led to the decline of secure full-time employment.

Rather than trying to improve the employment opportunities of workers, the EU promotes economic conditions that lead to labour casualisation.

The Maastricht Convergence Criteria, reiterated in the Treaty of Amsterdam, ensure that EU economic policy is committed to low inflation as a priority above employment.

The effects of this policy can already be seen in the drive for industrial competitiveness across the EU, inherent in the process of economic convergence, which has led to a squeeze on wages and redundancies. These hit hardest at low skill occupations - the low-paid, mostly working class women.

In this context the Part-Time Work Directive seems particularly inadequate. Clause 4 of the



Directive provides that "part-time workers should not be treated less favourably than comparable full-time workers, and that the pro-rata principle should apply". These rights are only available to employees - agency workers and the self-employed are excluded.

Working class women, who still constitute the majority of casual labourers, are thereby excluded from the employment protection they are most in need of.

The provision of rights through the EU regularly ignores the economic imperatives which make rights inaccessible as The Parental Leave Directive also demonstrates.

This Directive requires employers to introduce a minimum of three months parental leave for male and female workers, to be taken before their child's eighth birthday.

Dutch home helps (above), scaked Renault workers (left) and women all over Europe are against EU austerity

It also provides for the introduction of family leave for working parents, in the event of sickness or accident and protects workers against dismissal on the grounds that they have taken parental or family leave.

Although these rights are welcomed by feminists as a step in the right direction, they are a tiny step. Consultation with business has ensured that the EU parental leave provisions, according to EOC predictions, are only likely to cost business £5 a year per employee.

This is because parental leave does not have to be paid. As the Maternity Alliance have commented "hardly anyone will be able to afford to take it ... unpaid parental leave will be beyond the wildest dreams of most parents". Employers also have the right to deny parental leave when it is not convenient for their business. Once more the needs of women are subordinated to the needs of capital.

The final EU sop towards women's equality is also under attack at the Cardiff Euro Summit. Agenda 2000, the proposed



basis for enlarging the EU towards the East of Europe, will be debated at this summit.

The proposal is to enlarge the EU by an additional 6 member states and to divert 15% of EU structural funds towards improving the economies of these new members.

Agenda 2000 redefines the objectives under which structural funds are allocated. Although there remains a commitment to funding projects that promote training for women and that combat social exclusion, there is less funding available overall.

The EU commitment to women's rights is selective. It provides the right to parental leave from employment but not the right to employment. It provides the right to ask employers to give consideration as far as possible to requests from full-time workers to work part-time but not from part-time workers to work full time.

Although women and men are treated equally by these directives they ignore the fact that some (well-paid, securely employed) women are better able to access these rights than the women who are economically insecure.

The underlying trend of European economic convergence is to attack the welfare state and job security.

Consultation with business has ensured that the EU parental leave provisions are only likely to cost business £5 a year per employee.

This constitutes an attack on the services where women are the primary users and the majority of employees. It also constitutes an attack on women's employment

as women constitute up to 80% of those in low paid insecure jobs in EU member states. An understanding of these economic realities behind the EU rhetoric of equality is leading women across Europe to join the Cardiff EU Summit Demonstration.

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New Labour heads for EMU

Turning point or stumbling block for EU?

Cardiff, Blair and the drive for EMU

As we approach the end of the British presidency of the European Union, it is necessary to take stock both of what stage the overall project of unification has reached and what Blair has achieved here in Britain.

Blair's main concern at a European level is the success of EMU and to ensure the drive to introduce the 'labour flexibility' he is so proud of in Britain on a continental scale. Last year's Luxemburg summit set this latter process in train, and Cardiff will consolidate it. Protesting against this will be key for those gathered for the counter-summits and demonstration in the Welsh capital.

At home, Blair will be pleased that recent opinion polls show that opposition to joining EMU has fallen. While there is still a majority against, New Labour has not really started its campaign for the forthcoming referendum.

This is likely to be stepped up after the Cardiff summit – and we are in store for a number of glossy stunts like Ulrike Johnson and Gordon Brown's planned broadcast on the joys of EMU.

Activists in Britain must ensure that the momentum that is bringing thousands to Cardiff continues through to mount a vibrant and internationalist 'No' campaign.

Here we reproduce sections of a new Socialist Outlook pamphlet *The Case Against EMU* which analyses why European integration is so central for the European ruling class.

In Britain this issue has torn the Tory Party apart, reducing it to rump of feuding factions. It has divided the labour movement, with the TUC in full support of Maastricht, and thereby inhibiting the fight-back against unemployment and the defence of the welfare state.

The election of New Labour, however, has provided the dominant pro-European section of British big business with a government far more willing to do its bidding on Europe.

Despite equivocations, mostly for the consumption of the Murdoch press and the Tory right, Tony Blair and new Labour are fully committed to European integration and its flagship (EMU).

Blair's close relationship with Clinton does not represent an alternative strategic approach to that of European integration. That relationship is based on his wish to emulate the American Democratic Party as an alternative to Labour's social democratic past, and to follow the model of deregulation that Clinton and his predecessors have presided over.

Labour is fully prepared to go into EMU with all the consequences for the welfare state – Health, Education, pensions and benefits – which are involved. In fact preparation for EMU has been the cornerstone of Labour's economic policy since it came to office.

This was behind Brown's decision to hand over the control of interest rates to the Bank of England (ending such government control is a requirement of EMU) and was one of the reasons for the acceptance of Tory spending limits for Labour's first two years of office.

These measures led Britain to qualify economically for entry into the first round of EMU. Blair has chosen, however, for political reasons, not to take up this option and attempt to enter EMU at this point.

Blair has two problems: how to win a referendum on EMU, with opinion polls currently running 60-40 against him, and how to enter it and keep Rupert Murdoch (and the *Sun*) on board for the next election.

They are difficult problems. Murdoch is a committed opponent of EMU from the standpoint of the Tory right. It is hard for Blair to avoid a referendum given the high profile election pledge on it – other than including it in his next election manifesto, which would give the Tories a platform.

Blair therefore holds fire but stands committed to enter EMU as soon as he judges he can surmount these problems. Big resources are already being put into changing public opinion by persuasion, and if that doesn't work the frighteners will be brought out, and people warned of the 'dire consequences' of staying outside the forthcoming EMU zone.

EMU will be launched on January 1 1999. Eleven states have qualified by a combination of repeated cuts in public spending and fudging the criteria at the edges. Outside will be Greece (excluded for missing the criteria) Britain, Denmark and Sweden.

The question now is not *whether* to launch the EMU, or whether

the technical questions can be solved, but *how* to launch it as a stable currency, rather than into a crisis.

This is a major problem given the turbulence in the currency markets and the crisis in the Asian economies. It would be a disaster to launch it just before a recession, which may well happen. But the huge expenditure of political willpower which has driven the project this far remains in place.

Despite the determination of the key governments, there are serious problems with EMU, beyond economic stability. Public opinion remains deeply divided in all the main countries of the EU, as can be seen once again by the relatively narrow result in the recent Danish referendum on the Amsterdam treaty.

From the point of view of its key backers however, EMU cannot be allowed to fail. It is a crucial touchstone for showing in practice the possibility of transcending the established nation-states and creating a truly European ruling class with its own institutional framework – or state. EMU therefore represents a watershed – a turning point or a stumbling block – for the future of the EU.

But there is even more than that. The European Union is an integral part of an increasingly globalised world economy which has given renewed impetus to the formation of large, competing trading blocs.

Intensified global competition

between ever larger multinational companies has resulted in a desire to secure larger home markets, common currencies, and for an institutional framework for the concentration and rationalisation of capital.

If the restructuring is to be fully realised it requires federal institutions through the introduction of EMU.

Globalisation is leading to greater integration within the European Union on the one hand the emergent economic power blocs on the other.

The EU is a preparation for the more effective competition with the economies of the Pacific rim (dominated by Japan) and a North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) dominated by the USA.

It is an integral part of a world increasingly dominated by international capitalist institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

These institutions are the driving force of the world-wide neo-liberal offensive against the working class promoting economic and financial deregulation and labour flexibility.

This is the "internationalism" of the capitalist class: it must be challenged by a new level of *working class* internationalism and solidarity, glimpses of which we have begun to see in recent European strikes and campaigns such as the Euro-marches.



Why bosses want a European super-state

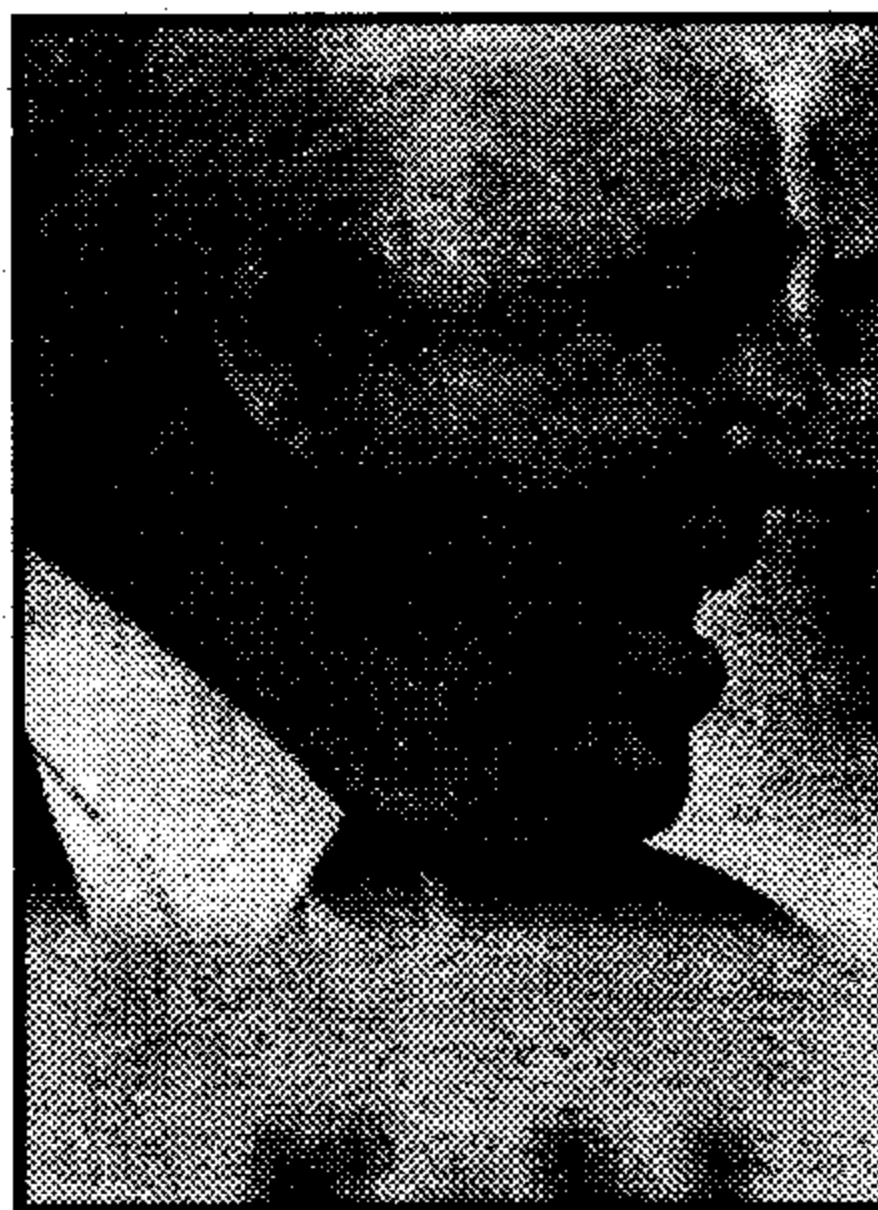
EUROPEAN integration, through the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties, is the central political project of the European Union today. It is the biggest single issue in Europe and continues to dominate the political terrain in all the member states.

The implications of the Europe of the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties are clear enough. It will be a neo-liberal, monetarist, Thatcherite Europe, designed to increase profitability for the employers, maximum job flexibility, and run down the welfare state. It will be a Europe controlled by unelected bankers and by the so-called Stability Pact, which will keep government borrowing permanently below the 3% of GDP ceiling set by the convergence criteria.

So why is integration so important to the ruling classes of Europe?

Today the EU, with 15 member states, represents the largest single unit in the world economy. It has a GNP of about six trillion US dollars against five trillion for the USA and three trillion for Japan.

The EU has a total population of about that of the USA and Japan combined. However, as a trading block, in a highly competitive world, it remains inadequate against its main rivals North America and Japan.



Laughing all the way to the European Bank – Kohl

It is unable, for political reasons, to punch its economic weight. The US and Japanese ruling classes have advantages which the multiple ruling classes allied within the EU cannot match: they have a single leadership, totally dominant currencies, lower social spending, and multinationals on average bigger and more competitive than Europe.

Tokyo and Washington dominate and politically lead their power blocks – even a unified Germany and its powerful

currency cannot do this in the EU.

The EU at its present stage of development, prior to the full implementation of the logic of Maastricht and Amsterdam, is a common market with many (and increasing) features of a nation state. For these reasons the deepening competition between the power blocs within the global economy is not a battle of equals at the present time.

It is the need to resolve these problems which lie behind the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties and the drive for a European superstate. The successful introduction of the European Monetary Union (EMU) – the single European currency – is a prerequisite for that.

JUNE 1998

What price a Europe of the Regions?

THE LATEST summit of European Union leaders will take place in Cardiff, the capital of Wales, on June 15-16.

It is no small irony that this summit is being held in such a poor and peripheral nation, at the very time when the European Commission is proposing huge cuts in regional aid.

Here CERI EVANS examines these plans and offers some proposals for a left response.

The regional policy of the European Union (EU), was grandly designated in the Maastricht Treaty as a commitment to "economic and social cohesion and solidarity among the member states". The two main mechanisms proposed to facilitate this cohesion were the structural funds and the cohesion funds.

Structural funds were directed at poor regions across the whole of the EU, while the cohesion funds were specifically targeted at the four poorest member states - Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

And yet, despite many years of funding, the EU's own figures, published earlier this year, show that enormous inequalities still exist (1). GDP per head ranges from nearly twice the EU average, for the port of Hamburg, to around half the average in regions of Greece, Spain, Italy and eastern Germany (2).

The poorest regions in Britain are Merseyside and South Yorkshire, which stand at 70% of the EU average. Wealth remains concentrated in and around state capitals, with Greater London enjoying a GDP per head at 139% of the average.

Indeed, it is possible to talk of a "golden banana" of wealthy regions, stretching from London, across to Brussels and Paris, down through the Rhinelands of western Germany and into northern Italy. Of the poorest states, which have been receiving the additional cohesion funds, only Ireland has made significant progress. The position of both the Spanish and Portuguese states has only slightly improved, while

Greece has actually declined.

The Irish experience is held up as a model by many in Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party, with regard to benefits of statehood and a seat at the Council of Ministers. Suffice it to say that while Ireland has enjoyed a mini boom in the last few years, the need for matching funding for all EU grants has meant cuts in many other areas of government spending. And the benefits of the cohesion fund bonanza have been very unevenly distributed, contributing to a deepening of inequality within the country.

The central approach has been to use spending on infrastructure and significant corporate tax breaks to attract inward investment - hardly a model of equitable and sustainable development which other small nations could or should try to emulate.

Thus EU regional policy is condemned as a failure by its own figures. There has been

these trends when the Maastricht treaty was first signed (4). Indeed, even some supporters of Maastricht, such as Wayne David, leader of the British Labour group in the European Parliament, have openly acknowledged that such trends are inevitable (5).

According to an analysis common to many social democrats, Maastricht contained two trends. The first was a move towards concentration of ownership and the centralisation of production in a few core regions, driven by economic and monetary union. The second a counter-tendency towards regional decentralisation, facilitated by regional funds, the creation of the Committee of the Regions and the principle of subsidiarity.

The funds have clearly failed, so what of the political manifestation of this approach, the Committee of the Regions? This body was established by the Maastricht Treaty and first met in 1994. It is composed of 222 delegates from regional and local authorities across the EU and must be consulted by the Council and Commission on certain areas where regional interests are deemed to be involved.

It can also deliver opinions on its own initiative, but has no powers beyond this. However, the real problem with the Committee is not only that it is powerless but the wide, and sometimes contradictory, interests which it represents.

It is only necessary to consider the diversity of small nation and regionalist politics across the EU to appreciate this point. At the risk of being schematic, the small-nation nationalism of poorer nations is most often to the left, such as in Wales, Scotland and the Basque Country. This is not least because it is often in direct competition with a more centralist social democracy for working class votes.

On the other hand, the ascendant nationalism of more prosperous small nations, such as Catalonia and Flanders, is predominantly to the right, though with an important left-wing component. The relatively new phenomenon of right-wing regionalism is most

spectacularly illustrated by the Northern League in Italy, but also by significant votes for the Republican Party in Baden-Wurttemberg in the early 1990s.

It is inconceivable that right-wing politicians from Europe's richest regions, which benefit from the current inequalities, will find common cause with those from the poorest, who are obliged to support a more redistributive approach.

Such are the dilemmas and contradictions of EU regional policy as we approach

the creation of a single currency. Since the current meagre resources allocated to regional assistance have clearly failed and the existing centralist economic tendencies will be accelerated by monetary union, it might be expected that an increase in regional funds would be in order. In fact, the opposite is the case, as regional funds are to be reduced in order to release funds for EU enlargement to the East.

The proposals are contained in a document from the European Commission entitled Agenda 2000 (6) and have serious implications for regional funds and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The reform of the CAP is outside the scope of this article but while the present system cannot be defended, the alternative being proposed, of opening EU agriculture to the "free" market, will be equally detrimental to small farmers, rural workers and the environment (7).

The terms of enlargement are also likely to be detrimental to the workers and poor of the new member states to the East. Existing Association Agreements between the EU and the eastern states already work to boost EU exports to those countries, while restricting the import of textiles, coal and steel into the EU (8).

The continued imposition of austerity measures is also a precondition for EU membership, which will cause further erosions in social provision and an increase in unemployment. Despite this, the new elites in Eastern Europe express an almost desperate desire to get on the right side of the borders of "Fortress Europe" as laid down by the Schengen agreement.

In the words of Igor Bavcar, Slovenia's minister for European affairs "I'm afraid that there will be a new line drawn in Europe. It will be the Schengen line, and there is no line harder. But then, that's life."

The budgetary framework for Agenda 2000 has been set by the Council of Ministers, which has fixed the total EU budget at 1.27% of Union GDP for the period 1999 to 2006. This figure has been described as "woefully inadequate" by many commentators.

Since no significant increase in cash will be available after the year 2000, the money for enlargement has to come from the existing programmes. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the regional budget for the period 2000 to 2006.

Under the new proposals, the present five categories of regional assistance will be reduced to three:

* **OBJECTIVE 1** - The poorest regions, with GDP less than 75% of the EU average.
* **OBJECTIVE 2** - Industrial and rural areas with unemployment above the EU average.

* **OBJECTIVE 3** - Replaces the European Social Fund, aiming to tackle high unemployment, combat poverty, anticipate economic change and promote opportunities for women.

Funding at pre Agenda 2000 levels will only be automatic for Objective 1 areas. Areas which lose Objective 1 status will

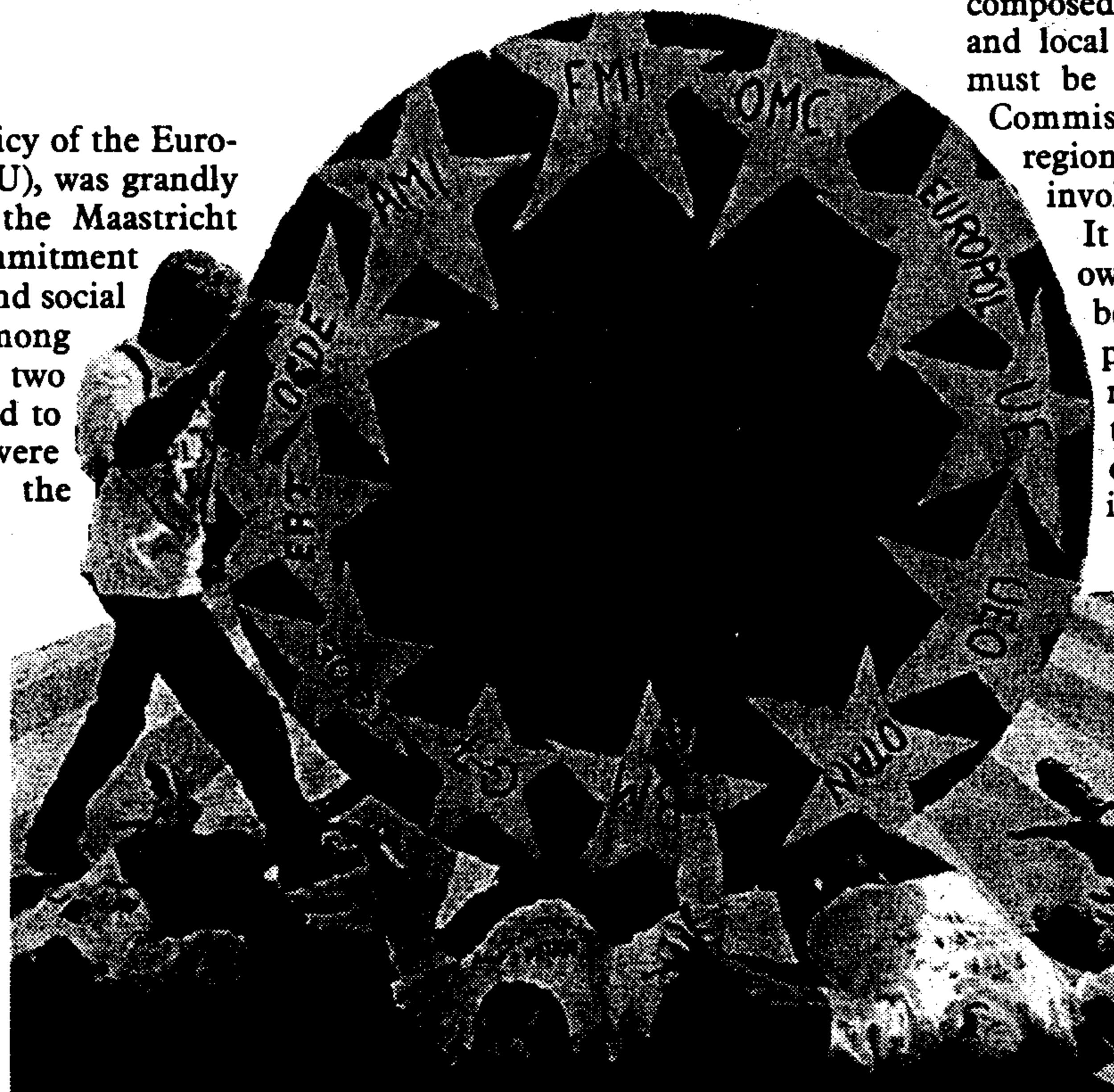


TABLE 1 Agenda 2000 : Regional Spending 2000-2006 (billion Ecu) (10)

1. Regional Assistance	218.4
2. Cohesion Funds	20.8
3. Enlargement	46.8
of which pre-Accession Aid	21.8
Total (1+2+3)	286.0

no fundamental change in the pattern of regional inequalities since the early 1970s, when regional funds were first established. In fact, the situation has deteriorated. And the concentration of wealth and investment in the core regions of Europe is set to continue, facilitated by the free movement of capital and labour enshrined in the Single European Act and the shake-out of less profitable branches and enterprises under a single currency (3).

More far-sighted observers warned of

The terms of enlargement are also likely to be detrimental to the workers and poor of the new member states to the East.

Pete Firmin for *Socialist Outlook* interviewed JEREMY CORBYN MP on May 14.

“Pressure is the key”

SO: What do you think is the government's programme?

JC: The government is trying to maintain the low corporate and income tax base and attract money in through high interest rates and a fast growing market economy.

It says unemployment will fall through the 'trickle down' effect. The reality is that the over-valued pound is raising unemployment in manufacturing, and it will get worse.

Then there are the long term effects of the South Asian collapse. The majority of inward investment in recent years has been from South Asia, and this will retrench to its home base and cause problems.

The welfare state should be a universal safety net - the Tories cut holes in it (lone parent benefit, boarding allowance and so on), which Labour has carried on.

Blair is reported to have sent back the initial report on the state pension because it is not radical enough, i.e. there is not a high enough level of compulsion for private schemes. The Tories never went as far as compulsion, only Chile under Pinochet did that.

In the absence of a decent national minimum wage the welfare to work strategy is an opportunity for unscrupulous employers to bring in welfare to work people on lower wages and get rid of long-standing employees. There are to be large amounts of money on offer to the employers for training, but I doubt how effective the monitoring of this will be.

That, together with the national minimum wage and trade union recognition bring in an element of compulsion, with the young forced into low paid jobs.

SO: What do you think of the TUC's approach?

JC: I don't know why the TUC got into this ludicrous debate

about percentages of the workforce for recognition. It should be a basic right to be a member of a trade union and have it represent you.

A surprisingly large number of MPs are agitated about this issue. 140 attended a meeting with John Monks this week, and 120 sent apologies.

They were having a go at Monks for accepting the threshold, although things might change with Prescott's mediation. The Cabinet may agree the White Paper shortly.

There is no news on the proposed level of the national minimum wage. The legislation has been passed in principle. The House of Commons would have to explicitly vote for any exemption for under-25s.

The trade unions as a whole have allowed the discussion on recognition to carry on in a vacuum. Discussions are purely through the General Secretaries to Monks and on to the government.

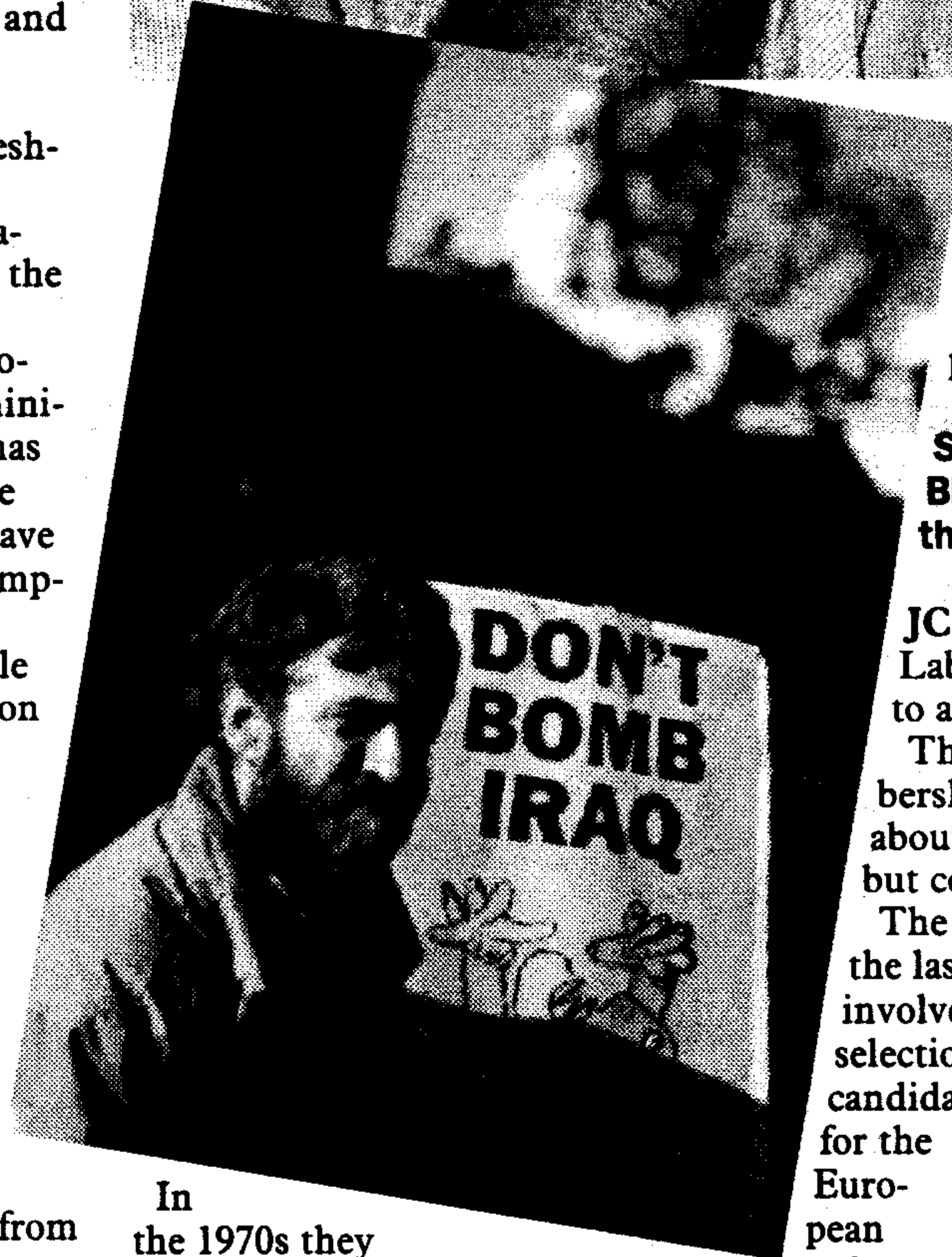
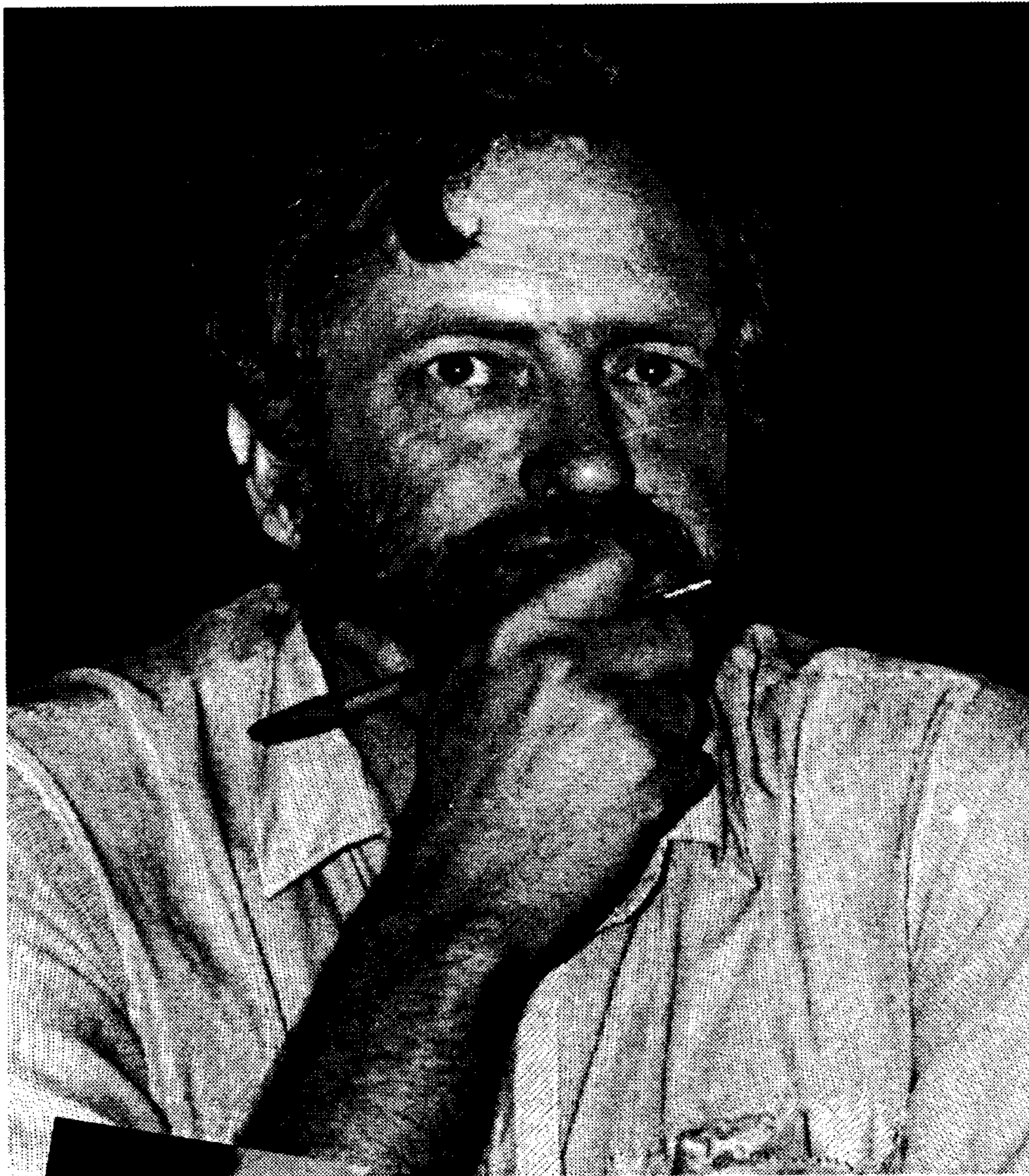
The CBI has been more effective than the unions. There has been no mobilisation by the unions. Prescott's proposed exemption of small firms would exclude millions of workers from the legislation.

There has been a lack of activity by the unions as a whole.

Current union members are more concerned with pay and conditions than recognition. Recognition should be a major issue for the left at union conferences. The trade union leaders have kept quiet on everything else saying that recognition is the priority but have not mobilised even on this.

SO: How do you see the response of the Left to the government's programme?

JC: The question is, to what extent do left parties challenge the mixed economy. Many have given up since the end of the Cold War.



parent benefit held up a lot of other things and sent out the message that there is a left in parliament prepared to fight.

SO: What are Blair's plans with the Labour Party?

JC: Democracy in the Labour Party is central to a lot of things.

The centralised membership system is not about greater efficiency but centralising opinion.

The membership will be the last to be involved in the selection of candidates for the European and Scottish Parliaments and the Welsh Assembly. The NEC is told who to select.

The next stage - Westminster selection - is not clear yet. One suggestion is that there would be a mandatory panel - the NEC would interview before anyone could be selected.

This would destroy accountability and ensure that the first loyalty would be to the leader.

This year's NEC elections are the first under the new system of non-MP CLP representatives. We have to campaign strongly for the slate. We have to replace Dennis Skinner with Liz Davies and so on.

On the London mayor they will probably set up an NEC panel and exclude Ken Livingstone.

The leadership hasn't thought out its strategy on the Left MPs. I'm not sure if it will go for a purge, although some around

Blair want clones.

There is an important left platform in parliament - it is important to stay in and defend what we've got. What will happen with the Labour Party will reflect what happens in society at large with opposition to reform of the welfare state.

Even before Partnership in Power it was difficult to reverse government policies. In that sense little has changed. Pressure is the key.

In my view the average Labour Party member has not changed much. A certain drift out by the Left is regrettable. Most Party members are not wedded to the New Labour project, although many thought we shouldn't rock the boat in advance of the election.

Ken Coates is wrong to give up the game in the Party. There are significant changes for the worse, but the

Labour Party retains huge working class support. I recognise his honesty, he is not motivated by his personal career.

There is a place in campaigns on the welfare state, Gulf war etc for people both inside and outside the Labour Party. In the activity against the Gulf War no-one asked whether someone was in the Labour Party or not, we all just got stuck in.

The need for comradely behaviour among the left is important.

SO: The single European currency has now been launched, what is your attitude?

JC: European Monetary Union is about handing control to bankers and calling it Europe. Bankers raise interest rates and cut spending. Britain is not yet in the EMU - but it has fulfilled the criteria.

Opposition to the criteria is strong and some countries which claim to have fulfilled the criteria probably haven't. The poorer European countries like Spain will be hit hardest.

Labour will go for a referendum after 2002: the government is boxed in on having to have a referendum. It will be a re-run of the 1975 referendum on Europe, when the 'yes' campaign knew what it was voting for, but the 'no' campaign was confused between those with a global vision and petty national chauvinists. It will be the same in this referendum.

It is not about protecting the queen's head. There is no common ground with Teddy Taylor and Bill Cash.

“European Monetary Union is about handing control to bankers and calling it Europe. Bankers raise interest rates and cut spending. The poorer European countries like Spain will be hit hardest.”

“Recognition should be a major issue for the left at union conferences. The trade union leaders have kept quiet on everything else, saying recognition is the priority, but have not mobilised even on this.”

Debate inside the Socialist Party

Time for a new workers' party in Scotland?

A contribution to the discussion by Dave Hudson

The Socialist Party and Scottish Militant Labour, its Scottish organisation, are engaged in a major discussion about launching a new workers' party in Scotland. This discussion is important for the whole of the socialist left in Britain, including the revolutionary Marxist organisations. Socialist Outlook comments on this discussion because of the important issues it raises for the left within a perspective of recomposition of the workers movement. Also, because the outcome of these discussions will in the short term materially effect the development of the class struggle not only in Scotland, but across the British state.

The controversy in the Socialist Party (SP), concerns the proposition made by Scottish Militant Labour (SML), that under today's conditions, with the present development of the Scottish Socialist Alliances, a new mass workers party to the left of Labour is both needed and can be built ("a small mass workers' party"). This is presented as a qualitative development which would supersede the present collection of organised left groups and tendencies in Scotland.

The political framework of the Scottish Militant Labour comrades is determined by three features: First, is the existence of a right wing, bourgeois, Labour Government and Labour Party, both dominated by Blairism. The Blairite phenomenon represents for them a sharp break from



The political situation in Scotland has long been more advanced than England

social democracy, and has transformed the class character of the Party from one based on and closely linked to the working class, to one based directly on the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. The comrades of the Socialist Party sometimes say that this process of bourgeoisification is already complete, although this is sometimes left unclear.

The second feature they raise is the Scottish National Question and devolution, and the preparations for elections by PR to a Scottish Parliament, scheduled for 1999. This scenario, argues SML, represents a significant political opening if a credible left party existed that could seize the opportunity.

Third, there are higher levels of class consciousness and mobilisation in Scotland than exist in England. This is in part due to the entwining of socialist issues and the struggle for national self-determination. Linked to this are the more advanced levels of socialist organisation, particularly through the Scottish Socialist Alliances.

A breakthrough in Scotland?

The specific combination of these three features (to which the comrades would add the global crisis of both Stalinism and social democracy) creates the opportunity for a new breakthrough in Scotland. Already SML has had some preliminary and informal discussions about launching a new party, possibly called the Scottish Socialist Party, with various prominent individuals and tendencies within the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA).

They say in their text, *Initial proposals for a new Scottish Socialist Party*, (p.1) that there are other socialist organisations they would like to approach for discussions about the formation of a new socialist party. These include the Communist Party of Scotland; the Socialist Labour Party, The Communist Party of Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, and socialists within the Labour Party, the SNP and the Green Party.

They are prepared to dissolve SML into the new party, making its present offices

and apparatus fully available to the new party, including handing over their newspaper. They do not demand that the new party is affiliated to SML's international organisation (CWI), although some mechanism is proposed to maintain individual membership. These proposals have the full weight of the Scottish SML leadership behind them, but are controversial with the SP leadership.

They write that; "The stakes are high, if the socialist left in these

elections fails to make a breakthrough, the advance of socialism could be slowed down. On the other hand, socialist victories in the local elections - particularly if accompanied by the achievement of even a toehold in the new Scottish Parliament - could dramatically accelerate events.... A breakthrough of anything like that magnitude (the 15% vote for the Green Party in 1989 - DH) for the socialist left in Scotland would have earth shattering repercussions - not just in Scotland, but throughout Britain as a whole." (Ibid., p.1.)

SML argues that, after several years of political difficulties the decision to launch the SSA as a campaigning and electoral alliance is vindicated. The tide is now beginning to turn. They conclude that today in Scotland, there are only two serious contenders that offer an alternative to New Labour and the SNP. These are the SSA and the SLP. They also point to growing ferment in the Scottish Labour Party among the 'nationalist' left and the possibility of breakaways in the summer.

The comrades therefore argue that, unlike with the southern Irish system of a single transferable vote, where multi-party systems are liable to flourish, in Scotland, where the additional member system will operate, "there is absolutely no room or political justification for two or more socialist parties to stand in opposition to one another". The Scottish system only requires a party to get 5-6% of the vote for it to get a seat in the parliament. It is clear that the new electoral possibilities have focused the comrades' minds.

We in *Socialist Outlook* are fully persuaded that the situation in Scotland is more politically advanced than in England or Wales, and with greater opportunities for socialists for broadly the same reasons that the SML outline. Allowing for some exaggeration by the comrades, we also believe that a serious electoral challenge by a class struggle or revolutionary party would be very significant and would undoubtedly change the political terrain on the left across the whole British state.

What kind of Party?

The problem for revolutionary Marxists, which needs further discussion, is what do the comrades envisage the political character of this new party will be, and what is the precise role of the Marxists? This is not simply a question of

whether the new party is formally a left reformist (or centrist) or revolutionary Marxist party. The comrades are right to insist it is more complex than this.

The construction of a revolutionary party out of diverse leftward moving forces, as history has shown, will often be more dynamic and complicated than abstract formulae allow. A recomposition of the workers' movement and revolutionary regroupment require a greater conceptual refinement than general principles presented in a lifeless fashion, even if formally correct.

In this respect we would be critical of the British Socialist Party EC response, which although making many correct criticisms of the SML proposals, fails to provide a concrete analysis of the potential in the situation or provide much positive advice.

On the other hand when we read formulations in the SML text such as; "Not only in Scotland, but internationally, the traditional ideological battle lines which divided the left have become blurred" (Ibid., pt.16, p. 4.), we find ourselves as startled as the Socialist Party EC.

Like them we feel it is necessary to ask if the comrades themselves have a vision that is not a little blurred? Clearly the collapse of Stalinism and the crisis and weakening of social democracy has led to a blurring of differences between the main traditions of reformism. But the comrades are not referring to this.

Some old divisions on "the left" may take on less significance, but the fundamental divide between reform, including left reformism, and revolution has not come down. The historic divide between reformism and revolutionary Marxism is not between those who wish to wage the class struggle against capitalism and those who don't. The Marxist understanding of the united front is based in this contradiction. Nor is it the desire to expropriate the capitalists. Nor was it ever simply between Stalinism and Trotskyism and the analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The fundamental divide is encapsulated in works such as Lenin's famous *State and Revolution* or the *Transitional Programme* drafted by Trotsky. The divide between reformism and

Bolsheviks were always engaged in delineating the forces of Marxism from reformist currents

Marxism is *parliamentarism versus revolution*.

Encapsulated in the Marxist programme is a perspective of a revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois state power.

Some examples of blurred thinking can be found in SML's reply to the

British SP EC:

"Yet, paradoxically, the task of organisationally and ideologically delineating the forces of revolutionary Marxism from other socialist currents was, in the period 1919-1920, a much more crucial task than is the case today." (*For a Bold Step Forward*. A reply from the Scottish EC to the British EC. p3)

Again, quoting a previous 'name change' debate:

"Trotskyism's main task was to differentiate itself from reformism and Stalinism... [however] 'The main task facing us now is to win support for a socialist programme and for socialist ideas generally.' (Name Change Debate, Page 3, Socialist Party Members' Bulletin Number 18)... we also faced the task of building a revolutionary party; however in all of the written and verbal discussions during the name change debate, the task of rehabilitating the basic programme of socialism was correctly given the strongest emphasis." (Ibid, p 4)

The first point, and we are sure the comrades will agree, is that the Bolsheviks were *always* engaged in delineating the forces of revolutionary Marxism from reformist socialist currents, not just in the most revolutionary conjunctures.

Second, the organisation of the revolutionary Marxists was both the political expression and the *means* of this struggle. This is because of an understanding that a revolutionary party could not be constructed overnight, but over a period and in continuous struggle with reformism.

While we today may have the luxury of a little more time than in 1919, because we do not live in a revolutionary conjuncture in Europe, this does not mean we are relieved of the task of building a revolutionary Marxist organisation, whatever flexible tactics this may require. Propaganda for basic socialist ideas and building the party are not counterposed.

Stalinism lives

Also, the political situation could change dramatically under conditions of crisis, in part because of the organisational and political weakness of reformism and Stalinism within the working class. We recognise that a contradictory new period has opened with the collapse of Stalinism.

However, we do not subscribe to the theory of world historic defeats of the working class which has virtually erased a century of struggle and experience, in which it is necessary to pick up the pieces and begin again from scratch. The rise in struggles over the past three years in Europe should have laid these ideas to rest.

The political conditions in which these struggles have taken place suggest that there is no clean slate, but most of the old problems still exist. The historic crisis of leadership continues. The experience of regroupments like Communist Refoundation (RC) in Italy and United Left (IU) in Spain have shown this clearly, including the fact that the class collaborationist core of Stalinist politics still lives on.

The comrades continue:

"Organisations and individuals which in the past subscribed to these ideologies [Stalinism and social democracy - DH] have been forced to re-examine their positions. As a result, many former Communist Party members and Labour lefts hoisted the white flag and made their peace with capitalism. But a more principled and courageous minority moved in the opposite direction toward greater acceptance of a political programme which advocates full-blooded socialism combined with workers democracy. In the past, such a programme would have been dismissed as 'Trotskyism'." (*Initial proposals* pt. 16, p4)

The last two sentences are ambiguous. We assume the full-blooded socialist programme referred to is a Marxist programme of socialist revolution. However, as far as we are aware, no significant ex-Stalinist tendency has adopted such a programme - the establishment of a socialist society and planned economy through the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state, the expropriation of the capitalist class and the establishment of a system of workers' democracy, self-management and control.

It could not be said that the ex-CP core of RC in Italy or IU in the Spanish state, have adopted such a programme. Even less could it be said of the ex-Stalinist layer around Scargill in the SLP. Most of these leaderships moved initially to the left and then swung back to the right. While it is true that a small minority of ex-communists and even some social democrats have continued moving to the left, this is different from breaking with reformist or narrow parliamentarist politics.

The current realities of the class struggle in Britain, which unfortunately has been at a very low ebb, never mind revolutionary, have not been conducive to the development of revolutionary politics. The decade 1985-95 in Europe has probably been the worst this century from the point of view of the class struggle and the development of the socialist project. This con-

tinues to be the case in Britain (although not in Europe as a whole), with the lowest level of strikes ever recorded here in 1997.

The fight for the revolutionary programme

It is not at the level of political analysis or an understanding of the need for flexible tactical responses where the comrades are on weak ground, but in the area of revolutionary programme and how to construct a party that is truly revolutionary in character. In their reply (*For a Bold Step Forward*), to the very critical text from the British SP Executive Committee the SML comrades provide many good historical examples from the Trotskyist tradition for flexible tactics in party building.

These clearly answer any mechanistic application of organisational 'principles' and are summed up by the phrase "organisational flexibility combined with political intransigence". However, the comrades emphasise the former and hastily skim over the meaning of 'political intransigence' (which of course requires Marxist organisation).

We agree that you can't just formally counterpose "the concept of a revolutionary party to the idea of a broad socialist party in a rigid and undialectical fashion". And that "there can exist transitional formations in which the features of a revolutionary party and those of a 'broad socialist party' coexist side by side" (*Ibid*, p2).

But in such parties, as the historic examples they provide show, the two polarities are in constant struggle for dominance. The resolution of this strategic political conflict may, at any decisive juncture in the class struggle, result in a split. This happened in the example of the RSDLP in Russia. The crucial point here is that both the reformist and the revolutionary wings of this party were organised as factions very early - in reality as public factions. The 'minority' Bolshevik faction was openly a party within a party long before the final rupture with the RSDLP in 1912.

There is of course a dynamic, a dialectic, involved here. However, the question that must be answered clearly is the following: Do the SML comrades envisage that this new party will be a *transitional* formation/party, a kind of proto-party? In other words, will it be founded on a limited Action Programme, of a type discussed by Trotsky in 1935, but with the aim of its transformation, through common experience and debate over a short period, into a revolutionary party? Or, do they think the new party, which they hope will include the broad forces listed above, will be a *revolutionary* party from its foundation?

If it is the former, then it seems to us incumbent on the revolutionary Marxists to maintain some organisational and political independence within it, to wage the necessary political struggle. If it is the latter, then it has to be shown that the party is founded on a revolutionary programme - a very difficult task in this political conjuncture, even in Scotland.

The need for revolutionary organisation within a new party

To put it another way. The one principle that is absolutely central is that the organisational dissolution of the revolutionary Marxists into a new party first requires the political conquest of a revolutionary programme.

Or, it must be founded with the expectation, due to the rapid evolution of the forces involved, that such a programme will be adopted in the short term (this was

the scenario in the USA in the late 1930s).

If, on the other hand the basis of unity of the new party is a more limited, 'class struggle', or 'Action Programme' (because of the diverse character of the forces involved - or are likely to become involved in the future), and therefore requiring considerable further development before it adopts a revolutionary programme (i.e. similar to the 1938 Transitional Programme), which seems most likely, then organisation remains essential. To genuinely dissolve under these conditions would be nothing less than the liquidation of the Marxist programme.

Organisation within a broad left-wing socialist party could take the form of a recognised tendency or faction, legitimated by the party constitution. Office resources could still be handed over to the new party as a gesture of goodwill, but the Marxists must retain the capacity and the right, if it becomes necessary, to transform themselves into a faction to fight for the leadership of the party - with the recognised consequence that if it fails, it may split, taking what it can with it. This understanding should be transparent and above board in the negotiations.

Is the SSA really revolutionary?

Faced with sharp criticism of their proposals, the comrades reply in *For a Bold Step Forward* that in fact the new party will be a revolutionary party. It will adopt the existing programme of the SSA which, we are assured is a "full-blooded socialist programme".

"Taken together, all of the programmatic documents of the SSA constitute nothing less than a detailed transitional programme for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers' power, updated and applied to the concrete conditions that exist in Scotland." (*Ibid*, p5)

The problem is that this programme of the SSA is neither a revolutionary programme, nor a transitional programme like the 1938 programme, it is an 'Action Programme'. This is fine as far as it goes, and as long as revolutionaries do not confuse it with the Marxist programme of socialist revolution.

The SML complain that the British SP EC misrepresented the political programme of the SSA and gave "a misleading impression" of what they are proposing. They quote from the main programmatic documents of the Scottish Socialist Alliance:

"The SSA stands for the socialist transformation of society. To replace the free market capitalist economy with an economic system based on democratic ownership and control of the key sectors of the economy. A system based on social need and environmental protection rather than private profit and ecological destruction." (*Statement of Aims, Point 2*).

Or again:

"The SSA actively promotes the International solidarity of the working class and the oppressed to defeat capitalism and imperialism... the SSA will build the closest possible links with socialists in other parts of Britain, across Europe and world wide. The SSA stands ultimately for a new socialist world, where poverty, starvation, environmental destruction, exploitation, war and racial hatred are eradicated." (*Statement of Aims, Point 6*) (*Ibid*, p 4-5)

These and many other demands and policies are excellent, including the demands of accountability and financial conditions upon public representatives: *but they do not constitute a revolutionary programme*, as the SP EC text points out.

Kautsky, Bernstein and the reformist leadership of the old Second International before World War One could easily pay lip service to this kind of socialist programme, as could Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner. The differences will soon emerge as to how

this programme is to be achieved - whether through parliament or through the self-activity and mobilisation of the broad masses and the revolutionary seizure of power.

No one is arguing that a full revolutionary programme must be presented publicly at all times; that would be absurd sectarian propagandism, and is why the method of the *Transitional Programme* was developed by Trotsky. However, as night follows day, these quite different programmes and perspectives will condition the priorities and methods of activity of the new party, and finally decide its character as either reformist or revolutionary.

It is not clear, but this blurring of fundamental programmatic issues may ultimately derive from the comrades' origins in the old Militant Tendency. This organisation had an emphasis on parliamentary 'Enabling Acts' to carry through the nationalisation of the monopolies and a socialist transformation. This kind of propaganda, which emphasises a parliamentary road to socialism, has been defended as merely a pedagogic device.

The British EC recognise that the SSA programme is not revolutionary Marxist, but without explaining clearly why, or what constitutes the core of any revolutionary programme. However this can't be the only explanation. Today in the aftermath of the collapse of stalinism, the whole of the socialist left has faced considerable pressure from the bourgeois ideological offensive.

Finally, the comrades complain that experience of the SSA shows that there are serious difficulties building two organisations, both a revolutionary current and a broader alliance. The new party is in part presented as an expedient solution to this problem.

The tactic of building the party within unitary formations, although not without its difficulties, should be basic to any revolutionary organisation that understands the united front method and builds action coalitions. In any case, a technicality is not an argument for dissolving the revolutionary organisation.

For bold steps - and revolutionary politics

To conclude. The SML has a good analysis of the Scottish political situation, a drive to take advantage of a new fruitful situation and healthy appetite for tactical flexibility. It would be a tragedy if their project could not be carried through whilst maintaining the integrity of revolutionary politics intact.

An illustration of the potential danger is Spain's increasingly dis-united left (IU), which shows what can happen to broad left parties as the unfolding class struggle highlights the different programmes and strategies that actually lay behind formal agreements.

Here, a very sharp political struggle is taking place between a defeatist and increasingly opportunist current, 'The Third Way' (which has the support of the leadership of the Workers Commissions), and those who want to develop the militant struggles of the working class in both the political and trade union field. (See *International Viewpoint*, Feb. 1998, No 297).

What is certain about the Scottish debate, is that the establishment of a genuinely broad-based small mass party with a revolutionary current integrated into its leadership, and which adopted a developed Action Programme at its founding conference, would be a significant step forward for the Scottish working class.

Nonetheless, for such a party to play its potentially historic role in the struggle for socialism, the revolutionaries will have to continue as a distinct tendency within it in order to transform it into a revolutionary party.

THE FALL of General Suharto is a great victory for the mass movement in Indonesia. The sight of thousands of student swarming across the parliament roof in Jakarta has once again kindled the flames of revolution. "Tomorrow it will be the president's palace." said one. After 32 years of brutal and corrupt dictatorship, Suharto's fall from power has shown the potential for a great liberation, reports DAVE PACKER.

Suharto may have gone: but the struggle must go on



The question is what kind of revolution will it be and how far can it go? The current manoeuvres of the ruling clique of bloated capitalists and sinister generals, with discrete support from the IMF and the White House, suggests that a counter attack is being prepared. Their candidate to replace Suharto, former vice-president Habibie, is of course promising elections, democratic and social reforms and legal challenges to the Suharto family empire, but these are a smoke-screen.

His real objective is to divide the opposition, dampen down the flames of revolt, and stabilise Indonesia, for big business - with a little help from the IMF. Sending troops into the parliament building to remove the students there shows his true colours.

The generals who promoted Habibie, now with smiling faces, were the same men who only a month ago were organising the kidnappings and torture of political opponents of the regime.

Imperialism too is quickly, if reluctantly, washing its hands of Suharto: but only last month it was still turning a blind eye to his re-election fraud. No real solution for the masses is on offer from any of these quarters and the crisis, which is in any case global in scope, can only deepen.

Unfortunately for Asian and world capitalism, as Alex Brummer writes in *The Guardian*, (30.5.98), it is, "too late to re-bot-

tle the globalisation genie", and like its neighbours in East Asia, the Indonesian regime remains in deep financial, economic and political turmoil. "The new world order trumpeted by George Bush at the start of the 1990s - as global capitalism and the forces of democracy marched on triumphantly - is looking extremely fragile," he writes.

But it was always a myth. The collapse of Stalinism and the Gulf war were never enough to establish a new imperialist order. Indeed the war successfully alienated the Arab masses from American and British imperialism.

Recession

The recently reported cracks in the Hong Kong economy, which is heading for recession, with output fallen by 2% in real terms in the first three months of 1998, threatens a fresh wave of collapses in the Asian financial markets.

The South Korean bourgeoisie, mired in its own protracted crisis, is now faced with major strikes from a militant trade union movement, while Japan is continuing to crack open at the seams, with sharply rising unemployment - the worst since the second world war.

Debt, deficit financing and corruption are not peculiar to Asia's "crony capitalism", but a growing feature of late capitalism on a

global scale. The crisis has spread geographically to Russia, whose corrupt, chaotic but paralysed capitalist roaders, with their massive government deficits vulnerable to external shocks, are finding that capitalism and imperialism are not always friendly when the chips are down.

It is a tragedy of history that the Russian proletariat, still the biggest in the world, is having to learn the lessons of capitalism the hard way.

In India the rupee has hit a record low, while the Pakistan government has suspended all foreign exchange dealings. It fears that, in the present climate of growing crisis in Asia, its tit-for-tat nuclear detonations may invoke financial and economic consequences.

The economic crisis in Indonesia is fast getting worse. Andrew Higgins of *The Guardian* (19.5.98) states what all the capitalists know and feared, namely that "Indonesia's economy is a wreck."

He writes of "the anguish that pushed slum-dwellers into anarchic revolt, and turned a darling of the World Bank into a basket case."

Today, one in ten Indonesians are slipping below an income of 65p a day. Many of the directors in the big corporations and banks,

together with other cronies at the centre of Suharto's corrupt "crony capitalism" and family

commercial and political empire, have already fled. So have other super-rich magnates. Some, including Indonesia's richest man, Lim Sioe Liong, have had the sumptuous houses which they left behind pillaged and torched.

The Suharto family fortune based on a vast web of interlocking companies and banks, tax-breaks and other privileges, stands as an insult to the working class and the poverty stricken masses.

Everybody has heard about the taxi companies and luxury hotels, owned by one of his sons but they also feed off the state sector as well. The state oil and gas company, Pertamina has 120 companies and contractors among its suppliers, owned by the Suharto family in a complex system of corruption.

His sons have a monopoly of all crude and product exports, worth £1.8 billion in 1996. One of these companies alone netted £30 million profits last year. Altogether 1,247 separate, active companies have been identified to date! Then there are the huge charitable foundations... It is like the Mafia with state power.

Mass movement

Today, the mass movement is temporarily at bay, but none of the problems which led to the anti-Suharto revolt are being solved. The movement will surely reorganise itself on a more clear political basis. However, there are big political weaknesses on the side of the existing opposition parties and groups.

A few Islamic organisations have a mass following such as Nahdlatul Ulama which claims 34 million supporters. Their conservative business leaders were also reluctant to see the end of Suharto.

The Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals also had the ear of Suharto. These are the main national chauvinist organi-

sations which consciously scapegoat Indonesia's Chinese minority, helping to fuel the outbreaks of anti-Chinese violence by some of the urban poor.

Amien Rais is the most prominent opposition leader. He is a free marketeer who seeks US backing to replace Habibie as president.

He was responsible for calling off a planned mass demonstration in Jakarta, last week - although over 700,000 people demonstrated in other cities. Nor has he called for mobilisations against Habibie, preferring to wait for promised elections even though they will probably be fixed. Worse, he has also called for anti-Chinese policies.

There are 20 million workers in the cities, and in recent years, trade union activists have succeeded in building independent unions. They remain fragmented but have waged some important struggles. This process of organisation, combined with the scope of the mass movement, opens up the possibility of socialist ideas gaining a hearing.

It is essential that the mass movement remains vigilant and mobilised, extending support to the continuing student protests on university campuses and outside prisons.

It must organise and prepare itself for new offensives and new conquests. However, with a rise to prominence of figures like Amien Rais, and with the pro-capitalist liberals either backing Habibie, or flirting with communal politics, the mass coalition is being stretched to breaking point. This is inevitable as different class standpoints emerge.

United front

The small forces of the Indonesian left should argue for a single united front; a mass action, pro-democracy movement, based on the working class and its allies, which rejects Habibie and all those associated with Suharto and the old regime.

It must argue for the main demands of the workers and the oppressed to be supported. This could open the way for a movement which could not only destroy despotism and the sinister power of the military, but also abolish exploitation and poverty by challenging the political and economic power of the bosses.

At a broader level, Suharto's fall shows the world once again the power of the masses when they are mobilised and determined. It shows those who have become used to bending the knee and touching their caps, or just sinking in front of the TV, how they are capable of changing things through organisation and collective action.

It also shows that without an established and determined leadership, such movements from below are always in danger of falling into the hands of every kind of opportunist or charlatan, and can be easily manipulated and divided.

Finally, it shows that without a conscious socialist leadership, with a programme for socialist change, which has the ear and the confidence of the mass movement, compromise and dissimulation can snatch victory from the peoples' grasp.

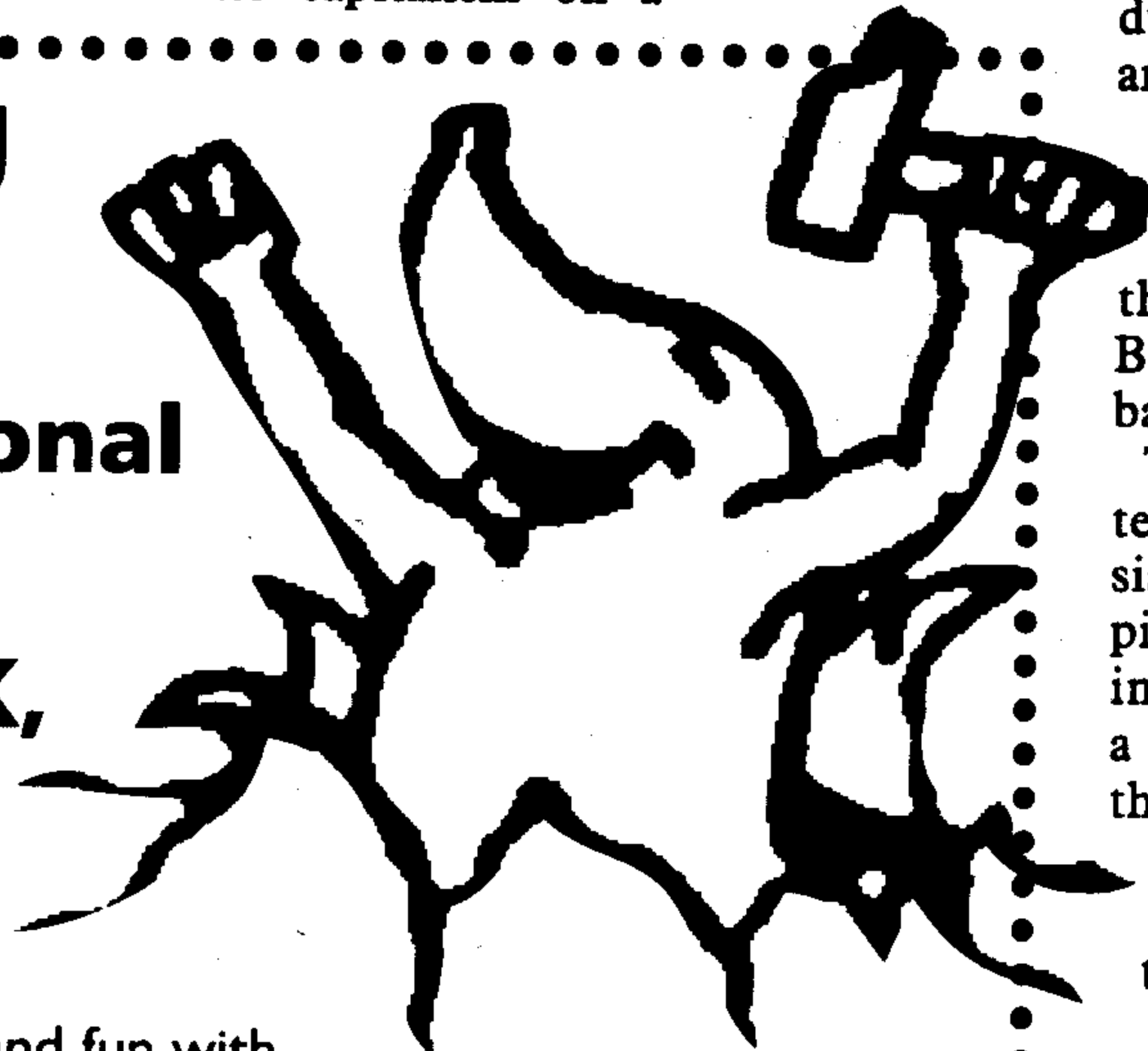
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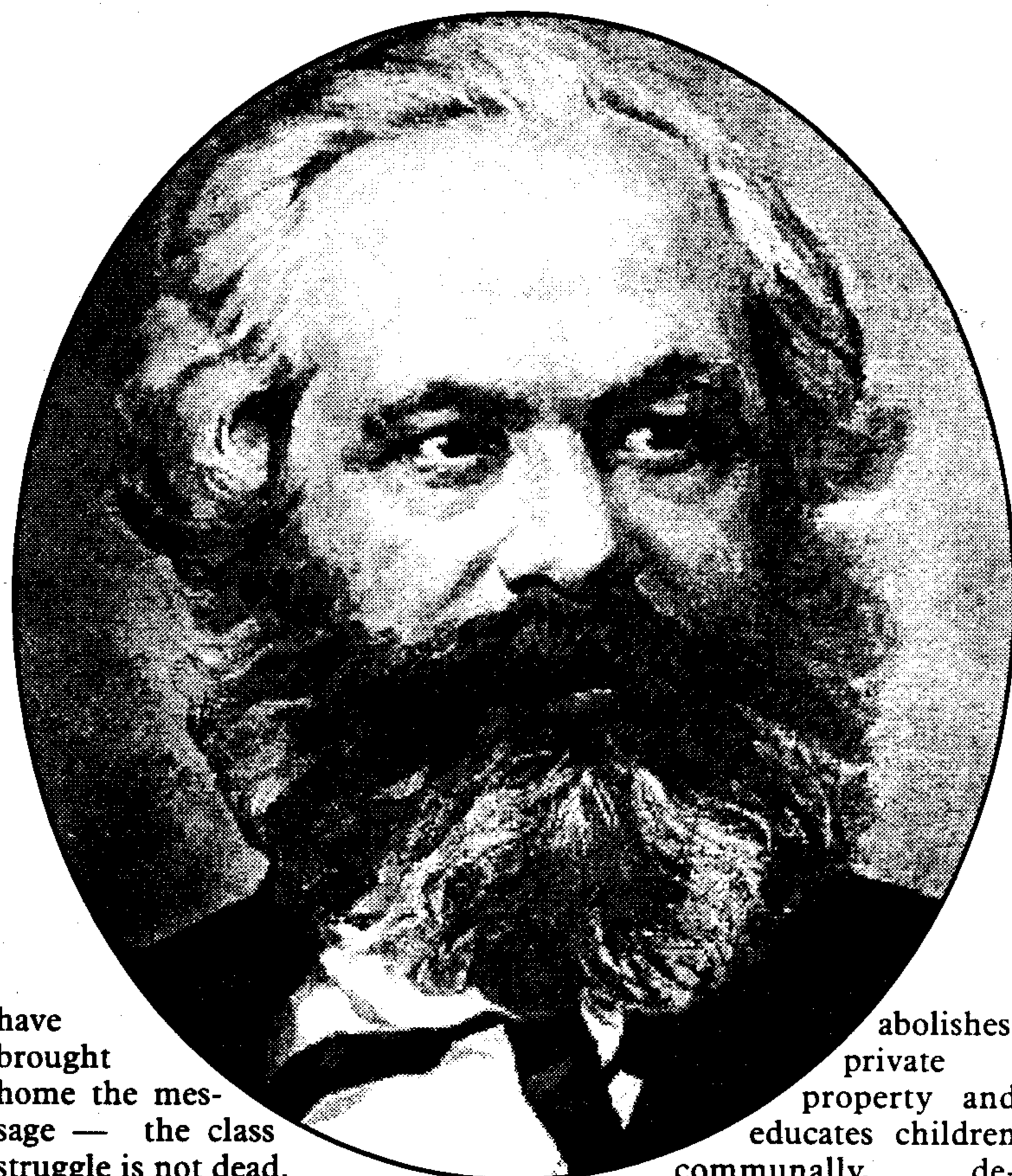
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The Communist Manifesto 1848-1998

Why bosses still fear communist revolution



Marx (right) and Engels drew inspiration from the 1848 revolutions which swept through European capitals including Paris (below)

Charlie van Gelderen

A HUNDRED and fifty years ago, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels began *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* with the words: "A spectre is haunting Europe ... the spectre of communism."

When the founders of scientific socialism wrote these words, there was no communist party anywhere, nor any other mass organisation of the working class.

The nearest approximation was the trade union movement in Britain, at that time the most advanced capitalist country in the world. This was the model on which Marx was to build his analysis of the development of capitalism - an analysis brilliantly outlined in the *Manifesto* and eventually elaborated in the *Grundrisse* and the three volumes of *Capital*.

Suddenly everyone is talking or writing about Karl Marx. Despite the collapse of the stalinized 'communist' system, academics, historians and economists are vying with each other to argue the relevance of Marx today.

There is almost unanimity in the tributes to Marx's genius in his development of capitalism, his remarkable diagnosis of the revolutionary character of 'bourgeois society'.

Globalisation

Perhaps this is not surprising. After all where can you find a better description of globalisation as we know it today than in the following passage from the *Communist Manifesto*?

"The need for a constantly expanding market chases the bourgeoisie over the surface of the whole globe. It must settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere ... through its exploitation of the world market [it has] given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country ... it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood.

"All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material, drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe.

"In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction

the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations ..."

Liberal and reactionary academics, acquainted, perhaps, only with the sterile stalinized version of Marxism, are amazed that in 1848 Marx could draw such a vivid word-picture of the capitalism they know today.

But while they grudgingly give praise to Marx for his prescience, they fail to grasp the revolutionary content of his teachings, that spectre of communism which struck fear into the ruling classes in 1848 and in every succeeding epoch.

Braced by the temporary apparent success of the market economy and the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites, they refuse to accept that the self-destructive forces built into capitalist development must reach a point where:

"modern bourgeois society, which has conjured up such gigantic means of production and exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the underworld which he has called up. Bourgeois relations have become too narrow to encompass the wealth created by them."

As Eric Hobsbawm put it: "What gives the manifesto its force are two things. The first is its vision that capitalism is not permanent, stable 'the end of history', but a temporary phase in the history of humanity, and, like its predecessors, one due to be superseded by another kind of society."

The locomotion to bring about this change is the class struggle, the battle of the modern, industrial proletariat against the owners of the means of production.

Class struggle

This is the essence of Marx's teaching, and the aspect which the liberal academics find hardest to accept. Isn't the class struggle dead, killed by Thatcherism and the overwhelming victory of market forces which brought down the 'communist' strongholds in Eastern Europe?

Where is the working class today? Wasn't Marx and Engels wrong about the growing improv-

erisation of the masses and the middle classes disappearing into the working class?

Ladies and gentlemen, you delude yourselves. Today we see the rapid impoverishment of the great mass of the people in the countries on the periphery, the so-called developing world (formerly 'Third World'), crushed by the unbearable burden of debt. In the economically advanced countries of the West, we see a rapidly growing gap between the rich and their middle class employees.

In Europe, despite over 20 million unemployed, weekly hours for those still in work rose. So did chronic sickness, crime and the numbers in prison.

The officially low rate of 5 per cent unemployed in the United



States have brought home the message - the class struggle is not dead.

Of course, such strikes do not represent the revolution which Marx and Engels anticipated, the final battle for the conquest of power. But they are powerful steps along the way, and Marx and Engels by their close collaboration with the conservative British Trade Unions showed their recognition of this.

From the start, however, the founders of scientific socialism realised that something else was required.

To achieve the ultimate goal, workers' power as the route to socialism, Marx and Engels, and Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci after them, realised that the working class needed the leadership of revolutionary parties.

Marx and Engels tried to steer the burgeoning social democratic parties along Marxist lines. Without such parties, working class struggle will not move forward to socialist revolution.

Today's Marxists can best commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Manifesto by uniting to build such a party - a party firmly grounded in the working class, nationally and internationally; a party which will learn from and try to avoid the mistakes of the past.

In Marx's day, and again, in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, the cry was raised: "you communists want to introduce community of women." Engels gave a scathing reply to this in an earlier draft of the Manifesto:

"What influence will the communist order have on the family? It will make the relations between the sexes a purely private affair, which concerns only the persons involved, with no interference from society.

"It is able to do this because it

abolishes private property and educates children communally, destroying thereby the two foundation stones of hitherto existing marriage - dependence of the wife upon her husband and of the children upon their parents conditioned by private property.

"Community of wives is a relation belonging entirely to bourgeois society and existing today perfectly in prostitution. Prostitution, however, is rooted in private property and falls with it."

Let anyone who would pour scorn of Marx's prediction of the destructive effect of capitalism on the family look at the statistics - the growth of single-parent households in the developed world, and of child labour in the developing world, child labour which is exploited by the capitalist monopolies.

"Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children...? To this crime we plead guilty." (Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto*.)

Capitalism has proved that, despite its enormous potential - to which the *Manifesto* pays handsome tribute, on a global scale it cannot provide a livelihood, however miserable, for most of the working class.

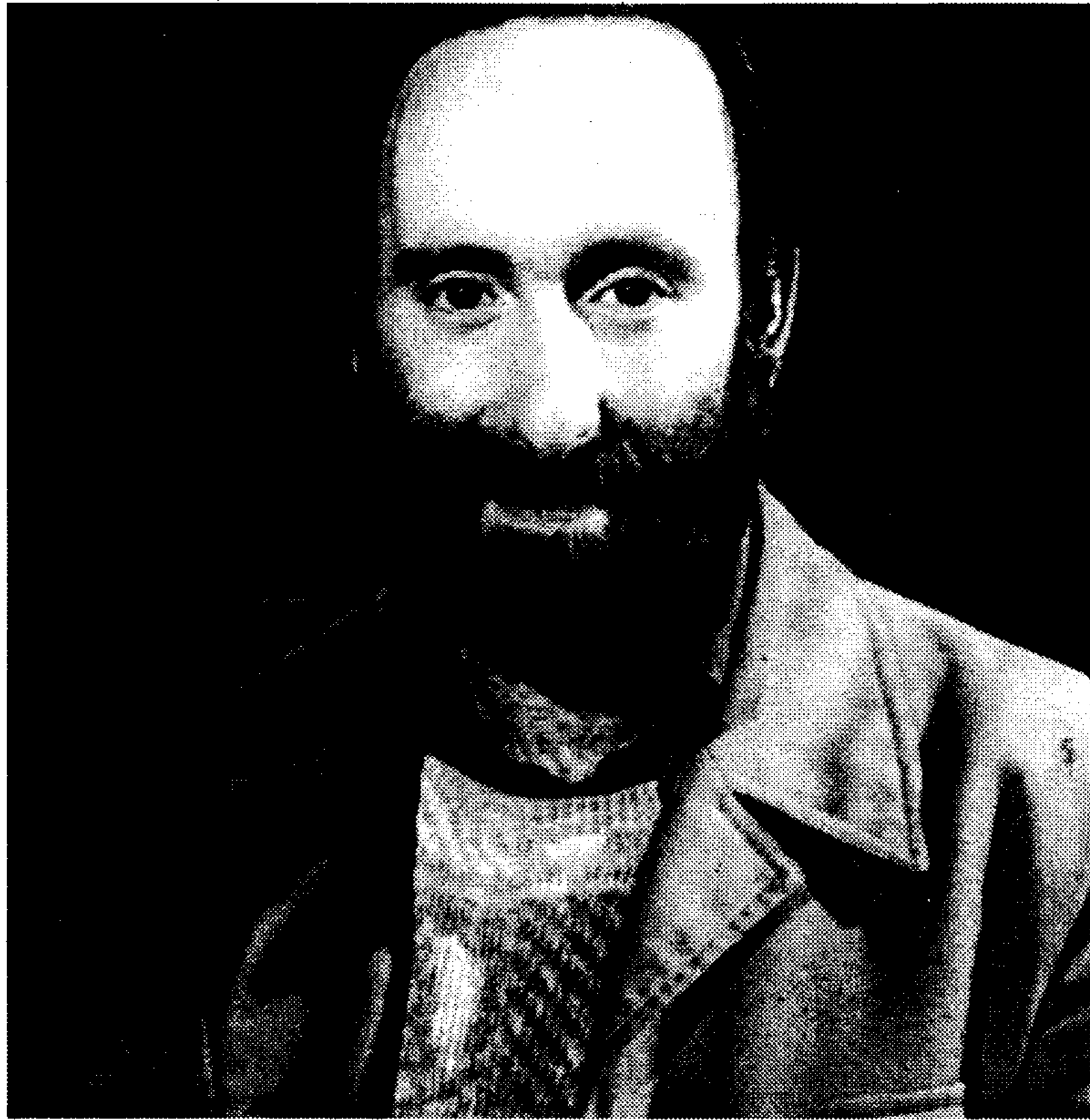
Marx and Engels envisaged a world in which the working class, "the grave-diggers of capitalism" would bring it down, and build a new, more progressive social order: but they did not exclude the alternative which was, as Rosa Luxemburg put it, the "descent into barbarism".

We have already seen the shape of this barbarism in the cruelties of colonialism, fascism and stalinism.

Despite the overwhelming triumph of capitalism, the spectre of communism is still haunting the ruling class. That is why little Cuba still has to battle against the embargo imposed by the mighty United States; that is why they invaded Grenada. The imperialists have not forgotten 1917.

This threatening catastrophe can only be averted if the working people of the world realise that they have nothing to lose but their chains, and they have a world to win, and respond to the ringing call to arms of the Communist Manifesto: "*Workers of all countries, UNITE!*"

Capitalism has proved that, despite its enormous potential it cannot provide a livelihood, however miserable, for most of the working class



Reuben Goldberg

Roland Rance

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK readers and supporters, together with many others, took part in memorial meetings held in London and Bradford for anti-fascist and socialist activist Reuben Goldberg, who died earlier this year.

Reuben was a member of the International Marxist Group, then the British section of the Fourth International, during the 1970s. At the time, he was President of Bradford University Students Union, and one of the founders of the Bradford Ad-Hoc Committee Against Racism and Fascism.

In 1975, the newly formed Asian Youth Movement was able to mobilise and prevent the National Front from marching through Manningham, the heart of Bradford's black community. Reuben was central to this mobilisation, and continued to work with the AYM and its successor groups for the rest of his life.

Reuben worked for many years at Bradford's Fourth Idea Community Bookshop. This was one of the centres of political activity in Bradford, and a regular target of fascist attacks.

The fascists had a particular hatred for Reuben, as an anti-fascist, socialist, Jew. Despite bomb threats, physical attacks and continuing harassment, the police failed to take any action until a Special Branch officer checking out the shop was himself assaulted by a fascist.

Having been a Socialist Unity candidate for Bradford Council in 1976, Reuben was later adopted as a Labour party candidate, and was a member of the council from 1984 to 1988. During this period, he was prominent in the struggle against anti-traveller racism, and he helped establish the Labour Campaign for Travellers Rights. In

1988, in a bitter reselection fight, Reuben was dropped by the party, and left the council.

Shortly after this, Reuben left Bradford and moved to London. He was employed as a Race Equality Officer by Newham Council.

Although always an opponent of the Israeli government and its treatment of its Palestinian subjects, Reuben refused to let this determine his attitude towards Jewish culture and history. It was natural, when he moved to London, that he should join the Jewish Socialists Group, and he soon became co-ordinator of their anti-fascist and anti-racist work.

In the debates in the anti-racist movement, Reuben always called for unity of the campaigns and uncompromising opposition to the fascists. He was a regular presence at anti-fascist and anti-racist mobilisations, and a tireless organiser behind the scenes.

In London, Reuben quickly made contact with the Newham Monitoring Project, with whom he worked closely. He continued

this collaboration in the difficult period after the NMP lost their council funding.

Reuben's death at the age of 45 is a serious loss to the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement. At his funeral, at Bushey Jewish Cemetery, Jewish

mourners were almost outnumbered by members of the Newham Monitoring Project and the Bradford Asian Youth Movement, who had come to pay their respects to a trusted ally and true comrade.

As part of their regular Holocaust memorial day, Bradford Trades Council has instituted an annual Reuben Goldberg Memorial Lecture. The first lecture was presented by Dave Landau, anti-fascist activist and member of the Jewish Socialists Group. We are pleased to reproduce it here.

Reuben Goldberg Anti-fascist memorial lecture

Building a genuine united front against fascism

Dave Landau

THE 1990s have been the decade of fascist revival on the continent of Europe. We had a brief period in which a fascist party, the Alliance Nazionale, was part of a coalition government in Italy. In France, the electoral strength of Le Pen's Front Nationale has grown by leaps and bounds throughout the decade.

After reunification the Republican Party in Germany became a significant force. There were mob attacks on hostels for asylum seekers with fatalities in some cases. Republicanism collapsed, but organised racist and fascist violence has continued to grow and whole swathes of Germany are no-go areas for all the communities threatened by the nazis.

In Belgium the Vlams Blok became the stoniest party in the local authority in Antwerp and has held on to that. Probably over half the police force are Vlams Blok supporters in that city.

In Austria there is a groundswell of support for the fascist Freedom Party and it is one of the strongest parties in Vienna. There is a real possibility that its leader Jorge Haider could win or come second in the next presidential elections.

In Eastern European countries, gangs of skinheads patrol the streets in search of Gypsies. Jews and other migrants are fair game.

In the early 90s Zironovsky, whose hero is Hitler, commanded massive support in Russia.

Fortunately in Britain the fascists have nowhere near the strength that we are seeing in these examples. However, there is no room for complacency. Right now in Bradford the BNP are circulating leaflets which attack people who are in this room.



On the stump: Dave Landau

To confront such a threat we need a massive united movement committed to effective action. This idea of unity in action against racism and fascism is one which Reuben consistently fought for.

So it is timely that I should make the theme of this talk, the united front.

I want to rehearse the classic idea of the united front against fascism and then subject to criticism and update it in the light of ideas of the Black and Women's movements.

United front

THE term "united front" became currency in left-wing politics in the 1920s and 30s. However, under different names it had been the principal form of working class organisation in the 19th and early 20th Century.

That is organisation which attempts to unite all the working class in common struggle and embrace a variety of political currents within that unity. In this country, the Chartist movement would be a clear example of this. This was Marx and Engels' conception when they wrote the *Communist Manifesto*:

"The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interest separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole."

In 1948 Marx believed that as Communist ideas were inherently superior and correct, that they would win in the battle of ideas within a broad workers movement. He had yet to discover the strength of his proposition "the prevailing ideology is the ideology of the ruling class".

Thus the First International, the International Working Men's Association, was essentially a united front body in which Marxism, Bakuninism, Proudhonism, all kinds of Reformism and utopianism, co-existed in conflict until, the tensions between them finally blew it apart.

Even after this experience, the Second International had largely the same character. The sections of the Second International, were essentially united front political parties.

Sometimes tendencies organised themselves into sub-parties within the united front, but – as in Russia with the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks – they remained within the framework of the Second International for a long time.

It was only with the outbreak of the First World War, when social democrats supported their imperial powers against one another, that it was seen as necessary for Communists and Social Democrats to form separate parties.

And it was precisely this which led to the necessity of articulating the explicit idea of the United Front, because the Communist International quickly realised that, in most circumstances, the Communist Parties could not unite the working class in struggle.

Aesop's fable

A CATTLE dealer once drove some bulls to the slaughterhouse. And the butcher came nigh with his sharp knife. "Let us close ranks and jack up this executioner on our horns", suggested one of the bulls.

"If you please, in what way is the butcher any worse then the dealer who drove us hither with his cudgel?" replied the bulls, who had received their political education in Manuilsky's institute.

"But we shall be able to attend to the dealer as well afterwards!"

"Nothing doing" replied the bulls, firm in their principles, to the counsellor. "You are trying to shield our enemies from the left; you are a social-butcher yourself".

And they refused to close ranks.

They had to fight for unity in action with social democrats and other proletarian forces.

The Communist Party and the rise of the Nazis

Whatever ideas the Communist Parties had developed about the United Front, particularly the lessons from the victory of fascism in Italy, had been completely lost when faced with the rise of the Nazis in Germany.

Stalin and the German Communist Party had developed the idea that fascism was just another form of bourgeois rule. We communists should not take sides between one form of dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and another. They were all as bad as one another – Fascists, Liberals, Social Democrats.

Indeed the Social Democrats were the worst because they incorporated the proletariat into their own exploitation. They were 'Social Fascists'.

You knew where you were with a Nazi. If they were in power this would polarise class forces and prepare the way for revolution.

This framework was carried through to the letter by the German Communist Party, leading to one of the greatest tragedies in human history.

Trotsky

A minority of Marxists saw the disastrous consequences of this policy. Two of the most prominent were Leon Trotsky and Georgi Dimitrov, but they both dealt with it in different ways.

Trotsky and his comrades wrote pamphlet after pamphlet, article after article, speech after speech, advocating the policy of the 'United Front Against Fascism.'

Yes, fascism was a form of bourgeois rule but it was a particular form which had, for Trotsky, two crucial features. First, it was committed to violently annihilating its enemies – on the streets when out of power and once in power – destroying all working class organisations.

The second was the method of building a mass movement amongst the petit-bourgeoisie who felt crushed between the forces of capitalism and the workers movement. The small matter of anti-semitism wasn't a crucial part of Trotsky's understanding at this time. I will return to this later.

Trotsky therefore argued that it *did* matter what form of bourgeois rule took.

With the fascists in power, fighting back would be virtually impossible. We would be in prison, or dead: there would be no working class parties or unions.

Saying that fascism was worse did not mean taking sides with one section of the bourgeoisie against another. None of them

could be trusted not to turn to the Nazis if the chips were down.

No, it was independent united working class action which Trotsky advocated. Between them the German Communist and Social Democratic Parties commanded the support of millions and millions. Between them they could crush the Nazis before they became real threat: "crush them in the egg", he said – on the streets, in the ballot box, in the war of propaganda – everywhere.

Even when the Nazis had grown very strong by 1933, this was still possible. A united working class movement could bring most of the petit-bourgeoisie behind it, taking it away from the fascists.

Dimitrov

Georgi Dimitrov, leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, also understood the threat posed by fascism. He managed to write about it without attacking Stalin or the leadership of the German Communist Party. Much of what he wrote followed the same contours as Trotsky, except he slipped in the idea of making alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie against the fascists.

This became the touchstone to the policy of the Popular Front which Stalin and the third international turned to after 1935. In this perspective the working class should sacrifice its political and organisational independence to making deals with the capitalists.

This policy would eventually prove to disarm the working class as the Nazis occupied one state after another across Europe – with the acquiescence of the national bourgeoisie and the national armies which put up a token resistance.

Racism and self organisation

The big gap in the Trotsky's understanding of fascism was the central role played by racism, anti-semitism in the case of the German Nazis, and also sexuality, and the family.

Mussolini may be an exception, but certainly for Hitler and the Nazis and for modern fascist movements, being a particular form of bourgeois rule is just not what fascism is about.

The motivation from top to bottom of fascist movements is about the domination of White Aryans over everyone else.

Much of what the Nazis did in power was not expedient from a capitalist point of view.

On balance however, it served the bourgeoisie well enough, but they wouldn't have chosen it had it not established a momentum in its mass movement.

Fascism cannot be eradicated without defeating the racism that underlies it.

Fascism appeals to the bully



With police protection for the fascists, only a genuine united front could have speeded the closure of the BNP HQ

and the coward. It plays to people's sense of powerlessness and alienation in our society by saying, "you can become powerful relative to that group – be they Jews, Black people, Gypsies, or homosexuals. You can smash those up, and we will give you a new identity as part of the master race, no longer the little alienated one."

How are we to break this? Self-organisation of the communities under attack is a key to this. If those Jews, Black people, Gypsies, Gays and women stand up with pride as communities, this challenges the bullies and the cowards.

Women as a group, are on this list for a different reason. Nazis never planned to wipe out women. They were attacked to put them in their place in relation to the reproduction of the Aryan race. The sexual politics of fascism would make a good memorial lecture in a future year.

I am of course, not saying that self organisation alone is enough. What I am saying is that it has to be a central and leading element of any successful united front movement.

Cable Street

In 1936 Mosley and his British Union of Fascists decided to march through the East of London. It was the Jewish Workers who got together and raised the slogan 'they shall not pass'.

Many of them were in the Communist Party, many in the Labour Party, but the party leaderships were not keen to do anything. They were forced into it by the determined campaign waged by the Jewish East End Workers.

Neither was the official Jewish Leadership interested. The Jewish Board of Deputies and the Jewish Chronicle told Jews to stay at home.

On the day, a quarter of a million turned out to stop Mosley. And who were they? Just Jewish Workers? No, workers from all over London, especially Irish workers.

And just workers? No. My paternal Grandfather, a small business man who voted Tory all his life, ignored his leadership, the Jewish Board of Deputies, and followed the working class and turned out to fight on the streets.

Working class unity and working class community self defence won the day, bringing other classes in behind it. This was the united front in action.

Welling and the united front from above and below

The classic Trotskyist writings on the united front refer to the need for a united front from above and below.

We need to bring together progressive and militant forces amongst the labour movement and the communities under attack. But we also need to make demands on the trades union bureaucrats, labour leaders and the traditional conservative leaderships of communities.

Why? Some people say to expose them. But I would argue, much more importantly, to bring a far greater number of people into effective action who would be prepared to take action if the traditional leaderships were supporting it.

Some movements sound like classic united fronts but in fact

are not. They insist on "Black leadership" and have a "labour movement orientation". But if their orientation is primarily towards the trade union, labour and community bureaucracies they will, in practice, only be a united front from above whose policies will be dictated by the needs of those traditional leaderships.

This was illustrated starkly in 1993. A Unity demonstration was called to march on the BNP headquarters in Welling, in the aftermath of the Steven Lawrence murder. There was a call for the TUC to support this.

However, another "Black-led" organisation called an alternative action in Downing Street, which got the support of the TUC, Labour Party and traditional community organisations.

As a result a 50,000-strong demonstration was brutally stopped from going to Welling by the police while a 6,000-strong rally took place in Downing Street. The first was a united front from below, the second a united front from above.

If there had been one united front action, from above and below, it would have been seen by everyone as an undivided call to effective action and we may have seen 200,000 marching on the BNP HQ in Welling.

Faced with a united front from above and below, the police might have decided that discretion was the better part of valour and let us through and that might have finished off the HQ two years earlier than actually happened.

Nazis never planned to wipe out women. They were attacked to put them in their place...

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Time to get trespassing

Freedom to Roam now!

Dave Bangs

ENVIRONMENT Minister Michael Meacher's proposal for a "freedom to roam" on certain categories of "open land" represents a tremendous political opportunity for the countryside access movement. Whether activists or their allies on the left are strong enough to grasp it is an open question.

The proposal is, in itself, a modest one. Mountain, moor, heath, down and common land will be open to public access on foot as a right, thus giving access to around 10 per cent of the land area of England and Wales.

Other types of "open land" which are arguably a greater resource to the mass of urban dwellers - woodland, lake and riverside, cliff and foreshore - are not included in the proposals, but will be considered by the year 2000, so it is said.

The proposals thus sideline the simple and obvious route of creating a general right to roam at will, and subjecting this right to common sense exclusions - such as over standing crops, buildings and gardens and other "developed land".

Such a right of "Allemansrotten" already exists in Sweden and other continental countries with a more democratic rural culture.

The way is thus set for exhausting and destructive arguments over definition of categories of access land - does "moor" refer only to those areas with a natural



Working class families need space and fresh air

vegetation (of moor grasses, heathers and so on) or does it include fertilised and reseeded areas; does "down" include areas used as horse gallops and pony paddocks?

But the most negative aspect of these proposals is their retreat from Meacher's earlier clear and unequivocal commitment to legislation.

In its place we now have a 3 month consultation period in which the landowners' organisa-

tions are challenged to come up with voluntary solutions.

The County Landowners' Association well know how to use such opportunities. Without a considerable show of strength and broad popular support, the access movement may now be cheated yet again, as it has been on four major occasions already this century by governments backing away from clear legislative proposals.

Yet the campaign for access rights is worryingly narrow and asymmetrical. The brunt of it is borne by the Ramblers Association and its wide network of local groups, often with an older

age profile and little experience of political activity. Other local conservation groups are often timid and deferential in character.

Red Rope, the socialist rambling and mountaineering group, appears to be completely passive on this - the very issue which should be at the heart of their existence.

Outside its ranks, the Ramblers Association can rely on only a small number of militant independent groups, like SCAM, the

Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorlands, and the networks of 'The Land is Ours' and 'Earth First!' to put some backbone into a movement dogged by the "politics of respectability".

The government proposals correctly link rural access rights with the defence of threatened wildlife. In Sussex last year, successful campaigns against habitat destruction at the Offham Down and Marsh Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) would have been greatly facilitated if the public had known such damage was in preparation. Yet the sites were completely off limits to public access, and some wetland damage was not discovered by biologists until a year after it took place!

Wide appeal

The access movement must build a combination of technical arguments and a campaign of mass trespass to appeal to the whole range of countryside users.

We must use our local knowledge to rebut in detail the landowners' propaganda machine - a task which gives the Ramblers Association activists great headway over the more footloose and migratory activists of 'The Land is Ours' and 'Earth First'.

The practical programmes of trespass will highlight the problems walkers face: habitat destruction, game rearing, route blocking, landowner hostility and so on. Provided our numbers can guarantee ramblers' feelings of safety, it will

be possible for such trespasses to gather large numbers of countryside lovers and attract broad publicity.

Sussex activists are organising a number of research projects and at least two mass trespasses - on 14 June and 5 July. We are able to utilise the network of activists already created to fight for a South Downs National Park and to oppose habitat destruction and local authority land sales.

We cannot match the great trespass traditions of the Peak District and Kinder Scout, but that is our model.

For 50 years - since the half-hearted voluntary measures passed in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act - the demand for a freedom to roam has lain dormant. It is ironic that its general revival should be the act of the Blair government, which, on so many fronts, has proved such a straightforward tool of private capital.

Decades of demoralising defeats for access and wildlife campaigners have meant the movement is ill-prepared for this major battle. The relentless destruction of biodiversity and historic rural landscapes by productivist farmers has left access campaigners with a deeply defensive culture - fighting hard for tiny victories and with little faith in their own ability to grasp major opportunities.

Our challenge is to turn this around. We cannot afford to wait another 50 years.

Frank Lovell, revolutionary socialist

Marian and Pat Brain

IT WAS with much regret and deep sadness that we learnt of the death of our comrade and friend Frank, who died on May Day of a heart attack at his Manhattan apartment. He was 84 years old. All his political life he was a fighter for working people, a prominent socialist writer and author on trade union issues.

Born on July 24 1913, he went to the University of California's radical campus, gaining a degree in Philosophy.

He was attracted to the socialist movement just after the San Francisco general strike, joining the Workers Party of the United States, led by James P Cannon and A.J. Muste, in 1935. He consequently became a seafarer and an organiser of the Sailors Union of the Pacific.

In 1938, Lovell was a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party, and for many years played a leading role in that organisation, especially as a trade union activist. He was the long-term labour correspondent of the *Militant*, the SWP's newspaper.

For many years, he participated in the influential Friday

Night Socialist Forums (later called the Militant Forum), a weekly series that drew a broad range of prominent trade unionists and working class militants, civil rights and black liberation activists, scholars, intellectuals, students and others.

The SWP ran openly socialist candidates in elections. Frank ran for Mayor of Detroit in 1953. This showed the character of the man. At the height of the McCarthyite witch hunt when many socialists were running for cover he went on television and radio and ran a high profile campaign.

He was also on the ticket for Governor of Michigan in 1954, 1958, and 1964. In the late 60s Sarah and Frank moved to New York City, where he served as the SWP trade union director.

As a young person Frank was attracted to some of the historical militant working class struggles led by Eugene V Debs, a leader of the American Socialist Party and the militant International Workers of the World.

He was also inspired by the idealism of the early Communist

movement led by Leon Trotsky, the Fourth International, which led a key battle against Stalinist degeneration both in America and internationally.

He lived to see all the theoretical battles against Stalinism vindicated by history.

Frank's political commitment

At the height of the McCarthyite witch hunt, when many socialists were running for cover, Frank went on television and radio and ran a high profile campaign for Mayor of Detroit.

and analytical insights were widely appreciated in left wing and labour circles, as were his warmth, avid intellectual curiosity, keen sense of humour, and an engaging interest in people of

all ages and backgrounds.

Marian first met Frank in 1990 when she went to New York. Both Frank and his late companion Sarah, made her feel at home, and introduce her to many legends in the Trotskyist movement.

You could not meet better people anywhere.

Frank and Sarah were among the few who stood firm for revolutionary Marxism during the years of Stalinist domination of the radical movement.

Perhaps it was even more crucial that at the time of the degeneration of the American Socialist Workers Party Frank was prepared to begin once again the indispensable task of the building of a revolutionary Marxist cadre.

In the early 1980s, Frank and Sarah, along with hundreds of others, were expelled from the SWP, when the group was taken over.

Its new leadership was intent on replacing the historic Trotskyist programme with a closer alignment to the orientation of the Cuban Communist Party leader Fidel Castro, who had

made adaptations towards Stalinism.

The key debate was on the question of the theory of permanent revolution, developed by Trotsky in continuity with Marx, which the leadership of Jack Barnes was prepared to jettison.

In December 1983 Lovell initiated the publication of the *Bulletin in Defence of Marxism*, serving as its first editor.

Later he continued on its editorial board. Before her death in 1994 Sarah Lovell played a central role as the magazine's treasurer and chief copy editor.

In Frank's last year he was also active in the Metro New York Labour Party and worked effectively to secure financial support for the Ernest Mandel Institute in Brussels, and the Leon Trotsky Museum at Coyoacan in Mexico City.

Frank will never be forgotten. The revolutionary movement will honour comrades like him, who stood firm in defence of marxism in periods of great difficulty, holding the line until a more favourable relationship of working class forces can develop that will ensure our victory.

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 face 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 - an alliance 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.

If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what you read in *Socialist Outlook*, why not join us? Drop a line to the address on this page, and we'll be in touch.

Common Ground/Cynefin y Weirin A Welsh Alternative to the Euro-Summit

JUNE 9-12

at The Tabernacle, The Hayes, Cardiff

Exhibitions, stalls, information, meetings, workshops, street events, fairtrade cafe.

Common Ground has been organised by Welsh organisations campaigning on international issues, raising the subjects not on the agenda of the Euro-Summit: peace, justice, cooperation and human rights.

There are workshops on refugees and asylum rights, money, jobs and environment in a sustainable European economy, radioactive material, globalisation and its effects, the arms trade, community control, Cuba and debt.

Contact 01286 882359 or email benica@ape.org.uk for more details.

WHAT'S ON

JUNE Saturday 6

Real People's Europe, conference promoted by Capital and Class, 10a.m.-6p.m., University of London Union (Room 3E), Malet St., London WC1.

Monday 8

Student fees demonstration

Saturday 13

Cardiff demo (see this page)

Tues 10-Friday 12

Common Ground alternative summit

Friday 12 - Sunday 14

Reclaim Europe counter-summit

Saturday 20/Sun 21

Troops Out Movement AGM

Wednesday 24

Special TUC to discuss response to government white paper

Public meeting: Stop ethnic cleansing, self determination for the people of Kosovo
Camden Irish Centre 7.30pm

Tuesday 30

London Socialist Alliance general meeting

JULY

Saturday 25 - Friday 31

International Youth Summer Camp

Cardiff June 12 -14

Reclaiming Europe!

IN ADDITION to other alternative events around the EU Summit in Cardiff, the counter summit was set up to meet the needs of campaigners affected by and/or campaigning on the EU.

The weekend will offer the opportunity for international campaigners to meet, discuss and formulate strategies for a better Europe. The structure has been kept very simple.

It aims to enable campaigners from a variety of backgrounds to meet with others in their particular field, as well as to hear and share experiences with people in other areas of campaigning.

This format allows both issue-specific discussions and information exchanges between different fields. We hope this will satisfy everyone!

Programme Reclaim Europe! Counter Summit / Fri 12th - 14th:

TWO DAYS of discussions and workshops on the leading role of the EU as an agent of economic globalisation - a space for national and international campaigners to discuss strategies and actions on the themes of social welfare, employment, the environment, peace/security, development/internationalism, agriculture, women, genetic engineering, CEE enlargement & others (with a whole range of groups and individuals including organisers of the previous counter summits, Colin Hines, Alan Simpson, French unemployed...)

FRI 12TH (evening): Arrival of participants and accounts of latest successful campaigns

SAT 13TH: 'The EU and the consequences of its present agenda' Speakers panel followed by workshops/discussions. Finish at 3pm to join start of demonstration.

SUN 14TH: 'Alternatives to the present EU & campaign strategies' Themed workshops followed by

closing plenary.

Field areas of workshops:

- Women (confirmed),
- Employment,
- Agriculture (& CAP),
- Peace and Security (confirmed),
- CEE Enlargement (confirmed),
- Development (internationalism),
- Environment (confirmed),
- Genetic Engineering,
- Fortress Europe.

We have space for up to 28 different workshops (14 on Sunday morning and 14 on Sunday afternoon) so please contact us if you know that a workshop that isn't already mentioned above will attract enough participants, and we will add it onto the list.

Please keep the subject as broad as possible so as to include enough people.

In addition, Friday evening will allow participants to share their latest successful experiences in their specific campaign or country with others present. We hope for example to hear reports on the French unemployed movement and the latest updates on the MAI and other agreements.

Reclaim Europe! will do its best to provide or direct people to free/cheap accommodation and food. Please contact the Cardiff office NOW if you require a bed.

For more information and a registration form for the weekend counter summit, Reclaim Europe!

■ Cardiff: Temple of Peace, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF13AP Tel: 01222-220347 / Mobile: 04116 05037 / Pager: 07666783239

Reclaim.Europe@btinternet.com

■ London: 1 B Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ Tel: 0171-272 9333

Fax: 0171-561 0800

■ Email: europ@globalnet.co.uk

and europ@astra.global.net.uk (both please)

Web site: <http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/5581/>



300 Club

EVERYONE CAN BE A WINNER!

- The **SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** 300 Club offers readers and supporters the chance to win a £50 cash prize or alternatives each month - for just a £5 donation.
- We get the cash we need to run campaigns and improve the paper - and you get an excellent chance of a bumper pay-out, or the satisfaction of knowing your donation was well spent!
- To join the 300 Club, send us a Standing Order for £5 per month, or drop us a line at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU, and we will send you a form.
- This month's lucky winners are (3rd prize) Gary Ostrolenk (2nd) Alan Thorne, and the top prize goes to Pdraig Finn.

Eileen Gersh

MEMORIAL MEETING

Saturday July 4
6-10pm,

Brockway Room,

CONWAY HALL,

Red Lion Square
London WC1

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Socialist Outlook

Fighting global bosses offensive

LAST MONTH thousands of people joined lively protests in Birmingham outside the G8 summit demanding cancellation of the debt of developing "Third World" countries.

Incensed by the 'new slavery of the twentieth century' which condemns millions of children to die of malnutrition to pander to the whims of the World Bank and the IMF, they demanded the leaders of the world's eight richest and most powerful

nations show some compassion. Sadly - if predictably - their voices were ignored.

On June 13, building on the success of last year's massive

**Demonstrate against EU austerity!
CARDIFF June 13,
Assemble 1.30, Sophia Gardens**

demonstration in Amsterdam to greet the European Union Summit, activists from all over Europe will converge on Cardiff to demand an end to unemployment, cuts in welfare spending and deteriorating conditions at work.

The moves to European integration and monetary union are being pushed through by a continental attack on the living standards and rights of ordinary people.

The protests have a common aim - fighting the world wide neo-liberal offensive in which the bosses, bankers and ruling élites are gang-ing up internationally to entrench their power and line their own pockets at the expense of the poorest.

The powerful have their own "solidarity", their rich men's clubs - G8,

NAFTA, EU, NATO and so forth, and impose their will through a series of treaties and agreements.

Their latest plan, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment seeks to dismantle barriers to investment all over the world - riding roughshod over democratically elected institutions, workers rights, the environment, and small farmers.

The poor and the dispossessed have only one weapon - that of solidarity.

In the last 18 months we have seen the first signs of Europe-wide campaigns and strikes linking up working people against the common enemy.

This kind of solidarity is mighty powerful. Let's use it!

